

All I Ever Wanted
by NSyncGrrl

WARNING: This story contains homoerotic fiction. DO NOT read if you are under 18 years of age, or if reading erotica is prohibited in your locality.

DISCLAIMER: It's called fiction, people. That means I made it up. The story is not intended to imply anything about the sexuality or personality of anyone portrayed in it. I am not affiliated in any way, shape, or form with 'N Sync, Backstreet Boys, Eminem, Britney Spears, or anyone else, real or imagined, who appears in the stories and I am making no profit from this page.

That said, this is story begins with Justin and Lance, and the first couple of scenes are complete in themselves. But further down, the other members become more involved in the plotline, so if you're not all that big on "lamb love," read on, there's something for everyone here.

All I Ever Wanted means a lot to me, as it is the first slash I ever wrote. It got me writing again after a dry period in my life, and it also helped strengthen my style and my ability, so it was necessary to me, in many ways. It's not the best thing I've ever written, and it doesn't reflect where I am now, I know, but it seems to be my most popular story. I hope you enjoy it.

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All I Ever Wanted
1. Letter From Home
by NSyncGrrl

Justin climbed up into the tour bus, the dark coolness refreshing after the bright sunshine outside. Peeking over the front seat, he looked down the length of the bus, waiting a moment as his eyes adjusted to the dim light.

Along the back of the bus were the band's beds -- two bunks, one above the other, on either side of the bus, and one bunk along the back. Justin squinted into the darkness but couldn't see that far. Cautiously, he called out, "Lance?"

He heard a snuffle from the back of the bus. "Yeah?" came the thick reply.

Justin leaned on the cool metal in front of him. "You okay?" he asked.

Another snuffle. Just when he thought he wouldn't get an answer, Justin heard a small voice say, "Just peachy."

Sighing, Justin climbed the rest of the way into the bus, leaning on the door release and pulling the folding doors closed behind him. Earlier their manager had handed out mail -- mostly from their families, a few fan letters, some K-Mart ads, nothing much. But Lance had gotten a small, pink envelope that set him smiling, and Justin wondered who it was from. After reading it, the smile had fallen from his face and Lance retreated to the safety of the tour bus, not saying a word. The rest of the band was inside the restaurant, eating lunch; only Justin had thought of going after Lance. He's so nice to everyone, Justin thought, making his way down the aisle. If anyone hurt him -- He left the thought unfinished, afraid of where it would take him. Lately when he thought of Lance, he found himself pushing those thoughts away. But they had known each other for so long ...

Reaching the back of the bus, Justin looked down at Lance, sitting on the edge of the solitary bunk. He held the pink envelope and one single sheet of stationery in his hand. With the other hand he wiped at his eyes. "Lance?" Justin asked softly, fighting the urge to run his fingers through his friend's short blonde hair to straighten it. "You okay, man?"

Lance looked up, his eyes teary. Seeing Justin standing above him, Lance sniffed loudly and wiped the sleeve of his shirt across his eyes roughly. "I'm fine," he said, his voice husky with emotion.

Justin bit the inside of his cheek thoughtfully. Pointing to the bunk, he asked, "Mind if I sit down?"

"Go ahead." Lance scooted over slightly and Justin sat down beside him. There wasn't much room, and Justin was uncomfortably aware of the warmth of Lance's leg where it was pressed against his own.

Nodding at the letter in Lance's hand, Justin asked, "Wanna tell me

about it?"

For a long moment, he thought Lance wouldn't answer. Then he sniffed again and sighed. "It's from Becky," he said. Justin remembered Lance mentioning her -- a girl from back home, whom Lance had been seeing when time permitted. Unfortunately, that wasn't often enough, and Justin knew that the long time spent on the road discouraged relationships. Lance scrunched the letter up in one hand tightly, the thin paper ripping easily. "She's ... she met this guy."

Oh no, Justin thought. Unconsciously he put an arm around Lance's shoulders. "I'm sorry," he whispered. Lance leaned into him, putting his head on Justin's shoulders, and began crying again. Justin hugged him close. "Sshh," Justin crooned, rubbing Lance's shoulder and rocking slightly to comfort him. "It's alright. It's okay."

Lance clutched at Justin, his hands grabbing fistfuls of his sweater, hugging him tightly. When the tears tapered off, Lance sighed deeply but didn't let go. His face was buried in Justin's chest, and Justin could feel his breath through the thin sweater he wore. It was a warm, pleasant sensation, and Justin tried to ignore it. Lance laughed bitterly. Speaking into Justin's shirt, he admitted, "I didn't even like her all that much. It's just the fact that she ... well, it was nice to think that someone somewhere was thinking about me." He looked up at Justin, his eyes red but dry. "You know what I mean?"

Quietly, Justin said, "I think about you all the time."

Lance studied him, looking for ... something. Justin met his gaze steadily, afraid to blink or smile or do anything to frighten him. "Do you?" Lance asked softly.

Justin found himself staring at Lance's full lips, his upturned face, his light eyes. Against his will, he leaned forward, lips parted slightly. Lance closed his eyes, and Justin pulled him closer.

A loud knock on the back of the bus startled them. Abruptly, Lance pulled away and Justin stood up, looking around. Even though the windows were dark, blocking out prying eyes, Justin couldn't stop the pounding of his heart. Lance crumpled up the letter and shoved it under the mattress, and then he looked up at Justin, a guilty expression on his face. "You feeling better?" Justin asked gruffly.

Lance nodded. "Fine," he said, straightening his shirt. Justin hurried to the front of the bus to open the door, but glanced back at his friend. Lance was watching him with a strange look on his face. Running a hand nervously through his curly hair, Justin opened the door for the other band members.

But his arms still ached with the memory of holding Lance close.

All I Ever Wanted
2. A New Dance Step
by NSyncGrrl

In front of them, Darrin moved easily across the matted floor, his feet hitting the ground in time with the music, his back to the band. He watched them in the large mirror in front of him, counting off to the music as he taught them the steps of the dance. Chris and Joey were goofing off a little, adding in their own twists and turns. JC and Justin had a nice rhythm going, keeping up with the choreographer with ease. But Lance seemed to be a beat off -- he wasn't concentrating on the music or the steps. His eyes were downcast, not watching the mirror.

Truth be told, Lance was watching Justin. The younger boy was in the center of the room, directly behind the choreographer, and Lance couldn't take his eyes off of him. The way his jeans tugged against his thighs, the way his shirt pulled up slightly, exposing tanned skin, the way the muscles in his arms stood out from the strain of the dance. Lance loved to watch Justin, especially when they were dancing, because then Justin didn't know he was looking. The music washed over him, unheard, as he watched Justin. He wanted to just stand still and lose himself forever in the motions of his body.

But then the choreographer twirled, the others following suit, and Lance tried the move but wasn't paying attention to his surroundings and his feet got tangled up on the mat, pitching him off balance. He stumbled to one side and bumped into Joey. "Hey!" Joey cried, smiling. "Watch your step, boyo." Playfully, he pushed Lance back into place.

Lance staggered against JC before managing to stop. A slight blush crept into his cheeks -- he felt Justin watching him, and suddenly he wanted to die. JC must have seen the look on his face, though, because he looked over at Darrin and said, "Maybe we can take a break?"

"Thirty minutes," Darrin said, cutting off the tape. The music died, leaving the room suddenly very quiet. The studio door opened and the others shuffled out, calling loudly to each other and horsing around, but Lance just stood there, hand to his head as if trying to gather some semblance of control, and waited for the embarrassment to pass. Damn it! he thought, cursing himself silently. Just ignore him! Don't let him get to you like this. He hated the way Justin made him feel, lost and afraid. Why was that? They had been friends forever, it seemed, but recently he found himself watching Justin openly, wondering how he would feel in his arms, pressed tight against him. Dreams of stolen kisses haunted his nights -- why couldn't he just stop all this madness?

"Lance?" Justin's voice was soft, concerned. Lance almost groaned. Why didn't he leave with the others? he thought, running a hand through his short hair. "It's okay, man," Justin continued, coming to stand next to him. "We all have our off days."

Lance laughed. "I'll be okay in a minute," he said, hoping Justin would just leave. He was aware of how close his friend was standing, and Lance

had to wrap one arm around himself, holding his chin in the other hand, to keep himself from reaching out for him. He looked at the ceiling and blinked back the dampness in his eyes, and waited.

But Justin wasn't one to just leave a friend in need, one of the reasons Lance liked him so much. Touching his shoulder gently, Justin offered, "Maybe we can practice together, just you and me. Maybe you'll be able to get back in sync then."

Lance looked at Justin, the wide grin on his face making his blue eyes sparkle at his own joke. He could lose himself in those eyes. Shaking free from their spell, Lance said, "I don't know. The others --"

Justin shrugged. "They're at the snack machine by now. Maybe it'll be easier if no one else is watching."

No one but you, Lance thought bitterly as Justin crossed the room and closed the studio door. For extra measure he turned the bolt. Smiling at Lance, he said, "See? They won't be able to distract you now. C'mon, let's work on the moves."

Justin clicked on the tape and came to stand on the mat, taking a spot beside Lance. The music was loud in the studio, and if Lance didn't look at the mirror he could pretend that he wasn't really watching Justin. Justin watched Lance's feet as they moved in time with the music, counting out the steps like Darrin did. Lance found the music flowing through him, and kept up with Justin's rhythm easily. "You're doing good," Justin said as they started the twirl that had tripped him up before. "Just needed to work the kinks out."

And then Lance caught a glimpse of Justin in the mirror as he turned, and he saw Justin's shirt stretched taut against the tight muscles of his stomach, and Lance lost whatever concentration he had. Stumbling, he knocked into Justin, who caught him with steady hands. Warmth spread out along Lance's shoulders and back where Justin held him, and Lance twisted away quickly. "I'm sorry," he muttered.

Justin studied him for a moment, but Lance didn't meet his gaze. Then Justin said, "Run through it again. I'll see if I can spot where you're going wrong."

God, Lance groaned inwardly. He wants me to dance for him! He didn't know if he had the courage to do that. So instead he shook his head. "It's okay," he said. "My feet just get tangled up, that's all. I'll work on it a bit."

"No, come on," Justin prompted. "I won't laugh."

"Justin, I can't," Lance said, his voice pleading. He turned towards his friend, his eyes troubled, and hoped he wouldn't have to explain any further. Please, he prayed, please don't make me -- please.

Justin looked at him thoughtfully, unconsciously biting the inside of his lower lip, a trait Lance found infuriatingly sexy. Closing his eyes, Lance wished Justin would just leave. He didn't trust his feelings right now.

Instead, Justin came over and stood behind Lance. "Well, maybe if I

guide your moves," he suggested, placing his hands on Lance's hips. One side of his shirt had pulled loose from where it was tucked into his jeans, and Lance felt the flame of Justin's touch against his bare skin. As Justin's strong hands guided him into the dance, Lance closed his eyes and submitted to the moment. Behind him Justin sang along with the music, the words barely audible under his breath, fanning the back of Lance's neck. During the more strenuous moves, Lance felt Justin press against him, and he hoped the pleasure of his touch didn't show on his face. But Justin kept up the dance, never letting go of Lance's hips for more than a beat or two, and when the twirl came, it went off without a hitch. "See?" Justin said, turning Lance around to face him. Lance opened his eyes and looked into Justin's beaming face. "Nothing to it."

Justin's hands were still on his hips. They were so close, Lance could feel the warmth of Justin's breath against his face. He studied Justin's curls, kinky and coarse, because he was afraid to meet his friend's eyes. "Nothing to it," he whispered, his voice suddenly husky.

And then he moved back suddenly, anxious to put some distance between them. He felt Justin's leg brush against his, and he stumbled back, falling over a low bench and landing flat on his back on the matted floor. Justin's fingers were laced in Lance's belt loops, and as Lance fell back, Justin was pulled down as well. He landed on top of Lance, his head bumping against Lance's forehead. Reaching up, Lance rubbed his forehead with one hand, the other hovering in the air just behind Justin's head. "Ow!" he said, laughing.

Justin disentangled his fingers from Lance's belt and rubbed his own forehead. "Ow is right!" he laughed, shifting into a more comfortable position. Lance was uncomfortably aware of how Justin's body fit snugly against his, and he shifted a bit, hoping Justin wouldn't realize how aroused this was making him. With a contented sigh, Justin spread his hands out on Lance's chest and set his chin on top of his laced fingers, looking directly at Lance. His frank gaze was unsettling. Lance laid his head back on the floor and sighed. Neither of them said anything, but Lance felt Justin's body gently pressing against his own, and he prayed for the strength to resist touching his friend.

Suddenly Justin ran a finger down Lance's nose, tracing its curve. Lance started at the gesture, and blinked at the earnest way Justin stared at him. "Justin," he began, trying to sit up, but his friend held him down.

"Sshh," Justin admonished. He ran his finger down Lance's nose again, this time not stopping at the tip. Instead he traced his upper lip and ran across his cheek, along the bone. The touch tickled slightly.

Lance pushed up again, harder this time. "Justin, stop it," he said, suddenly angry. He didn't think he could control himself much longer if his friend persisted in these innocent touches. He didn't trust himself to stop there.

Justin sat back and let Lance sit up. A hurt look crossed his face. "I didn't mean --" he started, but Lance ran a hand through his hair nervously and said, "I know, it's my fault --"

Justin still straddled Lance's legs, but the look on his face kept Lance from pushing him off completely. Those sad large eyes, filled with

confusion, that perfect mouth turned into a slight pout, those thick eyelashes -- Lance sighed again. "I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean --" When Justin looked up at him, hopeful, Lance smiled. "It tickled," he explained, hoping that was enough.

A mischievous grin slipped across Justin's face. "Tickled?" he asked wickedly. "Why didn't you say so?" And then he attacked Lance, his fingers digging into the older boy's stomach. As he tickled his friend, Lance's shirt came out of his jeans, and his bare stomach was an easy target for Justin. Together the boys laughed, Lance trying to get out of Justin's grip, Justin overpowering his friend and keeping him pinned to the ground. Soon they collapsed to the mat, lying side by side, exhausted and spent. Lance laughed once as Justin rolled over and leaned above him, and then he saw that serious look in his friend's eyes again and he hoped that the others returned soon.

"I've seen you watch me dance," Justin whispered. Lance started.

"What?" he stammered, his heart racing.

"I see you in the mirror," Justin continued. One of his hands found its way to Lance's chest, his fingers intertwining with Lance's. "You watch me move."

Lance tried to shake his hand free, but to no avail. Justin hung on tight. "I watch everybody --" Lance started, but Justin smiled.

"It's okay," he said, laying his head down close to Lance's. His breath caressed Lance's ear as he talked. "I like you watching me."

Before Lance could say another word, he felt Justin's lips on his earlobe, gentle and warm and wet. He felt the hardness of Justin's teeth as he bit down lightly. Lance closed his eyes and shuddered in pleasure.

Suddenly, someone banged on the studio door. Lance and Justin jumped up from the floor, surprised. Not meeting Justin's eyes, Lance hurried to unlock the door. Joey stood on the other side, JC and Chris behind him. "You guys giving private lessons now?" Joey joked, barging into the room. "Or can anyone sign up?"

Lance was speechless as he turned around and looked at Justin, who smiled at the others as if nothing had happened. But Lance still felt the touch of Justin's lips on his skin, and thoughtfully he wiped the wetness from his ear.

All I Ever Wanted
3. All I Ever Wanted
by NSyncGrrl

It had been a week since their last show, and because their next concert was another week away, their manager had agreed to a little down time, and each of the band members had flown to their respective homes. Now Justin lay on his bed, in the room where he had grown up, his walls still covered in teenybopper posters and school pictures. He stared at the ceiling fan, turning lazily in the tepid air, and wondered what the other band members were doing. Playing a game of ball, working out at a local gym, going to the clubs, taking in a movie or two? He wondered what Lance was doing right now.

He sighed. Lance. In the last few months, the two of them had grown so close -- sometimes he would catch Lance watching him. He felt the heat of Lance's gaze on his bare back when he stripped off his shirt; he felt it on his face as he tried to sleep on the bus. Whenever Justin tried talking to Lance, though, about anything, Lance always managed to put some distance between the two of them, when Justin found himself wanting to get closer. The only time Lance didn't pull away was when they were with the others, but Justin couldn't confront him then. He wanted to know what thoughts lay behind Lance's light green eyes; he wanted to drink of his secrets and run his hands through his cropped blonde hair. Sometimes, in the darkness of the night, when he lay in bed alone, tossing and turning, Justin admitted to himself that maybe, just maybe, he wanted to touch Lance's body, to hold him close and feel his skin against his own.

Lying on his own bed, in his own house, the sounds of his mother in the kitchen downstairs drifting up to him, he allowed himself to admit that he wanted to see Lance's eyes again, hear his deep voice, see his slight, hesitant smile. He wondered what Lance was up to right now -- was he out with friends? A girl? Was he thinking of him?

Suddenly the phone rang. Justin let it ring. Once, twice. The answering machine would get it. Downstairs he heard his mother cross the hardwood floor and answer it in mid-ring. He waited. It was probably an old school friend, wanting to catch him while he was home. Justin sighed -- he didn't feel like being sociable today.

"Justin!" his mother called, her voice muffled through his closed door.

Without getting up, he hollered back, "Who is it?"

"One of the boys!" she yelled. "Pick it up, will you?"

One of the boys. That meant it was one of the group. Justin's heartbeat quickened as he lifted the receiver from his bedside table. "Hello?" he asked, and heard his mother hang the other phone up.

Silence filled the air. He heard the crackle of long distance, and he waited. "Hello?" he asked again, ready to hang up.

And then, "Justin?" It was Lance.

"Lance?" Justin asked, incredulous. "I was just thinking about you, man. What's up?"

Justin could hear the grin in Lance's voice. "You were?" he asked. "Thinking about me, I mean?"

"Yeah," Justin said, his voice suddenly husky. He pictured Lance, laying on his bed at home like Justin was, and suddenly he wished to be there with him, beside him, their bodies pressed together so tightly that they appeared to be one. His arms ached to hold him like that.

Suddenly, Lance blurted out, "I miss you. I just called to tell you that." He laughed. "I know, I know. A few more days and we'll see each other again, but I just wanted to let you know I was ... I was thinking about you."

Justin sighed. "Me too," he said. They fell into a comfortable silence. Justin laid there listening to the steady rhythm of Lance's breath, and then he started to sing softly. "You're all I ever wanted."

Lance took up the chorus. "You're all I ever needed, yeah." Justin loved the depth of his voice.

Together they sang on the phone. "So tell me what to do now, 'cause I want you back."

Later, when they hung up the phone, Justin watched the ceiling fan for long moments and wondered how it would feel to kiss Lance, his lips and neck and face, to run his hands over his firm body, to hold him in his arms, and to never let go.

All I Ever Wanted
4. Wake Up Call
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sank down in the pool until the water lapped gently just below his nose. Beneath the water, his toes barely touched the tiles on the pool's bottom. Looking around he spotted three of his friends, sitting at the bar, sipping mock cocktails and goofing off. He turned around lazily, treading the cool water, and swam backwards, the sun beating down on the top of his head. He kept swimming slowly until he caught a glimpse of Justin, and then he positioned himself so he could watch his friend from the safety of the pool with no one else knowing.

Justin lay stretched out on a lounge chair close to the deep end of the pool. Lance allowed himself the luxury of studying Justin's body, tan and slim and glistening wetly in the hot afternoon sun. God, he's sexy, Lance thought. He could see Justin's tanned legs, strong and muscular; his broad chest, so smooth and golden; his sinewy arms stretched above his head. Beneath the curly crown of his blonde hair, a pair of black sunglasses obscured his eyes, but he had been lying still for so long that Lance thought he was asleep. As he napped, he ran his tongue over his full lips and shifted slightly. Even from this distance Lance heard the slight creak of the chair beneath Justin's weight. When he moved, his swim trunks pulled tight over the bulge at his crotch, one leghole gaping open slightly to reveal a triangle of darkness. Lance caught his breath, then sneezed as water shot up his nose.

He coughed and stood up in the pool, wiping tears from his eyes and water from his nose. Suddenly something soft hit him in the back of the head, bouncing over him. He looked up to see a bright red beach ball sailing above him, landing with a small splash in the pool. He turned around.

Joey and JC stood near the door leading back into the hotel. Chris stood at the edge of the pool, grinning foolishly. "Yo, Lance!" he called, his voice carrying easily across the pool. "C'mon, man! We gotta get ready for the show. Wake up Justin and get a move on!"

"Be right there," Lance called. Scooping up the beach ball, he waited until the others were inside the hotel before he climbed out of the pool. Beneath his feet the concrete walk was warm and dry. He tossed the ball aside and walked over to Justin, who hadn't moved. Must really be asleep, Lance thought. As he approached he stuck out one hand, still wet, and let the water drip onto Justin's legs. He watched as the droplets ran down the tanned skin and onto the straps of the chair. Moving closer, he dripped the water onto the hem of Justin's shorts, staining them a darker color, and then further up, letting the water pool on the taut fabric stretched tight between his legs.

Above the shorts, Lance let his hand fall until the tips of his fingers brushed Justin's skin. Gently he traced the curve of muscle along Justin's stomach, and he heard his friend's sharp intake of breath. Running his hand further up Justin's chest, he let his fingers linger over the dark

nipples, first one, then the other, leaving a wet trail between them. Justin shifted slightly, pressing up until Lance's hand covered his nipple completely, the nub hard against his palm, and then he settled back into the chair and sighed sleepily.

Lance glanced at Justin, but the dark glasses hid his eyes. Was he still asleep? He rubbed the nipple playfully with his thumb, watching the way Justin's lips parted slightly as he moaned with pleasure. Kneeling down beside the chair, he glanced at Justin again, and then leaned over and licked the aroused bud, the skin hard and firm and slightly salty. Placing his mouth fully over the areola, he sucked gently and kissed the skin, tugging the tip with his teeth slightly as he pulled away.

Justin's hand came up behind him and ran through his hair, pushing him closer. His grip was firm and steady, and suddenly Lance wondered if Justin was awake after all. Quickly he pulled back, a look of fear creeping into his eyes. He shook his head, knocking Justin's hand away as a spray of cool water sprinkled from his hair onto his friend's bare chest.

"Hey!" Justin cried, putting his hands up to avoid getting wet, but it was too late. Lance grinned and shook his head harder, flinging the water out of his hair, hoping to hide his embarrassment. He hoped Justin had been asleep. "Stop it!" Justin caught Lance's head in both hands and turned his face towards him.

Lance reached up and removed Justin's sunglasses. Justin stared at him with those large blue eyes of his, searching his face. Lance swallowed once, afraid of what Justin was about to say. "Where are the others?" Justin asked in a low, thick voice.

"Inside," Lance whispered. "We've got to get ready."

Justin ran a finger around the outside of Lance's ear, his touch warm and soft. Gently he tugged on Lance's earlobe as his other hand strayed down Lance's neck, stopping over one of his own nipples. Lance closed his eyes as Justin squeezed gently.

Opening his eyes, he found Justin leaning forward, his face inches from Lance's own. Lance held his breath until Justin smiled a bit sadly, gave his nipple one last squeeze, and then dropped his hands from his face and chest. "Thanks for waking me up," he whispered before standing.

Lance watched him walk away, his shorts pulling tight across his buttocks with each step, and then Justin stopped. Looking back, he asked, "You coming?"

Not trusting himself to answer in a steady voice, Lance hurried to catch up.

All I Ever Wanted
5. Heatwave
by NSyncGrrl

They were in Virginia somewhere -- that's all Justin knew. It was the middle of August, the air sticky with humidity. Walking outside was like stepping into a warm sponge; it took his breath away and made his head hurt. They had another five hours before their show tonight, and it was too hot to practice. And to top it all off, the air in their hotel was broken. Justin lay on the sofa and closed his eyes in frustration. He wore just a loose tank-top and a thin pair of boxers, and tried not to let any part of his body touch any other part.

Lance was on the floor on his back, his legs propped up against the end of the sofa, his feet in the air above Justin's own. Chris sprawled in a chair beside him, his feet propped up on the coffee table. Joey and JC had volunteered to get something for lunch; they left over an hour ago and weren't back yet. At this point Justin didn't even think he was hungry anymore. His head ached like a rotten tooth, his eyes watered, his whole body was bathed in a sheath of sweat. He just wanted to be dead.

"It's hot," Chris said for the millionth time. "Why's it so hot here?"

"The air's broken," Lance reminded him. Justin scrunched his eyes closed tighter and tried to block out the sounds of their voices.

But Chris wouldn't shut up. A few minutes later he said it again. "It's hot."

Justin couldn't take it anymore. Flinging a pillow over at Chris, he growled, "We know that. Just drop it already."

He waited, knowing Chris. Sure enough, in a few minutes he said in a soft voice, "Man, it's hot."

Sitting up suddenly, Justin pointed at the door to his room. "Out!" he said. Chris looked at him, a hurt expression on his face, but Justin didn't care. It was too hot to care. "Get out! Before I hit you, get out of my room!"

Chris pouted, but he stood up and stretched. As he stepped over Lance, he glared at Justin and muttered, "What's keeping those two?" At the door he said, "I'm going to see what's up with our lunch. I'll be back." Throwing another hurt look at Justin, he slammed the door on his way out.

On the floor Lance shifted, suddenly uncomfortable. Justin gripped his head with both hands and lay back down. He just wished the pounding would stop. He wished the a/c would work. He wished he hadn't yelled at Chris. Hell, he wished a lot of things right now, but none of them seemed likely to come true. He closed his eyes against the light and the pain and took a few deep breaths.

He heard Lance get up from the floor and open the small refrigerator,

the only cool place in the room. Earlier they had taken turns standing in front of the small appliance, but it hadn't generated enough cool air to cool them off and they had given up. Instead they had stripped to their t-shirts and boxers and just lay around, Chris remarking on the heat, until Justin couldn't stand it anymore and sent him away. Already he was feeling bad for yelling at his friend -- when he came back he'd have to apologize.

He heard Lance digging through the ice rack, the sound of ice cubes clinking together almost musical. A waft of coolness curled around his feet, and then the refrigerator door closed softly and the heat rushed in to dissipate the draft. He sighed and wondered if Lance would berate him for the way he had treated Chris.

His eyes were still closed, but he heard Lance move back across the room and sensed his friend standing over him. Then he felt the pressure of Lance's hip against his as he sat down on the sofa, and he felt his friend's steady gaze on his face. He kept his mouth set, his eyes closed, his brow slightly furrowed, and wondered what Lance was doing so close to him. His heartbeat quickened, and despite the heat, his skin suddenly hungered for Lance's touch. Maybe it's a good thing Chris left, he thought, finding himself suddenly aroused at the thought of them here, together, alone.

And then something wet and cold and hard touched his forehead, and Justin gasped. An ice cube, he thought as a drop of water coursed its way down his temple and into his curly hair. Lance must have taken an ice cube from the refrigerator, and now held it against Justin's forehead. As he kept his eyes closed, Lance began to run the ice cube around his temples, first one side, then the other, until his forehead was cool and wet.

Then the ice cube found its way down the side of his face, tracing his cheekbone, around his chin, up the other side. Back on his forehead, the ice cube rested briefly before sliding down the slope of his nose, and when it rested at the tip, Justin dared to stick his tongue out, trying to touch it.

He tasted Lance's palm, salty and warm and soft. Quickly his tongue darted back into his mouth, and Lance pressed the ice cube against his lips, rubbing back and forth until they were glistening and damp. He stuck his tongue out again and licked the side of Lance's hand with quick motions, like a cat bathing itself. He liked the taste of Lance's skin.

But then the hand and the ice cube were gone, trailing down his neck and into the hollow of his neck, where the cool water pooled slightly before trickling down either side to the sofa below. He sucked in his breath as the coldness slipped over his tank-top and traced first one nipple, teasing it into hardness, and then the other. As Lance outlined each nipple, his fingertips brushed against the tender bud, and Justin wished he was wearing something more than boxer shorts. He knew his pleasure must be showing by now; he had never felt so aroused by a simple touch in his life. How large was that ice cube? It should've melted away completely by now.

And then it moved lower, crossing the plains of his stomach to slide along the waistband of his boxers, and he groaned slightly when Lance's wrist brushed against the hard bulge in his shorts. He bit his lips and tried

to control himself, but when the ice cube danced over his erection, he couldn't stop from gasping with pleasure. Icy water leaked into his boxers, and he imagined he could hear it sizzle on his heated flesh. Involuntarily, he reached out, and gripped Lance's knee with one hand. As the ice cube teased his cock through the thin fabric, he rubbed Lance's inner thigh tenderly, flicking the edge of his own boxers playfully, afraid to go any farther.

Suddenly the ice cube found its way back onto his stomach and slid up his chest, up his neck, around his chin, and back to his mouth. His lips parted greedily as he tasted the wetness, hard and now so small. Lance's fingers held the ice cube to his lips, allowing him to suck at it before pulling it back. Teasing him. Forcing him to lean upward with his mouth, follow the ice with his tongue, wrap his lips around Lance's fingers and pull them back to him. When the ice was gone, Lance kept his forefinger at Justin's lips, and the boy sucked at it hungrily, running his tongue around its tip, nibbling at it softly. His crotch throbbed with the ache of his erection, and his hand found its way under Lance's shorts. His fingers touched hard skin, kinky hair. Lance pulled his finger from Justin's mouth and offered his thumb, leaving a hot, wet trail along his cheek as his finger came to rest above his jaw. Justin bit down lightly on his thumb as he twined his fingers in the damp hair beneath Lance's shorts. He smiled as Lance caught his breath sharply.

Suddenly the door to the room banged open. Justin sat up quickly, his eyes flying open, his headache pounding incessantly at his temples, Lance's hand falling away from his face to cover his own hand, still in Lance's shorts. Justin shifted his legs to hide his erection as the others barged into the room, bags of Chinese food in Joey's hands. Chris and JC carried tall cool drinks. Almost guiltily he pulled his hand out of Lance's shorts, letting his fingers trail along his thigh as Lance turned to look at the others. "Finally," Lance said, his voice a little shaky. "Food."

Justin ran a hand through his hair and silently cursed their timing. But he had to admit -- for a few moments there he had forgotten about the weather, though another kind of heat had fueled his thoughts.

All I Ever Wanted
6. The Haircut
by NSyncGrrl

Lance squinted in the mirror of Justin's hotel room. "I need a haircut," he complained, running a hand through his blonde hair. It was starting to get a bit long and looked a tad shaggy.

Justin stepped up close behind him, hands on his hips. Cocking his head to one side, he said, "I'll cut it for you."

Lance laughed. "What do you know about cutting hair?" he asked.

A wicked gleam crept into Justin's eyes. "Can't be that hard," he admitted. "Chris cuts his own hair all the time."

Lance met his friend's gaze in the mirror and grimaced. "That's not saying much. Maybe I should just wait --" But Justin was already heading for a pair of scissors from the bathroom, and when he returned he held them in one hand like Edward Scissorhands. He opened and closed them -- snip, snip -- and grinned. Lance shook his head. "Justin, really. You don't have to do this --"

A pout pulled at the corners of Justin's mouth. "Aw, what could possibly go wrong?"

"You could cut too much," Lance said. He kept his gaze on the scissors to avoid looking at Justin's face -- those full lips curved into a perfect pout, those mischievous eyes pleading with him. If he looked at that face for too long, he would do anything Justin wished. Suddenly the thought of Justin's hands roaming through his hair, his head pressed against Justin's chest, Justin's arms on either side of his head -- Lance swallowed hard against the image. Instead he added, "You could cut it all uneven. Why don't we just wait?"

But Justin had an answer ready for him. Crossing the room, he stood in front of Lance and studied him. He was so close that Lance leaned back on the dresser to avoid touching him. "If it's too short, it'll grow back," Justin cajoled. "If it's crooked, I'll fix it." Reaching out, he pulled at one strand of Lance's hair, his fingers brushing against Lance's neck. "Trust me," he whispered.

Lance met his gaze with wide eyes and knew he would give in. Not trusting himself to answer, he nodded, and when Justin smiled, Lance wondered how he had ever hoped to say no.

"Take off your shirt," Justin commanded.

Lance toyed with the hem of the gold jersey he wore. "My --" he began, confused. He had nothing on under it.

Justin rolled his eyes and sighed. "So it won't get hair all over it," he said in mock exasperation. He tugged at the hem of the jersey playfully. "C'mon," he pleaded, ducking his head slightly and looking up at Lance

with sad eyes.

Sighing, Lance pulled the jersey up over his head quickly, before he lost his nerve. When he was blinded by the fabric, he felt Justin's hand stray to the waistband of his shorts, caressing the muscles of his stomach. He pulled the jersey off completely and tossed it aside, boldly looking at Justin, but his friend's gaze was directed at his bare chest. For a moment his hand lingered on Lance's abdomen, the warm touch of skin on skin making Lance's stomach flutter with excitement.

And then Justin's hand fell away, and Lance released a breath he didn't know he was holding. Turning away, Justin pointed to a spot on the floor in front of the bed. "Have a seat," he said, his voice a little unsteady. Lance obeyed, sitting cross-legged on the floor.

Justin stepped around behind him and sat down on the bed, one knee on either side of Lance. Lance leaned back and looked up at him, his head resting against the inside of Justin's thigh where the hem of his shorts ended. Placing both hands on the top of Lance's head, Justin gently pushed him down until he was looking at the floor. Stretching his legs out, Lance shifted into a more comfortable position. "Stay still," Justin admonished, touching Lance's shoulders slightly to steady him. His hands were warm and strong and comforting. Lance closed his eyes, savoring the touch.

Justin began by running his hands through Lance's hair. His scalp tingled at the sensation. The only sound in the room was the snip of the scissors, loud in his ears, and their easy breathing. When Justin's hands settled for too long in one place, Lance would lean into his touch. But Lance didn't have a lot of hair, and before long it was over. Justin set the scissors aside and brushed through Lance's hair with his fingers, shaking away the loose clippings. Lance sighed as Justin's fingers delved deeper, massaging his scalp.

Then Justin's hands slid down, rubbing his neck and shoulders, kneading tired flesh. Beneath the insistent hands Lance felt his skin flush. As Justin continued his massage, Lance reached back and wrapped his arms around Justin's bare legs. He pulled gently and Justin slid off of the bed, his legs curling around Lance's own as he sat on the floor behind him. The bulge of Justin's erection pressed firmly against Lance's buttocks, and Lance groaned slightly, more aroused than ever. He leaned back against Justin, his head on his friend's shoulder, as Justin's hands slid lower down his back and under his arms, tracing soft patterns along Lance's chest and stomach. He felt Justin kiss his neck, soft damp lips igniting his skin, setting his blood aflame.

Gently Justin covered Lance's nipples with his hands, rubbing the tender buds with his palms, squeezing them playfully between his fingers. His tongue licked along Lance's collarbone, leaving a wet trail that cooled instantly. Lance shivered in delight, and Justin pinched his nipples erect while nibbling on his neck. As Lance moaned, he slid down until he leaned back fully against Justin's chest, his friend's hard cock pressing against his lower back. Justin groaned into Lance's neck and began to suck gently on his skin just above the collarbone.

His hands released Lance's nipples, slightly tender from the attention, and drifted down to Lance's stomach. Spreading out across his shorts,

Justin pulled the fabric tight as he traced his way down to twine in the fine downy hair on Lance's upper thighs. Lance thrust up slightly, his own erection straining against the taut fabric.

Slowly Justin stroked Lance's thighs, and Lance opened his legs wider, pressing them against Justin's own. As Justin bit Lance's neck tenderly, his hands moved across Lance's shorts until they cupped his crotch. Lance gasped and tried to pull back, but Justin pulled him closer, his fingers rubbing the swollen hardness through the thin fabric, his own erection pressing against Lance's back. Lance moaned loudly and thrust against Justin's hands as they squeezed him gently. He ran his hands along Justin's legs and thrust again, biting his lower lip to keep from crying out in pleasure.

A loud knock startled them. Justin's hands froze over Lance's crotch and Lance's eyes flew open. He gulped once and pushed away from Justin, reaching for his jersey lying discarded on the bed. This time Justin let him go, and they both stood up as the knock came again. "Justin?" someone called through the door, the voice muffled and indistinct.

Justin pulled his shirt down to cover his bulging crotch and shifted in his shorts awkwardly. He headed for the door, but turned back with his hand on the knob to watch as Lance tugged his shirt on over his head and nonchalantly studied his new haircut in the mirror. Justin unlocked the door and opened it.

Chris stood outside, about to knock again. "Yo, dudes," he called, barging into the room. "We're heading into town to check out the local scene. You've been complaining about a haircut lately --" he turned to Lance, standing in front of the mirror -- "You guys wanna go?" He squinted as Lance ran his hand through his newly cropped hair. "You already got it cut?"

Justin grinned. "What do you think?" he asked.

Chris cocked an eyebrow. "You cut it?"

Lance nodded. "I like it," he said, a slight waver in his voice. "Maybe I'll have him cut it all the time."

Justin ducked his head and ran a hand nervously through his curly hair, but not before Lance saw a thin blush creep into Justin's cheeks. Already he found himself looking forward to his next haircut.

All I Ever Wanted
7. Summer Storm
by NSyncGrrl

The small convenience store was only a few blocks from Lance's home, and even though the sky was overcast and a severe thunderstorm warning was in effect for the next two hours, Justin thought he could make it and back before the clouds broke. He was bored; JC was watching Joey and Chris annihilate each other in the latest Mortal Kombat video game, and Lance fooled around with a handheld Gameboy. Suddenly Justin had this craving for chocolate. "Where's that store again?" he asked.

Lance shrugged. "Just around the corner," he replied. "Why -- you going?"

Standing up, Justin stretched languidly, his arms reaching for the ceiling. The hem of his t-shirt pulled free from the waistband of his jeans, and he saw Lance's gaze linger on the exposed flesh of his stomach before he tugged the shirt down again. "I want some candy," Justin said. Lance raised his eyes to meet Justin's before turning back to his game.

"There's a storm coming," JC reminded him.

Justin shrugged. "I'll be back before it hits."

Suddenly Joey rooted through the pocket of his jeans and pulled out a five dollar bill. Handing it to Justin, he asked, "Get me a box of Twinkies, will you?"

Taking the money, Justin asked, "Anyone else?"

"Some bubblegum," Chris suggested. JC just shook his head.

Justin turned to Lance. "Is the store hard to find?"

Lance shook his head. "Want me to go with you?"

Trying to hide the smile that wanted to creep across his face, Justin simply shrugged. "If you want." He hoped Lance wanted to be alone with him.

Lance clicked off the Gameboy and stood up. "We'll be back," he said, and then led the way out of the room, Justin at his heels.

They didn't talk on the way to the store. The sky above pressed down on them, the bruised clouds swollen and angry. Justin walked as close to Lance as he dared, hands shoved deep into his jeans pockets. It wasn't often he managed to get Lance alone, though when he did they never seemed to have much to say. He wondered how Lance felt about him -- he thought his own feelings were so obvious, and yet he couldn't bring himself to talk to Lance about them. What would he say? How would he explain the sleepless nights, the gentle ache he felt in his arms, his heart, his groin? As they walked to the store, each lost in their own thoughts,

Justin managed to rub his arm against Lance's every few steps, the simple touch sending electric shivers down his spine.

The store was everything Justin expected it to be -- nothing more than four aisles of thinly stocked shelves and a cold case full of milk. There were no Twinkies, but Justin found a generic brand that Joey would eat just the same. Lance found some gum and a few candy bars, and they were ready to leave. As they approached the register, though, Lance elbowed him. "Look how dark it got," he said in a low voice.

Justin looked out the window and whistled. In the time they spent shopping, the sky had grown black. The clouds roiled like spilt ink, purple and indigo and a black so dark it hurt to look at it directly. Suddenly thunder rumbled, shaking the floor like an earthquake, and a bolt of lightning split the sky. And then the clouds opened up, and the wind flung torrential sheets of rain against the windows with such force that the glass trembled. "This sucks," Justin said.

Lance laughed as the cashier rang them up. "We can make a run for it," he suggested.

"You're outta your mind," Justin said. "It's pouring out there, man! We'll be soaked."

A bright shine came to Lance's eyes, and he grinned. "You afraid?" he asked, opening the door.

Outside the rain beat down so hard that it bounced off the concrete, forming a thin mist. Justin imagined that rain pelting his body, the water cold and refreshing after the heat of the day. What the hell, he thought, and without another word, he jumped out of the store and into the downpour, a loud whoop! rising from his lungs. Lance was right behind him.

The instant they were outside, they were soaked. The rain ran down Justin's face and plastered his hair to his scalp. His clothes clung to his body like a second skin, and when Lance ran past him on the sidewalk, he saw Lance's jeans hugging his legs and buttocks, the white t-shirt now translucent, molded to Lance's shoulder blades, outlining his biceps. Justin caught his breath when Lance turned around, laughing at the storm, and he saw dark, erect nipples through the thin shirt.

And then Lance stopped, waiting for Justin to catch up. The house was just ahead. Justin ran past Lance and up the driveway; Lance followed close behind. They were laughing as they ran into the open garage, and then they stood breathless just inside the doorway, watching the rain hit the concrete, the spray blowing in at them on the wind.

Out of the downpour, Justin shivered. The air was suddenly cool and in his wet clothes, he felt cold. Lance rubbed a hand along Justin's back, trying to warm him, the feel of his hand through the wet fabric igniting Justin. He leaned back into Lance's touch and closed his eyes as Lance used both hands to rub heat into his shoulders.

Reaching back, Justin ran his hands along Lance's thighs, the denim heavy and clammy. He gripped the back of Lance's legs and pulled him forward slightly. Taking the hint, Lance stepped forward, his feet on either

side of Justin's, their wet sneakers touching. Their thick jeans pressed close together, but beneath all that material Justin felt a stiffness that felt hot and damp press against his buttocks. He pushed his butt back against Lance and heard his friend's moan as he rubbed against Lance's growing erection. He ran his hands further back, until they cupped Lance's butt, and when he pushed again, he pulled Lance towards him as well, pressing against the bulge at his crotch.

Lance's hands worked their way down Justin's arms, kneading the cold flesh to warmth. Lance's chest pressed tight against Justin's back, and he could feel the hard nubs of Lance's nipples on his shoulder blades. A dull ache throbbed at Justin's groin, and he felt his own erection straining the cold, damp fabric of his jeans. When the wind blew, it tickled his erect nipples, and he moaned as Lance pressed his cock against him again.

Suddenly his clothes were too cold, too confining. He wanted to strip them off and lay with Lance on the lush grass of the yard, his erection pressing against Lance's own, his hands roaming Lance's body freely, the rain pouring down around them, wet and hot and hard. He wanted to taste Lance, his skin, his lips, his tongue. He wanted to feel those strong hands around him, holding him close. He leaned back and let his head rest on Lance's shoulder. Lance's ragged breaths fanned his ear, turning him on more. He turned his head towards Lance and opened his eyes. Lance's face was mere inches away, his eyes hooded with desire, his lips parted slightly. When Lance licked his lips and looked at him, Justin leaned forward slightly, wanting to taste that tongue, those lips.

Behind them, a garbage can toppled to the ground. Justin released Lance's legs and spun away, breathless, his heart beating wildly against his chest. Lance staggered back and turned, cursing softly as a shaggy tomcat ran into the shadows of the garage. Justin laughed, a little shaky, and wondered if they could get back to where they had been. So close, he thought to himself, running a hand over the erection in his jeans. He looked at Lance's crotch hungrily before raising his gaze to meet his friend's. Lance's eyes were wide and dark, full of promise. Sweet Jesus, oh so close.

Clearing his throat, Lance reached for the plastic bags from the store. They sat on the concrete floor of the garage, dropped and forgotten. "We better tell the others we're back," he said, a tinge of regret in his voice.

Justin nodded, watching as Lance walked up the stairs leading to the house. Outside the rain began to ease up, and Justin plucked at his wet garments as he followed behind Lance. "I am so wet. Gotta dry off," he muttered.

Lance laughed softly. "That'll take a while," he replied. Justin thought of his aching erection and silently agreed.

All I Ever Wanted
8. Truth or Dare
by NSyncGrrl

The game was Joey's idea. It was sort of a cross between "Spin the Bottle" and "Truth or Dare." They sat in a circle on the floor of JC's hotel room around an empty plastic Pepsi bottle. Joey went first since it was his game. Spinning the bottle, he waited until it came to a complete stop in front of one of his friends. Then he asked if they wanted to be asked a question they had to answer truthfully -- "Truth" -- or if they were up to performing a wild or crazy stunt -- "Dare." Once they had answered the question or completed the dare, it was their turn to spin the bottle.

It started out innocently enough. The questions focused mostly on girls: who had done what and how far they had gone. The dares were much more fun, and amid laughter and catcalls they took turns making prank calls to room service for outrageous meals, racing down the hallway in their underwear, and pestering their manager and the crew members with silly games. But as the night wore on their talk quieted, and the dares became few and far between, the questions more and more intimate. Joey spun the bottle again; it turned in a lazy circle and stopped in front of Justin. "Truth or dare?" he asked.

Justin shrugged. "Truth."

Joey took a minute to think about his question. They had almost exhausted all possible ones, until there seemed to be nothing left to ask that they didn't already know about each other. Then a grin tugged at the corner of Joey's mouth, and he asked, "Have you ever kissed a guy?"

Chris and JC looked over at Justin, who blushed slightly, suddenly the center of attention. Joey laughed, but Lance sat hugging his knees to his chest and looked at the bottle, wondering what Justin would say. For a moment everyone was silent, waiting. Then Justin said, "No."

The others laughed, almost relieved, but Lance closed his eyes tightly, trying to block them out. Never kissed a guy? he thought bitterly. While he admitted they had never kissed on the mouth, he had felt Justin's lips on his neck before. Didn't that count? Or had Justin already forgotten about that? Did their brief encounters, so full of heat and emotion, mean nothing to him? Lance frowned as Justin spun the bottle.

It stopped in front of him. Lance bit his lip in frustration as Justin asked, "Truth or dare?"

Lance met Justin's gaze, wanting to see something behind those blue eyes, but he couldn't read his friend's expression. He sighed. "This is stupid," he said.

"Aw, c'mon, Lance," Chris said.

"Just pick one," JC added.

Fine. "Truth," he said, boldly looking at Justin across the bottle. He

thought he knew what Justin would ask, and his answer would be yes. He had kissed Justin before -- the salty taste of Justin's hard nipple still lingered in his mouth. He felt the thick bud on his tongue, between his teeth. He would say yes.

But maybe Justin saw the determination in Lance's steady gaze because he glanced around the room at the others and said, "Name one thing you hate about me."

Startled, Lance asked, "What kind of a question is that?"

Joey laughed. "A good one," he admitted. "Go on -- answer it."

"I can't answer that," Lance complained. In truth, he was stalling for time -- he couldn't think of one thing he hated about Justin, not one thing.

But Justin persisted. "I won't get mad," he said, grinning. "It's only a game."

"I wouldn't answer it, either," JC said, coming to Lance's defense. "You say it's just a game but in the back of your mind, you'll always be thinking about it."

Chris chimed in. "I agree. Don't answer it, Lance." Looking at Justin, he said, "Majority rules. Pick a new question or let Lance spin."

Justin chewed on his lower lip as he studied Lance. Then he muttered, "You spin."

Was Justin mad at him? Lance reached down and spun the bottle a little too hard. It wobbled before stopping in front of Chris, who looked at him expectantly. "Truth or dare?" Lance sighed.

"Dare," Chris said, hoping to alleviate the dour mood that had settled over the group.

Lance sighed again. "I don't feel like playing this anymore."

"You just can't think up a good enough dare," Chris taunted.

The others were waiting. Lance just wanted the night to be over. "Stick your head in the toilet and flush it."

Joey laughed. Justin smiled as Chris jumped up and disappeared into the bathroom. They heard the toilet flush and Chris whooped loudly, and when he came back out his wet hair dripped into his face. Flinging it back out of his eyes, he sat down. "Done," he said, reaching for the bottle.

JC put out a hand to stop him. "Wait a minute," he said. "How do we know you really stuck your head in the toilet?"

"You heard it flush, didn't you?"

JC shrugged. "You could've flushed it and then stuck your head in the sink."

Chris rolled his eyes and spun the bottle. It stopped in front of Justin.

"Me again," he said, grinning.

"Truth or dare?" Chris asked.

"Dare," he said.

A sly look crossed Chris's face. "You've never kissed a guy," he said. Lance felt his stomach churn, his throat tighten, as Chris paused for effect. "Kiss JC."

"What?" Justin cried, and Joey hooted with laughter as JC grumbled, "Why me?"

Suddenly Lance couldn't take it anymore. How could they joke and laugh about this when it hurt so much inside? The last thing he wanted was the image of Justin's lips pressed against JC's engraved into his mind. Jumping up, he said, "This sucks. I'm leaving."

"Lance, wait!" Justin called, but he ignored him, heading for the door.

"What's up with him?" JC asked.

"I'll go see," Justin said as Lance left the room. He hoped Justin wouldn't follow him, but he knew his friend, and sure enough, as Lance was halfway back to his own room, he heard the door open behind him. "Lance, wait."

He ducked into the lounge, dark this late at night. A large window on the far side of the lounge ran from floor to ceiling, providing a panoramic view of the city at night. Where were they? he wondered. New York? Chicago? He didn't know anymore, and right now he didn't care. The lights of the city blurred as he blinked back tears he refused to cry.

He heard Justin enter the lounge and stop behind him. "Lance --" he began, but Lance cut him off.

"Leave me alone," he said, crossing his arms in front of his chest.

Justin walked closer. "Lance," he began again, his voice soft. He was so close. "What's wrong, man?"

Bitterly, Lance replied, "You don't know?"

Justin sighed heavily. "I'm sorry," he whispered. He hurried on. "But what could I say? I didn't want them to know -- I can't tell them."

"Oh, but you can kiss JC?" Lance asked, sarcastic.

"It wouldn't mean anything," Justin said. "Just a peck on the lips. It's only a game." Tentatively he touched Lance's shoulders, his hands strong, comforting, warm through his shirt.

Lance tried to shrug away but Justin began rubbing his upper arms gently, his touch insistent, demanding. Stepping closer, he leaned his chin on Lance's shoulder and wrapped his arms around his waist, right beneath Lance's own arms. He hugged him tight, and Lance closed his eyes, trying to ignore the feel of Justin holding him so close. Suddenly he felt warm and safe and loved, and he never wanted Justin to let go.

But he couldn't push aside the rest of his feelings, the hurt, the anger, the stupid game. "Is this just a game?" he asked softly. He felt Justin turn his face, his breath fanning Lance's neck. He looked at the window and saw their reflection, him standing with crossed arms, Justin right behind. He saw Justin looking back. Those curls, those eyes ... "Let me know if this is just a game to you, because I don't want to play anymore if it is."

Justin's arms squeezed him, and then Justin released his grip and turned him around to face him. "No," he said, his brow furrowed. Frowning, he continued, "No, this -- this isn't a game for me. I'm not playing with you, man. I live for these moments, just you and me. I dream about them, relive them over and over again, each glance, each touch, each kiss --"

Lance looked away. Taking his chin in his hand, Justin turned his face back towards his. His eyes were filled with sadness and angst. "I didn't want to kiss JC," he admitted. "I wanted to kiss you. And not just a peck, either, but something more, something real. I couldn't do that in front of them." He studied Lance's face, and Lance knew his eyes were red and watery -- he was on the verge of tears. Justin's thumb and forefinger gripped his chin tightly so he couldn't look away, but he was lost in Justin's blue gaze, and he didn't want to move. Justin leaned closer, his face inches from Lance's. "Something to show you exactly how I feel," he whispered.

Lance swallowed. Suddenly his throat was dry. "And how is that?" he asked quietly.

Justin pulled him closer, releasing his hold on his chin. One hand slipped around Lance's waist to press against his back; the other traced his cheek, caressed his ear, and roamed through his hair before coming to rest on the back of his head. Lance closed his eyes and waited.

The first touch was tentative, unsure. Justin kissed Lance tenderly, his lips slightly apart. His spicy cologne filled Lance's senses; his soft lips tasted sweet, exotic. He leaned forward as Justin kissed him again, more insistently this time, and he felt Justin's tongue lick over his lips, eager to explore. Lance opened his mouth slightly and Justin's tongue plunged inside -- Lance's own tongue reached out, licking the other experimentally. Justin pulled Lance closer, his hands holding Lance tight, and Lance didn't have enough room to unfold his own arms from his chest. They were all that separated them.

Justin's tongue roamed his mouth, tasting his tongue, his teeth, his cheeks. Lance felt himself harden as Justin pulled away slightly before delving in again. When he broke free, trailing kisses along Lance's chin and cheeks, he pushed his hips against Lance until their cocks bumped against each other, hard and hot, confined in their pants. Lance moaned and Justin found his mouth again, his tongue expertly finding its way around, claiming him. As Justin rubbed his erection against Lance's, Lance managed to pull back just enough to get his arms loose, and he ran his hands up Justin's chest, over his shoulders, locking them together behind his head and pulling him close.

Another kiss, and then Justin licked Lance's lips and looked at him. This close Lance could count each one of Justin's eyelashes. Justin's hand

rubbed his hair and back, and the feel of his stiff cock against Lance's own was almost too much to bear. His erection ached at the way Justin looked at him, hungry with lust. "That's the way I would've kissed you," Justin said, his voice husky.

Lance cleared his throat. "Might've raised a few eyebrows," he admitted.

Justin smiled. "If nothing else," he replied with a gentle thrust against Lance's groin. Lance groaned in pleasure.

Out in the hallway, a door opened. Lance dropped his arms from Justin's neck and stepped back. Justin kept his hand on Lance's back, rubbing gently in a small circular pattern. He studied Lance a moment longer before asking, "Are we cool?"

Despite the pain he felt earlier, that kiss had dispersed any doubts in Lance's mind. He nodded. "We're cool," he said as JC peeked his head into the lounge.

"You guys okay?" he called.

Justin draped his arm around Lance's shoulder. "Fine," he said. "It's just been a long day."

JC laughed. "Well, Chris got out the Ouija board. You guys up for a little spooky fun?" He wiggled his fingers like children do when they try to scare someone.

Lance smiled. "That thing never works," he said.

"Don't tell Chris that," JC said. "You coming?"

Justin squeezed Lance's shoulder. "Sure." As they left the lounge, Justin said, "I'm sorry I didn't kiss you, JC, but you're not really my type."

All three of them laughed. Suddenly, Lance felt better than he had all night long.

All I Ever Wanted
9. Goodnight Kiss
by NSyncGrrl

Justin closed the front door quietly behind him. The house was dark -- it was well past midnight, and the group had to be up early for a video shoot the next morning, so the others were probably already asleep. Justin blinked sleepily, stifling a yawn. It had been a long night -- right now all he wanted was to curl up under the covers of his soft bed and close his eyes.

As he headed for the stairs, he heard the low sounds of the television in the den. Curious, he walked past the staircase to see who was up at this hour. He saw light flicker across the wall as he entered the den, and there was Lance, sitting on the couch, hugging a pillow as he watched TV. "Hey," Justin called from the doorway.

Lance looked up. "Hey," he replied. He took in Justin's pressed jeans, shined shoes, crisp shirt. The blazer he had worn this evening was slung over one shoulder, and he leaned against the door jamb, one hand in his pocket. From here Justin couldn't read the expression in Lance's eyes -- the only light in the room came from the television screen. "How was your date?" Lance asked.

Justin shrugged. It hadn't been his idea -- his manager had devised the contest. One lucky winner would get a night on the town with her favorite member of the band. The teenybopper magazine was flooded with entries, and the girl who won was barely sixteen years old. She chose Justin, of course -- he seemed the most popular with the girls -- and all night long he feared touching or talking to her because she seemed to be on the verge of hyperventilating. After a show and dinner with a bevy of photographers and fans crowding around them, Justin was exhausted and more than happy to see the evening end. The limo had dropped her off at her hotel -- he didn't even remember her name, just her eyes, shiny as if with shock, and her white, white teeth, which flashed continuously as she smiled nonstop. "I'm just glad it's over," was all he said.

Patting the seat next to him on the couch, Lance asked, "Wanna sit down?"

Despite his weariness, Justin suddenly felt wide awake. "The others asleep?" he asked, coming closer.

Lance nodded and turned back to the TV. A tinge of excitement coursed through Justin's body as he sat down on the couch. His hip rested easily against Lance's, and he crossed one leg over his knee as he slipped an arm behind Lance. He let his hand rest against Lance's shoulder and glanced at the TV. "What'cha watching?"

"Casablanca," Lance said. "Ever see it?"

Justin nodded. "Once," he said softly, setting his head against Lance's

other shoulder. Lance shifted slightly into a more comfortable position, and Justin reached for his hand holding the pillow in his lap. They watched the movie in silence for a few moments, Justin stroking Lance's fingers, until Lance caught his hand in his own and intertwined their fingers together. On the TV Humphrey Bogart looked down at Ingrid Bergman with smoldering eyes and told her he had a job to do too.

Lance tossed the pillow aside and looked down at their hands, now sitting in his lap. "So was she nice?" he asked.

Justin sighed. "I guess," he said, nuzzling closer to Lance. He breathed deeply Lance's musky scent, the warm smell igniting his senses. He brought his hand up and played in Lance's hair. "I didn't really talk to her much. We saw Cats and ate at Rialto's."

"Posh," Lance commented. He leaned back against Justin's hand. "What did she eat?"

"Not much. She was too nervous."

A smile crossed Lance's face. "Meeting the famous Justin Timberlake," he said, laughing softly. "I'd be nervous too."

Kissing Lance's neck, Justin whispered, "You don't have to be."

Suddenly the TV clicked off. For a second they sat there in silence, wondering what had happened. And then they heard the sound of sirens far off, wails in the night. The house around them was silent -- even the almost imperceptible sounds of the central air conditioning unit were gone. "What happened?" Lance whispered.

Justin licked Lance's neck, right below his ear. "An accident, probably," he said. He nipped at Lance's earlobe gently, tugging it lightly with his teeth. "Someone knocked out a transformer somewhere." He leaned against Lance, one hand pressing Lance's head towards him, the other releasing Lance's hand and finding its way around Lance's lap. The sound of his zipper opening was loud in the darkness. "The power could be out all night," Justin whispered as his fingers brushed across the thin fabric of Lance's underwear. The soft skin hardened almost instantly beneath the touch, and Lance drew his breath in sharply. "So how was your evening?"

Lance groaned as Justin began to stroke him through his briefs, his fingers flattening the fabric around his stiffening member. "It just got better," Lance sighed, leaning his head back. Justin's other hand brushed the hair from Lance's temples, and Justin pushed himself up slightly to lean over Lance's upturned face. When he moved, he gripped Lance's erection and squeezed gently. Lance opened his mouth in delight and Justin's lips found his, his tongue pressing insistently against Lance's own. He squeezed Lance again as Lance's hand reached for Justin's pants. The sound of his zipper was lost as they moaned softly into each other's mouths. Lance found Justin already hard, his erection slipping free from the confines of his jeans through the opened zipper, straining against the fabric of his boxers. When Lance brushed against the tip of his penis, Justin bit Lance's lower lip in pleasure.

As Lance wrapped his hand around Justin's erection, the fabric the only thing between their skin, they heard a slight creak upstairs. Justin

pulled back, trailing his tongue down Lance's chin, and Lance tugged once on Justin's swollen cock. Justin groaned against Lance's neck and squeezed Lance's erection gently. Then they heard footsteps in the hall above, and the squeak of the first stair as someone stepped on it, and Lance released his hold on Justin's cock and pressed it back inside his jeans, tugging the zipper up gently over the bulge. Justin groaned again. "We should've gone upstairs," he muttered against Lance's neck, before zipping Lance's pants back up.

Lance nodded in agreement, not trusting his voice enough to talk. As Justin settled back on the couch beside him, he ran a hand through Lance's hair to straighten it. He kissed Lance tenderly, brushing his lips with his tongue, and then stretched his arms over his head, hoping to will away his erection. He was glad for the darkness -- whoever was awake wouldn't be able to walk in on the both of them, sitting here with hard-ons for each other. He cursed his stupidity -- as soon as he saw Lance was awake, he should've invited him to his room. Behind closed doors, with their friends asleep, maybe they could finally get somewhere instead of leaving them both aching and unfulfilled.

Joey peeked his head into the den. "What's up with the lights?" he asked sleepily.

Lance cleared his throat. "Power's out," he said.

Shuffling into the den, Joey sat down on the cassock near the couch and ran a hand through his tousled hair. "How was your date?" he asked.

Justin shrugged. "Okay."

Joey grinned. "Did you get a goodnight kiss?"

Justin put his hand on Lance's thigh and pushed himself up, his fingers brushing lightly against Lance's still hard erection. Lance closed his eyes and bit his lips to keep his arousal hidden. With a slight squeeze, Justin took his hand away and stood up. "Yeah," he said, heading for the stairs. "A kiss to keep me warm all night. You guys get some sleep -- I'll see you in the morning."

All I Ever Wanted
10. A La Mode
by NSyncGrrl

Lance lay on the slightly damp grass, his legs and arms stretched out. The sun beat down on him, drying the sweat from his chest and brow. He wore only his dirty sneakers and a pair of shorts, his tank top abandoned when he started to sweat. He had just finished mowing the lawn, and even though his body ached, he felt a strange sense of peace -- this was the first time he had been home in a while and he liked everything about keeping a house. The other guys were visiting for the few days they had off from the tour, and even though they asked to help out, he wouldn't let them. This was his backyard -- his -- where he could lie here and feel the warmth of the sun and the cool breeze. The smell of freshly cut grass hung in the air like a heady perfume and the rustling of leaves high above him was soothing. He closed his eyes, letting the summer sounds lull him into a light doze.

He heard the screen door slide open and close. Someone hurried down the few steps of the porch, their sneakers loud on the treated wood, and then the footsteps swished through the grass, coming closer to where Lance was. Lance opened one eye and looked up as a shadow fell over him.

Justin stood above him in rumpled jeans and an old t-shirt, but somehow he still managed to look perfect. He looked at Lance and smiled. In one hand he held a cup and spoon. "Thought you might like some ice cream," he said, walking around to Lance's other side, "after all that hard work."

Lance pulled his arms in, lacing his hands behind his head. Justin sat down next to him and then stretched out on his stomach, his body angled away from Lance's. He lay propped up on his elbows close to Lance's chest, one hand holding the cup above Lance as the other delved the plastic spoon into the ice cream. Lance could feel the coolness above him from the ice cream through the cup. Justin watched the spoon as he stirred the ice cream, and Lance studied his long eyelashes, his curly hair, the sparkling earring in his earlobe. He watched the strong hands, the way his rings fit his fingers snugly, the way his thumbnail flashed in the sun when he moved, and suddenly Lance was hungry for something more than ice cream.

Then Justin glanced at him and smiled. "You want some?" he asked.

Lance nodded slightly. "You only have one spoon," he said as Justin scooped out a small mouthful of white ice cream.

"That's all we need," Justin replied. He held the spoon out to Lance, who started to put his hand up to reach for it, but Justin pulled back. "No hands," he said. Lance glanced at him and saw a sparkle in his friend's eyes. Setting his hand under his head, he settled back on the ground and smiled. As he opened his mouth for the spoon, he felt a rush of heat enflame his groin.

Justin dipped the spoon down towards Lance's face. Eagerly Lance leaned forward slightly, his tongue licking out for the ice cream, but Justin pulled it back again. "Be patient," he admonished. As Lance watched, Justin stuck the spoon into his own mouth, pulling it slowly out between his full lips. "If you're not going to do it my way, then I won't give you any."

Lance pouted, but his crotch began to ache sweetly. "I'm sorry," he said, hoping he sounded contrite, but it was hard to keep the mirth from his voice. "I thought you brought it out for me?"

"I did," Justin admitted. He scooped up another spoonful, and this time Lance waited until the cool tip of the spoon rested against his lips before he opened his mouth. Justin eased the spoon inside, and the ice cream was cold against his teeth. He kept his mouth closed as Justin pulled the spoon free, stopping to wipe up a stray drop on the corner of Lance's mouth with the edge of the spoon.

Another spoonful. This time Lance let the spoon sit on his lip for a moment as he swallowed the first mouthful. "It's melting," Justin said, pressing the plastic utensil insistently against Lance's closed lips. "Open up."

"I'm not finished --" Lance started to say, but the second his mouth was open the spoon was inside. Justin laughed as he used the spoon to wipe up the ice cream as it ran down either side of Lance's mouth.

"I told you it was melting," he said.

Lance swallowed quickly. Before he could say anything, though, the spoon was back at his lips, full of ice cream. Justin was right -- the afternoon sun was warm, and the ice cream in the cup was melting. As the spoon rested against his lips, the ice cream on it slid forward. Before he could open his mouth, it slipped off the spoon and down the side of his face. Justin laughed again, and Lance laughed too, ice cream on his lips, his nose, his cheeks, his chin.

Justin leaned forward and licked the ice cream from his chin. Small, wet kisses trailed through the sweet goo as Justin kissed away the ice cream on Lance's chin and cheeks. When he got to Lance's mouth, Lance was already aching for his lips, his touch. His tongue reached out and licked a small dab of ice cream from the tip of Justin's nose, and then their lips met, sticky and warm and wet. Justin's tongue entered the coolness of Lance's mouth, tasting ice cream. Lance leaned up into the kiss, his hands encircling Justin's head, the curls tight and bouncy beneath his touch. He pulled Justin closer and moaned as Justin nipped his lips gently between his teeth. The sounds of their breath, their noses pressed against each other's cheeks, were quick and heavy. Lance moaned again and shifted slightly, pulling Justin closer.

Suddenly something cold and soft plopped on his chest, and Lance released Justin, scooting back quickly. Justin looked at him, confusion in his eyes, his face and lips smeared with white streaks of ice cream, and then he looked at Lance's chest and laughed. Lance looked down and saw the rest of the ice cream from the cup, sitting in a white lump on his chest. Thin rivulets of the sticky stuff ran down his stomach and onto his shorts, running down around the rise of his erection to the ground below.

Laughing shakily, Lance wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and lay back down, relieved. For a moment there he thought maybe one of the others had found them ...

Justin tossed the empty cup away. "Want any more?" he asked as the ice cream melted. Lance shook his head and sighed. Justin pushed the bulk of the ice cream off of Lance's chest and then crawled closer. When his tongue licked Lance's lower stomach, Lance drew his breath in sharply. Justin traced the muscles in his stomach with his tongue and Lance closed his eyes at the sensation. Then Justin ran one hand up Lance's leg, over his shorts, until he pressed against Lance's hard erection. He continued to lick away the ice cream as his hand rubbed Lance's cock through the damp fabric. Lance ran one hand through Justin's curls again while the other traced Justin's spine through his thin t-shirt.

Justin edged dangerously close to the waistband of Lance's shorts, his hand squeezing Lance's crotch gently. When his tongue darted under the waistband, Lance couldn't stand it any longer. He wanted to taste Justin again; he wanted to smother him with kisses and taste his skin, his mouth, his tongue. Sitting up, Lance pulled Justin towards him, hungry. Justin squeezed Lance's erection and pressed his lips to Lance's, pushing him back to the ground. Lance cradled Justin's face in both hands as Justin moved closer until his body leaned against Lance's. With one knee he opened Lance's legs wider, his hand slipping below Lance's erection to cup the soft scrotum. As he squeezed gently, Lance thrust his hips up, his erection rubbing almost painfully against Justin's denim-clad thigh. Lance kissed Justin's lips, his chin, his cheeks, and thrust again.

Justin moved his hips, his own erection pressing against the tender skin of Lance's lower stomach. He kneaded Lance's scrotum with one hand while the other ran through Lance's hair, pushing it back from his forehead. Justin sucked on Lance's lips, tugging at them, his tongue licking the skin still sweet from the ice cream. As Lance rubbed against his leg, Justin shifted his erection against Lance's stomach, his cock hard through his jeans. Lance covered Justin's mouth with his own, kissing him deeply, their tongues dancing over each other eagerly.

A dog started barking, and Lance groaned. He could recognize those tiny yips anywhere. Busta. Chris's dog. Justin kissed him once more and pulled back, his cock still pressed against Lance's stomach, his hand rubbing Lance more and more slowly. "Guess they're back," he said, running his hand through Lance's hair again.

"I'm not inviting them next time," Lance declared. He thrust once more, pressing the length of his erection hard against Justin's thigh and holding it there for a moment before letting it fall away.

Justin smiled and kissed Lance's nose. His hand released Lance's sac and trailed over the hard rod of his erection, the tip of his penis, his lower stomach, his chest, until it rested on one hard nipple. He pinched the nipple before disentangling himself and standing up. He helped Lance to his feet and, looking at the white mess across Lance's chest, said, "You better get cleaned up before they think that's something other than ice cream all over you."

Laughing, Lance said, "We didn't get that far yet."

Justin gave his hand a squeeze before letting go. "Not yet," he said softly, but his eyes held a promise that sent shivers of pleasure down Lance's spine.

All I Ever Wanted
11. Sleep Tight
by NSyncGrrl

Justin stifled a yawn as he followed the others into the hotel lobby. It was late -- two or three in the morning, he wasn't sure which -- and his ears still buzzed from the night's concert. They had put on one hell of a show -- it never ceased to amaze him when he looked out over a sold-out crowd, everyone there yelling and screaming and crying for them. The rush kept him going throughout the show, giving him energy to dance and sing forever. But once the lights dimmed and they left the stage, fatigue settled in his bones and he could barely stay awake on the bus for as long as it took them to get back to the hotel. Already he was thinking he'd bypass a shower and just fall into bed. Maybe he wouldn't even stop to undress.

JC and Joey stood waiting for the elevator, JC's head on Joey's shoulder. Chris leaned against the steel doors, waiting for them to open. Justin looked around for Lance and spotted him sitting on a couch in the lobby, his head leaning on one hand, his eyes closed. "Come on, Lance," Justin called as the chime announced the elevator. The doors slid open and Chris stumbled back, Joey and JC following. "Lance," Justin called again.

Lance hadn't moved. From inside the elevator, Joey asked, "You coming?"

Justin waved them on. "Go ahead. We'll catch up."

The elevator doors slid closed. Walking over to Lance, Justin leaned down and shook his friend gently. "Lance?" he whispered.

"Hm," was Lance's reply. His head lolled back as Justin shook him again.

"Wake up, man. You can sleep in your room. C'mon." But Lance didn't open his eyes, and Justin sighed, frustrated. What, he wasn't tired too?

Taking Lance's arm, Justin pulled him to his feet. He was heavier than he looked, and Justin stumbled back as Lance leaned heavily against him. Suddenly Lance was in his arms, sleepily holding onto him, and Justin felt a familiar ache in his groin as Lance's breath fanned his neck. Lance murmured against Justin's skin, and he was glad the others had left. Slipping one hand around Lance's waist, he led him stumbling to the elevator. As they waited for the car to descend, Lance leaned on Justin's shoulder, his arms tight around Justin's waist, and Justin ran his hand over Lance's back, his face resting on the top of Lance's head. Despite the fact that he was exhausted and Lance was half asleep, fire coursed through his veins at their touch. He hoped he would be able to sleep after this.

When the elevator opened, Justin led Lance inside and leaned him against the wall. He disentangled himself from Lance's arms, hating to

break away, and turned to punch the button for their floor. Behind him he heard Lance slide to the floor, and when the doors closed and the car began moving, he turned to find Lance sitting on the ground, his arms crossed over his knees, his head in his arms. "Lance," Justin whined. The thought of picking him up again made his knees weak.

Bending down, he lifted Lance's arms, pulling him up. Lance unfolded his arms and wrapped them around Justin's neck, letting himself be picked up. He leaned heavily against Justin, who steadied himself before grabbing Lance's legs, one thigh in each hand, and lifting his friend up. Lance wrapped his legs around Justin's waist and clung to him. As the elevator came to a stop, Justin staggered back and tripped where the elevator didn't quite meet the floor.

They landed on the ground, Lance on top of Justin, almost knocking the wind out of him. Justin felt Lance pressing against his groin, and without warning he was hard, his erection tight between them. When Lance shifted off him, he bit his lip to keep from crying out from the sensation. "I'm sorry," Lance muttered, staggering against the wall. "I'm so --"

Justin stood up gingerly and reached for Lance. Wrapping an arm around his waist, he pulled Lance's arm over his shoulder and let Lance rest his head against his shoulder. "You owe me one, buddy," he grumbled, but his crotch ached sweetly and he wasn't really mad. Fumbling in Lance's jacket pockets, he found the keycard to Lance's room. 2421. Luckily it was close to the elevator and they didn't have far to go. He slid the keycard into the lock and the door popped open.

Inside the room was dark, the only light coming from around the edges of the curtains. Pushing the door shut behind them, Justin led Lance to the bed. He leaned down and clicked on the small tabletop lamp, which cast a small circle of light on the bed and threw shadows at the blank television screen across the room. "Gimme your foot," Justin commanded, his voice low.

Lance leaned down over his back as Justin pulled off first one sneaker, then the other. Then Justin straightened a bit and tugged at Lance's pants, the windsuit material noisy in the darkness. He let his fingers brush against the front of Lance's underwear as he pulled the pants down; above him Lance moaned sleepily, the bulge at his crotch hardening. Justin pulled off Lance's windbreaker and tossed it aside, followed by his t-shirt. When he stood in just his white briefs, his eyes closed, his head still on Justin's shoulder, Justin pulled back the covers of the bed and helped him lie down. He tugged the pants off Lance's feet as his friend snuggled into the bed.

Weariness sank over Justin. He pulled the covers up to Lance's chin and clicked off the lamp. As he headed for the door, intent on his own room, Lance called out softly, "You staying?"

Justin stopped, the doorknob in hand. His erection swelled at the thought of sleeping next to Lance. Who would say anything? They had all slept over in each other's rooms before, and they were both too sleepy to do anything. "Do you want me to?" he asked.

From the bed Lance murmured his assent. "Keep me warm," he said

sleepily.

Justin needed no other prompting. By the time he reached the bed, he had stripped down to just his boxers. Climbing beneath the covers on the other side, he slid close to Lance and tentatively wrapped his arms around his friend. Lance rolled over and ran his hands beneath Justin's arms, pulling him close. Their erections pressed hard against each other, separated by just the thin material of their undergarments. Justin ran a hand through Lance's hair and down his back, and Lance nuzzled against Justin's chest and sighed, content. "Good night," he whispered, his hands warm on Justin's bare skin.

Justin cradled him close and kissed his forehead. Lance leaned back slightly and Justin kissed his lips, licking them with his tongue. The heat flared within him but he was too tired to do anything else about it. He hugged Lance tight and whispered, "Good night."

As Justin closed his eyes, he wondered briefly how he would ever be able to sleep without Lance in his arms again. It just felt so right.

All I Ever Wanted
12. Private Dancer
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stretched out on top of the freshly made bed in his hotel room. Outside the rain beat a steady rhythm against the windowpane. He wondered where the others were -- it was late in the afternoon, not quite time for dinner, and he was bored. Staring at the ceiling, he let his thoughts drift to Justin. He pictured those kinky curls, those sparkling eyes, that quick smile. He imagined holding his friend's muscular body close, and his arms began to ache. Just remembering the few stolen kisses they managed to share enflamed his senses and ignited his blood.

A knock on the door startled him out of his reverie. "Come in," he called, not wanting to get up.

As the door opened he shifted on the bed to see who it was. Justin entered, closing the door behind him, and Lance heard him turn the lock. In his hand he held a teen magazine with their pictures plastered across the cover. "Listen to this," Justin said by way of hello.

"Nice to see you, too," Lance said, grumpy.

Justin came over to the bed and plopped down on his stomach next to Lance. Smiling, he planted a quick kiss on Lance's lips. "That better?" he asked.

Lance ran his tongue over his lower lip and said, "Not really, but if there's more to come ..."

Justin laughed and opened the magazine. "You're so damn cute when you're horny," he said.

"And you're such a tease," Lance countered, smiling. The thought of spending the rest of the afternoon flirting with Justin, the two of them lying within inches of each other, excited him. He leaned back and tried to look at the magazine without sitting up. "What'cha got?"

Justin held the magazine up, showing him the front. "Aren't you a little old for Bop?" Lance asked.

"I wanted to find out all there is to know about my favorite member of NSync," Justin replied, quoting one of the splashier headlines from the front cover.

Lance smiled. "And what's it say in there about him?"

Clearing his throat, Justin read, "Lance Bass has always dreamed of stardom. What would this sexy singer be if he wasn't in NSync? I'd like to work for NASA, he says. If not a star then among them, eh, Lance?"

Lance rolled his eyes. "That's so cheesy," he groaned. And then, the hint of a smile in his voice, he asked, "What about my favorite NSync member?"

Justin grinned. "Who would that be?"

Looking at Justin, Lance said, "Joey. What's it say about him?"

Hurt and surprise flittered across Justin's face, but then he saw the glint in Lance's eyes and said, "You're kidding, right?"

"What's it say?" he said, sitting up.

Justin pulled the magazine back. "Lance --"

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding." Lance reached for the magazine, but Justin pulled it back again, looking at him with large, sad eyes. "Justin, I'm kidding." He leaned forward and kissed the tip of Justin's nose. "Really."

Justin bit the inside of his cheek and stared at Lance so hard, Lance almost wished he could rewind the moment and play it again differently. "Justin," he said softly, "I'm sorry."

Suddenly Justin smiled like pure sunshine, and Lance sighed, relieved. "I had you going there, didn't I?" Justin asked, giggling. "You thought I was pissed."

Lance swatted at him playfully. "Don't do that again, man," he said, laying back down on the bed.

Now it was Justin's turn to look contrite. "I'm sorry," he whispered, leaning closer. He pressed his lips against Lance's, easing them open with his tongue. Lance tried to keep them shut but Justin was insistent, and his tongue slipped inside Lance's mouth, cool and spicy. His kiss was sweet and gentle, and when he pulled back the way he looked at Lance told him that everything was fine between them. Resting his head next to Lance's, he rolled over on his back beside him and asked, "Do you really want to be an astronaut?"

Lance shrugged. "I just think it would be cool," he admitted.

Justin turned to look at him, his curls tickling Lance's cheek. "You know what I would be if I wasn't in the group?"

Lance shook his head. "A veterinarian?" he joked.

Beside him Justin sat up. "A vet?" he asked, laughing. "No -- I'd be an exotic dancer."

"A what?" Lance asked. He ran a hand down Justin's back, tracing the outline of his spine through his thin sweater. "Like those Chippendale's guys?"

Justin nodded. "Exactly. All I need are a few good moves and I could really pull in the dough."

Laughing, Lance said, "You can already dance. You just need to learn how to strip."

Looking over his shoulder at him, Justin grinned and said, "That can't be too hard."

"Then do it," Lance challenged.

Smiling, Justin stood up and, crossing the room, pressed the play button on Lance's CD player. Garth Brooks' voice filled the room. Justin turned. "Don't you have anything I can dance to?" he asked.

Lance pointed at his CDs, stacked to the side of the stereo. As Justin sifted through them, Lance watched the way his sweater pulled against his back. He imagined Justin swaying before him, dressed in nothing but his boxers, and suddenly his cock swelled against his jeans, hardening. Justin found a song he wanted and changed CDs. Standing in front of Lance, he stood with his legs slightly apart, his arms at his side. He locked eyes with Lance and licked his lips slowly as the opening notes of Madonna's "Fever" filled the air. Lance wondered how he would make it through the song.

"Never know how much I love you," Justin sang, swinging his hips in time with the music. "Never know how much I care." Crossing his arms in front of his chest, he tugged the end of his sweater up, an inch with every beat. Soon his flat stomach was exposed, the muscles flexing as he moved. Further, and his already erect nipples slipped free from the shirt. As Justin pulled the sweater over his head, Lance reached out to run his hands down Justin's chest, but Justin danced just out of reach. Twisting his sweater around his head, he tossed it at Lance. It landed on his chest, and Lance laughed.

Justin moved his shoulders to the music as his fingers undid the button of his jeans. Slowly he slid down the zipper, his gaze still on Lance's face, but Lance found himself unable to meet his eyes as the zipper opened. Then Justin hooked his fingers in the waistband of his jeans and wiggled his legs, tugging the jeans down one agonizingly slow inch at a time. By the time they pooled around his ankles, Lance was ready to jump off the bed and help him.

Stepping out of the jeans, Justin came closer to the bed again, wearing just his boxers. His erection strained the fabric, poking the front pouch open slightly. Lance watched as Justin thrust his hips to the beat of the music, dancing closer and closer. Sliding to the edge of the bed, Lance opened his legs as Justin danced between his knees, losing himself in the music. Lance rubbed his hands down the thighs of his jeans, leaving sweaty prints behind.

Suddenly Justin was right in front of him, the bulge in his shorts aching close to Lance's face. He couldn't take his eyes from Justin's boxers, but then he felt hands on his cheeks and Justin raised his face up towards his. The smoldering look in Justin's eyes made Lance whimper with desire. Bending down, Justin brushed his face across Lance's, his curls soft against Lance's brow. Lance reached out for Justin, one hand encircling his warm waist, the other fingering his hard erection.

Then Justin spun around and danced lower and lower until he nearly sat in Lance's lap. His buttocks ground into Lance's erection, and Lance ran his hands around Justin's chest, moaning. As Justin continued his lap dance, Lance let his hands stray to Justin's stiff cock, and he squeezed its thick length through the fabric of his boxers. Justin tossed his head back onto Lance's shoulder, his mouth open, his eyes closed. Not losing his rhythm, he thrust into Lance's hand as the music swelled around them.

Lance bit Justin's shoulder playfully and squeezed harder as Justin pressed against his own erection with each thrust of his hips.

Lance felt dampness in his palm, and knew Justin was close to coming. Wrapping his other arm around Justin tightly, he pushed through the opening in the front of the boxers and gripped Justin's hard, hot flesh in his hand. Kinky hair tickled his wrist as he squeezed Justin's cock, letting his hand slide over its stiff length. When Justin began thrusting harder, Lance held on tightly. He was on the verge of coming himself -- his erection was tight against Justin's buttocks, and with every grind of Justin's hips, he thrust forward gently, mindful of his rough jeans against Justin's thin boxers. Already he felt wet -- he knew another few moments and he would need to change his pants.

And then Justin reached back, gripping Lance's hips, and Lance's hand became slick and sticky as Justin came in his hand. Lance felt his own orgasm rip through him, and he rode the wave of pleasure to its end. When he opened his eyes, he found Justin turning in his lap, one hand on Lance's chin, his mouth covering Lance's face and lips with small kisses. "What a lovely way to burn," he sang as the song played itself out.

Lance felt a coolness on his wet crotch and let Justin push him down to the bed. As he wrapped his arms around Justin's bare back, he thought, What a lovely way indeed.

All I Ever Wanted
13. Boys' Night Out
by NSyncGrrl

Justin checked himself out in the mirror. Looking fly, he thought, smoothing down his curls. Chris walked up behind him and rubbed his hair. "Hey, watch it!" Justin cried, ducking out of reach. Chris grinned and pushed him aside.

"My turn," Chris said, running a comb through his hair. "You're hogging the mirror."

Justin stepped in front of his friend. "There are other mirrors in this house," he said, playing with his hair again.

"You two stop it," JC said as he passed by. "You look fine. The girls will be falling all over you. Now come on."

From the bedroom Joey called, "Someone make sure Lance is ready to go. Five more minutes and I'm going to the club by myself."

Chris tossed his comb into the bedroom, hitting Joey on the arm. "Hey!" he cried, and Justin tucked out of the bathroom to find Lance. He didn't care if he met a million girls tonight -- the thought of that crowded dance floor excited him. Out there, hidden in the crowd, he and Lance could rub against each other all night long and the others would never know.

The door to the den was half shut. Knocking, he pushed it open wider and peeked inside. Lance lay on the sofa, a book propped open on his chest. He wore jeans and a t-shirt, and no shoes. He had one arm draped across his brow, and he didn't look up as Justin entered. Justin studied Lance for a moment before saying, "Hey, man, you ready to go?"

Lance shook his head. "I'm not going," he said.

Justin felt his heart sink. "Why not? It'll be fun. Hell, JC is even going. You got to go." He hoped Lance heard the eagerness in his voice -- he didn't want to say anything where the others might overhear.

But Lance just shook his head again. "I'm not up to it," he said. "I thought I'd just stay here."

"By yourself?" Justin asked.

Looking over the top of his book, Lance met Justin's gaze and said softly, "I thought maybe you'd like to stay with me."

Alone, Justin read in Lance's eyes. Together. Without any distractions. Alone. Without another word, Justin raced from the room, back towards the others. He burst into the bedroom just as JC was pulling on his jean jacket. Joey and JC looked up at him, and Chris stuck his head out of the bathroom. "Lance isn't feeling well," Justin lied, trying to catch his breath. "I think -- I think maybe I should stay here with him."

"What's wrong?" JC asked, but Justin just shrugged. Joey pushed past him and headed for the den. JC and Chris followed, Justin right behind them.

Joey stepped into the den. "What's up, man?" he asked as the others crowded in behind him.

Lance shrugged. "I just don't feel like going," he said, setting the book down.

From the hallway Justin offered, "He said his stomach was bothering him." He hoped Lance would take the hint.

He did. Lance nodded and sighed pitifully. "I don't know what it was," he said, pressing the book against his chest. "But I don't feel good at all."

"Maybe it was those tacos," Chris said, but JC hit his arm.

"There was nothing wrong with those," he said, offended. "I followed the directions on the box."

Joey was watching Lance thoughtfully, and Justin held his breath. Please, he prayed. Please don't ask any more questions. Just go. "If you think it's nothing serious --" Joey started, but Lance nodded again.

"I'll be fine by tomorrow, I'm sure," he said. "You guys go on, have a great time."

Joey looked back at Justin. A nervousness crept into his stomach at the way Joey was looking at him, and Justin fought to keep from moving anxiously. He was so ready for them to leave. A sweet ache was already blossoming in his groin -- he wanted them to leave now. "You sure you don't mind staying?" Joey asked.

Justin shook his head. "Nah, it's nothing," he said in an off-hand manner. "If anything comes up, I'll call you. What he needs is some rest and ..." He trailed off, aware that he was babbling.

JC came to the rescue. "Chicken soup," he said, and Justin looked at him blankly. JC explained. "Chicken soup," he said again. "It makes you feel better."

"Right," Justin said. "Well, you guys get going. Don't stay out all night. Knock 'em dead." Just go! his mind screamed.

It took another five minutes for them to get to the door. Justin was almost frantic with lust and desire by the time they stood on the porch. "Don't forget to cook some chicken soup for Lance," JC said.

"And feed my dog," Chris called.

"Chicken soup," Justin said, nodding. "Cook the dog."

"No, feed the dog," Chris corrected. "And cook the soup."

Justin nodded again. "Feed the dog the soup, got it." He tried to close the door but JC held it open.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Justin flashed a big smile. "I'm fine," he said. "I just don't want you guys to miss out on all the fun."

Joey looked at him oddly. "You're not going to cook the dog when we leave, are you?"

Justin shook his head. "No, I promise. Feed the dog. Cook the soup. Now go." This time they stepped off the porch as he closed the door. Resting his back against the door, he waited until he heard the engine come to life and the car back out of the driveway before he locked the door. The dog can wait, he thought as he headed back for the den.

Lance was still lying on the couch, once again reading. "They gone?" he asked, not looking up.

Without answering, Justin kicked the door closed behind him. In one fluid motion he slipped out of his jean jacket, kicked off his shoes, and crossed the room. He plucked the book from Lance's hand and tossed it aside carelessly. "Hey --" Lance said as Justin placed a hand on either side of his head and lowered himself onto his friend. The way Lance boldly looked into his eyes turned him on, and he pressed his hips against Lance's crotch, surprised to feel a thick erection already straining against Lance's jeans. As Lance's hands slid up his sides and across his back, Justin shifted into a more comfortable position between Lance and the back of the couch. He ran one finger down Lance's chest, tracing the pattern on his shirt, and kissed Lance's neck. "I thought they'd never leave," he breathed against Lance's skin.

Lance laughed and hugged Justin close. Justin ran his hand up Lance's chest and cupped his head in his hand. Fingering his earlobe, he turned Lance towards him and brushed his open lips across Lance's chin. Lance reached out for Justin's mouth with his own, his tongue licking above Justin's upper lip, tasting salt and sweat. Justin kissed Lance's lower lip, sucking on it as he tugged lightly. Lance closed his lips over Justin's mouth and thrust his hips gently, his thigh rubbing Justin's cock. Moaning, Justin bit Lance's lip as his hands roamed Lance's body, teasing his nipples through his shirt, tickling his stomach, toying with the top of his jeans.

With sure hands, Justin unbuttoned Lance's jeans and slid the zipper down over the bulge of his erection. Stroking his hardness through the underwear, Justin eased his tongue into Lance's mouth, pressing him back against the sofa. Lance moaned against him as Justin teased his erection. And then his hands were on Justin, finding their way around his chest, his back, his crotch.

When Lance undid his jeans, the zipper opened on its own, pushed down by his swollen cock. He thrust against Lance's thigh, rubbing his hard erection against Lance's jeans, squeezing Lance's own erection at the same time. Lance thrust against his hand, and Justin slipped his fingers into the front of Lance's underwear, his hand cupping hard, hot flesh and coarse hair. Encircling Lance's shaft, he squeezed the soft skin, feeling it stiffen in his hand. Lance's mouth kissed his insistently, his hand reaching inside Justin's boxers, massaging his erection as Justin rocked his hips back and forth, helping him. In his own hand Lance was solid and

slightly wet. Justin thrust his tongue deeper into Lance's mouth and rolled onto him, their hands squished between them, their erections pressed against each other.

Justin thrust against Lance, felt Lance's hard cock thrust back, and groaned into Lance's mouth. He pulled his hand free and cupped Lance's face with both hands; Lance ran his hands down Justin's back and beneath his jeans, pressing his pelvis against his, holding him close. He opened his legs slightly, letting Justin's legs fall to the sofa, and Justin dug in with his knees as he began rubbing his hard erection against Lance's, slowly at first, and then with increasing intensity.

Each thrust rubbed their cocks against each other, squeezing, pressing, until Lance pulled his mouth away from Justin's and threw his head back, his eyes half-closed, his mouth open in a silent cry. Justin thrust harder, faster, and Lance came beneath him, the sudden wetness warm against his boxers. He slipped his thumb into Lance's mouth and as Lance bit down on it, Justin felt his own orgasm rip through him, his juices mixing with Lance's to create a hot, sticky mess between them.

Sighing, Justin pushed himself up on his knees. Still holding Lance's head in his hands, he kissed Lance's lips greedily. Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's back and pulled him down on top of him. The heat in Justin's groin flared as their wilting erections touched, and then he let himself get lost in their kisses.

Outside the window came the familiar sound of tires crunching gravel. Breaking their kiss, Justin rolled his eyes and laid his head beneath Lance's chin. "I think they're back," he whispered, his voice thick.

Lance ran his hands up Justin's back until he cupped Justin's chin. Running a finger over Justin's cheek, he sighed shakily. "We gotta get cleaned up."

"I gotta feed that dog," Justin replied, but he slid his hands beneath Lance and hugged him tight. When he heard the front door open, he pulled away slowly, rising to his knees above Lance. Tucking his slightly aroused penis back into his boxers, he zipped up his jeans and pulled his shirt down to cover the wet fabric. Then he playfully squeezed Lance's cock before zipping his jeans up, as well. The denim of Lance's jeans was stained dark where they had come together. Leaning down, he licked Lance's earlobe and whispered, "I'm glad we didn't go to the club."

"So am I," Lance replied, his hand trailing across Justin's back as Justin got off the couch. He tossed an afghan over Lance's stomach and legs to hide his damp jeans just as the door opened.

Joey entered, followed by JC and Chris. "We felt bad leaving you guys here alone," Joey explained. "It didn't feel right, going out clubbing when you're home sick. So we decided to come back, keep you company."

Justin sat down on the couch by Lance's legs. "You guys didn't have to do that," he said.

"Did you make the chicken soup?" JC asked as Busta ran into the room, yipping. "I see you didn't cook the dog."

Justin ran a hand through his curls to straighten them and blushed lightly. "I spilled the soup all over Lance," he said, gesturing at the afghan. "He's gotta change."

Seeing Lance wrap the afghan around his waist, Chris whistled low. "Man, that had to burn!"

"It was hot," Lance admitted, and Justin covered his mouth with his hand to hide his smile.

All I Ever Wanted
14. Suspicious Minds
by NSyncGrrl

Joey dunked the basketball through the hoop. "He shoots; he scores!" he cried as Justin caught the ball. "The crowd goes wild!"

Justin passed the ball to JC, who dribbled around Joey before passing back to Justin. They were in a small ball court behind Lance's house. From the sidelines Lance watched them play. Sweat stained Justin's tank top in a dark vee-shape, and his loose shorts pulled tight across his firm buttocks whenever he reached for the ball. Lance shoved his hands deep in his pockets and admired Justin's moves, the way his curls caught the sun, the way his tank top billowed out, offering tantalizingly brief glimpses of his bare chest. As Justin tried for a three point shot, he glanced over at Lance and flashed him a bright smile.

Lance grinned back. As the ball sank through the hoop a voice beside him said, "Sweet shot."

Lance turned to find Chris standing next to him. "Hey," he said. "What's up, man?"

Chris looked at him a moment, indecision written plainly on his face. Then he seemed to make up his mind, and he asked in a low voice, "Can we talk?"

Lance's stomach clenched nervously, but he nodded and said, "Sure." He followed Chris off the court and out of the yard.

They walked in silence for a few minutes. Around them the streets were empty, the houses quiet. Despite the peaceful atmosphere of the neighborhood, Lance felt a sliver of fear pierce through him. What did Chris want? He prayed it had nothing to do with Justin. Part of him didn't care what the others thought -- the way he felt when he held Justin close made him want to tell the world, shout from the rooftops and defy the gods. But he didn't know how Justin felt about their friends knowing ... well, knowing about them, together. He didn't want to say anything without talking with Justin first, but if Chris asked him point blank what was going on, Lance didn't know if he could lie convincingly enough and say nothing. Not when images of Justin's sweaty body kept crowding his thoughts.

But when Chris spoke, Lance felt the tension between them disappear. "I want to ask your advice about something," he said, and Lance didn't think this was about him and Justin.

"What about?" Lance asked.

Chris sighed, searching for the words. Finally he said, "It's about Danielle. She has a problem."

Uh-oh, Lance thought, the sinking feeling returning to the pit of his stomach. Danielle was Chris's girlfriend, and suddenly Lance realized he

hadn't seen her lately, and he thought the worst. "She's not --" He took a deep breath. "She's not pregnant, is she?"

Chris stopped walking and stared at him, dumbfounded. "Preg--" he began, and then he laughed. "God, no! Don't scare me like that, man! Jesus!" Running a shaky hand through his hair, he caught up with Lance, who laughed.

"Sorry, man," he said, clapping Chris on the back. He shook his head. "I was gonna say, I can't help you there."

"Jesus," Chris said again softly. They continued walking, Lance not wanting to rush his friend. Finally, Chris spoke again. "No, she's not pregnant. She's got --" He sighed. "She's got these two friends. She's really close to both of them. But she thinks there's something going on between them and she doesn't know what to do."

"Something like what?" Lance asked.

"She's not sure," he said. "Nothing bad, but she thinks they might be fooling around together and she's just worried. She doesn't want to see them hurt."

Lance shrugged. "She can't do anything about that," he said. "You love, you get hurt, you learn. You move on. She can't protect them."

Chris looked at him closely. "But what if something happens and they get in a fight? She can't take sides --"

"Whatever happens between them," Lance said, "is none of her business."

"But she's afraid --" Chris began again.

"Of what?" Lance asked quietly. Suddenly he didn't think Chris was talking about Danielle anymore.

"Of losing them," Chris whispered.

Lance turned and met Chris's gaze. His dark eyes were sad, full of trepidation and concern. He gripped Lance's arm tightly, his voice low and urgent. "Promise me you'll stay safe," he said.

Lance nodded. "I will," he promised.

"You know you can always talk to me, right?" Chris continued. "Any time, about any thing. You know this, right?"

"I'll be fine," Lance said.

Chris looked at him a moment longer and then nodded. Lance wondered exactly what Chris suspected about him and Justin. He wondered if any of the others had noticed something between them, too.

Back on the court, Justin tossed the basketball to Joey, who caught it deftly in his hands. "That's it for me," JC said, looking at Joey. "I'm gonna head back inside."

Joey nodded, and Justin got the feeling that something unsaid passed between them that he missed. He mopped the sweat from his brow with the hem of his tank top as JC left, and he felt Joey staring at him. Suddenly Joey asked, "Can I ask you something, Curly?"

His stomach fluttered but he kept his voice steady as he said, "Go ahead."

"What's up with you and Lance?" Joey asked, and Justin felt as if the wind had been knocked out of him.

"Nothing," he said, a little too sharply. Not looking at Joey, he started off the court.

But Joey stepped in front of him, the basketball in the crook of his arm, an earnest look on his face. "C'mon, man," Joey said. "It's me you're talking to. Joey. You can tell me."

Justin glared at his friend. "There's nothing to tell," he said.

"Bullshit!" Joey cried. "I've seen the way you two look at each other. What's going on?"

Stepping around him, Justin said, "Why don't you ask Lance?"

Joey reached out and caught his arm. Justin tried to shrug his hand off but Joey held on, and when Justin met his gaze again Joey said, "I'm not asking him. I'm asking you."

Anger flared within him, and his eyes flashed. "It's none of your business," Justin said, his voice hard and cold.

"It is my business," Joey replied. His voice was soft and his eyes so compassionate that Justin felt his anger dissipate, leaving him shaky, tired, and confused. "You're my friend, Justin -- you both are. I don't want to see you get hurt --"

"I won't," Justin said. When he shrugged again Joey let his hand fall away. Justin turned and stalked off, taking deep breaths and measured steps to steady himself. He wouldn't run, though he longed to put as much distance between himself and Joey as he possibly could. His eyes stung and he blinked away tears and sweat and wondered if they all knew about him and Lance. He hadn't wanted them to know -- the way he felt about Lance was something private, something special, something between the two of them alone.

Inside he hurried down the hall to his room, a scowl on his face to deter anyone he met from asking him any more questions, but he didn't run into anyone. When he passed the closed door to Lance's room, he stopped and hesitated, his hand on the cool wood. Then he knocked softly.

Lance opened the door and Justin pushed past him into the room. Taking in his friend's red eyes and grim frown, Lance knew someone had asked him about their relationship, too. "Who was it?" he asked as he closed the door.

"Joey." Justin choked back a sob and sighed, looking around the room,

his back to Lance.

Lance watched his friend's shoulders shake as Justin clenched his fists at his sides. Stepping closer, Lance ran his hands down Justin's arms and around his chest, encircling him. He rested his head on Justin's back, still damp with sweat, and hugged him tightly until he felt the tension in Justin's muscles melt away. In a weary voice Justin asked, "Which one talked to you? JC?"

"Chris," Lance replied.

"Do they all know?" Justin asked, his voice breaking with tears.

Lance hugged him tighter. In his arms Justin felt so right -- he wished he could ease his mind, take away his pain. Instead he just held on as Justin reached up and ran his hands along Lance's arms. "I didn't say anything," Lance whispered. "We don't have to tell them if you don't want to."

"They don't have to know!" Justin cried. "This is between you and me."

"Do you ..." Lance gulped, suddenly afraid, but he had to ask. He had to know. "Do you want to stop ..."

Justin turned in his arms and cradled Lance's face in his hands. His eyes were puffy and red, glistening with unshed tears that made them shine like deep blue crystals. Losing himself in those eyes, Lance couldn't imagine ever letting go. But if that's what Justin wanted -- "No," Justin said, shaking his head. "Don't say that. Don't even think that." Searching Lance's face, Justin whispered, "I love you. I can't change that, and I wouldn't want to if I could. I love the way you make me feel, and I don't care what the others think."

Tears of relief pricked at Lance's eyes. He tightened his grip around Justin's waist as Justin's words sank in. I love you. Lance replayed them in his mind, savoring them. "I love you, too," he whispered, and Justin pulled his face to his, his mouth covering Lance's. Justin's tongue slipped between Lance's lips easily, caressing his teeth, his tongue, claiming him. Lance licked Justin's lips, tasting him, and he ran his hands under the sweaty tank top and over Justin's cool back. Justin let his hands roam through Lance's hair as he slipped his arms around Lance's neck and pulled him closer, his tongue hungry in Lance's mouth.

Then he ran his tongue over Lance's lips lightly, trailing small wet kisses along his jaw until he held Lance's earlobe between his teeth. Lance moaned against Justin's curly hair as Justin nipped gently, sucking on the soft skin, running his tongue behind Lance's ear. "I love you," Justin whispered again, his breath hot against Lance's skin. "It feels so good to finally say it. I might never stop."

Nuzzling his face against Justin's neck, Lance said, "I don't want you to." Then, thinking of the others, he asked, "What are we going to do?"

He felt Justin shrug against him as they hugged. "Wait and see," Justin said. "Joey didn't ask me straight up, and I think I managed to piss him off enough that he won't ask again anytime soon."

Lance nodded and kissed the hollow of Justin's throat. "Chris didn't ask -- he just said be careful."

"They don't know how right this feels," Justin said, rubbing his hands across Lance's back. He kissed Lance's ear again, his wet tongue warm, exciting him. "We'll tell them when they absolutely need to know."

Lance hugged him close and agreed. They wouldn't understand this, he knew. He didn't fully understand it himself, but Justin had said he loved him, and that's all that mattered to him right now.

All I Ever Wanted
15. A Stolen Moment
by NSyncGrrl

Justin knocked on the door to Lance's hotel room. No one answered. He knocked again, harder. They had fifteen minutes until they had to load up and move on to the next city on the tour, and Justin wanted to spend that time alone with Lance. The past few days had been hectic and they hadn't managed to get any time to themselves. Justin so wanted to just hold Lance close for a couple of moments, to run his fingers through Lance's hair and kiss his face, his hands, his lips. He knocked on the door one more time.

The door opened slightly.

"Lance?" Justin called out softly. He pushed the door open wider. Warm, damp steam wafted out around him into the hall, and he could hear running water and Lance's deep voice, humming low. Must be in the shower, Justin thought, a slow smile playing across his face. He entered the room and closed the door quietly behind him.

The door to the bathroom stood open, and the steam from the hot shower fogged the mirror in there. Justin peeked into the bathroom before sitting on the edge of the bed. Across from him was a long mirror, reflecting him back to himself. In the mirror he could see into the bathroom, the drawn shower curtain, the towel rack, the steam rising above the shower rod. When the water turned off, he saw Lance's hand reach out and snag a towel from the rack. He waited as he listened -- he heard Lance rub the towel over his body, occasionally bumping against the shower curtain.

When Lance stepped out of the shower, the towel was wrapped around his waist. His hair stood on end, and water still clung to his chest and shoulders. Running a hand through his hair, Lance glanced at the mirror and stopped.

Justin smiled. If he could see Lance, that must mean that Lance could see his reflection, as well. "Hey," Justin said, hoping he hadn't startled Lance too much.

"Hey," Lance called back. Scooping up his discarded clothes from the floor, he walked out of the bathroom. He tossed the clothes onto the half-filled duffel bag lying open on the floor. "How long you been here?"

Justin shrugged. "A few minutes. Don't worry -- I didn't see anything."

Lance grinned. "There's nothing to see."

Letting his gaze wander over the contours of the thin white towel tied around Lance's waist, Justin said, "I don't know about that."

"We only have a few minutes," Lance reminded him.

Justin raised his eyes to meet Lance's. "I didn't really come here for

that," he said, but his thick voice said otherwise.

Lance cocked an eyebrow. "Oh?" he asked, coming to the edge of the bed. His damp leg brushed Justin's knee. "What did you come here for?"

Reaching up, Justin took Lance's hands in his and pulled Lance down onto his lap. Lance's wet body was warm through the towel, and Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's shoulders as Lance tucked his head beneath Justin's chin. Lance's hands slipped around Justin's waist and hugged him close. Justin ran one hand through Lance's wet hair while he rubbed his shoulder with the other. Resting his head on top of Lance's, he whispered, "I just wanted to hold you."

Lance squeezed him tighter. "We haven't had much time alone," he admitted. "There's always someone hanging around. I was beginning to wonder --"

"Sshh," Justin said. "Nothing's changed. We've just been busy." He began to rock Lance gently, his warm, damp, naked flesh pressed against him arousing Justin. But Lance was right -- they didn't have the time. So he tried to ignore the ache at his groin and forced himself to forget that only the thin towel and his shorts were between Lance's buttocks and his crotch.

In his arms Lance sighed, and Justin turned Lance's face up to his. He kissed Lance's lips, his tongue tracing their softness, his teeth pressing against them as his tongue delved inside. He tasted minty toothpaste and held Lance's head in his hand as they kissed. Lance's breath fanned his cheek, and when Lance pressed harder, Justin let himself be pushed down to the bed. Above him Lance shifted until he lay along the length of Justin's body, and Justin couldn't ignore Lance's erection, insistent against his own. He ran his hands around Lance's waist and up his back as Lance held Justin's head in both hands, his fingers entwined with his curls. Running his hands down, Justin slipped beneath the towel and cupped Lance's butt in his hands, pushing his hips against Justin's own.

Suddenly a knock on the door startled them, and Lance sat up slightly. "Yes?" he called, staring into Justin's eyes. He ran a hand across Justin's eyebrow, and Justin leaned into his touch.

"Lance, we're going." It was JC.

"Be right there," Lance called again. "Just got out of the shower."

He kissed Justin again, his tongue licking against Justin's, when they heard JC through the door again. "Is Justin in there with you?"

Justin nibbled on Lance's lips. "Yeah," he called out, before Lance could answer. "We're coming."

"No, we're not," Lance joked, thrusting his hips gently against Justin's.

Justin rolled over, pinning Lance to the bed. Kissing Lance's lips, his neck, his nipples, he smiled and said, "We gotta make more time for this."

Lance nodded. Then JC knocked again, and they hurried to leave, Justin helping Lance pack while Lance dressed. Another quick kiss before they opened the door, and they left.

All I Ever Wanted
16. Best Medicine
by NSyncGrrl

"Woohoo!" Chris whooped as his race car careened off the TV screen and crashed in a fiery blaze. Beside him Joey twisted the controller in his hand, moving his own car past the wreckage. Behind them, JC and Lance laughed. "I suck at this game," Chris cried.

From the back of the tour bus, Justin moaned. "Can you guys keep it down?" he complained.

Glancing back, Joey grumbled, "What's his problem?"

Lance stood up and stretched. Without answering, he made his way back to the cots they slept on while in the bus. Justin lay on one of the bottom bunks, his face buried in a pillow, his arms beneath his body. Squatting down beside the bed, Lance reached out and ran his hand through Justin's curly hair. "You okay?" he asked softly.

Justin turned his face towards Lance. His eyes were rimmed red and raw, and his skin was pale. Lance brushed the hair back from Justin's brow and rubbed his temple gently. "I feel like shit," Justin whispered.

Resting his hand on Justin's cool forehead, Lance said, "You don't feel feverish."

"I don't feel well," Justin replied, closing his eyes. Lance brushed his hair back again and studied his friend for a few moments.

Then he stood up. "Scoot over," he whispered. Justin complied, rolling back against the wall of the bus, and Lance laid down beside him. Wrapping one arm around Justin's shoulders, he pulled Justin close. Justin rested his head in the crook of Lance's arm, one hand on Lance's chest. Lance brushed at Justin's hair again, tracing the curve of his cheek with his fingers. "Where don't you feel well?" Lance asked.

Justin shrugged against him. "My stomach," he said, a pout in his voice. "My head. My throat."

"Maybe you're coming down with something," Lance suggested. With his other hand he rubbed small patterns into Justin's back.

Justin pulled himself closer to Lance, placing one leg over Lance's. "I hope not," he said. "I can't afford to be sick."

"We'll just have to cancel a few shows," Lance said. "No big deal."

Running his hand across Lance's chest, Justin caressed Lance's nipples until they stood up through his thin t-shirt. Then he plucked at them playfully. Lance looked down the aisle at the others, but they were still focused on the video game, and weren't paying them any attention. "We can't do that," Justin said. He was watching Lance's nipples as he picked at them. "We can't let our fans down."

"We can't have you too sick to perform, either," Lance admonished. Through his shirt, Justin's touch was ticklish and erotic, arousing more than just his nipples. He shifted his legs beneath Justin's until Justin's knee leaned heavily against his crotch.

Justin pushed against Lance's side, lying flush against him. "I'll be fine," Justin whispered, his breath warm along Lance's neck. He nuzzled closer and kissed Lance lightly, his lips just brushing Lance's skin. "I just need a little rest, is all."

"Then maybe I should leave," Lance suggested. He pushed his hips up against Justin's knee, knowing his friend would feel the swell of his budding erection. "I might be keeping you awake."

Justin hugged Lance tight. "No, don't go," he said. "I was just getting comfortable."

Lance smiled at him, then leaned his head down over Justin's. Justin's curls were rough against his cheek. He hummed softly, his hand rubbing Justin's back, his gaze on the others at the front of the bus. Soon he felt Justin's breath even out beneath him, his hand still, resting on Lance's chest. Lance's eyes began to burn and he closed them, intending to just wait a few more minutes until he was sure Justin was asleep before getting out of the bed and returning to the others. Maybe Justin was right -- maybe he just needed some rest.

With his friend on his mind, Lance fell asleep, too. Later, when the bus came to a rest station off the highway, Joey called back, "Pit stop!" but no one answered. As Chris and JC rushed off the bus to stretch their legs, Joey made his way back to the bunks. He found Lance stretched out on the bed, one arm beneath Justin, his cheek against the top of Justin's head. Justin curled against Lance, one arm and leg thrown over Lance's body, holding him close. They were both sound asleep.

Joey looked at them thoughtfully, debating on waking them, then decided not to. Smoothing down Lance's hair, he smiled before hurrying to catch up with the others. Justin looked as if he was feeling better now.

All I Ever Wanted
17. Rest Stop
by NSyncGrrl

The tour bus pulled into the self-serve gas station somewhere off Interstate 95. As the doors of the bus opened, the members of NSync clomped down the stairs, eager to stretch their legs after being cooped up inside for the past few hours. On his way out the door, Justin heard Lance ask if he could drive the next stretch. He smiled when the driver just laughed. "Get off the bus, kid," he said amicably. Justin waited for Lance just outside the door.

When Lance stood on the last step, he jumped onto Justin's back. His arms laced around Justin's neck, and his legs hitched up over Justin's hips. Justin reached back and grabbed Lance's thighs, holding him up. Lance laughed in his ear. "That guy's tough," he said. "Won't let me drive the bus."

"Can't imagine why not," Justin replied. He staggered under Lance's weight and then let go of Lance's legs. Lance set his feet back on the ground and stepped around to Justin's side, one arm draped over his friend's shoulders. Together they joined the others inside the small store beyond the gas pumps.

Chris and Joey were combing the junk food aisles. "No Twinkies, man," Joey cried as they entered the store. "Where the hell are we that they don't sell Twinkies?"

JC stood at the magazine rack, leafing through a local newspaper. Justin looked out at the bus -- the driver hadn't even activated the gas pump yet. They had a few minutes to spare, and suddenly he wanted to get Lance alone. He knew just the place. Walking over to the register, he smiled at the girl behind the counter. "You have a restroom here?" he asked.

She cracked her gum and nodded. Handing him a rusty key, she said, "Around the side. Bring the key back when you're done."

Like I'm going to keep it, Justin thought wryly, heading for the door. On his way out he caught Lance's eye. "Where you going?" Lance asked.

"Bathroom," Justin said, and smiled. With a nod outside, he motioned for Lance to follow.

Lance didn't need any prompting -- his thoughts must have been on the same track as Justin's. He hurried outside after his friend. As they walked around the corner of the store, he said, "You're crazy."

Justin turned and saw the half-smile on Lance's face. "No I'm not," he replied. "Just horny as hell. I can't get you alone in that damn bus so I'm going to take what I can."

"You're so bad," Lance said, grinning, as Justin slipped the key into the lock and turned the knob.

Inside the restroom was small and dirty, lit by one naked bulb. A urinal and stall crouched along one wall, and a foggy mirror above a small sink reflected the room back to them. Justin felt the door lock as he pushed it closed and said, "This ain't my idea of a good date, but any port in a storm, eh?"

Lance laughed nervously, and then Justin was pressing him against the sink, running his hands under Lance's shirt and over his chest. He caressed his nipples, teasing them erect, while his lips found Lance's mouth, his tongue slipping easily inside. Lance moaned as Justin leaned into him, his suddenly hard cock rubbing insistently against Lance's crotch. Justin wrapped his arms around Lance, his hands cool against Lance's warm back, and their kiss deepened. Lance hugged Justin close and thrust forward with his hips, bumping their erections together through their jeans.

Justin pulled back slightly and ran his open lips across Lance's cheek, his breath hot against the smooth skin. He closed his eyes as Lance's hands slipped lower, cupping his butt and pulling him close. He felt his erection stiffen, and he moaned as Lance rubbed his own against it. "I can't stand this," he whispered into Lance's ear. "I want you so bad."

Lance kissed Justin's jaw. "What about the others?" he asked playfully.

"I don't want them," Justin replied. "Just you." He looked at Lance hungrily. He wanted to taste every part of Lance's body. He wanted to hold him close, to feel him naked beside him, to make love to him forever. He leaned forward and they kissed again, tongues exploring each others' mouths, small moans lost as their lips met.

Justin let his hands find the waistband of Lance's jeans. He ran a finger down the length of the zipper, feeling the bulge of Lance's erection through the denim. When he poked gently, Lance leaned back and groaned, eyes closed. Justin smiled and kissed Lance's exposed neck, and pressed again, harder. He felt the outline of his penis straining against his hand, the tip swollen beneath his fingers. Rubbing up and down along the zipper, he licked the hollow of Lance's throat as Lance bit his lip, trying to keep his moans of pleasure quiet in the small room.

Tugging at the zipper, Justin pulled it down slowly. Lance's hands squeezed his buttocks as the zipper opened, his stiffening member hidden behind white briefs. Running his hand over the thinner material, he felt Lance's hard erection thrust against his hand. He reached up under the still buttoned jeans, his hand brushing the sensitive tip of Lance's cock as he slipped beneath the waistband of the underwear. Lance bent his head down over Justin's, his hands slipping into Justin's back pockets, his breath coming in short gasps in Justin's ears. Justin cupped his hands over the tip of Lance's penis, already damp, and Lance thrust into his palm as Justin licked along his neck.

Someone knocked on the door. "Shit," Justin swore softly against Lance's skin.

Lance held him tighter. "Let them wait," he moaned. "Just a few more minutes --"

The knock came again, louder. "Come on, you two!" Chris called through the door. "If you don't hurry up, we're gonna leave you here."

"Good idea," Lance whispered, but Justin gave his cock one last squeeze before disentangling himself from his jeans. He kissed Lance's mouth again as he pulled up the zipper.

"Next time," he promised, licking Lance's lips.

Lance pouted. "You're such a tease," he complained. "Now I'm going to have to sit through a hard-on for the next few miles."

Smiling, Justin ran a hand down Lance's zipper and said, "You're not the only one."

"You guys coming or not?" Chris called again. "You can be replaced, you know. How hard can it be to find two guys who can sing and look good? Come on!"

Lance rolled his eyes. "Right now I'm about to let them find someone new." He let go of Justin as they kissed one last time. With a wistful look in his eyes, he studied Justin's face. Softly he said, "What I wouldn't give to finish this."

Justin smiled. As the door shook under a barrage of pounding fists, he promised, "Next time. If they even let us go to the bathroom anymore."

All I Ever Wanted
18. Cleaning Up
by NSyncGrrl

When the tour passed through Florida, Justin invited everyone over to his house. His mother didn't mind -- she had plenty of room, and she was happy to have her son back home, if only for a few days. "While you're here, you can clean out that closet in your old room," she had said the first night they were there, the five boys sitting in front of the television eating pizza she had ordered. "Some of that stuff can go into the attic, you know, but I want it out of there. I need that closet."

Justin groaned but the next day began digging through the boxes stacked in his closet, behind clothes that didn't fit him any longer. "All those can go to the Salvation Army," his mom called from the doorway. "Where are your friends? They can help out."

From behind her, Lance said, "I'll help him, Mrs. Timberlake."

She smiled at Lance as he entered the room. "What about the others? JC, Chris, Joey? They can help, too."

Lance met Justin's eyes and smiled. "They ditched us," he said. "Scared of a little hard work."

"Okay, Mom," Justin said, stepping around Lance to push her from the room. "We'll take care of it. Just leave it to me."

"Justin --" she started, but he closed the door and locked it before turning back to Lance, a sparkle in his eyes that was hard to hide. From the hallway his mother called, "Remember, I want it cleaned out. Don't just pile the stuff up somewhere else!"

"Yes, Mom," Justin called, brushing against Lance as he headed back for the closet. "Jeez, you'd think I didn't know how to clean or something."

Lance smiled as he watched Justin bend over and pull out a large box from the back of the closet. Squatting down, Justin opened the box and began to riffle through its contents -- stuffed animals and school newspapers and old photographs. "You gonna help me or just stand there drooling all day?" he called over his shoulder.

"I'm not drooling," Lance said, coming to stand beside Justin. He looked down at Justin's curls, his tight black t-shirt that pulled against his biceps, the way his shoulder blades flexed beneath the material, and he hoped he wasn't drooling.

Justin grinned up at him. Before he could reply, Lance saw a small, well-loved teddy bear shoved in the bottom of the box. Reaching for it, he pulled it out. The bear was old, the fur worn away in places, one eye missing and one ear torn and sewn and torn again. "Who's this?" Lance asked, studying the bear.

"Give me that," Justin said quickly, a blush rising to his cheeks.

But Lance held the bear out of reach. "This is so cute!" he giggled.

Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's knees and pulled him down to the ground. "Give me it," he said again, crawling over Lance's body as Lance held the bear over his head. "Lance --" he warned.

When Justin's face was just inches above his, Lance leaned up and kissed him quickly. "I'm only playing," he said. Justin's hand slipped over his, the bear held tight between them.

Justin looked down at Lance, fear and embarrassment in his eyes. "You're not making fun of me?" he asked in a small voice.

Lance shook his head. "Jesus, Justin, a bear is nothing. You didn't have a sister like mine. I probably still have Barbies in my closet."

Justin laughed and tossed the bear away as his fingers entwined with Lance's. Lance took Justin's other hand in his and held them both above his head. With Justin stretched out above him, Lance kissed the curve of Justin's jaw. When Justin tried to kiss Lance's lips, Lance twisted away. Justin pouted and tried again, but Lance turned away again. "Lance," Justin whined.

"Now who's the tease?" Lance asked, smiling.

"Why, you little --!" Justin pulled his hands free from Lance's and sat up, straddling Lance's hips. Lance moaned as Justin's butt ground into his cock, already stiffening under Justin's weight. With both hands he pinched Lance's nipples through his shirt.

"Hey!" Lance cried, laughing, as he tried to shield his chest with his arms. Justin began to tug up the bottom of Lance's shirt. Pushing it down again, Lance tried to sit up but Justin held him down.

Lifting his shirt again, Justin ran his fingers across Lance's belly, tickling him. Lance laughed and then his shirt slid up over his head, tangling his arms above him, blinding him. Only his mouth and nose were free beneath the neck of the shirt. He felt Justin's lips brush against his as Justin wriggled his hips into Lance's. Lance moaned, his mouth opening as Justin's tongue slipped inside.

And then the shirt was completely off, tossed aside, and Lance brought his hands up to cup Justin's face close, pulling him into a deeper kiss. Justin tugged off his own shirt, breaking away just long enough to pull it over his head, and then he leaned against Lance again, their erect nipples rubbing against each other, their hands roaming bare skin.

Scooting back to sit on Lance's legs, Justin unbuttoned Lance's jeans, pulling the zipper down over his hard erection. Taking a belt loop in each hand, Justin began to pull down Lance's pants. He stood up to pull them completely off, and then he slipped out of his own jeans, as well. Lance lay on the floor, looking up at him, a smile on his lips. "Get back down here," Lance said.

Grinning, Justin pulled off his boxer shorts. Lance's eyes widened at Justin's thick cock, standing up from a patch of curly hair, the shaft

swollen and red. Unconsciously, Lance licked his lips. Then Justin leaned down and slipped his hands beneath the waistband of Lance's briefs. "Justin, wait," Lance said, suddenly unsure.

But Justin smiled, his eyes full of emotion, full of love. "Don't be afraid," he said softly. "I'm not going to hurt you."

"Justin --" Lance started again, placing a hand over Justin's to stop him.

Justin sighed patiently. "I just want to lay beside you, that's it. I want to hold you, nothing between us. We don't have to do anything else." Seeing Lance's unease, he said, "I promise."

Lance nodded and let Justin pull off his briefs. Despite his worries, his own erection was already throbbing and hard. Justin wrapped a hand around it as he laid down next to Lance, his own cock hot against Lance's thigh. Running his other hand through Lance's hair, Justin squeezed his friend's erection gently and whispered, "See? This isn't so bad, is it?"

Lance shook his head and sighed, his wariness slipping away. He pulled Justin closer and kissed him. Justin's cock brushed against his as he rolled on top of Lance, kissing his lips, his chin, his neck. Lance moaned as Justin thrust his hips against Lance's, their stiff erections rubbing each other. Justin's tongue danced over Lance's throat, licked one nipple, then the next, traced along the muscles of his stomach, until Justin's lips kissed along his lower belly. Lance sat up suddenly, reaching for Justin.

Justin's hand gripped Lance's cock, holding it up, as his lips closed over the swollen tip. Lance leaned back on his elbows as Justin kneeled between his legs, his tongue tasting Lance's wet member. "Justin," Lance managed between ragged breaths as Justin licked down the length of his shaft. Justin's other hand curled around his own erection, squeezing and tugging and kneading. Lance felt the wetness of Justin's mouth drip down his hard cock; he felt the pressure of teeth beneath lips, rubbing against him gently. Justin's tongue ran beneath the tip of his penis as he pushed deeper into the Justin's warm mouth, Justin's hand running up and down his shaft, squeezing in rhythm with Lance's thrusts.

When Lance felt himself on the edge of an orgasm, he pulled back from Justin just in time. A thin spray erupted from him as he fell back to the floor, pleasure tearing through his body. And then Justin was above him, droplets of white liquid clinging to his eyebrows, his eyelashes, his curls. Lance giggled. "You're a mess," he whispered, his voice shaky.

Justin brought his hand up and ran it through Lance's hair, leaving behind a wet trail of his own sticky cum. "You too," he said, kissing his lips.

"And your mother wanted this place clean," Lance reminded him as he hugged Justin close.

Justin nuzzled against Lance. "In a few minutes," he said, wrapping his arms around his friend, their legs entangled together.

All I Ever Wanted
19. Another Long Night Ahead
by NSyncGrrl

There was a mix-up at the hotel, and the only room available was the President's Suite. Two king-sized beds, a plush leather sofa and twin recliners, a claw-foot bathtub and glass-encased shower stall, a wet bar and full kitchen -- all in one elegant room. When JC unlocked the door, the guys stood there taking in the opulence around them, awed, until Joey called, "Dibs on the couch!"

"What?" Chris asked, looking around. He saw the two enormous beds and the one sofa, and said, "That's not fair."

"I wanted the couch," JC said, tossing his bags onto the floor.

Lance looked at the beds, side by side against one wall, separated by two heavy oaken nightstands. Then he glanced at Justin, only to find Justin staring back with the hint of a smile on his face. Running a hand through his hair nervously, he walked over to one of the beds and dropped his duffle bag on it. "This one's mine," he said, hoping his voice didn't betray the excitement suddenly coursing through his body at Justin's brief glance.

Chris flopped on the other bed. "Mine," he declared, letting his dog Busta loose to sniff the covers.

Nonchalantly Justin sat on the edge of Lance's bed, but he didn't say anything. Joey looked at him. "You want to fight for the couch?" he asked.

Justin shook his head, his curls bouncing slightly. "Nah, I'll sleep here. It's too late to argue."

It was true. They had rolled into town well behind schedule, and had to be up early in the morning to rehearse for their show tomorrow night. Joey sighed and studied JC for a minute before replying, "You take the couch. Leather sticks to me anyway." Turning his attention to Chris, he warned, "But that dog ain't sleeping with us. And I'm kicking you out if you start to snore."

"I don't snore!" Chris cried, indignant.

Later, after they turned off the lights, Justin crawled under the covers, pressing his body against Lance's warm back. The sounds of gentle breathing were loud in the room, and occasionally the squeal of skin on leather as JC rolled over on the couch punctuated the night. Lance felt Justin's arms wrap around his waist, his hands flat on Lance's lower stomach. With his chest against Lance's back, Justin's chin rested on Lance's shoulder, and each breath fanned Lance's ear until he thought he would scream with lust and frustration. With the others just a few feet away, he didn't dare do anything. So he bit his lip as Justin's breathing slowed, and he hoped he would be able to sleep.

Shifting slightly, Justin brushed his hand against Lance's crotch. Lance

held his breath as Justin's hand moved back across his underwear, surprised to find a thick erection beneath the thin fabric. And then Justin's lips kissed his shoulder, warm and wet in the darkness, and his hand squeezed Lance's cock slowly. "You little devil," Justin whispered in his ear.

"Shh," Lance whispered back, but he rolled onto his back and slipped one arm around Justin's shoulders. Justin leaned against him, massaging his erection as he thrust his hips against Lance's thigh, his own erection already growing beneath his boxers. Placing his mouth against Justin's ear, Lance spoke so low, he didn't even hear his own words. "We can't do this."

But Justin ignored him. His lips trailed kisses along Lance's chest, beneath his arm, on the soft underside of his bicep. Lance closed his eyes, the sensation of Justin's warm tongue on his skin maddening. With one hand he traced small circles into Justin's back; the other hand ran along Justin's arm, rubbing gently. He leaned down and kissed Justin's curls. When Justin squeezed his throbbing cock, Lance moaned into Justin's ear.

In the other bed, someone shifted. Justin's lips found Lance's and covered them in the darkness, stifling the soft sounds Lance made. His hand moved away from Lance's cock, tracing over Lance's stomach until it came to rest across his chest. Nuzzling close, Justin lay back on Lance's shoulder and sighed.

Across the way, Joey growled, "That better be your dog licking me."

Lance curled into Justin's embrace and smiled against Justin's shoulder. Their erections brushed against each other, flaring to life again, and Lance sighed as Justin hugged him close. It was going to be a long night.

All I Ever Wanted
20. Never Meant This Pain
Part 1 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

Joey was drunk. They had attended an awards show -- he couldn't remember which one -- and there must have been a little more alcohol in his drinks than he thought because by the time they left he was weaving through the crowd, leaning heavily on the others, and they wouldn't let him drive back to the hotel. As they rode up the elevator, Joey watched the others with hooded eyes, his mind still buzzing. JC leaned against the wall of the elevator, his eyes closed, his tux somehow still fresh and crisp at the end of the night. Chris stood near Joey, watching the numbers change above the doors as the elevator climbed to their floor. Lance leaned against the back of the elevator, Justin standing against him, talking quietly.

Suddenly Joey felt jealous. The emotion bubbled up instantly, and he didn't know where it came from. But the thought of spending a night alone in his bed while Lance and Justin shared theirs made his heart ache. He wanted someone to look at him the same way Lance looked at Justin, his eyes bright and shiny, his mouth curved into a coy smile. When the elevator ground to a halt, Joey staggered through the doors and stumbled out into the hall.

Strong hands caught him before he fell. "Easy, there," someone said, and then Lance was standing beside him, one arm around Joey's waist, supporting him.

"Sorry," Joey mumbled. He was very tired; his body was too heavy to move. Behind him the others were saying goodnight but they sounded distant, far away. Joey leaned against Lance. "I've got to get some sleep," he said.

"Let me help you," Lance said, and Joey let himself be led to his room. With awkward fingers he fumbled the key into the lock, but then Lance steadied his hand and turned the key. The door opened onto a dark room and sadness washed over Joey again. Alone, he thought, in a strange bed, a strange city. He sighed. "You okay, man?" Lance asked, helping Joey to the bed.

Joey could see Lance in the light from the doorway, and he sat on the edge of the bed while Lance turned on a lamp. The light cast thin shadows around the room. Joey watched the way Lance's tux pulled across his back as he bent to help Joey remove his shoes. He watched the light play off of Lance's blonde, spiky hair, and tentatively he reached out and ran his hand just above the spikes. Lance looked up at his touch. Joey ran his hand across again, pressing the spikes down. Something in Joey's eyes made Lance pull away.

"You have pretty eyes," Joey said, his voice thick. It was the truth -- suddenly he noticed how light Lance's eyes were, how the long eyelashes curled like a girl's.

Lance turned his attention back to Joey's shoes. Untying first one, then the other, he pulled the shoes off and tossed them aside. "You're drunk," he said.

Joey ran a finger down Lance's sleeve. "Am I?" he asked softly. He liked the way Lance jumped at his touch.

Standing up, Lance stepped back from him, a wary look in his eyes. "Get some sleep, Joey," he said.

Joey stood up, swaying slightly. Advancing towards Lance, he smiled devilishly and whispered, "You could stay here with me, you know."

"I can't," Lance said, backing up. He bumped against the dresser and reached back to steady himself. "You don't really want me, Joey. You're drunk."

"And alone," Joey said. "And right now the thought of holding you in my arms is intoxicating."

Lance sighed. "Joey --" he began, and then Joey stepped close enough to wrap his arms around Lance. Lance brought his arms up between them and pushed against Joey's chest, but Joey was insistent. He told himself it wasn't fear he saw in Lance's eyes but excitement, hunger, mirroring his own feelings. "Joey --" Lance said again, his voice wavering. "No --"

Joey bent his head against Lance's cheek, brushing his trimmed beard along Lance's skin. "What is it about you?" he whispered, his breath hot and coppery. "What is it that Justin loves so much? Can you show me? Can you --"

Strong hands grabbed his shoulders, spinning him away from Lance. Joey staggered back and fell against the wall, a stunned expression on his face. And then Justin stepped into his line of vision, his face pale, his eyes livid with rage. Between tight lips Justin snarled, "Just what the hell do you think you're doing?"

Through his disheveled hair, Joey stared at Justin, confused. Where had Lance gone? One moment Joey held him in his arms -- he had felt a familiar stirring in his groin and the desire to kiss Lance had been overwhelming. Then the next moment here he was on the ground, Justin standing over him, his fists clenched at his sides, his face closed and angry. "Justin?" Joey whispered. Suddenly his head began to pound.

From behind Justin, Joey heard Lance's voice. "Justin, he's drunk." He focused on the sound, and saw Lance standing with his arms wrapped tightly around his body, as if comforting himself.

A muscle twitched in Justin's jaw. "You better be," he warned, his voice hurt. "You better be shitfaced drunk. Otherwise I'll hurt you for touching him. I'll hurt you so bad we'll have to cancel the rest of our tour for you to recover."

Joey ran a shaky hand through his hair, brushing it back from his face. "I'm drunk," he admitted, his voice low. "I don't know what came over me. I'm sorry --" Looking past Justin, he repeated, "I'm sorry."

He stared at the floor as Justin took Lance's arm in one hand and led him from the room. He heard the door slam shut as they left, and he suddenly felt more alone than he ever believed possible. He didn't even think he could make it to the bed now. He slumped against the wall and wondered how he was ever going to make it to the bed.

All I Ever Wanted
20. Never Meant This Pain
Part 2 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

The photographer clicked off another roll of film as she circled the members of NSync. "Say cheese!" The boys smiled as the film rolled.

"My teeth are getting cold," Chris whispered through his smile.

The photographer reloaded her camera. "No more poses, then," she said. "Give me a little spontaneity, something unrehearsed."

Lance groaned. How could they be spontaneous now, after sitting under these lights for the past hour? The thought of goofing off in front of the camera was tiring, and a headache began to tug behind his eyes.

But Joey threw his arm around Lance's shoulder and began mugging for the camera, and Lance forced a grin on his face. From the corner of his eye he caught Justin glaring at him, and Lance ducked out of Joey's grip. Then Joey jumped on JC's back and Chris knocked both of them down, collapsing on top of them in a fit of laughter. The camera whirled, the photographer eating up their performance.

Lance felt Justin's hand on his waist and he turned slightly. Justin was watching the others wrestle on the floor. Lance wondered if he should say something, anything -- for the past few days Justin had been distant, angry at Joey for coming onto Lance when drunk. Lance had played the whole thing off -- this was Joey, he reasoned, the world's biggest flirt. The small touches and playful hugs meant nothing to him, or so Lance wanted to believe. And he'd probably already forgotten all about the other night. But Justin still simmered -- every time Joey spoke to him, Justin answered in short, clipped tones, and once or twice Justin had ignored Joey completely. Lance just hoped Justin would get over it. Joey had been drunk, Lance argued, but Justin didn't want to hear it.

Studying Justin's profile, Lance whispered, "I'm just not in the mood for this."

Justin smiled but didn't say anything. "Come on, you two," the photographer called. "Be yourselves. Join in the fun."

From beyond the lights, the producer clapped his hands, signaling an end to the shoot. "Wonderful, wonderful," he gushed, pointing to the dressing rooms at the back of the studio. "People, let's get ready for Westlife. Step to it!"

With his hand still around Lance's waist, Justin led the way to the dressing rooms. Looking back, Lance noticed that the other three were just picking themselves up off the floor. Joey flirted with the photographer while Chris held JC in a headlock and mussed his short hair with one hand. Lance glanced at Justin and took a deep breath. "You mad?" he asked, dreading the answer.

But Justin looked at him quickly, confusion in his face. "Why would I be mad?" he asked.

Lance shrugged. "The way you looked at me back there --"

"That was for Joey," Justin said bitterly. "Not you."

"You really should ease up on him," Lance said.

Justin shook his head. "Lance, he's all over you. I don't know how you'd feel if the tables were turned, but every time I see him touch you I want to punch him."

Lance thought about it. How would he feel? He pictured Joey holding Justin in his arms but just couldn't do it. Justin was too headstrong, too outspoken. If Joey tried to touch him in that way, he felt sure that Justin would punch him anyway. But he understood what Justin was saying -- the thought of Justin with anyone but him was just something he couldn't bear. "I'd be upset," he admitted, "but I don't think Joey's like that."

"Then you're blind," Justin said. "He's liked you since day one. And now that you and me are hooking up, he's sorry he missed his chance."

Lance turned as the others raced past them, banging through the dressing room door and laughing like idiots. "You're wrong," he said. "Joey's just a flirt. He means nothing by it. If I came to him one night, he'd scream in terror."

Justin glanced at him. "I seriously doubt that," he replied. "And I don't suggest trying it just to prove me wrong, either."

Ahead, Joey held the door open for them. He smiled at Justin as he entered the dressing room, Lance right behind him. Lance figured Justin didn't smile back, because then Joey looked at him and rolled his eyes dramatically. When Lance was inside, Joey let the door close and casually folded his arms over Lance's shoulder. "What's up with him?" he asked, his face close to Lance's. His breath tickled Lance's ear.

Lance shrugged and walked out from under Joey's arms. "I don't know," he muttered as he gathered up his stuff from the dressing room table. In the mirror he saw Joey watching him, a thoughtful expression on his face. Don't, he prayed, though he didn't know quite what he didn't want Joey to do. Something in his stance told Lance that Joey wanted to approach him, talk to him, and he didn't want anything to happen, not here, not where others could see. With Justin's current mood, anything could happen.

But before Joey could come any closer, Justin stepped between them, his lips set tight. He glared at Joey in the mirror as he scooped up his clothes from the table, bumping his hip against Lance, reaching past him for his comb, touching him at every opportunity. Mine, those little touches said. Hands off.

"I'm going to the car," Chris called, and JC left with him. When Justin had zipped up his bag, he looked at Lance with a question in his eyes. Ready?

Lance nodded and slipped his bag over one shoulder. When he turned

around, Joey was there, standing right behind him. "Joey --" Lance started.

Justin placed a hand on Joey's chest. "What's your problem, man?"

Joey looked at Lance, a pain in his eyes that made Lance want to cry. "I wanted to tell you I'm sorry," he said softly.

"About what?" Lance said, hoping to alleviate the tension in the room.

"About ..." Joey floundered, searching for the words. Lance wanted to help him out, to tell him that there was nothing to be sorry for, but the anger in Justin's eyes kept him silent. "About everything," Joey whispered, dropping his gaze. "Justin, Lance, I'm sorry. There's nothing else I can say."

Lance reached out and took Justin's hand off of Joey's chest. "It's okay, man," he said, "really. No harm done. No hard feelings. Right?" He smiled at Joey, then at Justin, but neither of them looked convinced. "We're still friends here, right?"

"Yeah," Joey said, his voice low.

Justin shrugged and looked away. "Yeah, I guess," he said.

But it was a start. Lance smiled brightly and said, "Well, I guess the others are waiting. Let's get going, shall we?" He pushed Justin towards the door and smiled at Joey. Joey smiled back, a faint, sad smile, and reached out to trail a finger down Lance's shoulder as they passed.

Lance glanced back sharply at the touch, but Joey was already busying himself with packing up. As they left the dressing room, Joey looked up and met Lance's eyes in the mirror. He smiled that slow, sad smile again before looking away.

All I Ever Wanted
20. Never Meant This Pain
Part 3 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

The door to Justin's hotel room stood slightly ajar. Lance pushed it open slowly and stepped inside. "Justin?" he called softly. Lance hadn't seen Justin for the past hour, ever since they returned from taping a live morning show. Looking around the room, he saw Justin sleeping, rolled over on the bed so his back faced Lance. He smiled and shut the door quietly behind him. In three steps he crossed the room and crawled onto the bed behind Justin.

Leaning close to Justin's ear, Lance whispered his friend's name. He saw Justin's eyelashes flutter slightly, and Justin sighed. Bending down closer, Lance licked Justin's ear, his tongue tracing along the warm skin. Lance reached over and placed one hand on the bed in front of Justin, his other hand behind his back to steady himself as he straddled above his sleeping friend. He sucked on Justin's ear gently, his breath ruffling Justin's curls.

Justin moaned and rolled over on his back, his eyes still closed but his hands reaching out to brush Lance's knee. Lance released Justin's ear to trail along his cheekbone, his tongue licking its way to Justin's mouth. Brushing his lips against Justin's, he whispered his name again.

Then he kissed Justin, his lips pressing gently against Justin's, his tongue easily slipping inside to taste the dark sweetness of Justin's mouth. Justin brought his hands up, running them along Lance's chest until he cradled Lance's face in both hands.

Lance pulled back and smiled down at Justin. "Wake up, sleepyhead," he whispered.

Justin looked up at him with those baby blue eyes and returned his smile. "I'm up, I'm up," he said, running one leg between Lance's. He pressed his crotch against Lance's thigh, and Lance felt Justin's budding erection rub against him through their jeans. Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's neck and pulled him in for another kiss.

Smiling wickedly, Lance started to sit up. "Well, now that you're awake, we can get going," he said. "We've got to be at the theater in thirty minutes."

Justin's smile faded. "We've still got some time," he pouted. He raised his knee to brush Lance's crotch, and smiled when he felt Lance's stiffening cock. "You don't really want to stop now, do you?"

The look on Justin's face was so infuriating. Without answering, Lance ran his hands beneath Justin's shoulders, pulling himself down on top of his friend. He thrust his hips against Justin's, their erections rubbing together, and his mouth found Justin's, covering it with wet kisses. His tongue delved between Justin's lips and he moaned into Justin's mouth.

He leaned heavily against Justin, pressing him into the bed.

When they broke apart, Justin was breathless. "Jesus, Lance," he gasped, grinning. He wiggled his hips against Lance. "I don't know what's gotten into you but I like it."

Lance grinned back. "I just wanted you to know how I feel," he said. "After all that's happened lately, I just wanted to show you ..." He let the sentence trail off as he kissed Justin again. "So there's no doubt in your mind ..." He kissed Justin's chin, his neck, his ear. "How I feel about you ..." He sucked at the hollow of Justin's throat, nibbled on his shoulder, licked his tongue across his collarbone. Justin pulled him close and moaned as Lance kissed his body and moved against him slowly.

"I didn't doubt you," Justin whispered, rubbing his cock against Lance. "I just don't trust Joey anymore. It's not you."

Lance thrust against Justin and tried to forget the memory of Joey holding him close, his face inches from Lance's. Lance kissed Justin again, pushing Joey from his mind.

The phone rang. Lance reached over and snagged the receiver. "Hello?" he asked. Beneath him Justin continued to move, each thrust sending chills of pleasure through Lance's body. An orgasm was not far off, and he hoped he could hang up the phone before he came.

On the other end of the line a woman asked, "Lance? How are you, honey?"

Lance sat up quickly, rolling off of Justin. "Oh, hello, Mrs. Harless!" he cried, looking at Justin with wide eyes. Of all the people to call at this moment! Justin sat up and ran a hand down Lance's chest, smiling. To Justin's mother, Lance asked, "How are you doing today?"

"Oh fine, dear. I saw you boys on Later Today this morning. You looked very thin. Are you eating enough?"

Lance laughed and brushed Justin's hand away as it tugged on his nipple. Undaunted, Justin grabbed the front of Lance's shirt and pulled him down over him again. "I'm eating just fine," he said, trying to twist out of Justin's grasp, but Justin wrapped his arms around him and held him tight. "I'm just a little tired, is all."

"Well, get some sleep," Mrs. Harless said. "Make sure they don't work you too hard. Is Justin there?"

"Right here," Lance said, handing the phone to Justin. As Justin took it from him, Lance leaned his head on Justin's chest, listening to his voice echo deep within his body.

"Hey, Mom," Justin said, running a hand through Lance's hair. "What's up?"

Lance reached over and hugged Justin tight. Then he let his hand stray to Justin's crotch, and he cupped Justin's cock through his pants. Justin gasped and then said quickly, "No, Mom, nothing's wrong. It's just that I can't talk for long. I just realized we have to get going soon."

Lance began to squeeze Justin's erection, hard and thick under his hand. Justin grabbed a handful of Lance's hair and pulled gently. "Yes, Mom," he was saying, though Lance wondered if he was paying any attention to the conversation.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door. Lance rolled away from Justin as the door opened -- should've locked that, he thought as Joey walked in. He took one look at Lance, lying next to Justin, and smiled, his gaze sweeping over Lance's body. Lance sat up. "Hey," he said, hoping Joey hadn't noticed the bulge in his jeans.

"Hey," Joey replied. "Your hair's a mess. Aren't you guys coming with us to the theater?"

Lance nodded. Pointing to Justin, he said, "He's on the phone with his mom. We'll be ready to go in a minute."

Joey glanced at Justin before looking back at Lance. He stared at him for a long moment, until Lance felt uncomfortable. Justin reached up and ran a hand down Lance's spine. Into the phone he said, "I'll have to call you back, Mom. How about later tonight?"

As Justin hung up the phone, Joey nodded at Lance and left without saying anything else. "Damn him," Justin said softly.

"Oh, Justin," Lance said. "You're seeing things that aren't there."

Justin wrapped his arms around Lance, setting his head on Lance's shoulder. "I don't think so," he whispered against Lance's neck. Then he squeezed him tightly and stood up to get ready to go.

All I Ever Wanted
20. Never Meant This Pain
Part 4 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

Lance felt soft, warm lips press against his. What a lovely way to wake up, he thought, leaning into the kiss. He raised one hand to touch a cool cheek. He trailed his hand along smooth skin until he brushed against the beginnings of a rough beard ...

Lance's eyes flew open. Joey leaned over him, his eyes closed, his lips insistent against Lance's. Pulling back, Lance scooted to the far edge of the bunk and in a breathless voice asked, "Joey?"

Joey smiled. "Hey, beautiful," he said. "Time to wake up."

Lance placed a hand over his chest, where his heart hammered so hard he was sure Joey could hear it. Unconsciously he licked his lips, tasting the spicy sweetness of Joey's lips on his own, and he ran a hand through his hair. "Jesus," he breathed.

Running a finger down Lance's leg, Joey asked, "It wasn't that bad, was it?" Through the denim of Lance's jeans, Joey's touch burned.

Lance gasped. Suddenly he couldn't remember how to breathe. He still felt the ghost of Joey's lips on his, and a flame of lust licked across his groin. Joey sat down on the bunk beside him, his fingers tracing the seam in Lance's jeans, and Lance pulled away. Smiling, Joey said, "You didn't answer my question."

But Lance just shook his head, trying to rid himself of the sensations Joey was awakening in him. "Joey," he began, his voice breaking. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Joey, we can't -- I can't ..." He trailed off as Joey scooted closer, his hand on Lance's leg.

"Can't what?" Joey asked softly as his hand began to rub along Lance's thigh.

"Joey, stop," Lance pleaded. "It's not right."

Joey ran his fingers over Lance's inner thigh, the touch arousing and warm. "It feels right," he whispered. "What if I told you I wanted you?"

Lance sighed shakily. "It's not that simple," he said. "I'm ..." He took a deep breath, and looked at Joey -- his disheveled hair, his deep brown eyes, his debonair smile ... Quickly he looked away, afraid that the temptation to take Joey up on his offer was one he couldn't refuse.

But Joey squeezed his thigh playfully and leaned his head on Lance's knee. "Promise me something," he said, and reluctantly Lance met his steady gaze. He could lose himself in those compassionate eyes. "Promise that you'll give me a chance one day."

"I can't promise that," Lance whispered. "Joey, please --"

Suddenly they heard footsteps as someone climbed onto the bus. Lance scooted back from Joey, pulling his knees to his chest, as he wedged himself in the corner. Above him the upper bunk leaned close to his head, and he could feel the metal side of the tour bus through his thin t-shirt. Joey looked towards the front of the bus and stood up quickly. Lance noticed the way Joey's sweater pulled against his chest, and suddenly he wanted to cry. He covered his face in both hands and prayed that Joey would just leave.

"What're you doing?" Lance heard Justin ask as he approached the bunk.

"Just waking up sleeping beauty here," Joey replied. Lance looked between his fingers to see Joey edge around Justin as he left the bus.

Justin looked down at Lance, the anger in his face fading to concern when he saw his friend huddled into himself. "Lance?" he asked sharply. "What's wrong?"

Lance just shook his head. Justin sat on the edge of the bed and touched Lance's leg. Where Joey's hand was, Lance thought, choking back a sob. "Lance?" he asked again, his hands reaching for him. "My God, what is it? What did he say to you? What happened?"

Lance ran his hands down his cheeks, pulling his face into a frown, and whispered, "I thought he was you. Jesus, but I thought it was you."

"Me?" Justin asked. "What --"

Lance sighed. "Kissing me. I thought he was you."

"What the fuck?" Justin's face hardened. "That son of a bitch --" He stood up, heading for the front of the bus.

Lance jumped off the bed and caught Justin's arm in his hands. Beneath Justin's shirt, his body hummed with anger. Lance pulled him to a stop. "Justin, wait a minute --"

"Fuck that shit," Justin cried. His voice was loud and echoed throughout the bus. "Who the fuck does he think he is? That bastard!"

Chris ran up the steps onto the bus. "What's going on?" he asked, looking from Justin to Lance.

JC was right behind him. "Keep it down," he said. "Someone might hear you."

"Fuck that," Justin said angrily. Then Joey climbed onto the bus, and Justin leaped at him. "You jackass! What the fuck were you thinking? I'm gonna fucking kill you --"

Lance held Justin back while Chris blocked the aisle. Justin pushed Chris back, trying to get by him, and Chris threw a glance at JC. "Get him out of here," he said, trying to stand his ground as Justin barreled into him.

JC pushed Joey off of the bus. Joey looked at Lance, his eyes sad, and then he was gone. Chris pushed Justin back against Lance. "What's your

problem?" he asked softly.

But Justin turned away, too livid with rage to speak. "Lance, what happened?" Chris asked, but Lance just shrugged. In a low voice, Chris said, "You can tell me. I won't say anything, I promise."

Lance sighed. Glancing back at Justin, standing with his back to them, he said, "I can't --"

"Joey fucking kissed him, that's what happened," Justin said bitterly. "Who the fuck does he think he is?"

Chris looked at Lance, incredulous. "He kissed you?" he asked.

"While I was asleep," Lance said, nodding. He pressed a hand over his eyes and sighed. Just let this all go away, he prayed. He was so tired.

Chris bit the inside of his cheek, thinking. "We've got a talk show to do in twenty minutes," he said. "I don't think --"

"I'm not going," Justin said. "If I see him, I'm gonna kick his ass. You better keep him away from me or I'll hurt him. I promise you, I'll hurt him."

Glancing at Justin's back, Chris said, "Let me go talk with Monica." She was their publicist. Maybe she would know what to do. He left the bus.

Lance hugged himself tightly. "Justin, I'm so sorry," he whispered.

And then Justin was there, his arms encircling Lance, pulling him close. He kissed Lance's forehead and rocked him gently. "It's not your fault," he said softly. "I'm sorry this whole thing happened. I should've come to wake you up. I didn't know he'd try something like this."

Lance closed his eyes and inhaled Justin's cologne. In the comfort of Justin's arms, he pushed away the memory of Joey's lips, his hands, his touch. Slipping his arms around Justin's waist, Lance buried his head in Justin's shoulder.

They stood like that for long moments. "I'm going to kill him," Justin said softly, and Lance frowned at the anger still in Justin's voice. And then Justin released him and headed off the bus. Lance hurried to catch up with him.

Outside Chris was talking to Monica, and JC and Joey stood to one side of the parking lot, a few feet from the bus. The look on JC's face made Lance think Joey told him what happened, as well. Joey stood with his arms folded across his chest, and he looked up as Justin and Lance exited the bus. Justin headed straight for Joey.

JC stepped in between them. "Justin --" he began, but Justin pushed him aside. Joey watched him approach, silent.

Then Justin punched Joey in the face. Joey fell to the ground, his hands cupping his nose, a thin trail of blood already seeping through his fingers. Justin fell on top of him, both fists plummeting the older boy, as Lance tried to pull him off. JC managed to get Justin up and Lance held his arms back, but Justin was strong and it took some effort. Lance didn't

think he could hold him for long. JC helped Joey to his feet, pulling him away from Justin. "You're dead," Justin snarled. "You're so fucking dead ..."

"Justin," Lance pleaded, struggling to hold him back as his friend strained in his grip.

"Let me go," Justin said, twisting one arm free. Lance managed to get hold of it again, and he pulled Justin back towards the bus.

Joey wiped the blood from his nose. "You dick!" he cried, looking at his fingers, dripping with his own blood. He lunged at Justin. "You fuckhead!"

But JC was there, holding Joey back, and then Chris stepped between them. "Lance, get him back in the bus," Chris ordered, his hand on Justin's chest to hold him off. Lance nodded and dragged Justin away.

"Come on," he whispered in Justin's ear. "Please, just come on."

Chris turned to Joey. "JC, help him get cleaned up. Is his nose broken?"

"I don't think so," JC replied, and then Lance managed to get Justin on the bus. He closed the door behind them, shutting out the rest of the world.

Justin collapsed into the first seat of the bus. He held his head in his hands and took a deep breath. "I'm going to kill that bastard," he whispered.

Lance sat down beside him, wrapping his arms around Justin's shoulders. "It's okay, Justin," he said. "Really. It's over with. You got in one good punch. Isn't that enough?"

But Justin shook his head. "He thinks he can just screw around with whoever he wants. Well, fuck that. He knows we're together. And he still pulls this shit. What the fuck's his problem?"

Lance hugged Justin close. "I don't know," he whispered. He hoped he would forget the taste of Joey's lips, the feel of his hands. Justin leaned into him, running his arms around Lance's waist, and outside the window Lance could see Chris talking with Monica, probably about today's show. He sighed and just prayed the day would end soon.

All I Ever Wanted
20. Never Meant This Pain
Part 5 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

A few days of sand and surf seemed the perfect way to let off the tension that had built up between the guys during the last week. JC and Chris stepped around the others carefully, afraid of saying anything that might set off another fight. Justin barely managed to be civil to Joey -- when they appeared in public, he kept the others between them and never spoke to him at all. For his part, Joey avoided Justin, though Lance felt his gaze often enough that he realized Justin had been right all along. Joey did like him. And Lance didn't know what to do about it.

So their manager cleared their schedule and sent them to a small, private beach on the Jersey shore, hoping the sun would clear the air between them. They stayed at a large beach house, privately owned, on a two-mile stretch of white sand not open to the public. No one knew they were there. When the tide came in Joey would go down to the water and ride the waves. Chris used an abandoned stretch of boardwalk as a skate ramp, and JC spent hours working on new songs, lounging on the deck. Lance tried to get Justin to come swimming with him, but Justin didn't like the ocean and stayed on the deck with JC. "No sharks up on the deck," he said, smiling.

"No sharks in the water, either," Lance joked. "This is New Jersey, not Florida."

But Justin just shook his head. "And no me in the water, either."

So Lance walked the quarter mile to the water alone, kicking the hot sands of the dunes as the sun beat down on his body, warming him. He wore just a pair of swim trunks, and he wished Justin would come with him one day. The thought of holding Justin close in the ocean, the two of them floating in the water, their bodies pressed tight against each other, the taste of salty water on sun-kissed skin ... Lance almost turned around at the image, the need to hold Justin was so overpowering.

On the beach he saw Joey, trying desperately to get his surfboard into the waves, but New Jersey wasn't California and the surf was low this time of the day. Lance stopped and watched as Joey tossed the board down on the sand, disgusted. He wore a wetsuit that clung to him like a second skin, the arms and legs cut short, the sleek black material glistening in the afternoon sun. Lance watched as Joey bent over, reaching for the board, and the way the wetsuit hugged his back and buttocks make Lance's throat ache.

And then Joey looked up and saw him. "Hey, man!" he called. "The surf sucks today."

Lance willed himself to stop staring and walked down the stretch of shore to where Joey stood. The incoming tide washed over Lance's feet as he stood on the opposite side of Joey's surfboard. He looked at Joey, his

hair damp, slicked back, his eyes warm, his mouth turned into a very slight smile. Unconsciously, he sighed. Lord, give me the strength, he prayed, not quite sure what he needed the strength to do, but suddenly he didn't trust himself. When Joey stepped around the board and stood just inches from him, Lance tried not to back away.

"So," Joey said, his voice thick. Lance glanced at him before turning back to the ocean. He felt a cool, damp finger touch his arm and trace around his back until Joey's arm rested around his shoulders, warm and wet and heavy. Lance tried to shrug away, but Joey wouldn't let him. "Look at me, Lance," he whispered.

Lance complied. Suddenly Joey was pressing his body against Lance's, and Lance could feel the hardness of an erection through the thin wetsuit. Lance swallowed hard. "Joey, no," he said, pushing away.

Joey let him go. "Why not?" he asked, and the hurt in his eyes was almost unbearable.

Lance turned away, crossing his arms in front of his chest. Suddenly he was very cold, and the water running around his feet was icy. He wanted to go back to the house. He wanted to hold Justin close and bury his head in Justin's chest. He wanted to forget the look in Joey's eyes right now, and he wanted to forget the fire of Joey's touch against his skin, the way his body ached when he looked at his friend.

But Joey touched his shoulder gently. "Lance?" he asked, his voice breaking. "Please, Lance, tell me."

"Joey, it's not you," Lance replied. He blinked back tears that pricked at his eyes and stared out over the ocean. "Oh God, please believe me, Joey, it's not you. If it wasn't for Justin, there would be nothing stopping me from ... from this ..." He let his voice trail off.

Joey sighed. "So you and Justin are together," he said, not quite asking.

Lance nodded. "I love him," he said simply. "And I don't want to hurt him. I can't."

Joey wrapped his strong arms around Lance's waist and rested his head on Lance's shoulder, his hair ticklish and wet against Lance's warm skin. He felt so right holding onto Lance like that. "I should've told you sooner," Joey whispered. "I meant to but I kept telling myself it was stupid, that you wouldn't want me, that I didn't want you. But then I saw the way you looked at Justin and I wanted you to look at me like that. I wanted to hold you, to touch you, to taste you ..." He sighed. "Lance, I didn't know you two were together. Honest. I thought maybe you were just fooling around. I thought I might still have a chance."

"Joey," Lance said quietly, and then couldn't think of anything else to say. The thought that Joey was watching him all this time, waiting for a chance to talk to him, waiting for him -- the thought made Lance's heart break. "I don't want to hurt you, either," Lance whispered. "I ... I want things to be the way they were before any of this happened. Is that possible? Can we do that?"

"Justin hates me," Joey said. "I don't blame him -- I'd hate me, too."

But Lance shook his head. "He doesn't hate you. It hurts so much because he doesn't want to hate you. It's easier to trust you, but when you kissed me ..." The memory of Joey's lips against his, spicy and sweet and warm, made Lance close his eyes in frustration. "He doesn't think he can trust you anymore. You need to talk to him."

"He won't listen."

Lance laughed. "Joey, you can make anyone listen to you."

"Anyone but you," Joey said sadly. Lance glanced at him as Joey disentangled himself from Lance and stepped back.

"Joey --" Lance said again, but Joey just shook his head.

"No," he said. "You're right. It's my fault. I should've told you sooner." He looked at Lance with a tortured gaze. "That's one thing I will always regret. That I should've told you sooner."

Lance reached out for Joey, but he bent down to pick up his surfboard. Tucking it under one hand, he started towards the house. Lance watched his retreating back and tried to forget the way he had felt in Joey's arms. Where Joey had touched him, his skin was cool and damp.

At the house Joey dropped his board on the ground and ran up the steps to the porch. Before he could change his mind or lose his courage, he hurried around the side of the house and onto the deck. JC and Justin lay stretched out on lounge chairs, dark sunglasses covering their eyes. Chris sat on the deck playing with his dog Busta. As Joey came up to them, Chris glanced at JC, who pulled off his sunglasses and watched as Joey stopped in front of Justin's chair. His shadow fell over Justin, and in a low voice, JC warned, "Joey --"

Justin looked up at Joey, a scowl already on his face. "We need to talk," Joey said. "Now."

Then he turned and stormed into the house. JC leaned over to Justin. "You don't have to --"

But Justin pushed himself out of the chair and followed Joey wordlessly. Chris cuddled Busta and in a high, childish voice, said, "There's gonna be a fight, Busta. Yes, there is! You better believe it!"

JC tossed one of his sandals at Chris. It missed him by a few inches, and Busta leaped on it, growling furiously. "Shut up so I can hear," JC admonished.

"You can't hear them," Chris replied.

"I can if you shut up." JC crept close to the screen door, Chris right behind him, and they listened to the quiet inside the house.

Joey stopped just inside the den, hoping Justin would follow. When he heard the screen door slam, he sighed, relieved. So Justin wasn't so pissed that he didn't want to hear what Joey had to say. Maybe Lance was right.

But when Justin spoke, his voice was laced with anger. "What do you want?" he asked.

Joey turned around and studied Justin. He had pushed his blue tinted sunglasses up onto his head, smashing down his crown of curls, and he stood with his arms crossed in front of his muscular chest. Everything about him exuded hostility, but Joey could see what Lance would want with this young, sporty, sexy boy. He took a deep breath. "Remember when I asked you about Lance?"

Justin blinked in surprise. He hadn't expected that. Joey waited while Justin thought back to the day they played basketball. Reluctantly, Justin nodded, his features still clenched.

"I asked you what was up between you two," Joey said. "Remember?" When Justin nodded again, Joey asked softly, "Do you remember what you told me?"

Justin closed his eyes. A muscle in his jaw twitched. "I told you nothing," he whispered.

Joey nodded. "Nothing," he repeated. He watched the anger fade from Justin's face, his shoulders relaxing slightly as he thought about what Joey had said. In a quiet voice, Joey said, "I've liked Lance ever since I met him. He's so innocent, so down to earth, so different from anyone I've ever known. But I was afraid to admit the way I felt. I didn't want to believe it -- me, Joey, world's biggest flirt. I was afraid to admit that I might be attracted to a guy."

"You can't help who you fall in love with," Justin said just as quietly, but the anger was gone from his voice.

Joey shook his head. "No, you can't. When I asked you about ... about him, I wanted to believe there really was nothing between you two. I wanted to believe I still had a chance. So when you --" His voice broke, and he turned away.

From across the room, Justin said, "Joey, I didn't know ... I thought you were trying to stop us, tell us we were wrong. So I told you it was none of your business."

Joey nodded. "And I believed I still had a chance. I didn't push it, but when I got drunk, I couldn't stop myself. I wish you had told me then. I swear I never wanted to hurt you."

He watched Justin bite his lower lip, torn between wanting to believe him and the pain and anger he had harbored for so long. "Why tell me this now?" Justin asked softly.

"I asked Lance why he kept pushing me away," Joey admitted, his voice bitter. "He told me he loved you. I couldn't say anything to that."

"And you really didn't know?" Justin persisted.

Joey shook his head. "God, Justin, you think I wanted this? You think I wanted us fighting over the same guy? Over Lance?" He turned to Justin and smiled sadly. "I can't promise you I won't look at him. I can't promise

you I won't think about him. But I can swear that I won't touch him again, as long as you two are together. I promise you that."

For a long moment Justin studied Joey, taking in his earnest face, his teary eyes. And then he nodded. "That's fair enough. I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Joey said, brushing the comment aside. He glossed over his pain with a smile. "Just don't hurt him, okay?"

Justin smiled back. "I won't." Stepping closer, he hugged Joey quickly, and Joey let his arms linger on Justin's waist. So this is how he feels to Lance, Joey thought, closing his eyes for the tight embrace. Just as quickly, they broke away. "No hard feelings, eh?"

"None," Joey said, smiling. With a twinkle in his eyes, he whispered loudly, "Watch this." Then he cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled, "I'm gonna kill you, Curly! I swear it!"

Suddenly the screen door banged open. JC fell on the floor as Chris vaulted over him, Lance pushing through. Justin turned and laughed at their friends, falling over themselves trying to get inside. "Didn't your mothers ever tell you eavesdropping is rude?" he said.

JC pushed Chris off of him. "We're just concerned --" he began, but Joey cut him off.

"You're nosy," he said, helping JC to his feet.

Lance came around to stand beside Justin, his eyes searching Justin's face. He glanced between Justin and Joey. "You guys okay now?" he asked.

Justin smiled at him and tweaked his nose playfully. "Fine," he said.

"You're not going to kill each other?" Chris asked.

Joey shook his head. "Not today," he said.

"Woohoo!" Chris whooped, and Lance laughed, relieved. Joey threw an arm around Justin's shoulders and tried not to let the sadness in his heart shine in his eyes.

All I Ever Wanted
21. Knock, Knock
by NSyncGrrl

After a long day on the beach, Lance was ready to wash the sand off of him and call it a night. On the deck of the beach house were two outdoor shower stalls -- strong, wooden walls kept prying eyes away, and a small space beneath the door allowed water to run across the concrete flooring into a drain outside the showers. A small bench ran the length of one wall, inside the shower, stocked with shampoo and soap and razors.

Inside the stall, the water was cool and invigorating after a hot day in the sun, and Lance stood beneath the shower head, letting the water pound into his shoulders, hearing the furious roar of it in his ears. He still wore his swim trunks, but he only wanted to get the sand off of them before taking them off. He was so tired of sitting in sand, of sand shifting against his skin when he walked. He ran his hands through his hair, slicking it back, as a sea breeze blew between the wooden planks of the shower wall and tickled his skin. Everyone should take a shower outside, Lance thought, sighing.

Outside the shower, he heard someone approach, their footsteps slapping through the run-off water. Then there was a knock on the shower door. "Let me in," he heard Justin say, his voice muffled through the wood.

Grinning, Lance replied, "I'm in here. Find your own shower."

The door jiggled against its frame as Justin tugged at it. "Come on, Lance," he wheedled. The lock on the inside of the door held fast.

"I'm taking a shower, Justin," Lance said patiently, as if he had to explain. But suddenly the thought of Justin in here with him under the running water hit him, and he placed his hand on the lock, smiling.

"No shit, Sherlock," Justin said. Placing both hands on the top of the door, he stood on his toes and tried to look over. All Lance saw was the top of Justin's curls and his nose, which Lance promptly touched with one wet finger. Justin fell back. He leaned against the door and whispered loudly, "Lance, don't make me beg."

Lance leaned on the other side of the door. Over the sound of the shower he could hear Justin's breath. "You're not begging yet," he said.

"Lance," Justin warned. "I'm going to crawl up in there in a minute." To emphasize his point, he stuck one bare foot under the door.

Stepping playfully on Justin's toes, Lance smiled. The urge to open the door was almost overwhelming -- his shorts clung tightly to the start of a throbbing erection; a few more minutes of this bantering and he'd really have to take off the shorts. "Say please," Lance laughed.

"Pleeeese," Justin asked, drawing the word out. He shook the door again. "I'm going to huff, and puff, and blow this door down if you don't

open up."

Lance threw the lock back and pulled the door open slightly. Sticking his head out, he grinned when he saw the frustrated look on Justin's face. "Well, if you're in the mood to blow something, you can come in."

"You are terrible," Justin said, but a smile tugged at his lips and he pushed his way past Lance into the shower. Lance locked the door behind him, and turned to find Justin standing under the shower head, the water flattening his curls and runneling over his bare chest and swim trunks. He was so close -- "There's not much room in here," Justin said, his voice suddenly soft.

"It's not built for two," Lance replied. He blinked water off his eyelashes and stepped around Justin, their hips rubbing each other in the small space. When he reached for a washcloth, Justin caught him around the waist, his hands wet and cool on Lance's warm skin. Lance turned and Justin pressed him back against the wooden wall of the shower, his wet body hard against Lance's. His lips brushed Lance's gently, not quite a kiss, his tongue licking the shower spray from Lance's lips. "You taste like summer," Justin whispered. "Salty and hot and sweet."

Lance ran his hands up over Justin's bare chest, around his muscular shoulders, across his warm back. Leaning closer for more of a kiss, Lance whispered, "Keep talking like that and we might be in here forever."

"The water company would have a fit," Justin replied, kissing along Lance's cheek. His tongue licked the sensitive skin in front of Lance's ear, and Lance pulled Justin close. Their hard nipples brushed each other, and Justin thrust his own erection against Lance's gently as he slipped his hands into Lance's shorts. He cupped Lance's buttocks in his hands, squeezing lightly. Feeling packed and smeared across Lance's skin, Justin whispered into Lance's ear, "You're grainy."

Lance pulled back slightly. He was grainy, and even though he loved the way Justin felt pressed against him, each thrust of his friend's hips rubbed the sand along his erection and it hurt. "I know," he said, pushing Justin away. "I've got sand everywhere."

A gleam sparkled in Justin's eye. "Then we'll just have to get you cleaned up." In one smooth motion, he managed to pull Lance's shorts down. They fell in a wet pile on the concrete floor, and his erection was red and stiff. Lance thought maybe some of the redness and swelling was from the sand, but he didn't say anything.

And then Justin slipped off his own shorts, too, and they stood naked in the open air, the water cooling on their hot bodies, the breeze licking across their nipples, their erections, arousing them even more. Laughing, Justin picked up both their shorts and tossed them out of the shower. They landed on the concrete flooring with wet smacking sounds.

Justin pulled Lance into the flow of the shower. Lance closed his eyes as the water fell around him, plastering his hair to his head, caressing his body. When Justin leaned past him, he felt his friend's thick cock brush against his hip, and he reached out, wrapping an arm around Justin's waist. He smelled flowers and fruit, and opened his eyes to see Justin with a wet washcloth in one hand, pouring shampoo into it with the other. He

smiled at Lance. "Salon Selectives," he said. "So you'll smell yummy."

"That's shampoo," Lance said as Justin rubbed the washcloth between his hands. A thick white lather rose from the depths of the cloth.

"It works as soap," Justin said. "And smells better, too. Now close your eyes."

Sighing, Lance obeyed. Justin moved behind him and began rubbing the soapy washcloth over his shoulders and across his back. Lance leaned into the gentle touch, the soft cloth tracing circles into his skin. Justin was so close, Lance could feel his erection against his hip, and Justin's hands moved around his back and lathered his arms. The water rinsed the lather away as Justin scrubbed the sand from Lance's back, his butt, his legs. Then Justin edged around in front of him, and Lance felt the soapy cloth teasing his nipples, rubbing his stomach, gently enveloping his hard cock and squeezing playfully. He gasped and then sneezed out a noseful of water. "Careful," Justin said, cupping Lance's chin in one hand while he toyed with Lance's erection in the other. He pulled Lance towards him, his lips covering Lance's mouth, his tongue delving inside, as he kneaded Lance's swollen shaft gently.

Lance moaned as Justin released his cock and trailed the washcloth around his hip, pulling Lance so close that their erections rubbed against each other. Lance thrust against Justin and ran his arms around Justin's waist, one hand holding his friend's back while the other slipped between Justin's legs to brush along soft skin. Justin thrust against him, moaning into Lance's mouth, his arms around Lance's neck and hip clutching him tight.

The sound of the door to the beach house opening was faint beneath the running water, but they both heard it clearly. Then Chris called, "Jesus, Lance, are you going to use up all the water?"

Justin smiled against Lance's lips. "Told you," he whispered.

Lance grinned. "I doubt the water company called," he said. Reluctantly he disentangled himself from Justin, kissing him one last time. Then he stepped up on the small bench and peeked over the wooden stall. "Sorry," he called.

Chris looked at him, then at the pool of running water, laced with soapy lather, running out of the shower and down the drain. "We've got no water pressure inside. You can't even flush a toilet when these things are on. Are you almost finished?"

Lance nodded. He felt Justin's arms wrap around his hips until his hands cupped Lance's erection, his head resting against Lance's butt. He hoped they were almost finished. "I just gotta wash my hair and I'll be done."

Chris thought this over. Then he noticed the two pairs of shorts outside of the shower, both wet and now soapy from the run-off. "Have you seen Justin?" he asked.

"Um," Lance stammered, trying to think of something, but then Justin raised one hand beside him, his fingers barely clearing the wall. "Here!"

he called. Lance looked at Chris with a guilty expression on his face.

But Chris just smiled. "Turn the shower off," he said. "Dinner's almost ready." Then he shook his head and went back inside.

Lance climbed down from the bench. "You heard him," he said, rubbing his hands briskly over his body to wash away the rest of the soap. Justin squeezed a handful of shampoo into his hand and worked the cool liquid into Lance's hair, lathering it quickly. As Lance leaned back and washed it out of his hair, Justin kissed his neck, just beneath his chin.

"I think you're all clean now," Justin whispered. "Maybe later we can pick up where we left off."

"After dinner," Lance promised, turning the water off.

All I Ever Wanted
22. Dinnertime
by NSyncGrrl

Lance and Justin walked in from the deck, beach towels draped around their waists, their hair wet and sticking up where they quickly rubbed at it with a towel. Inside the beach house they were staying at, Chris sat at the bar between the kitchen and living room. JC sat on the sofa behind Chris, talking on the phone. The smell of spicy tomato sauce filled the air, heating the kitchen and steaming the windows. "What's for dinner?" Lance asked, picking out a piece of lettuce from the salad bowl in front of Chris and sticking it in his mouth.

Chris shrugged. "I'm not cooking," he said.

"Who is?" Justin asked as he passed into the living room, heading for the stairs to change into something more than a towel.

Chris glanced at him. "If you and Lance were outside, and I'm sitting here, and JC is sitting there --" he pointed to JC "-- then who do you think is cooking?"

"That would be me," Joey said, coming into the kitchen from the pantry, his hands full with two long loaves of fresh bread. He let his gaze linger over Lance's damp, bare chest, the towel around his narrow waist, his disheveled hair. When Lance turned, Joey smiled brightly and asked, "Mosticcoli, anyone?"

"What's that?" Lance asked, picking at the salad.

Chris slapped his hand away. "Leave some for the rest of us," he said.

Setting the bread on the counter in the middle of the kitchen, Joey studied the way the thin towel clung to Lance's wet body, outlining his firm buttocks and the back of his thighs. "It's kinda like lasagna," Joey said, watching water from Lance's hair run in tiny rivulets down the plane of his back. He swallowed hard and forced himself to look away. "Only spicier."

Justin bounced down the steps and into the kitchen, a pair of jean shorts and a baja pullover replacing his towel. As he passed Lance, he slapped his friend's butt and said, "Go get dressed." Joey busied himself with slicing the bread to keep from watching Lance walk away. Then Justin leaned on the counter and picked up the end piece of the bread. Chewing on it thoughtfully, he watched Joey pull the knife through the loaf and asked, "What're we having?"

"Massachusetts," Chris called from the bar.

"Mosticcoli," Joey corrected, rolling his eyes. Justin looked up at him and laughed. When he reached for another slice of bread, Joey pointed the knife at him. "What is it with you two? Dinner's not ready yet. Stop eating."

"We worked up an appetite," Justin said, then turned away quickly when he saw sadness flash across Joey's face. He knew they had been in the shower outside together -- he had seen Justin knock on the door from the kitchen window earlier. He thought when he accepted the fact that Justin and Lance were together, then maybe his crush on Lance would fade away, but he was wrong. Just seeing them in the same room together hurt, but he didn't say anything. It wasn't their fault he felt like this.

Fortunately Justin wasn't angry with him anymore, and when he sensed the pain behind Joey's eyes, he changed the subject. "What movie did you get for tonight?" he asked, his voice light.

Since they had come to this beach house, it had been a custom to take turns cooking. Whoever cooked that night chose a movie for them all to watch together after dinner. Joey had been surprised at some of the films they had seen -- everything from old black and white westerns to the strangest things the local Blockbuster had to offer. Today when he went combing the aisles of the video store, he had toyed with the idea of renting a porno, just to see what the others would say, but decided on an old favorite of theirs instead. He didn't think he could sit through a porno with Lance beside him and keep his promise to Justin about not touching him. "Reservoir Dogs," he said.

"Cool!" Justin cried. "I haven't seen that one yet."

Joey smiled. "That's right, I forgot you were too young to see it when it came out."

Justin punched him playfully in the arm. "Oh yeah, like you saw it in theaters, Mr. Fatone."

"My brother snuck me in," Joey said, finishing up with the bread. Turning to the oven, he asked, "Can you get that bread buttered for me? Just don't eat it all."

"I won't," Justin pouted before sticking another slice in his mouth. Joey opened the oven, dry heat rushing out at him, and reached up for the oven mitts by the sink.

Someone handed them to him. Glancing up, Joey saw Lance standing beside him, wearing shorts and a faded sweatshirt. He smiled as Joey took the oven mitts from him. "Anything I can do?" he asked.

Stop being so damn sweet, Joey thought, and suddenly the heat from the oven wasn't the only thing making him sweat. Instead he said, "Step back," as he grabbed the hot casserole dish in both hands and pulled it out of the oven. As he set it down on the edge of the sink, the tip of his finger brushed the baked glass, and he let go of the dish quickly. "Shit!" he cried, sticking his finger in his mouth.

Lance was right there, reaching for his hand. "Joey, let me see," he said, trying to look at the burn, but Joey twisted away. "Joey --" Lance began, then turned on the cold water. "Run it under here."

"What happened?" Justin asked, his eyes narrowing as he watched Joey lean past Lance to stick his hand in the sink.

"Burned himself on the dish," Lance replied.

Justin held up the bowl he was scooping butter out of to spread on the bread. "Use this," he said tightly. "My mom says butter is good for burns."

Chris came into the kitchen. "That's margarine," he said. "And it's not good for burns." Pushing between Joey and Lance, Chris leaned down and looked at Joey, tiny beads of sweat sticking into the trimmed hair on his chin. "You okay?" he asked.

Joey nodded. "Fine," he said, his voice a little shaky. For all the goofing off and craziness Chris played, he was probably the only one in the room other than Joey himself who knew that it wasn't the pain from the burn that was bothering him right now. He had noticed the way Chris nonchalantly placed himself between him and Lance to cut the tension in Justin's voice. Joey sighed. If Lance thought this was going to be easy for him, just pretending his feelings didn't exist, he was so wrong. Joey could say that Lance meant nothing to him, but that was far from the truth, and when Lance stood so close to him, he found himself flustered and feverish and afraid.

Chris glanced over at Justin and Lance. "Can you guys set the table?" he asked. Joey looked up as Justin studied them for a minute -- Joey leaning over the sink, his hand under the faucet, Chris standing over him.

"Sure," Justin said, stacking the bread into a basket. Lance grabbed the salad and the handful of silverware lying on the counter, and they left the kitchen.

Once they were in the dining room, Chris leaned back against the sink. Softly, he said, "When I was in high school, I liked this girl named Sarah. We were really good friends, and before I knew it, I was in love. Or I thought I was. The only problem? She was my best friend's girl."

Joey swallowed past the lump in his throat and watched the water splash over his hand. His finger was numb from the cold but he didn't want to turn off the spigot just yet. "What did you do?" he asked quietly.

"I told her," Chris admitted. "She said she liked me but she liked my friend more."

"Did it hurt?" Joey asked.

Chris nodded. "Like a bitch. Every time the three of us were together, my heart broke all over again. Finally I realized that if I tried to come between them, I'd end up losing them both. And I didn't want that to happen. So I lost myself in a slew of girlfriends and eventually we drifted apart. Whatever I once felt for her disappeared."

Joey sighed. "It's not that easy," he said.

Chris touched Joey's shoulder. "I know you don't think so right now," he said, "but no one's ever died from a broken heart, and the wanting will go away."

"I'm such a jackass," Joey said quietly. "I've always played the field, never let anyone get too close. And then when I'm not looking --" He

sighed and turned off the water. His finger started to throb where he had burned it. Drying his hand on a towel, he pulled himself together and said, "Well, dinner's ready. And Chris?" He looked at his friend and forced a smile on his face. "Thanks."

Chris clapped him on the back. "I'm here for you, man," he said. Then he picked up the casserole dish of steaming mosticcolli and carried it into the dining room. On his way, he hollered, "JC! Dinner!"

Quickly JC hung up the phone and came to the table. Joey sighed again, scooped up the parmesan cheese, and headed into the dining room with the others.

All I Ever Wanted
23. What a Mess!
by NSyncGrrl

Justin read the back of the cake mix box carefully. At high altitudes, preheat oven to 350°. Was New Jersey a high altitude? He didn't think so. For a white cake, use 3 egg whites. Well, the picture on the box was of a white cake. That's what he wanted to make. But how did you get the yellow stuff out of the egg?

Frustrated, Justin tossed the box on the counter and began digging through the kitchen cabinets, looking for flour. Now where did they keep it? Or did they even have any? This cooking gig sucks, he thought sourly.

Behind him someone laughed. He turned to see Lance leaning against the doorframe, watching him. "Stop the press, Justin's cooking," he said, grinning.

"Hey, I can cook," Justin grumbled. "Do we have any flour?"

Coming into the kitchen, Lance leaned on the island counter in the middle of the room and watched Justin squat down to root through the lower cabinets. "You're not making those biscuits again, are you?" he asked, suspicious.

Justin rolled his eyes. "That was a long time ago," he said. "How was I supposed to know you can't use baking soda instead of baking powder? That's all I could find." He opened the cabinet under the sink.

"That's just cleaning stuff," Lance said. He walked around the island and opened one of the cabinets above the stove. "I think the flour is up here." He pulled down a large sack with Pillsbury written across it in blue letters, but when Justin reached for it, Lance pulled it back. "What are you making?"

"A cake," Justin replied, reaching for the flour again.

Lance stepped back and kept the bag out of reach. "What's the occasion?" he asked, his eyes glistening playfully.

Justin sighed. "I just wanted to make something, okay?" He held his hand out for the flour.

Lance studied him for a minute and then said, "You can't cook, Justin. You can barely boil water. So what's the big deal about making a cake?"

Justin bit the inside of his lip and said nothing. The other night Joey had made a delicious Italian dish for dinner, and everyone raved over it. Lance kept saying over and over again how good it was, and Joey basked in the praise. Justin couldn't help but feel a twinge of jealousy at that, even though Joey had promised to stay away from Lance. So Justin wanted to prove to Lance that he could cook, too. And a cake seemed an easy task. But if he said anything, Lance might think he was being childish. So he just pouted and waited with his hand outstretched for the

flour.

But Lance was pretty good at figuring out Justin's emotions, and he sighed. "I thought you had worked everything out with Joey," he said quietly.

"I have," Justin said. "At least, I think I have. But hearing you go on and on about what a good cook he was -- well, he ate that up. And I wanted to show you I can cook, too."

Lance rolled his eyes. "He's Italian, Justin. All Italians are good cooks. It's a law of nature."

"Just give me the flour," Justin said, suddenly not very interested in cooking anymore. He felt bad for thinking the way he did, but he couldn't help it. He knew Joey wasn't going to try to steal Lance from him, but the fact that Joey even felt the way he did made Justin uneasy and sad.

But Lance wasn't finished yet. "You'll have to come get it," he said, grinning. When Justin looked at him, he saw a spark in Lance's eye that made him smile.

"So that's how it is," he said, calculating the distance between the two of them.

Lance nodded and held the flour above his head with one hand. Justin lunged for it, but Lance stepped backwards, his butt hitting the counter behind him as Justin pressed his body against Lance's, reaching for the flour with one hand as the other leaned on the counter beside Lance, steadying himself. His fingers brushed Lance's, and then Lance kissed him quickly on the cheek, startling him. He stepped back and Lance lost his grip on the bag. They watched it fall, a fan of white powder spraying across them, and then the bag hit the corner of the island counter and split open. Flour burst across the counter top and fell to the floor in long lines like waterfalls, the soft substance making no noise as it spread across the floor tiles. "Oh shit," Lance said softly.

Justin looked at him. A white line ran through Lance's hair, down one cheek, and down the front of his shirt. Laughing, Justin leaned forward to kiss Lance. "You think I can scoop up enough to make a cake?" he whispered.

Lance touched Justin's nose, his finger coming away white. "You're covered in flour," he said, and when Justin pressed his lips against his, Lance ran his hands around Justin's back, pulling him close. As their tongues licked each other, Justin thrust his hips gently against Lance's, suddenly aroused. He reached around Lance and knocked over the bowl he was going to use to mix the cake in. The three eggs on the counter rolled and plopped to the ground with a sticky sound.

Justin turned to see the mess. "Damn," he swore. "Those were the last ones, too."

"No cake for you today, Mr. Timberlake," Lance said, stepping around Justin carefully to avoid the flour all over the floor. "The others should be back from the store in a few minutes -- we should get this cleaned up."

Justin reached for Lance, his fingers catching Lance's belt loops on his jeans. Pulling Lance back against him, he wrapped his arms around Lance's waist and whispered in his ear, "What's the rush?"

"They went out for groceries," Lance replied. "They'll have to come in here." He pulled away from Justin reluctantly. "They'll have a fit --"

Justin stepped closer to Lance, hoping to hug him tight. But he stepped on the slick egg yolk on the floor and his foot slipped out from under him. He stumbled into Lance, reaching out to steady himself, but Lance's hands slid across the flour on his arms and Justin ran into the island. As he fell to the floor, he swept flour off the counter, and he lay on his back staring up at Lance as the flour settled on him like a blanket. "My God, Justin," Lance said, kneeling down beside him. "Are you okay?"

Suddenly Justin laughed. His back hurt and he felt extremely foolish, but the way Lance looked at him, so concerned, with flour in his hair and across his face -- Justin couldn't help but laugh. He reached up and pulled Lance down on top of him. "Justin --" Lance cautioned.

"I'm fine," Justin said, his voice thick as Lance shifted his weight onto Justin's body. "Just covered in flour."

"Maybe we should bake you instead," Lance said, grinning. He rubbed his hips against Justin's, his erection already hard beneath his jeans. "Right now I'm hungry for a little piece of you."

"No cake?" Justin teased, running his hands down Lance's back until they rested on his butt. He squeezed Lance through the jeans. Beneath his head the flour was soft and pillowy.

Lance kissed Justin, and when he pulled back, his lips were white with flour. "Not right now," Lance said. He brushed back Justin's curls and shook the flour from them. Justin blinked flour out of his eyelashes and sighed as Lance leaned down to kiss him again.

They heard the front door open, and Busta ran into the kitchen, yipping loudly. "Jesus!" someone cried. "What happened here?"

Lance scrambled to his feet, pulling Justin up as well. Justin brushed ineffectively at the front of his jeans as he watched the others pile into the kitchen, their arms full of paper bags. "You weren't trying to cook, were you?" Chris asked suspiciously.

Justin blushed. The kitchen was a mess. Joey and JC laughed as Lance brushed flour off his hands. When he turned around to get a towel, two white handprints stood out against the dark denim of his jeans, where Justin had grabbed him close. Justin ran a hand over his eyes and sighed, embarrassed. He didn't dare look at Joey, for fear of seeing the pain in his friend's eyes. Chris and JC pretended not to notice, but a sudden tension filled the room.

"Your pants are wet," JC said, pointing at the leg of Justin's jeans.

"I dropped the eggs," Justin mumbled. When he moved he felt flour sift off of the back of his t-shirt. "I'll get this cleaned up. Just ..." He sighed again. Suddenly he wanted to cry, but he couldn't understand why.

Joey came up to him and ran a hand over Justin's hair. A veil of flour fell around his face, and he looked up at Joey with teary eyes. Joey just smiled sadly. "You're not allowed in my kitchen again," he said playfully. "Admit it, man. You might be able to sing and you might be able to dance, but you sure can't cook."

Justin felt Lance's hand on the small of his back. "C'mon," he said softly. "I'll help you clean this up." Justin nodded.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. He headed to the pantry for a broom, sorry Joey had walked in on them like that. Not just because they were getting into the mood, but because he didn't want to hurt Joey. He sighed. As long as Lance and I are together, he thought, Joey is going to be hurt. But he couldn't give up Lance just because of that.

He hoped they could all get past this soon. Picking up the broom and a dustpan, he went back into the kitchen to clean up the mess he had made.

All I Ever Wanted
24. Flying the Friendly Skies
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sat in the last row of seats on the airplane, his eyes shut tightly, and willed himself to relax. Tinny music poured out of his headphones, drowning out the roar of the plane's engines, but he still felt the slight vibration of his seat through his back and legs, and he gripped the armrests as if holding on for dear life. God, he hated to fly.

Someone sat down in the seat beside him, and Lance opened one eye to see who it was. Justin grinned at him. Around them the plane was dark, the only lights illuminating the aisle. Plucking the headphones off of Lance's head, Justin whispered, "I can't sleep."

Lance sighed. Without the headphones on, the sound of the engines was loud. He wondered how anyone ever managed to fall asleep on these things. "I never can," Lance admitted.

"You scared?" Justin asked, placing a hand on Lance's. The touch was comforting, warm and soft in the darkness. Justin didn't have to see his friend's slight nod -- he knew Lance was afraid to fly. Squeezing Lance's hand, he said, "It'll be okay."

"Once we land," Lance said, his voice taut.

"You need something to take your mind off the flight," Justin said, slipping his hand into Lance's lap. He brushed his fingers across the front of Lance's jeans, and despite his fear, Lance felt his groin tighten beneath Justin's touch. "You can undo your seat belt," Justin whispered, his lips against Lance's ear. He unbuckled the confining belt, and pushed it aside.

"I feel better with it on," Lance said, but as Justin fumbled with the button on his jeans, he had to admit that he was feeling pretty good just now, with or without the belt.

Justin tugged Lance's zipper down slowly, the noise barely audible, and Lance slid down slightly in his seat, spreading his legs as Justin's hand cupped his dick through his underwear. Beneath the pressure of Justin's hand, Lance felt himself harden, and he bit back a moan of pleasure as Justin stroked his budding erection through the thin fabric. Lance closed his eyes and thrust up against Justin's palm, and he heard Justin shift beside him. His lips brushed Lance's softly, and Lance opened his mouth as Justin's lips passed over his again. Justin's tongue slipped between Lance's lips, warm and wet and insistent. As his hand continued to rub Lance's cock, Justin moaned into Lance's mouth, and Lance let go of the armrests to pull Justin close.

Near the front of the plane, someone shifted in the darkness, and then Lance heard the tell-tale ding of a call button. Shit, he thought, pushing Justin back. Justin looked down at him, confused, but then the stewardess passed their seats and Justin settled back into his chair. "Someone's awake," Lance whispered, reluctantly zipping up his jeans. "They might

hear us."

"So?" Justin replied. "They all know."

"But we don't have to give them a show," Lance said.

As the stewardess walked past them again, Justin leaned against Lance and whispered, "I want you." A shiver ran down Lance's spine at the words. He wanted Justin, too, wanted to hold him tight and rub against him and kiss him and never let go. But they were on an airplane, of all places, full of their friends and crew members and security guards, and they just couldn't get it on here. Unfortunately, Justin had other ideas, and he bit Lance's earlobe gently as the stewardess walked by again, a tray of food in her hand. She glanced at them and Lance smiled as Justin's tongue licked behind his ear. Narrowing her eyes, she hurried past them.

Lance placed a hand on Justin's chest, hoping to push him away, but Justin caught it in his own hand and held it tight. "Justin, stop," Lance whispered, though he didn't really want him to stop. He wanted them to be alone, but here?

Justin released Lance's ear and whispered, "The bathroom."

"What?" Lance asked, his heart beginning to race.

But Justin was already standing up. "The bathroom," he said again, pulling Lance to his feet. "We can be alone there."

Beneath his feet, Lance felt the rumble of the plane engines. He reached back for his seat. "Justin, I don't know --"

Justin wrapped an arm around Lance's waist, pulling him into the aisle. "Just trust me," Justin said, and with his hands on Lance's waist, he steered him into the back of the plane. Lance swallowed nervously, smiling at the stewardesses they passed. "I don't know about this ..."

Lance whispered as they neared the bathrooms.

Justin reached past him and pushed open one of the bathroom doors. Inside it was pitch black, and Lance stumbled against a short counter as Justin closed the door behind them and threw the "Occupied" sign into place. As Justin flicked on the lights, Lance glanced in the mirror above the counter, only to see Justin looking at him hungrily. "Don't they have intercoms in here?" Lance asked. "Everyone will hear us."

"That's just on that commercial," Justin said, reaching for Lance. His arms slid around Lance's waist, his hands spreading out against Lance's stomach, and he hugged Lance close. With his head on Lance's shoulder, Justin licked Lance's ear and then breathed against it, his breath cool and damp. His hands spread up until they teased Lance's nipples through his shirt, and Justin kissed Lance's neck. "Don't be scared," he whispered.

"I just don't like flying," Lance said, leaning into Justin's embrace. He let Justin turn him around, trailing kisses around his neck. Then he felt Justin's strong hands beneath his butt, lifting him up, and he gripped Justin's shoulders. Justin set him down on the counter, making him only a few inches taller than Justin himself, and Lance wrapped his legs around

Justin, crossing his feet behind Justin's butt. Running his arms around Justin's neck, Lance pulled him close. He set his forehead on Justin's and looked into his friend's ice blue eyes.

Justin leaned up to kiss Lance, but as their lips brushed, the plane bucked beneath them. Lance tightened his grip on Justin, hugging him tight. "What's that?" he asked, his voice low.

"Turbulence," Justin replied. He ran his hands along Lance's back, soothing him. "Happens all the time."

Lance sighed. "That's not good, is it?" he whispered.

Justin smiled. "It's fine, Lance, really." To ease Lance's mind, he began kissing Lance's ear, his breath hot against Lance's skin. Lance leaned into his touch and closed his eyes, trying to forget they were a thousand miles above the ground. Justin traced Lance's chin with his tongue, licked his lips playfully, before pressing their lips together, his tongue dancing into Lance's mouth. One hand held Lance's back while the other edged around into Lance's lap, unbuttoning his jeans. As his zipper eased down, Lance felt Justin rubbing his erection through his underwear, and he thrust into Justin's touch. Breaking their kiss, Justin leaned his forehead against Lance's and whispered, "You need to start wearing boxers."

"What for?" Lance asked, his voice thick.

"Easy access," Justin replied, stroking his throbbing cock for emphasis.

Lance smiled. "Maybe you should keep your hands out of my pants," he suggested.

Justin pouted and looked at Lance with large eyes. "You don't really want me to do that, now do you?" he asked sweetly, and Lance had to admit that no, he didn't.

But Justin managed to ease Lance's erection out of his underwear, carefully sliding it free from the confines of his briefs. With one hand around his swollen shaft, Justin pulled Lance into another kiss, his hand massaging Lance's cock between them. Lance thrust into Justin's hand and moaned as Justin ran his thumb down the length of his dick, pressing tenderly, rubbing along sensitive skin. Lance held Justin's head in both hands, his legs locked behind Justin, and lost himself in their kisses as intense waves of pleasure rolled through him. When the plane bumped beneath them again, he didn't notice.

Suddenly there was a knock on the bathroom door. "Sir?" a female voice called -- a stewardess. "Sir, you have to return to your seat. We're flying through some turbulence and the pilot has ordered all passengers into their seats."

Lance groaned as Justin continued to rub his aching cock. He thrust once into Justin's hand before whispering, "No one ever leaves us alone."

"The price of fame," Justin replied, gently easing Lance's dick back into his underwear. Zipping up his pants, he kissed Lance and smiled. "At least you forgot your fear of flying for a little while."

Lance smiled back. "If we did this every time, maybe I wouldn't mind flying so much."

Justin laughed. The stewardess knocked again. "Sir?" Rolling his eyes, he flicked off the light and took Lance's hand in his. When he opened the door, the stewardess stepped aside quickly, surprised as Justin came out, Lance right behind him. Justin smiled at her while Lance ducked his head, avoiding her gaze. Then the plane rumbled again, and Justin held Lance's hand tightly as they made their way back to the main cabin. They sank into their seats, buckling their seat belts, just as the buckle light went out.

Justin sighed. "Wouldn't you know it?" he said. Beside him Lance squeezed his hand and grinned.

"There's always the return flight," he promised, already looking forward to it. He rubbed his thumb along the back of Justin's hand and thought that maybe flying wasn't all that bad.

All I Ever Wanted
25. Stay
by NSyncGrrl

A knock on the hotel door startled Lance awake. He blinked in the darkness. 2:04, his clock read. Rubbing his bleary eyes, he wondered what woke him up. He turned over in the narrow bed and yawned when the knock came again, louder this time, more insistent.

"I'm coming," Lance called out sleepily. Kicking back the covers, Lance stumbled to the door, yanking it open. Blinking at the sudden light, he saw Justin standing in the hallway, one hand raised to knock again. He wore nothing but his boxers, and his eyes were red, his forehead creased into a frown, his curls a riot on his head. "Justin?" Lance asked. "You okay?"

Justin rubbed his eyes and shook his head. When he sighed, Lance stepped aside and asked, "What's the matter?"

Stepping into the dark room, Justin slipped his arms around Lance's bare waist and tucked his head against Lance's chest. Lance pushed the door closed and enveloped Justin, pulling him close. His friend was shivering in his arms. "Justin, what's wrong?" Lance asked, concerned.

Justin sighed shakily against Lance. "My mom was in an accident this morning," he said. He sounded as if he had been crying.

"Jesus," Lance whispered, hugging Justin tight. Suddenly Lance was wide awake. "Is she okay?"

Justin nodded against Lance, his curls tickling Lance's chin. "She says she's fine. Just a small fender bender." He clenched his hands into fists against Lance's back. "But it happened this morning. She called me around eleven or twelve and no one told me! I didn't know anything until she left another message this evening, checking up on me. She's like I'm fine, honey, really, and I didn't know what she was talking about." Lance felt hot tears against his chest, and he ran a hand through Justin's curls. "Dammit, they didn't even tell me ..."

"Ssshh," Lance whispered, rubbing his hand over Justin's back, soothing him. He rocked Justin gently in his arms and let him cry. Once the tears eased up, he held Justin close and prompted, "You said she was all right?"

Justin nodded. Pulling back, he wiped his nose and sniffled. "She's fine. Just a little shook up. But what if something had happened? What if she was in the hospital? Or ... or worse? What then?" He looked at Lance with dark, tortured eyes. "I would've never known. What are those people supposed to do if they don't give me my messages? Isn't that their job?"

Lance reached out and rubbed Justin's arm. "I'll talk to them in the morning. We'll find out what happened. Did you want to go home?" The thought of Justin leaving the group for a few days made his heart ache, but if that's what he needed to do, Lance would talk the others into it.

They could cancel a few shows if it meant his friend's peace of mind.

But Justin shook his head. "I'm fine," he said, though he didn't sound fine. "It just pisses me off that I wasn't told, you know?" He looked around the dark room, the red LED display of the clock snagging his attention. "I'm sorry I woke you up. I didn't realize it was so late --"

Lance shrugged. "That's what I'm here for," he said. "You." When Justin turned towards him, Lance smiled, a gesture lost in the darkness. Lance stepped closer to Justin, his hand still on Justin's arm. "It's never too late for you to come over."

He felt Justin's hand touch his chest lightly, his fingers brushing against Lance's nipples. "But we've got a long day tomorrow," he whispered, his mouth inches from Lance's own. "You should get back to bed."

"And you should get some sleep," Lance replied. He leaned forward and kissed Justin gently.

"I don't think I'll sleep well tonight," Justin admitted. Then he leaned forward and kissed Lance back, his lips lingering on Lance's.

Lance felt a heaviness settle into his groin and sighed. "Now I'm not going to sleep well," he said playfully, and he felt Justin grin against his lips.

"Then let me go. No use both of us losing sleep." Justin started to pull away, but Lance caught his hand and held it against his chest.

"Stay," he said simply.

He could almost feel Justin's gaze, studying him in the dark. "You sure?" he asked.

Lance nodded. Raising Justin's hand to his lips, Lance kissed his fingertips lightly. "We don't have to do anything," he said. "I know you probably don't feel like it right now anyway. But I want to hold you. The bed's small, but --"

"We'll fit," Justin said, stepping back. Curling his fingers around Lance's hand, he led him to the bed. He slipped under the blankets and pulled Lance down beside him. It was a tight squeeze, but with his arms around Justin, Lance shifted into a comfortable position and pulled the covers up to their shoulders. Justin snuggled against Lance's chest and sighed. "See?" he whispered, his voice a little sleepy. "There's enough room for us."

Lance kissed Justin's forehead, brushing his curls back. His bones ached and his eyes slipped closed, suddenly too heavy to keep open. He felt Justin kiss his neck, and then he fell back asleep holding Justin close.

All I Ever Wanted
26. By Morning's Light
by NSyncGrrl

The alarm buzzed. Lance rolled over and hit the clock with his hand, knocking it to the floor, but the alarm quieted. He felt Justin shift beside him, his back pinning Lance's arm to the bed, and he tried to pull himself out from under Justin's weight. When Justin moaned in his sleep, Lance ran a hand over his friend's forehead. He smiled at the way Justin frowned as he gently rolled him back enough to free his arm. As he tried to get out of bed, though, Justin snaked his arms around Lance's waist and pulled him close.

With a sigh, Lance allowed himself to be pulled back onto the bed. Justin tucked his head against Lance's back, and Lance glanced over his shoulder to see the tips of Justin's curls against the white sheets. "Rise and shine, morning glory," he said, covering Justin's hands across his stomach with his own. Justin groaned into his back.

The phone rang. Lance fumbled with the receiver until he managed to get it to his ear, only to hear a mechanical, sexless voice intone, "Wake up call for Mr. Lance Bass." He set the receiver back down and turned around in Justin's arms. Justin raised his head slightly as Lance shifted, then when Lance ran his arm behind Justin's shoulders, Justin snuggled against Lance's chest. His eyes were still closed, but Lance thought maybe he was waking up. To hurry him along, Lance shook him slightly. "Justin, you awake?" he asked.

"No," Justin groaned. He squeezed Lance tight. "And you aren't either. Go back to sleep."

But Lance smiled and sat up, pulling Justin up with him. "Wake up, lazy."

"What time is it?" Justin asked, yawning.

Lance glanced at the clock on the floor. "A little after five," he replied.

"Jesus," Justin grumbled. "I just fell asleep." He slid under the covers, draping one arm across Lance's waist as he laid his head on Lance's hip.

"Get up," Lance said, running a hand through Justin's curls. "We've got to be out of the hotel by six. Talk show this morning, remember?"

Justin buried his head in Lance's shorts, his breath hot through the thin material, and Lance felt a familiar stirring in his crotch as each breath fanned his cool skin. "Justin," Lance warned.

Blinking the sleep from his eyes, Justin grinned up at Lance. "Five minutes," he pleaded. With a playful gleam in his eye, Justin growled and bit at the slight bulge in Lance's shorts, his teeth closing on empty air just inches away.

Lance tried to frown, but the kittenish look in Justin's eyes enflamed

his blood and he didn't want to get out of bed. The rest of the world could wait. But Justin looked so damn cute that Lance couldn't resist teasing him a bit. Sliding to the edge of the bed, Lance said, "We don't have five minutes ..." He hoped Justin would stop him.

He did. Wrapping his hands around Lance's waist, Justin pulled him back. "Five more minutes," he whispered into Lance's ear, and Lance leaned back against Justin's warm chest.

"Five," Lance said, hoping his voice sounded stern. Justin eased him down to the pillow again, his hands roaming Lance's chest, caressing him, brushing his nipples erect. Lance rolled into Justin's arms, running his hands over Justin's shoulders, across his back. He drank in Justin's smooth skin, the light downy hair on his arms, the deep blue of his eyes. Justin laid down over Lance, the hardness between his legs pressing comfortably along Lance's inner thigh. He ran his hands under the pillow behind Lance's head and pulled himself down until their noses touched. "Four," Lance whispered.

Justin kissed him quickly. "Four and a half," he said.

Lance kissed Justin back, pressing his lips to Justin's for a few seconds before pulling away. "Four," he said again, smiling.

Justin returned the smile before he leaned down and covered Lance's mouth with his. His lips parted, easing Lance's lips open, and his tongue licked around Lance's teeth, dancing over his lips, before delving inside. Beneath Lance's head, Justin's hands clutched the pillow tight, and Lance felt himself pleasantly caught between the soft pillow and Justin. As they kissed, Justin moved his knee up slightly, until it brushed at Lance's erection. Moaning, Lance leaned back and Justin pushed against him, his mouth hungry against Lance's.

When they broke apart, Lance tried to catch his breath while Justin sighed, "Three."

Lance giggled breathlessly. "Three," he agreed, nodding. Beside them on the bedside table, the phone rang.

Justin cocked an eyebrow and cuddled closer to Lance. "The wake up call?" he asked, but Lance shook his head.

"Already got that," he replied, reaching for the phone. Justin shifted off of him slightly, and Lance caught him with his other arm, holding onto Justin's bare waist to make sure he didn't go too far. Putting the phone to his ear, he asked, "Hello?"

"Lance?" It was Joey.

"Hey Joey," Lance said, and beside him Justin groaned. "Tell him you're busy," Justin whispered.

On the other end of the phone, Joey was silent. Fear gripped Lance -- had he heard Justin? Just when he was about to say something, though, Joey asked, "Is Justin with you?"

Glancing at Justin, leaning against his shoulder, Lance said, "Yeah, why?"

"Just making sure," Joey said, his voice neutral. "When he didn't answer his call, it rolled over here. We just wondered where he was."

Lance ran a hand along the soft skin of Justin's side. "His mom was in an accident yesterday," Lance said, feeling as if he had to explain. "He was a little upset."

"Is she okay?"

Lance nodded. Then, realizing Joey couldn't see the gesture, he said, "Yeah, she's fine. He just --"

"You don't have to explain it," Joey said, cutting him off. For long minutes they sat there, listening to each other breathe, and Lance felt Justin studying him but he looked at the ceiling instead of meeting his friend's gaze. Finally Joey asked, "You two coming to breakfast? It's here already."

"Okay," Lance said, sighing. "We'll be right over." He waited until Joey hung up the phone before replacing the receiver.

Beside him Justin asked, "What did he want?"

"To know where you were," Lance replied. He looked at Justin, tracing the curve of his cheek with one finger. "Your wake up call rolled over to him."

But Justin wasn't satisfied. "What did he say?" he asked, his voice petulant.

"Is Justin there?" Lance said, smiling. "What did you think he said? Lance, I love you and I want you?"

Justin hit him in the arm. "Shut up," he mumbled, and Lance thought Justin was probably upset that his feelings were so transparent. Sighing, Lance hugged Justin close just as he was trying to sit up, pulling him back to the bed.

"No, you shut up," Lance whispered into Justin's neck before he licked along his friend's collarbone, kissing up behind Justin's ears.

Justin laughed at the touch. "I think our five minutes are up," he said, pulling away. Lance let him go.

Watching Justin kick the sheets from around his legs as he stood, Lance laid back on the pillows and asked, "You mad?"

Justin shook his head. Looking back at Lance, he smiled devilishly. "How can I be mad at you?" he asked, his gaze devouring Lance's naked chest, his spread arms, his disheveled hair. "You better get up before I can't stop myself and crawl back into that bed with you. Then we'll never get out."

"And breakfast will get cold," Lance said, stretching languidly. He felt Justin's hungry gaze and smiled. "And we can't have that."

As he disentangled himself from the sheets, Justin asked, "Can I stay here again tonight?"

Lance looked at Justin. "Do you even have to ask?" he replied. "Just set your wake up call to roll over here. Don't want Joey calling me again, do we?"

Justin kicked at him playfully. "Shut up," he said, but a grin toyed with the corners of his mouth and Lance couldn't wait for the day to be over so they could get back into the bed.

All I Ever Wanted
27. A Night on the Town
Part 1 of 5
Justin
by NSyncGrrl

Their next concert was Monday at RFK Stadium, but they flew into Dulles Airport early Friday night, eager for a weekend of free time spent in the nation's capital. Justin had asked their manager to book him and Lance a double room, hoping no one would say anything about it. No one did.

By the time they got to the hotel, darkness already draped the city. Justin unlocked their hotel room and pushed open the door. Inside were two full-size beds and a long window with open blinds. Outside the window, the lights of DC glistened wetly like a million underwater jewels. "Wow," Justin said, tossing his bag on one of the beds and walking over to the window. He shoved his hands in the pockets of his windbreaker and looked out over the city below.

Lance closed the door quietly behind them and chuckled. "You should've asked for a single room," Lance said. "What are we going to do with two beds?"

Justin shrugged, not turning from the view. "One to keep our stuff on, one to sleep in. I didn't want any rumors starting. The last thing we need are tabloid headlines saying that two members of NSync shared a hotel room with only a single bed in it."

"True," Lance admitted. He set his duffel bag down on the bed closest to the window and unzipped it. Rifling through his clothes, he started pulling out his toiletries -- razors, soap, toothbrush. From the window, Justin said, "Come here."

Lance set down his deodorant and walked over to the window. Running one hand around Justin's waist, he stood next to him and set his head on Justin's shoulder. Justin's arm wrapped around Lance's waist, his hand settling on Lance's hip, and he hugged him close. Kissing the top of Lance's head, Justin whispered, "Isn't it beautiful?"

Lance nodded. "Hard to believe it looks so bad during the day," he said wryly.

Justin squeezed him playfully. "Such an optimist," he said, grinning. Then, suddenly, he said, "Let's do something."

"Like what?" Lance asked.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know. But it's not even nine yet, and we don't have anything scheduled until Monday. We can't waste this."

"Maybe we can try out the bed a bit," Lance suggested, looking up at Justin coyly. "Before we actually have to sleep in it."

Justin grinned wickedly. "Now there's an idea." He leaned down and brushed Lance's forehead with his lips. Lance raised his head and kissed Justin, who turned towards Lance and pressed his lips to Lance's own. When his tongue slipped into Lance's mouth, Lance leaned back slightly and pulled Justin closer, gripping the flimsy fabric of his windbreaker in both hands. Justin's hand rested on the small of Lance's back, just above his hips, and he thrust his hips against Lance's. He didn't think they would make it to the bed.

The door opened. "Hey --" someone called, and Justin turned to see JC standing in the doorway, a light blush creeping into his cheeks. "Sorry, guys," he said, trying to back out of the room, but Joey and Chris were right behind him, pushing him in.

Justin turned away from Lance, but one hand still rested on Lance's back. "It's okay," he said, though his groin ached sweetly and he wanted nothing more than to toss all three of them out the window at that particular moment. Lance ran a nervous hand through his hair. Justin grinned. "So what's up?"

"We're bored," Joey said, plopping down on the first bed.

Chris looked at the two beds and frowned. "How'd you get two of these?"

Justin shrugged. "Asked for a double."

"These beds are huge!" Chris spread his arms out, trying to measure the length of the bed Joey was on. "Mine's not even half this size! Can I change with you?"

Lance laughed. "Sorry," he said.

Chris grabbed the edge of the bed and tried to tug it away from the wall. It didn't budge. "Maybe I can just take one for myself," he said, straining to move the bed. "C'mon, JC, give me a hand."

JC pushed Chris onto the bed. Joey rolled out of the way as JC sat down beside them. "I don't know about you, but all I want to do is go to bed."

Joey rolled his eyes at Lance. "You're no fun," he said. "DC is full of clubs. We can party hearty these next few days."

"I'm not in the mood for a club tonight," Justin said. "We just got off the plane. We need some downtime, but I'm sure you don't know what that is."

Joey glared at Justin. "How about we take in the sights?" Chris asked. "There's lots to see here. The Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House --"

"One problem," JC said, laying back on the bed. His head rested near Joey, who picked at JC's hair. JC waved his hand away, annoyed. "It's nighttime. None of the monuments are open."

"You can still see them -- they don't take them down at night," Chris said. "All lit up, no tourists to hassle with. It'll be nice."

"I'm going to sleep," JC said. "I can see the monuments some other time."

Lance smiled. "Ever the party animal, JC."

Joey glanced up at Lance. "You two wanna go?"

Lance felt Justin's hand rub against his back, and he looked over and shrugged. "Might as well," he said, his voice low. "You wanted to do something."

Grimacing, Justin replied, "Well, I thought we were going to do something else ..." On the bed, JC blushed again. "But if you want to, we can go. Chris is right -- it'll be fun."

Joey harped on JC long enough that he felt guilty about not hanging out with them, so when they left, JC came along too. They climbed into the back of a limo provided by the hotel, two bodyguards in tow, and headed into the city. In the limo, Justin held Lance's hand in his lap, rubbing it with his thumb. He stared out the window at the city passing them by and wished he and Lance had stayed behind at the hotel. He wished they were alone. But Joey, JC, and Chris were sitting across from them, laughing over something Lance just said, and none of them seemed to notice Justin's quiet, pensive mood. Justin sighed, remembering the feel of Lance's lips on his, Lance in his arms, and hoped they returned to the hotel soon.

The limo stopped and they climbed out. Around them the night was alive with the sounds of distant traffic and the rustling of leaves from the trees in the park where they parked. Their bodyguards stayed back far enough to allow the five friends some privacy, but were always in plain sight. Justin kept Lance's hand in his and slowed as they walked down the empty sidewalk, letting the others pull ahead.

The sidewalk wound down a slight hill, leading to the Vietnam War Memorial. The dark stone walls shone black like obsidian, lit by soft white lights. The effect was breathtaking. Up ahead Joey's laughter erupted into the night, and Justin stopped at the Memorial. Lance stopped as well, and turned towards Justin. "You okay?" he asked.

"Yeah," Justin replied, glancing at the others a few yards away. He pulled Lance closer and slipped an arm around his waist. Leaning against him, Justin breathed in the musky scent on Lance's neck and whispered, "Let's ditch them."

"What?" Lance asked, giggling as Justin's warm breath fanned his skin.

"Sshhh," Justin purred, stepping in front of Lance and hugging him close. He brushed his lips along the soft skin of Lance's neck, his breath hot in the cool night air. As he licked behind Lance's ear, Justin felt Lance's hands on his butt, slipping into the back pockets of his jeans. Lance moaned into Justin's curly hair as Justin thrust his stiffening erection against Lance's crotch.

Justin trailed kisses down Lance's neck, reaching up to unbutton Lance's shirt. When the first three buttons were open, Justin slid his hand

inside, his fingers caressing one of Lance's nipples, teasing it erect. Bending down, Justin licked the nipple lightly, and Lance moaned his name softly, his hands easing up to rest behind Justin's head. Justin tugged the nipple gently with his teeth and grinned against Lance's chest. "Let's go back to the limo," he whispered.

"We haven't seen the monuments yet," Lance said, but the tone of his voice suggested that maybe he didn't want to see them after all.

Justin kissed him, his lips wet and hot against Lance's own. "I've seen enough," he said, his tongue slipping into Lance's mouth to lick against his teeth, his cheeks, his tongue. He ran his hands under Lance's shirt and around his waist. "Let's go back."

Lance nodded as Justin pulled away. "We should tell the others where we'll be," he whispered, his voice thick with lust.

Glancing around, Justin saw Chris and JC further down the path. They stood by a statue of army nurses, bent over to read the statue's plaque in the dim lighting. "Where's Joey?" Justin asked.

Lance looked around. "There," he whispered. Justin followed Lance's gaze to see Joey standing in the shadows nearby, his arms crossed in front of his chest. He leaned against the wall of the memorial, watching them.

Anger flared up in Justin. "Come on," he said roughly, taking Lance's hand and leading him back to the limo. As they passed Joey, Justin fought the urge to punch him. The thought of Joey watching them kiss and touch each other so intimately infuriated him. He clenched his free hand into a fist unconsciously.

Lance placed a comforting hand on Justin's arm, sensing his anger. Ahead the limo sat dark and inviting against the curb, and Justin couldn't wait to hold Lance in his arms again. With no one gawking at us, he thought bitterly.

As Lance opened the door to the limo, Justin whirled back towards the memorial. "That bastard," he growled.

Lance grabbed his windbreaker in both hands, pulling him back. "Justin, leave him alone," he said.

"Damn peeping tom!" Justin shouted, hoping Joey heard him. "Fuck that, Lance. I don't like the idea of him getting off watching us, watching you --"

"We're outside," Lance pleaded. "The middle of downtown DC. He's probably not the only one who saw us."

"But he's the only one who stood there watching," Justin replied. He started away from the limo.

Lance kept his grip on Justin's windbreaker and pulled him back. Justin was strong, but when Lance wrapped his arms around his waist and held him tight, he stopped, sighing. "I don't like an audience," he said, pouting.

"Then get in the limo," Lance said softly. "The windows are tinted and we can lock the doors." He led Justin back to the open door, where the plush seats beckoned them to lie down, relax. Lance ducked into the limo and pulled Justin inside. Lance lay back against the far side and whispered, "Close the door."

With a glance back outside, Justin sighed again, trying to hold onto his anger, but a look at Lance lying there, his shirt half undone, his legs spread wide, one on each seat, and Justin felt his anger begin to dissipate. He grinned and slammed the door shut, making sure he locked it. The overhead light blinked out as he crawled over top of Lance.

All I Ever Wanted
27. A Night on the Town
Part 2 of 5
Joey
by NSyncGrrl

When Joey turned away from the nurses' statue, he saw Justin and Lance stopped in front of the Vietnam War Memorial, several feet away. Justin held Lance's hand in his own, and even from this distance Joey thought he could see the smoldering way Justin looked at Lance. Joey had never been with a guy before, and he wondered if kissing one would be as arousing as kissing a girl. He had hoped Lance would let him find out, beyond the brief press of lips when he woke Lance up with a kiss. With Lance's soft-spoken Southern manners and his pretty green eyes, Joey had thought perhaps he could lose himself to Lance. The idea of falling in love with someone who was always close at hand, in the studio or on tour, was appealing.

Suddenly Joey had an idea. He would sneak around the memorial and jump out down by where Justin and Lance were. Already they held each other close, and a pang of jealousy stabbed through Joey. He'd jump out and give them a good scare, just enough to pull them apart. It didn't seem fair that they had each other on this balmy, starry night and Joey had no one.

He slipped away from Chris and JC, his sneakers swishing faintly in the damp grass behind the wall. When he eased around the side of the memorial, he saw Lance's arms encircling Justin's back. Lance's eyes were closed and Justin's head was bent to Lance's chest. His shirt was partially open, and Lance moaned Justin's name. The breathless sound enflamed Joey's blood, and he felt a heaviness in his groin as he heard their slight moans, the wet sounds of Justin's lips on Lance's skin. Changing his mind about startling them, Joey leaned against the memorial, the stone cold through his light sweater. He crossed his arms in front of his chest and watched Justin kiss Lance hungrily. Seeing them touch each other tenderly made Joey's arms ache to hold somebody, anybody.

Justin murmured something quietly, and Lance flushed in the darkness. They looked around, probably looking for the others, and Lance noticed Joey in the shadows. Justin turned and glared at him. Whatever witty comment Joey was going to make died on his lips when he saw the anger burning in Justin's eyes. As he was about to apologize for watching them, Justin pulled Lance away, heading for the limo.

A dull ache gripped Joey's groin again as he watched them walk away. He thought of them rolling around in the back of the limo, steaming up the windows, and he sighed. Damn, he thought. Another night alone wasn't something he looked forward to.

From the direction of the limo, Joey heard Justin raise his voice. He heard the words "peeping tom" and "fuck that," and he closed his eyes in frustration. No matter what he did, Justin seemed bent on hating him. I'd hate me too, he thought. Can't keep away from them, as if I like making

myself depressed.

"Where'd they go?" Chris asked, coming up to stand beside Joey.

Joey shrugged. "The limo," he said, grimacing. "Horny asses."

"What's wrong with you?" JC asked.

"Nothing," Joey said. "Everything. Shit, I don't know." Turning away, he called out, "I'm going to a club. Get drunk and get laid. Don't wait up for me."

He hurried through the dark streets of downtown DC. Around him a few people lingered here and there, beneath blazing lights that pushed back the night. As he headed into the center of the city, he saw more and more people, in groups or alone, leaning against the sides of buildings, calling out to the cars passing by, having fun out on the town. Joey ignored them as he walked, looking for a club. Any club would do -- the first one he came to that served alcohol and played its music loud.

As he walked, he admitted to himself that maybe, just maybe, he wasn't as smitten with Lance as he first believed. True, Lance was sweet, and very nice, and sometimes the way his eyes flashed made Joey's heart ache, but he never liked guys before. Joey was a ladies' man, always on the prowl. With the release of their latest album, he had spent more and more time with the band, and he was getting lonely. And when he saw the way Lance looked at Justin, before either of them even admitted there was something there between the two of them, maybe Joey had wanted someone to look at him in that way, too. And that led to a small crush on Lance, which blossomed into something larger once Joey realized Justin and Lance were together. Nothing like knowing someone's off limits to get you interested, he thought bitterly. Maybe, just maybe, he was only interested in Lance because he couldn't have him.

After walking for what seemed like hours, Joey stumbled upon a well lit area packed with people and cars. Several clubs lined the street, neon lights beckoning seductively. Lines curved around the sidewalk and into the streets for some places, but Joey found the shortest line and got in it. Tracks, the sign above the door proclaimed in rainbow hues. Music bled out into the streets, and Joey hoped this wasn't one of those dance clubs that played Top 40 hits -- he'd hate to be hitting on someone to one of NSync's own tunes.

When he got to the door, he was stopped by a burly black man with a shaved head and more earrings in his eyebrows than Joey had in both of his ears combined. "Eight bucks," the bouncer barked.

Joey fished out his wallet. Digging for the money, he asked, "Drinks any good here?"

"Need to see some ID," the man replied.

Not exactly what I asked, Joey thought, flashing his New York driver's license. The bouncer cinched a plastic orange strip to Joey's left wrist and, taking his cover charge, flicked his thumb back into the club, indicating that Joey should move along.

Inside the place was dark, lit by rainbow strips of neon tubing that ran the length of the room. A few tables were shuffled to one side of the room, and a bar ran along the other wall. Beyond the small room, a larger dance floor opened up, bright with dazzling lights and sparkling tubes of different colors that ran from the floor to the ceiling. An amateur band stood on a small stage at the far end of the club, belting out loud guitar riffs and snazzy drum solos, and little else. Wall to wall, the place was packed with people.

Smiling, Joey headed for the bar. He set a fifty dollar bill onto the counter and waited for the bartender. "The strongest you have," he said, pushing the fifty over. The boy behind the bar made it disappear. "And keep 'em coming until that's gone." The boy nodded and set a tall glass of frothy amber liquid in front of Joey.

He downed the drink in one gulp. Then, when the liquor hit his system, he stumbled onto the closest barstool. "Jesus," he whispered as the bartender refilled his drink. The alcohol curled warmly into his stomach, and he threw back the next glass, as well. When it was gone, he shook his head, blinked back tears, and the bartender refilled his glass again.

Beside him, two girls at the bar were watching him. "Hey," he said, grinning, but they just looked at him in disgust and turned away. Frowning, Joey sipped this next drink, letting his gaze wander around the club. Then he saw her.

She stood off the dance floor, against the wall. She wore a black outfit -- tight pants and a black jean jacket, it looked like. She had soft auburn curls and large dark eyes, and she was looking around the club as if she were lost. Drink in hand, Joey pushed away from the bar and staggered over towards her. He was surprised to find that after just two drinks, he couldn't seem to walk straight. He'd have to ask the bartender what it was he was drinking.

As he got closer, he noticed the girl was about his age. She saw him approach and looked away, her gaze on the dance floor. Joey leaned beside her against the wall and smiled. "Hey, gorgeous," he shouted over the noise of the band.

She looked at him, taking in his hair, his face, his drink, and after a long moment he thought maybe she wasn't going to answer. Then she laughed and shouted back, "Hey, yourself."

"What's your name?" he asked. It was as good a start as any.

She shrugged. "Marie," she said, looking back over the crowd. "You?"

"Joey," he said. Even over the smell of sweat and flesh in the club, he caught a whiff of warm musk and leaned close to her, breathing in the heady scent. "You here with someone?"

"My friend," Marie said. She pointed out into the people dancing. "She's over there."

Joey glanced over but didn't see anyone in particular. Turning back to her, he suggested, "Maybe we can go somewhere quieter?"

The look she gave him was startling. "You're either very brave or very stupid," she said, smiling. "Trying to pick up chicks in a gay club?"

"Gay?" Joey asked, spitting out the word as if he had never heard it before. He gulped down his drink and looked around. "This is a gay club?"

"The rainbow signs didn't give you a clue?" Marie asked, giggling.

Joey turned back to her. "So you're --" That explained why the girls at the bar had been unimpressed with him.

Marie laughed again. "I'm just here with Melanie. She's mad at her boyfriend and thought she'd hang out here for a while. I'm not into the whole club scene myself, and I'm definitely not looking to go home with anyone tonight." She looked pointedly at him. "Male or female."

"I need another drink," Joey mumbled, suddenly feeling very small and lost. "But I'd still like to talk to you."

"A few more drinks and you won't be able to talk," Marie said. Then, seeing the forlorn look on his face, she nodded. "I'll meet you outside in five minutes. Just to talk."

Joey weaved back towards the bar. The bartender saw him coming and refilled his glass when he set it down. Someone clapped him on the back and Joey turned to find a broad, muscular man with short cropped hair grinning at him. "Hey there," he said.

Joey grinned back. "Hey yourself," he said, thinking of Marie.

The other guy studied him for a second. "You looking for a good time?" he asked, winking.

Fear erupted in Joey's body. "Already found one, thanks," he mumbled, pulling away from the bar.

But the strong stranger blocked his path. "I think you want to come with me," he said, his grip tight on Joey's shoulder. "I think you want me to fuck your brains out."

Joey blanched. That was the last thing Joey wanted right now. He had to get outside, get to Marie, get out of there. "Can I buy you a drink?" he stammered. Motioning to the bartender, he said, "Give my friend a drink. It's on me." Turning back to the muscle man who held him in a grip of steel, he smiled what he hoped to be a winning smile and said, "I gotta tell my sister I'm leaving. I'll be right back."

"That chick with you?" the guy asked, suspicious, but he took the drink the bartender offered.

Joey nodded. "Be right back," he promised, managing to slip out from under the other's grip. Once free, he ran to the doors. Pushing through the crowd trying to get inside, he ignored the bouncer telling him to get his hand stamped and walked away from the club. The night air cooled his face and cleared his senses a bit, but his head began to spin and he tossed the rest of his drink away. Jesus, he thought, pressing a hand to his temple. What the fuck was in that?

"Joey?" someone called. Joey looked around to find Marie, hugging herself against the chill. "You okay?" Her face was pale and drawn in the light of the streetlamp, and concern laced her voice.

Joey stumbled towards her. "Fine," he mumbled, hoping that Hercules didn't want him bad enough to come outside looking for him when he never returned. "Just a little woozy ..." He leaned against the streetlamp, steadying himself. "I'll be fine --"

Marie ran a cool hand across his fevered brow. "You sure don't look fine," she said. "How are you getting home?"

Home, Joey thought, and laughed bitterly. "Home is a million miles away," he said, his voice sad.

"Well, where are you staying?" she pressed. "Do you have any friends here?"

"They all hate me," Joey choked. He looked at her as she ran her hand down his cheek. "I'd hate me too," he admitted. He kissed her palm when her hand neared his mouth. "I'm so lonely."

She bit the inside of her lip and looked at him with large blue eyes that he wanted to drown in. "You're drunk off your ass," she said gently. "If you weren't, I might consider going home with you."

"I sober up quickly," Joey promised, taking her hand in both of his and pressing her palm against his lips.

But Marie shook her head. "I'll give you my number," she said. "I'll help you get home. But I'm not going with you."

Joey sighed and closed his eyes in frustration. Striking out all over, he thought grimly. Should go take that guy up on his offer. At least you won't be so alone. But he didn't want that guy -- he didn't want the hard planes of a male body pressed against his. He wanted the soft curves of a woman snuggled against him -- he wanted Marie. Looking at her with the saddest expression he could muster, he asked, "You won't reconsider?"

Marie shook her head again. "I'm sorry, Joey, really. I'm not that type of girl."

Suddenly he was very, very tired. He wanted to be back at the hotel, but the thought of trying to find the limo exhausted him. "I don't know where my car is," he mumbled, the weight of his drinks buckling his mind. "I don't know where my friends are --" He had never felt more alone than he did at that moment, with Marie standing so close to him, her hand in his, and her refusing to come home with him.

All I Ever Wanted
27. A Night on the Town
Part 3 of 5
Chris
by NSyncGrrl

Chris watched Joey stalk away into the night and sighed. He had hoped this whole messy affair between him and Justin and Lance would just burn itself out, but it seemed to rekindle at every turn. If Joey wasn't so obvious in his desires, if Justin wasn't so jealous, if Lance -- well, if Lance wasn't so Lance, maybe this whole thing would eventually go away. But until that time, Chris felt it his duty to keep an eye on the three of them. He wasn't going to let this tear them all apart. "Come on," he said, pulling JC's arm. He started after Joey.

"Where to?" JC asked, trailing along.

Chris shrugged. "Wherever Joey is going. We can't just let him wander around on his own."

They kept their distance, never letting Joey get too far ahead, but it was harder than Chris imagined it would be. Don't know how those guys manage it, he thought, thinking of their bodyguards, who always seemed to be nearby. Joey walked at a furious pace, and sometimes Chris and JC had to run to catch up with him, ducking into a nearby alley when they thought he might notice them following.

When they reached the strip of clubs, they lost sight of him amid the crowds. "Great," JC said, looking around. "Now what?"

"We could check out each club," Chris suggested. But both sides of the street were jammed with bustling clubs and bars, and going into each one and looking through every person for Joey wasn't the way he wanted to spend the rest of the night. Not to mention the cover charges for each place -- they could go broke looking for their friend.

"Maybe we can just look around," JC said. "Most of the lines are pretty long -- maybe he's waiting to get in."

Chris nodded, and they split up, each taking one side of the street. Chris looked at every face he came up to, looking for Joey. Most of the people looked back at him blankly, but a few glared at him as if he threatened to get in front of him in line. After thirty minutes of fruitless searching, he was beginning to think he should give up. JC was already finished, running across the street to join him in front of a small club called Tracks, where a short line led inside. "Any luck?" Chris called, but JC just shook his head.

Suddenly they heard shouts from a nearby alley. A feeling of dread rose in Chris's stomach, and he raced over to find a man and a woman arguing. The man was large and muscular, easily twice the size of the smaller woman, who faced him defiantly. Behind her, leaning against the dirty brick wall, was Joey. His head hung to his chest and his shoulders

were slumped, but Chris would recognize that red-tipped hair anywhere. "Joey?" Chris called, rushing into the alley, JC right behind him.

The woman glanced at him and backed up, closer to Joey, blocking him protectively. "These your friends?" she asked.

Joey lifted his head. A thin trail of blood ran from his nose, another from a cut on his forehead. His sweater was ripped at the neck, and his pants were dirty and rumpled. But when his eyes focused on Chris, he nodded wearily. "Hey," he mumbled.

The man pushed the woman's shoulder roughly. "He's coming with me," he said, reaching around her for Joey.

"Like hell he is," she replied. With lightning speed she kicked out, the tip of her boot catching him in the knee. He staggered back and she looked at Chris and JC. "Take him home. He's drunk."

Again, Chris thought. Looking at the man clutching his leg, he asked, "Who's this?"

"Some horny bastard wants to fuck me," Joey said, wiping his nose with the back of his arm, staining his sweater with his own blood. "I told him I'm not interested."

The man lunged at Joey, who flinched, but the woman stood her ground between them and didn't back down. With a glance at Chris and JC, the man decided that it wasn't worth it to fight all three of them for a chance at the drunken Joey. Pushing past Chris, he left the alley. Chris stumbled into the wall. Thank God he didn't want to fight, he thought, picking himself up. No doubt who would've won. He admired the woman who managed to hold off the Goliath for Joey's sake.

Rushing to Joey's side, he asked, "You okay, man? What happened?" JC pushed beside him to look at Joey's face. A livid bruise was swelling under one eye.

The woman answered. "He picked the wrong guy to say no to. I went to find my friend, tell her I was going to help him home, and when I come back I found Hulk Hogan there all over him."

"Joey," JC cried, exasperated. He rolled his eyes and looked at the woman. "Thanks," he said. "We'll get him home."

She nodded. "My friend is leaving, so I've got to go. Will he be okay?" She looked at Joey, a skeptical look on her face.

Joey clutched her hand. "Marie, stay," he said sadly. Chris looked at her when she shook her head.

"I can't," she replied, but the look in her eyes said she wanted to. "My number's in your pocket. Don't lose it. Give me a call when you're sober and maybe we can do something then."

Chris wondered if she knew who they were. Come Tuesday they'd be out of DC and back on their tour, and her chance for a night with Joey would be gone. But she wasn't all ga-ga to see them so maybe she didn't know. He smiled tightly. "I'll tell him to call you," he said. A girl who didn't

jump at the chance to sleep with Joey definitely deserved a call in the morning.

From the street someone shouted, "You coming, Marie?" Marie kissed Joey quickly on the cheek, close to his lips but not quite there. Smiling at Chris and JC, she hurried away. When she was gone, Joey closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger, as if trying to pinch back tears that threatened to fall.

"I'm going to go get the car," Chris said softly. He looked at JC, who nodded. "You two stay here."

Joey sighed. "I'm sorry," he whispered, but Chris turned away and hoped he could find his way back to the limo.

"I'll be back," he called, leaving Joey and JC behind. Back on the street he caught sight of one of their bodyguards, and he flagged him down. Again he said a silent prayer of thanks that they didn't have more trouble with the guy after Joey. As he neared the bodyguard, he racked his memory for the man's name. Darren, he thought. "Hey, Darren!" he called, hoping he was right.

Darren nodded. "Where are the others?" he asked, looking back the way Chris had come.

Chris pointed to the alley. "Over there," he said. "I'm going to get the limo, round up the others. I think it's time we head back to the hotel."

Darren nodded again. "You want me to stay here?"

Chris thought it over. Joey was drunk but JC could probably fend for them if anything should happen. And the night was still young -- there were plenty of people around, and Chris saw one or two police cars patrolling the area slowly. On the other hand, the walk back to the limo was through dark, winding streets that would be mostly empty by this time. "What do you think?" he asked Darren. As a bodyguard, he would have a better understanding of the situation.

"I'll come with you," Darren said, and Chris nodded, grateful for the company. The thought of backtracking to the limo and probably getting lost in downtown DC around midnight didn't appeal to him much.

Together they headed away from the clubs. The bodyguard was silent, letting Chris wallow in his own thoughts. Just what did that guy do to Joey? he wondered. The cuts and bruises on his face suggested a bit of a fight, but his heart clenched when he thought of what might have happened if that girl hadn't come back. How did Joey manage to get himself into situations like this? He'd have to talk to him again, in the morning, when the alcohol was out of his system and he wasn't such a mess.

Chris thought maybe it was time to force Joey to come to terms with his feelings about Lance, and it was time to force Justin to stop being such a Neanderthal when it came to their relationship. Justin and Lance still hadn't officially told him and JC they were together, but they'd be blind not to notice. Maybe if all five of them sat down together and just talked it out, everything could be worked through. It had worked in the

past, with other problems. There was no reason it shouldn't work now.

Chris sighed and hoped he could find the car and get everyone back to the hotel in one piece before dawn.

All I Ever Wanted
27. A Night on the Town
Part 4 of 5
Lance
by NSyncGrrl

Justin lay on top of Lance in the back of the limo, his head resting on Lance's shoulder as he picked at the buttons on Lance's shirt. Lance ran his hand through Justin's curls and looked at the car's ceiling, his thoughts on Joey. He felt so bad about this whole thing. He knew Joey was lonely, and he didn't really blame him for watching him and Justin together. But Justin could be so unreasonable sometimes, as if he thought Joey was trying to steal Lance away or something. And there seemed nothing Lance could do to convince Justin that he wasn't going to let that happen.

Justin sighed. "It pisses me off," he said softly, and Lance rolled his eyes. Not this again, he thought. He had grown quite tired of hearing about Joey. When Justin caught Joey watching them earlier, it had taken everything Lance could think of to convince Justin to just drop the whole thing. Since then they had lay together in the back of the limo, whatever else they planned to do on hold while Justin simmered in his anger.

Pushing Justin off of him, Lance sat up abruptly. Justin glanced at him and Lance scowled. "Can't you think of anything else to talk about?" he said. "I don't know about you, but I'm sick and tired of sharing the back of this limo with Joey."

As soon as the words were out, he regretted them. The stung look in Justin's eyes made his head hurt. Justin sat back against the opposite side of the car and stared out the window. Where he had touched Lance earlier burned with the memory of his body, but the seat between them separated them like a gulf. "Well, excuse me," Justin said, his voice short and clipped.

Lance sighed. This is going to be a long night, he thought sourly. "Justin," he began, but Justin didn't turn towards him. "Justin, look at me."

He saw Justin's eyes shift but Justin stayed turned away. Lance sighed and reached out for him. He ran a hand down Justin's arm, feeling the bunched muscles beneath his windbreaker. Sliding closer, Lance said softly, "Justin, look at me." He saw a muscle twitch in Justin's jaw, and then Justin lowered his head and glanced at him out of the corner of his eyes.

Lance smiled. That was better. "Justin," he began again, "I don't know what I can say to convince you that I'm not interested in Joey. I love you. I want you. Joey is my friend and I love him dearly, but it's not the same way I feel for you." He choked back a sob strangling him. "Christ, believe me, Justin, it's not the same."

Justin looked up at Lance, his face clenched tight as a fist, but he

didn't say anything. Lance felt tears prick behind his eyes and he blinked them away. "Tell me, Justin. Tell me how I can prove it to you. I want only you."

"You don't need to prove it," Justin said, his voice so low Lance had to strain to hear him. "I just --" He sighed. "I just don't want to share you with anybody. You're mine. I don't want anyone to think otherwise."

Lance took a deep breath. "Well, then we have to tell them."

"They already know," Justin replied.

"But we've never said the words," Lance pointed out. "Maybe we need to all sit down and talk this thing out. Maybe that's the only way we'll be able to move past this." When he saw the indecision written on Justin's face, Lance asked, "If they all know already, what harm will it be to tell them? What is it you're afraid of?"

Justin shrugged but didn't say anything. Lance ran a hand through Justin's hair, smoothing down his curls, and pulled him into a tight embrace. Justin rested his head on Lance's chest, his arms wrapping around Lance's back, and he sighed. "I don't know," he whispered into Lance's shirt. Lance rubbed Justin's arms and back and hugged him close.

Justin's breath blew gently against Lance's chest where his shirt was unbuttoned. The air tickled Lance's nipple, reminding him why they had retreated to the limo in the first place. Slipping his hands between them, Lance eased Justin back against the side of the car. Justin looked at him with large eyes full of confusion and hurt, but when he saw the smoldering lust in Lance's eyes, he smiled. Lance ran his hands under Justin's windbreaker, smoothing the white tank top against Justin's chest, caressing his nipples through the thin fabric. Leaning closer, Lance kissed Justin's chin, his cheeks, his closed eyes. Justin raised his mouth to Lance's, lips slightly parted, hungry for his touch. As their lips met, Justin unbuttoned Lance's shirt completely, running his hands along his warm bare skin.

Pushing Justin back, Lance broke away and watched Justin's face as he let his hands stray to Justin's crotch. He pressed gently against the soft bulge and felt it harden beneath his touch. Justin closed his eyes and moaned as he thrust against Lance's hand. Slowly Lance unzipped Justin's jeans. He traced the outline of Justin's swelling cock through the flimsy material of his boxers. Justin curved his fingers through the belt loops in Lance's jeans and tugged at him. "Come here," he moaned, sitting up slightly.

"No," Lance replied, smiling. He pushed Justin back against the seat and resumed stroking Justin's erection, pressing harder. He slipped his hand through the hole in Justin's boxers and rubbed his stiffening cock, the flesh hot and hard in Lance's hand. Lance wrapped his fingers around Justin's thick shaft, kinky hair tickling his hand. Justin moaned Lance's name as Lance slipped his dick out of his boxers. Moving his hips, Justin began to thrust into Lance's hand as Lance squeezed his erection gently.

Lance scooted back along the seat and leaned down towards Justin's crotch. He smiled when he looked up and saw Justin's eyes widen. Then he licked the swollen tip of Justin's dick, the soft skin slightly salty in his

mouth. Justin moaned in pleasure and gripped Lance's head in both hands, his fingers delving into Lance's thick hair. Lance wrapped his lips over his teeth and slid Justin's cock into his mouth, licking while massaging the hard length with his hand. Justin thrust into his mouth, his breaths coming in quick pants of desire.

Lance licked Justin's cock, his saliva making the thick shaft wet and warm. He ran his tongue along the length of Justin's dick, starting at the bottom and sliding up to suck the tip gently. Then he licked the soft sac beneath Justin's shaft, and Justin gripped Lance's hair tightly as spasms of pleasure coursed through his body. A dampness spread across the top of Lance's head as Justin came, spraying Lance's hair with thin white liquid. Lance licked Justin's dick, already going limp, and then crawled up to kiss his neck while he zipped up Justin's jeans. "Lance," Justin whispered, hugging him close. He kissed Lance tenderly, tasting his own juices on Lance's cheeks and lips.

Someone knocked on the window above Justin's head. Lance sat back, running a hand through his wet hair, which came away sticky. Justin slid out of his windbreaker and pulled his tank top off over his head. "Clean yourself up," he said, grinning. He tossed the tank top at Lance, and it landed on top of his head. Lance rubbed it over his hair as Justin put his windbreaker back on, zipping it up to cover his bare chest. Whoever was at the window knocked again, louder this time.

Justin rolled down the window and Chris leaned in. "Sorry to break things up," he said, reaching inside to unlock the door. "But we gotta go pick up the others."

"Where are they?" Lance asked as Chris climbed inside. If he noticed the musky smell of sex in the air or Lance's damp, spiky hair, he didn't say anything.

"Downtown," Chris replied as the limo purred to life beneath them. "Joey decided to go clubbing and got drunk."

Justin scowled. "Something tells me that's not the end of it."

Chris grimaced, looking out the window. "He had a little run-in with someone," he said, sighing. "I think it's time to get back to the hotel."

A pang of guilt raced through Lance. It was all their fault. Joey couldn't help the way he felt, just as Lance couldn't help his feelings for Justin, and Justin couldn't help his jealous nature. If anything happened to Joey, Lance didn't think he could ever forgive himself. "Jesus," he whispered. "Is he alright?"

"He'll be fine," Chris said, "once he sleeps it off. Just --" He looked at them, his eyes pleading. "Don't you two say anything, okay? Just leave him alone."

"Maybe we all need to have a talk when this is over," Justin said, glancing at Lance.

Chris nodded. "But not tonight," he said. "Tonight I just want to get back to the hotel and get some sleep."

Lance sighed. Even though he had suggested the idea to Justin, the thought of actually sitting down in front of his four best friends in the entire world and confessing his love for Justin made his stomach twist into knots. He agreed with Chris -- he couldn't wait to get back to the hotel and fall asleep in Justin's arms. He'd worry about everything else later.

He just hoped Joey was going to be okay.

All I Ever Wanted
27. A Night on the Town
Part 5 of 5
JC
by NSyncGrrl

"I'm sorry," Joey whispered, covering his face with his hands. He slid down the brick wall of the alley until he squatted on the ground, his head in his hands.

JC knelt down beside him and looked around, but they were alone in the alley. Reaching out for his friend, JC ran a hand down Joey's back, rubbing gently. "It'll be okay," he said, watching the people pass on the street. He hoped Chris hurried back with the limo.

"Fuck that," Joey said bitterly. "Justin hates me, Lance hates me, Marie hates me and I don't even know her --" He sighed. "She wouldn't even come back with me. How the hell is everything going to be okay?" He looked up at JC with red-rimmed eyes that pooled with tears.

JC sighed. "Nobody hates you," he said, rubbing Joey's shoulder.

"Then why do I feel so alone?" he asked in a small voice.

JC studied him. Around them the alley was dark, the only light coming from streetlamps and neon signs outside the clubs along the streets. Shadows pooled in Joey's brown eyes, and his face was red, his hair disheveled. Quietly, JC said, "You have us."

Joey sighed. "That's not what I mean," he said, exasperated. "I want --" He sighed again. "I want someone to think about me. About only me. I want someone to hold onto at night. I want someone who wants me."

Smiling, JC said, "I bet there are a million girls all over the world eager to fulfill that wish."

Joey sighed again, wiping at his eyes roughly. "All those girls are in love with NSync, not me. I want someone who loves the real Joey Fatone, not a glossy picture in a magazine."

"Someone like Lance?" JC ventured. When Joey told him a while back that he had kissed Lance, JC had been surprised, mostly because he didn't think Joey liked guys. Joey always had his arm around a girl -- he was nothing if not a flirt. But JC could understand the need to have someone nearby -- he had to admit he thought Justin and Lance were lucky to have found whatever it was they had together. He could see how such a relationship would appeal to Joey -- hell, to any of them. The road was a lonely place, each night in a different bed, a different city. Some days home seemed so far away. To have someone there with you through it all -- well, that would make it all seem easier to bear.

Joey ran a hand through his hair. "I've fucked everything up," he said, his voice thick. He shook his head when JC tried to deny it. He laughed, a shaky sound that scared JC. "If we weren't on tour, I don't think Justin

would want me around. Hell, I wouldn't want me around. And you know what? I don't think I really want Lance all that badly. I just want what they have together -- I want that so much it hurts to see them together."

JC frowned, confused. "So it's not Lance?" he asked.

Joey shook his head. "If it is, it's only because he's always there. And he's with Justin. I always want what I can't have." Joey hung his head, resting it on his arms, crossed on his knees. "Like Marie."

"She left her number," JC said, trying to cheer him up. "You can call her in the morning."

Joey laughed that strange, scary laugh again. "Yeah, and she'll be like who's this? And what will I say? The dumbass drunk who tried to pick you up at a gay bar last night? You know, the one you didn't want to sleep with?"

"You're too hard on yourself," JC said softly.

"That's easy for you to say," Joey said bitterly. "You're the lead singer. All the girls love you. Most of them probably don't even know who I am. The freak with the red hair? What's his name again?"

JC slid his hand beneath Joey's chin, lifting his face to meet JC's steady gaze. JC studied Joey's dark brown eyes, and his heart twisted at the pain he saw in their depths. Squeezing Joey's chin gently between his thumb and forefinger, he whispered, "Don't say that, man. You're so wrong. Without you, the band would be nothing."

"Yeah, right." Joey tried to turn out of JC's hand, but he kept his grip tight.

"I know you're lonely," JC said, searching Joey's eyes. "I know it hurts to see Justin and Lance together. It hurts me too. It hurts to hear Chris talk to Dani on the phone, and to hear all those girls out in the crowd screaming my name and still know I'll go to bed alone again."

Joey's eyes softened. "You feel that way, too?" he asked, his voice incredulous.

JC nodded. "But I don't let it control me, man. I lose myself in the music and the band. I'm happy for Chris and Dani, for Justin and Lance, and I remind myself that one day, I'll find someone, too." He smiled sadly. "Some days it's hard, I know. But the ache will go away. And one day you'll find the one for you. I promise."

Joey dropped his gaze, thinking over what JC had said. JC let go of his chin and waited. When Joey looked up again, something in his eyes smoldered like damp coals, and JC knew what was coming before Joey leaned into him and brushed his lips against JC's. If he pulled away, with Joey in this frame of mind, JC feared the rejection would be too much for his friend. So he let Joey's tongue part his lips and slip inside. Joey tasted malty and sour, like alcohol, and his tongue was warm inside JC's mouth, large and gentle and probing. JC closed his eyes and let himself be kissed, his own tongue tentatively touching Joey's, tasting him.

Then Joey pulled back and sighed. "I'm sorry," he whispered again. "I

... I don't know what came over me. I'm just -- "

"It's okay," JC replied, wiping the edge of his mouth with the back of his hand. He didn't want to admit how aroused he felt at that one kiss.

Joey ran a hand through his hair. "I'm not really interested in you," he said, apologetically. "I don't know what I was thinking. Now you hate me, too." He hit his head with his fist in frustration.

"I don't hate you," JC said. "I --" He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I kinda wondered what it would be like, too," he said, his voice low.

Joey glanced up at him. "Really?" he asked, a smile pulling at the corner of his lips.

JC nodded, and smiled back. "Wow," he said softly. "You sure know how to kiss."

Joey grinned. "You aren't too bad, yourself," he replied.

At least he's smiling again, JC thought. Out on the street he saw a long dark limo slide into view. Standing up, JC stretched and said, "This doesn't mean I'm spending the night with you."

Joey stood up too, still smiling. His eyes sparkled and he shook his head. "Don't want you to, man. You said Marie left her number?"

JC nodded. "Call her in the morning. She'll remember you, I promise." He clapped Joey on the back and pointed at the limo. "The others are here."

Concern flashed across Joey's face. "You think Justin's still mad at me?" he asked as they headed for the car.

JC shook his head. "Justin's just being Justin. He'll get over it. Just make sure you introduce him to Marie, and he'll know you're not interested in Lance. Things should clear up after that."

Joey nodded. As they headed for the limo, JC licked his lips, still tasting Joey on them, and smiled. If that boy kisses her like that, JC thought, there's no way she won't stay with him tomorrow night. He just hoped the memory of the kiss would fade soon enough -- he didn't need a crush on Joey distracting him during the tour.

Chris opened the door to the limo and leaned out. "You guys coming?" he called, and they hurried inside, JC helping Joey as he staggered slightly. They slid into the limo across from Justin and Lance, who watched them silently but said nothing on the way home. Joey closed his eyes and leaned back against the seat, snoring softly. JC smiled at Chris and wondered if his lips would stop burning from Joey's kiss before they reached the hotel.

All I Ever Wanted
28. Rumors
by NSyncGrrl

It was late Saturday night, two days away from their concert at RFK. They had spent the day as tourists, taking in the sights and shopping and trying to keep a low profile. When night fell, Justin and Lance joined their friends at the Kennedy Center to see The Scarlet Pimpernel.

Now, back at the hotel, Justin was in the shower and Lance wanted to call his mom to tell her about the show, but a glance at the clock told him it was probably too late to do so. Instead he turned on his laptop and logged online. He'd e-mail her and then call it a night. He was sleepy and wanted to be in bed when Justin got out of the shower. The thought of Justin, clean and warm and slightly damp, slipping beneath the covers beside him ignited his blood. He hurried through the e-mail, keeping it short because he knew his mom would probably call him when she read it instead of replying, and he'd have to tell her everything all over again. While he waited for the message to go through, he opened IE and surfed to Yahoo!

Lance glanced at the headlines, and then his heart skipped. He looked again, sure he had misread the words. "Britney to marry singer Timberlake," he read out loud, the words falling from his lips like lead. His mind reeled as he clicked on the link for the full story. What the hell? he thought, reading the opening paragraph: Teen pop queen Britney Spears has announced her engagement to Justin Timberlake, lead singer for boyband 'N Sync. "He popped the question two weeks ago," a source for Spears said. "She accepted." Spears, 18, now sports a million dollar engagement ring, a gift from Timberlake, 19.

Two weeks ago. Lance thought back, trying to remember when he last saw Britney. She and Justin were childhood friends, and rumors of a relationship between them were rampant but, as far as Lance knew, untrue. They had dated briefly, years ago, way before Lance even met Justin. And now Justin shared his bed every night. So this couldn't be true -- could it?

And then Lance gasped, remembering. Two weeks ago they had seen Britney -- at an awards show of some kind. Lance forgot exactly which one. And Justin did buy her a ring. He wanted to buy something for her as a gift for the success of her new album, and Lance remembered going with him to the jewelry store, helping him pick out just the right ring. It hadn't cost a million dollars, but come to think of it, it could be mistaken for an engagement ring.

Lance sighed shakily. Did Britney think it was an engagement ring? Or -- he didn't want to even think it, but his mind whispered anyway, sowing a seed of doubt. Or did Justin really ask her to marry him?

No, he told himself firmly. Justin wouldn't do that to him. He wasn't like that. But Lance had left Justin and Britney alone that night -- they went to a movie and dinner, and when Justin came back to the hotel

Lance was already asleep. But he slept with me, Lance thought. He woke up with me.

Behind him the bathroom door opened, and a draft of humid air curled around Lance's feet. He heard Justin click off the bathroom light and step up behind him. Warm arms encircled his neck, and then Justin rested his chin on Lance's shoulder, his hair wet against Lance's ear. He kissed Lance's cheek. "What's new, pussycat?" he asked. Lance could see Justin's smile reflected in the laptop screen.

Then Justin glanced at the screen and Lance felt him stiffen against his back as his arms tightened around Lance's neck. "What the fuck is this?" Justin asked, a hard edge in his voice.

Lance shrugged out of Justin's embrace and stood up. "You tell me," he said, his voice more bitter than he had intended. "You're the one getting hitched." He crossed his arms in front of his chest and looked at Justin, naked except for a short white towel cinched at his waist.

Justin eased into the chair, reading the news story, his forehead creased in anger. "Jesus," he whispered. Then, looking at Lance, he frowned. He saw the hurt and betrayal in Lance's eyes. "You don't believe this crap, do you?"

Lance shrugged. "You did give her that ring --"

"You were with me when I bought it!" Justin cried. "You picked it out!"

"Did you --" Lance swallowed, the dry click in his throat loud to his ears. "Did you tell her what it was for?"

"Of course I did!" Justin said, standing up so fast he knocked the chair to the floor.

Lance sighed, running a hand over his eyes. "Maybe she misunderstood ..."

"Well, I'm going to straighten this out right now," Justin said. In two steps he crossed the room. Yanking open the drawer of the table between the two beds, he rummaged through pens and paper until he found the small address book he took with him on tour. He punched the speaker button on the phone and the sound of a dial tone filled the hotel room. Angrily he dialed Britney's cell phone number, and somewhere a phone began to ring.

"You don't have to call her," Lance said wearily. "She's probably already asleep."

"We're getting this straight tonight," Justin said again.

Someone answered the phone. "Hello?" It was a girl's voice, tired but still awake. Lance remembered Britney was on tour, too -- she must have just completed another show.

"Britney?" Justin asked, reining in the anger in his voice. He glanced at Lance and sat on the edge of the bed.

"Who's this?" she asked, and then, "Justin?" Lance rolled his eyes as

Britney's voice perked up. "Hey, babe, what's shaking?"

Justin sighed. "I hear you're getting married," he said carefully.

Britney laughed, a light sound like tinkling glass. "Who is it this time?" she asked.

"Me." Lance closed his eyes at the thought of Justin holding Britney in his arms.

Britney laughed again. "You're kidding, right?" When Justin didn't say anything, Britney's voice grew serious. "You're not kidding."

"Fuck, Britney," Justin said, the anger creeping back into his voice. "Do you think I'd call you up at one in the morning to joke around?"

The crackle of long distance filled the air, and then Britney asked quietly, "Where did you hear this?"

"The Internet," Justin admitted. Remembering the computer, Lance walked over and busied himself with the task of logging off and shutting it down. "It said you announced our engagement."

"I did not!" Britney exclaimed. Lance heard a small flare of anger in her voice, and wondered if maybe it wasn't just a vicious rumor after all. But this was Yahoo!, not some sleazy tabloid.

"They mentioned that ring I gave you," Justin said. Lance felt Justin watching him as he turned off the laptop, but he didn't turn around.

"Shit," Britney said softly. "Justin, I'm sorry. I showed it to some of my crew and someone asked if it was an engagement ring, and I laughed -- Justin, I was joking. I didn't think --"

Justin sighed. "Dammit," he swore, but Lance felt relief course through his body.

"Justin, I'm sorry," Britney said again. "I'll have my people issue a statement denying it first thing in the morning."

Lance closed the laptop and clicked off the lamp, plunging the room into shadow. The only light came from the lamp above the table between the beds. Stretching languidly, Lance felt the tension and surprise drain from his body, leaving him exhausted and weak. Suddenly he wanted nothing more than to lie down beside Justin and fall asleep in his arms. He pulled off his shirt and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth.

From inside the bathroom, he could still hear Justin's side of the conversation when he turned on the faucet. As he brushed his teeth, he tried to guess what Britney was saying. "Well, I gotta go, Brit. I got a lot of explaining to do tonight ..." To who? she'd ask. Lance could almost hear her over the running water. You're not alone, are you? Justin, are you seeing someone? "Yeah, I'm with someone ..." Ooh, Justin! I'm so happy for you? Who is it? Tell me! "No, I won't say who ..." Anyone I know? C'mon, Justin -- Britney could be wheedling at times, whining until she got her way. Lance hated that about her. "Don't bother asking -- I don't want the whole world to know ..." Lance grinned at that comment, his reflection grinning back with toothpaste foaming at his mouth as if he

were rabid. Aw, Justin! You can trust me -- I won't say anything, I swear it! I'm sorry about this whole marriage thing, really! "Yeah, well, I'm sorry too. I'll talk to you later. Goodbye."

Lance rinsed the toothpaste out of his mouth and splashed warm water over his face. Running his wet hands through his hair, he dried his face with a small washcloth and counted to twenty before he turned off the bathroom light. As he walked into the room, he saw Justin lying back on the bed, the towel still wrapped around his waist. When he saw Lance, he sighed. "Lance, I'm so sorry --"

"It's not your fault," Lance said. It wasn't, and even though Lance was angry that Britney had made such an offhand comment without even thinking about it, the empty feeling that had opened inside his chest when he first read the headline was gone. He didn't blame Justin -- he had been just as surprised.

But Justin scowled. "You're pissed, I know it," he said. "I'd be too if I were you."

If Justin heard he was getting married, Lance thought maybe Justin would hit the ceiling. He'd still be yelling, and the rest of the hotel would hear him. The image of Justin ranting and raving because he thought Lance was marrying some girl brought a slight smile to Lance's face. "I'm not pissed," he said. Picking his shirt up from the floor where he dropped it earlier, he folded it neatly and set it on the other bed, where their bags were.

"Then why are you so quiet?" Justin asked softly. Lance could hear in his voice that he thought Lance should be mad at him.

"Because I'm busy," Lance replied. He unbuckled his jeans and slipped them down. As he stepped out of them, he felt Justin's gaze on his bare chest and legs, but he didn't look up at his friend.

"Doing what?" Justin asked, watching as Lance folded his pants and set them on the bed.

Lance shrugged. "Getting ready for bed." He glanced up at Justin, surprised to see a slight bulge where the towel covered his crotch. "I don't know about you, but I'm about ready to fall out."

Justin's gaze strayed to the front of Lance's boxer briefs, but Lance stepped behind the bag on the bed, his crotch hidden from Justin's view. A frustrated look flittered across Justin's face, and Lance tried not to laugh. Looking at Justin lying there, stretched out, Lance remembered how he had wanted to be in bed before Justin came out of the shower, and a sweet heaviness settled into his groin at the thought of joining him in the bed now. As he set his clothes in his duffel bag, Justin pouted. "So you're not mad?" he asked.

Lance shook his head. "Not at you."

"You sure?"

Sighing, Lance looked up. The forlorn expression on Justin's face was so pitifully adorable, he couldn't help but smile. "Justin, I'm sure." He

walked around to his side of the bed and hooked his thumbs beneath the waistband of his underwear. Nonchalantly, he pulled them down and stepped out of them. From the corner of his eye he saw Justin bite his lower lip hungrily as he stood there beside the bed, naked. Reaching for the lamp, he grinned at Justin. "But when I get into bed, that towel better be gone, or I will get angry."

As he flicked off the light, he felt the damp towel smack his back as Justin tossed it at him. Lance crawled under the covers and into Justin's arms.

All I Ever Wanted
29. Before the Show
by NSyncGrrl

"Justin!" Lance cried, exasperated, as he walked into the dressing room. He wore the patchwork costume they were using for this tour, the black pants ironed to a crease, the starch in the white and sequined shirt practically creaking when he walked. His face felt thick with make-up, and his hair didn't move an inch when he ran his hand through it. He took one look at Justin, sitting in front of the mirror in nothing more than a pair of boxer shorts and a red bandanna covering his braids, and sighed. "Where are your clothes?"

Justin glanced up at him in the mirror and grinned. "It's too hot for clothes," he said. They were in DC, and even though it was almost seven o'clock in the evening, the temperature outside was still way over ninety degrees.

"You're going out on stage dressed like that?" Lance asked, cocking an eyebrow at Justin. "We've got forty-five minutes, boyfriend."

"And it takes me ten minutes to get ready," Justin replied. "So for the next thirty-five, I'm going to stay cool."

Rolling his eyes, Lance walked over to stand behind Justin. He looked at him in the mirror, taking in Justin's bare, muscular chest, his skin pale beneath the bright dressing room lights, and he ran his hands along Justin's smooth shoulders. Justin smiled up at him. "You look sexy in that getup," he said.

Lance blushed slightly. "I don't know about that," he said, but Justin twisted around in his chair, grinning.

"I like your makeup."

Lance felt his cheeks heat up as he blushed again. His eyes felt clumpy with liner and mascara, and a small blue tear sparkled above one cheek. This whole futuristic ghetto look wasn't his style, but he had to admit it did look ... well, not quite sexy, but different. Seeing him blush, Justin stood up and, leaning back against the dressing room table, reached out for Lance's hand. "Come here," he said softly.

Lance stepped closer to Justin. "You have to get ready," he argued. Justin put one foot up on his chair and pulled Lance into the space between his legs. Lance leaned against him, Justin's nakedness making his heart beat faster. Justin pulled him closer, until his eyelashes fluttered against Lance's cheek every time he blinked. Lance felt his breath quicken as Justin's mouth hovered just above his. "Be careful," Lance said, a little breathlessly. "My makeup --"

Suddenly Justin grabbed the lapels of Lance's jacket in both hands, lifting him off the floor just slightly. "Since when do I have to be careful?" he asked, a dangerous edge to his voice that made Lance's knees weak. He stared into Lance's eyes for a long moment, until Lance felt as if he

were drowning in Justin's blue gaze.

And then he pressed his mouth against Lance's, forcing his tongue between Lance's lips. Beneath the rough kiss, Lance moaned. He ran a hand along the downy hair on Justin's thigh, raised against Lance's hip where his foot rested in the chair. As Justin's tongue explored his mouth, Lance slipped his hand into the leg of Justin's boxers, roaming along Justin's hip, his buttocks. Lance's other hand encircled Justin's waist, easily sliding beneath the waistband of his boxers to cup his tight butt. Justin's hands released Lance's lapels to run over his shoulders and around his neck, and Lance pulled Justin's hips hard against his own.

"The sofa," Justin whispered, and Lance lifted Justin up off the dressing room table until he sat in Lance's hands, his long legs wrapped around Lance's waist. Staggering back, Lance felt the edge of the sofa bump against the back of his knees, and he plopped down, Justin in his lap. Justin's butt ground into his crotch, and a sweet ache began to throb in his groin. Lance looked up at Justin, who ran a hand over Lance's stiff hair and kissed him again.

Turning, Lance laid Justin down on the sofa, not breaking their kiss. He rolled on top of Justin, pressing him down into the cushions, and Justin cupped Lance's chin in one hand while holding the back of his head with the other. Lance kissed him hungrily, one arm beneath Justin's shoulder while his other hand slid up the leg of Justin's boxers to squeeze his slight erection. Justin moaned into Lance's mouth and thrust his hips into Lance.

The dressing room door opened. "You guys ready for the -- oh." Lance looked up to see Chris standing in the doorway. "You know we have a concert in thirty minutes, right?"

Lance blushed, ducking his head, his hair brushing Justin's chest. Beneath him Justin looked up and smiled. "We're getting ready," he said.

Chris frowned. "Ready for what?" he asked as Lance eased back off of Justin. Justin sat up, holding onto the front of Lance's shirt. Shaking his head, Chris grinned. "Get dressed and get a move on. We're ready for the hackey game." As he turned to leave, he looked back and said, "And Lance? You need to get your makeup touched up again."

"I told you to be careful," Lance said, sighing. It took twenty minutes to get his makeup on last time, and he didn't relish the thought of sitting through that again anytime soon.

Justin tugged on Lance's shirt, pulling him close enough for a quick kiss. "I still think you look sexy," he whispered against Lance's lips.

Lance smiled. "And you need to get dressed." He leaned back against the sofa as Justin went to change. Adrenaline coursed through his body, and he was looking forward to the show, though he would've liked to put all that unspent energy to a different use. He shifted his erection into a more comfortable position and hoped it went away before he had to go out on stage.

All I Ever Wanted
30. After the Show
by NSyncGrrl

It had been a long concert, and an even longer ride back to the hotel, and Justin was exhausted. He felt hot and sticky and uncomfortable in this heat -- how could anyone live here? he thought. It was well after midnight and the temperature was still balmy, in the upper sixties. He wanted nothing more than to snuggle close to Lance in the comfort of their air conditioned room and fall asleep.

He had tried to get alone with Lance after the show, but there were so many reporters and cameras that he was afraid someone might see something, and that was the last thing they needed. And in the limo back to the hotel, Lance had kept his distance, whispering to Justin that they shouldn't do anything in front of their friends. Justin had been a little ticked off at that -- not even hold hands? he thought angrily, and rode the whole way in silence, looking out the window at the passing scenery and wishing he could just have five minutes of Lance's time to himself. Five minutes -- was that too much to ask?

Lance unlocked their hotel room door and Justin followed him inside. The room was cold from the air conditioner, and the cool air perked him up slightly. He closed the door behind him and reached for Lance. Pulling him back against him, Justin buried his head in Lance's neck just beneath his hair and sighed deeply. "Justin, you're sticky," Lance complained.

It was true. After the show one of the crew members handed him a sports bottle, and thinking it was full of water, he squirted it all over his chest and face. "I didn't know it was Gatorade," Justin whispered against Lance's skin. His t-shirt clung to him now like tape, and his arms and face were tacky with the dried drink.

Lance pulled away slightly. "You need to get cleaned up."

"I don't feel like it," he replied, nuzzling closer to Lance.

"Justin, you stink."

Justin let Lance go, scowling as he watched him step out of his sneakers. "You don't smell all that great either," Justin said, pouting. In truth, they both smelled of sweat and exhaustion, having just finished another show in the sweltering heat. Sighing, Justin walked past Lance and sat on the edge of the bed. "Fine," he said, his voice cold. "All night long all I can think of is getting you alone, and once I do, you don't want to do anything. Well, you know --" He sighed and tugged off his shoes and socks. "Fine," he said again, as if that were the end of it, and tried to ignore Lance, who stepped into the bathroom.

The sound of running water filled the room. Justin sighed. He didn't feel like taking a shower right now. He didn't feel like doing anything but lying in bed with Lance in his arms. A wave of exhaustion washed over him, and he fell back on the bed, his arms stretched out at his sides, and

he looked at the ceiling, his mind blank. After a few minutes, Lance came and stood beside him. "Get up," he said.

Justin shifted his gaze to Lance, who stood bare chested beside him, his shirt left behind in the bathroom. "No," he replied.

But Lance took one of Justin's hands and pulled him up. "Come on," he said. "You need a bath."

"Lance," Justin whined, but he let Lance pull him off the bed, happy that Lance's hand was in his. He staggered behind Lance into the bathroom, where the tub was filled with huge white bubbles. The faucet was still on, the water running into the tub, filling it up. "I don't want to take a bath," Justin complained.

"Too bad," Lance said. He pulled Justin's t-shirt free from his jeans and tugged it over his head. Then he fumbled with the button on Justin's jeans, and Justin watched the top of his head as Lance concentrated on undressing him. Gently, Justin ran his hands down Lance's bare arms, feeling the smooth muscular skin beneath his touch. As Lance unzipped Justin's jeans and pulled them down, Justin leaned on Lance's shoulders, stepped out of his pants, and thought maybe this bath thing wasn't a bad idea after all. When Lance pulled down Justin's boxers, a faint smile played across his face at the sight of Justin's slight erection, but he didn't say anything.

Lance turned the water off. "Get in," he said, pointing at the tub.

"Aren't you coming?" Justin asked coyly.

Lance looked at him, the hint of a smile in his eyes, and shook his head slightly. "First we have to get you cleaned up."

"That's no fun," Justin said, pouting. He stepped into the hot water and eased himself down into the tub.

Reaching into the water, Lance fished out a wet washcloth and began to soap it up. "Don't worry," he said, lathering the cloth. "I wasn't planning to let you clean yourself."

Justin smiled and, closing his eyes, slid down further into the hot, soapy water. He leaned back, the porcelain cold against his bare skin, his arms on the sides of the tub, and felt his muscles relax. The weariness and aches that had plagued him since the show ended slowly ebbed away.

Lance sat down on the edge of the tub, just out of Justin's reach, and leaned forward. He rubbed the washcloth along Justin's neck, the rough terry cloth warm and soapy against Justin's skin. He felt Lance's fingers through the cloth, gently massaging as he rubbed down his shoulders and across his chest. The soapy water splashed on the linoleum floor as Lance ran the cloth along Justin's sticky arms. When he lifted Justin's hand and encircled each finger with the washcloth, cleaning them individually, Justin felt his groin tighten and couldn't stifle the moan that came to his lips. Then the washcloth plunged into the water, scrubbing his stomach, his chest, his nipples, until they were hard and his erection tightened against his inner thigh.

Justin clutched Lance's knee, the fabric of Lance's pants growing damp beneath Justin's wet hand. "Get in here," he whispered, his eyes pleading.

Lance smiled but shook his head. "Not yet," he said, running the washcloth across Justin's lower stomach, around his hip, and down one leg.

"Lance," Justin warned, squeezing his knee, as Lance picked Justin's foot up out of the water and rubbed the washcloth between each toe. Water ran down his leg and tickled his thigh. "You're driving me crazy," he admitted.

"I know," Lance replied. He set Justin's leg down and reached for the other one. Beneath the water, Justin tried to slip out of his grasp, but Lance held on tight and pulled his leg out of the tub.

As he scrubbed Justin's foot, Justin pouted. "Lance," he said again, his erection hard and throbbing between his legs.

"Almost there," Lance said, setting Justin's leg back down. His hand slipped beneath the water and Justin felt the rough washcloth encircle his swollen erection. He closed his eyes and leaned back in the tub, moaning. "Damn," Lance said softly as he rubbed the washcloth up and down Justin's thick length. "You should take baths more often."

"Lance, please," Justin said softly, thrusting into Lance's hand.

Then Lance released Justin's dick, and he wanted to cry in frustration. "Sit up," Lance said. "Gotta wash your back." Justin slipped his head beneath the water, wetting his face and braided hair, and then sat up. As he wiped the soapy water from his eyes, he heard the sound of Lance's pants hitting the floor. Finally, he thought, waiting.

Behind him, Lance stepped into the tub. He sat down carefully, his legs stretching out on either side of Justin's, his own erection pressed against Justin's lower back. Justin felt the washcloth across his back, massaging his shoulders, and he leaned into the touch. Lance raised his knees as Justin leaned back against him. The washcloth floated to the surface of the water as Lance tossed it aside, his hands trailing down Justin's chest. Justin ran his hands under Lance's thighs and pressed back against Lance's erection, hard in his back. When he set his head on Lance's shoulder, Justin turned and nipped at Lance's ear playfully. Lance grinned at him, water in his eyelashes like dew, and his hands rubbed along Justin's lower belly, just above his erection. Each touch sent shivers down Justin's legs.

Justin moaned as Lance kissed his cheek and ear, tiny kisses that licked and tickled. Lance's hands slipped lower, beneath Justin's cock, cupping his balls gently. Lance pressed them slightly, and Justin thrust into Lance's hands. Then Lance let his hands stray even lower, until he traced small patterns into the sensitive skin below Justin's scrotum, massaging gently. Justin dug his fingers into Lance's thighs as he felt wave after wave of desire and pleasure wash over him. He thrust against Lance's hands, Lance's thumbs rubbing him, massaging, kneading the skin until he didn't think he could take the sensation anymore, and he moaned as he came, the explosive orgasm rocking through his body. Sweet Jesus! he thought, as each spasm sent thick white liquid to the

surface of the water, mingling with the soap and lather.

Lance smiled against his cheek, kissing his chin. When Justin found his breath, he whispered, "Where did you learn that?"

"At the mall," Lance said.

Justin looked at him, incredulous. Lance's green gaze stared back and Justin wanted to lose himself in those eyes. "The mall?" he choked. He felt weak and exhausted, but not from the show. His whole body shivered with the memory of his orgasm. "What, they give classes now, or something?"

Grinning, Lance kissed Justin's nose. "The bookstore, silly," he said. "A book on tantric massage. How to Please Your Man, I think it was called."

"We gotta buy that," Justin whispered. He turned slightly, cupping Lance's cheek in his hand, and covered Lance's mouth with his. As his tongue licked between Lance's lips, Justin was glad Lance insisted on his taking a bath.

All I Ever Wanted
31. Hoagie Joe
by NSyncGrrl

Lance and Joey were alone on the tour bus, the others having left in search of lunch. Joey lay on his side on one of the bunk beds, watching Lance, who sat across the aisle on another bunk, a book open in his lap. He felt Joey's steady gaze on him, and he felt very self-conscious and awkward, alone with Joey staring at him like that. Glancing up at him out of the corner of his eye, Lance said, "Joey, stop it."

"Stop what?" Joey asked. Lance felt his hungry gaze on his face, his hands, his bare legs, and wished he was wearing more than a t-shirt and a pair of cut-offs.

Stop watching me, he wanted to say, but that would sound childish and petty. Lance was a little frightened of Joey, because despite his feelings for Justin, he had to admit that Joey's bold frankness and desire excited him, just a little. Joey could be quite charming, and to know someone wanted a chance to be with you -- well, if Lance were a weaker man, he might've given in. He hated to admit it, and would never ever say it out loud, but sometimes he wondered if Joey didn't read it in his eyes.

So instead, Lance sighed and closed the book he had been trying to read, though once he felt Joey watching him, he had read and re-read the same sentence over and over again, unable to concentrate on the words. "I'm starving," he said, just to break the uneasy silence in the bus. "I wonder when they'll be back with our subs."

Joey laughed. "Back home we call them hoagies."

Grinning, Lance said, "Well, with our hoagies, then."

"They won't get real hoagies this far south," Joey replied. Out of the corner of his eye Lance saw Joey lay his head down on his arm, his eyes never leaving Lance. In a quieter voice, Joey said, "If you want a real hoagie, just let me know. It'll be the best you ever tasted. Thick, hot, Italian ..."

Lance blushed at the suggestive tone of Joey's voice. "That's okay, really --" he began, but Joey cut him off.

"Eight inches of fresh, steaming hot bread," he said, "crisp and firm. Italian oil rubbed all over it, spicy and sweet. Ripe red tomatoes, round and juicy --"

"Joey, I get the picture," Lance interrupted. He set the book aside with shaky hands and hated the way his cock swelled at Joey's words. He closed his eyes and shook his head to clear the vivid image of Joey making him a sandwich wearing a white chef's hat and nothing else. Hoping to change the subject, he asked quickly, "So how's Marie?"

Joey shrugged. He had met Marie in DC and the two kept in touch, but

Lance hadn't heard Joey mention her in a while. "She's not here," Joey replied, and when Lance looked over he saw the hunger rumbling behind Joey's large brown eyes. "You are."

"You promised Justin you wouldn't touch me," Lance said in a small voice, his throat suddenly dry. Where were the others?

Joey smiled. "I'm not touching you," he replied. "We're just talking."

"Then why --" Lance blushed. Then why am I so turned on? he wanted to ask, but didn't.

Softly, Joey said, "I could touch you, if you wanted me to."

The door to the bus opened, and Lance sighed with relief when he saw Justin climb aboard, Chris and JC right behind him. Handing Lance a small paper bag, Justin sat down beside him on the bed and glanced at Joey. "You behaving yourself?" he asked, his voice tight.

Joey took the bag Chris offered him. "Always," he said, smiling at Lance. He opened his bag and pulled out his sub. Unwrapping the white deli paper, he bit into the warm sandwich and said, "I was just telling Lance, if he wanted a real taste of Italian, he should come to me. I'll hook him up with something he'll never forget."

Lance sighed, and Justin leaned back against Lance's knee. Glancing at Lance, a slight frown on his face, he replied, "Well, next time you go get us lunch, and I'll stay here."

From the bunk along the back of the bus, Chris said, "You two stop it."

"Stop what?" Joey and Justin said in unison, then glared at each other. Lance unwrapped his sandwich and felt Joey staring as he took a bite. The bread was a little stale, the meat sliced a bit too thick, and the tomatoes hard and a little green, but he swallowed the dry mouthful and tried not to think about the hoagie Joey said he'd make for him.

All I Ever Wanted
32. At the Playground
by NSyncGrrl

Justin pushed the swing higher, reaching for the sky with his feet. As he swung back, he grinned at Lance. "Did you ever try to swing high enough to touch the sun?" he asked as he whooshed by him.

Beside him, Lance sat on another swing, his feet tracing designs in the dirt. They were at a playground, somewhere in a park they had stopped at for a quick photo shoot. But Justin had seen the swingset as they drove up, and convinced Lance to leave the others and follow him to the playground. Watching Justin swing high into the air, Lance's heart skipped and he said, "No."

"I mean, when you were little," Justin replied, swinging past him again.

"No," Lance said again. He hadn't been the daredevil type.

"Did you ever swing so high you flipped over the bar?" Justin asked, pushing himself higher. It looked like that's what he was trying to do, flip the swing completely around the metal bar. "I did that once. It was great."

"Justin," Lance said, cautious. "Maybe you shouldn't go so high."

"Why not?" Justin asked. As he passed by again, Lance felt the whole swingset lift up slightly, pulling forward to follow Justin. When he swung back, the swingset shifted, and Lance wondered how secure these things were anyway. "We used to swing as high as we could and then jump off."

Lance's throat swelled with fear at the thought of flying across the playground like that. "Don't you dare, Justin Timberlake," he said.

Something in his voice made Justin look at him sharply. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm perfectly safe."

Apparently Justin couldn't feel the swingset trying to pull itself out of the ground. "Just slow down a bit, okay?" Lance asked, nervous.

Justin dragged his feet in the ground, slowing down a little with each swing. "I said don't worry. I'm not going to get hurt."

"You never know," Lance replied. "What if the chain broke? What if you slipped out of the swing? What if --"

Grinning, Justin said, "You sound like my mother."

Lance shrugged. "I just don't want to see you get hurt. I can picture it now -- you, stretched out bleeding on the blacktop. Me running to get the others while you lay dying --"

"Jeez," Justin interrupted. He slowed down until his swing barely

moved, and he frowned at Lance. "You've got a morbid imagination."

"Who would comfort me when you were paralyzed?" Lance continued, a slight smile in his voice. "Who would hold me close and whisper in my ear that everything would be alright?" He glanced at Justin out of the corner of his eye, and sure enough, his words had hit home. Justin chewed on his lower lip and studied Lance, as if sizing him up. Lance sighed dramatically. "I'm sure I'll find someone. Joey maybe --"

Justin lunged at him, but Lance anticipated the move and was quicker. He leaped out of the swing and raced across the blacktop, laughing. "That's not funny!" Justin cried, right behind him. Lance dodged the jungle gym and the slide, and then spun around and ran back past Justin, who almost tripped trying to catch him. "Lance, get back here!" Justin called again, and Lance could almost feel his breath on the back of his neck, so he spurred ahead, trying to outrun him.

But Justin was in better shape than Lance was, and as they neared the monkey bars, Justin tackled him. They rolled in the loose sand, until they ended up lying side by side, exhausted. "Jesus," Justin whispered as Lance panted beside him. "I need to work out more."

Lance laughed breathlessly and rolled over on his stomach. He looked down at Justin, who met his steady gaze, and smiled. Justin smiled back. "I was only kidding," Lance said softly. He brushed sand off of Justin's forehead.

"That wasn't funny," Justin said again, but his smile remained and Lance thought maybe he had liked the chase.

Justin reached for the unbuttoned collar of Lance's shirt. Gripping the fabric, he pulled Lance down to him. Lance twisted his head so that Justin's lips brushed his cheek. "Justin, we can't --" he began.

"Why not?" Justin whispered, his lips near Lance's ear.

"Someone might see," Lance replied.

Glancing around the empty playground, Justin asked, "Like who?" He slipped his hand into Lance's shirt, his fingers trailing along Lance's collarbone.

"One of the photographers," Lance replied. He looked around and didn't see anyone, but you could never be too careful. "All we need is one good shot of us kissing and it'll be all over the tabloids."

Justin's fingers caressed his neck, the touch gentle and soft. "We can deny it."

Lance frowned. "What will we say? I was giving you mouth to mouth?"

Tugging on Lance's collar again, Justin pulled Lance down. As Lance leaned closer, Justin whispered, "That would work." His lips brushed against Lance's, and Lance kissed him quickly before trying to pull back. But Justin was strong, and he had a good grip on Lance's shirt. He leaned up into Lance and pressed his mouth against Lance's, his tongue parting Lance's lips easily. Lance moaned and ran one hand across Justin's chest as they kissed.

The click of a flash and insistent whirl of film broke the silence around them. Lance pulled back quickly, trying to look everywhere at once, while Justin sat up, sand clinging to his back, anger already creasing his forehead. "What --" Lance started to ask, and then JC jumped out from behind the jungle gym, a few feet away. He had a camera in his hand.

Grinning, he held up the camera and hooted. "I got you!" he cried. "This makes up for that time you guys took those pictures of me sleeping -- remember?"

Justin pushed himself up. "JC," Lance whispered, relieved. But as Justin pulled Lance to his feet, he growled, "Give me that camera."

JC shook his head. "Nope. Mine." His eyes sparkled with mirth. "And I don't think you can claim that was mouth to mouth."

"Why you --" Justin took off after JC, and Lance laughed as he watched them race around the playground. "Give me that camera!" Justin cried, and when they passed by him again, Lance took off after them. He was glad it had only been JC, but if that film fell into the wrong hands ... with renewed energy, he joined in the chase, laughing as he ran.

All I Ever Wanted
33. Shooting Hoops
by NSyncGrrl

Justin dribbled the basketball around Lance, heading for the basket. They were in a private room at the YMCA, on a much needed break from their hectic tour schedule. The other guys had opted for the pool, but Justin wanted to shoot a few hoops and Lance came along once Justin managed to snag a closed room. It was a small, windowless room, with concrete block walls painted a bright yellow, and half a basketball court outlined on the floor. Lance sucked at basketball, but the thought of a room all to themselves, even if it was at the Y, made him think perhaps he could distract Justin from the game.

Jumping into the air, Justin dunked the ball through the hoop, hanging onto the rim for good measure. Lance laughed and bent over to catch his breath, his hands on his knees. Justin retrieved the ball and studied Lance, who smiled and asked, "Aren't you tired of winning yet?"

Grinning, Justin shook his head. He wore a black bandanna over his curls, a thin white tank top, and a baggy pair of shorts. "Nope," he said. "Why, you tired of losing?"

Raising a hand to his eyes, Lance held his forefinger and thumb an inch apart and squinted through the space between them at Justin. "Just a little bit," he said, breathless.

Justin smiled and threw the ball at him, but he dodged out of the way and it bounced harmlessly to the floor behind him. "You don't have to play if you don't want to," he said, pulling his tank top off over his head. He mopped the sweat from his brow with the thin material, and Lance ran his gaze over Justin's sweaty muscles. Justin tossed his shirt away and asked, "Can you get me the ball?"

Lance stared at him a moment longer, the black bandanna adding a roguish air to his friend, and suddenly basketball was the last thing on Lance's mind. But he retrieved the ball without a word and threw it at Justin, who caught it nimbly. "One more game," Justin said. "How's that sound?"

Lance shrugged and watched the muscles in Justin's arms and chest pull tight as he dribbled the ball. He kept it close to him, watching Lance out of the corner of his eye as Lance took a defensive position, blocking Justin's shot. Justin tried to dodge out from under Lance, but he couldn't. Lance hovered just behind him, mere inches away, his arms high in the air, his hands continually reaching for the ball. Justin found it hard to keep the ball in motion, as Lance suddenly got into the game. Catching the ball in both hands, Justin spun around and looked for an opening through Lance's arms, but the basket was so far away. Lance had cornered him against the wall, out of bounds.

And then Lance hit the ball, knocking it out of Justin's hands. As it rolled away, Justin glanced at Lance, wondering why he didn't follow the

ball. Instead Lance stared at him, his light green eyes smoldering with desire. Pushing him roughly against the wall, Lance held Justin back by his shoulders and stared at him with a look that made Justin's groin ache. Just when he thought he would cry out with frustration, Lance covered Justin's mouth with his own, his tongue pushing its way inside. Justin moaned against Lance, grabbing the sides of Lance's shirt as he curled his hands into fists. Lance pushed his hips against Justin's, his erection already hard through his shorts.

When Lance pulled back, Justin sighed shakily and met his green gaze. "Damn," he whispered softly. "If I had known you were such a sore loser, I would've never let you win."

Lance looked down, watching his hands slip from Justin's shoulders and down his arms, the touch gentle despite the pressure of Lance's body holding Justin against the wall. His hands trailed to Justin's, gripping Lance's shirt, and he plucked them away, holding one hand in each of his. Pulling Justin's arms around his waist, Lance held onto Justin's hands tightly, holding them against his back, and leaned forward until his lips brushed along the hollow of Justin's neck. Justin closed his eyes as Lance's mouth sucked at his neck and shoulder, leaning his head against Lance's. He whispered Lance's name and tried to disentangle his hands from Lance's, wanting to hold him close, but Lance held him tight.

Lance's tongue traced down Justin's collarbone, tasting salty sweat, nipping gently at his skin. Tiny kisses trailed down to Justin's nipple, already erect. When Lance covered the tender bud with his lips, Justin leaned his head back against the wall and, closing his eyes, moaned softly. Lance encircled the nipple with his tongue, until it was hard and throbbing beneath his lips, and then he turned his attention to the other nipple. Justin squeezed Lance's hands in his and rubbed his hips against Lance's.

Releasing Justin's hands, Lance ran his arms around Justin's waist, his hands slipping easily beneath the waistband of his friend's shorts. Justin grabbed twin handfuls of Lance's shirt, balling it in his fists, as Lance pushed the loose shorts down slightly, until they rested on Justin's hips. Then he brought his hands around to the front of Justin's shorts, where Justin's cock was already swollen and hard from Lance's kisses. Lance slipped just the tip of Justin's penis out of his pants, his hand massaging the throbbing erection through the fabric while the fingers of his other hand caressed the sensitive tip, tracing circles around and around it.

Justin thrust into Lance's hands and ran his hands up Lance's back to his shoulders, his neck, his cheeks, until he cradled Lance's head in his hands. Pulling him close, Justin kissed Lance, licking along his sweaty brow, his flushed cheeks, his eager mouth. Justin leaned his head against Lance's as Lance stroked his erection, their lips kissing each other hungrily, Lance's eyelashes light and fluttering against Justin's cheek. Lance felt dampness on his fingers and squeezed Justin's dick harder and faster. When Justin came, he latched his mouth over Lance's and moaned into his mouth, their tongues tasting each other.

Lance felt the front of his shirt grow wet and heavy as Justin came. He smiled against Justin's mouth and whispered, "You're always hard."

Running his arms around Lance's neck, Justin hugged him close,

Lance's hands still between them around his softening dick. "You turn me on," he whispered back, a little breathless.

Someone knocked on the wooden door, at the opposite end of the room. Pulling back from Justin, Lance tugged his messy shirt off and wiped at the dampness on his stomach. "I guess our time is up," he said, his voice thick.

Justin pulled his shorts up to his waist. "Guess so," he said, looking down. His own stomach was smeared, sticky and white, from where he pulled Lance to him after he came. Smiling, Lance wiped the mess away with his shirt and then wrapped Justin's shirt around his, balling them into one hand. Justin went to retrieve the basketball when the knock on the door came again.

"Coming!" Justin called out, his voice echoing in the empty court. He ran an arm around Lance's waist as they headed for the door. Bending down, he whispered against Lance's ear, "I like playing basketball with you."

Lance grinned. "Wait 'til you see what other sports I know." The promise in Lance's eyes enflamed Justin's blood, and Justin couldn't wait to take him up on the offer.

All I Ever Wanted
34. Intoxicated
by NSyncGrrl

When they got to New York, Lance wanted to do something different to celebrate the last leg of their tour. So when Chris said he was going out for some snacks, Lance tagged along. As they passed an ABC store, he pulled Chris inside. "I want something good," he said, looking over the rows of dark bottles, unsure of what exactly he wanted. "I don't know much about alcohol --"

"What's this for?" Chris asked, picking up a bottle of MD 20/20. The blue liquid looked like Kool-Aid, the same shade as Justin's eyes in the sun.

Lance shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "Don't you ever just want to get drunk sometimes?"

"You?" Chris asked, raising an eyebrow. "Sweet, little, innocent Lance wants to get drunk?"

"I'm not so innocent," Lance replied. A smile crossed his face as he thought of the night before, spent in Justin's arms. "I'll bet I see more action in one week than you do in a whole month."

Chris nodded, conceding. "You're probably right there," he said. "So what exactly are you looking for?"

Lance shrugged again. "Something sweet. Something that doesn't taste like alcohol, or beer, or wine, or any of that. Something good."

"How about this?" Chris asked, picking up a bottle of Peppermint Schnapp's. "This stuff's pretty good. And you get your choice of flavors. Peppermint, strawberry, peach --"

"Peach?" Lance asked, coming over to stand beside Chris. He took a bottle of Peach Schnapp's off the shelf and held it up to the light, studying the light amber liquid. "You think I'll like it?"

"If you like peach," Chris replied. "You're not going to get Justin drunk, are you?"

Lance smiled. "Don't worry, we won't leave the hotel."

Chris studied Lance for a moment before nodding. "You have your license with you? You look so young, they're sure to card you."

"Yeah. Will one bottle be enough?" Lance asked, skeptical.

"Jesus, Lance," Chris said, laughing. "What are you planning?"

"Nothing," he said.

"Then one bottle will be enough, trust me." Chris grinned wolfishly. "It usually takes just two glasses to get Dani in the mood."

Lance nodded. "This'll do, then."

So Lance bought the Peach Schnapp's, and later that evening showed the bottle to Justin, whose eyes glistened with excitement. "Let's go to the roof," Justin said, snagging two glasses and leading the way.

They lay stretched out on the roof, the bottle between them, watching the stars above. From this height the sounds of the city seemed distant, the traffic far away, the whole world insignificant. The only thing that mattered was that they were together, alone, the rest of the night stretching ahead of them full of promise.

Lance sat up, resting his back beside the door to the stairwell. He poured himself another drink as Justin stood up, and he looked at the bottle of Schnapp's -- it was already half-empty. "You're guzzling this," he said, surprised to find his words a little slurred. He blinked up at Justin, grinning down at him.

"It tastes good," he said. "Good choice." He reached for the bottle, but Lance pulled it away.

"I told Chris we'd be careful," he said.

Justin leaned down dangerously close to Lance, his breath hot and coppery. "I am being careful," he whispered loudly. He stared at Lance, his brow creasing as he tried to focus his eyes. "I love you, man," he said.

Lance grinned. "I love you, too." He kissed Justin's nose as he reached for him, but Justin stood up quickly, rocking back on his heels.

Raising his voice, Justin yelled, "New York City! I love Lance Bass!"

Lance felt his face flush. "Sit down," he said, tugging at Justin's pants. "You don't have to tell the world."

"But I want to!" Justin cried. He started for the roof's edge, but Lance pulled him back. Justin stumbled against Lance's leg, falling into his lap. Looking up at Lance sheepishly, he whispered, "Oops."

Lance giggled. "Oops." Justin crawled over Lance until he sat astride his hips, straddling him. His butt pressed against Lance's crotch, and Lance shifted slightly, feeling his dick swell beneath Justin. He pulled his knees up against Justin's back and ran his hands around Justin's waist. Justin stared down into his face, his own hands roaming through Lance's hair.

"Oops," Justin said again, kissing Lance's brow. His lips left a trail of sticky kisses down Lance's nose before they covered his mouth. Justin's tongue slipped between Lance's lips, warm and familiar. He tasted like peaches, and Lance ran his hands beneath Justin's shirt, his back cool to Lance's touch.

Justin shifted his leg and kicked the Schnapp's bottle beside Lance, knocking it over. It rolled against the wall behind Lance, the amber liquid gurgling out on the cold concrete. "Justin!" Lance cried, straightening the bottle. "This stuff wasn't cheap."

Justin took the bottle from Lance and sipped from it. "Then let's not

waste it," he said, placing the bottle to Lance's lips. "Drink up."

Lance turned his head. "I don't want any more," he said, but Justin tipped the bottle up, the liquid splashing down Lance's chin and neck. "Justin!"

"Oops," Justin said again. Setting the bottle down, he leaned forward and licked the alcohol from Lance's chin. Tracing along Lance's cheek, he nuzzled Lance's ear and neck as Lance's hands roamed his back. "Hmmm," Justin sighed, resting his head on Lance's shoulder. He closed his eyes.

Lance watched the lights of the city around them, twinkling like the stars. In his arms Justin grew heavy, his breathing even, as he drifted off to sleep. After a few long moments Lance found himself blinking slower and slower -- each time he closed his eyes it took longer to open them. He sighed and rested his head against Justin's, and let his eyes slip close.

Some time later Lance heard the door beside him open. "Look at this," someone said, and Lance yawned as Justin was lifted off of him. He tightened his grip on Justin's waist, but gentle hands pried him loose. Lance looked up to see JC holding Justin beneath the arms as Chris lifted his legs.

"What time is it?" he mumbled, his tongue thick in his mouth. Joey leaned down beside him as the others carried Justin through the open door.

Joey ran a finger down Lance's cheek, the touch cool against his hot skin. "Way past your bedtime, man," he said.

Lance pulled away from his hand. "Joey," he started, his words slurred.

"Don't worry," Joey whispered, lifting Lance to his feet. His hands were strong and sure on Lance's arm and back. "I'm not going to take advantage of this." Lance looked into Joey's face, trying to read behind his eyes, but out here on the roof all he saw were large pools of shadow and darkness. "Trust me," Joey said, and Lance nodded slowly. Joey led him to the door, one arm around his waist to steady his stumbling steps.

When they reached the elevator, Lance rested his head on Joey's shoulder, suddenly very sleepy. Joey held him close, his hand slipping into the front pocket of Lance's jeans as he looked down at him. They rode in silence down to their floor. As Joey helped him to his room, Lance whispered, "Joey, I'm sorry."

"For what?" Joey asked. The door to the room Lance shared with Justin stood slightly ajar. From inside they could hear Chris and JC struggling to get Justin on the bed.

Lance looked up at Joey, his eyes slightly unfocused. "For not --" He sighed. For not liking you more, he wanted to say, but he wasn't that drunk. "I don't know," he mumbled. Joey smiled sadly and shook his head.

"That's okay," he replied, as if he knew what Lance wanted to say. He

pushed the door open wider and, a hand across Lance's shoulders, helped his friend inside.

Chris and JC managed to get Justin stretched out on the bed and left. Joey sat Lance down on the edge of the bed and bent to remove his shoes. "Go to sleep," Joey said softly.

Lance glanced over at Justin, still wearing his jeans and shirt. "Help me get him undressed?" he asked.

Sighing, Joey nodded. Lance unzipped Justin's jeans and Joey pulled them down, tossing them to the floor. Lance pulled Justin's shirt off over his head, and then tucked the covers up to his neck, covering him. Wearily, Lance tugged off his own shirt. As it pulled free from his head, he found Joey standing just inches away from him, his hands hovering above Lance's bare chest. "Joey," Lance warned, as Joey's fingers fumbled with the button of Lance's jeans. "I don't need any more help."

Joey sighed shakily. "Right," he said, his voice thick. He turned away as Lance slipped out of his jeans and into the bed, easing beneath the covers to lay next to Justin. As he pulled Justin close, he closed his eyes. The alcohol buzzed through his veins, humming in his head.

As his mind drifted, he felt a gentle touch on his brow, brushing his hair back, and cool, dry lips kissed his forehead softly. Then he heard the door shut quietly, and he let the alcohol lull him to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
35. Mother and Son
by NSyncGrrl

Justin stretched as he stood up from his lounge chair. Beside him JC looked up from his own chair by the swimming pool. They were at Justin's mother's house for a few days, soaking up the Orlando sun while the others horsed around in the pool. "You going inside?" JC asked.

Justin smiled at Lance, in the pool with Joey and Chris, and nodded. "Want anything?"

JC held up his empty glass. "Some more lemonade," he said. Justin took the glass and headed for the door. Behind him, he heard someone climb out of the pool. Turning, he saw Lance, water dripping from his body, and he smiled, waiting as Lance approached.

"Hey, babe," Justin said, reaching out to trail a finger down Lance's arm.

"Where you going?" Lance asked.

Justin nodded towards the house. "I'll be right back."

Lance leaned close to Justin, his hand touching the small of Justin's back. His hand was wet and cool against Justin's warm skin, and suddenly Justin wanted to get Lance alone. Brushing his lips against Justin's ear, Lance whispered, "When you come back, let's go somewhere."

Grinning, Justin asked, "What do you have in mind?"

"Someplace private," Lance replied. He kissed Justin's ear and turned back to the pool. Justin hurried into the house, his mind already picking out places the two of them could go.

Inside the house, Justin's mother stood at the kitchen sink, washing dishes. She was looking out the window at the pool, and when she glanced at Justin, he felt his stomach twist into a knot. "Hi, Mom," he said, trying to sound casual. He opened the refrigerator and refilled JC's glass, and wondered if she had seen Lance's quick kiss.

His mother smiled at him. "Hey, honey," she said. As he headed for the door, she stopped him. "Can I ask you something?"

Justin stopped, fear curling in the pit of his stomach. Setting JC's drink on the counter, he came to stand beside her and looked out the window at his friends. "Sure," he said cautiously.

He waited. When she spoke, though, she threw him off-guard. "So how's everything going with you and the guys?"

Justin shrugged. "Okay," he said, wary.

"How's Lance?" she asked, watching as Joey dunked Lance into the

pool. Chris jumped on top of Joey, pushing him beneath the water, and Lance popped up a few feet away, laughing.

"Okay, I guess," Justin said, frowning. He wanted to go outside, get Lance away from Joey, but he sensed his mother had something else she wanted to ask him.

Carefully, she said, "He didn't stay in his room last night."

Startled, Justin turned towards her. "How do you know?" he asked, his heart in his throat. They had only been there for two days, and even though Lance left his bags in the guest room, he slept in Justin's bed. Justin hadn't thought his mother noticed.

"His bed hasn't been slept in," she replied. She looked at him archly, and he sighed. Quietly she asked, "Do you know where he's sleeping?"

Justin bit his lower lip. "With me," he admitted.

She nodded. "I'm not blind, you know," she said. "I've seen the way you two look at each other. Everytime I call your room, he's there. Remember when I called you a few weeks ago, when you guys were out in California? It had to be four in the morning out there. And Lance answered the phone."

Justin remembered that. At the time he had thought nothing of it. They were both asleep and when the phone rang, Lance picked it up because he was closer. Sighing, Justin said simply, "I love him, Mom."

"Justin --" she began, but he cut her off.

"I know what you're going to say," he said, turning to her. She met his gaze with troubled eyes. "But it's not like that. I've known him long enough to know this isn't just some passing crush. It took us forever to get together, but now that we are, I can't imagine us apart." He sighed. "I'm sorry if you don't approve --"

She placed a hand on his shoulder. "Honey," she said, taking a deep breath, "it's your life. You're old enough to know what you want to do with it." She smiled. "And you could do a lot worse than Lance. For a while there I was so worried about you and that Britney girl ..."

Justin rolled his eyes. "Mom," he said, his voice pleading. "Puh-leaze. That was so long ago."

"I know, I know." She studied him for a moment, and then said, "Just take care of yourself, okay? And take care of him, too. I've always liked that boy."

Justin smiled, relieved. "Sure, Mom." He kissed her quickly on the cheek. "And thanks."

"Just be careful," she said.

He nodded. "I will." As he headed for the door, he remembered JC's drink. He grabbed it and, with a quick grin at his mom, went back outside to the promise of getting Lance alone.

All I Ever Wanted
36. At the Beach
by NSyncGrrl

It was late afternoon, and Justin and Lance slipped away from the others, leaving them at Justin's mother's house and heading for the beach. Despite the hour, the beach was fairly empty, and they managed to find a secluded outcropping of rock that ran out a few yards into the restless sea. Justin sat on the edge of the outcropping, his legs dangling close to the water. Lance jumped into the sea, splashing Justin, and turned to smile at his friend. "Come on in," he called, treading water that came up to his shoulders.

Justin shook his head. "I'm fine," he said, looking at the sea doubtfully. He kicked at the water, his toes brushing across its surface. "Maybe you can come back up here," he suggested.

Lance swam back to the outcropping. Leaning on the rock, he put his head in his arms and looked up at Justin. Water beaded along his hair and face, sparkling in the late sun. He blinked water out of his eyes and smiled. Justin smiled back at him and ran a hand through his damp hair. "My mom asked about you," he said.

Lance started. "What did she want?" he asked.

"To know why you weren't sleeping in your room." Lance's eyes grew large, but Justin hurried on. "I told her. She's cool with it."

For a long moment, Justin didn't think Lance would say anything. And then he asked, "You sure?"

Justin nodded. "She likes you. It's cool."

Sighing, Lance rubbed his forehead against his arm. "I guess she'll tell my mom now."

"Why should she?" Justin asked, letting his hand roam across Lance's neck and back. "We're not kids anymore."

Lance set his chin on his arms, staring back down the outcropping at the beach. "I just don't want her to find out before I can tell her," he said.

Justin slipped a hand beneath Lance's upper arm and tugged gently. "Come up here," he said playfully.

Lance pushed off from the rocks and smiled. "You come here," he called, swimming out a little ways from the outcropping.

Frowning, Justin shook his head. "You don't know what's in that water," he said, looking at the dark sea.

Lance splashed around. "No sharks, that's for sure," he said. Looking at him with puppy-dog eyes, he pleaded, "Come on, Justin, please? For me?"

Justin bit his lip. He didn't like the ocean -- he was terrified of sharks and jellyfish and sea fleas and everything hidden beneath the waves. But Lance looked so adorable out there, bobbing up and down with each wave that rolled in, his hair wet, his body glistening. "I don't know --" he said, doubtful. He could swim but he didn't like the ocean very much.

Lance stopped swimming and stood still, the water coming to his chin. "See?" he called. "It's not so deep. I can touch the bottom. Come on." As Justin hesitated, Lance ducked beneath the water. When he resurfaced, he held his swimming trunks in one hand. Flinging them at Justin, he smiled sweetly as they hit Justin's shoulder. "I know you can't say no now," he said.

He was right. In one motion Justin pulled his own shorts off and slipped into the water. It was colder than he had thought, but then Lance swam up to him, his warm arms encircling Justin's waist. "See?" he asked, his voice husky. He pulled Justin so close, their noses touched. Against Justin's groin, Lance's dick was already hard and swollen, and Justin's own cock stiffened in return. He ran his hands around Lance's neck, holding him tight, trying to stop the small tremors shivering across his skin. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

In response, Justin kissed Lance, tasting salt water and the lemonade his mom had made that afternoon. Beneath the water, his legs entangled in Lance's, and Lance pushed him back against the rocky outcropping as his tongue found its way inside Justin's mouth. Lance cradled the back of Justin's head in one hand, his other arm around Justin's waist, holding him close. He thrust against Justin's hips and Justin groaned slightly, running his hands into Lance's hair and pulling him in as their kiss deepened. As each wave broke against them, they pressed against each other, their erections rubbing together, warming them despite the cold water.

Suddenly something brushed against Justin's leg. He tightened his grip around Lance's neck and scooted back, trying to climb up the rocks behind him. "Jesus!" he cried, kicking out between Lance's legs.

Lance hugged Justin, a worried expression flitting across his face. "What?" he asked, his voice laced with concern. "Justin, what is it?"

"Something --" He let go of Lance and twisted in his arms. Lance swam back as Justin pulled himself out of the water and onto the rocky outcropping. His naked body dripped with water, and then he turned and hugged his knees to his chest, his hands rubbing along his legs. "There was something on me."

Wolfishly, Lance leered at him. "That something was me," he said. "I was all over you."

"No, really," Justin said, scowling. "On my leg. I can still feel it. Wet and slimy." He ran his hands over his legs furiously.

Lance swam back to the outcropping. He studied Justin, sitting curled into himself on the rock, his legs hiding his chest and groin from Lance's view. Just looking at Justin's bare skin, shining with water droplets, made Lance ache to touch him. Pulling himself up onto the rock, he saw the hunger in Justin's eyes at the sight of his own body, naked, wet, his

erection red and thick and hard. Lance lay back on the rock, warm from the sun, one arm behind his head, and stared at the darkening sky. Stretching, he ran a hand down his chest to thread through the kinky hair around his cock. From the corner of his eye he saw Justin watching him. Out of the water, his shivering had stopped, and his hands were tracing slow circles on his legs, mimicking the movement of Lance's hand. Running one finger up his own swollen cock, Lance moaned softly and closed his eyes. As he circled the tip of his own penis, he asked in a thick voice, "You gonna just sit there and make me do this myself?"

He felt Justin's body press against his as he laid down beside Lance. Justin's hand caught Lance's and moved it out of the way. He raised Lance's hand to his lips and kissed it. When he released it, Lance ran his arm beneath Justin's and rubbed his back. Justin's fingers brushed against Lance's erection before wrapping around the thick shaft and squeezing gently. Then Justin's mouth closed over Lance's, his tongue slipping between Lance's lips, claiming him. Lance pulled Justin closer, until he felt Justin's erection rub against his thigh. His hand held one of Justin's buttocks tightly, kneading the tight muscle with every thrust of his hips.

Justin trailed tiny kisses down Lance's chin and neck, licking his nipples erect. In his hand Lance's wet dick throbbed, and his own cock ached as he thrust against Lance's thigh. He bit Lance's nipples lightly, tugging on them as his hand moved faster and faster. Lance held onto him tightly and moaned with each thrust of his hips. When Justin felt Lance's cock spasm, he kissed Lance hard, pressing him back against the rock, his tongue insistent. As Lance came, Justin moved his hips faster, until he came, too, his juices smearing between his lower stomach and Lance's hip.

Rolling over onto Lance, Justin released his friend's dick and, running his hands beneath Lance, rested his head on Lance's chest. He could hear Lance's rapid heartbeat, his breath slowing down as his orgasm passed. Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's shoulders and hugged him. Together they lay in the growing darkness, the air cool against their hot, wet bodies, teasing their softening erections and prickling their skin. Justin sucked on one of Lance's nipples, the tender bud stiffening beneath his tongue, and Lance ran his hands through Justin's curls. They lay like that for a long time, until the afternoon sun slipped away and dusk settled over the beach like a veil. "We better get back," Lance said, after the sun was gone. "They'll wonder where we are."

"Let them," Justin said. He blew against Lance's wet nipple, and Lance shivered in pleasure beneath him.

"We'll miss dinner," Lance pointed out, but he made no move to get up.

Justin raised himself up slowly until his forehead rested against Lance's. He blinked, his eyelashes brushing against Lance's temple, and his hand cupped Lance's soft penis. Beneath his touch, he felt the skin harden slightly. "If you're still hungry ..." he began, hoping Lance got his drift.

Grinning, Lance thrust his hips against Justin's hand and said, "I might have room for seconds." He hugged Justin close and whispered, "Think I'll just help myself." He licked Justin's ear, his tongue dancing around the

sensitive curve of skin. Gently, he bit the tip of Justin's ear, his teeth barely closing over it.

Against his neck, Justin moaned. "We're naked," he said, his voice muffled.

"You just noticed this?" Lance asked, smiling.

Justin sat up slightly. "This isn't a nude beach," he replied, "and police patrol it at night. If we get caught --"

Lance said, "I can see the headlines now." Rolling out from under Justin, he slipped into the sea to wash the sweat and sticky juices drying on his body. Then, reaching for his swimming trunks, he pulled them on underwater. "Your turn," he said, pulling himself back up onto the outcropping, now decently clothed.

Justin eyed the black water distastefully. He didn't relish the thought of going back into it, not with whatever it was that rubbed against him earlier still down there. With large eyes he glanced up at Lance.

Sighing, Lance dipped Justin's dry shorts into the water. Then he leaned down and rubbed the wet material across Justin's belly, washing away the white mess still there. Justin lay back and let Lance clean him up, and beneath the gentle touch he felt his cock grow heavy. "Justin," Lance said, a warning in his voice. Justin looked down to see his cock beginning to swell.

"Sorry," he said. Lance dropped the cold shorts on his groin, instantly cooling the hot blood running down there. As he pulled on the clammy swim trunks, he asked, "Maybe later?"

Lance grinned. As they headed back to the beach, he replied, "There's no maybe about it. Definitely later."

All I Ever Wanted
37. Cooking Out
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sat at the picnic table, watching the others play volleyball and pushing the cold pork and beans around on his paper plate with a plastic fork. The remains of his hamburger sat on one side of the plate, surrounded by half-eaten potato salad, the beans, and a handful of greasy chips. He looked across the yard at the volleyball net, where Justin and Joey played against JC and Chris. Justin wore nothing but a pair of cut-off overalls, his shoulders and chest bare beneath the denim straps, and Lance knew he was staring but he couldn't help it. He watched Justin's muscles flex beneath the overalls and shifted on the picnic bench, his slight erection rubbing against his clothes.

They were at Justin's mother's house, and Mrs. Timberlake stood at the grill, finishing off another round of burgers and hot dogs. Closing the grill cover, she came over to the bench and sat down across from Lance. "How's the food?" she asked, looking at Lance's plate, still full.

Lance started. Turning his attention to her, he smiled and replied, "Fine," though his mind was on Justin and he wasn't quite sure what she had just asked him. He glanced at the others once more before looking down at his plate and forcing a scoop of beans into his mouth. He chewed the cold beans thoughtfully, not meeting her gaze.

"Hey, Mom!" Justin called, and they both looked up. He gestured to Joey, who held the volleyball in his hands, and asked, "You wanna play? I'm getting tired."

"Sure," she said, and Lance breathed a sigh of relief when she headed over towards them. Justin stopped by the cooler to get a popsicle before joining Lance at the picnic table. Unwrapping the popsicle, he sat down on the bench where his mother had been and grinned at Lance. "She bothering you?" he asked playfully.

Lance shook his head. Up close he could see a sheath of sweat covering Justin's shoulders and chest. "I like what you're wearing," he said.

Justin laughed. "I think you like what I'm not wearing," he replied. The popsicle in his hand was long and purple, and already beginning to melt in the heat. He put his lips on the tip of the popsicle and slowly eased the full length into his mouth, his eyes never leaving Lance's face. Lance watched as Justin pulled the popsicle back out of his mouth, his lips wrapped around it, and when he pulled it free, he made a small, sucking sound that made Lance's groin ache. "You want some of this?" Justin asked, raising his eyebrows.

Lance didn't think he meant the popsicle. His mind went numb with desire, and he just nodded, biting his lower lip. Justin sucked on the popsicle a few more times, his tongue tracing around and around it until Lance thought he would scream, and then he set it down on top of the

uneaten food on Lance's plate. The popsicle wept purple juices onto the plate. Standing up, Justin walked around the picnic table and placed a hand on Lance's back. He leaned close to Lance's ear and whispered, "I'm hungry for something else."

"Like what?" Lance asked, his voice breaking slightly.

"Like you," Justin replied. "Follow me." Lance watched Justin walk towards the trees and bushes that edged the backyard. After a quick glance at the others, wrapped up in their game, he pushed his plate away and followed Justin. They walked among the trees, pushing aside low branches and thick shrubs. Justin pointed to a small thicket hidden among the bushes and vines. "In there," he said, his hand resting on the small of Lance's back. Lance looked at him, skeptical, but Justin nodded. "Trust me."

Bending down, Lance crawled into the clearing between the undergrowth. The grass here was thick and soft, like moss, and the ground sloped slightly up the side of a gentle hill. There was enough room for the two of them to lie down side by side, and through the leaves they could still see the others, tossing the volleyball back and forth just a few yards away. "This is nice," Lance said, looking up at the branches crossing above them. The clearing was cloaked in shadow, cool in the afternoon heat.

Justin crawled in beside him. Grinning at Lance, he pushed him back to the ground, lying on one elbow above him. "Great place to make out," he said softly.

"Oh, you've been here before?" Lance asked coyly, but Justin just grinned. "With who?"

"With you," Justin said, leaning down to brush his lips against Lance's. He tasted like grape Kool-aid. He kissed Lance's lower lip, tugging on it slightly, and Lance reached up to run a hand down Justin's bare arm, his fingers tracing the slim muscles beneath hot skin. Justin brushed the hair back from Lance's brow and kissed him again, his lips easing Lance's apart slightly. He sat up, straddling Lance's hips as they kissed, and then he sat down, his butt on Lance's crotch. Wiggling his hips, he ground into Lance's groin, feeling Lance's erection beneath him. "Damn," he said. "And I thought you were just walking funny 'cause your butt fell asleep sitting on that hard bench for so long."

Lance smiled and thrust his hips against Justin. "I told you I liked what you were wearing," he said.

Sliding down Lance's legs, Justin unbuttoned Lance's denim shorts and eased the zipper down. "And I told you I was hungry," he said. Running his hand over the thin fabric of Lance's underwear, he smiled. "Boxers?" he asked, surprised. "You never wear boxers."

"Easy access," Lance replied. He moved beneath Justin's touch, shivers of pleasure running from his penis throughout his body. "I thought I'd be prepared."

"Oh, suddenly you're a boy scout?" Justin asked, unsnapping the opening of Lance's boxers. Lance's erection bulged through the opening,

and Justin eased it out of his pants. He spread Lance's shorts and boxers open wide, pulling the fabric down below his balls, his cock red and thick against the light skin of his lower belly. Tracing a finger down the swollen shaft, Justin touched Lance lightly, feeling his cock stiffen. Lance closed his eyes, moaning Justin's name softly.

Then Justin stood up and spread Lance's legs apart. Kneeling between them, he slipped an arm under each of Lance's thighs and bent down, Lance's knees on either side of his head. Lance felt Justin's lips close over the tip of his penis, his mouth still cold from the popsicle. Justin slipped his mouth down around Lance's hard dick, taking most of it in, his tongue licking past his lips along the bottom of the swollen shaft. Slowly he pulled his mouth back up, his tongue leaving a wet trail behind as his lips kissed the sensitive tip of Lance's penis. Then he went down on Lance again, taking more of him into his mouth this time, warm and wet and soft against Lance's hard erection. His hands rubbed along Lance's stomach until Lance gripped them in his own, squeezing tight as wave after wave of sensation rolled through him.

When Justin released Lance's dick, the shade of the thicket cooled the hot wetness, teasing him harder. Then Justin licked along the length of his cock before slipping it into his mouth again, his lips pressing insistently along the solid shaft. Lance opened his eyes and looked down at Justin, who was watching him with large, blue eyes and a bold look that aroused him even more. He smiled as Justin pulled back, his lips lingering on the swollen tip before diving in again.

Lance leaned back and felt himself close to coming. He thrust against Justin slightly, glancing over through the bushes and leaves at the others. He saw JC and Chris standing on either side of the volleyball net, talking to each other, and Mrs. Timberlake had started to pack up the food. He didn't see Joey anywhere.

Then he heard footsteps through the grass, and he froze. When Justin let go of his dick, he hissed, "Someone's coming."

Grinning, Justin said, "I hope it's you."

Lance tried to pull back, but Justin released his hands and held him down. "No," he said. "I think it's Joey."

"Fuck him," Justin said. He licked along Lance's throbbing cock, blowing lightly against the wet shaft. "You're close, I can taste it." He took just the tip of Lance's penis into his mouth, massaging the sensitive area insistently with his lips and tongue.

Through the bushes Lance saw Joey, just walking along the edge of the undergrowth. He didn't know if Joey could see them or not, but he didn't look like he was going to interrupt them. His gaze was on the ground, as if he was looking for something. "Justin," Lance moaned as an orgasm ripped through his body. He came in Justin's mouth.

Justin turned and spit Lance's juices out on the ground beside him. Then he resnapped Lance's boxers and rezippped his shorts just as Joey stepped into the woods. "Hey," he called, not sure where they were. "You guys in here?"

Lance sat up, shaky from the force of the orgasm. "Here," he called as Justin wiped his lips. Quickly he kissed Lance, his mouth salty and slightly sour from the come, but Lance thought he could still taste the grape popsicle, too.

"Don't call him over," Justin whispered, but it was too late. Joey leaned through the opening in the bushes and grinned at them.

"You guys seen our volleyball?" he asked. He looked at Lance, taking in his flushed skin and embarrassed half-smile, then turned to Justin. "Did I interrupt something?"

Justin shook his head. "Just finished," he said bluntly, licking his lips.

"We didn't see the ball," Lance said. He wished Justin wouldn't be so rude to Joey.

"Thanks," Joey said, frowning at Justin.

Out in the yard Chris called, "Joey! Found it!" Joey ran his gaze down Lance's body, lingering on his crotch, and then he backed up and left the woods.

"You didn't have to be like that," Lance said.

Justin scowled. "Like what?" he asked. "I was just being truthful."

"You know it hurts him," Lance replied, but Justin just shrugged.

"He'll get over it," he said. He scooted closer to Lance and, leaning his head on Lance's shoulder, asked, "Do we have to talk about him?"

Lance sighed and laid back down on the grass. Justin laid down beside him, resting on Lance's shoulder. Lance rolled onto his side and trailed a hand across the hard edge of Justin's collarbone. "No," he said softly. "What do you want to talk about?"

"I don't want to talk at all," Justin replied. He propped himself up on one elbow and pulled Lance close, his other arm around Lance's waist. They lay against each other, and Justin kissed Lance gently. Lance leaned into Justin and listened to the sounds from the backyard as the volleyball game started back up. As he lost himself in Justin's kisses, he discovered he didn't want to do much talking just then, either.

All I Ever Wanted
38. Jealous
Part 1 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

They were driving back to Mrs. Timberlake's house after an exhausting day spent at Universal Studios when Joey said he was hungry. Chris agreed, and soon JC slowed down the main strip they were on, looking for a place to eat. "There," Joey said, pointing to a sports bar and grill called Splash. As JC pulled into the half-empty parking lot and cut off the engine, Joey jumped out of the car. "I've been here once before. They have pretty good burgers."

"What kind of place is this?" Chris asked, getting out of the back seat. On the other side of the car, Justin held the door open for Lance.

Joey shrugged. "Gay bar," he said in an offhand manner. He headed for the door.

"Joey!" Justin cried. "This isn't funny."

JC glanced at Justin. "What do you mean?"

Joey turned back to them, his hand on the door handle. "I'm not trying to be funny," he said. "I'm hungry. And this is the only place around where there won't be a million screaming teenage girls when we try to order."

"He's right," Lance said, looking at Justin. He took Justin's elbow and led him to the door. "Come on."

As they entered the bar, Justin glared at Joey. The last one in, he held the door for Lance and then stepped inside, looking around. JC had spotted an empty table and headed towards it. Justin felt the hot gazes of the guys sitting at the bar, watching them, and another flame of irritation sparked within him. It had been a long day -- he wasn't in the mood for Joey's jokes. Unconsciously, he put a hand on Lance's back and steered him after the others, not looking at the bar. When he sat down between Lance and Joey, Lance leaned over and whispered, "Justin, lighten up."

Justin just scowled. A tired waitress took their orders, and when she brought their drinks she nodded at the bar. "Free refills," she said, "but you gotta get up and ask for them yourself."

"Thanks," Joey said, smiling.

Justin resisted the urge to kick him. As she walked away, he said just loud enough for her to still hear him, "She's probably a dyke."

"What's your problem?" Joey asked, but Justin sipped his soda and didn't answer. His problem was that Joey thought it cute to stop at a gay bar. His problem was that Joey had been flirting with Lance all day long, and he hadn't said a word, but every little touch, every little glance, every little word had stabbed into his heart until he was ready to explode from

the pain. Lance didn't help matters -- he didn't see it as flirting. "He's just being Joey," he had said, when Justin mentioned it. So Justin kept his thoughts to himself and his eyes on Joey, ready to step in when the innocent little gestures got to be too much. He had been glad when they finally called it a day, Joey sitting in the front seat of the car, away from Lance. And now this.

When their food came, a different waitress served it. "The other one probably spit in your food," Joey said, dumping ketchup on his french fries. Justin eyed his burger without comment.

"He's kidding," Lance said beside him. "Eat up, Justin."

Frowning, Justin picked up the top bun of his burger as the others dived into their food. As he looked inside, he felt Joey lean against him. "Don't look now," he whispered, "but there's a guy at the bar checking out Lance."

Justin's head shot up, and he studied the guys at the bar. "I told you not to look," Joey groaned, stuffing a french fry into his mouth.

"Which one?" Justin asked. There were four guys sitting along the bar -- two older men on the end, talking quietly, a man at the other end lost in his cups, and a young guy in the middle, about their age, maybe a little older. As Justin watched, this last guy glanced over at their table, running his gaze around the five friends until he settled on Lance. He saw Justin and looked away. When Justin picked up his burger, the guy glanced back at Lance. "That ass," Justin said softly.

Then JC said something about one of the rides they had gone on earlier, and they started talking and laughing, reliving the day, and Justin forgot about the guy at the bar. When their plates were empty, they pushed them aside and kept talking. Lance stood up, his glass in hand, and asked, "Anyone need a refill?" Chris handed over his glass, and Lance headed for the bar.

He leaned against the bar and handed the glasses to the bartender. Beside him someone said, "Hi there."

Lance glanced over at the guy sitting next to him. With his surfer haircut and tanned skin, he looked like an Orlando native. When he smiled, thin lines from the sun creased his eyes, making him look older than Lance. "Hey," Lance said, turning back to the bar.

The guy stuck out his hand. "I'm Adam," he said, waiting. Shaking Adam's hand, Lance told him his name. Then he glanced around, wondering what was taking the bartender so long to refill their glasses. Adam nodded back at Lance's table. "Those your friends?" When Lance nodded, he continued. "I've been watching you since you came in."

"Um," Lance said, at a loss for words. What could he say? "We just spent the day at Universal."

Adam smiled. "Have fun?" he asked, and Lance nodded again. Running his gaze down Lance's chest, Adam asked, "Do you have any plans for tonight?"

Lance glanced at his friends, lost in their conversation. Only Joey looked back. Where are those drinks? Lance thought. A few seconds more and he was about to return to the table without them when suddenly Adam touched his shoulder. When Lance looked back at him, Adam let his finger trail down Lance's bare arm to rest above his wrist. His thumb rubbed Lance's skin gently. "I guess what I'm asking you is," Adam said, his voice low, "will you come home with me?"

"No," Lance said, shaking his head. He tried to pull his hand back but Adam held him tight.

Back at the table, Joey elbowed Justin, laughing at something Chris just did. "Justin," Joey said, the humor gone from his voice. He had seen the look Lance threw at them, and knew he needed help. Joey pointed at the bar, and Justin followed his finger to see Lance, standing next to the guy who had been watching him. The guy's hand held Lance's wrist, and when Lance tried to pull back, the guy didn't let go.

Justin stood up so quickly that his chair wobbled back on two legs before Joey straightened it. As he approached the bar, he heard Lance, his voice wavering slightly. "I said no, really, I'm not interested --" And then Justin shoved the stranger's shoulder, knocking his hand away from Lance. "You heard him," he said, the anger that had seethed within him all day curling into his voice. "He said no."

"I didn't ask you," Adam replied, looking past Justin at Lance. Lance stepped back behind Justin as Adam reached for him. "Go sit back down. This is none of your business."

Justin shoved him again. "This is my business," he sneered. "Touch him again and you're dead."

"Oooh, the jealous type, are we?" Adam asked. Looking at Lance, he said, "Ditch him, come with me. I'll show you the time of your life."

Justin punched Adam in the throat, knocking him back off the barstool. As he fell to the floor, gasping for air, Justin tackled him, his fists pummeling into Adam's sides and arms and face. Lance tried to grab Justin's arms but couldn't get a good enough grip to hold him back.

And then Joey was there, pulling Justin off of Adam. "You fucking faggot!" Justin cried, kicking out when his arms were held. "Find your own damn boyfriend."

"Justin, stop it!" Joey held him tightly, but Justin was stronger and struggled to break free. "Stop!"

Behind him, Lance heard the bartender finally set down his drinks. "You boys break it up," the bartender said wearily. "Take it outside or I'm calling the cops."

JC stepped in front of Justin as Adam pulled himself to his feet. "Just go," he said, looking at Adam.

"Let me at him!" Justin cried, struggling in Joey's arms. He glared at Adam. "I'll kick his ass. Let me go!"

Chris threw a few dollars on the bar to cover their meal. "Come on,

guys," he said, glancing at Adam, who swayed on his feet. Adam scowled at Justin and then looked past them at Lance, watching everything with large, frightened eyes. Rubbing his bruised jaw, Adam didn't look like there was much fight left in him. Chris looked at his friends. "Let's go."

Joey released Justin, who shrugged off Joey's hands, his eyes never leaving Adam. Justin reached back and took Lance's arm, pulling him gently. Lance stepped in front of Justin and felt Justin's hands on his back and arm, and he looked at the floor, not wanting to meet Adam's eyes. "Justin, I didn't --" he started softly, and then sighed. "I told him no."

"I know," Justin replied. He glared at Adam as they left the bar, the others right behind them.

Back in the car they were silent, the tension in the air thick. Justin rolled down his window and let the hot air blow against his flushed skin. Beside him Lance was watching him, but there was nothing he could say or do here, with the others present. He wanted to just be alone with him, hold him tight and never let anyone else touch him or talk to him, or even look at him. Suddenly he wanted Lance all to himself, for the rest of the night. And he thought maybe Lance was a little mad at him, for starting that fight back there, but what else could he do? He was just protecting what was his.

Lance set his hand on Justin's knee and squeezed gently. Justin looked down and smiled slightly. Maybe Lance wasn't all that angry with him. Placing his hand over top of Lance's, he slipped his fingers beneath it and looked back out the window.

In the passenger side mirror, he saw Joey watching him. Justin closed his eyes, forgetting why he had been mad with Joey in the first place. If Joey hadn't been watching Lance back at the bar, who knew what could have happened? Justin cursed himself for not paying attention. But Joey hadn't tried anything funny -- he told Justin. Maybe he was finally coming to terms with the fact that the two of them were together.

Smiling tightly, Justin looked at Joey in the mirror and said softly, "Thanks, man."

Joey nodded. "No problem," he replied, looking away. The tension in the car eased a bit, and soon Chris started talking about their day again, making them laugh as they drove the rest of the way home.

All I Ever Wanted
38. Jealous
Part 2 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

Lance opened his eyes in the darkness and tried to remember where he was. Justin's house, or rather, his mother's, down in Orlando. They were leaving in the morning, having stopped for a short break while on tour. Around him the room was cold, the air conditioning humming at full blast, the comforter pulled up to his chin. He didn't hear Justin's quiet snoring beside him, and when he rolled over, he found the other side of the narrow bed empty. "Justin?" he called softly, sitting up.

No reply. Kicking back the covers, Lance shivered as he rose from the bed and reached for his boxers, discarded on the floor. He pulled them on, followed by a light t-shirt, and headed for the door.

Stepping out into the dark hallway, his eyes already adjusted to the low lighting, he listened, but around him the house was silent. He walked down the short flight of stairs leading to the first floor and glanced at the large grandfather clock in the living room as he entered. Three thirty in the morning. His bare feet made no sound as he walked into the kitchen. "Justin?" he called again.

Then a warm breeze brushed against his legs, and he noticed the back door was open. Through the screen door he heard the light lap of water in the pool, and the buzz of cicadas in the backyard. Pressing his nose against the screen, he looked out at the deck and saw Justin sitting in his boxers beside the pool, staring into the dark water. Lance stepped outside and let the door close quietly behind him. "Justin?" he asked again.

Justin looked up at him. "Hey," he called. "Did I wake you up?"

Lance shook his head. The concrete was warm beneath his feet, and the balmy night air prickled his cool skin, a nice contrast to the air conditioned house. Crossing the deck, he squatted down beside Justin and looked at him closely. He could see the redness in Justin's eyes, the disheveled hair, the flushed skin, and he knew Justin had been crying. "What's wrong?" he asked, placing a hand on Justin's shoulder.

Sighing, Justin looked back into the pool. "Am I the jealous type?" he asked suddenly.

That was unexpected. Lance laughed. "God, yes," he said, before he realized that Justin wasn't smiling. "Justin, I mean --" he stammered, trying to correct his mistake.

Justin shook his head. "I know what you mean," he said, his voice hard. "You mean I need to mind my own damn business and leave you alone when other guys hit on you."

Shit. Lance eased down until he sat cross-legged beside Justin. Letting his hand trail down Justin's arm, lingering over his strong biceps, Lance said, "That's not what I meant."

"Then what?" Justin asked, looking at him. "You said I was jealous --"

"And you are," Lance replied. "Jesus, Justin, don't tell me you don't know that already."

"Then what?" Justin repeated. He looked as if he were about to cry again.

"Well, it doesn't really bother me much," Lance admitted. "Except when you pick on Joey."

Justin rolled his eyes. "I don't pick on Joey," he began, but Lance cut him off.

"You do, Justin. God, you do." Lance sighed. "If Joey hugs me, you're right there, giving him the evil eye. If it were JC or Chris, you're fine with it."

"Because they don't like you like that," Justin said. He picked at the hem of his boxers, not meeting Lance's gaze.

"And I don't like Joey like that," Lance replied. "No matter what he does, what he says, it means nothing to me, because I don't want him. If you trusted me, you would know that."

Justin pouted. "I do trust you."

"Not much," Lance said. When Justin looked up at him, he explained, "I trust you, Justin. Implicitly. I know you're not going to run around on me because that's not the way you are. I don't have to worry when I see you talking with other people because I know you'll go to bed that night with me. The hugs and kisses from fans don't bother me at all. But the minute someone touches me, you're all over them. Like you think I might give them a chance."

Justin was quiet for a long time. Just when Lance was about to say something else, though, Justin asked, "Would you?"

Anger flared in Lance's chest, but he closed his eyes and willed his voice to remain calm. "Have I ever done anything to make you think I would?" he asked softly.

Thinking about it, Justin shook his head. "No," he said, his voice low.

"Well then?" Lance asked. "I know it hurts you to see Joey flirt with me, but I don't flirt back. I just want things between us all to be the way they've always been."

"You can't pretend he doesn't like you," Justin said, biting his lip.

"Yes I can," Lance replied, nodding. "Maybe if I pretend long enough, he'll grow bored and move on."

Justin laughed. "I doubt that," he said, but Lance saw the small smile lingering on Justin's face and grinned.

"At least I got you smiling," he said playfully.

Justin's smile disappeared. "What about this afternoon?" he asked. Earlier that day they had stopped at a gay sports bar, and Justin picked a fight with a guy interested in Lance.

Lance waved his hand, dismissing that. "He was asking for it," Lance said. "I told him no, he wouldn't have it. If you didn't step in, I don't know what I would've done. He was stronger than me, and I hate fighting, you know that. I don't want to think about what could've happened." Looking at Justin, he smiled sweetly. "My hero," he said softly.

A smile tugged at the corner of Justin's mouth. "The jealous boyfriend," he replied. "Some hero."

Leaning closer to Justin, Lance brushed his fingers across Justin's neck lightly. Justin's skin was hot and soft. "To tell you the truth," Lance whispered into Justin's ear, "it turned me on to see you rushing to protect me."

Justin's hand came up to run down Lance's side. "Really?" he asked, turning his head towards Lance. They were so close, their noses almost touched.

Lance nodded. "On the way home I had the worst hard-on for you."

Justin grinned, laughing softly. "I wish I had known," he replied. "At that moment all I wanted was you." He kissed Lance hungrily. When they had returned home, though, Justin's mother wanted to spend some time with her son, and by the time Justin managed to get Lance alone it was late, and Lance was already asleep in his bed. Justin just crawled in beside him and lay there, staring at his friend, until he couldn't stand it anymore and left the room to sit by the pool. "I thought you were mad at me," Justin admitted.

Lance kissed him back, his tongue dancing over Justin's lips. "And I thought you were mad at me," he replied. His hand cupped the back of Justin's neck, pulling him closer. "Let's go back to bed."

Justin nodded. Setting his forehead against Lance's, he asked, "So you don't mind it when I get a little bit jealous?"

Looking into Justin's sad blue eyes, Lance smiled. "Just don't get so bent out of shape with Joey," he replied. "He's my friend, he's your friend, and it's not fair to the group. But you can get pissed all you want when strangers hit on me. It saves me the trouble of turning them down."

Justin grinned. "Lance?" he asked as they stood up. When Lance looked at him, he said, "I do trust you."

"I know," Lance replied. "Just try to show it a little more, okay?" Justin nodded, and Lance took his hand and led him back into the house.

All I Ever Wanted
39. Bike Ride
by NSyncGrrl

Once again back on the road, the group arrived at their next destination and checked in late at their hotel. By the time they got their bags up to their rooms, it was after eight in the evening, and the boys were ready to let off a little steam before calling it a night. They had a show to do the next evening, but tonight there was nothing planned, so they changed into tank tops and shorts and headed for the hotel gym.

The gym was small, crammed full of stationery bicycles, weight benches, lifting machines, weights, and punching bags. The boys spent a few hours working out, but after midnight the hotel around them settled down and JC, Chris, and Joey decided to get some sleep. Justin watched Lance on the stationery bike, his long legs pumping as he kept an eye on the odometer, and shook his head when they asked if he were coming. "I'm not tired," Justin replied. "We'll be up shortly."

After they left, Justin threw a few random punches at the punching bag, but his heart wasn't in it. From the corner of his eye he watched Lance, whose tank top was stained with sweat. The hum of the bike distracted Justin, and soon he tossed down the boxing gloves and made his way to Lance. Standing in front of his bike, Justin vaulted onto the handlebars. "Did you ever do this when you were little?" he asked, glancing back at Lance.

"My mother would've killed me," Lance replied, panting slightly. Then he grinned. "But yeah, my best friend always rode my bike like that."

Justin leaned back and Lance put a hand on his back, pushing slightly. "Get off," he said playfully. "I can't see where I'm going."

Turning, Justin raised an eyebrow at him. "It's a stationery bike," he said.

Lance blushed. "Get down," he said, his legs never breaking rhythm. "I can't see out the window." A large window, covered with half-closed blinds, ran the length of the gym, looking out at the hotel lobby.

Justin jumped down. Leaning on the handlebars, he crossed his arms and held his chin in one hand. Looking at Lance, he asked, "Aren't you tired of working out yet?"

Grinning, Lance said, "Translation: I'm bored, Lance, let's do something else."

Justin grinned back. "I'm bored, Lance. Let's do something else."

"Something else with you usually means sex," Lance pointed out.

Justin ran a finger along the back of Lance's hand, holding the handlebars tight. Tracing down between his knuckles, Justin pouted. "I'm nineteen," he said. "All I think about is sex."

Lance laughed. "Well, I'm busy," he said, trying to look as if he wanted to do nothing else for the rest of the night but ride this bicycle, but Justin thought maybe he could convince Lance otherwise.

Walking around the bike, he let his finger trail up Lance's arm, over his shoulder, and around his back. Standing behind Lance, Justin began to massage Lance's shoulders, kneading the tight muscles gently. Beneath his touch, Lance moaned, relaxing, and the rhythm of the bike faltered. Justin leaned close to Lance and breathed, "Scoot up."

Lance shifted forward in the seat, and Justin climbed onto the back of the bike. Luckily the seat was long enough for the two of them to fit on it, Justin's legs on either side of Lance's, his hands still massaging Lance's shoulders. He worked his way down Lance's back, pressing and squeezing and kneading the hard flesh beneath his hands, and Lance's cycling slowed.

Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's waist, tickling his stomach. His hands slipped lower, beneath the waistband of Lance's shorts, to cup Lance's stiffening erection. Leaning forward, Justin rested his head against Lance's sweaty back and closed his eyes, listening to Lance's ragged breath. He squeezed Lance's cock through his briefs, feeling the muscles in Lance's groin flex beneath his hands as Lance pedaled.

Easing Lance's dick out through the hole in the front of his underwear, Justin's fingers stroked the hard length until they encircled the base of the thick shaft. He traced small circles in the soft skin of Lance's balls as he squeezed Lance gently. His other hand hugged Lance's waist, keeping his back pressed firmly along Justin's chest. Lance's legs faltered, and then he stopped cycling all together.

Running his hand under Lance's shirt, Justin pinched Lance's nipples playfully, teasing them erect, while Lance's erection throbbed solid in his other hand. With small movements and tiny squeezes, he massaged just the base of Lance's hard dick, the weeping tip brushing against Lance's shorts until he was ready to come. "Justin," Lance whispered, breathless. "People are watching us."

Justin glanced up at the window, but there was no one in the hotel lobby this late at night. "No one's out there," Justin whispered back, kneading Lance's cock faster. When Lance thrust into Justin's hand, Justin's fingers pushed back against his groin, cradling his balls and tickling his lower belly. Justin's other hand pulled Lance back, holding him in the seat as he thrust forward, an orgasm not far off. Against Lance's back, Justin's own erection began to ache sweetly.

Outside the window, Justin saw the elevator doors slide open, and Chris walked out into the lobby. Justin leaned forward and caught Lance's earlobe between his teeth, nipping lightly, his tongue licking behind Lance's ear. Lance moaned and leaned into Justin, and Justin rubbed Lance's lower stomach. Beneath his touch, Lance's skin fluttered as he came. Inside Lance's shorts, Justin's hand grew slick with cum. "Thanks," Lance said softly. "Now my shorts are a mess."

Justin looked over Lance's shoulder to see a dark wet spot on the front of Lance's shorts. Giggling, Justin said, "It looks like you --"

"I know what it looks like," Lance said, cutting him off, but when he twisted in the seat and looked at Justin, he was grinning. Justin extracted his hand from Lance's shorts, wiping it clean on Lance's tank top. He kissed Lance's neck gently, and Lance leaned back against him, his eyes closed.

The door to the gym opened as Chris entered, and Lance sat up so fast, he slipped off the seat of the bike. Catching himself, he stood up, his tank top falling to cover his soiled shorts. Behind him Justin ran a finger beneath Lance's buttocks. "What are you guys doing?" Chris asked, looking at them.

Lance shrugged. "Working out," he said quickly. "You forget something?"

"My towel," Chris said, pointing. His towel sat on the edge of one of the weight benches. Narrowing his eyes, he said, "Don't tell me you were both on the same bike."

Justin laughed. "Lance was working out," he said. "I was just along for the ride." Lance swatted at him, but Justin ducked out of his way.

"It's getting late," Chris said. "Maybe you two should get to bed."

"Yes, mother," Justin replied, slipping his hands around Lance's waist when Chris turned away. Lance took Justin's hands in his own, intertwining their fingers, and led Justin to the door, following Chris out of the gym.

All I Ever Wanted
40. In the Mood
by NSyncGrrl

Lance woke up with a blinding headache. He lingered in the bed until well after Justin got up, and when JC came to their room to tell them it was time to go to the recording studio, Lance rolled out of bed and pulled on the first clothes he could find. In his rumpled jeans and Justin's sports jersey, he slicked his hair down and put on a pair of dark sunglasses, and followed Justin out of the room. "You okay?" Justin asked in the elevator.

Lance leaned against the wall, a hand pressed to his forehead, and just nodded wearily.

At the studio, they recorded an acoustic version of the next song to be released from their album. Lance suffered through it, sure that by lunchtime his head would explode. His whole body shook slightly, and he picked at the sandwich JC bought him for lunch. After eating, they took a short break before beginning their next project, a dance remix of the same song. Chris found a Frisbee and went outside with JC and Joey to toss it back and forth. Lance leaned back in the producer's chair, pinching his nose with his fingers, trying to will away the pain that tugged behind his eyes.

Justin sat down on the console in front of him, resting one foot on the chair beside Lance's leg. Pushing lightly, he spun the chair in a slow half-circle. In a low voice he said, "Let's get away for a few minutes."

"Let's not," Lance replied, closing his eyes. "I'm not in the mood."

Justin leaned close and ran a hand down Lance's arm. "I'm always in the mood," he said playfully.

"Justin," Lance sighed. "I don't feel like it right now, okay?"

He felt Justin pull away, and when he looked up he saw Justin's face harden. "Fine," Justin said. He glared at Lance. "I'll be outside with the others if you change your mind." He turned and left the studio.

Lance sighed again. With his head pounding, he didn't feel like soothing Justin's wounded pride at the moment. Leaning back in the chair, he closed his eyes and tried not to think. He sat like that for long minutes that passed like funerals, his heart pounding loudly in his ears, his head throbbing with each beat. Just when he was about to drag himself outside to apologize to Justin, the door to the studio opened. Glancing up, Lance watched Joey enter, an unopened can of Coke in his hand. He couldn't see Lance's eyes through the dark glasses, but he must have suspected Lance was awake because he smiled and said, "Hey."

"Hey," Lance groaned.

Joey pulled up another chair and sat down beside Lance. "You and Justin fight?" he asked.

"I'm not in the mood to fight," Lance replied. "Did Justin tell you that?"

Joey shook his head. "He didn't have to -- he's pissed to all hell; you can see it in his face."

"I've got a headache," Lance explained, sighing.

Leaning forward, Joey rested the Coke can against Lance's forehead. The aluminum was icy and cold against his flushed skin. Softly Joey said, "My mother says ice is good for a bad headache."

Beneath the cool can, Lance's head felt slightly better. "I never heard that one," he said, "but it feels good." He raised his hand to his head, his fingers brushing against Joey's hand as he took the can from him.

Joey dropped his hand, letting it rest on the arm of Lance's chair. Lance felt Joey watching him closely, but he looked at his other hand in his lap and tried to ignore Joey's stare. After a moment or two, when the can warmed against his skin, Lance handed it back to Joey. "Thanks," he murmured.

Joey smiled. "Maybe we can do the other song later," he suggested, "if you don't feel up to it now."

"I'll survive," Lance said. They had booked the studio months ago -- he didn't want to make everyone wait for another opening just because he had a headache. He looked at Joey and noticed a blade of grass caught in the fine hairs along Joey's chin. "You've got something --" Lance pointed at his own chin.

Joey ran a hand down his face. "Grass?" he asked, missing the blade. He looked at his hand but there was nothing there. "I slipped diving for the Frisbee. It still there?"

Lance nodded, and Joey ran his hand through his slight beard and moustache again. The blade of grass stayed where it was. "Did I get it?" he asked.

"No. Hold still." Biting the inside of his lip, Lance reached out. His fingers brushed against Joey's chin, the hair coarse beneath his touch. Gently, Lance wiped the blade of grass away, lingering to smooth down Joey's beard. Joey leaned into Lance's fingers, his hand coming up to hold Lance's against his face. His thumb rubbed the soft skin along the inside of Lance's wrist, and he turned his face slightly, just enough so that his lips rested in the palm of Lance's hand. Lance was glad he wore the sunglasses, because he was afraid of what Joey might see in his eyes if he looked at him now.

Suddenly the studio door opened, and Justin stepped inside. Joey released Lance's hand and Lance let it fall to the arm of his chair. Justin's jaw tightened as he took in the scene, and Lance could tell he was fighting the urge to say something cruel to Joey. Finally he said simply, "Sorry," and started to leave again.

Standing up, Joey said, "I was just leaving. I hope you feel better." Lance nodded and Joey left, not looking at Justin on his way out.

Justin studied Lance for a moment before asking, "What's wrong?"

"I've got a headache," Lance replied, pressing his hand against his temple. He felt Joey's lips still in his palm, and he hoped Justin didn't start -- he wasn't up to an argument over Joey, not today.

But Justin closed the studio door and flicked the lights off, bathing the room in darkness. Then he took a seat on the overstuffed couch along the back wall of the studio. "I didn't know that," he said, his voice quiet.

"That's okay," Lance said. "I didn't tell you."

"Does it hurt too much for you to come over here?" Justin asked, patting the seat beside him on the couch.

Actually, it did, but Justin hadn't said a word about Joey yet, and Lance was impressed, because even he would've raised an eyebrow if he walked in on a scene like that. He could just imagine how it looked -- his hand on Joey's face, Joey's lips against his palm, so close. He pushed the image from his mind and gingerly eased himself out of the chair. Whatever pain ached in his head while he was seated flared to a greater intensity as he stood and walked across the room. When he reached the couch, Justin reached up and pulled Lance down beside him. Sinking into the soft cushions, Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's chest and leaned his head on Justin's shoulder. Justin's arms encircled Lance's shoulders, holding him close. "Where does it hurt?" Justin asked quietly.

Pointing to a spot right above his left eye, Lance said, "Right here."

Justin leaned down and kissed Lance's forehead, his lips cool and damp against Lance's fevered skin. As he started to pull away, Lance moved his finger down below his eye and said, "It hurts here, too."

Smiling, Justin pushed Lance up a little and, taking off Lance's dark sunglasses, kissed his cheek, just beneath his eye. "Anywhere else?" he asked.

Pointing to his lips, Lance whispered, "Right here."

Justin brushed his lips against Lance's. Despite the pain pounding in his head, Lance found himself leaning into the kiss, his lips parting slightly, wanting more. But Justin pulled back and asked, "What was Joey doing here?"

Lance sighed. "Justin," he said wearily, "I'm not in the mood right now."

He waited as Justin chewed his lower lip thoughtfully, his hand absently rubbing Lance's back. "He was touching you ..." he said, his voice trailing off. He looked at Lance, expectant.

"He had grass stuck in his beard," Lance said. When Justin didn't answer, he asked, "Are you going to kiss me again?"

Smiling, Justin said, "I thought you weren't in the mood?"

"I'm not," Lance admitted. "My head is killing me. But maybe just little kisses would be okay."

"Just little kisses," Justin repeated, cupping Lance's chin in his hand.

"Like this?" His lips pecked at Lance's quickly.

"Not so fast," Lance said, reaching for Justin. His hand traced along Justin's smooth cheek.

Justin kissed Lance again, tiny kisses that left Lance hungry for more. "Like this?" he asked again.

"Slower," Lance replied, lying back against Justin's arm as Justin leaned over him. When Justin kissed him again, his lips lingered over Lance's, his tongue just barely peeking out to taste Lance's lips. Lance rested his head on the back of the couch and let Justin kiss him. "That's good," he whispered. He closed his eyes as Justin kissed his lips, his cheeks, his eyes, and ran his hands along Justin's waist. He hoped his headache went away soon -- Justin's little kisses were quickly putting him in the mood for more.

All I Ever Wanted
41. Going Clubbin'
by NSyncGrrl

The club was Chris's idea, a place to hang out after their show and unwind. As they stood outside, waiting to get in, Justin draped his arm around Lance's waist and slipped his hand into the front pocket of Lance's jeans. Ahead of them a mean-looking woman worked the door, looking over Chris's ID before waving him inside after JC and Joey. Turning her attention to Justin, she took in his rhinestoned bandanna and hoop earrings with a bored expression and barked, "ID."

Scowling, Justin pulled out his wallet. After looking at his driver's license, she grabbed his hand and stamped it. "What's this for?" Justin asked, looking at the red circle with a line through it, now stamped on the back of his hand.

"You're underage," she explained, as if he didn't know. "Can't sell you alcohol." Turning to Lance, she said, "ID."

"I'm not drinking," Lance said. She stamped his hand, too, and let them pass.

Inside, the club was ill lit. Shadows draped most of the dance floor, and only the bar and tables had any direct lighting from frosted bulbs overhead. The music was loud, the crowd louder. Catching onto the belt loops of Justin's jeans, Lance followed him past the bar, where Joey was already ordering drinks. A few booths edged the dance floor, and JC waved them over to one of them. Justin and Lance slid into the booth, hemmed in by JC and Chris. JC stood when Joey approached, five glasses held precariously in his hands. "Coke and rum," he shouted over the din of the crowd, setting two glasses in front of Lance and Justin. When he slid into the booth beside Justin, JC took his seat next to Joey. "Drink up."

Justin sipped at the soda and looked around the club. He was too tired for this, really -- the show had exhausted him, and he wanted nothing more than to go back to the hotel and crawl into bed. But when Chris suggested a club, Lance jumped at the idea, and since Justin's idea of a nice evening included Lance, he went along. Here in the booth Lance's thigh was pressed against Justin's, his hand high up on Justin's thigh, the tips of his fingers resting mere inches from Justin's dick. Through his jeans he felt the warmth of Lance's touch.

When Lance leaned closer, his fingers slipped slightly, brushing the tip of Justin's penis, and Justin had to bite the inside of his lip to keep from moaning out loud. "Wanna dance?" Lance yelled over the noise. Despite the fact that they were sitting so close together, Justin had to strain to hear him.

Justin shook his head. "Not right now," he said.

"Do you mind if I do?" Lance asked.

Justin glanced at him and shook his head again. "Go ahead," he said.

As Lance stood up in the booth, he leaned heavily on Justin's leg, and it was all Justin could do to keep from pulling him back down into his lap. Climbing onto the back of the booth, Lance jumped to the floor and, with a sweet smile back at Justin, headed for the crowd of people dancing in the middle of the room. Chris and JC followed.

Glancing sideways at Joey, Justin yelled, "Thanks for the drink."

Joey shrugged. "It's nothing," he said, scooting closer to Justin. Studying him, Joey asked, "You mad?"

Justin frowned. "No," he said. "Should I be?"

Laughing, Joey shook his head. "Just checking," he said. As two girls approached their booth, Joey elbowed Justin. "We got company."

"Hey," one of the girls called, a pretty redhead with glasses who smiled at Joey. Her friend, a tall, thin blonde, waved at Justin. "You guys alone?"

"Not anymore," Joey said, indicating the empty seat beside him. The redhead sat down, and Joey nonchalantly draped his arm around her shoulders. "You wanna dance?"

She nodded, and they slid out of the booth, heading for the dance floor. Her friend sat down beside Justin, easing closer to him. She looked at Justin and smiled. "You're cute," she said.

Justin grimaced. "My boyfriend thinks so," he said, looking around.

"You're shitting me," she said. He met her frank gaze and she shook her head, laughing. "You don't like guys."

"No," Justin admitted, "I don't. Just him."

She laughed again. "You're putting me on."

Justin noticed Lance, extracting himself from the crowd and heading back to the booth. Nodding his way, Justin said, "Ask him yourself."

Lance looked at the girl beside Justin as he slid into the booth. "Who's this?" he asked, breathless.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. Leaning close, he smelled the scent of Lance's sweat and felt a stirring in his groin. Lance glanced past Justin at the girl, and then back at Justin, confusion in his eyes as Justin slipped his arm around Lance's waist and pulled him close.

"Justin?" Lance asked, his voice low. He placed a hand against Justin's chest as Justin's mouth closed over his, his tongue delving between Lance's lips, tasting the rum on Lance's breath. When he pulled back, the girl beside him was gone. Lance let his hand trail down Justin's chest, tickling his nipple beneath his shirt. "What was that all about?"

Justin smiled. "I missed you," he said, kissing Lance again.

"I was only gone for a few minutes," Lance said, smiling. "I think you just wanted to show off for your new friend."

Scowling, Justin replied, "She's not my friend." He leaned against Lance, his hand slipping into Lance's lap.

Lance closed his eyes and thrust his hips against Justin's hand. "Come on," he said, pulling Justin out of the booth and leading him to the dance floor. As they entered the crowd of gyrating bodies, Justin felt people press against him on all sides, and Lance's hand was warm and strong in his.

Then Lance stopped and pulled Justin to him, wrapping his arms around Justin's neck as he ground his hips into Justin's. Grinning, Justin ran his arms around Lance's waist, his hands resting on the small of Lance's back, as he danced with Lance. Their hips bumped against each other, every touch sending shivers through Justin's body until his cock was hard and throbbed in time with the music.

After several songs, Justin kissed Lance's fingertips and, intertwining his hand with Lance's, led him through the crowd. He headed for a dark corridor that twisted away from the dance floor, behind the booths where JC and Chris sat talking. As he guided Lance down the hall and around a narrow corner, the music faded to a dull roar. At the end of the hall, closed doors on either side led to restrooms. The two of them were alone in the dark, empty corridor. Justin pushed Lance up against the wall gently, his hands roaming under Lance's arms and down his body. "Tired of dancing?" Lance asked, wrapping his arms around Justin's neck.

Justin leaned closer, his lips brushing Lance's cheek, and he thrust his hips against Lance, his hard erection rubbing Lance's crotch. Instead of answering, he kissed Lance, his hands on Lance's hips. Lance tightened his arms as their kiss deepened, holding onto Justin. When Justin pulled back, Lance ran his hands down the front of Justin's shirt, picking at the buttons playfully. Justin rested his forehead against Lance's, his eyes watching Lance's eyes, focused on Justin's shirt. Leaning down to kiss Lance's nose, Justin asked, "Did you want to keep dancing?"

Lance toyed with the button on Justin's jeans. "Not anymore," he admitted as the button slipped open beneath his fingers. Justin felt the zipper slide down over his hard cock, and he moaned slightly. Lance slipped his hand inside Justin's boxers and squeezed his erection gently. "Damn," he said, his voice low. "A few more minutes out there and you'd have a mess in your pants."

"Why do you think I got you away?" Justin replied. Cupping Lance's buttocks in his hands, he pulled Lance to him, Lance's hands between them. They kissed as Lance massaged the swollen tip of Justin's dick, already damp. Justin thrust into Lance's hand, and when he came, he bit Lance's lower lip tenderly, his breath ragged as his orgasm ran through him.

Lance rezipped Justin's jeans while Justin rested his head on Lance's shoulder. He was exhausted, his energy spent. He was ready to call it a night, go back to the hotel and fall asleep in Lance's arms. Kissing Lance's neck, he said softly, "I love you."

Lance played with Justin's hair peeking out from under the bandanna. His other hand was balled into a fist at his side, Justin's sticky cum in his palm. "I love you, too," Lance said, kissing Justin's ear. "You look sexy

tonight."

Justin smiled against Lance's neck. "You like the pirate look?" he asked. He felt Lance nod.

"I also like that little sound you make just before you come," he said. Justin raised his head and looked at Lance, an odd expression on his face.

"What sound?" he asked.

Lance grinned. "You know you make it. I can't do it -- but when you do it I know you're about to get off."

"You're kidding me," Justin said, smiling. A thin blush crept into his cheeks. "Do I really?"

Lance kissed him, his lips lingering over Justin's. "Yes, really," he replied. "I'll point it out next time. It's really cute. Let me go wash my hand." He slipped out of Justin's arms and into the men's room. Justin leaned against the wall and waited. He wondered what he sounded like when he came, and a smile toyed with his lips. He'd have to pay more attention next time. But he was always too distracted at that moment to really notice much else beyond the pleasure racing through his veins.

When Lance came out of the men's room, Justin reached out for him. Hugging him close, he kissed Lance's ear. Lance leaned back against him, his body tight against Justin's, his hands holding onto Justin's arms across his chest. "You ready to leave yet?" Justin asked. Weariness settled into his bones at the thought of going back out on the dance floor.

But Lance nodded. "I'm getting sleepy," he said. "I bet Joey's not ready to go, though."

Thinking of the redhead with the glasses, Justin agreed. "Maybe we can go out to the car," he suggested. "Lay down in the back seat, wait for them out there."

"Good idea," Lance agreed. Taking Justin's hand in his, he led the way back through the bustling club and outside to the parking lot. The thought of holding Lance close in the car made Justin's groin begin to ache again. Maybe he'd have another chance tonight to hear what he sounded like when he came.

All I Ever Wanted
42. The Way I Want You
Part 1 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

It was a charity luncheon, and NSync was one of the musical groups scheduled to perform. The boys wore classic black tuxedos, and Lance had to admit that Justin looked really fine all dressed up. He watched the way the tailored coat pulled against Justin's shoulders, the way the loose pants hung from his waist, and by the time they went on stage, Lance was hungry for Justin's touch. They only managed to steal a quick kiss in the dressing room when the others weren't looking, and out in the crowd of celebrities and reporters, there was no way Lance could touch him without raising a few eyebrows. So he bided his time, waiting for the whole thing to be over so he could have Justin all to himself.

As they mingled with the other guests, Justin ever present at Lance's side, Lance smiled and laughed with the others but his gaze lingered a bit too long on Justin's face, his touch a tad too familiar on Justin's arm. When they started back to their table, Lance leaned against Justin's shoulder, about to tell him that he wanted to slip away -- the bathroom, a closet, anywhere they could hold each other for a few minutes -- as a girlish giggle called out Justin's name. Turning, Lance saw Britney, a childhood friend of Justin's, waving to them frantically from the other side of the room. Lance rolled his eyes and groaned as she headed their way.

"Oh, Justin!" she gushed, latching onto Justin's arm as if she belonged there. "You guys put on such a performance! I was so hoping to get a chance to talk to you!"

"Hey, Brit!" Justin said, hugging her quickly. Lance thought Britney clung to him a moment too long, and he fought the urge to pull her off of Justin himself. Justin tried to extract his arm from hers, but she held on tight. Taking Lance's elbow, Justin pulled him a little closer and said, "You remember Lance?"

"Lance!" Britney squealed, as if they were old friends, too. Lance managed a strained smile and a small wave, and then let his gaze roam the crowd as Britney turned her attention back to Justin. He just hoped she would find someone else to latch onto soon, and leave Justin alone.

But no such luck. After a few moments of playing catch up, where Britney rattled on about every little thing going on in her life at the moment while Justin just nodded in the right places, she leaned against him and whispered loudly, "Tell me you don't have plans for this evening. I so want to spend some time with you."

Lance felt Justin look at him, but when Justin said, "That sounds great," Lance felt his heart falter. They had plans -- well, not really, but Lance had mentioned he'd like to go to the movies and Justin sort of said that tonight would be a good night to go -- and now he was going out with Britney instead. Lance looked at her, dressed in a skimpy dress whose neckline plunged to her belly button, pressing herself against

Justin, touching him in front of everyone in ways that Lance wanted to touch him, and suddenly he hated her. Is this what Justin feels like when he gets jealous? Lance thought, glaring at Britney.

Angry, he handed his half-empty glass to the next waiter that passed by and, twisting his elbow out of Justin's easy grip, headed for the restroom. He thought he heard Justin call after him, but he didn't stop. Fuck that, he thought, pissed. His emotions must have been written on his face for no one stopped him, and he burst into the empty men's room at full speed. The door swung shut behind him and he leaned on the sink, glaring into the mirror. He thought he might vomit.

Behind him the door opened as Justin entered. "What's your problem?" he asked, a little angry himself.

Looking at Justin's reflection in the mirror, Lance tried to keep his voice even. "Guess we ain't going out tonight, huh?"

Justin frowned. "We hadn't really set anything --" but Lance cut him off.

"Fuck, Justin! Do I have to ask you out?" He turned and glared at Justin, and he could tell by the tight set of Justin's mouth that he was upset.

Justin bit his lip. When he spoke again, he said, "She's my friend, Lance. I haven't seen her in a while. We can do something tomorrow night --"

Lance looked away, his eyes narrowing. "Sure," he said bitterly. "I'll be here. Where the fuck am I going?"

"What's your problem?" Justin asked again. He reached for Lance, but Lance shrugged away from his touch.

"Nothing," Lance said softly, not meeting Justin's gaze. If he did, he thought maybe he'd apologize and grovel for forgiveness, anything to have Justin touch him just now. "I'm sure Britney's waiting for you. Have fun tonight. I'll find someone else to go to the movies with me." Brushing past Justin, he left the men's room.

When he pulled open the door, he nearly ran into Britney, standing in front of the restroom with a worried look on her face. "Is everything alright?" she asked.

"Hell if I know," Lance replied, pushing by her to lose himself in the crowd. He found Joey and Chris, flirting with a couple of girls from some television show Lance never watched, and he headed their way. Joey looked up at him as he approached, a broad smile on his face, and Lance forced himself to smile back.

When the luncheon was over, and the crowd began to break up into small groups, limos lining the street outside for those leaving the building, Lance watched as Britney strutted around the remaining guests, JC and Justin on either arm. "Jesus," he said angrily. "Will you look at her?"

"I can't stop," Chris said, smiling. "I love that dress."

Rolling his eyes, Lance replied, "You would." Beside him Joey watched Lance carefully, but Lance avoided his gaze. Justin and JC led Britney over to them, and Lance sighed heavily, not wanting to talk to her again.

Standing in front of him, Justin tried to catch Lance's eye, but Lance didn't look his way. He crossed his arms and tried to ignore Justin when he reached out and brushed the tips of his fingers along Lance's arm. "We're heading out now," he said softly.

"Have fun," Lance replied through clenched teeth.

Britney leaned forward to peck Lance's cheek. "Cheer up, dude," she said playfully, and Lance fought the urge to wipe his sleeve against his cheek where the touch of her lips lingered.

Instead he pulled back from her, stumbling a bit. He felt Joey's hand on his back, steadying him, and he hoped Justin was watching. After the others said their goodbyes, Lance turned to Joey and asked, "What are you doing tonight?"

Joey shrugged. "I dunno. Maybe snag me one of those girls ..." he pointed across the room, waving at someone. "What about you?"

Lance sighed. "Justin and I were going to the movies," he said. He watched as Justin, JC and Britney left the banquet hall, Justin turning back to look at Lance one last time before leaving. Lance looked away.

Beside him Joey whispered, "So that's what's up between you two."

Nodding, Lance said softly, "Fuck this shit." Taking a deep breath, he looked at Joey and asked, "Do you want to go with me?"

"To the movies?" Joey asked, a gleam in his eye. "Like on a date?"

Lance blushed. "It's not really a date --" he began, but Joey smiled and said, "You and me, alone in the dark. Don't you think Justin will get a little jealous?"

Lance shrugged. Right now he didn't care if Justin got jealous. "Do you want to go or not?"

Joey studied him for a moment, his gaze hot on Lance's face. Lance looked into Joey's brown, compassionate eyes and thought maybe he could get lost there, if he didn't watch himself. Just as he was about to say forget it, a smile tugged at the corner of Joey's mouth and he said softly, "How can I say no?"

Lance felt Joey's fingers trail down his arm, and he hoped he wasn't getting himself into something he couldn't handle. But this was Joey -- they had been friends forever. And Justin was with Britney right now, snuggling in the back of a limo. Lance smiled brightly past the image and said, "I'll pick you up at seven."

All I Ever Wanted
42. The Way I Want You
Part 2 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

Lance's heart hammered in his chest as he slid behind the wheel of his rental car. Beside him Joey climbed into the passenger side, and when he closed his door, the overhead light flicked off, plunging them into darkness. Earlier that day Justin left the charity luncheon with Britney, and in an attempt to forget about that, Lance invited Joey to the movies. They ate a late dinner at a fancy Italian restaurant, Joey's twinkling eyes and quick smile making Lance blush at the subtle innuendoes in Joey's conversation. After dinner, they went to the movies to see X-Men, and Lance didn't say anything when Joey nonchalantly rested his arm on the back of Lance's seat. Now the movie was over and it was close to midnight, but Lance didn't want the evening to end. And that terrified him.

As he started the car, he heard Joey shift beside him and then a warm hand settled on his knee. Lance's blood pounded in his ears, but he liked the feel of Joey's hand through the denim of his jeans and in the dark of the car he could pretend he didn't notice it resting there. "Are we going back to the hotel now?" Joey asked.

Lance shifted gears and pulled out of the parking lot. "Do you want to?" he asked.

"Not really," Joey admitted. After a moment he said, "Justin's probably back by now."

I doubt it, Lance thought, remembering the last time Britney cajoled Justin into a night on the town. Lance didn't know what time they got in -- he had fallen asleep -- but in the morning he found himself in Justin's arms. He didn't fancy sitting up the rest of the night waiting for Justin to return. "Maybe we can just drive for a while," Lance suggested, the idea of returning to an empty room not appealing to him.

They drove in a comfortable silence for a long time, until the buildings around them faded into trees and the bustle of the city fell away. The radio was low, barely audible with the windows down, the cool night air rushing into the car, keeping them awake. Alongside the road a thin river twisted among the trees, muttering darkly in the night. When the trees gave way to wide open fields, Lance pulled off the road and parked in the tall grass. The river ran in front of the car, and with the engine off they could hear the croak of frogs and buzz of insects, loud in the still air. Lance got out of the car and stretched, reaching for the stars above.

Joey got out of the other side and jumped onto the hood of the car. Crossing his feet, he stretched back against the windshield and looked up at the night sky. "Beautiful, isn't it?" he asked.

Climbing up beside him, Lance nodded. "I've always loved looking at the stars."

Joey turned to him, and even in the darkness Lance felt the heat of his gaze. "Do you want to talk?" he asked.

Lance shrugged. "About what?" Please don't say Justin, he thought.

"Whatever," Joey said. "You don't seem too happy tonight."

"I've had a great time with you," Lance replied.

Joey frowned. "That's not what I mean. Earlier --"

"Let's not talk about that," Lance said, cutting him off. Around them a slight breeze picked up, and he wished he had brought a jacket with him. "I know how you feel about ..." His voice trailed off. "I know you don't want to hear me talk about it."

"If you want to talk," Joey said softly, "I'll listen. I don't care what it's about."

Lance glanced at him. "Even if it's about Justin?" he asked.

Joey nodded. He looked at his hands in his lap, toying with the hem of his t-shirt. "I like you," he admitted, his voice so low Lance had to strain to make out the words. "I tried to convince myself I was just lonely, that I only wanted someone with me all the time, and because Justin had you, I wanted you, too. But it's more than that, Lance. When I look at you, I feel like I did when I was in the sixth grade and the head cheerleader passed me in the hall. When you talk I want to bottle your words and keep them by my bed so I can listen to them later. Some days I'll do anything just to make you smile."

"Joey --" Lance said, a warning in his voice. He pulled his knees to his chest and looked out at the black river roiling by, and prayed Joey would stop.

"I know," Joey said. "You love Justin. I can't blame you, really. All the girls want him -- why shouldn't you?"

"Joey," Lance said again. He didn't like to hear the sadness in Joey's voice.

But Joey just shook his head. "I can't not like you, Lance. I want you in my life."

"We're in the same band --" Lance began, but Joey interrupted him.

"If we can't be together, I want us to still be friends," Joey explained. "And friends talk to each other. They share their feelings. I know it'll hurt to hear you talk about Justin, but I'd rather hear you talk about him than nothing at all." Lance looked at Joey's slight smile and disheveled hair. "Please," Joey said, his eyes pleading. "Talk to me."

Lance sighed. "I don't even know if there's anything to say."

"Well," Joey prompted, "what happened this afternoon?"

Lance shrugged. "I got pissed."

"Why?"

Picking at his shoelaces, Lance tried to organize his feelings. Why had he been upset? "Because of Britney," he admitted. "She can just waltz around like a queen, Justin on her arm like a loyal servant. I couldn't touch him, not there, not with all those people watching. And yet she just comes right on in and snuggles up to him, and no one bats an eye."

Softly, Joey said, "You wanted to do that."

Lance nodded. "If the way I felt watching her flaunt him like a prized trophy is anything like the way he feels when other guys talk to me, then I can understand why he gets so angry."

"So do you think he likes her?" Joey asked, speaking Lance's own fears.

Biting his lip, Lance said quietly, "I don't know." Before Joey could speak, he hurried on, explaining. "I trust him, I do, but he's known her for so long, and I can't help but wonder if her touching him like that doesn't do something for him, you know?"

Joey placed a comforting hand on Lance's shoulder. "I don't think it does," he said. "I mean, sure, she's pretty and flirty and she wears the most amazing outfits, but he's known her forever. She's probably like a sister to him. I doubt he even thinks of her in that way."

"I don't know," Lance said again. "Anyone else, I'm fine with. But there's just something about her that makes me want to pull him away."

Changing the subject, Joey asked, "What are you going to tell him when he finds out we went out tonight?"

"Jesus, Joey," Lance replied. "We're just friends. It's not like we're doing anything."

Joey let his hand trail down Lance's arm. Beneath his warm touch, Lance shivered slightly. "He's not going to be happy."

"Well, right now I'm not happy about Britney," Lance said. "I don't want to hear him start in on you. I'm sick of that."

Joey laughed softly. "My champion," he said, "battling dragons for me." He sighed, and took Lance's hand in his. Kissing Lance's knuckles, he asked, "What would I do without you?"

Lance pulled his hand back gently. "Joey," he said, frowning, but Joey jumped off the hood of the car and stretched, and the distance between them was too wide for Lance to say anything else. Joey's lips burned on his skin. "Come on then," Joey said, walking around the car. "To the castle, my knight in shining armor. Mind if I drive?"

Grinning in spite of himself, Lance slid off the hood and tossed Joey the keys. As he climbed into the passenger side, he wondered if Justin was back yet. He hoped so -- despite his anger at Britney, suddenly he wanted to hold him tight and never let go.

All I Ever Wanted
42. The Way I Want You
Part 3 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

"I had a wonderful time," Lance said as the elevator came to a stop at their floor. It was about two in the morning, and around them the hotel was silent.

Beside him Joey smiled and said, "Me too. We'll have to do it again sometime."

As the elevator doors slid open, Lance laughed. "It's a date, then," he said, stepping out into the hall.

A door opened nearby, and then Justin was there, his eyes blazing, his jaw set in a tight frown. He still wore his tuxedo from the luncheon, the shirt and pants rumpled, the coat long since discarded. His hair was a mass of disheveled curls, and his eyes were red and raw. "Just where the fuck have you been?" he demanded. His gaze raked over Joey, standing so close behind Lance, and then he turned the intensity of it on Lance.

Lance frowned as Britney followed Justin into the hall, JC right behind her. "What the hell is she doing here?" Lance asked, his own anger returning.

Justin's voice lowered dangerously. "Lance, we need to talk. Now."

A few moments ago, Lance would've agreed. But the last thing he wanted right now was an audience, and suddenly the corridor was too cramped. Further down the hall he heard Chris's door open, and it was too much. Britney took a step closer to him, reaching out with one hand to touch his shoulder. "Lance, we were so worried," she said, but something in her tone of voice sounded false, and he shrugged away from her.

Glaring at Justin, he said bitterly, "I'm sure you were. Ever the devoted friend, eh, Britney?"

"What --" she started, but Joey shifted between them, blocking her from Lance's view.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Justin asked, anger coursing beneath his words.

Lance brushed by him. "Whatever the fuck you want it to," he said, heading for their room. He felt Justin right on his heels, but he didn't turn around. Inside the room, he scooped up his duffel bag and began tossing clothes into it -- whatever he could grab that looked like his. With one arm he swept up his toiletries -- deodorant, hairbrush, shampoo, razors -- they fell into the bag carelessly. A pair of his jeans lay on the floor, entangled with Justin's shirt. He shook the jeans until they came free from the shirt and then shoved them into the bag, too.

Behind him Justin asked, "Where are you going?" The hard edge in his voice was gone. He sounded lost, confused, incredulous.

"Back to my room," Lance replied. They had separate hotel rooms but Lance hadn't slept in his -- when he unpacked, it had been in Justin's room, and they didn't sleep apart anymore. "Maybe it's a good idea if I don't spend the night here," he said, looking up at Justin. He looked away quickly when he saw the hurt in Justin's eyes.

"Lance, wait --" The door pushed open further, and Britney slipped into the room. "You guys okay?" she asked.

Justin closed his eyes in frustration, and a muscle in his jaw twitched angrily. "Britney, get out," he said.

"But I --"

"Get out!" He lunged for the door, but JC was behind her and pulled her out of the room before Justin slammed the door shut. Lance heard him throw the latch, and he hefted the duffel bag over one shoulder. Justin turned to see him, packed and ready to go, and the anger faded from his face. "Lance, don't go."

"I think it's best right now," Lance said, not meeting Justin's eyes. "We can talk in the morning."

"No." Justin spoke with such force, Lance couldn't help but look up. The pain in Justin's eyes twisted his heart, and he bit his lower lip to keep back tears threatening to fall. Softly Justin said, "If you walk out now, I'll lose you forever. I know it."

Lance sighed. "I'll be just down the hall --"

Justin cut him off. "Please, Lance. Oh God, please don't walk out on me, not now. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." Tears glistened in Justin's eyes, making them sparkle like twin pools of deep water.

Running a hand over his face, Lance asked, "For what?"

Justin shrugged. "For jumping all over you out there. I was so worried about you -- and when I found out Joey was gone ... I just went ballistic. I'm sorry."

Lance pressed his hands to his temple, willing away the slight headache that began to tug behind his eyes. "It's my fault," Lance said quietly. "I'm the one who should apologize. That girl --" He sighed. "The way she touches you pisses the hell out of me. I want to touch you like that. She has no right to."

He felt Justin's hand on his shoulder, slipping beneath the strap of the duffel bag. Lance let Justin take the bag from him, and it fell to the floor beside them. Then Justin took Lance's hands from his head and held them in his own, squeezing them gently. "Lance, look at me."

Lance kept his gaze on the floor. "Justin," he began, but Justin interrupted him.

"Look at me." Slowly Lance raised his eyes to look at his friend. Justin

ran a hand down the side of Lance's face, his touch cool against Lance's flushed cheek. "Don't leave me, Lance. Please don't."

Looking into Justin's deep blue eyes, filled with anguish and pain, Lance didn't know how he ever thought he could leave him. "I won't," he whispered. He sighed, feeling defeated and shaky.

Justin rested his forehead on Lance's. "I'll get rid of her," he promised. "I told her I didn't want her to stay but she didn't listen to me. All night long I practically ignored her -- all I could think of was you. You were so angry earlier ..." His voice trailed off, and he studied Lance's face. "I tried calling and no one answered. I got scared and insisted on coming back here. I wanted you to be here, waiting for me. But you weren't. You and Joey --" He choked back a sob, and then hurried on. "You two were gone. I thought I had lost you then. I was so sure you weren't coming back to me. I was worried, and I was angry, and afraid. But mostly I was pissed at myself. For letting you go. I'm not going to do that again."

Lance rolled his eyes. "You know me better than that," he said.

Smiling slightly, Justin replied, "I know." His lips brushed Lance's, the touch tentative, gentle. Lance leaned into him, running his hands around Justin's waist, pulling him closer as his tongue slipped between Justin's lips, claiming him. Into Justin's mouth, Lance whispered, "You're mine. I don't care who knows it anymore. I don't like seeing her all over you like that."

Beneath his lips, he felt Justin smile. "Ooh, I like it when you talk tough."

Lance laughed, pulling back slightly. Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's neck and held him close. "If you don't tell her to leave you alone," Lance said, trying to sound menacing, "I'm going to have to get medieval on her ass."

Justin laughed, and the tension between them fell away. "I can see the tabloids now," he said. "NSync's Lance Bass and Britney Spears duke it out in a free for all fight over Timberlake heartthrob."

"I'm serious," Lance said, and Justin's smile faded.

He looked at Lance with large eyes and said softly, "So am I. I'll tell her to stop it. I'll insist. I promise. Just stay with me."

Lance nodded. The thought of sleeping alone terrified him, and he didn't want to leave Justin. Right now he didn't even want to let him go. Someone knocked on the door, and then JC called, "You guys alright in there?"

"Fine," Lance called, kissing Justin again. They stumbled back and Lance pressed Justin against the door, kissing him roughly.

All I Ever Wanted
42. The Way I Want You
Part 4 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

As Lance held Justin against the door of their hotel room, their bodies pressed tight against each other, all of the feelings he harbored throughout the day came crashing back at him. The lust and desire that flooded his body filled him with a sense of strength that surprised him. In a gentle voice that belied the passion running through his blood, Lance stroked Justin's cheek and, gazing into those incredible eyes, murmured, "You look so damn fine in a tux."

Justin smiled, fanning the flames in Lance's heart. "I'm a little worse for wear right now," he replied, trailing his hands down Lance's arms.

Lance unbuttoned the top button of Justin's white shirt. Leaning down, he kissed the tender skin beneath the collar, at the base of Justin's neck. Justin closed his eyes and leaned his head to one side, allowing Lance's tongue to dance over his collarbone, tickle the hollow of his throat. "You still look fine to me," Lance whispered against Justin's neck as he unbuttoned Justin's shirt completely. He pushed the shirt back off of Justin's shoulders, his fingers running over Justin's chest, caressing his nipples, his stomach.

Justin tugged Lance's t-shirt up over his head, tossing it aside. "You know the others are still out in the hall," he said softly. "Waiting for us."

"Let them wait," Lance replied. He unbuckled Justin's belt and unzipped the front of Justin's pants, pushing them down past his hips. They fell in a heap at his feet, the belt buckle jingling as it hit the floor. At the sight of Justin's slight erection straining against the front of his boxers, Lance's own cock swelled, aching sweetly. He let his gaze roam over Justin's bare chest as he took Justin's hand in his and led him to the bed.

Justin sat down on the edge of the bed, his eyes watching Lance hungrily as Lance slipped out of his jeans and underwear in one fluid motion. Then he pushed Justin down to the bed, kissing his lips, his cheeks, his face, as he pulled down Justin's boxers. Lance sat down on Justin's thighs, his stiff cock resting along Justin's own thick length, and he stroked both of them lightly, his fingers just brushing along the hot skin. Justin stared up at him with wide eyes and then he whispered, "I bought something today."

"Oh?" Lance asked, trailing his fingers through the kinky hair at Justin's groin. He thought he knew what the purchase might be.

Sitting up, Justin reached past Lance for a small paper bag on the bedside table. It was a plain bag, the kind kids carried lunch in. Justin opened it and Lance held out his hands as Justin emptied the bag into them. Lance held up a small bottle and grinned, reading the label. "Where did you go to get this?"

Justin shrugged. "A store in the mall called Night Dreams." He bit his lip, indecision written on his face, and then he hurried on. "It's lube."

"I know what it is," Lance said, rolling his eyes. "What did you say to the others? Hold on a minute, I want to run in here for something?"

Laying back down on the bed, Justin laughed. "They were in the music store. I slipped away and was back before they even noticed I was gone." Lance turned bottle over in his hands. "Well?" Justin asked. "You gonna use it?"

"Hold up," he replied. "I'm reading the directions."

"Directions?" Justin asked, sitting back up. "They have directions on it?"

Smiling, Lance said, "They have directions on shampoo, babe. Of course they have them on this stuff."

Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's waist, resting his head on Lance's chest. Between them their erections throbbed. "I can't imagine it's too hard to use," he said. "Just rub it on and stick it in, right?"

Lance sighed, grinning. "Justin Timberlake, ever the romantic. Just stick it in already, will you? That sure gets me in the mood."

Leaning down, Justin kissed one of Lance's nipples, his tongue teasing it erect. His breath was hot against Lance's skin. "I want you," Justin whispered, and Lance felt his heart flutter at the words. "I'm sorry about earlier. Please. I want to make it up to you."

"You don't have to," Lance replied, his voice soft. He ran a hand through Justin's curls. "Lay back down -- my knees are starting to hurt."

Obedying him, Justin stretched back out on the bed, and Lance opened the bottle. The liquid inside was a rich golden hue, and he poured some into his palm. Then he took his erection in his hand and rubbed the cool liquid on his hard dick. "You really should be doing this," he said.

"Then give it here." Justin held both hands out, cupping them as Lance poured some more of the golden liquid into them. Then Justin stroked Lance's cock, rubbing the lubrication down his length, smearing it on his balls, his abdomen, his dick. Tiny drops dripped onto Justin's legs.

Lance closed his eyes as Justin massaged his cock, his hands sliding up and down the red hardness easily over the lube. "Okay, stop," Lance said, moaning. "I'll come before I ever get inside."

Grinning, Justin lay back down. "Put some on me."

Lance poured some more into his hands. "This stuff will be gone in no time," he remarked. Slipping his hand beneath Justin's dick, he massaged Justin's balls and the soft skin beneath them, and then his finger slipped inside of Justin. Justin shifted beneath Lance, spreading his legs out a little more, and he moaned loudly as another one of Lance's fingers slipped into him. "Sshh," Lance said. "The others are outside. They'll hear us."

He slipped a third finger inside, rubbing Justin's tight ass, spreading his fingers apart slightly, widening the opening, and Justin moaned again. "Fuck them," he said, a little breathless.

Then Lance leaned forward, guiding his hard erection to where his fingers held Justin open. As the tip of his penis entered Justin, he felt a hot tightness hug him, pulling him in. He slipped his fingers out as he eased his length inside, and Justin moaned again, his eyes clenched closed. "Does it hurt?" Lance asked, lying down on top of Justin.

"A little," Justin admitted. When Lance started to pull away, though, Justin grabbed his shoulders and hugged him close. Lance could feel Justin's dick on his lower stomach, thick and hard, and his own dick slipped further into Justin, until he was completely inside. Justin kissed Lance, holding his head in his hands, and Lance began to thrust slowly into him, his hands running over Justin's hips to hold him close. After a few minutes, he felt Justin moving beneath him, helping him, as he became more limber and the tightness fell away. Lance allowed himself to thrust a little faster, close to an orgasm.

Against his abdomen, Lance felt Justin's cock spasm, and then a warm wetness spread between them as Justin came. Lance thrust harder, faster, and then he pulled out of Justin, slipping his wet dick between them as he came, too, his own juices mixing with Justin's on their bellies. Lance rested his head on Justin's chest, their cocks softening between them, and Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's back, holding him tight. Lance sighed. "You okay?" he asked.

"Fine," Justin said, his voice breaking slightly. Lance propped himself up on his elbows and looked at Justin. His eyes were a little red.

"You sure?" Lance asked. He reached out and ran a hand down Justin's cheek. Justin leaned into his touch, closing his eyes, and he nodded.

Then Justin rolled over, pressing Lance back into the pillows at the head of the bed, and he snuggled beside him, his head on Lance's shoulder. "Hold me," he said, and Lance encircled his arms around Justin's shoulders, pulling him close. Justin pulled the bedsheets over them, covering their nakedness, and he draped one leg over Lance's hips, one arm across his chest. He squeezed him tight. Lance kissed Justin's flushed forehead, slightly damp with sweat, and he rubbed Justin's shoulders tenderly.

Someone knocked on the door again, and Justin groaned. "Leave us alone!" he called out.

"You okay in there?" someone asked. It was Chris.

"Go away," Lance called back. "We're fine."

Through the door he heard Joey's loud voice. "You heard him, they're fine."

"I need my coat!" Britney called.

Lance sighed. "She's still here?" he asked, incredulous. "Doesn't she have a hotel of her own to go back to?"

In his arms Justin giggled. He sat up and kissed Lance, his lips lingering on Lance's. "I'll be right back," he whispered against Lance's chin. "Save my place."

"Who would I give it to?" Lance asked playfully as Justin got out of bed. Lance watched him, his naked body making Lance's groin ache again. Bending down, Justin picked up a pink and blue coat from the floor and headed for the door. "Um, Justin?" Lance asked, as Justin opened the door a crack.

Justin shoved the coat out into the hall. "Here it is," he said. From the bed Lance could see Chris in the doorway. He took one look at Justin's nude body and stepped in front of him, his eyes wide. "Justin!" Chris hissed. "It would be nice if you put some clothes on first."

Behind him Britney edged closer, but Chris blocked her view of the room. He saw Lance on the bed, the sheets pulled up to his waist already tenting over another erection. Lance smiled and waved at him; Chris frowned and turned around, talking to someone else. "Get her out of here," he said, his voice tight.

"But I --"

"Goodbye, Britney," Justin said, closing the door. He looked at Chris and said, "We're fine, really. Just ..." He sighed. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight," Chris said, looking back at Lance. "Everything's cool?" he called. Lance nodded. "Okay then," he said, pulling the door close. "Goodnight."

Justin locked the door. "Get back here," Lance said. Justin turned and grinned at him before returning to the bed. Crawling under the covers, he slipped back into his position in Lance's arms and hugged him tight. Lance held Justin close as Justin poked at Lance's erection through the sheets. "What's this?" he asked.

Lance blushed. "I just can't get enough of you, I guess," he said, kissing Justin's nose.

"My turn next," Justin said, "but I'm tired now. It's been a long day."

Lance nodded. "Damn straight. Being jealous all day long is exhausting."

"Now you know how I feel," Justin said softly. Changing the subject, he asked, "What did you and Joey do all night?"

Lance shrugged. "Saw X-Men, ate dinner, drove around, talked."

"Was it good?"

"What?" Lance asked. "The movie, the dinner, the drive, or the talk?"

Justin shrugged in his arms. "The movie. I want to see it."

"I'll take you," Lance replied. "I liked it okay but I'm not really a Marvel fan."

"What about the dinner?" Justin pinched Lance's nipple erect.

Lance grinned. "Italian, of course."

Justin smiled. "Of course. The drive?"

"Kinda boring, actually," Lance admitted. "We just drove down the largest street we could find until we reached the end of town. Then we turned around and drove back." He knew what Justin was building up to -- he wanted to know what they had talked about all night long.

Running his hand across Lance's chest, Justin asked, "And the talk?"

"Joey's fun to talk to," Lance replied, evasive.

"What did you talk about?" Justin asked. His hand slipped under the sheet to caress Lance's stomach, still sticky with their cum.

Lance shrugged. "You," he admitted. "The way I feel about Britney. The way Joey feels about me."

For a long moment Justin was silent. He ran his fingers down Lance's slight erection, thoughtful, and Lance didn't say anything. There was nothing to say. Finally, in a small voice, Justin asked, "Did you do anything else?"

Sighing, Lance pulled him closer and said, "I'm not going to lie to you, Justin. He's a flirt, you know that. And he kissed my hand. But we didn't do anything. He knows the way I feel about you."

"You were so mad earlier ..." Justin said, his voice trailing off.

Looking into Justin's upturned face, Lance promised, "I will never be mad enough to hurt you. I love you too much to do that."

"He kissed your hand?" Justin whispered.

Lance smiled. "Like this," he said, taking Justin's hand from under the sheets and placing the knuckles against his lips.

"That's it?" Justin asked.

"Well, he sure didn't do this," Lance said, his gaze never leaving Justin's face as he opened his mouth and bit one of Justin's knuckles playfully. Then his tongue darted out and licked between the knuckles. Justin grinned, and Lance closed his lips over another knuckle, sucking gently. When Justin lay his head back down on Lance's chest, Lance said, "Let's go to that store tomorrow, before we have to leave."

Justin nodded, his curls tickling Lance's chin. "We need to buy more of that lube stuff. I didn't think we'd use so much."

Lance looked over at the bottle sitting on the bedside table, half-empty. "Do they have an economy size?" he asked.

Justin laughed, hugging him. "We'll see," he promised, his eyes slipping closed. Lance smiled, and wondered how he ever thought earlier he would sleep without Justin by his side.

All I Ever Wanted
43. Dueling Sabers
by NSyncGrrl

Justin opened the door, the shopping bags in his hands awkward as he entered the hotel room. Lance sat on the small couch by the window, his laptop open on his lap. He glanced up as Justin closed the door behind him. "Hey," he called, turning back to his computer. "Have fun?"

Justin nodded. He had gone out with Chris and Joey to a local Wal-Mart, just to stock up on supplies before tonight's show. Lance stayed behind to work on his managing company, or something like that -- when he began to talk business, Justin tuned him out. He wanted to work on it the night before but Justin convinced him to watch *The Phantom Menace* with him, and they laid together on the couch, watching the movie. Lance had mentioned it would be cool to be a Jedi Knight, and while they were out Justin found a couple of toy lightsabers on clearance and he just couldn't pass them up. Digging into the bags, he smiled at Lance and said, "I bought you something."

Lance looked up from the computer screen. "Something good, I hope," he said. Justin pulled out a green lightsaber, still in the package. Grinning, Lance took it and asked, "What the hell?"

Sitting down on the arm of the couch beside Lance, Justin said, "I thought you'd like it."

"Why green?" Lance asked. He closed the laptop and set it beside him on the couch before opening the lightsaber.

Justin shrugged. "It matches your eyes," he replied.

"Did you buy one for yourself?" Lance asked.

Cupping his crotch, Justin said softly, "I've got your lightsaber right here."

Lance slapped his arm playfully, and Justin laughed. He leaned over behind Lance, resting his arm on the back of the couch, as Lance held the lightsaber up. The hilt of the toy was large, designed to be practical and not accurate, and the blade sat inside, collapsed. With a flick of his wrist, the blade extended to its full length -- three feet, according to the package. "What am I going to do with this?" Lance mused.

Reaching into the bag, Justin pulled out another lightsaber, already out of its package. The hilt was longer, and when Justin twisted his hand, two red blades slid out from either end. "We can battle," Justin said. "I don't know. I just thought they were cool."

"And cheap," Lance remarked, glancing at the price sticker. He pouted, looking at Justin's lightsaber. "I want to be Darth Maul."

"I bought them," Justin said. "I can give yours to Joey, if you don't want it." He reached for the lightsaber in Lance's hands, but Lance pulled

it back.

"You bought it for me," Lance said. Justin leaned down and kissed Lance's forehead. Lance turned and Justin's lips found his, kissing gently. Reaching for Justin, Lance pulled him off of the arm of the couch and into his lap. Justin pushed Lance back, lying down on top of him as his tongue slipped between Lance's lips. Lance moaned against Justin and then pushed him away. Justin sat up, confused, as Lance turned and picked up the laptop from beneath him. "Forgot about this," he said, setting the computer on the floor.

Justin laughed. "Let's battle," he said, standing up.

From the couch, Lance laid back down and frowned. "But I was happy doing what we were doing," he said.

Justin pulled him up. "We can do that later," he said. "I want to try these things out."

Lance reached out and trailed his finger down the zipper of Justin's shorts. "Can't we try them out later?" he asked.

Justin rolled his eyes. "And you tell me I'm always horny," he laughed. He reached into the shopping bags again, pulling out a large wad of brown material. "Here's your Jedi cloak," he said, dropping the material in Lance's lap.

Lance held the material up. "These are from the show," he said. They used the brown monk's robe in the second encore of their tour, for the song "Bye Bye Bye." "They let you borrow this?"

"They don't know I have it," Justin replied. "As long as we don't mess them up, we should be alright. You see why I want to battle now? I have to get these things back in wardrobe before someone notices they're gone."

Standing up, Lance slipped the robe on over his t-shirt and shorts. "This is pretty cool," he said, picking up his lightsaber again. Pushing the long sleeves of the robe up to his elbows, he shook the lightsaber. As the blade opened, the sleeves fell back to his wrists. Pointing his lightsaber at Justin, he cried, "En garde!"

"Jedis don't say that," Justin said, pulling his own robe on over his tank top and shorts.

Lance pulled off Justin's bandanna. "Jedis don't wear these, either," he said, running a hand through Justin's hair to fluff his curls.

"Hey!" Justin cried, reaching for the bandanna. Lance held it out of reach. "Give me that!"

"You'll have to battle me for it," Lance taunted. Picking up the hem of his robe, he swung his lightsaber at Justin, keeping him at bay. "Catch me if you can."

Justin grinned and shook the blades of his lightsaber open. "Aha!" he cried. "A challenge!" He tried to twirl the lightsaber in his hand like a baton, but it slipped free from his fingers and fell to the floor.

As he bent to pick it up, Lance laughed. "I wouldn't try out for Episode Two, if I were you." He touched the tip of his lightsaber to Justin's head. "I won before we even got started."

Standing up, Justin knocked Lance's lightsaber away. His eyes gleamed wickedly as he held his lightsaber up defensively across his body. Without warning, he lunged for Lance, one red blade collapsing back into the hilt as it brushed against Lance's chest. Leaping back, Lance swung his lightsaber at Justin, blocking the next blow. The sound of plastic hitting plastic wasn't realistic enough for Justin -- as he swiped at Lance again, he made little lightsaber noises under his breath. Lance heard him, and the next blow he struck was accompanied by lightsaber sounds of his own. He grinned as Justin came at him, his lightsaber deflecting Justin's blows as Justin pushed him back.

And then Lance felt the edge of the bed against the back of his knees, and when Justin lunged at him again, he fell back on the mattress, Justin landing on top of him. Their lightsabers pressed into their stomachs painfully, and Justin pulled his out from between them. As he tossed it aside, Lance smiled. "Well," he said, his voice thick. "We're back where we started."

Justin took Lance's lightsaber and set it beside them on the bed. Lance ran his hands under Justin's robe and around his back, holding him close. Scooting up slightly, Justin kissed Lance's nose, his tongue trailing across Lance's cheek until he held Lance's earlobe in his mouth. His breath fanned Lance's ear gently, and he nibbled on Lance's ear, kissing his neck. Lance's hands slid beneath the hem of Justin's shorts, under his boxers, his skin warm and soft on Justin's. He traced the curve of Justin's buttocks until his hands cupped them gently, and one finger eased into Justin's ass slowly. Justin moaned breathlessly into Lance's ear and he thrust against Lance's hips, his dick already hard.

Someone knocked on the door. "Go away," Justin muttered into Lance's neck, his hands running over Lance's chest, caressing his nipples. The knock came again.

And then the door opened, and Lance slipped his hands out of Justin's pants quickly. Justin looked up as Chris entered the room, brandishing a blue lightsaber of his own. "Ha!" he cried, jumping onto the bed, his feet inches from Lance's head.

Justin rolled off of Lance, reaching for his fallen lightsaber, discarded on the floor. Lance grabbed his own lightsaber and jabbed it between Chris's legs, aiming for his crotch. Leaping back, Chris stumbled off the bed. "Hey!" he said. "No fair!"

Laughing, Justin wrapped his hands around his lightsaber and twirled it dramatically. "You Jedi are no match for a Sith!" he cried, stabbing one blade at Chris, the other at Lance.

Lance tumbled off the bed and ran to Chris's side, a smile on his face. Justin lunged for them, leaping onto the bed and laughing maniacally. He wished he had remembered to lock the door, but at least they'd get some use from the robes before he had to return them to the wardrobe trailer. He grinned at the thought of making love to Lance wearing only those

robes -- he'd have to try that one day.

Then again, if they did that, he'd never be able to keep a straight face on stage when they wore the robes again in front of all those screaming fans. And as he knew from experience, dancing with a hard-on was no fun at all. Maybe he'd have to wait until the tour was over before trying out these robes again.

All I Ever Wanted
44. Pool Party
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was headed for his hotel room when Joey's door opened and Joey leaned out, snagging Justin's arm. He held a cell phone to his ear. "You guys wanna go to a party?" he asked. Justin didn't know if he was talking to him or into the phone, so he pointed at his chest and raised his eyebrows.

Joey nodded. Shrugging, Justin said, "Let me see if Lance is up to it." They had just finished another show, the third one in a row this week, and Justin needed to unwind. The last few days had been so hectic, he only collapsed into bed at night, too exhausted to do anything more than snuggle up to Lance and fall asleep. Maybe a party would do them some good.

Letting go of Justin's arm, Joey said, "We're leaving in ten," and closed the door. Justin hurried down the hall to his room.

Opening the door, he saw Lance standing by the bed, dressed in nothing but a pair of swim trunks. On the bed was a large beach towel, folded up, and Lance was slipping on a pair of sandals. When Justin entered, he turned and grinned. "There you are," he said.

Justin frowned. "Joey wants to know if we want to go to a party with him," he said. "You're not really dressed for it, though."

Lance shook his head. "You can go, but I want to go swimming."

"Swimming?" Justin asked, as if he had never heard the word before. Glancing at his watch, he said, "Lance, it's after midnight --"

Stepping closer, Lance reached out and trailed a hand down Justin's chest. His fingers lingered on the waistband of Justin's jeans. Softly, he said, "The hotel pool is closed after dark, but I talked the manager into letting me use it tonight. No one else will be there but me." He looked up, his green eyes searching Justin's face. "The water will probably still be warm, with the stars shining overhead, the night breeze cool against my wet skin."

Justin swallowed, his throat suddenly dry. He ran his hands down Lance's bare arms and thought of holding him in the dark water of the pool, outside, together, alone. Leaning forward, his breath tickling Justin's ear, Lance whispered, "I wanted you to come, too, but if you'd rather go out with Joey --"

"I'll be right back," Justin promised, his mind already working out ways to turn down Joey's offer. As he raced out of the room, Lance called, "Meet me at the pool."

Justin knocked on Joey's door. When Joey answered, he took in Justin's flushed face and smiled sadly. "You guys bailing on me, huh?"

Justin felt a blush creep into his cheeks. Damn, he thought. Is it that obvious? He nodded and asked, "Is that okay?"

Shrugging, Joey said, "Sure. Chris is going."

"What about JC?" Justin asked. He tried not to shift from leg to leg, but he was in a hurry to get downstairs. The thought of him and Lance in the pool alone had already given him an erection.

"Sleeping," Joey replied. "Go on, have fun."

"You too," Justin said, heading back to his room. Changing into a pair of swim trunks, he hurried down to the pool. Outside the night was cool, the concrete warm beneath his bare feet. The pool was dark, and the slight sound of lapping water was strangely arousing. He found Lance already in the water, swimming lazily around the pool. When he saw Justin, he grinned. "Come on in," he called.

Justin slipped out of his swim trunks and into the water. As he swam towards Lance, Lance swam away. "Hey," Justin said, pouting. "Come back here."

Lance laughed, a soft sound in the darkness. "You lost your shorts."

Swimming closer to Lance, Justin grinned. "You're going to lose yours in a minute." He reached out and grabbed a handful of wet material, one of the legs of Lance's swim trunks. Lance twisted in the water, his shorts slipping down his legs. Then he pulled back, leaving Justin holding his shorts. "See?" Justin asked, holding them up. He flung them out of the pool and swam towards Lance again.

Lance swam back until he bumped against the edge of the pool. He wiped the water from his eyes as Justin hemmed him in. Justin reached around either side of Lance and held onto the edge of the pool, trapping Lance. Their bodies brushed together beneath the water, Justin's cock hard and throbbing as he bent down and kissed Lance tenderly. "Gotcha," he whispered. He felt Lance's legs rub against his, and Justin pressed him back against the edge of the pool.

Wrapping his arms around Justin's neck, Lance hugged him tight. Then he raised his legs beneath the water, encircling Justin's hips. He grinned when he felt Justin's hardness on his own erection. "What did Joey say when you told him we weren't going?"

"Sshh," Justin replied, covering Lance's mouth with his own. As his tongue parted Lance's lips, he ran his hands around Lance's back, between the hard cool tile of the pool and Lance's wet, hot skin, until he held Lance's butt in his hands. He kneaded Lance's tight buttocks, and Lance thrust his hips against Justin, moaning softly. Justin spread Lance's buttocks apart gently, slipping both forefingers into Lance, holding him open. Lance slid a little lower on Justin's hips, and when Justin eased his hard dick inside, Lance bit into Justin's shoulder.

Justin pushed Lance's hips down as he thrust into him. Lance was so tight and hot that Justin almost came immediately. He moaned loudly, the sound carrying across the pool, but he didn't care who heard him now. He felt Lance's teeth sink into his shoulder, felt Lance's fingernails dig into his

back, and he pushed Lance back against the edge of the pool as he slipped all the way inside of him. Lance's own erection rubbed against his lower belly as he thrust into Lance carefully, and he felt Lance's cock spasm as he came.

"You okay?" he whispered into Lance's ear. His voice was ragged as he moved inside of Lance.

He felt Lance nod against his cheek, and then Lance began kissing Justin's neck and shoulder. Moving his hips against Justin's, he tightened his muscles around Justin's cock, squeezing it with each thrust. Justin closed his eyes and thrust faster. "There," Lance said, a little breathless. "You're doing it now."

Justin opened one eye. "Doing what?" he asked, not breaking his rhythm.

Lance grinned. "You're about to come," he explained. "You're making that noise you make."

Groaning, Justin buried his head in Lance's neck. "Tell me about it later," he said, kissing Lance as his orgasm ripped through him. He pulled out of Lance as he came, his dick already going soft. Between them Lance had grown hard again. "Damn," Justin said softly. He kissed Lance's cheek tenderly as Lance blushed. "I'm so glad we didn't go with Joey."

"I'm glad this pool automatically filters the water," Lance said. "Else we'd be here the rest of the night, cleaning up."

Justin giggled. "That'd be the last time the manager lets anyone use the pool after hours."

Lance picked at Justin's nipples playfully. Then he unhooked his legs from around Justin's hips and, leaning his elbows back on the edge of the pool, pulled himself out of the water. Justin nipped at Lance's dick, his teeth closing on thin air, and then he pulled himself up next to Lance. Wrapping his beach towel around his shoulders, Lance shivered in the slight breeze. Then he opened his arms and Justin crawled into his embrace, the towel covering both of them, the heat from their bodies warm as they dried off. Justin hugged Lance tight, resting his head on Lance's chest. "I'll be glad when this tour is over," Justin admitted. "We don't spend enough time together."

"We spend every second together," Lance replied. "Morning, noon, and night. We just don't do enough other stuff."

"Like this," Justin said, rubbing his hands along Lance's back.

Lance nodded, his hands warm and strong on Justin's shoulders. "Like this," he agreed. Justin sighed against Lance's chest and closed his eyes, savoring the moment.

All I Ever Wanted
45. Digital Getdown
by NSyncGrrl

They were on the road again, on an interstate somewhere between the Rockies and the Mississippi, but even Lance wasn't quite sure where. They had to be in New Mexico in two days for their next show, and he thought maybe they were within schedule. He looked up from his laptop, open on the table in front of him, and glanced out the window of the tour bus. Short shrubs and hot sand stretched away alongside the tarmac, a familiar sight in a dozen American road trip movies.

The other bus passed theirs, and Lance caught a glimpse of Justin staring out the window back at him. He smiled but Justin was gone. Turning back to his laptop, he finished the e-mail message he was writing to his mother and clicked the send button. Wireless Internet, he mused, opening Netscape. What a wonderful invention. Checking the time, he noticed they had another half hour until the next scheduled rest stop, and he might as well use that time to surf the web. He wanted to call Justin, but there was only one phone on the bus and JC was on it, stretched along the back bunk, talking quietly to someone.

Suddenly a message popped up on the computer screen. Lance grinned when he saw the screen name -- CurlyBoi. "Hey there, you sexy thang," he read under his breath.

Lance clicked the reply button. Justin must've seen his laptop open as the bus drove by, and wasted no time in logging online, too. Lance's fingers flew over the keyboard as he typed a short reply.

WhatstheScoop: Now what are you doing on that bus instead of this one?

CurlyBoi: *shrugs* i don't know how that happened. *yells* stop the bus! i gotta get off!

Lance laughed at the computer, the image of Justin yelling at the bus driver to pull over vivid in his mind. Before he could reply, Justin sent another message.

CurlyBoi: what're you doing?

WhatstheScoop: Thinking of you.

CurlyBoi: *swoons* how sweet!

WhatstheScoop: What are you up to?

CurlyBoi: thinking of you =P

"Figures," Lance muttered. Then, remembering he wasn't alone, he glanced back at JC guiltily, but JC was too wrapped up in his phone conversation to pay Lance any mind. Turning his attention back to the computer, he found another message waiting for him.

CurlyBoi: HEY LANCE WHAT'S UP?

WhatstheScoop: Why are you shouting at me?

CurlyBoi: sorry - that was joey. *kicks him away* he wanted to see what

i was typing.

WhatstheScoop: Tell him to go sit down.

CurlyBoi: he's gone back to his game. he and chris are playing sonic.

WhatstheScoop: Sonic? You guys are really living it up over there, aren't you?

CurlyBoi: it's the only game we could find. i think the others are on your bus.

WhatstheScoop: Drive by again and I'll toss them out the window to you.

CurlyBoi: only if you come, too

WhatstheScoop: Tell the others I'll make them a deal. You in exchange for JC. He comes complete with his own phone, already attached to his ear.

CurlyBoi: *rolls his eyes* so that's why i can't get through over there. tell him to hang up -- i want to talk to you.

WhatstheScoop: You're already talking to me.

CurlyBoi: but i can't hear your voice

WhatstheScoop: You know what I sound like.

CurlyBoi: i want to hear you breathe in my ear. i want to hear your deep voice say my name. i want to hear your sexy laugh and look into your sexy eyes ...

WhatstheScoop: You can't do that over the phone, silly!

CurlyBoi: *wicked grin* then get over here

WhatstheScoop: We've got another twenty minutes until we stop. Make sure you get on the right bus this time.

Lance waited. Justin didn't reply immediately, and he wondered if maybe his last message had offended him. He opened a new message, ready to apologize, when Justin's response popped up on the screen.

CurlyBoi: i want to get you alone. i'm going to run my hands up your legs and kiss your chest and bite your nipples

WhatstheScoop: Ouch!

CurlyBoi: not hard just soft little bites don't worry i won't hurt you

As Lance read Justin's words, he felt a stirring in his groin and he shifted in his seat, glancing back at JC. But JC was still on the phone, and when Lance turned back to the computer, Justin had sent another message.

CurlyBoi: i want you in me. i want to taste you. my tongue on you, licking you.

WhatstheScoop: You better stop it now. I'm getting horny just reading your words.

CurlyBoi: that's the idea, babe! *winks*

WhatstheScoop: Then I'll have to sit here with a hard on for you and no relief in sight.

CurlyBoi: aww, poor baby. *hugs* i was thinking of something we could try.

WhatstheScoop: What's that?

CurlyBoi: well i don't want to say too much but i was thinking you and me and whipped cream. yum!

WhatstheScoop: And what exactly do you plan to do with the whipped cream?

CurlyBoi: i'll buy some at the next stop and show you. first we'll take off

all our clothes and then i'll squirt the whipped cream on your chest, down your belly, all along your dick, pile it on your balls.

WhatstheScoop: Justin!

CurlyBoi: *grins* then i'll lick it off. starting at the top, working my way down. how long do you think it'll take you to get off on that? just my tongue, licking you?

WhatstheScoop: I'm about ready to get off now.

It was the truth. Lance's groin ached at the images in his mind. He and Justin, lying on one of the tiny bunks in the back of the bus. Whipped cream cool and sticky all over his body. Justin's tongue, warm and wet, licking along his skin. He glanced at the time -- ten more minutes until they stopped.

His message lingered on the screen as his computer thought about sending it over the network to Justin. Suddenly Lance felt someone lean down over his shoulder. "Where you going?" JC asked.

"Nowhere," he mumbled, closing the laptop quickly.

JC looked at him strangely. "You said you were getting off."

Lance blushed, his ears burning. "We've got a few more minutes until we stop," he muttered.

Laughing, JC clapped Lance on the back. "Hey, do you want me to switch buses with Justin?" he asked. "That's who you were talking to online, wasn't it?"

Numbly, Lance nodded. Then, in a small voice, he asked, "How long were you standing there?"

"Not long," JC admitted. "Don't worry, I didn't read anything else." The phone rang again, and JC flipped it open. "Hello?" Covering the phone with one hand, he whispered, "It's my mom." He returned to the back of the bus, already lost in another conversation.

Flipping open the laptop, Lance found three messages waiting for him. He read them quickly, one after the other.

CurlyBoi: *winks* don't do anything without me

CurlyBoi: lance you still there?

CurlyBoi: lance? are you there? talk to me please!

WhatstheScoop: I'm here. JC saw my last message.

CurlyBoi: *grins* what'd he say?

WhatstheScoop: He wanted to know where I was getting off at.

CurlyBoi: *dies*

WhatstheScoop: He said he'll change buses with you when we stop.

CurlyBoi: then stop the bus now!

WhatstheScoop: You haven't bought the whipped cream yet.

CurlyBoi: *licks his lips* this is going to be fun ...

WhatstheScoop: I better log off now. I'll see you in five minutes. I love you.

CurlyBoi: *kisses* love you too. c-ya soon!

Lance turned off the laptop, smiling. He couldn't wait for the bus to stop. The thought of the two of them alone on the bus ignited his senses.

Even without the whipped cream ... but he hoped there was a convenience store wherever they were headed, with a shelf stocked full of Redi-Whip.

All I Ever Wanted
46. Shopping Spree
by NSyncGrrl

Lance felt lost. They were in an expensive men's clothing store in the mall. Loud hip-hop music blared from the speakers, and the prices made Lance's head hurt. But they had been bored, and instead of staying back at the hotel, Justin thought it would be fun to go shopping. So Lance tagged along -- he needed some new jeans, anyway, though none of the ones in this store looked like the kind he preferred. He glanced over at Justin, a few racks away. With a bandanna covering his braids, a yellow windbreaker over a white tank top, and a pair of baggy Fubu jeans, Justin looked as if he belonged in this store. Lance knew he looked out of place, in his simple t-shirt and jeans, but if this is where Justin wanted to shop ...

"Hey there," someone said, and Lance turned around. A young salesman with skin the color of malted chocolate smiled at him. His nametag read simply Dave, and the man was about Lance's age, maybe a little younger. Slim, clean-cut, handsome, with a devilish grin. His gaze ran down Lance's body as he asked, "Can I help you find something in particular?"

Suddenly Justin was there, pushing between them as he reached for a shirt on the rack beside Lance. "We're just looking, thanks," he said, glaring at the salesman. Lance smiled as Dave frowned at Justin.

"Well," he said, looking back at Lance, "if you need something --"

"We'll let you know," Justin interrupted, his voice like ice. "Thank you."

As Dave walked away, Lance said softly, "Down, boy."

Justin turned to him, confused. "Don't people flirt where you come from, Lance?"

"What do you mean?" Lance asked. He held his arms out at his sides as Justin held up an outfit in front of him to see what it looked like. "He was only doing his job. You know how pushy salespeople are."

Justin rolled his eyes. "You aren't even looking at the clothes," he replied. He held up a deep purple silk suit and cocked his head to one side. "If he was only doing his job, he would've left you alone."

Grinning, Lance said, "You're so cute." Looking down at the suit Justin held in front of him, he asked, "Purple?"

"I like it," Justin replied. "I think it'll look good on you."

Laughing, Lance said, "I'll look like Puff Daddy in that thing." The suit was huge, with broad shoulders and yards of material. "Where am I going to wear it to? The Grammy's?"

"Hey, that's a good idea," Justin said, smiling. The salesman was

already forgotten. "Maybe we can all get one, each a different color."

"We'll look like a rainbow," Lance said. "And I'm not wearing that thing."

Justin pouted. "At least try it on? For me?"

Lance sighed. "I'm not buying it," he declared. "I need some jeans."

"I'll get you a few pairs. You can try them all on at the same time." Justin handed Lance the outfit and headed for the jeans rack.

Lance looked at the flimsy suit in his hands, glancing at the pricetag. He couldn't believe someone would pay that much for something this ugly. But he didn't want to hurt Justin's feelings -- if he thought the outfit was fly, the least Lance could do was try it on. Heading for the dressing rooms, he noticed Dave the salesman, already waiting for him. "That outfit's da bomb," Dave said, smiling. His teeth were very white, and Lance couldn't help but smile back. "I'd love to see what it looks like on you."

"It's not really my style," Lance admitted. He glanced around the store, looking for Justin.

Dave stepped closer. "Hey, what is that you wearing? You smell great."

Lance frowned. What was he wearing? Then he noticed Justin, heading towards them. "Hey, Justin," he called out. "What was that stuff I put on this morning?"

Frowning, Justin asked, "What stuff?"

Lance nodded at Dave. "He wants to know what cologne I'm wearing." He saw anger crease Justin's forehead, and then Justin wrapped one hand protectively around Lance's waist. He leaned into Lance, his curls tickling Lance's ear as he pressed his nose against Lance's neck. Inhaling deeply, he said, "I think that's me on you." Justin looked at Dave, his arm still around Lance. "They don't sell that in the stores."

With a tight smile, Dave handed Lance a dressing room key. Before Lance could take it, Justin snatched it away. "Thanks," he said, leading Lance into the dressing room.

Quietly, Lance said, "Justin, you're so bad." Justin looked at him only to find Lance grinning. Leaning close to Justin, he whispered loudly, "It turns me on when you get like that."

"Like what?" Justin asked, grinning back.

"You don't even know you're doing it," Lance said, amazed. "You act like a lion, protecting his turf."

Running his other hand around Lance's waist, Justin hugged him quickly. "But I'm just a kitten at heart," he replied.

"A sex kitten," Lance laughed, pulling back. "Watch it -- I don't want to have to buy this suit just because we wrinkled it."

"Try it on," Justin said, handing Lance the key. He sat down in a chair beside a tri-fold mirror and waited as Lance entered one of the dressing room stalls.

Inside the dressing room was a full-length mirror and a small bench. Lance undressed quickly and slipped the suit on. It felt very thin and ill-made. As he pulled on the jacket, he called, "It feels like I'm not wearing anything at all."

"Let me see," Justin said, and Lance heard the smile in his voice.

He opened the door and stood in front of the tri-fold mirror. "I look like I'm pretending to be someone I'm not." He frowned. "This isn't really my color ..."

Standing behind him, Justin studied Lance in the mirror. "It looks good on you," he said, running his hands down Lance's arms, smoothing the fabric down. "I like it."

Meeting Justin's gaze in the mirror, Lance asked, "You're kidding?"

Justin shook his head. "It's different, but I like it. Trust me."

In the mirror Lance could see Dave standing near the doorway that led to the dressing rooms. Nodding at him, he said, "Maybe I should ask him."

Justin frowned. "You're doing this on purpose," he said.

Lance grinned. Turning around, he poked at Justin's stomach. "I'm just kidding," he said. "I'm not buying this thing."

Justin smiled back. "I'll buy it for you."

Rolling his eyes, Lance countered, "I'm not wearing it."

"Even if I told you how sexy it looks on you?" Justin replied. He took Lance's hands in his own, pulling him closer. Lowering his voice, he asked, "Even if I told you it turns me on?"

Lance looked into Justin's eyes, and suddenly he wanted Justin -- right here, in the dressing room. "Well," he said, his voice thick, "when you put it like that ..." He kissed Justin softly, pushing him towards the dressing room stall. Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's shoulders as he staggered back.

"Justin!" They looked up at the sound of JC's voice. "Lance? You two back there?"

Ducking his head, Lance hugged Justin and whispered, "They have the worst timing."

Justin laughed and called out, "Yeah."

Lance stepped back, his fingers trailing down Justin's arm, as JC came around the corner. He took one look at Lance's outfit and grimaced. "What in the world do you have on?"

"It's a bit much," Lance agreed, looking down at the suit.

Chris and Joey followed behind JC. "Dude!" Chris shouted. "Cool zoot suit!"

"See?" Justin asked, grinning. "I told you it looked good."

Lance glanced at Joey. "What do you think?" he asked, but Joey just shook his head.

"No comment," he replied. "I'm not getting myself in trouble."

"You don't like it," Lance said, smiling. "I can tell by the look on your face. Majority rules, Justin. I'm not buying it."

Chris grinned. "Can I get it then?"

"They have a million of them," Justin replied. "All different colors."

Turning to JC, a wild look in his eye, Chris whispered dramatically, "We should all get one!"

Justin winked at Lance. "Didn't I say that? Huh?"

Lance nodded. Joey leaned close to him and whispered, "You look like an eggplant."

"Hey!" Justin cried, offended. "I picked it out!"

Joey rolled his eyes. "There's no accounting for taste," he muttered, but Chris took his arm and pulled him out of the dressing room. "Let's find those outfits!" he said, excited. JC shook his head and followed them.

They were alone again. Lance entered the dressing room stall, Justin right behind him. He looked at the two of them in the mirror and frowned. "An eggplant?" he asked.

"Don't listen to him," Justin said, closing the door behind him. He slipped the jacket off of Lance's shoulders, setting it on the bench carefully. "You look great."

Lance pulled the shirt off over his head. "An eggplant?" he asked again. "Aren't they kind of frumpy?"

"He meant the color," Justin replied, letting his gaze linger over Lance's bare chest.

Seeing the hunger in Justin's eyes, Lance said, "Maybe you should wait outside." When Justin met his gaze, Lance explained, "I don't think either of us can just stand here and do nothing when I take these pants off."

"Try me," Justin said, sitting down on the bench. He looked up at Lance, smiling sweetly. "I'll be a good boy, I promise."

"But will I?" Lance said. When it was obvious Justin wasn't leaving, Lance unbuttoned the pants and slipped them down over his hips. The front of his underwear bulged from his slight erection. Glancing at Justin, he said, "I told you I was getting turned on."

Justin reached out, running his hands around Lance's waist, his fingers brushing against his erection. As he pulled him closer, Lance tried to twist away, but Justin's grip was firm. "You said you'd be good," he reminded Justin as he was pulled into Justin's lap. "This isn't good."

Kissing Lance's neck, Justin whispered, "This is very good." With one hand he cupped Lance's crotch, rubbing his dick through his briefs, while the other hand caressed Lance's chest, teasing his nipples. Lance leaned back as Justin's tongue traced along his neck, behind his ears, his teeth nipping lightly.

"Okay, you guys!" Chris called as he entered the dressing room again. When he didn't see Justin or Lance, he banged on the door to their stall. "You guys stop that and come on."

Lance grinned. "You don't even know what we're doing," he replied, trying to pull away from Justin, who only held him tighter.

"I can see you," Chris said, his voice very close as he tried to peek between the door and its jamb.

"You cannot," Justin replied, letting Lance go. As Lance hurried to dress, Justin held his middle finger up to the crack in the door. "What am I doing now?"

The door shook as someone kicked it from the other side. Then Joey called out, "I'm going to hurt you, Justin. Chris is making me buy one of those hideous outfits."

Justin laughed. "What color?" he asked, glancing at Lance. Lance pulled his shirt over his head and grinned.

"White," Joey replied. "I'll look like the Pillsbury Doughboy. Now get out here so I can kick your butt."

Justin fell back to the bench in a fit of giggles. Stepping around him, Lance unlocked the door, and Joey dived in, reaching for Justin. As they rolled around on the floor, Lance extracted himself from the stall and looked at the outfit Chris held in his hand. "Orange?" he asked, laughing.

"Tangerine," Chris replied haughtily. He held up his other arm, where two more outfits were draped. One was dark red, the other sky blue. "Pomegranate and cerulean. I'm thinking we can wear these in our next video."

Lance rolled his eyes. "I don't think so," he said, folding his own purple outfit over his arm. But if Justin really liked the suit, maybe he'd wear it every once in a while. He glanced at Justin, laughing breathlessly on the floor as Joey tickled him without mercy, and reached past them for the jeans Justin had picked out for him. He would buy them without trying them on -- his groin ached sweetly from the memory of Justin's hands, and he wanted to get back to the hotel as soon as possible to finish what they started.

All I Ever Wanted
47. Pick-up Line
by NSyncGrrl

"You need fifty-two more cents," the woman behind the counter told him.

Justin reached into his pocket, digging for change. Behind him a line was forming, and he heard people grumbling as he looked for his money. Joey and Chris were gone, already heading back inside the theater where Lance and JC saved their seats. He wished they hadn't left -- he didn't think he had any more money.

Suddenly someone touched his elbow, and he turned around to find Lance standing there. "Excuse me," he said politely. Justin smiled. "Do you need fifty-two cents?"

Justin nodded. As Lance counted out the change to the cashier, he said, "I haven't seen you here before. What's your name?"

Justin looked at Lance, a puzzled expression on his face. What's he playing? he wondered, but he smiled again and said, "Justin. Thanks for the change."

"No problem," Lance replied. He let his gaze run down Justin's chest, lingering at his crotch before meeting his eye again. The way Lance looked at him made Justin's throat ache. "You here alone?"

"Yeah," Justin said. Behind the counter, the cashier took her time filling Justin's drink, her eyes never leaving them. Justin glanced at her as he asked, "What about you?"

Lance leaned closer to him. "All alone," he whispered loudly. He covered Justin's hand with his. "Maybe you'd like to sit with me?"

Justin blushed. "I don't even know your name," he said coyly.

"Lance," came the reply. The cashier set Justin's drink down in front of them and turned to get his popcorn, but it was obvious from the way she kept glancing back at them that she was hanging on every word they said.

"Well, Lance," Justin said, "do you often pick up guys at the movies?" He felt a silly grin begin to pull across his face, and he had to admit that this little charade of Lance's was making him hungry for more than popcorn. Lance's hand was warm and heavy on his, and then Lance reached around and placed his other hand on the small of Justin's back. Justin felt a tightening in his groin and wondered how he'd ever pay attention to the movie with Lance sitting next to him in the dark.

Winking at him, Lance replied, "Only cute ones. And I gotta tell you --" He leaned closer and whispered loudly, "I like what I see."

Behind the counter, the cashier dropped Justin's bag of popcorn, and it

was all Justin could do to not laugh out loud. As she hurried to fill another bag, Lance trailed his finger up Justin's back, along his shoulders, and down his arm. Justin smiled at his touch. "I've already got a boyfriend."

Lance sighed. "I knew it. Someone like you is too good to be true. Tell him he's a lucky man to have you."

Justin grinned. "I can still sit with you, if you want."

"Can I hold your hand?" Lance asked sweetly.

Justin wanted to kiss him, but he restrained himself. Shrugging, he said, "We'll see. You never know what can happen in the dark."

"I'll be waiting," Lance said, and Justin watched as he walked away. Lance turned once and smiled at him, and then disappeared into the theater.

"What a perv," the cashier said, placing the popcorn in front of Justin. "He was all over you! Like you'd hook up with someone you just met in a theater." She rolled her eyes. "That happens to me all the time. You're not really going to sit with him, are you?"

Picking up the drink and popcorn, Justin nodded. "I know him," he said. "That's my boyfriend."

The stunned look on her face made Justin want to laugh again. "You mean --" she started, but Justin nodded and slipped out of line. He hurried after Lance, eager for the lights to go out and the movie to start, though he didn't think he'd see much of it now.

All I Ever Wanted
48. Bad Dreams
by NSyncGrrl

The lights blink out as they leave the stage. The crowds are still roaring, and as Justin races to catch up with the others, someone stops him. Turning, he doesn't really know who is talking to him, and he can barely hear what's being said. He pulls away, looking for the others. Chris and JC are ahead somewhere, laughing. He can hear the steady din of the crowd, a rush of noise like falling water, cascading all around him.

Then he sees Lance, leaning against the wall. Joey leans over him, smiling, and Justin feels his heart break at the way Lance smiles back. Justin starts to run but he knows he won't reach them in time, and sure enough, Joey bends down, his lips brushing Lance's. Lance opens his lips greedily, his tongue licking into Joey's mouth.

Justin's chest begins to ache -- he can't breathe, and something is holding him down, pulling him back, keeping him away. "Lance!" he cries, but Lance doesn't hear him. Joey's hands start to rub along Lance's arms, his chest, and Lance pulls him closer. "Lance!" Justin calls again, but he can't even hear himself ...

Justin sat up, blinking in the darkness surrounding him, his breath ragged. His heart pounded in his chest, and he ran a shaky hand across his sweaty brow. A dream, he thought, pushing away the image of Joey and Lance together. He could hear rain, pounding against the windows of the hotel room with all the intensity of an oncoming train. The sheets were entangled around his legs, trapping him. Reaching out, Justin's hand closed on empty space. "Lance?" he asked softly, willing his breathing to a normal pace.

He heard a lightswitch flick off, and then quiet footsteps entered the room from the bathroom. "Lance?" he called again.

"Right here," Lance replied, slipping into the bed. His arms encircled Justin's shoulders. "What's wrong? You're shaking."

Justin leaned his head against Lance's shoulder and let Lance pull him back down. "Oh God," he whispered. "I dreamed you and Joey --"

"Shh," Lance said, his hands cool and soothing on Justin's fevered skin. "It was only a dream."

Cuddling closer, Justin fought back a sob at the memory of it. "It was so real," he said. "I was there, and he was kissing you, and you liked it ..."

"And you didn't stop him?" Lance asked. Justin could hear the smile in his voice.

"I couldn't!" he cried. "I tried but I couldn't run fast enough, I couldn't reach you ..."

Lance sighed. "Now do you think I would really let something like that happen?" he asked softly.

"No," Justin replied. He didn't -- he might not trust Joey, and he might believe that Joey would kiss Lance if given the chance, but he didn't think that Lance would let that happen. Not in a million years. He sighed. "I'm just ... I don't know what's wrong with me."

"You're stressed out, that's what's wrong with you," Lance said. "We all are, with this tour and the new album and the new video coming up. That's it."

Justin wrapped his arms around Lance and nodded. Maybe that was it. "Don't leave me," he whispered into Lance's chest.

"I'm not going anywhere," Lance replied. He hugged Justin tighter.

"Hold me," Justin said, snuggling close to Lance.

Lance laughed. "If I hold you any closer, you'll be behind me." He kissed Justin's forehead, and didn't say anything else for a long time. Justin thought perhaps Lance had fallen back to sleep. He closed his eyes and was beginning to drift himself when Lance asked, "Did he kiss good?"

"What?" Justin asked, his voice a little groggy.

"In your dream," Lance explained. "Did Joey kiss good?"

Justin shrugged in Lance's arms. "I didn't kiss him," he said.

"Well," Lance said playfully, "next time dream that you're kissing him, and let me know what he kisses like."

Justin pouted. "I don't want to dream about kissing him. I want to dream about you."

In the darkness Lance's lips brushed along Justin's nose, his cheeks, his closed eyelids, coming to rest on Justin's mouth. As his tongue parted Justin's lips, Lance said breathlessly, "You don't have to dream about kissing me."

Justin moaned sleepily as Lance pushed him back against the bed, kissing him gently. He felt Lance roll on top of him, his body heavy and comforting against his, and then Lance trailed kisses down Justin's chin and neck. Justin hugged Lance and whispered, "Lance, I'm so tired ..."

"I know," Lance replied. He licked along the curve of Justin's collarbone. "You go to sleep. I'll just kiss away all the bad dreams, okay?"

Justin nodded and closed his eyes. With Lance's arms around him, his body pressing down on his, his mouth sucking along his skin, Justin couldn't quite remember what he had been dreaming about in the first place.

All I Ever Wanted
49. Just Friends
Part 1 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

In an effort to snag a little downtime in the midst of their hectic schedule, the boys of NSync decided to spend a few carefree days at their manager's rancher just outside of Beverly Hills. It was a sprawling, secluded home, spread out on over a dozen acres of lush grasses and redwood trees, and it afforded the group a sense of privacy that had been missing in their lives as of late.

But their first day at the rancher, JC got a phone call from an old friend whose brother was in a motorcycle accident, and he left that night on the first plane back home to be with her. As Justin, Lance, and Joey watched *Blade Runner*, Chris tried calling his girlfriend, but she wasn't answering the phone. By the time they decided to hit the sack, Lance could see the worry in Chris's eyes as he stared at the telephone, willing it to ring.

As he passed behind the loveseat Chris sat in, Lance reached over and hugged his friend quickly. "She's probably out with some friends," he said, trying to cheer Chris up. "Try again in the morning. Right now you need to get some sleep."

Chris patted Lance's arm as he stood up. "Thanks," he said softly.

Lance felt Justin's hand on his shoulder, and he let Justin lead him to their room. Once inside, Justin closed the door and ran his hands around Lance's waist, pulling him close. "Do you think he'll be alright?" Lance asked, covering Justin's arms with his own.

"He'll be fine," Justin murmured into Lance's neck. "Right now he's worried but he'll call her tomorrow and everything will be okay."

Lance frowned. "I don't know," he said. "A million things could have happened. She could be hurt, she could be gone, she could've found someone else ..."

"Jeez," Justin replied, kissing Lance's neck. "You're such an optimist."

Lance shrugged out of Justin's arms and began to undress. "I just know how hard it is to keep up a long distance relationship," he said, pulling off his t-shirt.

Justin ran his hands over Lance's bare chest, his fingers rubbing Lance's nipples erect. "Which is why I'm glad you're here with me," he said. He pulled Lance close again. Lance giggled as Justin nuzzled his ear and pushed him back to the bed.

Back in the living room, Joey sat on the sofa, waiting for the VCR to finish rewinding the tape they watched. He studied Chris, sitting across the room on the loveseat with a frown on his face that creased his brow. "You okay?" Joey asked as the VCR clicked off and ejected the tape.

Chris nodded slightly. Joey stood up and stretched, reaching for the ceiling. The end of his shirt pulled free from his pants, exposing his pale stomach. Chris glanced at him and said, "I'm fine, really. Go to bed."

"You're not fine," Joey replied. He knocked Chris's leg off his knee and squeezed down beside him on the loveseat. Scooting over, Chris sighed. Joey studied him for a moment and then, in a quiet voice, said, "Lance is right. She's out with some friends, that's all."

"Then why don't I believe that?" Chris replied. He picked at the hairs on Joey's arm, smoothing them down. Beneath the gentle touch, Joey felt his blood rise, heating his skin.

Looking at Chris, he wondered how anyone could hurt someone like him. He was a great guy, one of Joey's oldest, closest friends, and Joey hated to see him like this. "What makes you say that?" he asked, his voice as soft as the touch of Chris's fingers on his arm.

Chris shrugged. "I don't know. Last time we talked, I got the feeling she didn't want to be on the phone for too long. Like she was rushing me to hang up. Like she had something else she'd rather be doing."

"It's the tour," Joey said. "I'm sure of it. We're all a little stressed right now. When you get her on the phone, why don't you invite her over here for the next few days? Spend some time alone, just the two of you?"

"I don't know," Chris replied. He raised his eyes to meet Joey's frank gaze, and there was something behind the sadness in his eyes that made Joey's pulse quicken. Damn, he thought, his gaze lingering over Chris's face. Am I that lonely? Lonely enough to see something more than gratitude in the eyes of a friend who needed comforting?

Joey draped his arm over the back of the loveseat. Leaning close to Chris, Joey looked into his brown eyes and said, "There are hundreds of girls who would give anything to be with you, man. Dani's crazy if she doesn't want you. Crazy and stupid."

Chris looked up at him with large, damp eyes. His mouth twitched as if he wanted to say something, but wasn't sure what it was. Beside him, the phone rang. His eyes widened, and then he turned away and picked up the receiver. "Hello?" he asked, hopeful. After a moment, he said, "Oh. Hi, JC," and Joey ran both hands down his face, pulling it in frustration at the disappointment in Chris's voice. He prayed Chris heard from Dani soon.

The next day found Justin, Lance, and Joey crowded around the door to Chris's room. Justin had his back against the wall, one arm around Lance's waist, his hand resting on Lance's stomach. Lance stood on one side of the door, his shoulder leaning against Justin's, and Joey stood across from him, his head down, listening through the closed door. It was late in the afternoon -- all day long Chris had tried calling Dani, with no luck. Finally she called back about an hour ago, and after the first hello Chris retreated to his room, shutting the door behind him. His friends let him go until they heard shouting -- since then they stood outside, listening to Chris rant and rave through the door, waiting for him to come out.

"Fuck that!" they heard inside the room, and something hard hit the door. Lance jumped back slightly but Joey grabbed the doorknob and threw the door open. "What's going on?" he asked, kicking the phone aside as he entered the room. Lance stood behind him in the doorway, and Justin peeked around the corner.

Chris sat on the edge of his bed, his head in his hands. "Fuck," he said softly, sniffing. He didn't look up as Joey placed a hand on his shoulder and squatted in front of him. "Do you know where she's been?" he asked, his voice hard. "All night long, while I sat here worrying about her? Losing sleep over her? Do you even know where she's been?"

"Where?" Joey asked, his voice gentle. He rubbed Chris's shoulder, trembling slightly beneath his hand.

But Chris shrugged him off and shook his head. Without warning, he picked up the clock from the bedside table and threw it at the door. Justin pulled Lance out of the way as the clock shattered on the doorjamb, falling in pieces to the floor. Joey reached for him again. "Where was she?" he asked, trying to control the situation.

"Fuck," Chris said again. He twisted out of Joey's grasp and pushed past Lance on his way out of the room. Snarling, he lashed out and kicked the wall, his shoe leaving a dark smudge behind. Then Justin grabbed his arm, pulling him back. "Chris, calm down," he said, but Chris shrugged him off with surprising strength. He hurried down the hall, and as Joey came out of Chris's room, they heard the front door slam shut.

"Shit," Joey said. Crossing his arms, he held his head in his hand and sighed. "She fucked him over. That bitch."

"You don't know that," Lance replied, but the look in his eyes said he thought the same. "Maybe they just had a fight."

Justin shook his head. "I've never seen him this mad," he said. "She cheated on him, no doubt about it."

Lance frowned. "Maybe we should go after him."

But Joey shook his head. "No, leave him alone. He'll come back when he's ready to talk about it. Right now he just needs to be by himself."

Hours passed, but Chris didn't return. After a late dinner Joey fell asleep on the couch in the living room, and Justin and Lance retreated to their room to watch television. They kept the door open and the volume low, to hear when Chris came in. Justin sat back against the head of the bed, his legs stretched out around Lance, leaning against Justin's chest. Justin held Lance tight, his arms folded under Lance's chin. Lance's fingers trailed through the downy hair on Justin's thighs, and his back pressed heavily on Justin's crotch, where a slight erection was starting to ache. When the late news went off and Lance began flipping through the channels, looking for something other than infomercials to watch, Justin let his hands drift down Lance's stomach to unbutton his jeans. Lance clicked the television off and closed his eyes as Justin's hand slipped into Lance's pants, his fingers brushing the tip of Lance's dick.

Beside them, the phone rang. Lance reached for it. "Hello?" Justin's

hands drifted lower, pushing down the zipper of Lance's jeans as they cradled Lance's balls through his briefs.

"Yeah," a rough voice said over the phone line, "this is Rudy. At Eddie's Bar and Grill. We got a friend of yours here, needs a ride home."

Lance sat up quickly. Justin pulled his hands back, a questioning look on his face, as Lance turned around. "Chris?" he asked nervously. "Is he okay?"

"Jesus," Justin muttered. Lance glanced at him and then asked, "Can I talk to him?"

"Passed out," Rudy said gruffly. "Come down here and get him 'fore someone decides to take him home."

As Rudy gave Lance directions to the bar, Justin scrambled to get his shoes on. Lance hung up the phone and zipped up his jeans. "Where is he?" Justin asked.

"A bar on the other side of Beverly Hills," Lance replied. He shook his head. "I don't know how he got that far, unless he hitched a ride."

"Is he alright?" Justin waited as Lance pulled on his shoes.

Lance shrugged. "That was the bartender who called. He says Chris is passed out drunk."

"Shit," Justin said softly. They left the room and found Joey still asleep on the sofa. Picking up Joey's car keys from the table, Justin whispered, "We'll be right back. No use waking him."

Lance nodded. They had two cars at the rancher, Joey's Acura and JC's Corvette. If Chris was passed out, he could stretch out on the back seat of the Acura better than he could in the Corvette. They closed the front door quietly behind them as they left the house.

All I Ever Wanted
49. Just Friends
Part 2 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

Eddie's Bar and Grill was in a seedy part of town. When Justin pushed open the door, loud heavy metal music and the smell of stale alcohol wafted out. Lance wrinkled his nose and followed Justin inside. They looked around the dingy bar -- they were the only people not wearing chains or black leather or motorcycle jackets. They saw Chris slumped over the bar, but when they started towards him, a large woman of Amazon proportions stepped in their way. "You're too young to be here," she said, her voice carrying across the bar, causing a few bikers to turn in their direction. "Go back home."

"A guy named Rudy called us," Lance said. He pointed at Chris. "We came for our friend."

The woman's features softened. "The kid who's girl screwed around on him?" she asked. When Justin nodded, she jerked a thumb at the bar. "He's out cold. You boys need some help getting him in the car?"

"Thanks," Lance said. He and Justin headed for the bar. Chris was stretched out over the counter, leaning forward dangerously on his stool, snoring softly. "Come on, Chris," Lance pleaded as he pushed his friend upright. Chris fell back against Justin, who slid his hands under Chris's arms, lifting him up. Lance took Chris's feet and hefted him off the stool. Between them Chris hung like dead weight, heavy and awkward. The woman held the door for them as they staggered back out to the parking lot, and she took Chris's legs from Lance so he could unlock the car door. "Just set him in the back," he said.

Justin climbed into the back seat and eased Chris down. Then he crawled out and shut the door gently. "Thank you," he said to the woman as he took the car keys from Lance.

"No problem," she said. "Take care of him."

"We will." Lance climbed into the passenger side as Justin started the car. On the way home Lance let his mind drift as he watched the trees rush by in the darkness. The radio was barely audible, but the quiet sound of Justin's humming filled the car and Lance wanted to get home and back into bed, Justin in his arms. He hoped Chris would be alright.

After an hour of driving, Lance asked, "Are we lost?" He didn't think it took them this long to get to the bar.

Justin shrugged. "I missed the exit. Don't worry -- we're back on track."

Lance sighed. "Why didn't you say something?" he asked.

"There was nothing much to say," Justin admitted. "You want to drive?"

"I want to get home," Lance said.

Justin grinned. "And what do you want to do when you get there?"

Smiling, Lance reached out and set his hand on Justin's knee. He squeezed it gently, his skin warm beneath Lance's hand. The hem of his shorts tickled Lance's wrist, and he felt Justin shift lower in his seat, causing his hand to slide up just slightly. "You know what I want to do," he whispered.

"No, I don't," Justin said, "but I can guess." He took one hand off the steering wheel and covered Lance's hand on his leg. He slipped his fingers under Lance's and glanced in the rearview mirror. "Chris still asleep?"

Lance turned around. Chris had curled into himself in the back seat, and Lance could hear his steady breathing. "Yeah," Lance said softly. He glanced at Justin, a wicked grin on his face, as he eased his hand up Justin's thigh. When his fingers brushed against Justin's crotch, Justin groaned slightly. "You sure?" he asked, his voice a little breathless.

In reply, Lance tugged down the zipper on Justin's shorts. He reached in and cupped Justin's dick in his hand, kneading it hard. Then he slipped it out of Justin's boxers until he held the stiff length in his hand. He massaged the swollen tip of Justin's penis with his thumb as Justin thrust into his grip, a small moan escaping him. "Sshh," Lance said, pulling his seat belt out a little to let him lean his head into Justin's lap.

"Lance, no," Justin said, but when Lance's lips closed over his hard cock, Justin's hand curled into Lance's hair, holding him down. Lance ran his tongue along Justin's dick, his teeth pressing gently against his lips as he took Justin into his mouth. Justin sank further into his seat, spreading his legs as Lance pulled up, his hand rubbing Justin's balls. His tongue traced the tip of Justin's dick before trailing down his hard length to lick at the soft skin of his balls. Justin moaned louder, his dick wet against Lance's cheek as Lance wrapped his lips around the tender base of the thick shaft.

Suddenly a siren wailed behind them. Glancing up, Lance saw flashing lights reflected off the window. "Shit," he said, sitting up. He tucked Justin's penis back into his shorts, zipping them up. "What's he want?"

Justin eased his foot off the gas. "My fault," he said as he slowed and pulled to the side of the road.

"How fast were you going?" Lance asked, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

Justin shrugged. "I'm not sure," he admitted. The headlights from the patrol car lit up the night. He watched the state trooper approach, keeping both hands on the steering wheel.

"Note to self," Lance said as Justin rolled down the window, "no more blowjobs in moving vehicles for you."

Justin smiled at the state trooper. "Hello, officer," he said.

The trooper leaned into the car, taking in Lance and Chris with one

practiced glance. Turning his attention to Justin, he said, "License and registration, please."

Lance dug through the glove compartment as Justin handed the trooper his license. Just when he thought Joey didn't have the registration in the car, he found it, hidden inside a stack of McDonald's napkins. He handed it to Justin, who gave it to the trooper. The trooper took one look at it and then looked at Lance. "Are you Mr. Fatone?"

Lance shook his head. "No."

"Is he?" The trooper nodded to Chris in the back seat.

"No," Justin said.

"Then who's Mr. Fatone?" The trooper leaned on the car door heavily.

Justin sighed. "Our friend. He's back at the house. It's his car."

"What's wrong with him?" the trooper asked, nodding at Chris again.

Lance glanced in the back seat. "He's drunk," he said softly. This doesn't look good, he thought as the trooper asked Justin to step out of the car.

A few hours later, the phone back at the rancher began to ring insistently, jarring Joey awake. He reached out and knocked the cordless off the table. It rattled to the wooden floor and he blinked in the sudden light, sleepy, confused. The living room, he thought, getting his bearings. From the floor the phone continued to ring, the shrill noise piercing the silence draped over the house. Why wasn't anyone answering? Where was everybody?

Fumbling with the receiver, he clicked the talk button and mumbled, "Hello?"

A cool, impersonal voice asked, "Mr. Fatone?"

Joey recognized the bored professional tone immediately and sat up. "Yes?" he asked, trying to reign in the terror in his voice.

The man continued. "Mr. Fatone, this is the Beverly Hills Police --"

"Jesus," he said, closing his eyes. He ran a hand down his face, smoothing his close-cropped beard. "Is this about Chris? Is he alright?"

"Mr. Fatone, we have your car in our possession --"

"My car?" Joey asked, confused. Chris hadn't taken one of the cars. Unless -- "Oh my God, Lance? What's happened?"

"Can you come down here to the precinct?" the policeman asked.

Joey nodded. "I'll be right there." Hanging up the phone, he rooted through his pockets, looking for the keys to the Corvette. When he couldn't find them, he dug under the sofa cushions, panicking until his fingers brushed against the warm metal and he sighed in relief. Grabbing the keys, he headed out the front door, his mind in a whirl.

At the police station, he was led back to the holding cell where Justin, Lance, and Chris sat together on a hard wooden bench. Seeing Joey, Lance stood up and gripped the bars in his hands. "Joey," he sighed, "thank God."

"What happened?" Joey asked as the officer with him unlocked the cell. He glanced at Chris, who stared at the ground and refused to meet his eyes.

Justin stood up and stretched. "We came to pick Chris up and got stopped for speeding." He glared at the officer as he left the cell, Lance right behind him. "Chris was drunk and the car wasn't ours, so they pulled us in."

"Speeding?" Joey asked. He noticed the light blush creeping into Lance's cheeks and decided to change the subject. Turning to Chris, still sitting inside the cell, he asked, "Are you okay?"

"Just dandy," Chris said, dispirited.

The officer put a hand on her hip. "Come on, son," she drawled. "Bond's posted. You're free to go."

When it didn't look like Chris was going to move, Joey entered the cell. Taking Chris's arm in his hands, he pulled his friend to his feet. "Come on," he said softly. "I'll take you home."

Chris leaned against Joey. "I'm sorry, man," he whispered.

"It's okay," Joey replied, leading him out of the cell. Justin and Lance were already at the counter, picking up their belongings. Lance glanced at them and then scooped Chris's things up, as well. He handed them to Joey. "Take my car," Joey said. He glanced at Justin. "Drive slow. I'll follow you guys in the vette."

Lance nodded. "Joey," he started, but Joey shook his head.

"It's late, Lance," he said, sighing. "We'll talk about it in the morning, okay?"

Justin touched Lance's shoulder, and Lance nodded again. Joey led Chris out to the parking lot and helped him into the Corvette. On the way home Chris sat silent, staring out the window, and Joey let him wallow in his own thoughts. He wanted to know what had happened -- where Chris ended up at, why Justin didn't wake him when they left, what they were doing when the cop pulled them over. But one look at Chris's sad eyes and tight lips, and Joey didn't have the heart to grill him for answers. When they pulled into the driveway behind the Acura, Joey cut the engine off and watched Justin and Lance go inside the house. In the darkness he asked softly, "Are you going to be okay?"

Chris nodded. "Yeah," he said, his voice low. As Joey opened his door, Chris looked up at him with wide, trembling eyes and asked, "Are you mad?"

Joey shook his head. He helped Chris inside the house, locking the door behind them. The hallway leading to the bedrooms was dark, and the door to Justin and Lance's room was already closed. Joey stopped in

front of Chris's door and stepped back. Chris leaned against the wall and looked at Joey with a hooded expression. "Joey," he said, his voice thick. He grabbed Joey's sweater in both hands and pulled him close.

"Chris, you're drunk," Joey said. He placed his hands against the wall, on either side of Chris's head, to steady himself.

Chris looked up at him. "Not anymore," he whispered. He searched Joey's face, his gaze lingering on Joey's mouth.

Joey licked his lips. Through his sweater he felt Chris's hands bunched into fists so close to his nipples that they already stood erect from the knitted yarn brushing against them. Chris pulled gently, and only Joey's hands on the wall kept him from falling into him. When Chris moved his leg against Joey's crotch, Joey felt a tightening in his groin and fear gripped him. With Chris looking at him like that, Joey knew he wouldn't be able to stop himself if things went any further.

And then Chris reached up and kissed Joey, his lips warm and soft on Joey's own. He moaned against Joey's mouth, and Joey found himself pressing against Chris's body, his hands cradling Chris's head, running through his hair. Then Chris slipped his tongue between Joey's lips, and Joey tasted a bitter sweetness that reminded him of Jack Daniels and strawberries.

Pulling back, Joey took a shuddery breath and whispered, "Chris, we can't --"

"Why not?" Chris asked. "Justin and Lance can. Why can't we?"

Joey sighed. "Because ..." His voice trailed off. Why couldn't they? "Because you're with Dani," he said. It was a lame excuse, he knew, but it was the only one he had.

"She's not here," Chris said, the anger in him flaring to life again. "And I want someone to hold me tonight. Someone to kiss me, someone to love me." His eyes softened. "Someone like you."

"Chris --" Joey sighed. How could he possibly hope to say no to that?

Chris hurried on. "I know you like Lance. And I love Dani, I really do, even though right now I don't like her all that much. But we've been friends for so long, and tonight I just want you to be with me. No one needs to know."

Joey ran a finger down Chris's cheek. The thought of sleeping with his arms around someone, anyone, was intoxicating. "When I was in high school," he said softly, "I had this friend. We promised each other if there was ever a night one of us got lonely, we could call the other and presto! Instant date. We'd cuddle and make out and feel each other up -- you know how kids are -- and the next day it'd be like nothing happened. We were just friends again, that's it." Joey watched as his hand cradled Chris's chin. "Do you think we can still be just friends if I kiss you and hold you tonight?"

"I'd like to try," Chris whispered. He pulled Joey into him again, and Joey let himself fall into Chris's kisses. Wrapping his arms around Chris,

Joey promised he wouldn't let this night change anything between them.
He wasn't going to lose Chris's friendship just because he couldn't say no.

All I Ever Wanted
50. Afternoon by the Pool
by NSyncGrrl

Justin dropped his grocery bags in the foyer and closed the front door behind him. They were staying at their manager's house in Beverly Hills for a few days, and from the silence hanging in the air, he knew he was alone. JC had gone back home but was expected to return tomorrow, and Chris drove down to LA to be with his girlfriend, despite a fight they had over the phone earlier in the week. Joey and Justin went to the mall, but somewhere along the way Joey ran into someone he knew and told Justin to go home without him. Justin had tried to get Lance to go with them but he wanted to be lazy today, he said, and planned on nothing more than relaxing by the pool.

Walking over to the window that looked out on the deck, Justin saw Lance getting out of the pool. His body glistened wetly in the sun, sparkles of water winking from his chest, his legs, his hair. He wore a tight Speedo bikini that left nothing to the imagination -- the lycra hugged every curve of Lance's butt, outlined every bulge of his groin. Justin's eyes widened as Lance stretched, reaching slowly for the sky, his muscles flexing, lithe and strong. Justin bit his knuckle and moaned at the sight. Suddenly he was glad the others were gone, and they had the house all to themselves.

Quickly Justin pulled his shirt off over his head and stepped out of his jeans. He ran back to their bedroom, leaving his clothes strewn about where they fell. On the bed he saw a small shopping bag with Fins written on it -- a surf shop they found one day while cruising downtown. He hadn't thought Lance bought anything then, but that must have been where he bought the Speedos.

And there was another pair still left in the bag.

Justin tugged them on, the lycra painfully tight against his already swollen erection, but he didn't think he'd be wearing them for long. Then he hurried out to the deck, where Lance was lying on his back on a large lounge chair. He looked up as Justin approached and smiled, his gaze lingering on Justin's crotch. "Do you like them?" he asked.

Justin sat down on the edge of the chair and ran a hand down Lance's back. "I love them," he said. "Especially the way they show off your perfectly round ass."

"I was talking about yours," Lance replied. He rolled over and patted the space beside him on the chair.

Justin laid down on his stomach, his head in his hands, and looked up at Lance. He could feel the dampness of Lance's skin so close to his, and the smell of chlorine hung faintly in the air. When Lance reached out and ran a hand through Justin's curls, Justin looked at him hungrily. "I like them but I want to take them off."

Lance grinned. "What will Joey say?"

Justin shrugged. "I don't know. He's not here."

"He's not?" Lance asked, raising an eyebrow. Then he leaned down and kissed Justin, his lips lingering on Justin's. "If he's not here," he said, his voice husky, "then what's stopping you?"

"Only if you take yours off too," Justin said coyly. He rolled on his side and trailed a hand down Lance's chest.

He should've noticed the gleam in Lance's eye, but he was too busy gazing at Lance's smooth skin beneath his hand. "I'm sunbathing," Lance said in an off-hand manner, as if he didn't have the time to fool around. He rolled over on his stomach again, setting his head on his arms and closing his eyes. "Maybe in a little while."

Justin frowned. Lance knew how to frustrate him so easily! He ran a hand down Lance's back again, sure he was only joking. "Why are you messing with me?" he pouted.

"Because you're fun to mess with," Lance replied, a faint smile on his lips. Justin rolled over on top of Lance, pressing him against the chair, his chest flat against Lance's hot, wet back. "Justin, you're blocking my sun."

He ground his hips against Lance's, knowing his hard erection would be felt through the thin Speedos they both wore. When Lance didn't respond, he ran his hands under Lance's waist, tickling him. Lance laughed and tried to shake Justin off, but Justin held on, his hands slipping lower until he felt Lance's own erection. Squeezing gently, Justin said, "Why play me like this? You're as hard as I am!"

"Because I like playing with you," Lance said, grinning. Laying back down, he suggested, "Since you're up there, why not put lotion on my back?"

"No," Justin said, pouting. He sat up on Lance's butt, his hands on Lance's back. "How would you like it if I started playing with you?"

Lance shrugged, the muscles in his back moving like water beneath his skin, and Justin reached for the bottle of suntan lotion lying beside the chair. As he squirted some of the lotion into his hand, Lance said, "I'm just teasing you, Justin. If you don't want me to, just tell me and I'll stop."

"Why do you do it?" Justin asked, rubbing his hands together. Between them the lotion was warm and oily and smelled like coconuts.

Lance sighed. "Because I can," he admitted. "Because you're so damn cute when you're frustrated, and it turns me on when you pout."

Justin placed his hands on Lance's shoulders, his fingers kneading the trim muscles gently, working the lotion into Lance's skin. Beneath him, Lance moaned loudly. The sound made Justin's groin ache. As he massaged Lance's back, his hands working the lotion in, he asked softly, "What if I don't want to play anymore?"

"Right now?" Lance asked. "Or ever?"

"Right now," Justin replied. He stood up and pulled off his Speedos, tossing them aside. Then he sat back down, his thick erection stretched out along Lance's butt. He squirted the lotion onto Lance's lower back and rubbed it in, his hands slipping just beneath Lance's Speedos, working them down.

"Ouch," Lance said, shifting beneath him. "Justin, that hurts. You're cutting off my circulation down there."

"Then sit up for a minute," Justin said, sitting back. Lance rolled onto his side and tugged the Speedos down over his dick, sighing in relief as the material released his throbbing erection. Justin helped him roll the tight lycra down over his balls and then said, "Okay, roll back."

Lance positioned his dick along his lower stomach as he laid back down. Justin pulled the Speedos off completely and threw them to the ground. Spreading Lance's legs apart slightly, Justin sat down on his thighs and poured lotion over Lance's butt. With strong hands Justin worked the lotion into Lance's skin, kneading his ass with both hands, rubbing down between his legs, along his balls, slipping inside Lance easily. Lance groaned Justin's name softly as Justin's fingers massaged him, widening him gently.

Then Justin squirted the rest of the lotion onto his other hand and rubbed it along his aching cock. His fingers held Lance open as he guided his dick inside. As he eased his full length in, his hands held Lance's hips, raising him up against Justin.

Lance arched his back as Justin thrust into him, slowly at first, savoring the tight feel of Lance's ass around his throbbing cock. Justin slid his hands beneath Lance, gripping his hard erection. As he thrust into Lance, he squeezed Lance's cock, running one hand up and down the thick length as the other hand massaged his balls. Lance pushed up onto his hands, rocking back into Justin as he thrust into Justin's hands. Justin pushed harder, faster, moaning as he thrust into Lance. When he came, he pulled Lance tight against him, his orgasm tearing through him as he came inside Lance. As he pulled out, Lance came in his hand. They collapsed on the chair, Justin falling down on top of Lance, exhausted.

After a few minutes, their ragged breathing evened out, and Lance said, "You're blocking my sun."

Justin rolled off of him, pressing his body against Lance's as he hugged him close. He ran his hands under Lance's chest, his fingers finding Lance's nipples, and he tweaked them gently. "Stop being so contrary," Justin whispered into Lance's ear.

Lance turned his head to face him. Smiling, he said, "I'm just playing with you."

Kissing Lance's forehead, Justin said, "I don't want to play right now. I want to hold you and kiss you and love you and not play any games."

Lance rolled into Justin's arms. Snuggling his head against Justin's chest, he pulled Justin to him and sighed. He closed his eyes as Justin's lips kissed his cheeks, his eyelids, his nose. When Lance leaned up to kiss

Justin, though, Justin pulled away slightly. Lance frowned. "I thought you said no more games."

Justin brushed his lips against Lance's, his tongue parting them as he licked into Lance's mouth. He pressed Lance back against the chair, their bodies rubbing together in the hot afternoon sun. "No more games," he promised, losing himself in Lance's kisses.

All I Ever Wanted
51. Can I Have This Dance?
by NSyncGrrl

Justin watched Joey fumble through his dance steps and frowned. They had been in the studio since early this morning, working on numbers for the new video, and when the choreographer wanted to work with just Lance and Joey, going over their moves, Justin, JC, and Chris retreated to the sidelines, sitting on the short flight of stairs leading to the door to watch their friends. But Joey kept getting his feet tangled up, and when that happened he usually tripped and fell against Lance, laughing at his own clumsiness. For the last fifteen minutes, though, Justin thought maybe Joey was faking the whole thing just to get his hands on Lance -- Justin noticed the way Joey's hands slipped lower and lower on Lance's back when he stumbled against him, and it was all Justin could do not to say something. Lance smiled and encouraged Joey to keep trying, and Justin sighed in frustration. Couldn't he see through Joey's little charade? Didn't he know Joey was just using this as an excuse to touch him?

When the dance moves turned them around to face the others, Lance smiled brightly at Justin. Justin forced a grin, eyeing Joey distrustfully as he tripped again and collided with Lance. They fell to the floor in a heap of arms and legs and giggles, Joey on top of Lance. Justin started to rise but Chris put a hand on his arm, pulling him back. "Leave them alone," he said softly.

Justin glared at him as he sat back down. "This is stupid," he said, his voice tight.

Chris shrugged. "Joey's just a little off today, that's all. No one got hurt."

On the floor Lance was trying to push Joey off of him, but he was too weak from laughing and was having a hard time getting out from under his friend. Justin frowned and said nothing. He didn't think Chris was right but he didn't want to make a scene, not here, with the choreographer and cameramen and everyone else around.

"Joey, get up," Lance said, a little breathless. Joey grinned down at him, pinning him to the floor. Lance stopped laughing and, seeing something in Joey's eyes that frightened him, pushed Joey up. "Joey, get off. Now."

Joey sat back as Lance crawled out from under him. They both glanced over at Justin, jealousy and anger written all over his face, and then Lance stood up and helped Joey to his feet. Brushing off his butt, Lance called, "Can we take a break?"

The choreographer nodded. "Fifteen minutes," she said. JC and Chris stood up, stretching, and then climbed up the stairs and out the door, heading for the snack room. Joey followed them, taking the steps two at a time and avoiding Justin's gaze as he passed. Justin fought the urge to say something, anything, to put Joey in his place, and then Lance was

there, standing in front of him. Crossing his arms, Lance rested them on Justin's knees and smiled. "Hey there, dear heart," he said softly.

Justin ran a finger along the back of Lance's hand. "He was pretending. You know that, right?" he asked. Lance sighed. Closing his eyes, he nodded. "Jesus, Lance, why do you encourage him?"

"What am I supposed to do?" Lance countered, looking at Justin. His green eyes studied Justin's face, set in anger. "Get mad at him? What good will that do? It wasn't my idea to have just the two of us dance. Take that up with the choreographer."

"Maybe I will," Justin said bitterly.

Lance looked at him a moment, and then laughed. "Yeah, I can see it now. Um, can you keep Joey away from Lance? I don't like him hitting on my boyfriend."

Justin smiled. It did sound childish. "Why can't I dance with you instead?" he asked.

Lance sighed. "Hello? You're the lead on this song. Joey and I are in the background during the video -- our moves are different from yours."

"I know," Justin said, pouting. He picked at the sleeve of Lance's shirt and frowned. "I still want to dance with you."

"Then come on," Lance said, standing up. He took Justin's hand and pulled him to his feet. Then he led the way to one of their dressing rooms, a small closet-like room with nothing more than a mirror, a chair, and a CD player inside. Lance checked out the CD player as Justin closed the door behind them, then he pressed the play button. The opening chords of Madonna's "Crazy for You" filled the tiny room, and Lance turned the volume up loud. Turning to Justin, he held his hand out, his eyebrow raised in an unspoken question.

Justin blushed lightly and grinned, looking at his feet as he took Lance's hand. Then he pulled Lance close, folding their hands against his chest as he wrapped his arm around Lance's waist. Lance ran his other hand up Justin's arm until it rested on his shoulder, and they started to sway in time with the music. Justin set his forehead against Lance's and stared into Lance's wide, green eyes. Looking back at him, Lance smiled and started singing softly. "I see you through the smoky air. Can't you feel the weight of my stare? You're so close but still a world away."

Justin's hips bumped against Lance's as they danced. The music washed over them, their hearts beating in rhythm with the song, and they both sang along. "I'm crazy for you. Touch me once and you'll know it's true. I never wanted anyone like this, it's all brand new. You'll feel it in my kiss. I'm crazy for you."

Leaning down, Justin let his lips brush against Lance's cheek. In the small room their bodies swayed with the music, and Justin ran his hand up Lance's back, pulling him closer. His other hand held Lance's tightly. Resting his chin on Lance's shoulder, he sang in a low whisper, his words tickling Lance's ear. "Eye to eye we need no words at all. Slowly now we begin to move. Every breath I'm deeper into you. Soon we two are

standing still in time." He felt Lance's heart beat against his chest, Lance's breath warm his neck.

As the music faded, Justin released Lance's hand and hugged him tight, his head buried in Lance's neck. Lance sighed against him and when the next song started, they slowly danced to a stop. Justin kissed Lance's neck, his lips soft and gentle against Lance's skin. "There," Lance said, his voice low. "Now we danced. I don't think the choreographer could work that into the video."

Justin laughed. "I'd like to try it," he replied, kissing his way up Lance's neck and chin until his lips pressed against Lance's own.

"There'd be a lot of unhappy girls all over the world," Lance replied, kissing Justin back.

Justin smiled. "Not to mention Joey," he said.

Sighing, Lance said, "Stop worrying about him. I'm not."

Justin leaned against Lance, his tongue delving inside Lance's mouth, probing gently. "Let's dance again," he whispered. He rubbed his hips into Lance's, hoping Lance got the message.

Someone knocked on the dressing room door. "Your fifteen are up," the choreographer called. "Turn that music off and get back out here."

Lance sighed. "There goes our dance," he said, smiling.

"Later, then," Justin suggested, kissing Lance once more before turning off the CD player.

"Later," Lance promised. "We'll dance all night long."

Running a hand down Lance's arm, Justin grinned wickedly. "Well, eventually I'll want to do something else."

Lance laughed. "We still have a video to shoot," he replied, opening the door. "Let's get through that first."

Justin followed him out into the studio where the others were already gathered, the memory of Lance's body against his still etched into his skin.

All I Ever Wanted
52. Meet and Greet
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sat down between Justin and Joey at the long table already set up at one end of the conference hall. On the other side of Justin, Chris and JC took their seats, as well. Glancing at his watch, Lance noticed they had five minutes until the security guards opened the doors and let the fans crowding the hall outside into the room. Lance always looked forward to these "Meet and Greets," when he got to meet the fans and talk to them face to face, but he had woken up in a weird mood and just wanted to get Justin alone. His arms ached to hold Justin, and when they were close enough he managed to touch him every chance he got. He didn't know what had come over him but today he couldn't get enough of Justin. And it wasn't a good day to feel this way -- after this Meet and Greet they had to rush over to the MTV studios for a scheduled appearance, and then they had to practice for their show tonight. It would be quite a long time until Lance managed to get Justin to himself. He sighed. Picking up a marker from the table, he began doodling on the tablecloth in front of him.

Beside him Justin was talking with Chris and JC. On his other side, Joey sat slumped over the table, his head in his hands, his eyes closed, trying to catch a few more minutes of sleep before the crowds came in. Lance watched Justin's profile as he talked, his face turned away from Lance slightly. He studied the faint scruff along Justin's chin, the sharp curve of Justin's jaw, the way his lips slipped easily back from his teeth when he grinned. A stray eyelash rested on Justin's cheek, and Lance reached up to brush it away. Justin blinked as Lance's fingers touched his skin softly, and then he smiled at Lance quickly before turning back to the others.

Lance sighed. He traced his fingers along the tablecloth, smoothing it out. When Justin smiled, it ignited his blood and lit up his whole day. He wanted to say something to Justin to make him smile like that again. He wanted Justin to turn around and talk to him, to only him, but that was mean and selfish and God, if he could only have two minutes of Justin's attention, his full attention, focused only on him, then he would be happy for the rest of the day!

Picking up a red marker from the center of the table, Lance folded his arm around Justin's until he held Justin's hand palm up in his. Justin glanced at him, but then Chris said something that made Justin laugh, and he turned away again. Slowly Lance ran his fingers down each one of Justin's. Beneath his gentle touch, Justin curled his fingers over Lance's, holding them tight. His hand was warm and soft in Lance's.

With the red marker in hand, Lance bent over Justin's hand, turning slightly so Justin wouldn't be able to see what he was doing if he happened to look over. The marker was a fine tip felt pen, one they would use for signing autographs -- it wouldn't smear or run, and it dried instantly. Very carefully, Lance drew a small heart on Justin's palm, just below his thumb. With short, even strokes of the marker he colored in the

heart. Then he picked up a black marker and outlined the heart, pulling Justin's skin taut with one finger and blowing on the ink to help it dry.

"What are you doing?" Justin asked, leaning over Lance's shoulder.

Lance glanced up and noticed the security guards heading for the doors. In a few seconds the room would be flooded with fans, and he wouldn't even be able to talk to Justin for the next two hours or so. Releasing Justin's hand, Lance put the markers back down and smiled as Justin looked at the heart drawn in his palm. "There you go," Lance said.

Justin looked up at him with wide, soft eyes, and smiled. He took Lance's hand in his and kissed the delicate web of skin between Lance's thumb and forefinger. "It's beautiful," he whispered.

Lance blushed slightly. "It's just a heart," he replied.

"It's your heart," Justin said. "You drew it for me. I'm not going to wash it off ever."

As the first fans entered the room, rushing for their table, Lance said, "Whenever you look at it, remember that I can't wait until this day is over and we can be together. Remember that I'm thinking of you."

Justin smiled again. "I won't forget it." Then people crowded around their table, and they turned to their fans, smiling, their thoughts on each other.

All I Ever Wanted
53. In the Studio
Part 1 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

It was still very early, but Justin and JC wanted to get started on the next album and were already in the studio before the sun came up. Justin sat at a small card table in the back of the recording studio, reading over some music JC wrote the night before. He hummed along under his breath, listening to the rhythms as his mind worked on putting words to the notes. As the door opened, he looked up and saw JC with a large McDonald's bag in one hand, two cups of orange juice in the other. Smiling, Justin motioned to the paper in front of him and said, "This has a good beat to it. What kind of song are you going for?"

Setting the bag and drinks down on the table, JC shrugged. "I'm not quite sure. What does it say to you?" He opened the bag and handed Justin a breakfast sandwich.

Justin tore open the yellow paper and bit into the sandwich. Chewing thoughtfully, he suggested, "Well, it's kinda slow. A love song? Something along the lines of loving you forever, maybe."

JC rolled his eyes. "There are a million songs out there about that," he said, taking a seat across from Justin and digging into his own sandwich. "Why does it always have to be a love song with you anymore?"

"Maybe because I'm in love," Justin countered.

An uneasy tension filled the air, and Justin felt JC's steady gaze on his face but he didn't look up. There, he thought. I've said it. Since he and Lance had started their relationship, neither of them had ever said anything to the others. They assumed their friends already knew what was going on between them. Well, they told Joey, for all the good it did -- he still flirted with Lance, though admittedly not as much as he used to. Lance said they should tell everyone, just to get it out in the open, but with the tour and now the new album, they hadn't had the time. And they shared the same room at night -- there was no way the others could miss that.

But JC was one of Justin's oldest friends. They were like brothers -- he had known JC forever. And maybe a part of him was afraid of what the others really thought about him and Lance being together, and that's why he never mentioned it before. They were discreet -- around the others or in public, they didn't kiss or get overly mushy. Maybe Justin had hoped the others would just know and accept them without his having to actually say anything.

And now he had said something. He waited for JC's reply. When it came, it was soft and not exactly what Justin expected, but kind of what he had hoped for. "So," JC said, and Justin raised his eyes to look at him. "Maybe you want to talk about it?"

Justin shrugged. "There's not much to talk about," he admitted. "You know that Lance and I ..." He trailed off, unsure of what to say.

"I'm not blind," JC replied. "I saw the way you two looked at each other way before either of you noticed. I was just surprised it took you so long to hook up with him."

"Well," Justin said, picking at his sandwich, "it's not easy telling one of your best friends that you want to be something more, you know?"

JC nodded. "So what's up between you two now?" he asked.

"I love him," Justin said, looking down at the sheet music on the table. He picked at the edge of the paper. "I know that we can't do anything that will jeopardize the group, and that we have to be careful when we're in public, but when we're alone all I want is him." He looked up at JC. "Are you okay with this?"

JC nodded again. "I think it's totally cool that you two have found something," he said. "I just want you to realize how hard it's going to be, if you two decide to stay together. If you can stay together."

Frowning, Justin asked, "What do you mean?"

JC sighed. "Being gay isn't the most popular thing to be, even in today's society."

"I don't think of it like that," Justin said, pouting. "I love Lance -- that he's a gay is besides the point."

"That's a beautiful thought, Justin," JC replied, "but unfortunately the rest of the world doesn't see it that way. You're living in a fantasy right now, where nothing else matters. But what's going to happen when this is all over?"

Justin bit the inside of lip but didn't say anything. He knew that it would be hard when he and Lance stayed together outside the group -- he knew that they had to be careful in public, and not just because they were members of one of the hottest boy bands in the world. But the way he felt when he held Lance close, the way his blood rushed at Lance's touch, the way his heart fluttered when he looked into Lance's light eyes, these things outweighed anything else that may have kept them apart. "I love him," Justin said again, as if that explained it all. "I'm not going to think about tomorrow, or next month, or ten years from now. None of that matters when I'm with him."

JC studied him for a moment, and then nodded. "Justin, I've known you forever," he said, smiling. "And I know that you're nothing if not tenacious. If it was anyone else sitting here telling me the world can burn for all you care, I would be worried. But I know once you put your mind to something, you stick it out, no matter what. So I'm happy for you, I really am."

Justin smiled slowly. "Really?" he asked.

"Really," JC replied. He reached out and placed his hand over Justin's, squeezing gently. "Just remember if you need to talk to anyone, I'm still here. For both of you."

Justin smiled. "Thanks," he whispered. See? he thought to himself, it wasn't that hard.

All I Ever Wanted
53. In the Studio
Part 2 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stood outside of the recording studio, looking in through the small window on the door. Inside the studio Justin sat on a barstool, a huge headset covering his ears, a microphone so close to his mouth that he appeared to be kissing it. He was singing, reading words written on sheet music that rested on a stand in front of him. Behind him JC leaned over his shoulder, one finger following along with the music as Justin sang. JC's arm was draped over Justin's back, and when he turned to smile at Justin, Lance felt a tightening in his chest at how close they were, their faces just inches apart.

When Justin finished singing and smiled at JC, Lance swallowed and knocked on the door. Before anyone could answer, he opened it and walked inside. JC and Justin both looked up, and Justin smiled brightly when he saw Lance standing there. "Hey, Lance," JC said, standing up.

"Hey," Lance said, closing the door behind him. He looked at Justin, who held his hand out to Lance. "Hey, babe," Justin said.

With a glance at JC, Lance stepped forward and took Justin's hand. Justin pulled him closer, running a hand around Lance's waist. Behind him, JC cleared his throat. "I'm going to go cue the tape," he said, heading for the door. "I'll be right back."

As the door closed behind JC, Justin leaned forward and kissed Lance, his lips lingering on Lance's own. When he pulled away, Lance twisted his mouth into a half smile and asked, "What were you singing?"

"A new song JC wrote," Justin said, showing Lance the sheet music. "It's really pretty."

Lance skimmed over the music, a slight frown on his face. He couldn't get the image of JC touching Justin's shoulder out of his mind. Justin must have noticed something was bothering him, though, because he frowned and asked, "What's wrong?"

Lance shrugged. "Nothing," he said, shaking his head.

But Justin was persistent. "Tell me," he said, taking Lance's hand in both of his. He tugged on Lance's fingers gently. "Please?" he asked.

Lance sighed. "It's stupid," he said.

"What is it?" Justin asked.

Lance looked at Justin, his deep blue eyes wide, waiting. Lance sighed again and looked away. "It's JC," he whispered.

"What about him?" Justin asked, frowning.

Shrugging, Lance said, "You two are always over here. I never get to see you anymore."

Justin smiled. "We're working on the new album, honey."

Lance knew that. Every morning for the past week Justin was gone before he woke up, and he stayed at the studio until late at night. After a jam session where everyone voted on the songs for the upcoming album, JC hadn't really needed anyone else with him in the studio, not yet. But Justin was always down there, singing the songs so JC could hear the way the melodies worked and fine-tune everything before they started any actual recording. Frowning slightly, Lance asked, "Do you think maybe ..." He trailed off, unsure of what he wanted to say. "I mean, maybe you and JC ..." He closed his eyes in frustration, unable to complete the thought.

Justin ran a hand down Lance's cheek, his touch soft and gentle. "Lance, look at me." Lance obeyed, and Justin smiled. "You don't think there's something going on between me and JC, do you?" When Lance didn't reply, Justin started to laugh.

Lance pulled his hand out of Justin's and headed for the door, a scowl furrowing his brow. "So happy to amuse you, Justin, but the thought isn't the least bit funny to me."

"Lance, wait." Justin rushed past him and leaned on the door, blocking his path. He looked at Lance, sincerity written all over his face. "I didn't mean to laugh," he said, his voice low. "I wasn't laughing at you, I promise. It's just the thought of me and JC --" He started the giggle again, and Lance reached for the doorknob, pushing Justin aside. Justin held the door closed. "No, I'm sorry," he said. "Wait."

"What?" Lance asked, sighing. He hated the fact that he even suspected anything between Justin and JC, and he wanted to just crawl back to his room and hug his pillow and wait for Justin to come back later that night. Maybe by then his cheeks would stop burning and he wouldn't feel so shitty.

Justin took Lance's hand in his. "Lance, listen to me, please."

"I'm listening," Lance said, not meeting Justin's eyes.

"Lance, there is nothing between JC and me," Justin said. "Nothing. I swear."

Lance chewed on the inside of his cheek. "I believe you," he said softly. He did believe him, and he felt awful for even thinking otherwise.

"He's my oldest friend," Justin continued. "Lance, look at me." When Lance complied, Justin said, "I told him about us. I had to."

"What did he say?" Lance asked softly.

Justin kissed Lance's hand. "What could he say?" Justin countered.

Lance shrugged. Sometimes Justin's logic bewildered him. He sighed. "Justin," he began, and then, "I'm going to leave now, okay? You two finish what you're doing. I'm sorry I interrupted."

"You never interrupt me," Justin replied. He ran a hand down Lance's chest and said, "Tell you what. Give me until two to get this all squared away. I'll beg off the rest of the afternoon and we can do something -- anything you want. Okay? I know I haven't really spent a lot of time with you lately and I'm sorry, I really am. I'll make it up to you this afternoon. Okay?"

Lance smiled. "You don't have to --" he began, but Justin cut him off.

"I know I don't, but I want to." Justin kissed Lance, his lips gentle on Lance's own. Lance leaned into Justin, his lips parting slightly, hungry for more. As Justin's tongue darted out, licking Lance's lips, his teeth, someone knocked on the door behind him. Lance hugged Justin tight and saw JC looking at them through the small window in the door. He waved, and then pointed down, wanting them to open the door. "JC's back," Lance whispered.

Justin stepped aside, pulling Lance with him. As he kissed Lance's neck, JC pushed the door open. "Two o'clock," Justin said as Lance pulled away. "Pick me up then, okay?"

Lance nodded. With a smile at JC, he left the studio, Justin's sporty scent lingering around him like a cloud. He checked his watch and smiled when he saw that it was already after noon. He didn't have too much longer to wait until he had Justin all to himself.

All I Ever Wanted
53. In the Studio
Part 3 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

When Lance pulled up in front of the studio at two o'clock, Justin was already outside, standing in the shade of the building, waiting. As Lance slowed their manager's pickup truck to a stop, Justin ran over, smiling. Climbing into the cab, he scooted over next to Lance until their hips pressed warmly against each other, and he kissed Lance quickly. "So, where to, Papa Smurf?" he asked, running a hand along Lance's thigh.

Lance grinned and draped an arm around Justin's shoulders as he pulled out of the parking lot. "Nowhere in particular," he admitted. "I thought we'd drive until we found someplace quiet and secluded."

"And then?" Justin asked. His fingers drew soft lines up and down Lance's thigh, the touch sending pleasant shivers through Lance's body.

Lance shrugged. "We'll see," he said, hugging Justin close. After a few miles he asked, "So how was your day?"

Justin rested his head on Lance's shoulder. "Hmm, okay," he said. "I told JC I wasn't setting foot in the studio again until Monday morning, so I could have all weekend just to be with you."

"How sweet," Lance replied. "You know we have a charity show to do tomorrow night?"

"Oh, shit!" Justin cried. He looked at Lance. "I totally forgot about that. Well, we'll have tonight, and we'll have Sunday, okay?"

"Okay," Lance agreed. The thought of spending a lazy Sunday under the covers with Justin brought a slight smile to his lips, and his eyes scanned the surrounding landscape, looking for someplace to stop. They had driven out of the city and now trees hemmed in the road, the forests broken by long grassy fields and farmland. As they drove, they passed fewer and fewer cars, until theirs was the only one on a road that stretched away in either direction for miles.

Suddenly Lance saw the perfect spot -- a long field that reached back from the road, the remains of an abandoned winery now gone wild. Lance pulled off the road, driving into the midst of overripe grapes fermenting in the late afternoon. When they were far enough in the field that they could barely make out the road winding away through the tangled grapevines, he cut off the engine. "Here we are," he said.

Justin looked around them. The air was filled with a heady scent like rich wine, and he smiled sweetly. When he turned to say something to Lance, his words were stopped by the smoldering look in Lance's eyes. Lance pressed him against the seat, his lips finding Justin's as he kissed him gently. Justin grabbed fistfuls of Lance's shirt and laid back on the front seat of the pickup, pulling him down on top of him. Beneath him, Justin shifted his legs apart, and Lance thrust his hips against Justin's.

Pushing up on his hands, Lance smiled down at Justin. "I actually have something else planned," he said in a thick voice.

Justin pouted. Tugging on Lance's shirt, he asked, "What's wrong with this?"

Lance laughed. "We'll get back to this," he replied with another thrust of his hips. "But after that long day in the studio, aren't you just a little bit hungry?"

"For you," Justin replied, trying to pull Lance back down.

But Lance sat up, and Justin sat up with him. "Come on, horny boy," he said playfully. "I thought we'd have a picnic."

Justin's stomach rumbled at the thought of food, and he grinned sheepishly when Lance narrowed his eyes. "Maybe I'm just a little bit hungry," he said as Lance climbed out of the truck. Justin followed behind him. Lance vaulted with ease into the bed of the pickup and spread out a pair of rolled up blankets along the hard metal. When they covered the bed, Justin jumped in and kicked off his shoes, already stained with grape juice.

Lance sat down with his back against the truck's cab, his own shoes already discarded. Beside him sat a large picnic basket. Inside was a bucket of KFC chicken, still warm. The scent was heavenly, and Justin's stomach growled as he tore into the food. As he finished his second piece of chicken, Lance pulled out two cans of soda, sweating from the cold beverage inside. And there was cole slaw and potato salad and rolls -- "What else do you have in there?" Justin asked, looking for himself. He grinned as he reached into the basket and pulled out a small jar of petroleum jelly. "Now I wonder what this is for?"

A light blush rose to Lance's cheeks, and he shrugged. "I couldn't find anything else," he admitted.

Justin set it down and wiped the grease off his fingers. "It'll work," he said, packing up the food. Suddenly he was hungry for something else entirely, and he felt a sweet heaviness settle into his crotch as he watched Lance tear into another piece of chicken. Taking the chicken out of Lance's hands, Justin scooted closer and said, "Aren't you done eating yet?"

"I guess I am now," Lance replied, wiping his hands on his jeans.

"You can eat later," Justin said, pushing the picnic basket out of the way. He stood up and unbelted his jeans. With a glance around to make sure they were still alone, he pushed down his jeans and stepped out of them, tossing them aside. Then he pulled his shirt off over his head, and in just his boxers, smiled down at Lance. "Come on," he said, tugging Lance's shirt off as well.

Lance let Justin unzip his jeans, and shifted as Justin pulled them off of him. Slipping out of his underwear, Lance sat naked on the blankets, his back against the cab of the truck, his knees bent. Justin discarded his own boxers and then knelt before Lance, his hands on Lance's knees, pushing Lance's legs apart. He grinned at Lance's thick erection, standing

up from a patch of light blonde hair. Running his hands down Lance's thighs, Justin leaned over and kissed Lance's lips hungrily. Lance's hands caressed Justin's shoulders, pulling him closer.

Justin reached for the jar of jelly. Scooping out a healthy handful, he began to rub Lance's dick gently, smearing the jelly all along Lance's swollen length. Beneath his touch, Lance's cock throbbed, and Lance leaned back, moaning softly. When he was hard and solid in Justin's hands, Justin stood up and stepped over Lance's knees, his feet on either side of Lance's hips. Lance reached up and cupped Justin's butt, spreading him open as he sat down on Lance's lap. As Lance's dick eased inside of him, Justin leaned back against Lance's knees and whispered his lover's name.

Justin straddled Lance, kneeling on the blankets, as Lance thrust his entire length inside. His hands held Justin's hips, and Justin ran his own hands around Lance's back as they moved in a slow, steady rhythm. Every thrust rubbed Justin's own erection against Lance's lower belly, and Lance ran one hand down the hard length, pressing and squeezing as his own dick worked inside of Justin. Justin ran his hands over Lance's chest, teasing his nipples, tickling his stomach.

Lance thrust harder, an orgasm close. In his hand Justin was already wet, and within minutes he came, a thin spray of cum covering Lance's belly. He rode Lance as their rhythm picked up, and Lance thrust faster into Justin. Then he gripped Justin's hips tight, holding him down against him as he came. With a ragged sigh, he smiled as Justin pulled him close, his hands on Lance's face, his lips kissing Lance's cheeks and lips tenderly. He ran one hand around Lance's neck as his tongue slipped into Lance's mouth, tasting chicken and the sweet coldness of soda. Lance hugged Justin tight, his hands on Justin's bare back, warm in the afternoon sun, his softening cock still inside Justin.

As Justin nuzzled Lance's neck, Lance whispered, "I'm sorry for what I said about JC. I didn't mean --"

"Shhh," Justin said. "I've already forgotten it." He stared into Lance's eyes for so long, Lance thought he might cry from desire and need. And then Justin smiled. "You bring along anything to clean up this mess?" he asked in a lighter tone.

Reaching into the picnic basket, Lance brought out a packet of Handi-Wipes. With a wry grin, he said, "Always come prepared. That's my motto."

Wriggling his hips, Justin ground his butt against Lance's groin. "Is that why you're always hard?" he asked playfully. "Always prepared?"

Pulling Justin close again, he smiled. "For you," he whispered as Justin kissed him again.

All I Ever Wanted
54. That's What Friends Are For
by NSyncGrrl

Joey heard the television blaring in the hotel lounge as he passed by on the way to his room, and he stopped to look in. A low couch faced the wide screen TV, where Scully was telling Mulder that she didn't believe in vampires. Stepping into the lounge, Joey looked around, but there was no one else there -- the large chairs were empty, and he didn't see anyone on the couch. But when he reached over the back of the couch for the remote, sitting on the coffee table, he glanced down and saw Justin stretched out on top of Lance. Justin's hands roamed Lance's body as Lance moaned into Justin, their eyes closed, their lips locked on each other's. Joey pulled back quickly and cleared his throat.

Lance's eyes flew open, and he pushed Justin up. "Joey," he said, breathless. Justin sat back and glared at him, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Sorry," Joey said. "I didn't know ..." He pointed at the TV. "I thought --"

"It's okay," Lance said, sitting up. Justin reached for the remote and thumbed the volume down. "We didn't hear you."

Joey nodded. "I was going to cut the TV off," he explained weakly. "I didn't know you were here."

Justin tossed him the remote. "You want to watch something?" he asked, standing up.

Shaking his head, Joey said, "No. I'm going to bed." He dropped the remote onto the couch, and with a tight smile at Lance, he whispered, "Good night."

"Shit," he heard Lance whisper as he left the lounge. Joey ran a shaky hand across his face and sighed. The last thing he needed to see right now was Justin and Lance getting it on. A loneliness seeped into his bones at the thought of another night by himself. God, he thought, pressing his fingers against his eyes until he saw red spots, willing away the image of Justin and Lance together.

He stopped outside of his room. He didn't want to go inside, not tonight. The bed would be cold, the room dark, and he could feel tears pricking behind his eyes. Taking a deep breath, he looked around the brightly lit hallway, unsure. His gaze fell on Chris's room, the door closed at this hour. When Chris and Dani had a fight, Joey had been there for him -- Chris wanted someone to stay with him, to hold him and kiss him, and Joey had obliged. It felt a little strange, waking beside his friend the next morning, but Joey had liked the feel of someone in his arms, of waking up beside a warm body that responded to his touch. It was nothing more than innocent kisses, strong arms and tight hugs, and in the end they were still friends. They never mentioned it again, though some

nights Joey fought the urge to knock on Chris's door again.

Tonight he thought that might be one battle he was going to lose.

Before he could change his mind, Joey crossed the hall and knocked on Chris's door. He counted to five, and then turned away. Fuck it, he thought, angry at himself for the disappointment that coursed through his veins.

Behind him the door opened. Joey turned back to find Chris blinking in the light. "Joey?" he asked, a little sleepily.

"Go back to bed," Joey said softly. "I'm sorry."

Chris reached out and placed a hand on Joey's arm, stopping him. "No, wait," he said. Lowering his voice, he asked, "What's up?"

"Nothing," Joey said in a small voice. Sighing, he said, "Go back to bed."

Chris opened the door. "Come in," he said, stepping aside. He tugged on Joey's arm gently.

Inside the room, it was cool and dark, the only light coming from a small bedside lamp. The covers were drawn down on the bed, and Joey said, "I'm sorry I woke you up."

"It's no problem, I just laid down," Chris said, closing the door behind him. He pointed to the bed. "Wanna sit down?" Joey sat on the edge of the bed, Chris sitting down beside him. Looking at Joey, he asked, "What's wrong?"

"I'm just ..." Joey sighed. "I don't want to be alone tonight."

Chris reached out and ran a hand down Joey's arm. "Do you want to talk about it?" he asked. Joey shook his head. "Is it about Lance?"

Joey nodded. "I didn't know they were in the lounge," he whispered. "What's wrong with me? Why can't I just be happy for them? Accept the fact that he's not interested in me and move on? What the fuck's my problem?"

Slipping his hand beneath Joey's arm, Chris traced his fingers along the inside of Joey's elbow. "I know it hurts to see them together," he said. "I know it's hard when we're always on the road and you can't find someone else. Did Justin say anything ...?"

Joey shook his head. "I just left," he said.

Chris frowned. "Do you want to stay here?" he asked.

Looking at him, Joey whispered, "Can I?" Chris nodded. "Can I --" Joey sighed. "I mean, do you think maybe --"

Chris leaned forward and kissed Joey, his lips brushing against Joey's lightly, cutting off Joey's words. Joey leaned into Chris, pushing him back against the pillows as he wrapped his arms around his friend. He felt Chris's hands run around his waist, pulling him tight. His tongue slipped

between Chris's lips, tasting minty mouthwash and a sweetness that made his groin ache. When he pulled back slightly, Joey bent his head, running his cheek along Chris's thin beard, the short hair coarse against his skin. "What about Dani?" Joey asked, a little breathless.

"What about her?" Chris asked. He let Joey kiss him again, small, wet kisses trailing along his cheeks, his chin, his neck, until Joey nuzzled against his throat, his lips sucking gently. His hands cupped Joey's head, his fingers entwined in Joey's hair.

Joey shrugged against him. "I should go," he said, pushing himself up. "Who am I kidding? You've got a girlfriend. I'll just screw things up between you two."

But Chris pulled him back down. "Joey, stay," he whispered. His fingers ran down Joey's arm, leaving a path of warm fire in their wake. "We're not doing anything wrong. I mean, it's not like we're going to have sex. This is just me and you, right now. No one else will know."

Joey laughed bitterly. "And what if she said that to someone? You'd get pissed. You can't play her like this."

Beneath him Chris shrugged. "If she wants to kiss and hug girls, that's fine with me. It's only when she fools around with guys that I get ticked off."

"So because I'm a guy this is okay with you?" Joey asked, a little confused.

Chris grabbed Joey's shirt and pulled him down again. In response, he kissed Joey, his hands sliding behind Joey's neck. "Stop talking so much," he whispered against Joey's mouth. Pressing into Chris, Joey complied. At least he wouldn't be alone tonight.

All I Ever Wanted
55. In The Dark
by NSyncGrrl

In the darkness of the bus Justin stared at the dull metal wall beside his bunk. It was late -- he wasn't sure what time it was, exactly, but he could hear the others snoring softly, and Joey not so softly, and he knew he should just close his eyes and try to get some sleep. But his arms ached to hold Lance. He wanted to feel Lance pressed against him, his breath gentle on Justin's neck, his heart beating quietly against Justin's chest. His thoughts played over their last kiss, their last touch, hours ago, and he knew he should go to sleep but he just couldn't.

He wanted Lance beside him, and not in the bunk above him.

But they were on the road, the swaying of the bus beneath him almost hypnotic, and they had to sleep in the bus tonight. And even though the bunks would accommodate two people, though it would be a tight squeeze, one Justin wouldn't mind, there were the others to think about. When they found out they had to sleep on the bus, Lance had whispered, "It's just one night, babe."

"I hate it," Justin pouted. "I don't want to sleep without you."

"I hate it, too," Lance replied. Then he smiled. "But we can't do that to the others. I mean, I would feel really uncomfortable with them there, you know?"

Justin frowned. "We wouldn't do anything. I just want to hold you."

"But we have to think of them, too," Lance persisted, and in the end Justin nodded and crawled into the bottom bunk, alone, while Lance vaulted into the top bunk. Now, hours later, Justin still hadn't fallen asleep, and he didn't think he would. He sighed, a sad sound in the night. Deciding he liked the sound of it, the way it wrenched his heart and sounded oh so desperate, he sighed again, a little louder.

Above him Lance shifted on the bunk. "Hey."

Justin turned at the whispered word and saw Lance's head, peeking over the edge of his bunk. Justin grinned. Remembering Lance probably couldn't see him, he sat up and kissed Lance's forehead quickly. "Hey," he whispered back.

Lance reached out and touched Justin's nose. "You're so pathetic," he said playfully. And then, "Scoot back."

Justin obeyed, pressing himself back against the wall of the bus. Lance's head disappeared, and then he swung down onto Justin's bed, his legs folding beneath him easily. Before he could sit down completely, Justin was reaching for him, running his hands along Lance's thighs, entwining their fingers together, leaning to kiss him. Their foreheads bumped together, a solid sound in the darkness, and Justin giggled. Lance rubbed his head with one hand, covering Justin's mouth with the other.

"Keep it down," he whispered.

Beneath Lance's hand, Justin opened his lips and licked Lance's palm. Lance leaned against Justin's ear and whispered, his voice barely audible, "We have to be quiet. The others are sleeping."

"No shit," Justin whispered back, snaking his hands around Lance's neck, holding him close. He buried his nose in Lance's neck and inhaled deeply, his musky scent igniting Justin's senses, turning him on. "God, I couldn't sleep without you."

Lance smiled against Justin's ear. His hands ran down Justin's chest, tickling him slightly. "Why do you think I'm still up?" Justin began kissing Lance's neck, his lips warm against Lance's soft skin, sucking softly. Lance rubbed Justin's nipples through his shirt, and Justin moaned against him. "Sshh," Lance said. "We gotta keep it down."

Justin took one of Lance's hands in his and pushed it down his stomach onto his crotch, where his penis was already hardening. "I can't keep it down," Justin said as Lance squeezed him gently. "I want you."

Pulling back from Justin, Lance studied him in the darkness. "Do you trust me?" he asked suddenly.

Without hesitation, Justin nodded. "Then take off your shirt," Lance commanded, his voice papery in the night. Justin pulled it off quickly. "Give it to me." He handed it to Lance, who twisted it between his hands. "Now, stick out your hands."

"What?" Justin asked, holding out his arms, palms up. As Lance began tying the shirt around his wrists, Justin asked, "What're you doing?"

"You said you trusted me," Lance replied.

"I do," Justin whispered. As Lance tightened the shirt, tying his wrists together, Justin felt a flame of excitement flare through his groin.

"Then lay down," Lance said, moving aside. Justin laid back on the bunk, the pillow beneath his head, kicking the sheets out from under him. His chest felt cool in the darkness, and the shirt around his wrists was an unfamiliar sensation that made him grin foolishly. He wondered what Lance had in mind. Checking the knots in the shirt, Lance asked softly, "Is this too tight?"

Justin shook his head. "No," he whispered. Lance straddled him and tugged his own shirt off. Against his slight erection, Lance's butt pressed warmly, and Justin thrust his hips up, rubbing his thick length against Lance. Lance smiled and twisted his own shirt in his hands. Then he ran it between Justin's hands, around the other shirt, like a chain. Pulling his shirt gently, he raised Justin's hands over his head and tied the shirt to a rung on the bunk's ladder, behind Justin. Justin shifted until his arms rested on either side of his head comfortably, stretched out above him. He tested the knots, trying to move his hands, but he couldn't. "You're tying me up," he said, smiling.

"No shit," Lance whispered. He stretched out on top of Justin, their nipples brushing each other, his chest warm against Justin's. Justin tried

to reach for him before he remembered his hands were tied above his head, and instead he leaned up, his lips closing over Lance's earlobe. "Untie me," he whispered, "so I can touch you."

Instead, Lance placed his lips against Justin's ear and spoke softly. "We have to be quiet. The others are sleeping but the slightest sound could wake them up. So here's the deal -- I am going to kiss you, and touch you, and lick you, and suck you --" Justin groaned in delight at Lance's words -- "but you are going to be quiet. Silent. The slightest little sound, and I'm going to stop for five seconds. Okay?"

Justin nodded. "Five seconds isn't very long," he whispered.

"We'll see," Lance replied, sitting up. He rolled off of Justin and laid down beside him. Justin turned his head to look at Lance, only to find him looking back, hunger in his eyes. Justin tried to move his head closer to Lance's but couldn't. "Kiss me," he whispered.

"Quiet," Lance admonished. "Starting now."

Justin bit his lip to keep from saying anything. After what seemed like an eternity, Lance leaned forward and brushed his lips across Justin's brow. Justin opened his mouth, wanting to taste Lance, but he only managed to lick at Lance's neck before Lance pulled away again. As Lance kissed down the bridge of Justin's nose, his teeth nipping the tip lightly, Justin giggled.

Lance pulled back until no part of him touched Justin's body. Justin bit his lip again and counted quickly to five. And then he heard Lance breathlessly whisper, "One Mississippi. Two Mississippi." Justin almost groaned in frustration.

When he finished counting, Justin waited, and Lance leaned back over him, his lips pressing against Justin's, parting them. His tongue licked its way inside, and he kissed Justin's chin, his cheeks, his ears, his neck. His lips sucked at the hollow of Justin's throat, his tongue tracing along Justin's collarbone while his hands caressed the sensitive underside of Justin's upper arms. Justin closed his eyes as Lance moved lower, his teeth biting playfully at Justin's nipples, teasing them erect. When his tongue outlined the fine muscles on Justin's abdomen, Justin sighed Lance's name, and suddenly Lance's touch was gone again.

"Lance?" Justin asked. Shit, he thought, remembering Lance's little game. He counted to five in his mind, and just when he was going to risk saying Lance's name again -- five seconds wasn't that long, couldn't be -- Lance was there again, his tongue licking along the same place where he had left off, his hands running along Justin's chest, pinching his nipples. Don't talk, don't sigh, don't moan, don't say anything else, Justin thought, repeating the words over and over again like a mantra in his head. He didn't want Lance to stop again as he eased Justin's boxers down, exposing his aching erection.

Then Lance's wet tongue licked along the underside of Justin's hard dick, toying with the swollen tip, and Justin bit down on his lip to keep from moaning out loud. Wave after wave of pleasure crashed over him as Lance's tongue danced over his cock, his lips a soft pressure against Justin's hot skin, his breath cooling the wetness his mouth left behind.

Lance's tongue slipped lower, tracing over his balls, and then Lance took the soft sac into his mouth, humming so low that Justin felt the vibration in his groin shatter through his mind. He breathed in sharply, a small cry in the dark, and the sensation of Lance's mouth on him disappeared.

"Oh God, no, Lance," he whispered before he could stop himself. Then he closed his eyes in frustration and counted to five over and over and over again, his body quivering for Lance's touch. His dick throbbed, he was so close to coming, and Lance was just sitting there, watching him suffer, enjoying it ... the thought made Justin want to scream in lust and desire.

And then Lance was back, his tongue slipping below Justin's balls to lick the sensitive skin there, his hand squeezing Justin's thick length gently. Justin thrust into Lance's hand. He was close, so close, and if he said anything Lance would stop, but at this moment Justin thought that he would get off just on the thought of Lance alone, without his touch, but he didn't want to chance it so he bit the inside of his cheeks and willed himself to be quiet. When an orgasm rocked through his body, he whimpered slightly before stifling the muffled sound. Lance let go of his cock and Justin almost cried. "Untie me, Lance," he sobbed, exhausted. "Please, oh God, please Lance, untie me."

Leaning over Justin, Lance worked the knots in the shirt loose. When his hands slipped free, Justin ran his hands over Lance's chest, encircling his back, hugging him tight. "You were good," Lance said softly, speaking into Justin's ear. "I didn't have to stop too often."

Justin covered Lance's face with hungry kisses. He was still shaken by the force of his orgasm, and the way being so submissive to Lance had turned him on. He pulled Lance close and whispered, "I'm not letting you go tonight. I can't, not now. I hated not being able to touch you. You were so close, and I wanted to so bad, but I couldn't ..."

Lance kissed Justin slowly, savoring the taste of their tongues, the feel of their lips on each other. His hands roamed Justin's back, gentle caresses in the darkness. "I have to get back to my bunk," he said. "The others --"

"Fuck them," Justin said, burrowing his head in Lance's neck. "I'm not letting you out of my reach tonight. I'm not sleeping without you again, not ever."

Lance smiled against Justin's shoulder. He reached down and tugged Justin's boxers back up, covering his nakedness. Then he reached past Justin for the sheets, fallen on the floor of the bus, but Justin wouldn't relax his grip on him and Lance had to strain to reach them. "Justin, some help here would be nice."

Justin reached down and grabbed the sheets. Tossing them over top of their bodies, Justin crawled close to Lance again and hugged him. "Now, sshhh," he said softly. "You don't want to wake the others up, do you?"

Grinning, Lance ran a hand through Justin's curls and asked, "Do you think you can sleep now?"

"As long as you stay here," came the reply in the darkness.

All I Ever Wanted
56. Bathroom Break
by NSyncGrrl

"We'll be back with more NSync Live after this! So don't go away." Carson Daly pointed at the camera across the small stage. "Cut!" he called. Clicking off his microphone, he said, "Ten minutes, guys. Be back here in eight, if you can."

Lance jumped off the stool and hurried offstage, grinning at the fans who called his name. After the last hour of broadcasting, he had only one thought on his mind -- the bathroom. He had to pee something awful, and had been close to just walking off the stage in the middle of the show when Carson called for a commercial break.

As he pushed through the stage doors and out into the hall, Joey called out behind him, "Hey, Lance -- wait up."

"I can't," Lance replied, picking up the pace. "You want to talk, you gotta keep up." Ahead he saw a door marked Men's, and he headed for it.

He hit the door, stepping into the bathroom as he unzipped his jeans. When Joey came in behind him, he was already at the urinal, sighing in relief. After a few seconds he felt Joey's steady stare on his back, and he glanced over his shoulder. "Are you watching me?" he asked, amused.

Joey looked away. "No," he lied softly.

As he rezipped his jeans, Lance asked, "So what's on your mind?"

A thin blush crept into Joey's cheeks. "You really don't want to know," he said, embarrassed.

Lance laughed. "You're probably right." He came over to the sink and turned the water on. Joey stood so close to him, and he could see the way Joey was watching him, his gaze on Lance's face, but Lance ignored him. Just when he thought Joey would say something else, the door opened and Justin came in. "There you are," he said, smiling at Lance.

"Hey," Lance replied, scrubbed his hands in the sink. Even though he had turned on the hot water, all that came out of the faucet was icy and cold.

"Hey, Justin," Joey said, looking up.

Nonchalantly, Justin stepped around Lance, one hand resting on Lance's hip as his arm settled around Lance's waist, standing between them. "Hey, Joey," he said, and then with an easy grin, he asked, "Have you seen the girl in the front row checking you out?"

Joey rolled his eyes. "You mean the one with the ..." He pointed to a space below his lip, where the girl he was talking about had a silver stud earring.

Justin nodded as Lance turned off the water. "You should get her number," he suggested. "Rock her world tonight."

"Um, hello?" Joey asked, grinning. "They have a term for girls like her. It's called jailbait."

"No way," Justin replied. "She looks like your type."

I'm his type, Lance thought, flippant, but kept his mouth shut. Joey laughed. "Justin, she's twelve if she's a day. I'm not into that." He walked past Justin, heading for the door.

Lance grinned, drying his hands under the air dryer by the door. "She probably doesn't want an old fart like you anyway," he yelled over the noise of the dryer.

"Hey!" Joey cried, indignant. "Take that back!"

"No," Lance said, laughing. He turned away from Joey and winked at Justin. Before he could say another word, though, Joey leaped onto his back, his arms wrapping tightly around Lance's throat while his legs hooked onto Lance's hips. Lance bent over under Joey's sudden weight and grinned as Joey rubbed his knuckles into Lance's hair.

Justin laughed at them. "Get off me!" Lance cried playfully, trying to buck Joey off. "You're heavy -- get off!"

"You wanna see heavy?" Justin asked, and then he was climbing up onto Joey's back, and Lance staggered from the combined weight of his friends. Squished between them, Joey laughed. When Justin began to slip off, Lance reached back and grabbed Justin's legs. "You guys get off," he said, a little out of breath.

When the dryer beside him clicked off, Lance gave in to the weight on his back and fell forward, hitting the floor with his hands before rolling onto his back. Joey landed on top of him, Justin pressing him into Lance as they collapsed in a fit of giggles. Joey raised his eyebrows at Lance in a suggestive manner, and Lance reached past Joey to smack the top of Justin's head. "You guys are going to break my spine. Get up."

Justin laughed. "I can see it now," he said, rolling off of Joey. Joey rolled to the other side of Lance, and the three of them laid there, grinning foolishly. "Carson? Lance isn't feeling too good -- it seems like we broke his back, or something."

"Yeah," Joey added, "he's going to watch the show from the hospital, where they have him in traction."

Lance tried to sit up, but Justin pulled him back down. Scooting closer, he raised up on one elbow and smiled down at Lance. He ran a soft hand down Lance's cheek, and Lance glanced at Joey warily. "Justin," he warned, "we've got to get going." He started to sit up again.

Joey put a hand on Lance's chest, stopping him. "No, wait," he said, pushing Lance back down. His gaze shifted between Lance and Justin, and he seemed to be gathering the courage to speak. Then he said softly, "I need to tell you guys something."

Lance glanced at Justin, who frowned slightly. "What's up, Joe?" Justin asked.

Looking at Lance, Joey sighed. "You know how I feel about you," he said, and Lance wanted to turn to see Justin's reaction to Joey's words, but something in Joey's eyes held him prisoner. "I don't try to hide it. And I know it's a problem between you two sometimes, when I get too careless." His gaze shifted to Justin, and Lance studied Joey's face, seeing the sadness there, suddenly sad himself. "But I want you to know that I love you guys, and I'm not going to come between you. I can't let myself do that."

Softly Justin said, "Sometimes you go too far. When you think you're only flirting, and it hurts, Joey, to see you do it."

Joey nodded. "I know. I'm sorry. I know you guys try to keep the touching and kissing down to a bare minimum when I'm around, and I appreciate that. But I can't help the way I am -- I flirt with everybody, Justin. I'd flirt with a nun if I thought she was cute."

Lance laughed at the image of Joey hitting on a nun in full black habit. Beside him he saw Justin smile slowly. Lance said, "It's okay, Joey. I know you don't mean anything by it."

"Actually, I do mean something by it," Joey replied. His eyes took in Lance's light eyes and light hair, and he sighed again. "But I know you don't feel the same way, and I know you and Justin have something that I can only dream of, and I don't want to ruin that. So I just wanted to tell you that ..." He took a deep breath. "I might mean something by it, but I'd never do anything about it. If anything ever breaks you two up, it's not going to be me. Does that make any sense?"

Justin nodded. "Joey?" he asked, "thanks. I'm sorry, too."

Lance felt the tension in the room disappear, and he snaked an arm beneath Joey and Justin and hugged them both. Justin kissed Lance's neck, and Joey's breath was hot against his skin as his lips brushed against Lance's other cheek quickly. "I love you, man!" Lance cried, laughing. Joey's hand slid across his waist, tickling him, and Lance curled up in giggles. Justin started tickling him too, grinning broadly, and Lance sat up, trying to get away. They pulled him back down.

The door to the bathroom opened and Carson walked in. He took one look at them, laughing and rolling on the floor, and he asked, "Am I interrupting something?" Lance shook his head. Before any of them could reply, Carson continued. "What is it with you boy-bands and the floor of this room?"

Joey looked at Carson strangely. "Why?" he asked. "Who else have you walked in on down here?"

Holding the door open, Carson swept his arm out. "One minute til airtime," he said, smiling. "You guys gonna join us for the second half of the show?"

As they helped each other up, Justin asked, "Who else, Carson?"

Carson just grinned. "I'm not saying," he replied. "Just like I won't say anything about you guys. Never know what the media will blow out of proportion. Particularly something like this. Now come on already. Chris and JC are waiting."

They ran out of the bathroom, heading back for the stage. For the first time since Joey had told him how he felt about him, Lance thought maybe things could be okay between the three of them.

All I Ever Wanted
57. What I Like About You
by NSyncGrrl

"Justin, can you move?" Lance asked, setting aside a box of old toys. "I can't see what I'm doing."

Justin stepped inside the storage shed, propping the door open with his foot. When he moved aside, bright sunlight flooded into the small room, and Lance started digging through another box. They were at their manager's house for the weekend, and the other night he mentioned he had a crate full of old LPs out in his shed. When Lance got bored he thought he would find the albums, see if there was anything good to listen to. Justin snagged the key to the shed from the keyrack in the kitchen and held the door open while Lance looked for the albums. The shed was small and cramped inside, the walls lined with boxes upon boxes stacked to the ceiling and overflowing onto an ancient couch that had seen better days. They couldn't find a lightswitch, though, and the only light came from the doorway. Lance moved another box aside and sighed. "I don't see them," he said.

Pointing at something, Justin asked, "Maybe that's them?"

"Where?" Lance asked, looking.

"Right there," Justin said. When Lance didn't see them, he took another step into the shed. "Look where I'm pointing, Lance. Right there."

"I don't see them," Lance replied. He picked up another crate and moved it aside. "Here?" he asked.

Justin sighed. Coming closer, he pointed at a large crate at the bottom of a towering pile of boxes. "Right here," he said.

"Justin!" Lance cried. "The door --" He lunged for it as it swung closed, his fingers just brushing against the doorknob. Then it slammed shut, cutting off the light. "Great," he muttered. "Give me the key."

Justin didn't say anything. "Justin?" Lance asked.

"It's in the lock," Justin replied, his voice soft in the darkness. "Outside."

"Shit!" Lance said. The door only opened from either side with the key. Lance ran a shaky hand down his face and tried to stay calm. "How long do you think we'll be in here before someone notices we're gone?"

Justin moved closer to him, reaching out tentatively. "Someone will come by and see the key. Don't worry, it won't be long."

"But it's dark," Lance replied. "And spending the day locked in a storage shed isn't my idea of a good time."

He felt Justin's fingers on his, and then Justin took his hand. "We can

make it good," he whispered.

"I'd like some light," Lance whispered back. He was ticked off that Justin was taking this so lightly, but with a little convincing, he thought maybe he could enjoy this time together. Justin brushed past him, his hand touching Lance's stomach in the dark to make sure they didn't run into each other.

"I saw a flashlight over here somewhere," Justin mumbled. When he pulled away and his touch was gone, Lance's stomach fluttered with the memory of Justin's hand. Then suddenly a brilliant light blinked on, large and round, like a small spotlight. "Here it is."

Lance shielded his eyes. "Do you mind?" he asked. Justin aimed the light at the ceiling so it fell around them softly. Blinking away spots that danced behind his eyes, Lance said, "Thank you."

Justin took his hand again. "No problem," he whispered, leaning in to kiss Lance, his lips gentle. "Are you totally mad at me?"

"Totally," Lance replied, giggling a little.

"Then come here," he said. Leading him over to the tiny couch, Justin pushed aside the few boxes covering the cushions and sat down. A thin veil of dust settled back around him as he pulled Lance into his lap.

Lance slid down beside Justin, his legs draped across Justin's thighs. He leaned back against the boxes stacked beside them on the couch. "What are we going to do until someone rescues us?" he asked, picking at the sleeve of Justin's t-shirt.

Justin leered at him. "What do you want to do?" he asked, running his hands around Lance's waist. Lance laughed. Before he could answer, Justin suggested, "Let's play a game."

"What kind of game?" Lance asked.

"It's called What I Like About You." He trailed his fingers down Lance's stomach, his touch light and soft.

Lance narrowed his eyes. "You're making this up," he said.

"As I go along," Justin replied.

"Then how do you play it?"

Justin shrugged. "We'll each take a letter of the alphabet and name one thing we like about the other using that letter. Like I'll start with A, then you do B, and so on. Get it?"

"Do I get Z?" Lance asked. "I don't think I'll be able to think up something for that."

"You'll be surprised," Justin said, smiling. "Come on, it'll be fun."

Lance shrugged. "Why not?" he said. "You start."

"Okay." Justin closed his eyes and gathered his thoughts together.

Lance watched his eyelashes flutter and resisted the urge to touch them. When Justin opened his eyes, he smiled and ran a finger down Lance's throat. "I like your adam's apple."

"You don't," Lance said, blushing.

"I do, too," Justin replied. "Your turn."

Lance studied Justin. B, B, B, he thought. What starts with B? "I like your blue eyes," he said. "They're so pretty."

Justin smiled. "C," he said.

"I wish I got that one," Lance replied. "It'd be easy -- I like your curls."

Justin smacked his arm playfully. "Well, you don't have it, it's mine. I like your cute butt."

"That shouldn't count," Lance said. "Butt doesn't start with a C."

"And eyes don't start with a B," Justin replied. "So now it's your turn."

Lance frowned. "D ... the way your cheeks dimple when you smile."

Leaning forward slightly, Justin grinned. "Like this?" he asked.

Lance poked at his dimpled cheek with one finger. "Like that," he said.

Justin leaned closer until their noses touched. "I like your eyes," he said softly. "I could lose myself in them forever."

"I like your feet," Lance replied. "Especially when we're lying together and you rub them along my legs."

Justin kissed him quickly. "I like the way you grin when you're embarrassed."

"I like your hair," Lance said, running a hand through Justin's curls. "I like it best when you just let it go wild like this."

Justin sighed. "What are we on now, I?" When Lance nodded, he said slowly, "I like your ... I like ... hmm." He thought for a minute and then said, "I like the way you look at me sometimes when you want me to do something. You're so damn irresistible."

Lance frowned. "I guess we'll let that one slide. J ... I like the curve of your jaw." To emphasize his point, he traced a finger down Justin's jawline.

Justin kissed Lance again, his lips lingering on Lance's. "I like the way you kiss," he said softly. "I could spend hours just kissing you."

"And sometimes you do," Lance reminded him. He kissed Justin again, his tongue tracing along Justin's lips. "I like the way you laugh. It's infectious."

"Now there's an I word," Justin said, smiling. "M ... I love the way you moan my name during sex."

Lance blushed again. "I love it when you nuzzle against my neck," he said. "When we're lying in bed and you just breathe against my throat -- it turns me on something awful."

"I didn't know that," Justin whispered, resting his head on Lance's shoulder, his lips brushing Lance's neck. "What letter are we on?"

"O," Lance said as Justin's tongue licked behind his ear.

"O is for orgasm," Justin whispered. "I love it when you come."

"That's not really something --" Lance started, but Justin quieted him with another kiss. "Your turn," he whispered.

"I love it when you pout," Lance said, "but you know that."

Justin smiled. "Q ... what is there to love about you that starts with a Q?" Justin closed his eyes, shifting into a more comfortable position under Lance's legs, his hands on Lance's chest, warm through his shirt. "I know. I love your quick mind. And I love it when you're in one of your quiet, pensive moods."

"That's two things," Lance pointed out, running a hand around Justin's shoulders. "I love it when you wear your bandannas -- you look so roguish and rough."

"Hmm," Justin sighed. "S, S, S. I love your smile and the way you smell and our hot sex, sex, sex."

Lance grinned. "I love your taut muscles and your trim body and your toned arms and your tight ass."

Justin ran his arms around Lance's back, hugging him close. "U is because I love you."

"That starts with a Y," Lance pointed out, but Justin simply shrugged. "V. You're so vibrant and vigorous and vivacious."

"Vivacious?" Justin asked, giggling.

Lance nodded. "When you're horny sometimes I think I've never seen you so alive."

Justin sighed, a soft, content sound. The light from the flashlight flickered a bit, and Lance glanced at it sharply, wondering how old the batteries in it were. "I love you wet."

"Justin!" Lance said, smiling. "You already said you like it when I come. Isn't that the same thing?"

But Justin shook his head, his curls tickling Lance's chin. "No, I like you wet. I like to watch water dripping down your naked body. I like to feel your hair spiky and wet against my chest. I like to touch your damp skin and kiss your wrinkled fingertips ..." He picked up Lance's hand and kissed his fingers gently.

"Oh, so I get X," Lance said. Thinking for a minute, he smiled and

said, "Sometimes I like your X chromosome anger and jealousy. It really turns me on."

Justin frowned. "X chromosome?" he asked. "I don't get it."

"Your manliness," Lance said. "Your testosterone. Your bad-boy nature. Sometimes, when you're Mr. Neanderthal, I just want to smother you with kisses and hug you tight and never let you go."

Justin giggled at the image. "I get Y," he said. "And so I love you."

"See?" Lance asked, laughing. "I told you I would get Z."

"Well, next time you start with A," Justin replied. "What can you come up with for Z?"

"Zeal," Lance said. "I love your zeal, your zest for life."

Justin smiled. "That'll work." He sat up and kissed Lance. "Didn't I tell you that would be fun?"

Lance nodded, his hands slipping down Justin's back to pinch his butt playfully. "And now maybe we can do something else that's fun," he suggested.

They heard a slight sound at the door, a scraping as the key was removed from the lock. Muffled voices seeped into the storage shed. Justin and Lance glanced at each other and then scrambled off the couch. "Wait!" Lance cried, throwing himself against the door.

"Hey! Let us out!" Justin cried.

They heard the key being inserted into the lock again, laughter from the other side, and then someone pushed open the door. Blinking in the bright light, Lance saw Joey and Chris grinning at them. "You guys forget something?" Chris asked, holding up the key.

"Justin let the door close," Lance said sheepishly.

Joey grinned wickedly. "Maybe we should lock you two back up in there, then," he said, pulling the door slightly.

"Not without the key," Justin replied, catching the door with his foot. He held his hand out. "Give us the key and we'll stay in here all day long."

Behind them the flashlight blinked out. "Maybe not," Lance replied. He pushed past Justin and stepped outside, grabbing Justin's hand in his. Suddenly he wanted to get Justin alone again. He was eager to show Justin what else he had in mind now, after that little game.

All I Ever Wanted
58. Without You
Part 1 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

"Oh, Lance, we can't wait for you to come home!" Lance listened to his mother's tinny voice through the bad cellphone connection and closed his eyes. Now that the tour was over, they were all going home, and he had called to tell her he and Justin had plans to visit Justin's mom for a week before heading to his own parents' house in Mississippi. But he didn't have a chance -- the moment she picked up the phone, Lance's mom hadn't let him say two words. The excitement in her voice as she listed all of his friends and relatives who would be at the house when he arrived made Lance's head ache at the thought of telling her he wasn't coming home right away. Finally, he managed to interrupt her enough to ask, "Mom, what if I told you my flight would be a little delayed?" By a week, he thought, waiting for her reply.

"Don't worry, dear," she said, and he could almost see her in his mind, her smile contagious, her eyes sparkling. "Your sister is here and she wants to see you so badly. And then your Uncle Eddie will be here, and his new wife ..."

Lance let the guest list wash over him as his mind worked. Well, Justin hadn't asked his mother about Lance visiting yet, so maybe it would be alright if they went to their own homes for a day or two before catching up with each other later on. But the thought of being apart from Justin, even for a few days spent with their own families, made Lance's heart hurt. And in the end, he nodded and said goodbye to his mom, whispering "I'll see you soon" and hanging up before she could ask him what was wrong.

He sat on the couch in their hotel room, staring out the window, thinking. He didn't want to go home, not without Justin. He had planned on telling his mom about the two of them, but he didn't want to do that without Justin being there. He wanted her to see how much they cared for each other, to ease any fears she might have of their being together. He wanted to hold Justin in his narrow bed, go to the mall where he used to hang out and show off Justin to his friends, gaze into Justin's endless eyes as they lay in the hammock in the backyard and watch the stars come out. He sighed. Now he would have to sleep alone, to fly alone on the plane back home, to count down the days and hours and minutes until they saw each other again. Justin wasn't going to like this.

The door to their room opened, and Justin walked in. "Hey," he said softly, taking a seat beside Lance on the couch. He nodded at the phone, lying forgotten in Lance's hand. "What did she say?"

Lance sighed and didn't meet Justin's gaze. "She said the whole family is already there," he whispered. "She said she can't wait for my flight to come in tomorrow night. She said my sister can't wait to see me."

Justin studied him. "You didn't tell her," he said.

"I couldn't," Lance replied. Turning to Justin, his eyes tortured and hurt, he said, "I just couldn't, Justin. She's so excited ... and she's already planned out this huge welcome home party for me ... I just couldn't tell her I wasn't coming."

Justin looked at his hands, twisting in his lap, and Lance watched his chin crumble as he fought back tears. His lips trembled lightly, and Lance wanted to cry himself, watching Justin struggle to keep his composure. Reaching out, Lance touched Justin's shoulder gently. "I'm sorry," he whispered, and Justin leaned into his touch, wrapping his arms around Lance's waist as Lance hugged him close. "It'll only be a few days, really. I'll call you every night, and when my relatives leave, I'll come to Florida that day. I promise."

Against his chest, Justin sighed shakily. Hot tears spread through Lance's shirt, pricking his skin. "I don't want to leave you," he whispered, his voice cracking. "I already told my mom I'd be home tomorrow, but I --" He sighed again. "I don't want to have to say goodbye."

"Then don't," Lance replied. He rested his chin on the top of Justin's head and rubbed his friend's back. "I'll only stay a few days. Three at the most."

He felt Justin's hands on his back, bunching his shirt into angry fists. "Oh, Lance," Justin sighed. "I'm so sorry. Why can't this be easy for us?"

Lance smiled gently. "Because then it wouldn't mean so much when we do manage to get together."

Justin shifted his head onto Lance's shoulder. They sat like that for long moments, Justin lying against Lance, Lance holding him close. Reaching out, Justin picked at the frayed arm of the couch and sniffled. "I love you," he said simply.

"I love you, too," Lance replied, squeezing Justin quickly. "We'll call each other every night."

"Eight o'clock," Justin said. "We'll stay on the phone until we go to bed, so the last thing I hear before falling asleep will be your voice."

Lance smiled. "Agreed."

The next morning they stood with the others at the airport, waiting for their flights. Justin stood behind Lance, his arms around Lance's waist, holding him close. Lance leaned his head on Justin's shoulder, his hands on Justin's arms. He didn't care who saw them, not now. The memory of Justin's body pressed against him this morning when they awoke still ached in Lance's bones. The others stood in a small huddle, a little ways away from them, giving them a few final moments of privacy. "I don't like this," Justin said for the hundredth time that morning.

"I don't, either," Lance replied. "But just think how great it'll be when we see each other again."

Justin sighed. "I'm going to hug you and kiss you and love you and never let you go."

"Is that a promise?" Lance asked, glancing up at Justin.

Justin smiled down at him sadly. "You have my word." His lips brushed against Lance's, a gentle touch, and Lance leaned into the kiss, his tongue slipping into Justin's mouth with a familiarity that sent a thrill through his body.

Over the loudspeaker, a woman's voice announced Lance's flight. "That's me," he said, pulling away from Justin.

Justin tightened his grip on him, and for a moment Lance didn't think he'd let him go. And then Justin kissed him again quickly and let his hands fall from Lance's waist. Suddenly Lance wanted to cry again, but he raised his chin bravely and smiled at Justin, blinking back the tears in his eyes. Justin opened his mouth to say something, but Lance put a hand on his lips. "No," he said softly. "Don't say goodbye."

Kissing Lance's fingertips, Justin smiled and said, "I'll call you tonight."

"Eight o'clock," Lance said. "So the last person I talk to before falling to sleep is you."

He hugged Justin quickly, savoring the feel of his body in his arms, and then the others were there, and Lance hugged them, as well. Joey draped an arm around Justin's shoulder and, looking at Lance, said, "Don't worry, Scoop. I'll keep an eye on this one for you."

Lance laughed. "I'll see you guys soon enough." With a final glance at Justin, he turned away to board his plane.

All I Ever Wanted
58. Without You
Part 2 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

Lance rushed into the kitchen, letting the screen door slam shut behind him. "Lance!" his mother yelled from the hallway.

"Sorry!" he yelled back. Pushing the door open, he closed it again, softly this time. Then he hurried into the hall. His mother was arranging a bouquet of flowers in a vase, and she looked up as he entered. "Hey, Mom," he said, hugging her quickly. "Did anyone call?"

She nodded. "Justin called about an hour ago."

Lance smiled. It had been four days since he last saw Justin at the airport. All he remembered of that day was his friend's wild curls and sad eyes. That first night apart, Justin had cried on the phone, and Lance cried himself to sleep without Justin's arms around him. The next two nights they talked until well after midnight, singing softly to each other, whispering and giggling and making promises about what they would do when they met up again. Lance planned on leaving for Florida yesterday, but his mother talked him into staying for another two days, and Lance swore to Justin he'd be there by the weekend. He couldn't wait.

Going back into the kitchen, Lance picked up the phone and dialed Justin's number. Somewhere far away, a phone began to ring. Lance let it ring eight times before he hung up, frowning. Maybe Justin had stepped out for a minute, went to the store, the movies, out with friends. Well, Lance thought, sighing, he'll call me again tonight. It was Justin's night to call anyway, and when eight o'clock rolled around, Lance waited by the phone, willing it to ring.

By 8:10, he was worried. He dialed Justin's number again, and again there was no answer. Standing at the kitchen window, he stared out at the growing dusk descending over the backyard and sighed. Someone placed a warm hand on his shoulder, and he turned to find his mother standing beside him. "Hi, honey," she said, smiling. "Are you okay?"

Lance nodded. "Fine," he said softly, his mind on Justin.

His mother sighed. Squeezing his shoulder gently, she said, "Lance, I want you to know that I love you."

Uh-oh. The last time she started a conversation like that had been when he wanted to drop out of high school to join the group. "I want you to know that we love you, son, and only want to do what's best for you." Somehow he just knew this was about Justin. "Love you, too, Mom," he said, a little wary.

She took a deep breath. "I've noticed you've been a little down lately ..." She trailed off. This was one of her "talk to me" tactics -- she'd start something and then expect him to finish it.

"I miss Justin. I ... I mean, we ..." He sighed. He might as well say it and get it over with. "Mom, we're sort of dating."

She didn't say anything, and he turned to her, fear choking his throat. Her expressionless face didn't betray her emotions. "Each other?" she asked.

Lance nodded. She pursed her lips, and he asked, "Mom? What are you thinking?"

She shrugged. "You're old enough to do what you want, I guess," she said, but he heard a bitterness in her voice. "Are you telling me you're ..." She didn't say the word.

Lance sighed. "No, Mom, I'm telling you I love Justin. He loves me. I'm sorry if this bothers you, but ... I'm sorry." He ran a hand over his eyes and wished Justin was with him right now. If only she could see the way they were together. If only she could understand the way it felt to hold Justin close, to kiss him and to love him, to be loved by him.

His mother twisted her mouth into a tight smile. "Well, I can't say that I'm thrilled about it," she replied, "but I suspected something like this. You never were very interested in girls."

"Mom," he said, rolling his eyes. "It's not like that. I just never found the right person before. And Justin is that person -- I know it. I feel it, when we're together. It's like finding something I didn't know I lost, and now that I have it, I can't live without it. Without him." He looked at her. "What are you thinking?" he asked again.

She shrugged. "Lance, you're my son. I still love you." He opened his mouth to say something, but she held up a hand to stop him. "I may not agree with what you do, but I can't make decisions for you anymore. If you want to be with Justin, then I can't stop you. Just, please -- can you be discreet, at least around me?"

Lance nodded. "Sure," he said. He kissed her forehead quickly. Then he frowned. "When he called earlier, did he say anything?"

She shook her head. "Just told me to tell you he called. He hasn't called you back?"

Shaking his head, Lance replied, "No. And no one answers when I call his house. I'm getting worried."

"He's probably out with some friends," she said. Squeezing his shoulder again, she walked away, leaving him alone with his thoughts.

Sometime later, Lance crawled into his bed, a loneliness gripping his heart and tugging throughout his body. He had called Justin three more times, and each time he let the phone ring and ring, but there was no answer. Where could he be? he wondered, trying not to give into his fears. He replayed their last conversation over in his mind, remembering each word, each sigh, each little laugh, each "I love you" they whispered in the dark. I'll call him tomorrow, he thought sleepily. I hope he's there. With Justin on his mind, Lance fell asleep.

When morning came, Lance felt warm sunlight, bright and new,

shining into his room, and he rolled over onto his stomach, throwing an arm over his head to block out the light. He heard the creak of hardwood floors somewhere in the house, the chime of the doorbell, the clamor of pots in the kitchen. As he drifted back to sleep, he heard the hinges of his bedroom door creak slightly as someone entered. His mother, probably. If he kept his eyes closed, she'd think he was still asleep and leave him alone a little longer. Right now he didn't feel like waking up -- then he'd have to call Justin, and he couldn't bear the thought of listening to the desperate ring of the phone as no one picked up on the other end of the line.

Then he felt strong, warm hands run along his back and up his arms, kneading his tired skin. A familiar weight pressed against him, and hot breath tickled his neck as something wet and warm latched onto his earlobe. Then tiny kisses trailed across the back of his neck, over his shoulders, and Lance heard Justin's voice, moaning his name. Lance rolled over and opened his eyes to find Justin smiling down at him. "Hello, gorgeous," Justin whispered.

Lance cupped Justin's head in both hands and pulled him closer, his lips hungry as they kissed. His tongue delved into Justin's mouth, tasting a sweetness he had yearned for these past few days. When he finally broke away, Justin whistled low. "I missed you, too," he whispered.

"I was so worried," Lance said, studying Justin's face. He wanted to tattoo the image of Justin here above him onto his brain and never forget it. He ran his hands around Justin's neck and explained, "When you didn't call last night, I could only think --"

Justin grinned. "I tried to call you earlier but you weren't home --"

"I called you back --" Lance interrupted.

"It was too late," Justin said, cutting him off. "We had already left."

"We?" Lance asked, confused. "Justin --"

Justin smiled. "Joey and JC and me. I wanted to tell you but then we left and I didn't get a chance to call you again. I thought we'd be here before now but one of the tires blew out and we got lost in Georgia and we drove all night long without sleeping ..." He kissed Lance again. "Oh God, Lance, I missed you so much."

Lance kissed Justin, hugging him tightly. "I'm never letting you go," he whispered between kisses. "Never ever again."

All I Ever Wanted
59. Road Trip
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was pissed. He didn't remember whose bright idea it was to drive from Mississippi to California, but they were somewhere in Texas now, the radio had played the same damn song five times already this hour, and he had a slight headache from the motion of the car. He lay in the back seat, his head on Lance's lap. Lance was reading -- Justin could see the book upside down from his vantage point, but didn't know what it was. Some horror novel, or something, judging from the cover. In the front seat, Joey drove, humming along with the radio and every now and then telling JC to shut up, he knew where they were going. JC sat in the passenger seat, crinkling a map as he tried to fold it again and saying he thought they should've taken the last exit, could Joey please just pull over and ask someone where they were?

Justin sighed. Why didn't we take a plane? he asked himself again, scrunching his eyebrows together as he frowned. But no, he had wanted to see Lance so badly, he couldn't wait for a flight, and when Joey and JC suggested just hopping into the car and driving up to Mississippi like it was just around the corner, he was there. One day they had spent together -- he didn't think they left Lance's room except to eat -- and then Joey said hey, let's go pick up Chris, like he was waiting at the mall for them, and Justin thought that would be cool, too. But the coolness had worn off after only a day and a half on the road, when Joey and JC started arguing about driving and Justin realized they weren't stopping for the night, so he and Lance could only sit in the back seat and hold hands and steal tiny kisses when the others weren't looking. He sighed again. This sucks.

"Joey, can't we stop somewhere, please?" JC asked. His voice had a tightness to it that Justin recognized -- JC was getting pissed, too. Justin closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep.

Joey slammed on the brakes. The car skidded to a stop, turning slightly. "Jesus!" Lance said, holding onto Justin with one arm as Justin slid out of the seat. He hit the back of Joey's seat, hard, and JC jerked forward, the map tumbling out of his lap. "What the fuck?" Justin muttered. So much for pretending to sleep.

"There," Joey said, angry. "We stopped. You happy?"

JC glared at him. "Look, Joe," he began, but Joey turned the car off and threw the keys at JC.

"You drive," he yelled. His voice was loud in the car. "You know so much about where the hell we are, you fucking drive." Then Joey released his seat belt, the metal buckle clanking against the door as it snapped back into place, and he got out of the car, slamming the door shut.

Justin glanced at Lance. "Um," Lance said, clearing his throat. "Where's he going?" He turned around and Justin sat up, looking out the

rear window. Joey had stopped the car in the middle of a two-lane highway. Trees surrounded the road, and there was no one else around for miles, or so it seemed. And Joey was walking back the way they had come, kicking at stones in the road, his pace furious.

"How the fuck should I know?" JC replied, unbuckling his own seat belt.

"Hey," Justin warned, frowning. "Don't yell at us."

JC got out, slamming his door, and began walking, his long strides taking him in the opposite direction, away from Joey. After a moment Justin laid back down, Lance's lap warm and comforting and safe beneath his head. "Well, that's just peachy," he said sullenly. "We're never going to get to California alive."

"Not at this rate," Lance muttered. His hand rested on Justin's hair, and he soothed down the unruly curls as he stared out the window, lost in thought.

Justin smiled. "At least we're alone now," he said softly, reaching up to touch the underside of Lance's chin.

"I wonder if they expect us to go out and bring them back," Lance said, not looking at Justin.

"Lance," Justin said, letting his finger trail down Lance's throat. He plucked at the open collar of Lance's shirt.

Lance sighed. "I don't really feel like patching things up between them," he continued, ignoring Justin. "What are we supposed to do now?"

Justin undid one button on Lance's shirt and slipped his finger inside, across Lance's smooth collarbone. "Lance," he pouted, unbuttoning the next button. "Listen to me."

"I'm listening," Lance said automatically, and Justin knew he wasn't.

Justin ran his hand down Lance's chest. "We're alone," he said. He tugged on the bottom of Lance's shirt, trying to get it out of his jeans.

"Hmm." Lance nodded and turned back around to look out the window. Justin sighed, frustrated. The first time in days they have a few minutes together, and all Lance can think about is the fight Joey and JC were having. "Lance!" he said, sharp enough to force Lance to look at him. He frowned. "Hello? We're alone!"

"So I noticed," Lance said, frowning as well. "Don't you think we should try to talk to them?"

Justin unbuttoned the next button on Lance's shirt. "I don't want to talk to them," he said, pouting. "I'm sick of listening to them bitch and moan and piss down each other. Let them cool off and they'll come back, but in the meantime ..." He shrugged. "We're alone," he repeated.

"So you keep saying," Lance said. He ran a hand over Justin's hair, wrapping a stray curl around his finger. "What do you have in mind?"

Finally, Justin wanted to say, but he kept it to himself. "Lay down next to me," he said.

Lance looked at him as if he were crazy. "There's not enough room back here," he replied.

"Then lay on top of me," Justin said, grinning.

"And do what?" Lance asked.

Justin sighed. "Jesus, Lance! Do I have to spell it out for you?" Lance grinned, and suddenly Justin knew he was being played. He started to sit up. "Lance, that's not funny --"

And then Lance had the car door open, and he scooted out from under Justin as he jumped outside, laughing. Justin's head bumped the seat and he leaped up, twisting as he scrambled out of the car. "Lance!" he cried, stumbling to his feet. "Come back here! This isn't funny!"

Lance ran around to the other side of the car, laughing. "I had you going," he said, breathless. Justin started towards him but Lance moved away, keeping the car between them. When Justin moved back the other way, Lance switched direction, too. "You thought I wasn't interested, didn't you?" Lance laughed again.

"Lance," Justin whined. "Please, Lance, this isn't funny."

Apparently, Lance thought so. "Oh, Justin," he said in between giggles. "You're so damn cute."

"Then come here," he said, vaulting over the hood. Lance scurried to the other side of the car. "Lance, get back here."

"Where'd you learn that?" Lance asked, looking at Justin over the roof of the car. His eyes twinkled merrily. "The Dukes of Hazzard?"

Justin faked a right, and when Lance moved to the left, he sprinted around the back of the car and caught Lance in his arms. "Gotcha!" he cried. Lance staggered against the open door and then they were falling into the car, Justin landing on top of Lance in the back seat.

Lance looked up at him as he tried to steady his breathing. "So," he said, his voice thick. The mirth in his eyes made Justin's groin ache. "We're back in the car again."

"Why are you so mean to me?" Justin whispered. His arms were trapped beneath Lance, wrapped around his back.

Lance slid his arms out from between them and draped them around Justin's neck. "Because you're so easy to tease," he replied. "Because it's fun."

Justin shifted his hips, pressing against Lance. He leaned down, his mouth hovering above Lance's. When Lance reached up for a kiss, Justin pulled back slightly. "How fun is that?" he asked softly. "Hmm? How do you like to be teased?"

Lance raised his eyebrows. "Fine," he said, placing his hands on

Justin's shoulders. He pushed against Justin's hard body. "Get up if you don't want to play anymore."

Justin didn't budge. He leaned down again, his lips inches from Lance's, and when Lance reached up, he pulled away again, grinning. "It's not so fun, is it?" Justin asked.

Lance pushed against Justin again. "Get up," he said. Justin held him tighter.

Justin leaned down again, meaning to kiss Lance for real this time, but his lips just brushed along Lance's cheek as he turned away from Justin. Pouting, Justin sighed. Fine, he thought, getting a little angry. Maybe he had pushed Lance too far. He started to sit up.

Suddenly Lance's hands bunched into fists, grabbing onto Justin's shirt, pulling him back down. Lance reached up and kissed Justin, his lips demanding, his tongue insistent. Justin melted from the strength of the kiss, the intensity of emotion in it, the lust and desire he tasted in Lance's mouth. He smiled when Lance finally released him, laying back on the seat and looking up at him with those incredible eyes of his. "You still want me to get up?" he asked, a tease in his voice.

"You guys knock it off," Joey said as he climbed into the front seat of the car. Justin sat up, Lance's hands trailing down his chest to rest on the waistband of his jeans. "Where's JC?"

Justin shrugged. "He left," Lance offered, pointing up the road. "That way."

"Fuck," Joey muttered. With a glance at Justin in the rearview mirror, he started the engine. "Close your door."

Lance sat up as Justin pulled the door closed. Neither of them said a word as Joey began to drive -- he kept a low, even speed, but there was still a tension in the set of his shoulders that suggested he was still angry, and another outburst might not be far behind. Reaching out across the seat, Justin took Lance's hand in his. Lance entwined his fingers with Justin's and smiled at him quickly. Up ahead they saw JC come into view. He was still walking, but the quick strides were gone, replaced with weary, trudging steps. His head was down, and Joey leaned over, rolling down the passenger side window as he slowed to a stop. JC looked at them, a frown on his face. "Hey there, sexy," Joey drawled. "Want some candy?"

For a long moment JC just stared into the car. His gaze shifted from Joey's smiling face to the back seat, where Lance and Justin sat, grinning. Then JC leaned into the car, crossing his arms on the window, and smiled one of his patented heartthrob smiles that kept teenaged girls up at night. "What kind you got?" he asked.

"Git in and find out," Joey replied with a mock Texan accent. JC laughed, looking away as a slight blush crept into his cheeks. "Come on, sugah. We ain't got all day."

JC opened the door and climbed inside. Rolling up the window, he reached for the map. "Can we just stop in the next town?" he asked. "Just

to get our bearings?"

Joey groaned, and Lance rolled his eyes. Justin sighed and laid down on his side, his head in Lance's lap again. This was going to be a long trip.

All I Ever Wanted
60. Stopping for the Night
Part 1 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Joey pushed his sunglasses up on his forehead as he stepped into the tiny lobby of the Econolodge. Looking around, a sour expression flitted across his face and was gone. This isn't exactly what I call high-class, he thought bitterly. The lobby was tiny, with only one ripped chair, a messy rack of brochures for local places of interest, and a bullet-proof window in front of the counter. There was a little area set up with coffee and stale cakes to the side of the counter, and a cracked security mirror was aimed in that corner, so when Joey stepped up to the window he still could see the molding complimentary breakfast proclaimed on the sign outside. Somehow he didn't think he'd be rushing down here first thing in the morning for free food.

Justin, Lance, and JC poured into the lobby behind him as he smiled at the Indian woman behind the counter. "Hey," he said, turning on the old Fatone charm. "We'd like a room, please."

"Two," Justin corrected, pushing beside Joey. "Or maybe three, the way you two have been fighting."

"One," Joey said, raising one finger to emphasize his point. Turning to Justin, he said, "We'll get a double. It's only for one night. No use spending more money than we have to."

Justin frowned, his brow clouding with anger. "Two," he argued, his voice raising slightly. Since they had been on the road, spending every minute together trapped in the car, tensions ran high between everyone. "Joey, if we only get one room, we might as well sleep in the car again."

"I want to sleep in a bed," JC offered. "Or on the floor. Anywhere that's not a cramped bucket seat. At least you two got the back seat."

Justin glared at JC. "You're not helping. I want a room to ourselves."

Lance stepped behind Justin, placing a hand on his shoulder. "Maybe one room will be okay," he offered, his eyes pleading with the others not to start something, not here, not now.

Turning away, Justin sulked in the corner by the coffeepot, crossing his arms as he leaned against the wall. In the security mirror Joey could see Justin's eyes narrow as he threw an angry glance back in their direction. Lance leaned against Justin. "I wanted us to be alone," Justin said, his voice tight. "That's the whole reason for us stopping here."

Lance whispered something in Justin's ear. Joey couldn't hear what it was, but it brought a slight smile to Justin's face. When they kissed, Joey turned away, forcing himself to grin at the woman behind the counter. "One room," he said again, pulling out his wallet. This would be a long night.

Room 213 was up on the second level. As Joey opened the door, Justin pushed inside, dropping his bag on the bed furthest from the door. JC clicked on the light and bent over the air conditioner, turning it up full blast. Joey frowned at the full sized beds -- the woman had assured him they were queen sized, but if they were, they were the smallest Joey ever saw. Lance sat on the edge of Justin's bed and looked up at Joey expectantly. "Well?" he asked. "You going to close the door or just stand there all day?"

Joey closed the door, locking it automatically without thinking. Any neighborhood where they needed bullet-proof glass in the lobby of an Econolodge wasn't a safe one, by his standards. Beside him, JC sighed. "We're both not going to fit on this bed."

"We'll fit," Joey said, a little angry.

JC frowned. "Joey --" he started, but Joey cut him off.

"You don't want to sleep with me, fine. You share a bed with Justin. I'll sleep with Lance."

Without warning, Justin was in Joey's face, pushing him back roughly. "Just what the fuck is that supposed to mean?" he asked bitterly.

Joey smiled at him quickly, and then Lance forced his way between them, holding Justin back as he frowned at Joey. "Stop it, you two. Right now." In a lower voice, he said, "He's just kidding, Justin." Lance looked at Joey with distrustful eyes, and Joey wanted to cry.

He sighed and ran a hand over his eyes. "I'm just kidding," he repeated, his voice emotionless. He flopped down on his bed and picked up the remote control, clicking on the TV. He was determined to ignore all of them until he fell asleep. As Justin and Lance settled in, unpacking their bags, he felt Justin's evil glare on him but he kept his gaze on the TV. As he flicked through the channels, JC stepped in front of him. "Get out of my way," Joey said. "I can't see."

"I'm going out for some food," JC replied. "What do you want?"

Joey shrugged. "Anything as long as it isn't that shit down in the lobby."

That brought a slight smile to JC's face. "How about Chinese?"

"Why did I know you'd say that?" Joey asked. He waved his hand, and JC moved aside so Joey could see the TV. "Get a little bit of everything."

"I want those noodles," Justin said from the safety of his bed, where Lance sat reading his book.

JC looked over at them. "Lance?" he asked. "What about you?"

Lance shrugged. "Maybe some pepper steak. Or that general guy's chicken." He thought for a minute, and then offered, "Or something with snow peas in it."

"Like I said," Joey replied, "a little bit of everything. You need some money?"

JC shook his head. "I've got it. Just don't kill each other before I get back."

Justin laughed. "Yeah, then you'd have to eat it all yourself. Joey could do that, but I don't know about you."

Joey ignored the bait for another fight. JC glanced down at him once more before heading out, the latch loud in the room as the door closed behind him. When Lance opened his mouth to say something, Joey muttered, "Just shut up, you two, okay? You think this is fun for me, either?"

He turned his attention back to the TV, ignoring both of them. The thought of sleeping in one bed with Lance an arm's length away, lying with Justin, was almost too much to bear, but Joey wasn't going to let it get to him. The fact that he and JC were going to sleep in the same bed made him uneasy -- he hadn't forgotten the kiss they shared one night, over a month ago now, and the way JC had looked at him after Joey pulled away.

He sighed. Maybe this wasn't a good idea after all.

All I Ever Wanted
60. Stopping for the Night
Part 2 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Justin lay down on the hotel bed beside Lance, cuddling close to him. Lance draped an arm around Justin's shoulders, his nose buried in a paperback book. On the other bed Joey was watching TV, studiously ignoring them. An uneasy tension filled the room as they waited for JC to return with dinner. Justin ran a hand around Lance's waist, hugging him. He wished Joey had left with JC -- he really wanted to spend a few uninterrupted minutes with Lance. The whole reason he suggested a hotel in the first place was so they could be alone, and what did Joey do? Book one room. Sure, they got to share a bed, but they couldn't do anything with Joey and JC in the same room.

He sighed. Damn this whole trip. He'd be happy once they got to California -- Chris was staying at Dani's house and she was bound to have enough rooms for them to snag one for themselves. In a low voice so Joey wouldn't overhear, Justin whispered, "If only I could get you alone ..."

Lance smiled. "What would you do?" he asked. Joey glanced over at them and then turned back to the TV.

Justin snuggled closer to Lance. "I'd lick you all over," he said, grinning.

"What's stopping you?" Lance asked, setting the book aside. Justin nodded over at Joey, who sighed loudly. Squeezing Justin's shoulder, Lance suggested, "How about a shower?"

"Now?" Justin asked, excitement coursing through his groin, swelling his cock. Lance, naked, water pounding on their bodies. Justin sat up and grinned. "Maybe that's not such a bad idea."

Lance stood up and stretched. "Then come on." He headed for the bathroom, Justin following him. When Joey looked at them, Justin smiled wickedly. "We'll be right back, Joe," he said.

Holding the bathroom door open, Lance slapped Justin's butt. "Be nice," he admonished, closing the door behind them.

Justin pouted. "I am being nice," he replied. "I didn't tell him what we were going to do. I just said we'd be back."

Lance closed the toilet lid and sat down, taking Justin's hands in his. "This is kinda small," he whispered. The bathtub took up most of the room, and the toilet faced the sink. With the door closed they had privacy, but no space to move around.

Justin knelt down on the floor in front of Lance. "It'll do," he replied, pulling Lance into his lap. Lance straddled Justin's legs and sat down, his weight comfortable and warm on Justin's thighs. Justin ran his

hands around Lance's waist, hugging him close, while Lance cradled Justin's cheeks in his hands, staring into his deep blue eyes. Leaning forward, Lance kissed Justin hungrily, and Justin's hands slipped beneath Lance's shirt, rubbing his back. Justin pulled back long enough to tug Lance's shirt off, and then Lance helped him out of his shirt, as well. He moaned as Lance's hands caressed his nipples erect, tickling his belly as they unbuttoned Justin's jeans.

Lance kissed Justin again. "What about that shower?" he asked quietly. Justin's hands held onto the waistband of his pants as Lance stood up. Reaching over Justin, he turned on the water in the tub. Justin unzipped Lance's jeans and pulled them down, pressing his cheek against the bulge in Lance's briefs, his hands cupping Lance's buttocks.

As steam began to heat up the small room, Lance stepped back and pulled down his briefs. Justin grinned at Lance's already hard erection and, standing up, pulled off his own jeans and boxers in one fluid move. His cock throbbed achingly as his gaze lingered over Lance's smooth body. Tugging the shower curtain across the rod, Lance stepped into the bathtub. The sound of water spraying against the vinyl curtain filled the room as Lance turned on the showerhead. "You coming?" Lance called through the curtain.

Justin stepped into the tub, the water hitting his body with a soothing intensity. Lance stood against the wall, a smoldering look in his eyes that enflamed Justin's senses. Water dripped off Lance's chest, beaded in his hair and eyelashes. Justin reached out and touched Lance, his hands tentative on Lance's chest. "Kiss me," Lance whispered.

Leaning into him, Justin complied. The shower fell upon his back as he pulled Lance to him, their cocks rubbing together with a sweet pain that left Justin breathless and wanting. He felt Lance's thigh press against his hip as Lance propped his leg up on the edge of the tub, behind Justin. Justin's hands slipped lower, lifting Lance up slightly as his fingers slid inside Lance's ass, hot and warm and oh so tight. Bending his knees a little, Justin eased his hard length beneath Lance's balls and into him, thrusting gently. Lance moaned his name as Justin's swollen erection filled him.

Justin covered Lance's mouth with his own, kissing and licking as he moved against him. Lance's hard dick rubbed between them, and Justin thrust slowly, savoring the feel of Lance, tight and hot around his aching cock. Lance moaned again, louder. His hands gripped Justin's muscular biceps, squeezing in rhythm with Justin's thrusts. "Sshh," Justin admonished, breathing raggedly against Lance's neck as he thrust harder, faster, into Lance. He kissed Lance's neck, his collarbone, his throat, and he felt a hot wetness spread along his lower belly as Lance came. After a few more thrusts, Justin's own orgasm tore through him as he came, too.

He kissed Lance's face, his lips, his eyelashes, kissing away drops of warm water mingled with sweat. Around them the shower cascaded, pounding their bodies with a hard heat that enveloped them. Lance sighed, content to rest in Justin's arms. "Now we can get some sleep tonight," Lance whispered against Justin's chest. "All that sexual tension building between us these past few days is finally gone."

"I still wish we had our own room," Justin said, hugging Lance against

him. "This trip is turning out to be a nightmare."

Lance laughed softly. "If only Joey and JC would stop arguing," he said.

Justin laughed. "That'll be the day," he said. Kissing Lance's cheek, he whispered, "Let's leave them outside, okay? I don't feel like talking about them right now. They're the last thing on my mind."

"Oh?" Lance asked, smiling. "And what's on your mind?"

"You," Justin said, thrusting his softening member deeper into Lance. "You, you, and forever you."

Lance grinned and kissed Justin with such fervor that Justin felt his cock begin to stiffen again.

All I Ever Wanted
60. Stopping for the Night
Part 3 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

JC pushed open the hotel room door, two huge bags of Chinese food in his hands. He kicked the door shut behind him and set the bags down on the desk by the TV. Joey sat up on the bed. "What'd you get?" he asked, thumbing down the volume on the remote.

Pulling carryout containers out of the bags, JC replied, "Fried rice, lo mien, some of this, some of that. What do you want?" He glanced at the other bed in the room. "Where'd they go?"

Joey jerked his head towards the bathroom. "Fucking in the shower," he said.

"Joey!" JC cried. "Do you have to be so damn crude?"

Joey shrugged. "Sorry," he said, sounding anything but. "At least they'll get it out of their system now and we won't have to listen to them groping each other all night long."

JC threw a handful of napkins at Joey. They hit his chest and landed in his lap. "Shut up," he said. He didn't want to hear Joey's mouth right now -- he was happy for Justin and Lance, and he understood the frustration they must be feeling, not wanting to do anything in front of their friends, in front of Joey, knowing the way he felt about Lance. And all Joey could do was complain. "What do you want to eat?"

Standing up, Joey came over to the table, where JC was setting out the carryout containers. Joey opened a few of the containers, and then leaned past JC for a fork. JC studied the angry set of Joey's jaw and sighed. "Joe," he asked softly, reaching out to touch Joey's shoulder, "why are we always at each other's throats anymore?"

Joey shrugged away. "I don't know," he mumbled, scooping out a large helping of fried rice and stuffing it into his mouth. A few stray grains of rice stuck to the hair on his chin, and JC laughed. Joey looked at him, narrowing his eyes. "What?"

"You've got rice --" JC reached out and brushed his fingers along Joey's chin, brushing away the rice. Joey swallowed his mouthful of food and watched JC carefully. JC let his fingers linger on Joey's chin, his gaze on Joey's lips, and remembered the way it had felt as Joey's tongue slipped into his mouth back in DC, when Joey kissed him.

Behind them the bathroom door opened, and Justin and Lance stumbled out into the room, laughing, small towels wrapped around their waists. JC pulled away and stepped back from Joey, clearing his throat. "Hey, guys," he said, sweeping an arm at the desk. "Dinner's served."

"Thanks," Lance said. "You know we didn't get any free shampoo with this room?"

"And nothing but a tiny bar of soap," Justin added. "These towels don't even say Econolodge on them."

Joey snorted. "This isn't the Hilton," he said, digging into the rice again. He didn't look up as he shoveled another forkful into his mouth.

Turning his back towards them, Justin untied his towel, letting it fall to the floor. JC shielded his eyes. "Justin, please!" he said playfully. "We don't want to lose our appetites."

"Shut up," Justin replied, dressing in a pair of boxers and a t-shirt. Lance dropped his towel, too, but JC saw the way Joey turned slightly, watching Lance's reflection in the mirror as he hurried to get dressed, and he nudged Joey's foot with his. "Stop it," he hissed.

"Stop what?" Justin asked, coming to the desk for something to eat.

JC glared at Joey, and then took the container of rice out of his hands. "Stop eating all the rice. There's other stuff here." When Joey looked at him, JC widened his eyes and nodded at Justin, hoping Joey would catch his drift. He didn't want any more arguing tonight.

Joey sighed and opened another container. "Lo mien," he said, passing it to Justin. "What do you want, Lance?"

Sitting down on his bed, Lance frowned. "Hmm, anything spicy?" he asked.

Justin picked up a container of something in a red sauce. "This looks spicy," he said, going back to the bed and sitting next to Lance.

After the food was gone and infomercials ran on every channel, they decided to call it a night. JC clicked off the bathroom light and waited for his eyes to adjust to the darkness before walking over to his bed. He could barely see Justin, hugging Lance close, the two of them one shape beneath the covers. JC navigated around their bed and then stumbled into the other one, his hands out to steady himself as he felt his way around the bed. He felt Joey's legs beneath the covers and pulled back quickly, his cheeks heating up. He was glad it was dark.

Crawling under the covers, he tried to keep to the edge of the bed, but his feet brushed against Joey's legs and he almost tumbled out of bed trying to scoot away. Suddenly strong, soft hands gripped his waist, pulling him back. "You gonna sleep in the bed or on the floor?" Joey whispered.

"I didn't want to crowd you," JC replied. Beneath Joey's warm touch, his skin heated up, and he rolled over on his back. Joey's hand slid across his stomach, tickling him. He snickered softly and pushed it away.

Joey leaned closer, resting his head on JC's pillow. His hot breath fanned JC's ear, and JC's lips burned with the memory of Joey's kiss. Closing his eyes, he willed himself to ignore Joey, telling himself he was tired and that Joey didn't like him and that he didn't like Joey, at least not in that way, but why the hell couldn't they have gotten two rooms? Justin and Lance in one, he and Joey in separate beds in another. He'd have to insist if they stopped again.

Warm, dry lips brushed against his cheek. "Good night," Joey whispered.

"Good night," JC said, choking out the words.

Joey rolled back onto his side of the bed. Where Joey's breath had caressed his skin, JC felt cold. He rolled over on his side, away from Joey, and resisted the urge to scoot back any closer.

Then Joey's hands were on his waist again, tentative, unsure. JC squeezed his eyes shut. Eventually he managed to fall asleep, Joey's warm touch comforting in the dark.

All I Ever Wanted
61. Hearts Do Mend
Part 1 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

Lance remembered the first two or three beers, but then the bottles faded one into the next and it seemed the one in his hand never emptied completely. He remembered Justin and JC leaving for a MMC reunion of some kind, and he remembered Joey asking him to go to this party, but he didn't know where it was they ended up. Chris and Dani came along, but he hadn't seen them since he walked in the door. And now he couldn't see much at all -- the house was dark and loud and there were people everywhere, and the only constants in this crazy night was the beer in his hand and Joey at his side, drinking and laughing and flirting.

And Lance couldn't help but flirt back.

It began innocently enough. Joey smiled at him, a hand on Lance's back, and then after a few drinks Lance began to lean into Joey's touch, laughing at everything Joey said, looking into those deep brown eyes and blushing when Joey leaned down over him like he was the only person here, despite the crowded rooms and blaring music. By the time midnight rolled around, some of the people had migrated outside, where it was cooler, but Lance liked the heat in the house and the feel of Joey against his side and he leaned against the hallway leading back to the bedrooms. A steady stream of people pushed by them, heading for secluded rooms, if there were any left. Joey stepped in front of Lance, shielding him from those jostling to get by, and he smiled down at Lance as he placed his hands on the wall on either side of Lance's head. His own longneck bottle of beer was held in one unsteady hand, the curve of glass cool where it rested against Lance's fevered brow. Lance took another sip from his own bottle and studied Joey's face, his gaze lingering on Joey's lips. "So," he said, shouting a little to be heard over the noise of the party. His head buzzed pleasantly.

"So," Joey replied. His eyes took in Lance's spiked hair, his sweaty skin, his beautiful light eyes that didn't quite focus when he looked around. Joey stepped closer to Lance, whose own bottle of beer pressed between them. He bent down slightly, meaning to say something else, something funny, something to make Lance laugh again. It was such an easy thing to do tonight, it seemed, and Joey was drunk on the beer and the sound of Lance's laughter and the feel of Lance whenever he managed to touch him.

And then Lance's arms slid over Joey's shoulders, around his neck, and Lance pulled him closer, his lips brushing Joey's lightly.

As Lance started to let go, Joey seized the opportunity and hungrily pressed his mouth to Lance's. Running a hand behind Lance's waist, he pushed Lance against the wall, his tongue forcing Lance's lips apart. Lance moaned against Joey, the bottle slipping out of his hands as Joey's tongue invaded his mouth, licking over his teeth and around his own startled tongue. Joey's hips ground against Lance's, and Lance could feel

a hardness against his crotch that scared him. He tried to pull away but he was caught between the wall and Joey, and neither of them seemed willing to let him go.

Joey's hand roamed Lance's chest, feeling his nipples beneath his thin sweater before slipping down. Lance felt fear rise in his throat as Joey cupped his dick through his jeans, his touch causing Lance to harden in spite of himself. "Joey," Lance managed, trying to push Joey away.

Moaning Lance's name, Joey kissed him again, his tongue insistent, demanding. His hand fumbled with the button on Lance's jeans, and then slipped beneath the thick denim to fondle his stiffening cock through the thin fabric of his briefs. "Joey, no," Lance whispered, trying to pull away.

Joey hugged him closer, his hand squeezing Lance's erection. "Yes," he whispered. "Oh God, yes."

"No," Lance said again, turning his face away. But Joey's lips followed his, trailing across his cheek until his tongue found Lance's mouth. Joey's hand slid up from his pants, beneath his sweater, rubbing against his nipples. "Joey, stop it."

Joey thrust against him, and Lance closed his eyes in lust and frustration. "You don't want me to stop now, do you?" Joey asked, breathless. "Please don't make me stop."

Suddenly Lance felt nauseous. "Justin --" he gasped, hating himself. He pushed Joey away, ignoring the pain in those wonderful eyes, and stumbled down the hall. "I'm going to be sick," he said.

"Lance," Joey pleaded, placing his hands on Lance's shoulders. "Lance, please --"

"Joey --" Lance choked. God, he thought wildly, what am I doing here? I didn't just ... He sobbed. "Oh God, Joey, I --" He pushed through the crowd, heading for the exit.

"Lance, wait!" Joey cried, but his voice was lost in the noise and confusion swirling through Lance's mind. All Lance could think of was Justin. Fuck, he cursed himself. Once he made it outside, he zipped up his jeans and screamed it to the stars. "Fuck!"

All I Ever Wanted
61. Hearts Do Mend
Part 2 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

Lance was waiting in their room when Justin came home. The clock on the bedside table said it was 2:30, and even though Lance had been sitting here, in this same chair, for the last two hours, he still reeked of alcohol and smoke and Joey. Oh God, Joey, he thought bitterly as Justin opened the door. He looked up, saw the slump of Justin's shoulders, and knew Justin had had a rough evening. And he was only going to make it worse.

"Hey, honey," Justin said, closing the door behind him. He tossed his jacket on the bed.

"Justin," Lance began, not quite sure where to go from there. He sighed.

Justin narrowed his eyes. "What's wrong?" he asked. When Lance didn't reply, his voice rose slightly. "Lance? What's the matter?"

Lance closed his eyes and sighed. "Justin, I love you --"

"But?" Justin prompted.

"I was drunk," Lance said, babbling. "It's not an excuse, I know, but it's the truth. I was drunk, and Joey was drunk, and Justin, I swear to God I would never do anything to hurt you --"

Justin's face closed up, his eyes hardening. "What the hell happened?"

Lance looked up at Justin, tears glistening in his eyes. He vowed not to cry them. "I kissed him," he said softly. "Oh my God, Justin, I'm so sorry --"

A muscle in Justin's jaw twitched. "Kissed?" he asked, his voice breaking. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Kissed? Joey?" Lance nodded. Without warning Justin grabbed the first thing at hand -- the receiver to the cordless phone in their room -- and threw it against the wall with such force that Lance cringed when it shattered to the floor. "Fuck!" Justin said, his voice breaking again. "Lance, what the fuck ...?" He trailed off in a sob.

Lance's arms ached to hold him. Standing up, he reached for Justin. "I'm sorry --" he began, but Justin shrugged away.

"Don't touch me," he whispered. He didn't look at Lance.

The words pierced Lance's heart, and the tears he swore he wouldn't cry overflowed, trailing down his cheeks. Don't touch me -- "Oh God," Lance pleaded. He didn't know if he was praying or cursing. He had never felt so alone.

"What else happened?" Justin asked, regaining his composure.

"Justin --"

"What else?" he asked through clenched teeth. When he looked at Lance, his eyes were hard and emotionless.

I've lost him forever, Lance thought bitterly. My fault, all my fault. He wanted to ram his head into the wall and beat out the few moments with Joey, forget the memory of Joey's lips on his, the spicy taste of Joey's tongue, the way just a few kisses, a few gropes, managed to get him hard and how for a second he didn't want to stop, didn't want to pull away, but then he had thought of Justin and thought he was going to throw up. "He touched me," Lance whispered, turning away. He ran a shaky hand across his brow and sighed. "Justin, if I could take it all back, I would. I am so sorry. Please ..."

Justin glared at him, anger and betrayal written across his face. Lance searched those piercing blue eyes for something telling him everything would be okay, but all he saw was pain and he hated himself for putting it there. When Justin spoke again, his voice was thick with tears that shone unshed in his eyes. "Did you like it?" he asked gruffly. "Did it turn you on?"

"Oh fuck, Justin," Lance began, turning away, but Justin gripped his arms tightly, squeezing painfully. "Justin, you're hurting me --"

"Is he what you want?" Justin whispered angrily.

"No," Lance whispered back. "No, I want you. I want only you, Justin."

Releasing his grip on Lance, Justin pushed him back. "You sure have a funny way of showing it," he said as Lance stumbled against the bed. "Now what the fuck am I supposed to do? Just forget about this? Pretend it never happened?"

"I don't know," Lance admitted, sitting down on the edge of the bed. He rubbed his upper arms where Justin's hands were imprinted on his skin.

"Well, I don't know, either," Justin cried, and Lance cringed again.

"Keep it down," he whispered. He didn't want to wake the others up.

But Justin didn't care. "Keep it down?" he cried, raising his voice. "Fuck, Lance, you tell me that you and Joey got it on and I'm supposed to keep it down?"

Lance buried his head in his hands. "Justin, I'm sorry --"

"So you keep saying," Justin replied. He grabbed his jacket from the bed and headed for the door.

"Justin --" Lance watched as he threw open the door, banging it against the wall. "Where are you going? Justin, please --"

And then the door slammed shut, and Lance never thought he could feel so much pain and still be alive.

All I Ever Wanted
61. Hearts Do Mend
Part 3 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

The night air was cool against Justin's flushed skin. He walked quickly, long, angry strides taking him down the street, away from Dani's house, away from Lance and Joey and the thought of the two of them, drunk, kissing. He shoved his hands deep into his jacket pockets. His face was a mask, tight and angry and closed. His eyes burned, and when he blinked he felt tears spill down his cheeks. His lower lip trembled but he refused to cry. Oh, Lance, he thought bitterly, his heart twisting again with the image of Joey touching him.

"I was drunk --" That wasn't an excuse. But Justin knew Lance didn't hold his alcohol well. "Joey was drunk --" Justin snorted a thin, humorless laugh. That wasn't an uncommon occurrence. "Justin, I am so sorry --" Yeah? Justin thought bitterly. Well, I am, too.

He picked up his furious pace, walking off the anger that boiled through his veins, trying to clear his head. So what happens now? he thought. He didn't know. He was upset, yes. He felt betrayed, yes. He didn't know if he could trust Lance anymore. But he knew the way Joey felt for Lance, and if they were at a party, drinking, and Joey was flirting with Lance, laying that endless charm of his on thick, and Lance was drunk, then maybe it just happened. Joey had been hitting on Lance pretty hard lately, and Justin often wondered just how strong Lance was to hold off for so long. "I kissed him --" The words burned into Justin's mind. "Justin, I am so sorry --"

He didn't have to tell me, Justin thought suddenly. He could've been in bed when I came home and I would've cuddled up to him and never even knew --

But that didn't change what happened. Lance still kissed Joey. What the fuck was he going to do about it?

"Is he what you want?" Oh God, it had hurt to ask that, but he needed to know. He had seen the pain and fear and horror in Lance's eyes and knew the answer even before Lance said it. "No, I want you. I want only you, Justin."

"Yeah, right," he said softly into the night, but he knew it was true. The anger seeped away suddenly, leaving him shaky and weak. He knew Lance wanted him, and only him, and that this was just something that happened, something they'd have to work out between them, but something they could get past, given time. Ahead Dani's house loomed in the darkness, and Justin trudged up the steps onto the porch. If only Joey would stay away from Lance --

"Justin."

Justin's hand stopped on the doorknob. In the shadows of the porch

he saw Joey's silhouette, standing there, waiting for him. "What," Justin said, the anger flaring to life within him again.

Joey cleared his throat. "If it helps you any, feel free to beat the shit out of me."

Justin sighed. "It won't make me feel better," he admitted.

"Then maybe it'll help me," Joey replied.

"I don't give a fuck about you right now," Justin said, his voice hard. Before Joey could respond, he turned and glared at him. "Didn't I tell you to stop flirting with him? Didn't I tell you to stay away?"

"I know," Joey said softly.

"You know?" Justin asked, his voice rising. He pointed at the house. "Lance is crying his eyes out right now, my heart is breaking, and all you can say is you know?"

Joey sighed. "It's not his fault, Justin. Really. It was the beer and the noise and the crowd, and when he kissed me it was all the opening I needed. I couldn't stop myself. I had to have him. Don't you understand?"

"No, I don't," Justin said, turning away.

"No, you wouldn't," Joey replied bitterly. "You're never lonely, are you, Justin? You never lie awake at night and ache for someone to hold you, anyone, anyone at all. You never watch lovers hug and kiss and want that for yourself. You don't know what it's like to get shit-faced and lose control and hate yourself because you pushed someone too far, do you?"

"Shut up," Justin said.

"Justin, listen to me," Joey said. "I couldn't stop myself. That little, innocent kiss was all I needed to convince myself it was okay to kiss him back. I was drunk on the beer and the moment and him. You know what that's like, I'm sure. He's intoxicating."

"Shut up," Justin said again, louder. He didn't want to hear this.

Stepping out of the shadows, Joey glared at Justin. "Lance loves you. This was just a moment of weakness, for both of us. We can't be strong all the time, and I'm too damn weak to say no to him. If you let this tear you two apart, that's your loss," he hissed. "But don't think I won't be there to pick up the pieces. Don't think I won't try for him if you let him go."

"I hope you enjoyed tonight," Justin said, turning away. Opening the door, he stepped inside the house. "Because that's all you'll ever get of him. You hear me, Fatone? That's it. Touch him again and you're dead."

Justin navigated the dark house to his room. He sighed as he opened the door. Lance lay on his back in their bed, and Justin's heart stopped when he saw Lance's red eyes, his face mottled from crying. He was wearing a white undershirt, and though his legs were covered by blankets, Justin thought maybe he had on boxers, too. When was the last time we slept in clothes? Justin wondered. Oh God, how did it come to

this?

Lance watched him strip down to his undergarments, and then Justin crawled into bed beside him, his back to Lance. He clicked off the light and crossed his arms in front of his chest. In the darkness he felt Lance's hand on his shoulder, the touch tentative. When Lance spoke, his voice was thick from crying. "Justin ..." he whispered. "Can you ... can you forgive me?"

Eventually, Justin's heart whispered, but he just sighed shakily. Closing his eyes tightly, he said, "Not right now. Not tonight."

Lance sobbed softly and Justin felt hot tears course down his cheeks at the sound. Then he felt a warm heaviness against his back as Lance rolled over and leaned his head between Justin's shoulder blades. "I'm so sorry," he whispered again.

Me, too, Justin thought bitterly. Me, too.

All I Ever Wanted
61. Hearts Do Mend
Part 4 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

Lance aimed the hose into the bucket and pulled the trigger. A thin spray of water squirted into the bucket, foaming up into thick, soapy bubbles. It had been three days since the party, and even though Justin still shared his bed at night, the gap between them was a sea Lance didn't think he would ever be able to cross. Justin was civil to him, but when they talked it was in careful words, Lance eager to make amends, Justin not quite ready yet. My fault, Lance thought, watching the water overflow out of the bucket, soap lather racing away down the driveway. Jesus, this is all my fault.

When had they last kissed? Lance couldn't remember. Before the party, sometime, but Justin kept his distance and Lance ached to feel his touch again. It hurt to see the pain in Justin's eyes, and Lance didn't even want to think about Joey, who kept himself in his room and didn't say anything to anybody. JC knew what had happened, Lance was sure -- the first day Justin had spent hours in JC's room, and once or twice Lance heard yelling, so he was fairly certain Justin told JC. And Chris -- well, he had been at the party, had taken them all home, his worried eyes watching Lance and Joey in the rearview mirror. They sat on opposite ends of the back seat, as far away from each other as possible, and if Dani noticed anything, she didn't say a word. Chris had gone to Joey's room after it happened, while Lance waited in his own room for Justin. Dani asked Lance if there was anything she could do, and there wasn't, so she left. And then Justin came home. And all hell broke loose.

Lance cut off the water. Dropping the hose, he reached into the cold water and found the sponge floating in the bucket. As he pulled it out, wet and dripping and heavy, he wondered how many times he had said he was sorry. What would it take to make things right again? If they can be made right, he thought, fighting back a sob that choked his throat. He threw the sponge at Joey's car angrily. It landed on the trunk with a sloppy sound. Leaning over the back of the car, Lance began to scrub away the dirt and grime that had built up from their trip across country.

Inside the house, Justin watched Lance through the window. Lance wore only a pair of baggy shorts that hung low on his waist, exposing the band of his underwear, and Justin's heart quickened to see Lance's muscles flex beneath his pale skin. He ached to hold Lance in his arms, to kiss him and hug him and never let him go. But there was too much between them right now, keeping them apart. How will we ever get past this? Justin wondered. In his heart of hearts, he had already forgiven Lance. But he just couldn't bring himself to say the words. He knew Lance was giving him space, letting him work this through on his own time, waiting for him, but ... he didn't know how to tell him he wanted him back.

Justin slipped out of the house and stood in the shadows clinging to the corners of the garage. Out here he could smell the clean, medicinal

scent of the carwash soap, and he saw a colorful rainbow in the water staining the driveway. He watched Lance with a hooded expression, unsure of what to do.

Lance didn't notice Justin. He soaped up the car, working his way down the side, from the trunk to the hood. Every now and then he would stop and bend down, dunking the sponge into the bucket to wet it again. Then he would slop it against the car, flinging soap and water and dirt. He tackled the car again, rubbing the sponge in large, angry circles, trying to scrub away the guilt and pain he felt inside.

He's never going to forgive me, Lance thought bitterly. He tried to imagine a life with Justin there but not there, not sharing his bed, not sharing his life. He just couldn't picture it. He didn't think he could make it alone. He thought of the upcoming album, the upcoming tour, all of the shows and interviews and photo shoots and concerts -- his head began to spin, thinking of going through it all without Justin beside him. He'd have to quit the band, he was sure of it. There was no way he could pretend they were still a happy group of friends when he couldn't love Justin the way he wanted to love him. And it was all his fault.

Leaning his forehead against the hot metal of the car roof, Lance closed his eyes and began to cry. "Oh, God," he sobbed, squeezing the sponge tightly in his hand. He didn't want to let the others down but without Justin, he didn't think he could go on. He didn't know what else he would do, except live with the knowledge that all the pain and heartache was all his fault.

Suddenly strong arms wrapped around his waist, and he felt cool lips on his hot skin, kissing the back of his neck. "Lance, don't," Justin whispered. "Don't cry, please."

Lance turned in Justin's embrace and ran his hands around Justin's neck. Burying his face in Justin's shoulder, Lance felt the tears rack through his body. "I'm so sorry," he whispered.

Justin's hands rubbed his back, hugging him close. "I know," he replied. "I forgive you. I know you didn't mean to --" He sighed. "Please don't cry."

But Lance couldn't stop. I forgive you -- the words echoed in Lance's mind, releasing the pain and the anger and the hurt. His legs felt rubbery and he struggled to breathe. The tears turned to tears of relief. I forgive you --

"I love you," Lance sobbed. "Justin, I swear it, I will never hurt you again. I love you."

"I love you, too," Justin said, his voice low and soothing. He kissed the tears on Lance's cheeks, his touch feathery on Lance's skin. Then his lips found Lance's, salty from Lance's tears, warm and impossibly sweet. Lance let Justin's kisses wipe away the memory of Joey and the past few days spent apart. As they kissed, Lance clung to him and vowed never to let him go.

All I Ever Wanted
62. So Alone
by NSyncGrrl

The bedroom was dark. The light was off -- Joey hadn't turned it on in so long, he no longer knew if it worked. The blinds were closed, the curtains drawn -- the clock on the dresser said it was 1:48 but he didn't know if that was in the afternoon or the wee hours of the morning. He lay on his bed in the same t-shirt and boxers he changed into when he came home from the party. How long ago was that? He didn't know. His mind tried counting back but the days all blended into the same darkness, the same thoughts, and he didn't know. He just didn't know.

I've fucked everything up, he thought. This was the litany that ran through his mind over and over again, the way some people subconsciously repeat the Hail Mary when times are tough. Justin hated him -- he knew that. It had been so apparent the last time they talked, the way Justin glared at him as if he were nothing but garbage, the way Justin spat his words at him as if he wasn't worth the time or the energy for a more civil tone of voice.

Lance hated him, he was sure. Lance, his mind sobbed, and fresh tears spilled from the corners of his eyes as he blinked at the ceiling and tried to remember how Lance had smiled at him that night, how it felt to hold him, to kiss him, to feel him -- a flame of arousal flared through Joey's groin at the memory, and he hated himself for it. But the taste of Lance was still in his mouth, his arms ached to hold Lance again, and Joey knew he would never be able to let that go. He didn't know if he wanted to let it go.

But he had to. Oh God, if he wanted to get past this thing, he had to forget. Forget the feel of forbidden flesh, hidden from view. Forget the feel of soft lips on his, the taste of a sweet tongue, the warmth and the hardness and the gentle kisses that was Lance. Why couldn't he be stronger? He promised he wouldn't come between them -- he promised -- and look what he did. I've fucked everything up.

And it was so hard to see Lance every day, his slow smile, his quirky hair, his beautiful, deep eyes. The way his eyes lit up when Joey flirted with him, the way his body moved, the way he sang, the way he touched Justin that made Joey's body ache for those same small touches. The way he laughed, the way he sighed, the way he would sit for hours and not say a word, and when he did it was always the right one, the thing that needed to be said. How could Joey see him day in and day out and not fall in love over and over again?

Maybe he should leave. The group didn't need him anyway. Who the fuck was he? Joey Fatone -- which one again? Not the lead singer, not the heartthrob, not the one all the girls screamed for and cried for and dreamed about at night. Not the highest voice, not the lowest -- that was Lance, his mind whispered, sweet, tender Lance. So he got one solo here and there, so what? JC could always sing his parts. Maybe it was time to move on, call it quits. It's been real, it's been fun, he thought bitterly. But

now it's not real fun anymore.

A soft knock broke through his thoughts. "Go away," he muttered, and the guttural sound of his voice scared him. When was the last time he spoke? Or ate, for that matter? Not that he was in any danger of wasting away -- it would take longer than a few days to shrivel up Joey Fatone. Clearing his throat, he said, a little louder, "Leave me alone."

The door opened a crack, and bright light spilled into the room, falling on the bed. He glanced over at Chris, peeking inside. "Can I come in?" he asked softly.

"No," Joey replied, turning back to his study of the ceiling.

Chris ignored him and stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. "I brought you something to eat," he said, his voice still gentle, as if he were talking to someone in intensive care.

Joey glanced at him again, this time noticing the McDonald's bag and can of soda in Chris's hands. "I'm not hungry," he whispered, but he caught a whiff of something fried and his stomach rumbled.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Chris smiled. "Liar," he said, setting the soda down on the bedside table. Opening the bag, he reached inside and pulled out a cheeseburger. "Here," he said, unwrapping it. "You need to eat something."

Joey looked at the burger in Chris's hands and sighed. Closing his eyes, he whispered, "Why are you doing this to me?"

"Doing what?" Chris asked.

"Being so nice," Joey replied. "Don't you hate me, too?"

"No one hates you, Joe," Chris said softly.

Joey snorted. "Yeah," he said. "Have you talked to Justin lately?"

"Just a few minutes ago," Chris said. He held the burger out to Joey.

Joey's eyes shifted to Chris's face. "What did he say?" he whispered.

Chris shrugged. "Nothing much. He and Lance made up. They washed your car. You're not his favorite person in the world right now but he did ask about you."

"What did he say?" Joey asked.

"He wanted to know when you were coming out of your room," Chris replied. "Now do you want this sandwich or not?"

Joey sighed. "He just wants to kick my ass," he said. He wanted to ask about Lance but didn't have the courage. He didn't want to hear what Lance might have to say about him.

"If that's all he wanted, then why wait?" Chris asked, and Joey frowned, thinking about it. "Why not storm in here and beat you senseless while you're lying here in your underwear, crying at the ceiling?" Joey

blushed. "You look like shit, Joe, and right now I think even Dani could kick your ass. If that's all Justin wanted to do, what's stopping him?"

Good question, Joey thought. He looked at the burger in Chris's hand, and his stomach growled again. Before he could say anything else, though, Chris placed the warm sandwich to Joey's lips and pressed gently. "Eat up," he said, and Joey opened his lips, the bread and meat and warm, runny ketchup filling his mouth as the scent of thick cheese filled his nose. He took a large bite and Chris pulled the burger back, watching Joey chew. When Joey reached for the burger, Chris said, "Maybe you should sit up."

Joey pushed himself up and scooted back against the pillows. Taking the sandwich from Chris, he devoured it in another two bites. Then Chris handed him a second one from the bag, which he ate just as quickly. Popping open the can of soda, Chris suggested, "Slow down."

"I'm starving," Joey admitted, gulping down half the can in one swallow.

Chris studied him. "When's the last time you ate?" he asked.

Joey shrugged. "What day is it?"

"Wednesday," Chris said. Joey thought back and groaned. The party had been Saturday night -- he had let four days slip away while he lay here in his self-imposed stupor.

"God," he said, running a hand down his face. He felt the unruly hair at his chin and wondered just how horrible he looked. "I must look awful."

Chris grinned. "Well, I wouldn't plan on winning any beauty contests if I were you," he said playfully. Joey finished the rest of the soda and lay back down on the bed. "You coming back to the land of the living anytime soon?"

"I can't," Joey whispered, rolling over onto his side. "You got any fries in there?" he asked, poking at the McDonald's bag.

"Almost forgot," Chris said, pulling out a large container overflowing with French fries. Joey took a handful and stuffed them in his mouth. They were limp and hot and salty, and they tasted wonderful. Setting the empty bag on the floor, Chris stretched out on the bed beside Joey and laid his head down on the other pillow. He watched Joey's face as he ate, watching the way his jaw moved as he chewed, the way his throat worked when he swallowed. Reaching out, he brushed the hair back from Joey's brow and said softly, "Joey, we've got to work this out."

Joey rolled onto his back, away from Chris's touch. "I don't think we can," he said. Finishing up the fries, he admitted, "Maybe I need to just go home."

"For a few days?" Chris asked. "Is that what you need right now?"

"For ever," Joey said. He rolled over again, his back to Chris, and set the empty fry container on the other bedside table. "Maybe I need to just leave."

"Fuck," he heard Chris whisper, and then the bed shifted as Chris moved closer. When he spoke again, his mouth was against Joey's ear, his words breathy and hot, and Joey remembered the way Lance felt in his arms and he wanted to cry. "Joe, you're not leaving the group."

"What else am I supposed to do?" Joey whispered.

Chris touched Joey's waist, his hand warm through the thin t-shirt Joey wore. He rubbed a gentle pattern into Joey's hip, his touch soft and comforting. Then his hand ran across Joey's stomach, slipping beneath the shirt to rub along Joey's chest. His other hand eased beneath Joey, until Chris held him in his arms, and he pulled Joey against him and rested his head on Joey's broad back. "So, what? You're running away?"

Joey sighed. Chris's body was pressed tight against his, and through the thin material of his boxers he could feel the hard zipper of Chris's jeans on his butt. Suddenly he felt a stirring in his groin, and he closed his eyes in frustration. Great, Fatone, he thought. Let's piss off Dani, while we're at it. Can't you find someone who isn't with anyone else? "Joey, listen to me," Chris said, and Joey felt the words reverberate through his chest as Chris spoke. "It was just a little kiss --"

"It was more than that," Joey said angrily. "I touched him, Chris. I unbuttoned his pants and held his dick in my hand. He said no and I wouldn't stop. I couldn't stop. I kept kissing him until he managed to get away."

Chris rubbed Joey's stomach lightly. "Remember back when I got mad at Dani?" he asked.

Joey nodded. It was the first night Chris kissed him. God, I'm such a slut, Joey thought bitterly. "Yeah," he whispered.

"She spent the night with a friend of hers," he said. "A male friend. Someone she works with, sees everyday, someone who was here for her when I wasn't. She says they didn't have sex, but they came damn close. And it still hurts me to think about it."

"But you forgave her," Joey pointed out. After a moment, when Chris didn't reply, he asked, "Didn't you?"

"We're working on that," Chris admitted. "I ... we're still working on that."

Joey bit his lip. "If you can't get over something like that, what makes you think Justin will get over what I did to Lance?"

"Because you didn't do much," Chris said. "And you were both drunk. Dani wasn't. It was just the two of them, alone, and ..." He trailed off and hugged Joey tighter. "Joe, it wasn't that bad, what you did. Trust me. Justin will see that eventually and then he'll be able to forgive you, too."

"I doubt it," Joey whispered.

"Why don't you come out and see for yourself?" Chris asked.

"I'm not ready," Joey replied. "I can't face them, not yet."

They lay together for a little while longer, and despite the pain in his heart and the tightness in his chest, Joey was grateful for Chris's company. He ran his hands along Chris's arms and let himself be held, let the touch be comforting. When someone knocked on the door, he said, "Go away," because he didn't want Chris to pull away and leave him all alone again.

But the door pushed open, and Dani stepped into the dark room. "Chris?" she asked, tentative. With the light from the hallway behind her, she probably couldn't see into the room very well, but she had to notice their legs, pressed so close together, at the foot of the bed where a sliver of light fell.

"Right here," Chris replied. Joey was surprised when he didn't let him go. "What do you need?"

She sighed. "If I'm interrupting something --" she started, but Joey spoke up.

"No," he said, unwrapping Chris's arms from around him. Sitting up, he blinked at the light and said, "Thanks for the food, Chris. You don't have to stay any longer."

Chris sat up, too. "You okay?" he asked, studying Joey.

Joey glanced at Dani, shifting anxiously from foot to foot in the doorway. "Better," he admitted. "And thanks."

Chris reached out and squeezed his shoulder. "No problem," he whispered. Before Joey could say anything else, Chris leaned forward and kissed his cheek quickly, his lips barely brushing Joey's.

"You better go," Joey whispered back. "Or Dani really will kick my ass."

Chris grinned. "Chris?" Dani asked again, and he leaned into the light. "Coming," he replied, pushing himself off the bed. He stopped at the door and looked back at Joey. "When you're ready," he said softly, "remember I'm here for you."

Hot tears filled Joey's eyes again, and he brushed them away angrily as Chris closed the door.

All I Ever Wanted
63. Making Amends
by NSyncGrrl

"Pete Postlethwaite," Justin said, squinting to read the tiny credits on the television screen. "What else has he been in?"

Lance shifted his legs in Justin's lap until his foot pressed against Justin's crotch. "He looks familiar," he said, watching Justin's expression guardedly. It was late and the others had gone out to a movie -- well, everyone but Joey, who was still locked up in his room in his self-imposed exile. Lance didn't want to go out, so he and Justin stayed home, watching TV and talking low and getting to know each other all over again. Justin wanted to take things slow, and Lance was letting him handle everything in his own time. They were cool again, kissing and touching and holding each other close, but Justin didn't want to rush into the sex part of their relationship right yet, and Lance respected that, for the most part. Justin wanted to make sure that Lance knew what he wanted, and that what he wanted was Justin, before they went any farther. But he had to admit, they made up earlier in the week and Justin didn't think he could hold out much longer. The way Lance looked at him sometimes, when he didn't think Justin noticed, made his groin ache sweetly, and he wanted to feel Lance inside of him again. So maybe it was a good thing the others were gone for the evening. Maybe it would allow them a chance to really patch things up between them.

Now they had just finished watching a movie on HBO and couldn't place one of the actors. They sat on the couch, Justin at one end, Lance stretched out along the length with his feet propped up on the arm of the couch, his legs in Justin's lap. Justin rubbed his hands along Lance's bare legs, enjoying the feel of Lance's hair and skin beneath his touch. "I swear I've seen him before," he said, lost in thought.

Smiling at Justin's touch, Lance said, "He's one of those character actors. Been in everything."

Justin grinned at him. "Then why can't we think of one movie he's been in that we've seen?"

Lance ran one of his feet along Justin's thigh. "Because we've got other things on our mind," he whispered, his gaze smoldering as he looked at Justin.

God, Justin thought suddenly, I love him. The clarity and depth of the emotion staggered him -- despite what had happened with Joey, or maybe because of it, he loved Lance more than before, more than he ever thought possible. Lance saw something in his eyes that made him blush slightly. "Justin?" he asked, his voice soft. "What's on your mind?"

"You," Justin admitted. He lifted one of Lance's legs and kissed his calf. Lance giggled at the feel of Justin's lips on his leg. Grinning, Justin opened his mouth and nipped lightly at Lance's skin, his teeth pulling at skin and hair gently.

Lance tried to pull away, laughing, but Justin held him tight. "Justin!" he cried, twisting his leg to get away. Justin's tongue licked out and wet a small patch of Lance's leg. Giggling, Lance said, "Stop! That tickles."

Justin smiled and let Lance go. Lance dropped his leg back into Justin's lap and looked at him, expectant. "You want a drink?" Justin asked, suddenly thirsty.

Lance shrugged. "Sure," he said, starting to get up.

"I'll get it," Justin said. Lance pulled his legs in and Justin felt his hot gaze on his back as he went into the kitchen. Tonight, he thought, getting two Cokes from the fridge. I want him again so badly. Definitely tonight.

When he came back, Lance lay down on the couch, propped up on one elbow. "The Lost World," he said suddenly.

Justin sat on the edge of the couch and frowned. "The second Jurassic Park?" he asked, setting the sodas on the coffee table. He popped open one and handed it to Lance, who nodded.

"Yeah," he said, taking a sip. "He was the bad guy, the hunter who wanted to bag a T-Rex."

Before he could stop himself, Justin joked, "I want to bag you." He glanced at Lance, only to find him staring back at him with large, watery eyes. "Lay down," Lance whispered.

Justin lay down on his back, and as Lance reached over him to set his soda down on the coffee table, Justin ran his hands around Lance's waist and pulled him on top of him. Lance looked down at him, his face inches from Justin's, and he studied Justin's eyes for a long moment. Justin got the feeling that Lance wanted to ask him something, something uncomfortable, so to alleviate the tension between them, Justin whispered, "Romeo and Juliet."

Startled, Lance blinked and asked, "What?"

"He was the priest in Romeo and Juliet," Justin explained. "You know, the one with Leonardo DiCaprio in it."

Lance smiled sadly. "Let's not talk about him anymore," he said, running a hand down Justin's cheek.

Leaning into his touch, Justin closed his eyes. "Okay," he said. "I don't like talking about Leonardo DiCaprio all that much anyway."

"Justin!" Lance admonished.

Justin smiled. "He was good in Gilbert Grape, though," he pointed out. He looked at Lance and saw tears shining unshed in his eyes. "Lance, don't," he warned, his voice soft. He hugged Lance tighter, his hands slipping just below the waistband of Lance's shorts. "Don't cry again. Please. It breaks my heart when you cry."

Lance smiled bravely. "Do you still trust me?" he asked quietly.

Justin thought for a moment, unsure of how to answer. Deciding Lance

deserved the truth, he admitted, "Not as much as I did before."

Lance sighed. "That's understandable," he whispered, laying his head down beside Justin's. His gentle breath fanned Justin's cheek, while his hand stroked the other one softly. "Will you ever trust me again?" he asked.

Out of the corner of his eye Justin could see tears on Lance's cheeks. He leaned his forehead against Lance's and, in a low voice, said, "When I was little, there was this huge tree in our front yard. I used to love climbing in it, because it was so large and the branches stretched out over the roof of the house. When I laid down beneath it, the leaves seemed to touch the sky. I had never seen anything like it before. Then one summer we had this horrible storm. Thunder and lightning and tornado winds, and the power was out for days. I sat under my bed listening to the rain pound against the house, so sure it was the end of the world." He took a deep breath, remembering how terrified he had been, only a small boy of eight or nine, huddled beneath his bed. "In the middle of the night a bolt of lightning hit the tree."

"What happened to it?" Lance asked.

"The whole top half of it came crashing down," Justin said. In his mind he saw the mess it had made the next morning, limbs and leaves and glass everywhere. "Right on top of my dad's car. He was livid. He took a chainsaw and cut all the branches off, all the leaves, everything, until all that was left was a bare, ugly trunk, like a big ass stick, just standing in the middle of our yard." Justin turned his head slightly to look into Lance's eyes. "He wanted to cut that down, too, but never got around to it. Sometimes it made me mad, to see what was left of the tree that had been so proud and strong. Sometimes it made me upset, because it wasn't the same and I couldn't play in it anymore."

"And then what?" Lance asked, sniffing.

Justin whispered, "Then the next year, it started to grow back. Little buds, tiny leaves, but they were green, they were alive, and after a few more summers the tree was back, more beautiful than ever, stronger than before." He studied Lance's face, hoping Lance understood what he was trying to say. "And when more storms came, it weathered them easily. Nothing could take it out again."

Leaning forward, Lance kissed Justin, his lips tender on Justin's own. Justin shifted Lance onto him, until his body pressed against the length of Justin's body. Lance's hands cradled Justin's face as their kiss deepened, Lance's tongue slipping easily between Justin's lips, tasting of cola and tears and the sweet flavor that was Lance. Justin ran one hand along Lance's back, rubbing gently, while his other hand slipped lower, cupping Lance's butt before easing between his legs, pressing insistently. Lance moaned, kissing Justin's cheek, his ear, his neck. "I've missed you," he whispered against Justin's throat. "Oh God, Justin, I've missed your touch and your kisses and you."

Justin turned his head, letting Lance suck behind his ear. He was going to suggest they go to their room when Joey walked into the room, wearing a pair of wrinkled jeans and an old, tattered t-shirt. "Joey?" Justin asked. Was this really Joey? He looked pale and thin and scraggly.

Lance pushed himself up off of Justin and looked around. Glancing at them, Joey muttered, "Sorry," and started back for his room.

"Joey, wait," Justin called, sitting up. He felt Lance maneuver around behind him, running his hands along Justin's waist, holding him tight. Joey stopped in the hallway. Justin looked at him for a long moment before saying, "Come here, Joe."

"I don't think so," Joey replied. He took another step back into the safety of the hallway. His eyes were dark, the wary eyes of a dog that's been kicked too many times. "I didn't know you guys were here. I'm ..." He sighed. "I'm sorry."

Behind Justin, Lance rested his chin on Justin's shoulder, watching Joey carefully. "I'm not going to hurt you," Justin said. "Come here, please."

Joey grimaced. "Which one of us is the one we can't trust?" he asked wryly.

Lance's hands tightened around Justin's waist as anger flared inside of him. "I'm not the one who made a mistake," Justin replied, his brow creasing. "I'm not the one who needs to be apologizing here."

Suddenly Joey's resolve seemed to break, and he leaned back against the wall, drained. "Justin, I'm sorry," he whispered. "Lance ... Oh God, Lance, I didn't mean it. I mean, I did, but I didn't --" He sighed, a shaky, scared sound. "I didn't want this to happen. I didn't want to hurt either of you. I didn't want you to hate me."

"We don't hate you," Lance replied quietly, and Joey started to cry.

"I didn't want to hate myself," he said, his voice so low Justin barely heard the words.

"Joey --" Justin started, but the front door opened and JC came in, laughing. JC took one look at them, Lance curled up behind Justin, and then his gaze shifted to the hallway, where Joey stood in the shadows. He stopped in the doorway, unsure.

Chris pushed past him, taking in the situation. "Joey?" he asked, glancing at Justin. "Is everything okay here?"

Joey wiped his eyes and fled down the hallway. The sound of his door slamming shut echoed back to them. Behind JC, Dani and a friend of hers, JC's date for the night, strained to see into the house. "What's going on?" Dani asked, trying to get by. "JC, move. This is my house."

Chris glared at Justin. "What did you say to him?" he asked.

Justin narrowed his eyes and said, "We were talking. Until you guys came barging in here." Standing up, he pulled Lance to his feet and looked at JC and the girls, and finally his gaze rested on Chris. "Don't be so quick to jump to his side, Chris. Just because he's the only one crying doesn't mean he's the only one in pain."

Chris frowned. "Justin --" he started, but Justin brushed past him,

leading Lance down the hallway. Lance kept his head down and didn't look at anyone as they left.

Instead of stopping at their room, Justin kept going. He stopped suddenly at Joey's door, and Lance bumped into him in the darkness. Before he could change his mind, Justin knocked on Joey's door. "Go away," came a muffled reply.

Justin tried the knob. It was unlocked. Pushing the door open, he leaned in. Joey sat on the edge of the bed, sniffing. Around him the room was dark. He glanced up and, seeing Justin there, Lance right behind him, Joey looked up again, surprised. "Justin?" he whispered. "I thought ..." He sighed. "What are you doing here?"

"You said you were sorry," Justin said, his voice low.

Joey closed his eyes. "I am," he choked. "Jesus Christ, I am so sorry."

Lance squeezed Justin's hand, and Justin sighed. "That doesn't make what happened right," he said. "That doesn't make the hurt go away. But it's a start."

Joey looked up at him, scared, hopeful. Justin smiled halfheartedly. "Goodnight, Joe."

"Goodnight," Joey whispered, and Justin closed the door.

All I Ever Wanted
64. Lonely Together
by NSyncGrrl

"Chris," Dani said suddenly, "I want my house back." She sat on the edge of her bed, her back to him, as she ran a brush through her long blonde hair. Chris lay under the covers on the other side of the bed, watching her. When he didn't reply, she looked at him over her shoulder and arched her eyebrows in that way she had that always pissed him off. "I want them out of here."

"They're my friends, Dani," Chris said. "You said they could visit."

"And the visit's over," she replied. Placing the brush on the bedside table, she began to set her alarm clock. "It's time for them to go home." Before he could say anything, she hurried on. "Look, it's nice that you guys have a few months to goof off and fool around and not do shit. But some of us have to get up early in the morning. Some of us have real jobs, you know."

Chris looked at her out of the corner of his eye. Real jobs? he wondered. "What the hell's that supposed to mean?" he asked, trying to control his voice. "We worked our asses off this past tour. We're going into the studio in a few weeks to start on the new album, and we'll be lucky if we even get a chance to breathe before we have to go to Europe for the next phase of the tour."

"So, what?" Dani asked, her voice bitter. She looked at him, her lips pressed together so tightly, they were almost white against her tanned skin. "You're going to hang out here until then? I don't think so. I can't be running around town every night having fun. I'm sick of coming home every day from work to find the place trashed. Five guys here all day long and not one of you seems to know how to operate a dishwasher, or the dryer, or even how to put the damn toilet seat down." She sighed. "Chris, they need to leave. Now."

Chris glanced at the clock. "It's after midnight," he said. "You want me to kick them out in the middle of the night?"

Dani sighed again. "That's not what I meant," she said, exasperated. "God, Chris, why does everything have to be a joke with you? Why can't you just be serious, just once?"

He reached out to touch her, but she shrugged away. "I am being serious," he said, frowning. "Dani, what's wrong?"

"I don't want them here anymore," she said. "I'm sick of this whole damn melodrama. They're worse than a bunch of girls."

"What do you mean?" he asked softly.

She sighed. "Please, Chris, you know what I'm talking about. This whole love triangle crap. They're a bunch of guys, for heaven's sake."

Chris picked at the blanket. "You saying guys can't love other guys?" he asked.

"I'm saying it's not natural," she replied. "I know they're your friends, and that's fine. Justin and Lance aren't all over each other in public, and that's fine, too. But this bullshit with Joey locked in his room and crying all night long, puh-leaze! Chris --" She looked at him, her eyes pleading, and he knew what she wanted him to say. She wanted to hear him agree with her.

And he couldn't. He just couldn't. "It's called love, Dani," he said angrily. "Sometimes it just happens, between guys, between girls, between two people who care for each other more than they care for themselves. It's something more than sex, more than sleeping together. Maybe one day you'll understand."

Dani rolled her eyes. "I'm not going to argue with you," she said, lying down on her side of the bed, her back to him.

Chris looked at the angry set of her shoulders, incredulous. "You're just gonna leave it at that?" he asked.

"I don't want to talk about it anymore," she replied, turning off the light.

Chris sighed. "Dani --" he began, but she cut him off.

"Chris, I've got to get to bed. Unlike you, I've got to get up before noon tomorrow." She shrugged off his touch when he reached out for her again. "If you want to keep talking, do it somewhere else, please, and let me get some sleep. There are four other guys in this house -- someone should be up you can talk to." When he didn't reply, she sighed. "Goodnight," she said in clipped tones.

"Goodnight," he whispered. He waited until her breathing grew steady and even, and then he slipped out of the bed and left the room. Someone else I can talk to? Chris thought bitterly. There was only one person he could think of that he wanted to talk to right now. It didn't even cross his mind that Joey might be sleeping until after he knocked on Joey's door. When there was no answer, he turned the knob slowly and pushed the door open just a little bit.

Inside the room, the light was on. Chris opened the door further and stepped inside, closing the door behind him. The bed was made, the sheets changed. There were still clothes strewn everywhere but the air of desperation that had permeated the place was gone. A radio played softly, and the bathroom door was closed. Chris could hear Joey singing, and then the bathroom door opened and Joey stepped out into the room, his chest and legs wet from the shower. He wore only a large towel wrapped around his waist. His hair was cut short, most of the red tips gone now, and his beard was trimmed once again. He glanced at Chris and smiled brightly. "Hey there, babycakes," he said.

Baby --? Chris laughed. "Okay, who are you, and what did you do with Joey?"

Joey laughed, too. "Chris, thanks for putting up with my shit these

past few days. I really appreciate it, man."

Shrugging, Chris sat down on the bed. "No problem," he said, watching Joey. He couldn't seem to raise his eyes from his friend's chest.

But then Joey began rubbing himself with another towel, drying off, and Chris looked away. "So what's on your mind, Christopher Robin?"

Chris sighed. "Nothing," he lied.

Sitting down next to him on the bed, Joey rubbed the towel through his hair, leaving it spiky, sticking up all over the place. "Liar," Joey said, smiling. "What are you doing here at this time of the night? Don't you have a girl around here somewhere?"

Chris frowned. "She's got to get up early," he said, mimicking her. "And she wants you guys to leave," he added, his voice low.

"What, we piss her off or something?" Joey asked.

"Or something," Chris replied. "She's not ..." He sighed. "She's not comfortable with everything that's happened. She thinks it's not right, guys liking other guys."

Joey raised an eyebrow. "She never struck me as a bigot before," he said. "Daddy's little princess, yes. An ice queen, yes. Holier than thou, yes. But close-minded? Who da thunk?" He leaned closer, one hand resting behind Chris on the bed. "So what does she think of you coming here now?"

"She doesn't know," Chris whispered. He looked at Joey, his deep eyes, his wet hair, his nakedness like a shotgun beside him, deadly and loaded. "She doesn't have to know."

"Don't you think she'll find out?" Joey asked softly.

Chris shrugged, his shoulder brushing against Joey's, warm and slightly damp through his thin undershirt. "Joey," Chris began, and then Joey's lips closed over his, cutting off his words. His hand caressed Chris's chin, rubbing his short goatee, and Chris forgot what he was going to say, if anything at all.

When he pulled back, Joey looked at him with sad eyes and whispered, "I'm sorry. I just couldn't help --"

"That's okay," Chris whispered back. He reached out and touched Joey's thigh, running his hand along the warm skin. It felt so nice to touch someone who didn't pull away, didn't harden beneath his fingers. When was the last time Dani had let him just touch her like this? He didn't know. "Joey," Chris began again, and then Joey pushed him down to the bed, rolling on top of him, covering his face and mouth with hungry kisses.

"I'm not going to make promises to you," Joey whispered, shifting his weight against Chris's body. Chris felt Joey's hard erection press against his thigh and found it exciting, arousing. "I'll only break them anyway. But I like kissing you, and I like holding you. I don't know if it's more than that right now ..."

"It doesn't have to be," Chris replied. Maybe Joey wasn't even thinking of him -- maybe in his mind, he was with Lance, or someone else. But right now Chris didn't care. Dani didn't want to hold him and kiss him -- she was too tired, she had to get to sleep. If Joey was willing, and he was willing, did it really matter who was using who? Chris ran his hands along Joey's hot back, enjoying the feel of flesh on flesh. "I can't stay all night," he whispered.

Joey kissed him again. "You can stay a little while," he said. "And then you can come back when Dani goes to work."

The thought of crawling out of Dani's bed and into Joey's made Chris grin. Joey's lips trailed small kisses down Chris's cheek and along his neck, where Joey began to suck gently. Chris pulled Joey closer and sighed. "Joey," he started again.

"Sshh," Joey replied. His breath tickled Chris's neck. "Just pretend you're enjoying this."

"I don't have to pretend," Chris said, more aroused than ever when Joey began to lick behind his ear. "I just don't want to ... I mean ..." He sighed again. He didn't know what he meant.

"You talk too much," Joey said, looking down at Chris. "We're friends, right?"

"The best of," Chris replied. He ran his hands down Joey's chest, savoring the feel of Joey's muscles.

"And you're lonely right now, right? Your girl doesn't want to love you tonight, right?" Joey looked at him, his gaze intense. Chris nodded. "And I'm lonely, too. I want something I can't have, and I'm going to try to force myself to forget about it." He smiled devilishly, and Chris couldn't help but grin back. "So if you're lonely, and I'm lonely, we can sit here and moan and groan and sigh, or we can do something about it. And personally, this is more fun than moaning and groaning and sighing, don't you think?"

Chris leaned up and kissed Joey, tugging gently on his lips. "I think we can work the moaning and groaning part into this," he said.

Joey grinned and Chris pulled him down on top of him again. Right now returning to Dani's bed was the last thing he wanted to do.

All I Ever Wanted
65. Something More
by NSyncGrrl

"So," JC said, sliding into an empty booth, "how are things going between you and Lance?"

"Much better," Justin admitted, sitting across from JC and looking around. They were in the mall's McDonald's, and Lance was still at the counter, waiting for their food, while they went in search of a table.

JC smiled. "I'm glad you're taking this so well," he said. "I know how jealous you can be."

Justin sighed. "Well, I couldn't stay mad at Lance forever," he said softly. "I love him -- I still love him -- and I love him more and more every day. I couldn't deny that. I had to get over it and move on, or I would lose the one thing in my life that means more than anything else right now. I could never let him go."

"What about Joey?" JC asked quietly.

"What about him?" Justin replied. He shook his head. "That's gonna take some time. But being angry at him doesn't accomplish anything, and it takes so much energy. It's easier just to let it all go."

JC nodded. "So you forgive him?"

"Not yet," Justin admitted as Lance came over, a tray laden with food in his hands. Justin smiled at Lance as he slid into the booth next to him. "Took you long enough," he said, slipping his hand over Lance's thigh.

Lance sighed. "You'd think these people never made a Big Mac before," he said as JC picked his food off the tray. "And then they had to make the fries, so you know that took forever."

Justin reached over for his food and grinned. Under the table, his fingers squeezed Lance's thigh gently. Taking a bite of his Big Mac, JC looked at Lance and asked, "How you doing, Lance?"

Nodding, Lance said, "Okay." Actually right now he was better than okay, because Justin's hand slipped up just a little further and brushed along the tip of his penis, and through his jeans the brief touch was maddening. Every day the tension between them was building, begging for release. Lance had been so sure that they would've done something last night -- made love, fooled around, gotten off, something -- but then Joey had apologized and Justin had been sweet enough to accept it, and afterward Justin had been introspective and quiet. Lance just held onto him and let him think his deep thoughts, and eventually they both fell asleep. When they woke up, Joey was almost back to normal, laughing in the kitchen with Chris, and when JC suggested a trip to the mall, Justin coerced Lance to come along for the ride. Lance didn't want to push Justin -- he knew that they still had a lot to work on, and he wanted Justin to trust him again before they jumped into sex -- but God, he wanted him so

badly. Just sitting next to him here in this booth was almost too much to bear.

JC shifted his gaze from Lance to Justin. "You know," he said slowly, chewing his sandwich, "I'm thinking we need to get away for a while."

"Away from what?" Justin asked.

JC shrugged. "Away from all this," he said, motioning around the room with his burger. "Away from the city and the noise and the fans. Away from everything. Just the five of us, get to know each other again, remember why we're doing this in the first place."

"What do you have in mind?" Lance asked. "We've got the new album coming up --"

"That's weeks away," JC said. "I'm thinking maybe take a few days out of life, hide away from the world, just be ourselves."

Justin narrowed his eyes. "Sounds like you already have someplace in mind," he said, finishing up his fries.

"A cabin in the woods," JC said, his eyes lighting up, and Lance imagined crisp, cool mornings waking beside Justin, slow, lazy days and long, endless nights. JC continued. "I found a place online. You rent a cabin and there's no one else around for miles. There's hiking paths, and a lake with boats, and fishing and hunting and --"

"We don't hunt," Justin pointed out.

JC waved the comment aside. "We don't have to, that's the point! We can do whatever we want -- or whatever we don't want. And they have weekly rentals. There's one I was looking at, three bedrooms, a huge kitchen, a deck, a boathouse, right on the lake --"

"Sounds more like a resort than a cabin," Lance said. "Only three rooms?"

JC shrugged. "You and Justin get one, of course. Maybe this will be just what you need to move on, you know?" He thought for a minute, and then said, "Maybe Chris and Joey can share one, or Chris and I, or something. We'll work it out."

"Why not you and Joey?" Justin asked. He looked at JC closely. When JC didn't reply right away, he prompted, "JC?"

JC shrugged again. "Maybe," he said, his voice lower. "Who knows? But Chris told me Dani wants us to leave, and I told him about this place, and he's all for it. He's supposed to be talking to Joey about it now. So what do you guys think?"

Lance glanced at Justin and shrugged. "Why not?" he asked softly.

Justin nodded. "Sure," he said. "If the others are going, count us in. It might be the last rest we get before we go to Europe, anyway."

Lance groaned. "God, don't remind me," he said.

"Lance, we're not riding the Concorde," Justin said, placing a hand over Lance's. "I promise you."

"Other planes explode," Lance pointed out.

When they finished eating Justin wanted to look for some clothes -- "If we're going to rough it in the woods," he said, grinning, "I'll need to stock up on flannel," and the thought of Justin in baggy flannel shirts made Lance weak in the knees. They headed for Abercrombie and Fitch, but a jewelry store across the mall caught Lance's eye and he slipped away from the others to look at the diamonds and gold behind the glass displays. I should buy him something, Lance thought suddenly, looking at the earrings.

"Can I help you?" a salesman asked, and Lance looked up. The guy on the other side of the counter had dark, shiny skin and that braided hair last seen when Milli Vanilli was popular. His nametag read "Dionte," and Lance didn't quite know how to pronounce that. But when he smiled, Lance couldn't help but smile back.

"I'm looking for a gift," Lance replied. "Something for a friend ... I'm not sure what ..."

"What do you have in mind?" Dionte asked.

Lance shrugged. "Something gold," he said. "Maybe with diamonds in it? I don't know, I don't buy much jewelry."

"Well," Dionte asked, trying to be helpful, "what's the occasion?"

Sighing, Lance said, "I made a mistake. And I'm sorry. And ..." His voice trailed off.

"You want your friend to forgive you?" Dionte prompted. "Diamonds are always good for that."

"He already forgave me," Lance replied. "I just want something to show him I'm never going to make the same mistake again."

Dionte nodded. "So what does he like?" he asked.

Gaudy stuff, Lance thought before he could stop himself. "Large things," he said. "Kind of like ..." He looked around the jewelry store until he saw a display of ostentatious jewelry, large golden necklaces, thick gold rings, huge earrings and chunky bracelets. "Stuff like that," he said, pointing to the display.

Dionte laughed. "This friend of yours sounds like my kind of guy," he said, moving towards the display. Lance followed. "See anything you think he might like?"

Lance shrugged. He didn't really know what to get. The only person he'd ever bought jewelry for before was his mother, and she liked anything he got her. 'I really don't know,' he admitted.

"Is your friend here?" Dionte asked, lowering his voice.

Lance nodded. Looking out into the mall, he could see Justin and JC

across the way, looking through a rack of jeans. Pointing, Lance asked, "See the guy with the bandanna on his head?"

"With the orange turtleneck on?" Dionte asked, leaning over the counter.

"That's him," Lance said.

"He's very attractive," Dionte said.

"Thank you," Lance replied, blushing. Justin looked up and caught Lance looking at him. Lance waved, and Justin said something to JC before heading over to the jewelry store. "Here he comes," Lance said, rolling his eyes. "This is supposed to be a surprise --"

And then Justin was there, slipping his arm around Lance's waist and frowning at Dionte. "Hey, babe," he said softly. "You buying something?"

"No," Lance replied. "Just looking."

Justin let his gaze wander over the display of clunky jewelry and asked, "For what?"

"Nothing," Lance said. "I'll be right over, okay?"

Justin looked at Dionte again. "You want me to wait?" he asked.

"Not really," Lance said. When Justin looked at him sharply, he smiled and asked, "Justin, please? Just give me five minutes."

Justin pouted, and Lance knew he was struggling not to argue with him. Here Lance was, in a store talking to a salesguy, pointing at Justin across the mall, and Justin didn't know if he was worthy of his trust yet. Please, Lance begged, hoping Justin could read the plea in his eyes. Trust me, please? "Okay," Justin said at length. "I'll be next door."

"Thank you," Lance said, smiling. He wanted to kiss Justin, but restrained himself. With a final glance at Dionte, Justin left. Turning back to Dionte, he asked, "So what do you think?"

"I liked his necklace," Dionte said. "But I think you're in the market for something a little bit less noticeable, am I right?" Lance nodded. "Necklace, ring, bracelet?" Dionte asked.

"Necklace," Lance said. "He wears the same earrings all the time, and doesn't have many rings. And I've never seen him wear bracelets. So maybe a necklace that's a little shorter than that one? Something he can wear under his shirt, maybe ..."

Dionte opened the display case and pulled out a rack of thick herringbone necklaces. "These are nice," he said. "Plain, but nice."

Lance frowned. "I want something more ..." he said, not quite sure what he meant.

But Dionte smiled. "How about this?" he asked, holding up a necklace that at first glance looked like all the others. It was a gold herringbone chain, about a quarter of an inch thick, and it was light to the touch. It

would rest easily against Justin's neck, fall just below the hollow of his throat. But when Dionte turned it just slightly, Lance noticed the way it sparkled and caught the light. "Diamond dust imbedded in the design," Dionte explained. "Something very extraordinary, for an extraordinary man."

"I'll take it," Lance said, holding it up to watch the light play across the gold.

He found Justin and JC at the checkout in Banana Republic. He slipped behind Justin, his arm running around Justin's waist as he leaned his head against Justin's back. Hugging him quickly, Lance said, "Hey, you guys."

"What'd you buy?" Justin asked, nodding at the small bag in Lance's hands.

Lance shrugged. "It's a secret," he said.

"I can keep a secret," JC replied. "Tell me."

"If I told you, I'd have to kill you," Lance said, smiling. "And then who'd sing your part?"

Justin laughed. "Is it something for me?" he asked.

"No, it's for my mother," Lance replied.

"Then why can't you tell us?" JC asked.

Lance rolled his eyes as they left the store. "Of course it's for him, silly!"

"Can I see it?" Justin asked, a shy smile creeping across his face.

"No," Lance replied. "Not yet."

"When?" Justin and JC asked in unison.

Lance sighed. "Never, if you two don't stop it." He clutched the bag tight and wouldn't say another word about it. He wanted to give it to Justin when they were alone -- he'd find the perfect time. Already he couldn't wait.

All I Ever Wanted
66. Getting Ready to Go
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sighed as Justin opened the dishwasher. Hot, wet steam bellowed out around them. "Justin," he groaned, looking at the overflowing rack, the spotted glasses filled with soapy water, the stacked plates still caked with food. "You're supposed to put the cups in upside down."

Justin shrugged. "At least they're clean," he replied. He didn't want to wash the dishes -- it had been Chris's idea to clean the place up before Dani came home from work, and Justin just shoved everything from the sink into the dishwasher and turned it on. Dani wanted them out of the house tomorrow, JC still hadn't reserved their cabin, Lance had already packed all of their clothes, he still hadn't mentioned the gift he supposedly bought at the mall, and Justin knew it was sitting in the top drawer of the dresser but he fought the urge to peek at it every time he entered the room. It killed him to know it was there. And right now Justin was just not in the mood to deal with this damn dishwasher. "If Dani wants these any cleaner," he said, "she can wash them herself. I did my best."

Looking at the rack, Lance frowned. "If you want to call this clean," he said dubiously, picking up a crusty plate. "Aren't you supposed to scrape these off first?"

"Lance," Justin began, picking up one of the cups and flinging the water in it back into the dishwasher.

He missed. The filmy water splashed against the counter, and Lance jumped back as it splattered the cabinets, but not before the hot water hit him, drenching his legs. "Justin!" he cried, picking at his pants. "These are the only pants I have left." Justin began to laugh, and Lance narrowed his eyes. "This isn't funny," he said.

"Oh please," Justin said, the tension and stress building in him all day disappearing as he looked at Lance, standing there peeling his pants away from his skin with a disgusted look on his face. "It's only water."

"It's dirty water," Lance corrected.

"Well, we'll wash them." Justin took Lance's hand and pulled him towards the laundry, a small room off the kitchen.

Lance sighed. "Justin, you don't know how to use the washing machine."

"Can't be too hard," Justin said. He opened the lid of the washer and looked in. "Take off your pants," he said as he measured out detergent.

"I thought you'd never ask," Lance replied, grinning. He slipped out of his pants and handed them over.

Justin glanced at him and smiled. This is getting better by the minute, he thought, taking in Lance, his boxers hidden beneath the tail of his shirt, his socks ending just above his ankles. "You look like that guy in that movie," he said. "You know which one I mean."

"Oh yeah," Lance said, "that one."

"No, you know." Justin wiggled his hips and pretended to sing into a microphone. "Just take them old records off the shelf --"

"Risky Business," Lance said. A grin broke across his face. "All I need are a pair of shades." He jumped up to sit on top of the dryer and watched the washer filling up with water. "You're sure you know what you're doing?"

"Lance," Justin pouted, a hurt tone in his voice. He closed the lid and leaned against it, his gaze on Lance's bare legs.

"Okay, okay," Lance conceded. "I just don't want you to break anything. Dani's mad enough at us as it is."

Justin ran a hand down Lance's thigh. "Have I ever told you how sexy you are?" he asked shyly, picking at the hem of Lance's boxers.

Lance caught Justin's hand in his own and pulled him into the space between his legs. Wrapping his long legs around Justin's waist, he ran his hands over Justin's shoulders and stared into his eyes. Resting his forehead against Lance's, Justin rubbed his hands along Lance's sides and pulled Lance closer, easing him off the dryer just a little until he felt Lance's slight erection press against his stomach. Justin leaned forward and kissed Lance hungrily as he hugged him tight, the hardness between them turning Justin on. Running his hands through Justin's curls, Lance moaned into Justin's mouth.

"I want you," Justin whispered. It was true -- right here, right now, in the middle of the laundry room of Dani's house, the washer kicking into its cycle beside them, Justin wanted Lance so badly he wanted to cry out from the need. He slipped his hands beneath Lance's buttocks and lifted him off the dryer, shifting his weight onto him. Lance covered Justin's face with kisses, tugging gently at Justin's lips, pushing against him with each kiss. Justin eased down Lance's boxers, savoring the feel of smooth skin as he cupped Lance's ass in both hands. His fingers slid inside of Lance, and Lance moaned his name loudly.

They heard the squeal of hinges. "You guys," Chris whined.

Justin sighed in frustration, resting his head on Lance's shoulder as he pulled Lance's boxers back up. Lance smiled at Chris guiltily. "Hey, man," he said, feeling a little giddy.

Chris closed his eyes. "Okay," he said, "I'm not seeing this. When I open my eyes, you two will be back in the kitchen, doing the dishes."

"Dishes are done," Justin said, pulling Lance tighter. He stole a kiss while Chris's eyes were closed.

Chris opened one eye. "You call that done?" he asked, pointing back at the kitchen.

Lance grinned. "Told you," he whispered.

Justin sighed. "Can't you give us like fifteen minutes --"

"You'll have all the time in the world when we get to the cabin," Chris reminded him. "Right now we need to get this place cleaned up. Please?"

Justin sighed again. "Remember where we stopped," he said to Lance, helping him down from the dryer. "I want to pick this up right where we left off."

Chris smiled tightly. "Thank you," he said, glancing at the overstuffed dishwasher as he left the kitchen. He shook his head. Should've given them yardwork, he thought grimly. Justin and chores just didn't seem to mix. He stopped at JC's room, where the door was open, and looked inside. JC sat at his desk, pouring over his laptop. He glanced up as Chris entered. "How's it going?" Chris asked, sitting down in a chair beside JC's.

JC shrugged. "I can get us a place as early as the day after tomorrow," he said, staring at the computer screen, "but I can't seem to find anything with more than two rooms."

"That's not good," Chris said. "No offense, but bunking down with you and Joey in the same room isn't my idea of a perfect getaway."

"I know what you mean," JC said, rolling his eyes.

Chris watched him for a minute, and then he glanced up as Joey came into the room. "Hey there," Joey said, draping his arms around both JC and Chris. He leaned down between them, hugging them both. "What'cha guys doing?"

"Trying to get us a cabin," JC replied, pulling away from Joey. "You're in my light."

"Sorry, boss," Joey pouted. He plopped down on JC's bed, rolling onto his back, his hands beneath his head. Crossing his legs, he asked, "So when we leaving?"

"Tomorrow," Chris said. "I told Dani we'd be gone by the time she came home from work." He pointed at something on the computer screen. "Hey! Click on that."

JC sighed. "Hello?" he asked. "I'm the one on the computer right now. You wanna wait until I get finished before you start to surf around?"

Chris grimaced. "Fine," he said, standing up. He laid down on the bed next to Joey, propping himself up on one elbow. "You pick out the cabin, then. Don't ask for any help from me."

"Don't worry, I won't," JC replied.

Joey reached out and poked JC's butt with his foot. "What's your problem?" he asked.

JC scooted out of reach. "Nothing," he said, sighing. "I don't know about you guys, but I'm trying to get this vacation organized. I want to make sure it runs smoothly. The last thing I want is to be stranded in the

woods with no place to stay."

Chris laughed softly. Reaching out, he trailed a finger down the inside of Joey's arm. Joey grinned and winked at him. Smiling, Chris let his finger continue down, tickling Joey's armpit, down the side of his chest. Joey laughed and pulled away slightly.

JC glanced over his shoulder at them. Chris wiggled his eyebrows at him and grinned. "What are you two doing?" JC asked, grinning back.

Suddenly Justin burst into the room, Lance right behind him. "Give them back!" Lance cried. Justin laughed as he ran around the bed, clutching something to his chest. Lance followed him. "Justin!"

Justin jumped onto the bed, running over Chris and Joey. Lance tackled him, knocking him off the bed. Justin rolled over and Lance straddled him, prying his hands away from his chest. "Justin," he cajoled, while Chris and Joey laughed, "give them back."

"What are they?" Chris asked. He reached past Lance as Justin handed him a stack of photographs. Looking at the top one, Chris hooted loudly and passed it to Joey.

"Gimme them," Lance said, reaching for the photos. Justin ran his hands along Lance's bare thighs and smiled up at him. "Chris," Justin said, "hand them back."

"What are they?" JC asked.

Joey laughed. "Prom pictures," he said, giggling. "Check out your date! Look at that eighties hair."

"Shut up," Lance said, laughing. He reached for the pictures, snatching them back. Trying to hold onto them, Chris tumbled off the bed and landed with a thud on the floor beside Justin. He laughed and looked up to find Dani standing in the doorway, a hand on her hip, her lips pressed together angrily.

"Dani," he said, scrambling to his feet. She looked around the room -- JC at the computer, Joey stretched out on the bed, Justin lying on his back on the floor with Lance sitting on top of him. And Chris, sprawled on the floor. His laughter stopped like a faucet turned off suddenly.

She frowned. "You said this place would be spotless by the time I got home," she said, her voice tight.

"We're still working on it," Chris replied.

"So I see," she said, her gaze sweeping the room again. "The washer's unbalanced, the dishwasher's overflowing, and there's water all over the kitchen floor." Chris glared at Justin, who studiously ignored his gaze. "Chris," she said, rubbing her temples, "I'm not kidding here --"

Chris left with her, kicking out at Justin as he passed. Joey looked at Lance, his gaze following Justin's hands up and down Lance's thighs. "What happened to your pants?" he asked, clearing his throat.

Lance sorted through the photos in his hand. "In the wash," he said,

not looking up at Joey. "Justin got them wet."

"I didn't mean to," Justin said, pouting. His hands squeezed Lance's thighs gently, his eyes never leaving Joey.

From the kitchen Chris yelled, "Justin!" Justin groaned. "Get in here and clean this mess up!"

Justin pushed Lance off of him, rolling his eyes. "Jesus Christ," he sighed, getting up. Lance held his hand out for the photo Joey had, and Joey looked up at him, trying to catch his eye, but Lance didn't look at him. When he handed over the photo, Lance mumbled, "Thanks," and followed Justin out of the room.

"Here we go," JC muttered. He glanced around and noticed the room had emptied. Only Joey remained, sitting on the bed, looking at him with a forlorn expression on his face. JC frowned slightly. "I got a three bedroom cabin," he said.

"Yipee," Joey smirked. "Now we can fight over who sleeps with who." He reached out and touched JC's shoulder.

JC jumped at the touch. "We can work that out when we get there," he said, shrugging away.

"JC," Joey asked quietly, "what's wrong between us?"

"Nothing," JC replied. He focused all of his attention on the computer screen and hoped Joey dropped the subject.

But he didn't. Frowning, Joey pointed out, "We argued nonstop all the way over here, and since this whole thing with Lance you haven't said two words to me." He sighed. "You're not mad at me, are you?"

"What?" JC asked. "No, I'm not mad."

"Then what is it?" Joey persisted.

JC sighed. You make me nervous, he thought suddenly, surprising himself. Nervous? How? He didn't know. But if he had to describe the way he was feeling, sitting here alone with Joey in the room, it would definitely be nervous. "Joey," he started, but then angry shouts came from the kitchen, Dani and Chris arguing, and he sighed. Chris stalked past the room, heading down the hall, Dani right behind him, listing off things that needed to be done before they left. JC rolled his eyes and turned back to the computer screen. "I'll be so glad to get out of here," he said.

"Me, too," Joey agreed. "She's worse than my mother."

JC raised an eyebrow. "I don't know about that," he said playfully. "I've seen Mama Fatone get wicked on your ass. Especially that one time --"

"Don't even remind me," Joey said, standing up. He patted JC's shoulder, and this time JC didn't flinch away. "I better go finish packing before the wrath of Dani lands on me, as well."

JC watched him walk away, wondering at the lingering feel of Joey's

hand on his shoulder and the feeling of nervousness that clung to him like ivy.

All I Ever Wanted
67. In Your Arms
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stretched out on the small loveseat as Justin stood up. "Bathroom break," Justin said.

"Want us to pause it?" JC asked, nodding at the TV. All five of them were camped out in the middle of Dani's living room, watching the Alien movies. They were on Alien³ and Lance was getting bored, but they only had one more film after this one and then they planned on hitting the sack. At least, he did, and he hoped Justin would follow him. What the others did was no concern of his, though Joey needed to get some sleep if he was going to drive tomorrow. Chris said they had to be out by noon, and already Dani had yelled from the safety of her room for them to keep it down, she was trying to sleep. JC and Joey sat on the couch, Joey on his second bag of popcorn, while Chris lay on the floor with his dogs, his head propped up in his hands, too close to the television for it to be good for him. JC looked up from the movie as Justin stepped over Chris and headed down the hall. "Justin?" he asked.

"No," Justin replied. "I know what happens. I'll be right back."

Lance sighed and turned back to the movie. Behind him Joey groaned. "Oh puh-leaze!" he said, laughing. "You know the alien is in there, dude! You're such a dumbass."

"Joey, shut up," Chris said. "I've never seen this before."

Joey kicked Chris in the butt. "You have too," he said. "Everyone's seen these movies."

"I haven't," Chris replied, wiggling his butt beneath Joey's foot, "so stop talking to the TV. You're ruining it for me."

"Chris," Lance said, smiling, "you know in the end they kill the alien and the good guys win."

Chris covered his ears with his hands. "Shut up!" he said. "Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

JC grinned. "And then Ripley --"

"Shut up!" Chris flung a pillow back at JC, hitting him in the face. Laughter filled the room, and then Joey put a finger to his lips and shushed everyone, remembering Dani sleeping down the hall.

Leaning down, Joey stretched out over Chris, a hand on either side of Chris's body supporting him above his friend. Lance glanced down as Joey whispered loudly, "She dies, Chris. Ripley dies."

Joey jumped back on the couch in a fit of giggles as Chris tried to turn and hit him, only to find him no longer there. He glared at JC, laughing as well, and then at Lance, smiling at their antics. "You guys suck," Chris

pouted.

"Justin might," Joey said, "but you'll have to ask Lance to find out for sure."

Lance tossed a pillow back at him, a light blush creeping into his cheeks. "Hey," he cried, "don't start picking on me, too."

Joey shoved another handful of popcorn in his mouth and laughed. Lance turned back to the TV and willed away the color in his cheeks. Joey's teasing brought to mind the last time he and Justin made love, in the shower of that hotel they stopped at, how long ago? Two weeks, maybe. I miss that, Lance thought suddenly. He had never been one for sex before, but when Justin held him in his arms, he felt as if he could live forever. It was such a heady feeling, even when they weren't having sex, to just lie in Justin's embrace and feel Justin's gentle breath against his skin, and to hear the beating of Justin's heart against his. He swore at those times, their hearts beat as one. If only they could find that rhythm again.

But he knew it was hard for Justin right now. He didn't want to give himself to Lance because he was afraid Lance might hurt him again. What can I do to prove to him that I'll never hurt him anymore? Lance thought. For the millionth time since it happened, he regretted kissing Joey, regretted it so much that he felt a hollow ache in the pit of his stomach and he wanted to cry. He blinked away the tears -- how could he ever convince the others that he was getting all teary-eyed just because the alien was devouring yet another prisoner?

Joey kicked the loveseat by Lance's head, and Lance looked back at him. Joey nodded at the hallway, where Justin stood in the shadows, watching them. Smiling brightly, Lance moved his legs and said, "Have a seat."

Justin looked at him with dark, smoldering eyes and shook his head. Then he turned and disappeared down the hall. Lance looked around, confused, but the others were engrossed in the TV and weren't paying them any mind. Looking back at the hall again, Lance debating following Justin when suddenly Justin peeked around the corner, a small smile on his lips. He crooked a finger at Lance and motioned him to come on.

Grinning, Lance put a hand to his chest. Me? he thought, looking at Justin with the question written on his face. Justin's smile widened and he nodded. Then he turned and was gone.

Lance almost stumbled over Chris in his haste to follow.

In the darkness of the hallway Lance didn't see Justin, but he heard a door shut quietly and hurried to their room. The door was closed, and there was a piece of notebook paper taped to the door at eye level. "DO NOT DISTURB!!" it read in large, block letters. "UNDER PENALty of death" -- the last bit was squeezed onto the bottom of the sign, and Lance grinned. So this is what he was doing during his bathroom break, he thought, knocking lightly.

"Come in," Justin called from the other side.

Lance eased the door open. The room was dimly lit, a single large candle on the dresser casting light, draping shadows over the bed and not quite reaching the corners by the window. Their suitcase, last left open on the bed, was closed now, shoved against the wall out of the way. And then Lance turned his gaze to the bed, where Justin lay on top of the covers, naked, his hard erection lying along his inner thigh, waiting.

Closing the door quickly, Lance started for the bed. "Lock it," Justin said, smiling at Lance. "I don't want any interruptions tonight."

Almost groaning in frustration, Lance managed to back up to the door and lock it without taking his eyes off of Justin. Then in two steps he was on the bed, pressing down on top of Justin, cradling him in his arms, his lips hungry on Justin's neck. He thrust his hips against Justin's, his cock already hard, already throbbing in his pants. He hugged Justin close and kissed him until they were both hot and breathless. Working his way down Justin's shoulders, Lance trailed wet kisses over Justin's cool skin, the movie and their friends in the living room forgotten. "Lance," Justin moaned, running his hands beneath Lance's shirt, "it helps if you take your clothes off."

"Oh," Lance said, a little disoriented. His senses were filled with Justin -- his sporty cologne tickling Lance's nose, the rough feel of his curls, the deep ocean of his eyes, the warmth and softness and smoothness of his flesh. Lance felt light-headed and dizzy, high on Justin. He sat up enough to let Justin unbutton his shirt, his hands roaming Justin's chest, caressing his nipples erect, tracing the firm muscles of Justin's stomach. Beneath him he felt Justin's hard dick, urgent and solid. When his shirt was unbuttoned completely, Justin pushed it back off of Lance's shoulders, running his hands along Lance's chest, and Lance shrugged the shirt off completely. "Justin," he said, leaning down over him again.

"We don't have to rush this," Justin cautioned, rubbing Lance's back as Lance nuzzled his neck. "We've got all night."

"I want you now," Lance replied. "Oh God, Justin, I want you so badly." He covered Justin's face with kisses, licking along Justin's skin until the taste of Justin was imprinted in his memory so he would never forget it.

Justin kissed Lance's shoulder, his lips soft and tender compared to Lance's insistent, demanding touch. "You still need to take your pants off," he said.

"Fuck," Lance moaned, and then he rolled off of Justin, unzipping his pants and kicking them off quickly. His boxers followed suit.

As he was about to climb back on top of Justin, Justin pointed at his feet. "Your socks," he said, laughing.

Lance sighed. "Justin!" he cried, frustrated. He pushed his socks off with his feet and cursed when they got tangled up in each other. Sitting up, he plucked them off and was about to lay back down when Justin's arms encircled his waist. Justin's hands found his thick erection and squeezed gently. Justin's touch was cool and damp, his hands full of oily cream, and Lance moaned as Justin rubbed up and down his dick, his hands sliding easily over the length, lubricating it. Wet lips kissed his

back, and Lance leaned back into Justin's embrace. Justin worked his erection, kneading it until Lance was achingly hard and ready to come. Then Justin pulled away and Lance turned, lying down over Justin as he lay back against the pillows.

Running his hand over Justin's swollen cock, Lance watched Justin's face as he stroked him. Justin closed his eyes, his mouth opening as he moaned, showing those perfect teeth, that delightful tongue. Lance leaned forward and covered Justin's mouth with his own, delving inside to taste Justin's sweetness. His hand slipped lower, cupping Justin's balls, two fingers sliding inside of Justin to spread him apart. Justin opened his legs and pulled Lance down on top of him, his hands slimy and cold with the lube still on them.

Lance guided his dick into Justin, moaning at the tightness latching onto his cock, pulling him in. He had forgotten how wonderful it felt to be inside of Justin, the way his dick throbbed against Justin's snug muscles, the way Justin clung to him as he eased all the way inside, filling him. Justin moaned Lance's name and pulled him down on top of him, his teeth biting into Lance's shoulder gently. Lance ran his hands beneath Justin and hugged him close, each thrust of his hips rocking the bed slightly. The quiet thump of the bedpost against the wall excited Lance, making him thrust harder, faster, just to hear it thump again. Justin moved beneath Lance, his muscles squeezing Lance's thick shaft, his own erection between them slick with cum. When Lance came, he held Justin so tightly that for a moment he forgot to breathe.

And then he was kissing Justin, covering his face with tiny butterfly kisses, fluttering over Justin's sweaty brow, dancing in his curls and along his cheeks. Lance sighed Justin's name. "I love you," he whispered into Justin's mouth.

Justin's hands ran down Lance's back, soothing as the heat of the moment dispersed. "I love you," Justin replied. Smiling, he said, "I came twice."

"You didn't." Lance grinned down at him. "Now how did you manage to do that?"

"I don't know," Justin admitted. He wiggled his hips against Lance's. Lance started to stiffen inside of him again. Sighing, Justin studied Lance's face and whispered, "I missed you."

"Me too," Lance said, leaned down to kiss Justin again.

Someone knocked on the door. Groaning, Lance called out, "Go away."

"You guys want to see the next movie?" It was JC.

Justin giggled. "You've got to be kidding me," he said, rolling his eyes.

"JC," Lance said, rolling over and pulling Justin on top of him, "can't you read?"

"Do not disturb?" JC called.

"It means go away," Justin replied. He grinned down at Lance and kissed him again.

"What's this penalty of death thing?" JC said, tapping on the door.

Lance reached down off the bed and grabbed one of Justin's sneakers. Pitching it at the door, he said, "Go away!" The shoe hit the door loudly, shaking it in its frame, and they heard laughter from the other side.

"I'm glad he thinks this is funny," Justin said, pouting.

Lance thrust into Justin again and kissed his pouty lips until they smiled again.

All I Ever Wanted
68. Just Desserts
by NSyncGrrl

They were in a hotel near the airport. Their flight for Maine left at six in the morning, and they'd be at the cabin by nightfall tomorrow. This time when Justin argued for two rooms, Joey agreed -- a single for Justin and Lance connected to a double for the others. "I'm not sleeping with you again," JC said, frowning. "It's Chris's turn."

Joey grinned. "Aw, c'mon," he said, laughing. "These beds are bigger."

Chris jumped on one of the beds. "Your loss, JC," he said, smiling. "Just don't beg to sleep with me at the cabin. I'm going to remember this."

JC threw his pillow at Chris as the door between the rooms opened. Justin peeked out and grinned at them. From inside the other room, Lance called, "What are we doing for dinner?"

Glancing at the clock, Chris replied, "Let's order in."

"We don't know who delivers in this area," JC said.

Joey tossed him the phone book. "That's what this thing's for. You think they only give it to you to prop up the nightstand?"

"I want something fresh," Justin said, coming into their room. "Like a salad, or fruit, or --"

"Listen, rabbit boy," Joey said, plopping down on the bed next to Chris and turning on the television, "I want something sinful. Chocolate, or pizza, or a hoagie to die for." He glanced up as Lance entered the room and leaned against the door while Justin sat down on JC's bed. "What are you hungry for, Lance?"

Lance let his gaze roam over Justin and shrugged. "Seafood? Pasta? I don't know." He looked at his watch and said, "Let's just run out to that grocery store past the airport. They had a deli sign out front. Maybe they have something we can pick up."

"If it's food, I'm there," Joey said, sitting up. "Who's coming?"

"I will," Lance said, and when no one else chipped in, he looked at Justin. "Justin?"

Justin chewed his lip thoughtfully. He didn't want Lance to go out alone with Joey, but he didn't want to tag along just to prove to himself that Lance would be faithful to him. He knew Lance wouldn't do anything, but he didn't want to chance it -- his trust in Lance was slowly being rebuilt, brick by brick, but so far Joey hadn't done much other than stay away from Lance to give Justin reason to trust him. He glanced at Chris, watching TV and ignoring them, and then he glanced at JC, unpacking his sleepwear for the night.

Joey saw the indecision in Justin's eyes and asked, "JC?" JC looked up at him. "Lance and I are heading out to pick up dinner. You wanna come along for the ride?"

JC met Justin's gaze and, seeing the silent plea in his friend's eyes, nodded. "Sure," he said, setting his bags aside. After they left, Justin retreated back to his room, leaving Chris alone with the sound of the TV seeping through the thin wall. Leaving the door slightly ajar, Justin lay down on the narrow double bed and stared at the ceiling, angry at himself for feeling the way he did. Now JC probably thought he was being overly protective, Joey had to think ill of him, and what was going through Lance's mind right now? Justin would've given anything to know. Should've just gone along myself, he thought, frowning. Forget what the others would think -- Lance asked and you didn't go.

About a half hour later, he heard the door open in the other room and knew they were back. Lance laughed at something Joey said as he pushed open the door between their rooms. Glancing in, he saw Justin lying down and stepped into the room, a paper grocery bag in one hand. "I'm locking this door," Lance called out to the others as he closed the door behind him.

Suddenly someone on the other side started knocking. Lance grinned at Justin, who rolled his eyes. "I'm not opening it again," Lance replied, and for good measure he propped a chair beneath the knob. "You guys leave us alone." The knocking stopped, replaced by their friends' laughter.

Justin sat up on the bed. "What did you get?" he asked, reaching for the bag.

Lance pulled it away. "You'll see," he replied. Then he looked at Justin for a long moment. "Do you trust me?" he asked quietly.

Sighing, Justin said, "Lance, I'm sorry, really. I know you're not going to do anything with Joey but I just couldn't help myself --"

"What are you talking about?" Lance asked, frowning.

Justin looked up at him, confused. "When you were going to the store," he explained. "I didn't want you to think I was coming along just to keep an eye on you, but I didn't want you to go alone, not with him ..."

He frowned. "What are you talking about?" he asked.

Lance laughed. "I'm thinking we can play a game," he said, setting the grocery bag down on the floor, out of Justin's reach. "It involves trust. But if you don't think you can do it just yet, I'll understand."

The corner of Justin's mouth twitched. Lance's games usually ended up with them together in the bed, naked and pleasantly exhausted, but he was getting hungry. "Does it involve food?" he asked.

"Yes," Lance said, watching Justin's face carefully.

"Is it going to be fun?" Justin asked, a slow smile spreading across his face.

"Isn't it always?" Lance replied.

Justin nodded. "Okay," he said. "What kind of game is it?"

Walking over to the dresser, Lance picked up one of Justin's bandannas in his hands and began rolling it up. "Close your eyes," he commanded. Justin obeyed. He felt Lance kneel on the bed beside him and then the soft fabric of the bandanna pressed against his closed eyelids, keeping them shut. "Is this too tight?" Lance asked, tying the bandanna behind Justin's head.

"No," Justin said, a shiver of delight rushing down his spine. He reached out for Lance but he was gone. Frowning, Justin asked, "Lance?"

"Right here," Lance replied, catching Justin's hand in his own. He squeezed Justin's hand gently. "You okay?"

"Fine," Justin said, smiling. "I just can't see."

Suddenly Lance's lips were on his, and Justin leaned back, savoring the kiss. Excitement raced through his veins as Lance's tongue parted his lips. It was much different than simply closing his eyes and kissing Lance -- he couldn't see when Lance leaned towards him, couldn't see the look in Lance's eyes, or anticipate the feel of lips on his. And the gentle pressure of the bandanna across his eyes heightened his senses and added to the moment.

But when he reached out to touch Lance's face, Lance pulled away. "You hungry?" he asked softly.

"For you," Justin said, turning his head to follow the sound of Lance's movements. He heard the rustle of the grocery bag and smiled again. "What did you buy?" he asked.

The bed shifted as Lance sat down beside him again. "You'll see," he said. Justin heard the crinkle of a plastic container being opened, and then Lance laughed. "Actually, you won't see, but you'll find out soon enough. Open your mouth."

Justin opened his mouth, waiting. After a moment Lance sighed. "Justin, do you know how adorable you look right now?"

Justin blushed slightly but left his mouth open. Then he felt something soft and juicy between his lips and he bit down gently. It was a slice of tomato, sweet and a little tangy. Lance's fingers slipped inside his mouth with the tomato, and Justin sucked on them before letting go. "Italian dressing," he said, grinning.

"Yep," Lance replied. "Open up again." This time it was a strip of green pepper, crunchy and tart. Then a fork full of leafy green lettuce smothered in dressing pressed against his lips, and Justin took it into his mouth. As he chewed, Lance said, "See? You said you wanted a salad."

"Thank you," Justin replied, swallowing. "More, please," he said, opening his mouth again.

Lance giggled. "Oh, Justin," he sighed, feeding him another forkful.

"Are you eating anything?" Justin asked while he chewed.

"After every bite you take," Lance said. "The salad's almost gone."

Justin grinned. "Do you have anything else planned while I'm blindfolded?"

"Wait and see," Lance teased. When they finished the salad, he said, "You wanted fruit, too, right?"

Justin nodded. "We can hold off on the fruit," he said, reaching out for Lance. His fingers brushed against Lance's knee, and he rubbed along Lance's thigh. Lance's lips were on his again, oily kisses as spicy as Italian dressing. Justin let Lance push him down on the bed, and then soft fingers began unbuttoning his shirt. Justin moaned, running his hands along Lance's muscular arms, and then Lance pulled his shirt off first one arm, then the other. Justin reached up to hug Lance but Lance slipped away. "Lance?" he asked, pouting.

He felt Lance's hands on his crotch, pressing gently, and he thrust up against the touch. "Justin, let me get these off first," Lance said, and Justin grinned. Reaching out, he felt empty air, searching for Lance, and then he felt Lance's thick hair and he tugged gently. Lance unzipped Justin's jeans and pulled them down. Then cool air kissed his hot skin as he was stripped of his boxers, too.

Lying there naked, Justin frowned. "Lance?" he asked, unsure.

"Right here," Lance replied, kissing Justin's forehead quickly. "Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere." He set something cold on Justin's cheek.

"What's that?" Justin asked, turning.

Lance turned his head back. "Your fruit," he said, placing another slice on Justin's other cheek. "Don't move." Justin felt small circular pieces of something cold placed along his chest, over his nipples, down his stomach, and all along the hard length of his cock. He opened his mouth to ask Lance what they were, but then Lance's fingers were there, pressing a sugary sweet slice between his lips. "Strawberries," Lance said as Justin savored the fruit.

"How am I supposed to eat them when they're all over me?" Justin asked.

"Those aren't yours," Lance replied. "They're for me." He placed another slice on Justin's lips, and then his tongue licked Justin's cheek, taking the cold strawberry into his mouth and wiping away the sugary juice left behind. Justin sucked on his strawberry as Lance ate the one from his other cheek.

And then Lance's tongue was on his chest, his nipples, his stomach, eating the strawberries. Between pieces of fruit Lance would kiss around Justin's skin, licking up the sticky juice from the fruit, as he fed Justin more strawberries. He sucked Justin's nipples until they were aching from the attention, and when he trailed down between Justin's legs, Justin's dick throbbed. Lance licked along the swollen length, his teeth gently picking up the strawberry slices from Justin's tender skin, and then his mouth closed over the sensitive tip, his tongue cold and sweet and sticky. "Jesus!" Justin cried, coming almost instantly from the prolonged

foreplay. "Oh God, Lance, don't stop just don't please don't --" He felt his orgasm tear through him, as sweet as the memory of the strawberries that still lingered in his mouth.

Justin lay back on the pillows, sweaty and shaking slightly. He heard Lance in the bathroom, running the water, and he debated taking off the blindfold, but then Lance was back, a hot, wet washrag in one hand. Steam rose from the rag as he ran it gently over Justin's body, wiping away sweat and sticky strawberry juice and cum. "Lance?" Justin asked, his voice soft and trembling. He wanted to hold Lance close, to feel him pressed against him, to cuddle with him. "Can I take off the blindfold?"

"Not yet," Lance said. Justin moaned slightly, exhausted.

"Lay down with me," he whispered.

"In a minute," came the reply. Lance rubbed a dry towel over Justin, cleaning him up. Justin relished the touch and decided they should take baths more often. The feeling of lying there as Lance washed him was intoxicating.

Justin sighed. "Lance, please?" he asked. "Hold me."

"Hold on," Lance said, the smile in his voice hard to miss. He leaned over and kissed him, his lips lingering over Justin's. "One more minute, honey, I promise."

"Okay," Justin said, pouting. He heard Lance return to the bathroom, heard the soft shuffle of clothes as Lance finally undressed, and then heard the unmistakable sound of Lance rooting through their duffel bags. "What are you looking for?" Justin asked, frowning.

"Sit up," Lance commanded as he came back to the bed. Justin pushed himself up and sensed Lance's hands on either side of his head. Then something hard and cold draped against his neck, and he raised his hand, feeling smooth metal and tiny chips of stone. He heard the soft click of a clasp, and then the necklace settled against his skin easily, falling in the hollow of his collarbone.

"What's this?" Justin asked as Lance untied the bandanna. Justin looked down and saw a thick gold chain, sparkling with diamond dust. He turned to look at Lance, his eyes wide. "Lance, is this ...?"

"For you," Lance whispered. He ran his hands around Justin's waist and hugged him close. "Do you like it?"

"I love it," Justin whispered. Tears glistened in his eyes as he fingered the chain. "You didn't have to --"

"I know," Lance replied, kissing Justin's neck. "And you didn't have to forgive me, either. But you did. And this is a sign that you can trust me again."

"I do trust you," Justin said softly, turning to kiss Lance. Lying back, he pulled Lance down with him and ran his hands around Lance's neck. "I'm going to never take this off."

Lance giggled. "Maybe in the shower," he said. "And when you go

swimming. "

Justin smiled. "Maybe then," he conceded. Settling back in Lance's embrace, he said, "I really liked what you did with those strawberries. Where'd you ever get that idea from?"

"Came to me at the salad bar," Lance said, nuzzling Justin's neck. "I almost bought cucumbers ..."

Justin laughed, enjoying the weight of Lance's gift around his neck, the cool metal warming from the heat of their bodies pressed together.

All I Ever Wanted
69. Get to Sleep
by NSyncGrrl

In the darkness of the room, the only light came from the television. Chris thumbed the mute button, cutting off the TV's sound. He grinned and looked at Joey, sitting beside him on the bed, as they heard Justin's voice in the next room, calling out to Jesus and God and Lance to don't stop just don't please don't. "Sounds like Justin's having a religious experience," Joey said, laughing.

In the other bed JC rolled over, away from them. "You guys cut it out," he said. "Turn the TV back on."

"I thought it was bothering you," Chris said, hitting the mute button again. The TV roared back to life.

"I'd rather hear that than those two," JC grumbled.

Joey picked at the blanket on the bed, frowning. He's thinking about Lance, Chris thought, running a hand down the inside of Joey's thigh. He stopped at the hem of Joey's boxers. When Joey looked up at him, Chris smiled, and Joey smiled back, a little sadly. "You guys going to bed anytime soon?" JC asked from the safety of his covers.

Joey shrugged, his gaze lingering on Chris. "I'm kinda hungry," he said.

"You just finished eating," Chris said, laughing again. He laid back on the bed and, watching JC carefully, ran his hand beneath Joey's shirt, rubbing his back. "We should call it a night."

Joey glanced back at him, a sparkle in his eye. Taking the remote away, he clicked the TV off, plunging the room into darkness. Then he laid down beside Chris, resting his head on Chris's pillow. Their faces were so close, their noses touched. Chris felt Joey's hand caress his cheek, and then he leaned over and kissed Joey, pressing him back against the pillow as his tongue slipped between Joey's lips. Joey moaned, a small sound lost in Chris's mouth.

"Did you set the alarm?" JC asked suddenly.

Joey pulled away from Chris, startled, and slipped out of bed. He hit the floor with a loud thud, his hand clutching his chest where his heart hammered, his breath caught in his throat. A light clicked on and JC looked down at him. "You okay?" he asked.

In the bed, Chris laughed and hit Joey in the head with his pillow. "Jeez, Fatone," he said playfully, "it's not that bad, is it?"

JC rolled his eyes. "You two knock it off. Am I the only one here who realizes we need to be at the airport in five hours?"

"I set the alarm," Joey said shakily, crawling back into bed. He

swatted Chris with his pillow as he pulled the covers over him. He rolled onto his side, away from Chris, and frowned at JC. "Turn out the light, JC."

JC complied. The room fell silent once more, and then Joey felt Chris's hands around his waist, pulling him close. Soft, wet kisses trailed down the back of his neck. "You're going to get us in trouble," Joey whispered, leaning into Chris's touch.

Chris grinned against Joey's skin. "Just trying to take your mind off of Lance," he whispered back.

Joey started, surprised that his thoughts were so transparent. Chris's hand slipped down his stomach and cupped his dick through his thin boxers. Joey felt a familiar stirring in his groin at the touch. "I'm not thinking about him anymore," he sighed as Chris's hand squeezed gently. Beneath his fingers, a slight erection began to harden.

"Will you be quiet?" JC asked, and Joey stiffened against Chris.

"You be quiet," Chris replied, kissing Joey's neck again. "You're the one talking."

"I can hear you two --"

Chris laughed softly. "What are we doing, then?"

JC didn't answer. "Just go to bed," he sighed.

"Someone's jealous," Chris whispered loudly.

Joey laughed. "It's his own fault," he whispered back. "Didn't want to share his bed with anyone."

"Shut up," came the terse reply.

Chris let go of Joey and climbed over him. Joey trailed a hand down the back of Chris's leg as he left the bed. He could hear quiet footsteps as Chris tiptoed over to JC's bed. Then he let out a wild whoop and jumped onto JC's bed, tickling JC mercilessly. "Stop it!" JC cried, squirming to get away. Joey stood up on his bed and leaped into the other one, laughing as he landed on top of the others.

JC tumbled to the floor. "You two leave me alone!" he cried, breathless. "I'm trying to sleep!"

Chris lay across JC's bed, Joey propped up behind him, and they both grinned wickedly. JC couldn't see them, but he stumbled to his feet and warned, "Get to bed."

"Yes, Daddy," Chris replied in a high, childlike voice. Joey ran a hand over Chris's hip and kissed the back of Chris's neck softly.

JC fell into the other bed and turned his back to them. Chris laughed as Joey's hand slid up beneath the leg of his boxers, rubbing his thigh. When Chris rolled over, Joey's hand slipped along his groin, brushing against his penis before pulling back. "You're evil," Joey said, laying down beside Chris.

Chris placed his lips against Joey's ear and whispered, "Can you kiss quietly?"

"Like this?" Joey asked, his lips closing over Chris's lips silently. He sucked for a moment before pulling away.

Chris nodded against him. "Watch this," he whispered, taking Joey's hand in his and placing it over his crotch. Joey grinned and squeezed gently, surprised to find Chris already hard. "Oh, Joey!" Chris moaned, his voice loud in the small room.

Joey pulled his hand away, blushing furiously. In the other bed JC sighed dramatically. "You're not being funny anymore," he said.

Chris collapsed in a fit of giggles, and Joey punched him in the arm. When he tried to turn away, Chris hugged him close, trapping him. "That's not funny!" Joey hissed.

"I thought it was," Chris replied, climbing on top of Joey to hold him down. When Joey didn't reply, Chris asked, "You really pissed?"

"Yes," Joey said. Embarrassed was more like it, but he wasn't about to tell Chris that. The feeling of Chris pressing down on him was comforting, but he didn't want to tell him that, either. Not after that stunt he just pulled. When Chris leaned down to kiss him, Joey turned away.

Chris's lips brushed against his cheek. Joey tried to roll over, and Chris rolled off of him, his hands latching onto Joey's waist again. "Stop being pissy," Chris whispered as he hugged Joey tight. He rested his head in the middle of Joey's back and sighed. "I'm going to squeeze you until you stop it."

Running his hands along Chris's arms, Joey grinned. "Then I'm going to be pissy forever," he said, "so you have to stay just like this forever."

"Okay," Chris agreed. He shifted into a more comfortable position, and Joey felt Chris's hard erection rub against his butt. Chris thrust against him gently. "I'm sleeping with you at the cabin," he said.

"Is that a promise?" Joey asked.

"You two shut up," JC said.

Chris turned his head. "You can't hear what we're saying," he said.

"I don't care," JC replied. "I can hear your voices mumbling. And it's keeping me awake."

"Then we'll shut up," Joey said, pinching Chris's arms playfully. "And once you fall asleep, we'll start talking again."

JC sighed, and Chris laughed, burying his head against Joey's back. Joey grinned in the darkness and closed his eyes, hoping he didn't fall asleep before JC.

All I Ever Wanted
70. At the Airport
by NSyncGrrl

"How long is this flight again?" Justin asked no one in particular as he stood in the airport, waiting to board. He was looking at the screen announcing that their flight would be delayed by fifteen minutes, but the time change was making it hard for him to count out how many hours they'd actually be in the air. If they left at 6:30 in the morning, and got to Maine at 7:00 at night, did that mean they would spend almost eleven hours on the plane? He wasn't sure, and right now it was still very early, and he was a little peeved because he had woken up with a hard-on and they were running late so he didn't have a chance to do anything about it, and if Chris or Joey said one more thing about him yelling out last night he was going to deck them. Before he even got a chance to eat his cereal Chris was banging on the door between their rooms, grinning from ear to ear and asking Justin if he found God last night. Joey hooted with laughter and called him Brother Justin of the Church of Lance. That's the last time we get connecting rooms, Justin thought sourly, glaring at his friends who stood by the window, watching the planes take off.

Lance turned around and caught Justin's eye. He smiled brightly and waved; Justin smiled back and turned away. Eleven hours, he thought, sighing. On a commercial flight. Which meant screaming kids and noisy music and loud businessmen. They were flying first class but still. He wouldn't be able to get Lance alone until they reached the cabin all the way on the other side of the country. And he was getting horny again, dammit. Unconsciously he fingered the chain Lance gave him, still clasped around his throat, and wished they could be taking this week off from the group alone, and not with the others in tow. Despite whatever it was they needed to work out between them, Justin planned on spending most of his time in bed with Lance, catching up on all the time they missed at Dani's house. And in the woods, he thought, smiling, and in the lake, and in the boathouse ...

Warm hands ran around his waist, and then Lance hugged him close, setting his chin on Justin's shoulder. "You still pissed at them?" he asked softly, rubbing Justin's stomach through his thin shirt.

"A little," Justin admitted. "If only they'd leave it alone already."

"But it's fun to pick on you," Lance said before he could stop himself.

Justin turned his head towards Lance, frowning. "Well, if that's how you feel, go back over there with the others. Make sure you guys laugh loud enough for me to hear."

Lance squeezed him tightly. "Oh, Justin, stop it," he admonished, his voice light. "They're just teasing you. Buck up, boy, and take it like a man." Justin grinned at the sudden image that came to mind, of him and Lance naked in the bed with none of the others anywhere in sight. Lance sighed. "They're picking on me, too. I just ignore them."

"What are they saying about you?" Justin asked, anger creeping into his voice.

Lance laughed. "Ready to fight now, eh?" he asked.

"What did they say?" Justin asked again.

"Nothing," Lance lied.

"Lance," Justin whined. He ran his hands over Lance's and up his arms, feeling the smooth skin beneath his fingers. "Tell me."

Lance sighed. "It's nothing," he said again. Then he started to pull away.

Justin held onto him. "Don't go," he said. Suddenly he didn't want Lance's touch to disappear.

But Lance smiled and said, "People are starting to stare at us, Justin. We can't just stand here and cuddle in public." Justin pouted. When he didn't think that would work, he ducked his head and looked up at Lance with large, puppy dog eyes. For good measure he sighed, a lonely, despairing sound. "Justin," Lance warned, "no."

Justin held out his hand. "Please?" he asked in a sad voice.

Lance rolled his eyes but took his hand. Justin led him away from the concourse and down an ill-lit hallway off the bathroom. "Justin," Lance said, uneasy, "I think this is for employees only."

"We won't stay long," Justin said, leaning back against the wall. He pulled Lance against him, scooting down a little so Lance stood over him, his feet on the floor between Lance's. He looked up at Lance and ran a hand down Lance's cheek, savoring the feel of Lance's unshaven skin. "Kiss me," he whispered.

Lance leaned down and kissed Justin, his lips tugging Justin's gently as Justin grabbed fistfuls of Lance's shirt and pulled him closer. Justin moaned as Lance shifted his knee into Justin's crotch, rubbing his slight erection through his jeans. Lance's tongue slipped between Justin's lips, and Lance pressed him back against the wall with the strength of his kiss.

"Church is in session!" someone cried. Lance and Justin turned to see Joey kneeling on the ground, just outside the hallway. Chris was behind him, preaching to the people passing by about worshipping at the Church of Lance, pray for the lost souls, hallelujah, praise Lance. Odd glances took in the two men, and then slipped into the hall to see Justin and Lance, pressed against each other, before moving on. Justin sighed. "Praise God!" Joey continued, his voice loud. "Praise Lance!"

"Shut up," Justin said, starting for them, but Lance held him back.

Chris turned around and grinned at them. "The time of the new era is upon us," he said, his eyes sparkling with suppressed mirth. "Bow down to the new God. Worship the new deity. Taste of the communion that is Lance."

"Let me go," Justin whispered, his face angry. "I'm going to kill them."

Lance kissed Justin quickly, surprising him. "Why not listen to them?" he asked, smiling. When Justin looked up at him, confused, Lance said, "Kiss me."

"But Lance --"

"Kiss me," Lance repeated. Before Justin could reply, he closed his lips over Justin's and kissed him tenderly. Over the loudspeaker their flight was announced. Pulling back, Justin looked at Lance and smiled slowly. "See?" Lance asked, tugging on one of Justin's curls. "They're just jealous."

Justin kissed him again before they hurried out of the hallway, but he couldn't resist kicking Joey as they passed.

All I Ever Wanted
71. Memory of a Kiss
by NSyncGrrl

"Put that map away," Joey said as he climbed back into the driver's seat of their rented Ford Explorer. He frowned at JC, sitting in the passenger seat, trying to refold a map he just bought. They had made a pit stop at a gas station off the interstate, only to find the others asleep in the back seat. Lance rested against the window, his head in his hand and Justin cuddled against him, his arms wrapped around Lance's waist. Chris leaned on Justin, snoring lightly. JC thought they still had another hour until they reached the cabin, if Joey didn't get them lost along the way, and he didn't see the point in waking them when they stopped. He picked up the map inside the gas station, hoping to get a quick look at it and hide it away before Joey noticed. No such luck.

"I just want to make sure we're going the right way," JC said, folding up the map.

"We are," Joey replied. He set his drink in the holder beside JC's leg and grinned. "You got the directions off the internet."

JC sighed. "Those suck," he said. Picking up the sheets of paper he printed out back at Dani's house, he read, "Interstate 95 turns into Orono Rural State Highway 675 for 1.5 miles. Orono Rural State Highway 675 turns into Interstate 95 for 4.5 miles. What the fuck is that?"

Joey laughed. Turning back onto the road, he said, "So how much longer you think we have until we get there?"

"About an hour," JC admitted. They sat in silence for a while, JC staring out at the passing scenery while Joey drove. The radio was turned down low, and the sounds of light jazz filled the car. He glanced back at the others and smiled slightly.

Looking at him from the corner of his eye, Joey asked, "What's on your mind?"

JC shrugged. "I thought you only liked Lance because you were lonely," he said, surprising himself. What the hell? he thought. "I'm sorry, Joe," he said quickly, turning back towards the window. "I don't know where that came from."

For a moment he didn't think Joey would answer. Then, in a quiet voice, he asked, "When did I say that?"

"You don't remember?" JC asked. Suddenly he was back in that dark alley in DC, the night sweltering and noisy, Joey hunkered down beside him, crying from loneliness and too much to drink. He forgot what he had said but Joey looked up at him with those deep brown eyes and JC knew Joey was going to kiss him. He remembered the feel of Joey's tongue in his mouth, the press of his lips, the malty taste of beer on his breath. Many times after that he would wake up with the memory of Joey's kiss lingering on his lips and wonder what exactly he felt for his friend. True,

JC was lonely as well -- the road kept him away from his friends and family, and it was hard to make any kind of lasting relationships outside of the band. And he didn't think he wanted Joey, not that way -- he couldn't handle a lover who pined for someone else. The way Joey still felt for Lance was too obvious, and JC didn't want to play second to that. But the memory of the kiss remained, and he had hoped that maybe it meant as much to Joey as it had to him. Obviously not. "Nevermind," JC said softly.

"No," Joey persisted, "when did I say that?"

JC sighed. "Back in DC. You were drunk. Just forget about it."

He should've known Joey wouldn't drop it. A few minutes later he asked, "That night I met Marie?" JC nodded. "I said I only liked him cause I was lonely?"

Hoping to change the subject, JC asked, "Have you heard from her lately?"

"Who, Marie?" Joey asked. JC nodded again, his gaze steady on the trees passing by outside. Joey shrugged. "Got an email from her the other day. She's doing okay. You trying to change the subject?"

"Is it that obvious?" JC asked, grinning.

Joey laughed. "What else did I say that night?"

JC shrugged. "I don't remember," he muttered. It was the truth. The only thing that stood out in his mind was the kiss.

Glancing at Lance in the rearview mirror, Joey said, "I was out of it that night. I don't remember much either."

JC shrugged again. Joey leaned forward and adjusted the radio, cutting off the speakers in the front seat so the music flooded the back of the car. If any of the others woke up, they wouldn't be able to hear what he said over the music. Still, when he spoke, it was quietly, as if he was afraid of being overheard. He looked in the mirror again, studying Lance's sleeping features, and said, "The first time I met him I remember thinking he was pretty. And I've never thought a boy was pretty, you know? Remember how I used to pick on him all the time?" JC nodded, looking at Joey, but Joey didn't meet his gaze. "I didn't want him to know," Joey continued. "I didn't want to know it myself, to admit that I might be attracted to a guy. But he was the perfect gentleman, always so sweet, so forgiving, and I couldn't help but fall for him."

"So it wasn't loneliness?" JC asked quietly.

Joey shook his head. "I tried telling myself that to ease the pain of seeing him and Justin together. It still hurts when I look at them. To know that he's not interested in me. And I'm afraid I ruined things between us -- I mean, at least before when I flirted with him, sometimes he'd flirt back. It was just enough to keep me hoping, you know? And now I haven't even talked to him since that party. I don't know what he thinks about me now."

"He talks to you," JC said.

Joey sighed. "Only when he has to. We used to be great together. We were working on that script, and we had plans of what we'd do after the group. We'd open a club, Justin too, and now I can't even sit down with him and ask him what's going to happen between us." He glanced at JC and whispered, "If I tell you something, can you promise not to tell the others? Ever?"

JC nodded. "Sure," he said, leaning closer to Joey.

Joey chewed his lower lip, indecisive, and then he blurted, "I think about him all the time." He blushed. "That kiss, the way it felt to hold him in my arms, to feel him against me, to know that it was me turning him on. It makes me hard just to remember that." He laughed, breaking the tension in the car. "Justin would kill me if he knew everytime I look at Lance I remember the way he tasted in my mouth, the way he felt in my hands."

Shifting back into his seat, JC glanced back at Justin, so childlike in sleep, and silently agreed. Joey looked at him sharply. "You won't tell?" he asked.

"No, I won't," JC promised.

They drove for a while, each lost in his own thoughts, when suddenly Joey grinned and said, "I remember that night."

"What night?" JC asked, even though he already knew what Joey was talking about.

"In DC," Joey said. He looked at JC slyly. "Tell me, do you still taste me in your mouth?"

JC blushed and turned away. What could he say? He wasn't going to tell Joey that once he woke up in wet sheets with Joey's name on the tip of his tongue in the darkness. He wasn't going to let Joey know that sometimes he wondered what Joey would do if JC asked for another kiss. He wasn't going to make him think he wanted him like that.

Before he could answer, someone shifted in the back seat, moaning as they stretched. Then Justin leaned forward, blinking in the late afternoon light. "We there yet?" he asked sleepily.

Behind him Chris crawled over and leaned against Lance, closing his eyes again. "Not yet," Joey replied, glancing back in the rearview mirror as Chris settled against Lance's shoulder comfortably. A slight frown crossed Joey's face and was gone. "Another half hour or so," he said.

Justin leaned back on top of Chris. "You took my spot," he whined, pushing Chris up.

"I don't see your name on it," Chris replied, scooting closer to Lance.

"Chris," Justin complained, shoving himself beneath Chris's body. "Move over."

"Justin, stop it," Chris pouted, poking at Justin's ribs.

Justin frowned. "Ow," he said softly. "Stop touching me."

JC rolled his eyes. "This is going to be a fun week," he muttered, and Joey laughed as Chris and Justin began slapping each other in the back seat. Silently JC said a prayer of thanks, glad that Justin woke up when he did. Joey didn't need to know JC still thought about their single kiss.

All I Ever Wanted
72. Roughing It
by NSyncGrrl

Justin scrubbed his face with the new washcloth roughly, the cold water a shock on his skin. First night in this damn cabin, he thought sourly, and the hot water heater hasn't even warmed up yet. The ranger knew they were coming but forgot to get the cabin ready, and when they pulled in a little past eight o'clock that night, she smiled weakly and cut on the generator outside. The first thing Justin did when the lights came on was pick out the bedroom he would share with Lance -- it was the master bedroom, with a large, king-sized bed covered in down comforters and flannel sheets, and huge windows afforded a serene view of the lake outside and would fill the room with light from the setting sun.

While the others were picking out their rooms, Justin laid Lance down on the bed and covered him with long, slow kisses, whispering what he wanted to do to him in this bed, and in that lake, and out there on the wooden walk leading to the boathouse, and in the claw-foot tub in the bathroom off their bedroom. That was hours ago, though, and after a late dinner, Chris and JC headed outside to check out the layout of the grounds while Lance and Joey sat in the living room, reading comic books they picked up from Grosso's Market, the closest store to the cabin and over ten miles away. Justin thought he'd get ready for bed and then coerce Lance into joining him -- damn, but he was horny. After that whole strawberry thing, he couldn't stop thinking about Lance.

Justin toweled the water off of his face and chest. He stood in just his boxers and looked at himself critically in the mirror, squinting. His hair bounced like coils of wire on his head, and he hated it. Should've had it braided, he thought, sticking his tongue out at his reflection. But Lance liked it curly, so Justin hadn't cut it lately. And it was getting a little scraggly.

Suddenly he saw something by the tub out of the corner of his eye. He turned and frowned as the largest spider he ever saw eased out from under the tub. "Jesus!" he cried, stumbling back. He hated spiders -- he knew they wouldn't hurt him, his dad had laughed at him when he was little and screamed when he saw one, normally he just made a face and squished them and moved on, but holy Mary, Mother of God, this was the biggest fucking spider he'd ever seen! It was easily the size of his palm, big and black and impossibly hairy -- "Lance!" Justin cried, throwing the towel onto the floor, covering the spider. There was no way on God's green earth that he was touching that thing. Let Lance get it.

"Lance!" he called again, his voice a little steadier now that the spider was hidden from view. He stumbled out into the living room, where Joey and Lance both looked up from their comic books.

Lance heard Justin's unsteady voice and frowned. "What's wrong?" he asked, setting his comic aside.

Justin frowned at Joey. There was no way he could tell them he found

a spider without getting laughed at, no matter how big the thing was. If Lance had been alone, he would've just smiled and gone in to see the spider, and then maybe laughed after he killed it and hugged Justin close. Justin wanted Lance to hold him right now, spider or not. But Joey would squeal if Justin said there was a spider in his room, and then he would make a big deal about killing it, and then he would never let Justin forget the whole incident.

Fuck it, Justin thought. I am not going back in there until that thing is gone. He looked at Lance with his patented pitiful pout and said in a small voice, "There's a spider --"

Joey erupted with laughter, just as Justin thought he would. "A spider?" he choked, laughing so hard that tears spilled from the corners of his eyes. Justin frowned at him, vexed, and then looked back at Lance.

Lance laughed at the way Joey was taking this, and then smiled so sweetly that Justin felt his heart swell in his chest. He knew Justin hated spiders. "I'll get rid of it," he said, standing up. He touched Justin's waist as he passed, his hand cool against Justin's bare skin, and Justin wanted to hug him.

Joey clamored to his feet. "I've gotta see this spider," he said, giggling as he followed Lance into their room. Justin watched them from the doorway, frowning. Lance walked into the middle of the room and turned around, a little confused. "I don't see it," he said.

"Check out this bed," Joey said, plopping down on their bed. "Ours isn't this big."

"Get up," Justin said angrily. "The spider's in there ..." He pointed at the bathroom, where he could see the edge of the tub through the open door.

Lance walked over, his gaze on the ground. "I still don't --"

"Under the towel."

Joey pushed past Lance and picked the towel up. The floor was bare beneath it. "Nothing," he said, turning to show Justin.

"Fuck!" Lance cried, hitting Joey's hand. The towel fell in a heap to the floor and Lance backed away quickly. When Joey looked at him, he whispered, "That's the biggest damn --"

Joey picked up the towel again, and the spider scurried out. "Christ!" Joey shouted, jumping back. He hit the edge of the tub and fell to the floor, but he scurried back, bumping against Lance's legs, trying to keep an eye on the spider. "It's a Chernobyl spider!"

"It's on steroids," Lance said, reaching out behind him for Justin. Justin grabbed his hand and pulled him back to the safety of the doorway. Joey knelt on the floor, fascinated with the spider now that the shock of seeing it wore off. "Joey," Lance warned. Then, turning to Justin, he whispered, "How the fuck are we going to kill that?"

"I'm sleeping on the porch," Justin replied.

"Can I have your room?" Joey asked, watching the spider. Now that there was no one in the bathroom, the spider took its time crossing the floor.

"No," Justin said, scowling. "Just kill it."

Joey looked back at them and smirked. "What do you want me to do, step on it? It'll take me for a ride." Looking back at the spider, he said, "I had a turtle that big once. Maybe I can keep it as a pet. Whaddya think?"

"I think this whole trip sucks," Justin announced, pouting. He clutched Lance's arm and despite the comforting pressure of Lance's body against his, Justin was not having fun.

Behind him he heard the sliding door open, and then JC yelled, "Well, fuck, Justin, what's your problem now?"

Justin glanced back at him and frowned as JC came into the living room, Chris right behind him. This whole trip was JC's idea, and Justin thought it would be great at the time, but now ... "JC, I've had it."

"You just got here," JC replied. Looking into the room over Justin's shoulder, he saw Joey on the floor and asked, "What's going on in here?"

"There's a spider --" Lance began, but Chris cut him off, laughing.

"A spider?" Chris asked, as if he had never heard the word before. "Jesus Christ, Dani was right when she called you a bunch of girls."

Justin glared at him. "She called us girls?" he asked, anger flaring in his voice. "When'd she say that?"

But Chris pushed his way into the room and stood behind Joey, his hands on his knees. "Where's this spider?"

"Under the sink," Joey replied. "Wait til you see it."

Justin pouted. "I'm not girly, am I, Lance?" he asked in a low voice.

Lance smiled, watching Chris and Joey as they stood still, looking for the spider. Squeezing Justin's hand, he whispered, "Normally I'd say no, but right now --"

"You're being girly," JC finished. He pushed into the room and sat on the edge of the bed. Chris ventured into the bathroom, trying to look in all directions at once. "I bet this spider isn't even here anymore. It probably crawled down the drain and --"

Suddenly Chris came out of the bathroom, holding the spider between his forefinger and thumb by one long, black leg. The huge body wriggled, the legs struggling to get away. "This it?" he asked, grinning at the disgusted looks the others threw his way. Holding the spider up to his face, he studied it for a minute before saying, "It's kinda cute."

"That's not a spider," JC said, scrambling off the bed to stand by Lance and Justin, "that's a freaking tarantula."

"No, it's not," Joey said, watching the spider carefully. He didn't back

away as Chris passed, but he kept his distance. "You're not putting that thing in our room, are you?"

Chris shrugged. "It's Justin's spider," he said, coming towards Justin, who hid behind Lance. Lance reached back and hugged Justin against his back, and the two of them began to move out of the room. Lance kept his eyes on Chris's face, trying to predict his friend's actions. Chris just kept walking towards them, slowly, the spider outstretched in his hand. Behind him JC and Joey stood in the doorway to the bedroom, watching them.

"Chris," Lance warned. Justin bumped into the couch and stopped.

Chris dangled the spider in front of Lance. "What do you want to do with your spider, Justin?" he teased.

"Get rid of it," Justin said, sitting down on the arm of the couch.

Chris laughed and tried to move around Lance, but Lance blocked him. "Chris," he said again, his lips set in an angry frown, "get rid of it. Please." Behind him Justin slid down onto the couch and hugged Lance's waist, his head against Lance's butt, his eyes closed tightly.

"Fine," Chris replied, a little miffed. He turned and stalked to the kitchen, where he opened the sliding door and tossed the spider outside. Coming back into the living room, Chris glared at Justin playfully. "You're such a wuss," he said.

"I am not," Justin replied, pulling Lance down into his lap. Lance laughed and slid off onto the couch.

"You are, too," Joey laughed, tousling Justin's hair.

Justin swatted his hand away. "Leave me alone," he muttered. Joey ran his hand over Justin's curls again, and Justin tried to duck out of reach. "Joey, stop."

"Joey, stop," Chris mimicked in a high, singsong voice. He tickled Justin's ribs, and Justin doubled over, trying to get away.

"Stop," he said again, kicking out at Chris. JC laughed as Joey rolled over the top of the couch and pushed Justin facedown into the cushions. Chris jumped onto Joey, and when Justin tried to crawl out from beneath their combined weight, Chris pulled at his curls. Moving out of the way, Lance watched Joey and Chris terrorize Justin with a slight smile on his face. "You guys stop!" Justin cried, tumbling onto the floor.

Joey laid on the couch beneath Chris, grinning. "You guys stop," he repeated, sticking his tongue out at Justin. Chris tried to catch Joey's tongue between his fingers but Joey scrunched up his face and pulled away. "Ew, Chris, you touched that spider --" Lance laughed.

It was the wrong thing to do. Justin glared at him, pissed. "I'm glad you find this amusing," he said, the anger in his voice barely held in check. He leveled one finger at Lance and frowned. "You can sleep in JC's room tonight." The others laughed, causing Justin's cheeks to burn. He hurried to his room and slammed the door. He threw himself onto the bed, burying his head in the soft pillows, cool against his flushed skin.

Someone knocked gently on the door. "Go away," he muttered. He didn't look up as the door opened, but he knew it was Lance when he heard the door shut.

Then Lance laid down next to him, pressing his body along the length of Justin's, and Justin turned his head away as Lance ran a hand across Justin's bunched shoulders. "You don't really want me to stay with JC tonight," Lance asked softly, "do you?"

"No," Justin admitted.

Lance tugged at Justin's curls. "You've been in a bad mood all day," he admonished. "What's wrong?"

Justin sighed. "Have you ever had one of those days where you feel as if the whole world is against you?"

"They're just picking on you," Lance said.

"And I'm sick of it." Justin sighed. "What's gotten into those two? All day long Chris and Joey have just been plain evil to me."

Lance ran his arm around Justin's shoulders and hugged him, resting his head on Justin's back. "Baby, they're just teasing," he said. Rubbing Justin's muscles, he sighed. "You're so tense. No wonder you're in such a bad mood." Sitting up, he massaged Justin's shoulders, his hands working the tightness out of his muscles.

Justin groaned beneath Lance's touch, relaxing slightly. Without breaking his gentle rhythm, Lance climbed on top of Justin, straddling him. With both hands he rubbed away the tension and stress caught between Justin's shoulder blades, kneading with the heel of his hands. Justin felt warmth spread through his shoulders and he sighed, forgetting about Chris and Joey's mean-spirited jokes and the long plane trip and that God-awful spider. "Lance, I'm sorry," he whispered.

"Sshhh," Lance hushed. His hands massaged Justin's biceps and then moved down Justin's back, inch by inch. Justin closed his eyes and let himself get lost in the motion of Lance's hands along his spine, rubbing in gentle circles. His skin heated up beneath the massage, and when Lance's hands slid lower, working out the knots in his lower back, Justin moaned his name. "This turning you on?" Lance asked, smiling.

"Is it ever," Justin replied. Lance leaned down on Justin as his hands kneaded the flesh just above the waistband of his boxers. Then Lance scooted back and his hands cupped Justin's buttocks, squeezing lightly. Justin moaned again, and Lance pulled down one side of his boxers and kissed his hip. His lips were cool and damp on Justin's skin. Justin rolled over, Lance's hands trailing across his lower belly. Lying on his back, he looked up at Lance and smiled. "I'm sorry I've been in a bad mood," he said.

"Me, too," Lance said, grinning. "You're not any fun when you're being poopy."

"Poopy?" Justin asked, giggling. Stretching out beside him again, Lance ran his hand over Justin's chest, up his neck, along his chin, turning

him to face Lance. Justin kissed Lance quickly. "I won't be poopy the rest of this trip," he promised.

"You better not be," Lance warned, "or I really will shack up with JC for the rest of the week."

"No!" Justin cried, pouting playfully. "You can't. I won't let you."

Lance grinned. "How are you going to stop me?"

"Like this." Justin rolled on top of Lance, pushing him against the bed. Straddling him, Justin laid down, his head on Lance's chest, his legs on either side of Lance's legs, and he hugged Lance close. "I'm going to stay like this forever."

Lance folded his arms around Justin and grinned. "That might not be a bad idea," he said, his voice echoing deep within his chest, tickling Justin's ear.

Justin kissed one of Lance's nipples. Between them their erections were stiffening, but Justin was tired after the long day they'd had and wanted nothing more than to go to sleep. Grinding his hips against Lance, he whispered, "We'll take care of these in the morning."

Lance kissed Justin's forehead. "One of us needs to turn out the light."

"I'm not moving," Justin said.

"Well, I can't move," Lance replied.

Justin frowned. Then, a smile on his face, he called out, "JC!" After a few moments, he called out again. "JC! Josh! Come here!"

The door opened. "What --" JC saw Lance, lying on the bed, Justin on top of him, and sighed. "What do you guys want?"

Justin grinned at him. "Can you cut the light out?" he asked sweetly. "Please?"

Sighing again, JC hit the lightswitch and pulled the door closed. "Thank you!" Lance called, grinning. "Justin, you're so lazy."

"At least the light's out now," he replied, snuggling closer to Lance.

All I Ever Wanted
73. Pillow Talk
by NSyncGrrl

Joey turned off the faucet and toweled his hair dry. When he came out of the bedroom, Chris was already under the covers, lying on his back and staring at the ceiling. The only light came from a small lamp on the table by Joey's side of the bed, and shadows clung to the room like spiderwebs. Chris grinned at the memory of that spider. Justin was so damn funny sometimes -- it was too easy to pick on him. Chris watched from the corner of his eye as Joey slid into bed and turned out the light. "Goodnight," Joey said, his back to Chris.

It was late, and they were both exhausted -- from the trip, from the tension running high between everyone today -- but now that the light was out, Chris was wide awake. He blinking in the darkness and whispered, "Goodnight."

After a few moments, he cleared his throat. "You still awake?"

"I just laid down," Joey replied. "Of course I'm still awake."

"Can we talk?" Chris asked nervously.

Joey sighed. "About what?"

Chris shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "Just stuff. I can't sleep."

"You haven't even tried."

"I did, too," Chris said, "when you were in the bathroom."

Joey sighed again. "The light was on then. Try again now."

A few minutes later, Chris said, "Nope. Can't do it."

Rolling onto his back, Joey stared at the ceiling and said, "Okay, so talk."

Now that Joey was listening to him, Chris didn't know what to say. He thought back to the previous night, when he and Joey had tried to keep quiet until JC fell asleep. Chris had such a hard-on, and touching Joey in the dark with JC in the bed beside them, not knowing what was going on, had turned him on so badly. But then they fell asleep before JC did, and didn't get to fool around any. Remembering Joey's hand on his crotch, squeezing gently, Chris felt himself stiffen slightly. "What do you think about blowjobs?" he asked suddenly.

If Joey was surprised, he didn't show it. "I like them," he replied.

"Have you ever given one?" Chris asked. The thought of Joey's lips on his cock made him harden even more.

"What?" Joey cried, disgusted. "No!"

There goes that idea, Chris thought sourly. "Never?" he prompted.

"Chris, I think I'd remember if I did something like that."

"Hmm." Chris frowned. "When's the last time you got one?"

"I can't remember," Joey admitted. "It was a while ago."

"Was it good?"

"Could a blowjob be bad?"

Chris laughed. "I don't know." He didn't -- he hadn't had very many, and as far as he could remember, they had all been good.

Joey shifted beside him. "When's the last one you got?" he asked.

Chris thought back. "I don't know. Dani doesn't like them."

"Most girls don't," Joey said.

"I wonder why not," Chris said. "I like them."

Joey shrugged. "Maybe it's better to receive than to give, you know?"

"You think so?"

Joey shrugged again. "I'm not going to find out. I'm not giving you a blowjob tonight."

Chris blushed, glad it was dark. "I didn't ask you to."

"Why don't you ask Justin?" Joey asked suddenly.

Chris rolled his eyes. It wasn't an appealing thought. "For a blowjob? He'd kill me."

"No," Joey said, laughing, "about giving them. I'm sure he and Lance --"

"I don't want to even think about that," Chris said, sighing. "Joey, don't you start thinking about it, too."

"I'm not."

"Liar." Chris could almost see the slight frown on Joey's face, despite the darkness.

"No, I'm not," Joey said again. Then he grinned. "I'm not thinking about Justin giving Lance a blowjob, anyway."

Chris hit Joey's arm playfully. "I'm not asking Justin," he said. "He's pissed enough at us as it is."

"Your fault," Joey said. "You and that damn spider."

Chris shook his head. "No, your fault. You and that damn Church of Lance crap."

"I thought it was funny," Joey pouted.

Chris grinned. "It was funny."

"I'd convert in a heartbeat," Joey continued.

"See?" Chris asked. "There you go again. Stop thinking about him. He's not here. I am."

Joey sighed. "I know. Okay, I'm not thinking about him anymore."

Yeah, right, Chris thought. "What are you thinking about?"

"You," came the reply.

How sweet. "Really?"

"Yeah." Joey laughed. "And why you want a blowjob right now."

"I didn't say --"

"No, but you're the one who brought it up." Joey turned to him, but Chris kept his gaze concentrated on the ceiling.

Shrugging, Chris said, "I just wanted to know if you ever did it before, that's all."

"What if I said yes?" Joey asked. "Then you'd ask for one, too?"

Chris sighed. "Shut up, Joey."

"You're the one who wanted to talk," Joey reminded him. They were quiet for a few moments, and Chris began to wonder if Joey had fallen asleep. Then Joey said, "I wonder if JC's ever had one."

Chris laughed. "He's so damn uptight sometimes I doubt it. He needs to loosen up."

Joey laughed, too. "Yeah, he needs a good mind-blowing dick licking."

Laughing, Chris thought maybe he wouldn't mind one of those, too. "Now you're thinking about --"

"I am not," Joey said quickly, and something in his voice made Chris wonder what made Joey bring JC into this in the first place.

Watching Joey out of the corner of his eye, Chris said, "You know, that was fun, last night, teasing him. He gets pissed off so easily."

Joey laughed, relieved the subject was changed. "He does."

"We should do something else," Chris prompted. Suddenly the thought of JC lying in his bed, so vulnerable, was almost too good to let the moment slip away. "He should be asleep by now."

Joey frowned. "What do you want to do?"

Chris shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. Something fun, something raunchy, something that would really get JC going. But his

mind was blank.

"Well," Joey said slowly, "I don't think we should mess with him anymore. He's too stressed out." He thought for a moment. "Besides, there are no locks on these doors."

"What's that have to do with anything?" Chris asked.

"He wakes up before us," Joey pointed out. "He'll come in here and retaliate."

That'll be the day, Chris thought. "No, he won't." Not the JC he knew.

But Joey nodded. "He will if Justin goes along with it. And the way Justin feels right now --"

"Oh, yeah. Right." Justin and JC went way back, and when Justin got to thinking about doing something, he could always convince JC to go along with him. "So have you ever had sex with a guy?" Chris asked, trying to get back to the original topic.

Joey sighed, exasperated. "Chris, if I have never sucked dick, what makes you think I've taken it up the ass?"

Chris grimaced at the image. "You don't have to be so crude about it."

"I'm just saying --"

"Well, fine. Sorry I asked." Chris closed his eyes and pouted.

But Joey laughed. "No, you're not," he said. "You're just being nosy."

Chris shrugged. "Whatever," he said. And then, "When's the last time you had sex?"

"Jeez, Chris, what is this? The third degree?"

Chris pouted again. "I'm just trying to make conversation."

Joey sighed. "Well, it's late and we don't need to be making conversation. We need to be getting to sleep."

"I can't fall asleep," Chris said. "It's too quiet."

Joey listened. "I know," he said, lowering his voice. "I can't hear anything outside. No cars, no horns, no music. I never thought I'd miss it."

"Joey?" Chris asked.

"Yeah?"

"I thought we were going to sleep." He grinned at the hurt look that flittered across Joey's face.

Joey punched him in the arm. "Shut up," he muttered.

Rubbing his arm, Chris cried out, "Shit! That hurt!"

"It did not." Joey frowned at the ceiling.

"Did too," Chris said, pouting. His arm began to ache.

"You're a wimp," Joey said.

Chris sighed. "Joey, you just about drove your fist through my arm. It hurts."

Suddenly Joey rolled over and rubbed Chris's arm, his hands strong and warm on Chris's cool skin. "I'm sorry," he whispered, his voice soothing.

Chris pouted. "Kiss it and make it better," he pleaded.

Joey leaned over and kissed Chris's arm, his lips damp. "There," he said. "All better?"

Chris frowned. "No, now my head hurts."

"Where?" Joey asked patiently. He was so close, Chris could smell Joey's spicy cologne and the faint scent of soap that lingered on his skin.

"Here." Chris pointed to his forehead.

Joey leaned forward and kissed Chris's forehead. His trimmed beard was coarse and scratchy against Chris's skin. "All better?" Joey asked quietly.

Chris nodded. Joey eased closer and slipped his arms around Chris. Grinning, Chris said, "Now my dick hurts."

"And it's going to hurt all night long," Joey replied. Chris tried to elbow him but Joey laughed and pulled him close, cradling him against his body. "Shut up and go to sleep," he said, resting his head on Chris's shoulder.

Chris sighed. At least it's something, he thought, closing his eyes as he lay in Joey's embrace. But it ain't a blowjob. He shifted until his body pressed against Joey's tightly, and then he drifted off to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
74. Dialogues
Part 1 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Lance swam, long, lazy strokes carrying him through the icy water, rippling the lake's placid surface. A low fog clung to the ground, making the woods surrounding the lake seem ethereal and dreamy. It was early morning -- Lance woke up when the first rays of sunlight crept into his room over an hour ago, and he laid in bed for a while, watching Justin sleep. He looked so peaceful when he was asleep, his brow smooth and unwrinkled, his lips full and slightly parted, his eyelashes fluttering as he dreamed. Lance kissed his cheek and eased out of bed. He was the only one awake this early, and after a quiet breakfast out on the deck, he decided to take a dip in the lake. So he slipped into his swimming trunks and took a running dive off the wooden pier that stretched into the lake past the boathouse. The water was cold and delicious on his skin, and Lance dunked his head under the surface of the lake, diving to touch the bottom.

When he bobbed back up, Joey sat on the edge of the pier. "Hi, Lance," he said softly, watching Lance swim towards him.

"Hey, Joey," Lance replied. He eyed Joey carefully, unsure. Joey wore just a pair of boxers and a t-shirt, and from his tousled hair and wide, blinking eyes, Lance knew he just woke up. Drifting closer to the pier, Lance wiped the water from his eyes and looked back at the house, but it was still dark -- no one else was up yet.

Joey cleared his throat. "Can we talk?" he asked.

Lance pulled himself up onto the pier beside Joey and reached for his towel. Drying himself off, he said, "Okay."

For a long moment they just sat there, the silence of the morning pressing against them. Lance sniffled, rubbing the water from his nose, and waited. Finally Joey asked, "How are things between you and Justin?"

"Okay," Lance repeated. He glanced at Joey warily. "Why?"

Joey shrugged. "Just wondering. I ..." He sighed, and in a small voice said, "I want you to be happy."

"I am," Lance said, thinking about it. Last week he would've never thought he could be happy again, but every day Justin trusted him a little bit more and they grew a little bit closer. At night he fell asleep with Justin's arms around him and knew this was what he wanted. He woke up in the mornings and watched Justin sleep and knew there was nothing he would do to mess up what they had together. "What about you?" Lance asked suddenly. "I want you to be happy, too."

"I will be," Joey promised. "One day. Maybe."

Lance sighed. "Joey," he started, but Joey held up his hand and cut

him off.

"Lance, it's okay, really. I understand." Joey smiled sadly. "I'm glad you and Justin are cool again, I am. I just wish you and I could get back to the way we were before all this happened."

Lance frowned. "And how was that?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know," Joey admitted. He looked out over the lake, but Lance felt his gaze on him from the corner of his eye and wished he had thought of bringing a t-shirt out with him. Suddenly he was all too aware of his naked chest and his cold, wet swim trunks clinging to his body. He shifted uncomfortably and draped the towel over his shoulders. In a small voice, Joey asked, "Do you ever think about what happened that night?"

Lance didn't have to ask what night he was talking about. "No," Lance whispered.

Joey turned and studied Lance's face. "I think about it all the time," he said. "I'm glad you two are together, really I am, but I can't forget the way it felt --"

"Joey, I can't think about it," Lance said, interrupting him. "I won't. God, that was the worst night of my life, when I came home, and Justin got so angry he left, and ..." Lance sighed, remembering. "I thought I had lost him forever."

"Part of me hoped you would," Joey said. When Lance looked at him sharply, Joey hurried to explain. "It's awful to say, I know, but if he left you I thought maybe you would let me ..." He sighed. "Let me be there for you."

Lance frowned. "I don't think that would've happened," he said. "I couldn't have done that to Justin."

"What would you have done?" Joey asked.

"I don't know," Lance admitted. "But I don't have to worry about that now. Justin forgives me, and nothing like that will ever happen again."

Reaching out, Joey touched Lance's knee, but Lance brushed his hand away. Joey sighed. "As long as you're happy," he muttered, but he didn't sound sincere.

"I am," Lance replied. He wanted to go back inside, get away from the tension and need radiating from Joey, and hold Justin close again. Maybe he was still asleep, and Lance could slip back between the covers and wake him up with soft, sweet kisses that would lead to something more.

"What's going to happen with us?" Joey asked.

"I don't know," Lance whispered. Taking a deep breath, he asked, "What do you want to happen?"

"I want us to be friends again," Joey said.

"Okay," Lance replied, cautious. "What does that mean to you?"

Joey whispered, "I don't want you to be afraid of being around me."

"I'm not," Lance said. He wasn't. A little awkward, yes. A little trepidatious, maybe. But not scared.

Joey looked at him for a long time before saying, "I don't want to make you uncomfortable."

Lance sighed. "That might take some time," he admitted.

Joey nodded. "Fair enough. Do you ..." He shrugged. "I don't know, do you still want to be friends?"

"Yes," Lance said. "I like you, Joey. You're a great guy, you're funny, you make me laugh. You're always there for me, and I want that to stay the same. But I don't like you the way I like Justin. And I don't want him to get jealous just because we're friends, you know?" Joey nodded again. "I think it'll just take a little time, that's all. We both need to prove to Justin that we aren't going to hurt him again."

"Okay," Joey agreed.

Behind them, Lance heard soft footsteps on the wooden walk leading from the house. Turning, he saw Justin, rubbing his eyes sleepily, his hair a shock on the top of his head, a comfy flannel shirt covering his chest and obscuring his boxers. He was barefoot, and as he came closer, Lance could see the slight frown marring Justin's face when he saw the two of them on the end of the pier, sitting side by side. "Hey," he said, still a little groggy. He sat down behind Lance and ran his hands around Lance's waist. Resting his head on Lance's damp back, he whispered, "I missed you this morning, babe."

"I wanted to let you sleep," Lance replied.

"What are you guys doing here?" Justin asked, blinking owlishly at Joey.

Joey grinned. "Just talking." He tugged playfully at one of Justin's curls. "What are you doing out here? You look like you need to be back in bed."

"I'm awake," Justin replied, yawning. He buried his head between Lance's shoulders and hugged him tightly. "Did you go swimming?" Lance nodded. "What are you guys talking about?"

"Being friends," Lance said.

Justin yawned again. "I want to be friends, too," he said innocently.

Lance and Joey both laughed. Turning around, Lance wrapped an arm around Justin's shoulders. "You're so cute when you first wake up," he said.

Joey grinned. "When you're not being an ass," he added.

"Hey," Justin cried, indignant. "Don't start with me today, Fatone. You and Chris are already on my shit list."

Joey laughed. "What happened to wanting to be friends?"

Lance smiled and hugged Justin. "You two stop it," he admonished lightly. "It's too early to argue."

"We're not arguing," Justin replied.

Joey grinned wickedly. "We are, too," he countered.

Lance laughed. It was a start, at any rate. A week ago, he would never have believed he would be sitting in the early morning air on the edge of a pier with both Justin and Joey without one of them winding up in the lake. And now here they were, laughing like nothing had happened. Maybe one day, they could forget it ever did.

All I Ever Wanted
74. Dialogues
Part 2 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Joey could just see Justin and Lance through the leaves of the trees. They were in the large hammock by the boathouse, Justin on top of Lance, making out. Don't they come up for air? Joey thought bitterly, taking another swig of his beer. He stood on the deck, leaning on the wooden railing, and tried to tell himself he was looking out at the lake, watching the late afternoon light play across the still water, staining it with reds and oranges and a deep, vibrant purple where shadows dappled the surface. But he saw the shifting in the hammock out of the corner of his eye, and if he didn't look at them directly he could see through the leaves that hid them from view the pale skin, hands roaming beneath shirts, tongues licking and lips kissing, denim-clad hips rubbing together. When the breeze shifted he heard slight moans, small gasps, their names whispered lovingly. I'm going to be sick, he thought, gulping down the rest of his beer.

Something soft hit him in the back of the head and fell to the deck. Looking down, Joey saw an unopened bag of hamburger buns. Turning, he frowned at Chris. "What's your problem?"

"Stop watching them," Chris replied. He stood over the large gas grill, a crisp, new apron proclaiming Kiss the Cook and Die over his shorts and t-shirt. He glanced up at Joey before turning his attention back to the burgers and hot dogs on the grill. Flipping one of the burgers into the air and catching it deftly on the spatula, Chris grinned at Joey and asked, "You like to torture yourself?"

Joey reached into the cooler and pulled out another bottle of beer. Sitting down on the wooden bench that ran along the deck's railing, he popped open the bottle and took a long swallow of the cold draft. "I was looking at the lake," he said lamely.

"Bullshit," Chris said, flipping another burger. This one didn't quite make it onto the spatula, and it landed with a wet smack on the deck. With the toe of his sneaker, Chris kicked it between the boards, stepping on it until it fell down to the ground below. "Um, you didn't want a burger, did you?"

Joey rolled his eyes. "Chris, we made ten of them. How many are you down to now?"

"Seven," came the reply.

"Then stop flipping them," Joey said. He glanced back at the lake, saw Justin and Lance, and sighed. He took another swig of his beer, downing more than half the bottle in one gulp.

Chris frowned at him. "Slow down on the brewskies, Joe. You'll be moody all night long."

"And lonely," Joey added. With a slight grin, he said, "I know what you're thinking."

"What?" Chris asked, suspicious.

Joey smiled crookedly. "You're wondering if I'll be moody enough to give you a blowjob."

Chris laughed. "Believe me, Joe, I'd pour all those beers down your throat myself if I thought it would make you suck my dick."

Raising an eyebrow, Joey mused, "It means that much to you?"

Chris shrugged and flipped another burger. This one landed on the grill. "I just want a blowjob, I don't care who does it."

Joey frowned. He wanted to hear that someone wanted him in particular, not just a warm, willing body. Reaching for another beer, he said, "Let's see how many it'll take."

Chris sighed. "Go wake up JC," he said. "We're going to eat soon. And stop drinking."

"I thought we came here to have fun," Joey pouted. "I am having fun."

"You're getting depressed," Chris corrected. "Last time I checked, that wasn't fun."

With a dramatic sigh, Joey hauled himself to his feet, staggering a bit. When Chris looked at him critically, Joey set the beer down and headed inside the house. "I'm fine," he muttered. "Wake up JC, I know. What the hell he wanted to come all the way out here for when all he does is sleep twenty-four seven is beyond me."

The door to JC's room stood open a crack. Joey pushed it open slowly. Inside the room was cool and dark, the blinds closed. Faint lines of sunlight crept between the slats of the blinds, falling just short of the bed. JC lay on top of the covers, sleeping fully dressed, lying on his back. Joey tiptoed closer and stretched out beside JC on the bed. Propping his head up with his hand, he studied JC, his face smooth in sleep. All the worries he carried on his mind, the frown and creases in his brow and small, fine lines around his eyes, everything was gone. He looked so young, so carefree, so unlike the anxious workaholic JC Joey knew every day. Joey brushed his fingers along JC's forehead, delighting in the feel of soft skin beneath his touch. JC moaned slightly and turned towards him, his lips slightly parted, his eyes still closed.

Still sleeping, Joey thought. Surprising himself, he leaned closer and covered JC's mouth with his. JC's lips were tender and pliant, and Joey eased them apart with his tongue, licking into JC's mouth. Pressing JC back gently, Joey kissed him. JC moaned into him, his hand coming up to touch the back of Joey's neck, pulling him closer. Joey opened his eyes as their kiss deepened.

And found JC staring back at him.

Joey snickered. "You always kiss with your eyes open?" he asked,

giggling.

"You're drunk," JC replied sleepily. "I can taste the alcohol."

Joey laid his head down beside JC's, his forehead resting against JC's ear. His coppery breath tickled, warm and malty, along JC's neck. "I came to wake you up," Joey said, closing his eyes.

"I'm up," JC said, not moving. "Where are the others?"

"Outside," Joey said. A sweet heaviness sank into his head, and he let his body relax. "Dinner's almost ready."

"I can smell it," JC said. After a few moments, Joey's breathing grew even, and JC elbowed him in the stomach. "Now I have to wake you up," he said.

"I'm up," Joey muttered, snuggling closer to JC's warmth. "I'm just closing my eyes for a moment."

JC rolled Joey over and pried open his eyelids. Leaning over him, JC smiled. "Get up."

"I am up," Joey replied. He tried to close his eyes again but JC wouldn't let him. "JC," he groaned, trying to roll away, but he was already on the edge of the bed.

"Why did you kiss me?" JC asked.

Joey tried to turn his head, but JC held onto him and the alcohol in Joey's blood was making him too weak to struggle much. And he kind of liked the feel of JC's hands on his head, his palms over Joey's ears, his fingers touching Joey's face lightly. "I wanted to wake you up," Joey replied. "My eyes are drying out."

JC laughed and let go of Joey's eyelids. "Right now I don't think there's any part of you in danger of drying out," he said. He pulled Joey's arms until Joey sat up. Then he got behind Joey and pushed him off the bed. "Dinnertime," he said, standing beside Joey. "Gotta feed your alcohol."

"I didn't drink that much," Joey said, but suddenly he was sleepy and the thought of crawling back into JC's bed and not waking up until tomorrow was inviting. "Just let me stay here for a little --"

"You guys coming or what?" Justin's voice echoed through the house, and then they heard Chris growl darkly, "I could've done that."

"Come on," JC said, his hands on Joey's shoulders. He massaged them as he pushed Joey from his room.

In the doorway Joey turned around and grinned at JC. "I could wake you every morning with kisses," he said, his eyes twinkling playfully.

"You don't wake up before I do," JC pointed out. Before he could stop himself, he said, "I could wake you --"

"Chris would get jealous," Joey said, laughing. "Unless you wake him

up, too ..."

"I don't think so," JC said, blushing. He gave Joey another push, and Joey led the way outside, where the smell of burnt burgers made his stomach growl. On the deck Justin and Lance were already eating, their hair disheveled. Lance's shirt was buttoned wrong, Justin's hand was on Lance's thigh, and they sat so close together, they were almost on top of each other. Joey grabbed his beer and drank the whole bottle before taking the burger Chris offered him. As he ate, he caught JC looking at him thoughtfully, but every time Joey met his gaze, JC looked away. Kisses in the morning would be nice, Joey thought randomly, diving into his burger. God, he was starving.

All I Ever Wanted
74. Dialogues
Part 3 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

The sounds of Joey snoring lightly on the couch in the living room carried through the house and outside, where Justin and Lance sat on the deck. Chris finished cleaning the grill and sat on the other side of the deck, his feet propped up on the bench beside Lance. Justin's arm was draped over Lance's shoulders, and his other hand kept straying to Lance's lap to toy with the zipper on Lance's jeans. When he plucked at it insistently, Lance pushed his hand away. "Justin," he warned, tilting his head towards Chris. "We're not alone."

Kissing Lance's neck gently, Justin said, "Chris, don't you want to go inside now?"

"No," Chris replied, watching them. Taking a sip of his beer, he asked, "Don't you?" Justin glared at him. Before he could say anything else, Chris said, "Go on, Brother Justin, you can worship Lance. Pretend I'm not here."

"Shut up," Justin growled. Lance squeezed Justin's hand, trying to comfort him. He wished Chris would leave Justin alone with this teasing.

Chris smiled and scooted over closer to them. Leaning forward, he whispered loudly, "Hey, can I ask you something?"

"What?" Justin narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

"Joey and I were wondering ..." Chris's eyes sparkled, but Lance couldn't tell if it was from the alcohol or mirth. "What's it feel like to suck dick?"

Lance stared at Chris, shocked. He felt Justin stiffen in anger beside him, and he should've known what was coming but he couldn't believe Chris just asked him that, and then Justin tackled Chris, knocking him to the deck and hitting his shoulder with one hard, swift punch before Lance managed to pull him off. Justin kicked Chris in the thigh and shrugged out of Lance's grip, his face livid with anger. Then he stormed into the house, and they heard the slamming of a door.

When Lance looked down at Chris, he was even more surprised to see that Chris was laughing.

Lance helped Chris to his feet. "Why'd you ask him that?" he asked, his voice tight.

Chris shrugged, and then rubbed his shoulder. "Ow," he complained. "Damn, he's got a killer right hook." He sat down on the bench and laughed again.

"Chris, you need to leave him alone." Lance stood over him, wanting to make sure nothing was broken before he went to comfort Justin. "Are

you okay?"

"Fine," Chris said, waving him away. "Go soothe his wounded ego."

Lance sighed and went inside. JC sat in the recliner, reading a book, and didn't look up as he passed. Joey was asleep on the couch, gracelessly sprawled over the cushions as he slept off the beers he had earlier. Taking a deep breath, Lance raised his hand to knock on the door to his room when the door opened and Justin stood there, his mouth set in a resentful frown. Glaring past Lance, he muttered, "Get out of my way," and tried to push by.

Lance pushed him into the room and shut the door. As he leaned back against the door, he said, "Justin, calm down."

"Lance, move." Justin sighed, frustrated, and then tried to push Lance aside.

Lance stood his ground. "Justin, look at me." Justin's fierce gaze turned to the walls, the floor, everywhere but Lance. "Justin."

Justin sighed again. "What?" he asked, his voice tight.

Reaching out, Lance ran his hands down Justin's arms, feeling the muscles humming with anger beneath his touch. "Baby, calm down," he said, squeezing lightly.

Justin let out the breath he was holding. "Lance, what is his problem?" he asked, rubbing his forehead wearily. "Why is he taking such perverse joy in pissing me off?"

"I don't know," Lance admitted. "But you're too angry right now. You need to calm down. Let me talk to him."

Justin laughed bitterly. "What are you going to say?" he asked.

"I'm going to tell him to leave you alone," Lance replied. He kissed Justin quickly. "No one picks on my guy and gets away with it."

A slow smile spread across Justin's face. "You're going to tell him that?"

Lance nodded. "You stay here and I'll be right back, okay?" Justin nodded. "Promise me you aren't going to come out and kick the shit out of him."

"I promise," Justin said. The anger was gone, and Lance kissed him again, his lips lingering on Justin's.

"I promise I'll be right back," Lance said.

"You better be."

Lance left the room, closing the door behind him again. This would be quick -- even if Chris laughed at him, he was going to try to convince him to stop picking on Justin. And then he was going to return to their room, and hold Justin close, and cover him with kisses. He was already looking forward to that part of the evening when he stepped out onto the deck.

The light was out, but he could hear someone rustling around in the grass. "Chris?" Lance called softly.

Suddenly a flashlight clicked on, and Lance could see Chris standing in the middle of the yard, the flashlight held against his forehead like the light on a miner's hat. Chris took slow, cautious steps, turning his head from side to side. The light swept the grass like a beacon. "Chris, what are you doing?" Lance asked, sitting on the steps leading to the deck.

"Looking for spiders," Chris said. "Maybe that big one is still around here somewhere."

Lance frowned. "What's with the flashlight?" he asked.

Chris turned towards him, the light on his forehead blinding Lance. Sighing dramatically, he said, "Don't you know anything? This is how you find spiders."

"Chris," Lance said, shielding his eyes, "turn that thing off."

Chris turned away. "Their eyes reflect back to the source of light," he explained, continuing his search. "So you hold the light to your head, and when their eyes reflect it, it comes back to your eyes, and you can see them."

Lance laughed. "Where did you hear that? National Geographic?"

"High school," Chris replied. "I actually listened in class."

"What do you want spiders for?" Lance asked. "Or are you just that bored?"

Chris grinned eerily. "I was thinking of playing this trick on Justin --"

"Well, don't." Anger flared through Lance. Chris turned towards him again. "Get that damn light out of my eyes."

Chris complied. "What's wrong?"

"Don't fuck with Justin anymore," Lance said, his voice taking on a hard edge that surprised even him. "I'm sick and tired of the way you and Joey are acting lately. It's childish and mean."

"Jeez, Lance," Chris replied, "we're only kidding." The flashlight fell to his side, and when he turned to Lance again he didn't blind him. "He just can't take a joke --"

"The whole church thing was cute at first," Lance admitted, rising from the steps. He stepped down into the yard, heading for Chris. "But you should've dropped it when it started to piss him off. And the thing with the spider was just cruel from the start. You know how he feels about those things. And then tonight ..." He sighed. "I can't believe you asked him that."

Chris shrugged. "I'm just curious," he said. "I mean, blowjobs are nice, but most girls don't like to --"

"Don't change the subject," Lance said. He stopped in front of Chris,

straightening up so his slight advantage in height became more apparent. Pointing at Chris's chest, Lance said, "And now this. Looking for spiders to taunt him. Leave him alone, do you hear me?"

Chris grinned. "Or what?" he asked.

"Or I'll kick your ass, is what," Lance replied. When Chris laughed, Lance nodded. "Yeah, you think it's funny now, but the next snide remark you make to him, you'll have to answer to me."

"Lance," Chris said, laughing, "you couldn't even kill that spider --"

Lance reached out and grabbed Chris by the neck. The move surprised both of them. Chris dropped the flashlight and placed both hands on Lance's wrist, trying to loosen his grip. Lance squeezed the soft skin beneath his fingers, and Chris's eyes widening in fright. "Lance?" he choked.

"Leave him alone," Lance said. "Do you understand?" Chris nodded. Releasing him, Lance nodded, too. "Okay. Just so you do."

When he turned around to walk away, Chris tackled him, and they both tumbled to the ground. Lance rolled beneath Chris and tried to push him away. "Think you can scare me?" Chris asked, his voice sullen and scratchy. "I'll do what I want. Fuck you."

Lance rolled over and pinned Chris to the ground. A flash of pain crossed Chris's face when Lance pressed against his shoulder where Justin punched him earlier, and Lance leaned heavily on the injury. "Chris, I don't want to hurt you," he said, "but I will if you don't stop picking on Justin."

Chris got his hands between them, and he twisted one of Lance's nipples painfully. Lance kneed Chris in the hip, mere inches from his cock. Chris bucked beneath Lance and managed to knock him off, and then Lance felt Chris straddle him. He pushed Lance's face into the damp grass, and Lance held his breath and tried to shake Chris off of him.

And then Chris was gone, and strong hands helped Lance to his feet. Justin hugged him close, wiping the grass from his face. "You okay?" he asked tenderly.

Lance nodded. Justin glared at Chris, who was sprawled on the ground, JC sitting on his chest to keep him down. "This isn't over, Chris," Lance said, pointing at him. Chris let his head fall back to the ground, exhausted. "Remember what I said. You leave Justin alone."

JC grinned. Lance let Justin lead him back to their room, where he sat Lance down on the toilet and washed the grass stains from his face. Squatting, Justin looked up at him and smiled. "My hero," he said softly, running a hand down Lance's chest.

Lance flinched. "Ow," he said, rubbing his nipple. "That's still a little sore."

"Poor baby," Justin said, unbuttoning Lance's shirt. His cool lips closed over the tender bud and kissed gently. Resting his head against Lance's chest, Justin said, "You don't know how arousing it is to look outside and

see your boyfriend defending your honor."

Lance laughed. "I don't think I won."

Before Justin could reply, someone knocked on their door. Justin and Lance looked at each other, and then the door opened. Shuffling steps stopped in front of the bathroom door. They looked up to see Chris, dirty and tired but grinning. "Justin," he said, his gaze fastened on the wall past them, as if he didn't want to be there, "I'm sorry."

"For what?" Justin asked.

"For being such a shithead," Chris replied. Shifting his eyes to Lance, he said, "Just don't sic Lance on me again." He rubbed the area between his hip and crotch, where Lance caught him with his knee. "I'm going to be walking funny for a week."

Lance blushed. "I'm sorry, too," he said. "Just leave him alone, okay?"

"Okay," Chris said. He tousled Justin's hair playfully. "I'll leave your man alone."

As Chris started to leave, Justin called out, "Hey, Chris?" Chris turned back, a questioning look on his face. Justin grinned wickedly. "It's not as good as getting a blowjob, but it's close. Damn close."

They heard Chris laughing even after he closed their door.

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 1 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

Through his closed eyes, Justin could see the morning sun spilling into their room. It cast red shadows on his eyelids, and he buried his head into the pillow, trying to block out the light. Another month and they'd be on tour again, and these moments when he could wake slowly beside Lance, savoring the feel of his lover's body pressed against his beneath the sheets, these moments would disappear. He wanted to stay in bed all day, his hands just as they were on Lance's back, the feel of Lance's soft breath fluttering against his neck, Lance's hands on his shoulders. Justin sighed, content.

"Justin?" Lance whispered. Go back to sleep, Justin thought. He wasn't ready to give this moment up. "Justin, you awake?"

"No," Justin whispered. He clenched his eyes shut tighter and hugged Lance closer, and willed them both to sleep.

But it didn't work. Lance shifted in his arms and ran a hand through Justin's hair. "Justin, wake up."

"No," Justin said again.

Then he felt Lance's lips on his, kissing insistently. He kissed back. Lance's tongue parted Justin's lips and Lance's hand slid around the back of Justin's neck, pressing him closer. "Justin," Lance said, his words breathy, "I'm getting horny."

Now that was something worth waking up for. But Justin kept his eyes closed, just to make sure Lance wasn't playing with him. And then he felt Lance's hands encircle his dick, squeezing it erect, and Justin rolled on top of Lance and kissed him passionately. He felt Lance's erection hard between them and he thrust his hips against Lance's, his own cock already beginning to swell. Opening his eyes, he stared down into Lance's green gaze and smiled sweetly. "Now I'm up," he said, grinding his hips into Lance's so their cocks brushed together to emphasize his point.

Lance laughed. "I knew that would work." He pinched Justin's nipples playfully. "We have to be quick," he said. "The others will be up soon."

"And?" Justin asked. He didn't care if the others were up or not. All that mattered to him right now was the feel of Lance in his arms and the sweet ache in his groin. He nuzzled Lance's neck, kissing and licking and sucking until Lance groaned in pleasure.

"Our door is unlocked," Lance reminded him. There were no locks on any of the bedroom doors in the cabin, a faulty design, in Justin's opinion. But right this second, he didn't care who walked in on them, because he wasn't about to stop. His hand trailed down Lance's stomach, massaging Lance's erection before slipping lower to cup his balls, and then lower still, until Justin slid two fingers inside of Lance. Lance moaned louder and

pulled Justin's face up to his, kissing hungrily. "Second drawer," Lance said, motioning to the bedside table.

Without a break in his kisses, Justin reached over and opened the top drawer. He felt around inside until he found something that might be lube, and he pulled it out. Looking at it, he started to laugh. "Toothpaste?" he asked.

Lance sighed, exasperated. "I said second drawer, honey. Can't you hear?" He sat up, reaching for the second drawer of the table.

Justin tried to push him back down. "I'm getting it," he complained.

"You got toothpaste," Lance replied. "I'm not sticking that up in me." Justin laughed again, a goofy grin plastered to his face. He watched Lance as he dug through the drawer, looking for the lubrication. His gaze drifted over Lance's smooth chest, his strong arms, the muscles just below the skin, his narrow waist, his unkempt hair -- "Lance, do we really need it?" Justin asked, pouting. Right now he just wanted Lance.

"Got it," Lance replied, pulling out a tube of K-Y Jelly. Opening it, he squirted some of the lube onto his hands and rubbed them together. He grinned at Justin. "Stop being so impatient. You'll get some, don't worry."

Before Justin could reply, Lance reached for his dick and smeared the warm cream all over Justin's throbbing cock. Justin closed his eyes as the sensation enveloped him. Lance kneaded him, covering his dick and balls with the lube, and when Justin opened his mouth to moan, Lance was there, kissing him quiet. Justin pushed him back down on the bed and eased his aching erection inside of Lance, enjoying the tightness and heat he hadn't tasted in a long time. Lance pulled the covers up over Justin's buttocks, balling the sheets into fists in an effort to clean the jelly off his hands. As Justin slid all the way inside of him, Lance moaned his name and cupped Justin's ass through the sheets, pushing him further into him.

Justin kissed Lance's face, his cheeks, his neck, sucking his earlobe greedily, thrusting slowly into Lance. "Justin," Lance breathed, wiggling his hips beneath Justin, "harder."

"I want this to last all day," Justin replied. A nice, long, leisurely lovemaking, where he devoted enough time to every aspect of Lance that he loved.

But Lance wanted him, and he wanted him now. "The next one can last all day," Lance said, contracting his muscles around Justin's dick. "Right now I just want you before the others wake up."

Justin grinned and kissed Lance's nose. Picking up the pace, he thrust harder into Lance, faster, slipping his hand between them to stroke Lance's dick. "That better?" he whispered, and Lance whimpered in delight, nodding.

Suddenly the door opened behind them, and they froze. Justin looked over his shoulder to see Joey, staring at them sleepily. Lance rolled his eyes and sighed. "Jesus," he whispered. Justin frowned. "Joey?" he asked.

Joey clamped a hand over his eyes. "I so did not need to see this first

thing in the morning," he said, backing out of the room. When he closed the door, Justin looked down at Lance, and they both cracked up. Justin resumed his thrusting, faster this time, feeling an urgent need to finish this before they were interrupted again. Lance ran his hands around Justin's neck, pulling him down for more kisses, and Justin felt Lance come in his hand. Justin wiped his hand on the sheets beside them and closed his eyes as his own orgasm ripped through him explosively.

He collapsed on top of Lance, exhausted and spent. "I'm ready to go back to sleep now," he said, curling up beside Lance.

Lance held him tight. "I can't believe Joey --" Someone knocked on the door. Justin groaned. "At least they knocked this time," Lance said. Raising his voice slightly, he called, "Yeah?"

"Can I come in?" It was JC.

"I'm sleeping," Justin called back.

JC opened the door. "As long as you aren't doing anything else --" He took one look at the two of them, the sheets clinging to their sweaty naked bodies, and sighed. "Sorry about Joey. I told him to knock, but you know how he is."

"No problem," Lance said. Justin cuddled closer to Lance and rested his head on Lance's shoulder. "So what's up?"

JC shrugged. "Chris thinks we should go hiking."

"He's out of his ever-loving mind," Justin replied. "I'm going back to sleep."

"Get your lazy ass out of that bed!" Chris yelled from the living room. The three of them laughed.

"It might be fun," JC cajoled.

Lance smiled. "I like hiking," he said.

"I don't," Justin said, pouting. He rubbed Lance's stomach and wondered why anyone would want to go hiking in the woods when all he wanted was to lie right here in Lance's embrace forever.

Joey peeked over JC and grinned at them. "You guys decent yet?" he asked.

"No," Lance replied.

Joey pushed past JC into the room and jumped on the bed. Justin kicked at him but Joey snuggled up behind Justin and sighed. "I'll stay here with you guys," he said. "Chris and JC can go hiking." He ran his hand down Justin's arm and across Lance's stomach.

Lance slapped Joey's hand away. "Three's a crowd, Joe," he said.

Justin shrugged Joey off of him. "If you're staying here, we're definitely going," he replied darkly. "Now get out of our bed."

JC laughed. "Come on, Joey," he said, hauling Joey to his feet, "let them get ready." As they left, JC called over his shoulder, "We leave in one hour, boys."

Justin groaned. "I don't want to do this," he muttered.

Lance hugged him tightly. "Just think," he said, "we can ditch them and find a nice, secluded place in the woods, just you and me and the soft grass, the gentle breeze --"

"Pack the lube," Justin said, getting out of bed.

An hour later they stood with the others on the deck. Chris had a map the ranger left them, marking off hiking trails through the woods. "The trails are marked with little colored flags," Chris explained. "I don't know which color is which but as long as we see the flags, we should be fine."

JC rolled his eyes. "And what if we don't see them anymore?" he asked.

"We turn around and go back to the last flag we saw," Chris replied, as if it were only too obvious.

Joey laughed. "No shit," he said, plucking the map away from Chris. "So what's the game plan?"

Chris snatched the map back. "The red flags lead to a camping area. We'll have lunch there, turn around, and come back."

Justin was leaning against Lance, his hands holding onto the straps of his half-empty backpack that rested between his shoulder blades. He blinked behind his blue tinted sunglasses and asked, "We're doing all this just for a picnic?"

"You don't have to come," Chris replied. When Justin started to take off his backpack, Chris said, "I lied. You're coming. Open your bag and carry some of this food."

Justin sighed and opened his backpack. When Chris leaned down to put a brown paper bag of fruit inside, he frowned. Pulling out the tube of K-Y Jelly, he asked, "What's this?"

"For emergencies," Justin replied, plucking the tube from Chris's fingers.

Chris grinned and winked at Lance. "You have him trained well," he said, laughing. Lance blushed and kept quiet.

Once the food was distributed so each of them carried something, Chris handed out large water bottles. Then he handed Justin a compass. "What's this for?" Justin asked, frowning.

"In case something happens," Chris said. "If you have room for lube in your backpack, you have room for that. Saddle up, boys."

Joey laughed and followed Chris into the woods, JC right behind them. Lance took Justin's arm. "Come on," he said softly.

"Maybe if we stay here, they'll forget about us," Justin said, hopeful.

No such luck. "You guys coming or what?" Chris called, and their three friends stopped a little ways into the trees, waiting for them.

Justin sighed dramatically. "Remind me why I'm doing this again."

"Sex in the woods," Lance replied. He pulled Justin's arm as he stepped off the deck.

"Oh, yes," Justin said, following. Already he was looking forward to losing the others and getting Lance all to himself again.

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 2 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

The hiking trail was a little overrun with weeds and vines, and long branches scraped against the five friends as they walked, but they could see the little red flags clearly, every quarter of a mile, and the path was easy to follow. Chris and Joey walked ahead, their laughter carrying back to the others. JC and Justin talked quietly about the upcoming album, and Lance walked slightly behind Justin, not really listening to what they were saying. He held onto one of the belt loops on the back of Justin's jeans and watched the trail beneath his feet, thinking back to this morning. He smiled remembering the look on Joey's face when he opened the door and caught them in the act. Just thinking about it made Lance horny again. Damn! he thought, what's wrong with me today? I get in a fight last night and suddenly I can't get enough of Justin. Was this why Justin was always so loving after one of his jealous bouts? Did it make him horny just to defend Lance? Because right now Lance was getting hard just walking beside Justin, and this was going to be a long hike if he didn't do something about it soon.

Up ahead, Joey turned around, a devilish grin on his face. "Hey, Brother Justin --" he started. Justin stopped in mid-sentence, frowning.

"Joey," Lance warned, narrowing his eyes. He stepped up beside Justin, his arm protectively around Justin's waist.

Joey glanced at Lance, confused. "What?" he asked.

"You missed it last night," JC told him. "Lance and Chris got into it about you guys picking on Justin."

Joey looked at Chris. "You two got in a fight?" Chris nodded. "Shit," Joey said, frowning. "Where was I?"

"Passed out drunk," Justin said, pouting. "You missed the whole thing."

"What happened?" Joey asked. He stopped and looked at each of them, his gaze resting on Lance.

Lance sighed. "You didn't tell him, Chris?"

Chris shrugged. "My bad," he said, walking ahead. "This one doesn't count."

"Just this one," Lance said. "Next time, I won't be so nice."

"What happened?" Joey asked again. He caught up with Chris, who began telling Joey about the night before.

JC started after them, and Justin hurried to keep up, Lance right beside him. After a few moments, Justin turned to Lance and smiled like

the sun, and Lance blushed. Justin leaned close and kissed his cheek. "I love you," he whispered before turning back to JC.

Lance let go of Justin's belt loop and ran his hand around Justin's waist, rubbing gently. Ahead Joey turned around and glanced warily at him. Lance tried to look menacing but didn't think it worked when Joey grinned and turned back around. JC laughed at something Justin said, and then a comfortable silence fell on the three of them. They could hear Chris talking low ahead of them, and then Joey laughed. "I'm still not giving you a blowjob," he said.

Justin stopped. Lance looked at him, confusion written on his face. JC glanced at them and frowned. "Joey," JC began, and Justin said, "You didn't just say what I think you said."

Lance laughed. Right now a blowjob sounded like a good idea. "Chris?" he asked, surprised.

Chris and Joey turned around. "What?" Chris asked, but Joey realized what they had overheard and his cheeks turned a bright red. "I didn't ask him," Chris said hurriedly.

"Yeah, right," JC replied.

"We're just talking smack," Joey said, clearing his throat.

"Messing around," Chris explained. "You don't think --"

Lance grinned. "You are sharing a room," he pointed out. Justin started to laugh.

Chris glared at them. "Now who's asking to get his ass kicked?" Pointing at Lance, he growled, "You know I'll do it, too. You know I'll win."

"You'll have to fight me," Justin replied, stepping in front of Lance, the laughter gone from his eyes. "Don't even play like that, Chris. You know I'll kick your ass just for looking at him funny."

"Okay, guys, stop it," JC said, pushing between them. "Let's just forget this whole thing, okay?" He looked at the anger smoldering in Justin's eyes, the wounded pride in Chris's face, and sighed. "Okay?"

"Fine," Chris said, turning away. With long, furious strides he hurried away from the others, heading down the trail.

Joey sighed and rubbed his eyes. "We were just fooling," he said wearily. "It's kinda like a running joke --"

"You don't have to explain," JC said, watching Chris walk away. "We better stay together." He hurried after Chris.

Joey sighed again and looked at Justin and Lance. A slight smile tugged at Joey's lips. "So it's pretty good, eh?" he asked.

"Shut up," Justin growled. "I'm not in the mood for this right now."

Joey looked at Lance and smiled tightly. Up ahead Chris and JC were arguing, but their words didn't reach the others. Joey frowned and headed

for them. Justin started after him, but Lance held him back. "What is it?" Justin asked, turning towards Lance.

Lance was grinning. "Am I the only one here who got turned on at the thought of a blowjob?" he asked softly.

Justin blushed and ducked his head. "Sometimes you can't help what you think," he said. Then, looking at Lance, he asked, "You ready to ditch them?"

"Am I ever," Lance replied. He led the way off the trail, through the woods. Keeping one eye on the path behind them, Lance held Justin's hand and led him through the trees. Beneath their feet, dried leaves from autumns past crunched as they walked, and Lance stepped over fallen logs and around small bushes, looking for a place to sit. Finally he found a slight slope, stretching up to a line of trees far above them. The hill was shady and cool, the grass slightly damp. Lance climbed up a little ways before sitting down, dropping his backpack to one side. He pulled Justin into the space between his knees and Justin pushed him back against the grass, setting his backpack beside Lance's. Justin kissed Lance as he unbuttoned Lance's flannel shirt and tugged his undershirt free from his jeans.

Lance thrust his crotch against Justin's as they kissed, hungry for more. "Your choice," Justin breathed. "What'll it be? A blowjob or --" grinding his hips against Lance's -- "something more?"

Lance pulled Justin's shirt free from his jeans, exposing the smooth skin of his stomach. Running his hands along Justin's bare back, Lance gripped the waistband of Justin's jeans and tugged playfully. "Sit up here," he said, grabbing Justin's ass in both hands and pulling him closer.

Justin sat on Lance's stomach, his butt resting against Lance's raised thighs, his legs on either side of Lance's. Looking down at Lance, Justin grinned. Before he could say anything, Lance unzipped Justin's jeans. Justin moved up a little and sat on Lance's chest as Lance unsnapped Justin's boxer shorts. "Am I too heavy?" Justin asked.

"No," Lance replied. He eased Justin's dick out of his shorts, already thick and hard. Then he leaned forward and took it in his mouth, his lips closing over the swollen tip, his tongue licking down the hard length. Justin gasped and sat up on his knees, reaching to lean his elbows on the grass above Lance's head. Lance ran his hands over Justin's butt as his tongue worked around Justin's cock, and Justin thrust into Lance's warm, wet mouth, moaning his name. Tugging his jeans down just a little more, Lance pulled back and let Justin's dick slip out of him. Then he trailed his tongue around Justin's balls, licking greedily. One hand slid into Justin's boxers below his balls, and when he eased two fingers inside of Justin, he heard Justin make that little mewling sound he always made just before he came. Lance smiled and latched onto Justin's dick again, his lips massaging gently until they covered the throbbing tip again, already damp and salty. He was so close --

And then Justin came, his hot juices filling Lance's mouth. Turning his head, Lance managed to spit most of it out before Justin fell on top of him, sighing. "Jesus," he whispered, sliding down Lance until his head was level with Lance's. He stroked Lance's cheek lovingly and kissed his

cheek. "You're too good to me, you know that?"

"I know," Lance said, laughing. He turned to Justin and Justin kissed him hungrily. He felt Justin's hands stray to his crotch, and Justin squeezed his own erection through his jeans. Moaning into Justin's mouth, Lance said, "Shouldn't we get back to the others now?"

Unzipping Lance's jeans, Justin asked, "Do you want to?"

Not really, Lance thought, losing himself in Justin's kisses. But the others would be worried, they were probably looking for them by now, and the last thing he wanted was be interrupted again -- "Justin," Lance said, catching Justin's hand in his, "we really should get going."

Justin sighed. Running a hand over Lance's swollen erection, hard through the fabric of his thin underwear, he asked, "What about this?"

"Next time," Lance promised. "They'll be mad we even left the path."

Justin agreed. Reziping their pants, they gathered up their bags and headed back for the path, Justin's hands on Lance's hips protectively. After a few minutes of walking, Lance stopped and frowned. "What is it?" Justin asked, kissing the back of Lance's neck.

Lance looked around. "We didn't go that far into the woods," he said. "But I don't see the path anywhere."

Justin took a curious glance around before returning to the business of sucking on Lance's neck gently. Running his arms around Lance's waist, he said, "Maybe this is a sign," he said, thrusting his hips against Lance's.

"Yeah," Lance said bitterly, no longer in the mood. His heart began to race in his chest, and it wasn't from Justin's touches. "A sign that we're lost." He looked around and tried to tell himself not to panic.

"Lost?" Justin asked, frowning. "You sure?"

"Well I don't see the path," Lance said, "and that's the only way back to the cabin. And that usually means --"

"Calm down," Justin said, hugging Lance tightly. "Just calm down and let's think this out."

"We're lost, Justin," Lance replied. He looked around, but all the trees looked the same, and he couldn't even see the hill anymore, so he couldn't get his bearings. Where was the path? And where were the others? Why weren't they looking for them yet? And what the fuck were they going to do now?

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 3 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

"It's not so fun to be picked on, is it?" JC asked. When Chris tried to walk away, JC grabbed his arm and held him in place. "Is it?" he asked again.

"Leave me alone," Chris grumbled. "I don't have to explain myself to you."

JC sighed. "I'm not asking you to. I just want us all to stay together." He looked around the narrow hiking trail. The shadows were shifting, and he had an odd sense that time was flying by. Joey walked towards them, a goofy grin on his face, but where -- "Where'd they go?" JC asked.

"Where'd who go?" Joey asked as he came up to them. He glanced back down the trail and laughed. "They were right behind me, I swear."

"Horny faggots," Chris mumbled under his breath.

"Hey!" JC pushed Chris back, surprised at his own reaction. Chris stumbled into the woods, a low bush breaking his fall. "They're our friends," he cried as Chris extracted himself from the bush. "Do you have a problem with that?"

Chris brushed leaves off his butt. "I'm just sick and tired of the two of them getting it on everywhere we go," he said.

"He wants a blowjob," Joey offered, raising his eyebrows at JC.

Suddenly Chris began to laugh, and the tension between the three of them dispersed. JC smiled, and when he didn't think Chris was angry any longer, he started to laugh, too. "You want a what?" he asked between giggles. Chris was doubled over with laughter and didn't respond. Looking at Joey, JC asked, "He told you this?"

Joey shrugged. "The things you talk about once the lights are out," he explained. "I need to take a piss."

That made Chris laugh even harder. "God, Joey," he said, wiping tears from his eyes, "you are so damn uncouth."

Joey frowned. "What's that mean?"

"It means you're vulgar," JC said, laughing.

"I am not," Joey replied. He looked around and then stepped into the woods. "I'll kick your ass once I get back," he promised.

"Watch out for poison ivy," JC called. Chris started laughing again.

Joey stopped a few feet into the trees. Looking back over his shoulder, he asked, "What's it look like?"

"The leaves are shiny," Chris said, his laughter subsiding.

Joey headed for a clump of bushes a little farther away. "Shiny leaves, gotcha."

JC laughed. Chris put one hand on his shoulder and said, "JC, I didn't mean --"

"I know," JC replied. Looking at Chris critically, he asked, "What do you think of the two of them together?"

Chris shrugged. "I'm cool with it," he replied. "Really, I am. They're cute together, you know?"

JC nodded. "Then why --"

"I was just mad," Chris said, before JC could finish. "And a little embarrassed. Joey has such a big mouth."

That struck JC as funny, considering this all started with Joey's comment about blowjobs. JC started to laugh, and Chris grinned and asked, "What?" in a slow, "come on, share the joke" kind of way that made JC laugh even harder. Suddenly they heard a crash in the woods followed by a cry of pain, and they scrambled down off the path and through the trees. "Joey?" Chris called.

"Right here," Joey said. He was lying amid the grass and leaves on the floor of the forest, propped up on his elbows, one leg stretched out in front of him. His face was clenched in pain.

"What happened?" JC asked, kneeling beside him. Chris stood over them, his hands on his knees.

Joey breathed in sharply. "Saw a snake," he said. "And my foot --"

JC looked at Joey's leg. "Did it bite you?" he asked. What the hell do you do for snake bites? he wondered. He remembered something about cutting them into an X and sucking the venom out. He didn't think he wanted to use Chris's pocket knife to cut Joey's leg.

But Joey shook his head. "I don't think so," he said. "I got my foot caught on a root, or in a hole, or something ..." He sat up and reached for his foot. "God, it hurts like a bitch."

"Let me see," Chris said. He squatted down on the other side of Joey and pulled up the leg of Joey's jeans. JC leaned over Joey, trying to see. The skin looked unmarked. "No bites," Chris said. Taking Joey's foot in his hand, he moved it around gently. "Does this --"

"Shit!" Joey cried, falling back to the ground. He covered his eyes with his hands and sobbed softly. "That hurts."

JC placed a comforting hand on Joey's shoulder and looked at Chris. "I think he's sprained his ankle," Chris said. He met JC's gaze and sighed. "There's no way he'll make it back to the cabin."

"So now what?" JC asked. This was just lovely. First Justin and Lance go missing and now this. When Chris didn't answer, JC said, "What do we

do now?"

"Just let me think a minute," Chris replied, looking around. JC chewed on his lower lip and waited. Finally Chris said, "Help me get him up."

JC eased his hands beneath Joey's shoulders and lifted him off the ground. Chris got Joey's legs and together they carried him over to a fallen log. "Joey," Chris huffed as they sat him down, "you need to go on a diet."

Joey pouted but didn't say anything. He's really in pain if he doesn't comment on that, JC thought. Bending down, he began to untie Joey's shoelaces. Already his foot was swollen, and when JC pulled his shoe off, Joey stifled a cry. Pulling off Joey's sock, JC took one look at the bruised flesh of his ankle and sighed. "This doesn't look good," he said to no one in particular.

"No shit," Chris replied. He was looking around again, still thinking.

"We need some ice --" JC began.

Chris exploded. "What do you think I am, a fucking 7-11?"

JC glared at him. "Well, excuse me, but whose idea was this damn hiking trip anyway?"

"You guys stop it," Joey yelled. "Right now. We need to stop all this fighting and just figure out what the hell we're going to do, okay?"

"This is what we're going to do," Chris said, and then he fell quiet again, unsure.

"Well?" JC asked, waiting.

Chris sighed. "I don't know which direction leads back to the cabin," he admitted.

"What?" JC asked, incredulous.

Chris pointed at the path. They could barely see it through the trees. "I forget which way we were headed," he whispered. "I know the cabin is north but --" He laughed. "But Justin has the compass."

"Oh, fuck," Joey muttered. "What did you give it to him for? He doesn't know how to use it anyway."

"I don't know," Chris cried, exasperated. "It seemed like a good idea at the time, okay? I don't fucking know."

"Okay, calm down." JC sat back on his knees and tried to think. Chris sat down beside Joey on the log and looked at his friend's foot while JC let his gaze roam the woods around them. He could hear birds calling back and forth, small animals running over dried leaves, branches shaking gently, and a slight sound that ran under it all, something wet ... "Is there a river nearby?" he asked suddenly.

Chris took the map out of his back pocket and opened it. "Maybe," he said, "if we're where I think we're at."

Water would be good for Joey's foot. It would be icy and cold, and maybe take the swelling down a bit. "Can you walk?" JC asked.

Joey shook his head. "I don't think so," he said.

"We'll help you." JC stood and pulled Joey to his feet. Joey stood on one leg, his injured foot off the ground. Chris handed Joey his shoe and slipped one arm around Joey's shoulders. JC took the other side, and Joey leaned heavily on both of them as they headed further into the woods. The sound of rushing water became louder, but it took almost fifteen minutes to finally reach the river, cutting through the woods. By that time Joey was bathed in sweat and near exhaustion. JC's shoulders ached from supporting Joey's weight, and Chris's lips were pressed so tightly that they were just a thin white line on his face. They eased Joey down to the riverbank. "Put your foot in the water," JC said. "It'll help the swelling."

"Okay," Joey said, pulling off his other shoe and sock as well. With both feet in the water, he laid back on the ground and looked up at them. "I'm sorry, guys," he said.

"Not your fault," Chris replied, a little out of breath. "Now if we can only find that damn snake ..."

JC laughed. "Well, I'm out of ideas," he said, sitting down beside Joey's head.

"My turn now, huh?" Chris asked, smiling. He looked down the river, watching the swift current tumble over rocks and branches in its path. Hunkering down beside them, he looked at the map and said, "If this is where I think we are, then I should be able to follow this river back to the lake. The cabin is on the lake, and I can call the ranger from there."

JC nodded. "You going alone?"

"It's not that far," Chris said. "Just a few miles, according to the map."

JC laughed. "On the right map, California's not that far away, either."

Joey grinned. "And if you fold it right, it's just around the corner."

"I'll be fine, really," Chris said. "You stay here with Joey. I'll send back help."

JC frowned. "If you're sure ..."

"I'm sure," Chris replied, digging through his backpack. "Give me the water bottle with the least amount left. I shouldn't take too long getting back. Here --" Joey sat up as Chris handed him a bottle of aspirin. "Your foot's going to hurt soon, once the shock wears off. Take these sparingly." He glanced at JC, who nodded. He'd keep an eye on the pills. "I don't want you OD'd on aspirin by the time I get back." Quickly, before anyone could say another word, Chris leaned forward and kissed Joey's forehead roughly. "Take care," he whispered.

Chris stood, and JC rose, as well. "I'll be back," Chris said in his best Arnold Swartzenegger imitation.

JC smiled. "Don't forget the search party for the other two."

Rolling his eyes, Chris said, "Don't worry. I'll tell them to send out the dogs. That should scare them into keeping their pants on next time."

JC thought maybe Justin and Lance were scared enough as it was. He knew he wasn't feeling all that great himself, right about now. As Chris walked off down the riverbank, JC sat back down beside Joey, who was rubbing his forehead slowly, thoughtfully. When Chris faded from view, JC took the aspirin from Joey's hands and said, "Well, now we wait."

Joey nodded and laid back down on the ground, lost in thought. JC watched the water rushing by them and kept quiet, letting him think. This is the last time I go hiking, he thought, smiling grimly.

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 4 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

"Justin --"

"Keep walking," Justin said, tugging on Lance's hand. They had been walking for hours, it seemed, and they couldn't seem to get out of these damn trees.

"Justin," Lance said again, stopping. Justin stopped and looked back at him. Exhaustion was written all over Lance's face; his eyes were glassy with fear, and he frowned. "Can't we sit down for just a minute?"

Justin sighed. "Okay," he said, leading Lance over to a tall oak tree with a wide trunk. "Just a minute." He sat down at the base of the tree and pulled Lance down beside him.

Lance rested his head on Justin's shoulder, and Justin slipped his arm around Lance, hugging him closer. "We're going to be lost forever," Lance whispered.

"Don't say that," Justin replied, frowning. "Someone will find us."

"No one knows where we are," Lance pointed out. "The others aren't even looking for us."

"You don't know that." Justin rubbed Lance's shoulder and wondered why they hadn't heard anyone calling their names. How big were these woods, anyway? "We have to be in the studio next week. If we don't show up, the shit's gonna hit the fan. So don't worry, someone will find us."

Lance laughed bitterly. "A week," he said, running his hands around Justin's chest and leaning against him. "We'll be dead by then."

"We'll be found by then," Justin corrected. "Just stay calm. I'm right here." He hoped that made Lance feel better.

It must have, because Lance didn't say anything else, and they sat in a comfortable silence for a few minutes, listening to the sounds of the forest around them. Suddenly Lance asked, "Didn't Chris give you a compass?"

"It's in my backpack," Justin replied.

"Can I see it?" Lance asked.

Justin sighed. His eyes were closed, he held Lance in his arms, and he really didn't feel like moving just now. "Right this second?" he asked.

Lance shifted in Justin's arms and reached for the backpack. Pulling it onto Justin's lap, he unzipped it and began looking for the compass. He found a large brown bag, and when he opened it, he found the fruit Chris

gave Justin earlier. "I forgot about this," he said, pulling out an apple. He took a bite of the hard fruit, the juices sweet and succulent as they coursed down his dry throat, and he moaned at the sensation. Holding the apple out to Justin, he asked, "Want a bite?"

Justin bit into the apple, his eyes never leaving Lance's. As he chewed, he watched Lance take another bite. "I like to watch you eat," he said.

Lance laughed. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Justin shrugged. "I don't know. I just ... it turns me on."

Raising an eyebrow, Lance smiled. "Really?" Then he took another huge bite of the apple and closed his eyes, savoring the fruit. Justin leaned forward and kissed Lance's lips, tasting apples and sticky sweetness.

Reaching into the bag, he asked, "What other fruit do we have?"

"Oranges," Lance said, placing the apple to Justin's lips. Justin took another bite as he pulled an orange out of the bag, his lips brushing against Lance's fingers where he held the apple. "They take too much time."

"I'll peel it," Justin said, as Lance finished off the apple. He tossed away the core and reached into the backpack again, feeling around for the compass. Pulling it out, he sat back against the tree and tried to read it. Justin looked at it curiously. "How's that thing work?"

"It always points north," Lance said. He spun the compass around but the needle stayed in the same spot.

Justin frowned. "I don't get it." The arrow was pointing one way, while the big N on the compass was nowhere near the arrow. How could it be pointing north if north wasn't that way?

But Lance turned the compass until the N lined up on the arrow, then he pointed out into the woods, along the path of the arrow. "North is that way," he said.

"So what's that mean to us?" Justin finished peeling the orange and started to break it into sections, but Lance stopped him.

"Take all that white stuff off," he said, frowning.

Justin grinned. "That's part of the orange," he said.

"It's part of the rind. I don't like it. Take it off." When Justin started to giggle, Lance asked, "What?"

"Nothing." Justin picked off the white stuff around the outside of the orange. "What's that mean to us?" he asked again, nodding at the compass.

"I don't know," Lance admitted. "We don't have the map."

Justin frowned, remembering the map Chris had. He hadn't seen much of it, but -- "I think the cabin was near the top of the map," he offered.

Lance laughed. "That could mean anything," he said.

"But isn't north at the top?" Justin asked. Holding the orange up, he cocked an eyebrow at Lance.

"That's better," Lance said. "I don't like that white stuff."

Justin broke off a section of the orange and said, "Open up." His hands were sticky with juice, and when he slipped the piece of fruit into Lance's mouth, Lance's lips closed down over his fingers, licking them clean. Lance closed his eyes and moaned, a sound that made Justin's groin ache. Then Lance turned towards him and smiled. "That turn you on?" he asked.

"I'm going to feed you oranges all the time," Justin replied, popping one slice of the fruit into his own mouth. "Just to hear you make that noise."

"What noise, this?" And Lance moaned again, louder. Suddenly Justin was glad they were alone, even if they were lost. He kissed Lance tenderly, his lips parting Lance's, his tongue tasting the orange sweetness inside Lance's mouth.

"You better stop," Justin said, smiling, "or I'll want to stay lost with you forever."

Lance laughed. Justin slipped another orange slice into Lance's mouth and studied Lance's face as he turned back to the compass. Finally he set it aside and sighed. Turning to Justin, he asked, "Can I ask you something?"

"What?" Justin finished off the orange, tossing away the thick navel.

Lance didn't reply, and Justin looked at him sharply. Uh-oh, his mind whispered. This was going to be one of those questions that Justin would rather not answer, he knew. When Lance spoke, he wasn't surprised in the least at what he asked. "Do you ever think about that night ..." Lance sighed, not sure how to continue. "That night when me and Joey ...?" He looked at Justin, hoping Justin would know what he was asking.

Justin sighed. They hadn't talked about what happened since it did. Actually, the only words they ever had on the subject were during the heated, angry argument that ended when Justin left. He had hoped they would never have to speak of it again, but maybe it was something they needed to do, to move on. But instead of answering, Justin asked, "Do you?"

Lance shook his head. "I hadn't. I mean, God, I was so afraid that we were through. But yesterday Joey asked me about it, and I told him no, I don't think about it, because I don't, but then he said he thinks about it all the time, and I just wondered if you ..."

Justin frowned. He didn't like the thought of Joey thinking about touching Lance, kissing him, holding him in his arms. "I try not to think about it," Justin replied. "I had such an awful evening at that reunion, and then I come home and you tell me you kissed Joey, and at first I was like, okay, I can deal with that. But then you told me he touched you, and that

just set me off. The thought of him --" He closed his eyes to block out the image.

Lance placed a hand on his shoulder. "It's okay," Lance whispered. "I didn't want ... we don't have to talk about it." Hoping to change the subject, Lance said softly, "I never did ask you how the reunion went."

Justin sighed, remembering that night. He had been tired from their cross-country road trip, and he wanted nothing more than to stay with Lance back at Dani's house. But JC coerced him into going to the MMC reunion, and when they showed up, he knew he shouldn't have come. Britney was there, all over him, and he tried to fend her off the best he could but she kept asking him about the girlfriend she assumed he had, and if he and Lance were friends again, and what exactly went on that night he and Lance got into a fight when she was at their hotel. "I kept telling Brit JC liked her new song, and he liked her dress, and her hair, and when she finally goes over to talk to him, she was like Justin keeps talking about you. And JC got mad and told her not to believe a word I said, because he thought I was dissing him."

"Why'd he think that?" Lance asked, frowning.

Justin shrugged. "Because he was on his second beer and sick of hearing me bitch about how much I wanted to leave."

"I wish you had left," Lance said suddenly. "I wish you had come back before we went to that party and I would never have gone with Joey that night."

Justin put an arm around Lance's shoulders and pulled him back against him. "There's a lot of things I would change about that night if I could," Justin admitted. "I wouldn't have grabbed you like I did, or pushed you onto the bed, or ..." He sighed. "I wouldn't have let you cry against my back. If I could change just one thing, I would've turned over and held you until we both fell asleep."

Lance sniffled against his shoulder, and Justin murmured, "Don't cry, please. It's all over, it's behind us now. Lance, please."

"We are so fucking lost," Lance cried, burying his head into Justin's chest.

Justin smiled slightly. At least Lance wasn't still berating himself for kissing Joey. Justin sighed, trying to think of a way to cheer Lance up. "Let me finish telling you about the reunion," he said.

Lance wiped his eyes and muttered, "Okay." He sniffled again and prompted, "JC got mad at you --"

Justin grinned. "And so I pull him aside, right? I go Josh-U-A," and he tapped Lance's forehead gently, once for each syllable of their friend's name. "I'm like, what's your problem, man? I'm trying to hook you up with Brit, don't play me like this."

Lance laughed. "What'd he say?"

"He looks at me with this stupid expression on his face." Justin bugged his eyes out in a good imitation of JC, and Lance laughed again. "I didn't

know that, he says, and I'm like no shit, go get her."

"Did they hook up?" Lance asked.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know, but he didn't come back with me, that's for sure."

Lance laughed again. In a quiet voice he said, "I'm sorry I brought this up."

"That's okay," Justin said, rubbing Lance's shoulder gently. "Maybe it's good that we talk about it." He bit his lip, unsure if he should ask Lance what was on his mind, but since they were being open about it -- "Do you ever think about the way it felt to kiss him?" he asked softly.

Lance looked up at him, his green eyes watery and pale. "No," he said. "I try not to think about that night at all. Or the next night, or anything until you said you loved me again."

Justin kissed Lance's forehead tenderly. "I do love you," he whispered. "I never stopped."

Lance snuggled closer, hugging him. "I love you, too," he said. After a moment, he added, "We better start walking again."

"Which way?" Justin asked. Everywhere he turned, the trees looked the same.

Picking up the compass, Lance turned it until the needle stopped and said, "North. That's as good a place as any, no?"

Justin laughed and stood up. "Well, eventually we'll hit the North Pole, I guess." He helped Lance to his feet. "Then Santa can take us home."

Lance rolled his eyes. "I'm hoping we find something before that," he said.

Justin kissed Lance, his lips lingering on Lance's. Then he took Lance's hand and said, "Lead the way." If he had to be lost, he was glad it was with Lance by his side. Thank God for the little things.

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 5 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

Joey's feet were numb from the icy water, but he could feel a steady throbbing in his ankle that beat in time with his heart, and he knew if he took his foot out of the river, it would hurt even worse. So he laid back on the grass and watched the clouds through the branches overhead, and willed the pain away. It didn't work. "Can I have some aspirin?" he asked, holding out his hand.

JC shook two pills into his palm. Joey looked at them and laughed. "I'm a big boy, JC," he said, holding his hand out again. "These won't do shit."

From the corner of his eye he saw JC chew on his bottom lip indecisively, and then he shook two more pills out of the bottle and into Joey's hand. Joey popped all four into his mouth at once and swallowed quickly, grimacing at the acidic taste they left behind. "We have water," JC said, placing his hand beneath Joey's head to support it while holding a bottle to his lips.

Joey took a sip before pushing it away. "Thanks," he said, lying back down. JC ran a hand across Joey's brow and looked at him thoughtfully. "What's on your mind?" Joey asked. The last time he asked JC that, he had been surprised at the answer. Now he told himself he was ready for anything.

But JC still managed to shock him. "What does a kiss mean to you?" he asked softly.

Joey laughed. "Where do you come up with these things?" he asked, smiling. JC smiled back but didn't respond. A kiss, Joey thought. What did he feel when he kissed someone? "I don't know," he said, frowning. "I like kissing. It's fun."

"That's all it is to you?" JC asked. "Nothing else, just fun?"

Joey shrugged. "Sometimes," he admitted. He watched JC's face carefully. "You want to know what it means when I kiss you?" he asked, grinning.

JC blushed. "Both times you kissed me, you were drunk," he said. "I can't imagine it meant more than that."

"Did it mean more to you?" Joey asked. He felt a lightness in his chest that surprised him, and he touched JC's knee where it rested by his head. The warmth of JC's fingers on his forehead was pleasant, and suddenly he thought he might want to kiss JC again.

JC sighed. "Joey," he began, and then he took a deep, shaky breath. "I won't lie to you and say I don't think about it now and then. But I don't think ..." He sighed again. "I don't think it would work out, between us."

"Why not?" Joey asked. He had never really thought of JC in that way; even though he flirted with him from time to time, he had never really thought of any guy like that, except for Lance.

JC shrugged. "You said it yourself, back in DC. I want someone who wants me. I couldn't get involved with someone in love with someone else."

Turning his attention back to the sky, Joey sighed. "You mean Lance," he whispered.

"I mean Lance," JC replied, nodding. "I'd tell you to forget about him if I thought it would do any good."

"I can't," Joey whispered. Tears filled his eyes at the memory of Lance in his arms, his sweet kisses, his hard erection in Joey's hand. "Jesus, JC, I see him every day. I fall for him over and over again. I can't forget about him."

JC sighed. "So what, you're going to spend the rest of your life jonesing for him?"

"Maybe," Joey said, shrugging. "I don't know."

They sat in silence for a while, the only sounds the rushing water and the birds in the trees. Finally Joey sniffled and asked, "Is that such a bad thing?"

"No," JC admitted. "But I don't like you that way."

"I don't like you like that, either," Joey replied, thinking about it. "But sometimes I think maybe I could, if I was lonely enough." He looked up at JC, picking at the grass beside his head. "Tell me, JC, are you lonely?"

JC frowned and didn't answer right away. Joey let him mull it over, but then JC shook his head and said, "Believe it or not, Joe, I'm not. Really. I've got my music, and I've got you guys, and right now that's enough for me."

"But," Joey persisted, "don't you want someone to hold at night, someone to kiss and hug and love?"

JC shrugged. "Sometimes. Why, is that what you want?"

Joey nodded. He wanted that so badly, he didn't mind getting it from Chris, though they hadn't been very kissy on this trip so far. The kiss on the forehead surprised him, though. He'd have to remember to ask Chris about that, if they ever saw him again. JC continued. "I'm waiting for the right person to come along."

"What if they never do?" Joey asked. He shifted his gaze to JC. "Or what if they are already with someone else? What then?"

JC shrugged. "Then ..." He sighed, exasperated. "Joey! Don't ask me stuff like that. I don't know!" Joey laughed, and JC smiled to see him laugh. "You know," he said again, his voice quieter, "you seem happier than you've been in a long time. Any reason why?"

Joey frowned. He was happier, and it was all because of Chris, come to think about it. Chris had been there for him when he was so sure that everyone hated him, and now it seemed they couldn't get together for five minutes without making each other laugh. It wasn't just the kissing, either, though Joey didn't mind that part of it. Chris was a great kisser, and Joey liked to feel him in his arms. But it was great just to be with him, to laugh with him, to tease the others and have Chris look at him in that secretive way he had that made Joey feel as if he were the only one in the world in on the joke. But how could he tell JC about that without mentioning the kisses and the hugs and the lying in bed giggling like kids? He didn't want to say anything about that -- it was something kept between just Chris and himself. Dani didn't know, none of the others knew, and he wasn't about to ruin it by telling JC that sometimes when he was lonely, Chris let him kiss him and hold him close.

So Joey just shrugged and said, "Maybe this trip of yours was just what I needed to move on, I don't know."

"Have you talked to Lance yet?" JC asked. Joey nodded. "Justin?" JC asked.

Joey shook his head. "I don't think he wants to talk to me about it yet," he said. "I can understand that. Especially after all the ribbing Chris and I put him through."

JC laughed. "You really should've seen Lance and Chris last night," he said, smiling at the memory. "I go out on the deck and Lance is on top of Chris, and the next thing I know Chris is shoving him into the grass, and Justin is yelling at me to help him break them up ..." His voice trailed off, and he laughed again. "I had to sit on Chris to keep him down. He was so livid."

Joey laughed. "I wish I had seen that."

"I made him apologize," JC continued. "I told him he had to. Lance isn't a bully, you know? And if Chris pissed him off enough to actually get in a fight over it, then I thought he should at least say he was sorry."

Joey laughed again. "Now I would've given anything to see that. Chris apologize -- what a concept."

JC looked at Joey closely. "Why'd he kiss you on the forehead?" he asked.

Joey shrugged. "I'm going to have to ask him that myself," he replied softly. Was it just a friendly gesture, or something more? He didn't know. He didn't know if he wanted to know, and he didn't know what he meant by that. Now he was confusing himself, and it hurt his head to think about it too much. He'd just ask Chris whenever he came back. "Do you think he's gotten very far?" Joey asked.

"Maybe," JC replied. "He took out of here at a pretty good clip, and he knows you need to get to a doctor, have someone look at your foot. So if he keeps up that pace, he might be back before it gets dark."

"What if he isn't?" Joey asked. The thought of spending the night in the woods didn't appeal to him much. It would be cold, and damp, and oh

so dark -- "What if he doesn't get back by nighttime?"

"I don't know," JC whispered. He plucked at the grass by Joey's head and frowned. "I just don't know."

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 6 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

After an hour, the only thing that accompanied Chris as he walked through the woods was the river flowing beside him. It was more of a stream, really, when he thought about it -- too wide and too fast to cross, but not a raging river, nothing he'd boat down. Now a boat would be nice, he thought, glancing at the white-tipped water rushing by him. A boat would get him to the cabin and back in no time, and he wouldn't have this nagging worry deep in his chest that Joey was in pain. Why did he have to twist his ankle? He didn't do it on purpose, Chris knew that, but it still upset him. Poor Joey.

Chris sighed, shifted the pack on his back into a more comfortable position, and picked up the pace. A glance at his watch told him it was already after three in the afternoon -- they started this thing when? Nine or so in the morning. It seemed like days ago, standing on the porch and looking over the map. They'd just hike up to the picnic grounds, eat, and come back. How hard could that be?

How hard indeed. This was all kind of his fault, really, when he thought about it. He sighed. All his fault -- he should've told Joey about the fight with Lance on his own. Then Joey wouldn't have said anything on the trail, and Lance wouldn't have started, and Chris wouldn't have had to explain everything, and Joey wouldn't have made that blowjob comment, and he wouldn't have gotten embarrassed and angry and wouldn't have yelled at Justin, which probably just set him off, and Lance took him aside to calm him down ... all his fault. But truth be told? Chris hadn't wanted to tell Joey about the fight. He knew how Joey felt about Lance, and he didn't quite know what Joey would've said when he heard they got in a fight over Justin. Whose side would he have taken?

Chris didn't know. And he didn't want to find out.

But Joey had been cool about the whole thing today, even laughing about it, and Chris was relieved. Part of him knew Joey would see the humor in the whole thing -- come on, Lance? Fighting? Puh-leaze! But there was another part of him that wondered if maybe Joey could get jealous and defensive over Lance the same way Justin did. And Chris didn't want to fight Joey, too, especially when Joey didn't even have any right to pick a fight over Lance. Lance didn't want him. He wanted Justin.

Around him the trees pressed closer to the river, and Chris stepped closer to the water, trying to stay out of the woods as much as possible. He felt bad for Joey. No, he felt awful for Joey. He knew how it was to be in love with someone who didn't love him back. How many girls had he crushed on when he was younger? Girls who were popular in high school, too beautiful or too smart or too perfect, girls who wouldn't even look at him, let alone give him the time of day? He had a lot of friends who were girls, but he learned early on not to tell them he liked them -- it only drove them away.

Except for Dani. He smiled grimly. Dani had probably called the cabin twenty times by now, furious because no one was there. She had quite a temper. And she was very beautiful -- the type of girl Chris could never seem to attract in high school, or even college. He was a nice-looking guy. He was a very good friend. What was his problem when it came to relationships?

It had started out with Dani like it did all the others. They were friends. They met through other friends and something clicked -- Chris thought she liked his devil-may-care attitude and his quick humor, but now she complained he wasn't serious enough, and how was he supposed to react to that? This was the way he was -- serious wasn't a word one used to define him. Crazy, yes. Goofy, yes. Fun? All the time. But serious? He didn't think so.

Sometimes he wished they could get back to those days when they were just friends, he and Dani. She was so much more spontaneous then, and he loved to be with her because there was a tension between them he couldn't put into words. He used to take her to shows and they'd laugh like they were the only two people in the whole world. He missed that. What happened?

You had sex, he thought bitterly. That's what always happens. Dani had been upset about something, Chris no longer remembered what, and she asked him to stay one night. A few kisses, a hand rubbing here, a gentle touch there, and before he knew it, he woke up beside her in her bed, naked, wondering what the hell just happened. Now they weren't just friends -- they were friends who had sex. And when that magazines asked if he had a girlfriend and he said no, Dani went ballistic. "What the hell am I?" she asked. He remembered the fight vividly -- even here, in these woods, he could close his eyes and hear her strident voice. "Just a friend you fuck? Just a girl who gives you head?" Well, she doesn't do that very often, he thought, a goofy grin spreading across his face. Here, in the safety of the forest, beside a nameless river in Maine, he could allow himself the luxury of that smile.

So he released a statement that he was dating. What would it matter? Two of the Backstreet Boys were engaged to be married, and their boyband following was still going strong. And it felt good to know that he would have a date to all those award shows and concerts and whatnot. The fans were sometimes rude to Dani, he didn't quite know why, but they were still friends. And then she started in on this serious business. "You're the CEO of your own company," she'd say. "You have to take this seriously."

He did take it seriously. When times got tough, he went skating. Or played video games. Or just crashed with the band. How much more serious did she want?

Sometimes he wished they could go back to being just friends. No hassles then, no worries, no constant phone calls, paging him down. He liked the sex and he liked hanging out with her, but sometimes he didn't really want much more.

Ahead the river began to widen, and Chris sighed. Finally, he thought as he stepped out of the trees and saw the lake, stretching away into the

distance, the water shiny and mercurial like quicksilver in the late afternoon sun. Further down the lake, wooden piers stretched into the lake like dark driftwood, and Chris guessed the first one would lead to their cabin. He hoped. It wasn't too far away ... he would be there in fifteen minutes, twenty at the most. He started around the lake, stepping carefully.

The ground was sandy, and the sparse grass and cattails made walking treacherous. A few times his feet slipped down the grainy slope, and he pinwheeled his arms to steady himself. He did not want to pull himself out of that lake. Up close the silvery water looked brackish and green, a scum of algae covering the surface. He didn't want that shit on him.

Chris stepped on a weak patch of ground and suddenly he was up to his ankle in cold, slimy water. Tonight, Chris thought, extracting his foot and shaking it, a disgusted look on his face, after all this is over with, and we're all at the cabin, sitting around drinking beers, I'm going to look back on this and laugh. I hope.

When he reached the first pier, he pulled himself up on the wooden walk and smiled when he saw that damn apron he picked up at the airport in Chicago during their layover. It was hung over the top of the grill on the deck, the hem flapping in the slight breeze. He ran down the walk, his footsteps echoing dully in the still air, and he dug into his pockets, looking for the keys to the cabin. For a heart-stopping moment he couldn't find them, and he was so sure he'd have to break a window, or hot-wire the truck, or something, but then his fingers closed over warm metal and he sighed in relief. Unlocking the sliding door, he left it open and headed straight for the phone. The ranger's station number was taped to the receiver.

The phone rang, a shrill, insistent sound that made Chris nervous. "Come on," he whispered. He wanted to get the others back here now, he wanted to get Joey to a doctor, he wanted them to pick up the goddamn phone -- "Thank you for calling --"

"Hey," Chris said, interrupting the dispatcher. "Listen. I'm in cabin 23, and I have a problem."

The woman sighed on the other end of the connection. "Sir, any problems with the cabin must be addressed to Mr. Kingsley, who isn't here right now."

"Not that kind of problem," Chris said, out of breath. He hurried to explain. "We went hiking, and my friend got hurt, and --"

"Calm down," the woman said, and Chris took a few deep breaths, trying to clear his mind. He closed his eyes and saw Joey, his face contorted in pain. He saw Justin and Lance, lost and afraid. He saw JC, worry making his eyes shiny and round. God, he prayed, please let me get them all back here safely. Please.

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 7 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

Lance looked at his watch and sighed. Seven o'clock. A thick dusk had settled over the woods, making it hard to see where they were going. Another hour or so, and they would have to stop for the night. And Lance didn't relish the thought of sleeping on the ground. He stopped and squinted at the compass, trying to make sure they were still headed north.

Justin stopped behind him and rested his head on Lance's shoulder. "I'm hungry," he moaned.

"Me, too," Lance replied. They finished off the fruit hours ago.

"I'm tired," Justin added.

Lance sighed. "Me, too." They had been walking forever.

"Will you carry me?" Justin asked, slipping his arms around Lance's waist.

Lance laughed. "I can't lift you," he replied. Justin's curls tickled his neck, and Lance didn't feel like walking anymore. He rubbed his eyes wearily. This was not his idea of a good time.

A light clicked on up ahead. He could barely see it through the trees, but it was there. "Justin?" he asked, turning. Justin looked at him and frowned. Lance pointed. "Is that --"

Justin pushed past him, catching Lance's arm and pulling him along. "That's the deck light," he said, excitement replacing the weariness in his voice. "Come on."

"Justin, wait." Lance didn't want to get his hopes up, but the deck light at the cabin was on a timer, and it would click on every night around this time, and they had been walking for so long, they had to be close to something by now. When they broke free of the trees they saw the darkened cabin and Lance blinked away tears of relief and exhaustion. "Oh God, thank the Lord --" He followed Justin up onto the deck and fell down on the bench.

Justin tried the sliding door. "Locked," he said, sighing. He cupped his hands to his eyes and peered inside, but it was obvious no one was there. "Jesus, Lance, we come all this way and who has the fucking keys?"

"Chris," Lance whispered, suddenly very sleepy. "Or JC. Or Joey. Fuck if I know."

"Well, this is just da bomb," Justin said sarcastically. He plopped down on the bench beside Lance. "What are we supposed to do now?"

Lance yawned. Stretching out on the bench, he laid down with his backpack beneath his head and said, "I'm going to sleep."

Justin looked at him for a moment before easing down between him and the railing of the deck. He draped an arm over Lance and hugged him close, his breath fanning the back of Lance's neck softly. "I wonder where the others are," he said, his voice low in Lance's ear.

Shrugging, Lance whispered, "I don't know." He didn't care right now. All he wanted to do was sleep.

"They're probably looking for us," Justin mused. His hand rubbed Lance's arm gently.

"Justin, I don't know," Lance said again, a little irritated. "Just let me get a little bit of rest and then we'll go look for them, okay?" Justin was silent, and Lance could almost feel the disappointment and dejection radiating from him. Lance sighed. He wasn't up for one of Justin's moods right now. "Justin," he whined. "Please?"

"Fine," Justin pouted, burying his head into Lance's neck. Lance could hear the frown in his voice.

Wiggling his butt against Justin's crotch in the hopes of cheering him up slightly, Lance closed his eyes and fell asleep instantly.

Back by the river, JC and Joey were lying on their stomachs in the grass, staring into the darkening woods. When Joey complained that he couldn't feel his feet anymore because the water was too cold, JC told him to roll over and bend his knees to hold his legs up. He remembered reading that a swollen ankle had to be kept above the heart to keep the blood from pooling in the muscles, or something like that. Since there was no place to prop up Joey's foot, JC figured kicking his legs up behind him would be the next best thing. He laid down beside Joey after they ate the sandwiches in JC's backpack intended for their picnic lunch and together they sat with their chins on their hands, an anxious silence enveloping them. JC tried telling himself it was because they were worried, and Joey was in pain, and Chris wasn't back yet, and where the hell were Justin and Lance right now? He didn't know.

But no matter what he tried to think of to distract himself, his mind kept replaying their earlier conversation. He had asked Joey if he would keep wanting Lance when he knew he couldn't have him, and Joey had said maybe. JC had nothing to say to that. When Joey spoke again, he asked if JC thought it was so bad, the wanting. JC said no, but he hated to see Joey mope and long for someone who didn't want him, someone who wanted someone else. How had he said it? "But I don't want you like that."

And Joey took it the wrong way. "I don't like you that way, either," he had said. His words still rang in JC's ears. "But sometimes I think maybe I could, if I was lonely enough." Jesus Christ, JC thought, clenching his jaw. Joey had thought JC said he didn't want him as a lover, and JC hadn't meant that. And after Joey's comment -- "maybe I could, if I was lonely enough" -- shit, after that, how could JC tell him that's not what he meant at all?

Beside him, Joey sighed. "Can I have some more aspirin?" he asked.

"No," JC said. He was glad he wasn't looking at Joey right now -- he didn't want those deep eyes, so filled with pain and hurt, to coerce him into giving Joey any more aspirin. "You've had eight. That's enough."

"My foot hurts," Joey said.

"I know it does," JC replied. "I'm sorry. Chris will be back soon." Beneath his breath, Joey cursed softly. "Joey, I'm sorry. The instructions on the bottle say --"

"The people who wrote the instructions aren't here right now," Joey said angrily. "If they twisted their ankle in these God-forsaken woods, do you think they'd stick to that eight pills a day rule?"

JC sighed. "Joey --"

"Forget it," Joey said.

But now the tension between them was even worse than before. JC tried again. "Joey --"

"I said forget it, Josh. Please." Joey passed a hand across his eyes and sighed. "I'm sorry. I'm just ... it hurts, okay?"

"I know," JC replied softly.

"And it's dark," Joey added. "And it's getting chilly. And where the fuck is Chris?"

"I don't know," JC said. He looked at Joey's thin t-shirt and asked, "Did you bring a flannel shirt with you?" JC had -- when night began to fall, he pulled it out of his backpack and put it on.

But Joey shook his head. "No," he whispered. Laughing, he said, "This was supposed to be a day trip, remember? Not Survivor. Hell, I thought we were going to just hike a few miles, have a picnic, turn around, go home. I didn't pack anything more than I had to. I didn't even think to bring something with long sleeves."

JC chewed on the inside of his lip. "Do you want mine?" he asked. He would be cold, but right now Joey was hurt, and in pain, and anything to make him more comfortable ...

Joey turned and looked at him. In the dusk, JC could see the slight smile tugging at Joey's lips. "Chasez," he said in that Brooklyn drawl of his that made JC's heart flutter, "now you know that your tiny little shirt ain't gonna fit on me."

JC felt his cheeks heat up in the cool air. Grinning, he said, "I just thought I'd offer."

"Well, thank you," Joey said, studying him. JC couldn't look away from the magnet of Joey's gaze. "But no."

Before he could stop himself, JC asked, "Do you want me to hold you?"

"JC --" Joey started, a puzzled look on his face. And then beams of light cut through the trees, and he heard Chris's voice, calling out their names, and they both turned to see rangers trampling through the woods, and rescue dogs, and Chris, and the moment was lost.

In the back of the ranger's jeep, as they were whisked down the trail to the closest medical facility, Joey huddled beneath a rough blanket, shivering in the night air with an ice pack wrapped around his ankle. The trail was bumpy and when Joey leaned against him, JC draped an arm around Joey's shoulders and tried not to think about how pleasant it had been to wake up to Joey's kiss the other evening.

"Maybe I could, if I was lonely enough." JC closed his eyes and felt the warmth of Joey against him, and sighed. Just how lonely is that? he wondered bitterly.

All I Ever Wanted
75. Lost in the Woods
Part 8 of 8
by NSyncGrrl

They borrowed one of the rangers' jeeps and drove back to the cabin. Chris was behind the wheel, JC in the seat beside him, watching the road ahead through the twin cones of light from their high beams. Joey lay stretched out on the back seat, snoring softly. The doctor had declared his injury just a very bad sprain, told him to stay off his feet for the next few weeks -- weeks! Chris thought, wondering if that would affect their schedule any -- and after giving him an air cast, a pair of crutches, and a handful of ibuprofen with a prescription for more, he told them to all get some rest. Chris told the rangers that Justin and Lance were still out there somewhere, but the rangers said it was too dark now to really set up a search. Go home, they had said. If they aren't there, give us a call. We'll do what we can. But chances are they're already back at your cabin, sleeping off the adventure. Call us if they're not there.

Chris glanced at the cell phone in the jeep and debated on whether or not he should just say the hell with it and call the rangers anyway. Tell them he was already back at the cabin and Justin and Lance weren't there and could they please just go out and find them? Please? Beside him JC shifted, and Chris glanced up to find JC watching him closely. "They're going to be all right," JC said, as if he could read Chris's thoughts.

Chris snickered. "Yeah," he said. Watching the road ahead, he asked quietly, "What if they aren't, JC? What if they're hurt like Joey was, or if something happened, or --"

"They aren't little boys," JC replied. "I know you don't think Justin's all there sometimes, but he can take care of himself. And Lance is with him. They'll be fine."

Chris smiled at the image that came to mind, Justin standing over Lance protectively, staring down a big ass grizzly because it looked at his boy the wrong way. He giggled, more tired than amused, and JC smiled slightly. "What?" he asked.

But Chris shook his head. "We have to find them," he said. "God, can you imagine calling Justin's mom, telling her we lost him?"

JC laughed. "Or Lance's. She'd be up here with a search party herself before we even got off the phone."

"Maybe we should just release a statement saying they're lost," Chris suggested. "These woods would be crawling in overeager teenaged girls in no time, all looking for Justin Timberlake."

JC smiled. "You know, if we can't find him, we're screwed big time."

"No shit," Chris said darkly, but the smile on JC's face didn't fade.

"No, I mean, really," JC said, and Chris looked at him, confused. JC

explained. "I know we say everyone's got equal standing in the band, and it's true. But the fans all love Justin -- our whole show centers around him. If we suddenly decide to become NSync the trio, do you think we'd still have the fan base to support us? Without their curly haired hero?"

Chris laughed. "Years from now we'll get calls from VH-1 for a Where Are They Now? series. They'll ask what happened and we'll be like we lost Justin, everything went downhill from there."

"And all along Justin and Lance will be holed up in some shack in the woods," JC added, giggling. "Living la vida loca, just the two of them."

"They might like that," Chris said softly. He glanced in the rearview mirror to check on Joey. Joey's head rested against the back seat of the jeep and his foot was propped up on the door. With the help of the pain medication, his brow was smooth and unwrinkled in sleep. "When we find them ..." Chris let his voice trail off, unsure of what it was he would do when he found them. Hug them tight, tell them never to pull this shit again, and then break their arms? Maybe. That's what he felt like doing.

"I have two words for you," JC said, "chastity belts."

Chris laughed. "Now there's a thought." Softly he added, "We need to talk to them. All of us. Just sit down and have at it."

"I agree," JC replied, nodding.

Chris turned down the dirt road leading to their cabin, and a comfortable silence descended over them as the cabin loomed into view. The place was dark and foreboding, and Chris wished he had thought of leaving a light on before he left with the rangers. A wash of bright light spread out behind the cabin like a halo, backlighting it. The deck light. If no one turned it off, it would stay on all night. Maybe he should leave it on, in the hopes that Justin and Lance would find their way back on their own. He looked at the phone again, wondering if he should call.

When he stopped the jeep, JC jumped out and stretched. "I never thought we'd see this place again," he said, a sudden weariness creeping into his voice. "I hope they're here."

Chris frowned and didn't reply as he cut off the jeep. The engine's roar faded and the noises of the night pressed against them, the soft lap of water, the rustle of leaves, cicadas and grasshoppers and buzzing things Chris didn't want to think about, rising into a cacophony of sound. He prayed Justin and Lance were safe.

He came around to JC's side of the jeep as JC opened the back door. Leaning inside, JC shook Joey gently. "Joey?" he asked, his voice low. "Joey, wake up."

Joey groaned but didn't open his eyes. "He's exhausted," Chris said, pushing past JC to lift Joey off the seat. Shifting Joey's weight onto him, Chris backed up, pulling Joey out of the jeep. "He's sleeping with Mama Motrin tonight."

JC laughed and took Joey's legs in his arms. Kicking the door closed, JC followed Chris to the cabin, Joey hanging between them like dead

weight. They stood at the front door and looked at each other stupidly. "Who's gonna open the door?" Chris asked, laughing.

Easing Joey's legs down to the porch, JC plucked the keys from Chris's hand and unlocked the door. Inside the cabin was pitch black, and Chris bumped into a table, spilling papers and pens and the phone onto the floor. They shuffled through the mess and managed to get Joey into his room. After they laid him down on the bed, Chris clicked on the bedside lamp and looked down at Joey, sleeping peacefully. "I'll get the crutches," JC said, heading back outside.

Chris pulled off Joey's t-shirt, struggling to get Joey's arms free. Then he unzipped Joey's jeans and began to tug them down gently. With a glance to make sure JC wasn't back yet, Chris let his hand drift over Joey's crotch, feeling the thick bulge beneath the thin fabric of his boxer briefs. Joey moaned in his sleep, and Chris blushed, hurrying to pull off Joey's jeans. He left the air cast on, and tossed an afghan over Joey as JC came back.

From the doorway, JC laughed. "You'll never believe who's on the deck out back," he whispered loudly, pointing. Chris stepped out of the room and looked. Through the sliding glass doors in the kitchen, he could see denim-clad legs, someone sleeping on the deck. Two someones, he thought, as the legs shifted and he saw dark denim and a lighter, acid-washed denim.

"Fuck," Chris whispered in disbelief. He hurried to the door and looked out. Lance was asleep on the bench, Justin curled up behind him. Unlocking the door, Chris threw it open wide and stepped out onto the deck. He knelt down beside Lance and touched his forehead, amazed. They're back, he thought. Thank you, Lord, they're back.

Lance shifted, moving away from Chris's touch. Behind him Justin groaned and snuggled closer to Lance. It was chilly outside, and Chris could see goosebumps all along their arms. "Lance," he called softly, shaking his friend. "Get up. Lance?"

Blinking, Lance opened his eyes. "Chris?" he asked sleepily. Sitting up, he looked past Chris at JC, and a slow smile spread across his face. "Jesus," he whispered, rubbing his eyes. He turned around and shook Justin. "Wake up, Justin." Justin groaned again. "Come on, Justin. Get up."

Justin yawned. Looking at Chris, he grinned crookedly. "Never thought I'd be glad to see you," he mumbled. Lance elbowed him, scowling.

But Chris laughed, shaky with relief. "You can stay out here, you know," he said, heading back inside. Justin and Lance scrambled off the bench and followed him. "You guys hungry?" Chris asked, clicking on the kitchen light.

"I just want to fall out in my bed," Lance said. "I'm really sorry about --"

"Not now," Chris said, raising his hand to cut Lance off. "We'll talk about it in the morning, okay?"

Justin nodded, his hands on Lance's waist, and let Lance lead the way to their room. As they closed the door, JC leaned against the kitchen counter and sighed. "Go get some sleep," Chris said softly.

"You too," JC said. He patted Chris on the back and trudged to his room.

When JC's door shut quietly, Chris listened to the stillness of the cabin. He let it fill him until the fear and anger from the day dispersed, replaced with an empty hollow ache in his bones. He picked up the phone where it had fallen on the floor and thought about calling Dani but decided against it. Instead he dialed the rangers' station and told the dispatcher they were right, his friends were at the cabin, thank you and good night. Then he crept into the room he shared with Joey.

Somehow Joey had managed to kick the afghan to the floor and crawl under the covers. He lay on his side in the middle of the bed, turned away from the light Chris turned on earlier. Sighing, Chris clicked off the lamp, plunging the room into darkness. Feeling his way around to his side of the bed, Chris undressed and slid beneath the covers, wrapping his arms around Joey. He placed his forehead against Joey's and studied the way Joey's eyelashes fluttered on his cheeks. Between them Joey's arms were crossed over his chest, and Chris brushed his lips across Joey's cheek, the skin soft but a little rough where Joey needed a shave. Part of him wished Joey was awake so they could talk about what had happened -- Chris wanted to hear Joey's infectious laugh right now, wanted to look into his friend's jovial eyes and see his contagious smile. When Joey laughed, Chris felt the same way he used to feel when he was with Dani, before she was "his girlfriend" and that fluttering in his stomach every time she smiled at him was gone.

But he knew Joey needed his rest, so Chris buried his head against Joey's and closed his eyes, and let his friend sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
76. Stolen Kisses
by NSyncGrrl

Joey laid back in the recliner, his feet propped up on the footrest, and closed his eyes. His ankle throbbed, but not as bad as it did when he first woke up this morning. Everyone was down by the lake, and Joey was feeling sorry for himself -- he couldn't swim with his foot in the air cast, he didn't feel like hobbling down that wooden walk on those damn crutches, and the last thing he wanted was to watch Lance horsing around with Justin in the water. So he sat inside the cabin, the afternoon sunlight filling the living room, and he wished they had a television in this place. Cable, satellite, video tapes, rabbit ears, damn! Anything, Joey thought sourly.

The sliding door opened, and Joey turned his head to see Chris come inside. "Hey," Chris called. He wore just a pair of loose swim trunks, and Joey let his gaze slide over Chris's bare chest. He might have it bad for Lance, but damn, Chris looked fine right now.

"Hey," Joey said, closing his eyes. He heard Chris come closer, his bare feet slapping on the hardwood floor, and then Chris straddled his knees and sat down. Joey opened one eye and frowned. "You're going to break this chair," he said, though Chris's weight on his legs was warm and pleasant.

Chris smiled wickedly. "Come outside," he said, plucking at the hem of Joey's shirt.

"And do what?" Joey asked. "Go swimming? Hello? I twisted my ankle, remember?"

Chris scooted up Joey's thighs, his fingers picking at the buttons on Joey's shirt. "You can at least come out and be social," he said.

Joey shook his head. "I don't feel like it," he said softly.

Chris watched his hands on Joey's shirt as he smoothed out the thin fabric, tracing along Joey's stomach. Joey's skin fluttered beneath Chris's soft touch. Scooting closer, Chris placed a knee in the chair on either side of Joey and slid into his lap. Suddenly Joey didn't want Chris to go back outside, either. Chris leaned against Joey, his bare chest brushing against Joey's shirt just enough that the fabric caressed Joey's nipples maddeningly. His hands rested on the back of the chair, right above Joey's head, his arms stretched out on either side of Joey's face. He leaned closer, his lips inches from Joey's, and he whispered, "Why not?"

Joey laughed, hoping to dispel the tension suddenly thick in the room. Chris merely smiled back. "You know," he said, his voice soft, "the others are busy right now. Maybe we could --"

"I'm not giving you a blowjob," Joey said quickly, though right now the idea wasn't all that bad.

Chris sighed dramatically. "Joe-ey!" he whined. "For the millionth time, I'm not asking you for a blowjob!"

Joey grinned. "Then why do you keep bringing it up?" he asked.

Chris smiled devilishly. "Because I want one," he said. "That doesn't mean I'm asking you ..."

"Well," Joey asked, "what are you asking me?"

"I wasn't asking anything," Chris replied.

"You said maybe we could and then you stopped," Joey pointed out. He let his hands rest on Chris's hips, on his shorts, with just his thumbs touching Chris's skin.

Chris smiled. Damn, he's so close, Joey thought, wondering why he felt as if he were staring into Lance's green eyes instead of Chris's large brown ones. His heart was beating just a little too fast, and he felt just a little too warm, and there was a tightness in his groin that made him hope Chris didn't scoot any closer and feel the growing hardness there. What was with him today? He had kissed Chris before, yet today his words tickled Joey's lips and the flirty way he was looking at him made Joey want to stay like this forever.

Chris shrugged. "Maybe we could ..." he started again, and then his voice trailed off as his lips pressed against Joey's lightly. Joey closed his eyes as Chris's lips opened, parting his as well, and Chris's tongue slipped into his mouth, tasting as sweet and refreshing as cold ice cream on a hot summer day.

When Chris pulled back, Joey sighed. "Do you think of Lance when I kiss you?" Chris asked.

Joey frowned. "No," he said. "Should I?"

Chris shrugged again. "I just wondered."

"When I'm with you," Joey said, letting his hands trail up Chris's sides, "I think of you."

"Do you like kissing?" Chris asked. He leaned forward and rested his forehead against Joey's.

Joey smirked. "Why wouldn't I?" he replied. His hands rubbed Chris's back gently.

"Do you like kissing me?" Chris persisted.

"No," Joey teased. When Chris pouted, Joey asked, "What kind of question is that?"

Chris shifted, his crotch pressing against Joey's. He could feel Chris's own erection against his, and the brief touch sent shivers of delight coursing through Joey's body. "Feels to me you like it," he said. "Anyone ever tell you that you have a big dick?"

"How would you know?" Joey said, blushing. He was hard, he knew it,

and now Chris knew it, too.

Chris leaned forward, his lips against Joey's ear, and whispered, "I touched it last night when I undressed you." Sitting back, he looked at Joey and nodded. "You are huge, man."

Joey laughed, embarrassed. "How many other dicks have you seen to compare me with?" he asked.

Chris closed his eyes as if deep in thought. Then he opened them and began counting on his fingers. Losing count, he started over again. Joey frowned, worried for a second, and then Chris smiled and asked, "Do I count myself?"

Joey shrugged. "Sure," he said.

"Then one," he said, grinning.

Joey laughed. "Well," he said, smiling, "you aren't exactly an expert on dick sizes, are you?"

Chris leaned close and kissed Joey again, surprising him. "Joey, shut up," he said softly.

Joey let himself be kissed. "Chris," he asked, looking up at Chris, "what are you doing in here when you can be outside having fun with the others?"

"I'm having fun now," Chris replied.

That wasn't exactly what Joey meant, but then Chris kissed him again, his tongue insistent in Joey's mouth, and Joey decided to just enjoy it without question. He let his hands roam Chris's chest, tweaking his nipples playfully, and Chris slid closer to Joey until their stomachs were flat against each other and their erections throbbed together in the confines of their pants. Something in the depths of the chair snapped, and Joey laughed. Chris pulled back just slightly, grinning. "I told you we'd break the chair," Joey said, running his arms around Chris's narrow waist. Chris was right -- this was fun.

Outside they heard their friends' laughter, and then heavy footsteps clomped up onto the deck. Joey looked at Chris with a terrified look in his eyes, but Chris just grinned carelessly and held Joey's arms around him when he tried to pull them away. "Chris --" Joey warned. He didn't want the others to walk in and see them like this.

At the last moment, Chris twisted in Joey's arms and plopped down in his lap. Joey looked up as JC opened the sliding door and entered the cabin, followed by Justin and Lance. JC frowned slightly, and then Justin cried, "Geronimo!" and leaped into the chair, landing across Chris's lap. He was damp and his shorts dripped cold lake water onto Joey's legs.

"Justin!" he cried, laughing, trying to push Justin off. Justin pulled Lance down on top of them, and Joey groaned beneath the weight of everyone on him. Luckily Chris was sitting in the middle of his lap, or Justin would've raised an eyebrow at the hardness in his pants, he was sure. Beneath them the chair creaked in protest.

"You guys get up," JC said, tugging at Lance's arm. Chris reached out and pulled JC closer. JC stumbled and fell on Joey's legs. "Chris!"

Joey felt something in the chair under him give way, and he said, "Okay guys, get up, really." He pushed Chris's back, hoping to start something that would end with all of them off of him. "Guys, really --" The chair creaked again. "Get up, please --"

Justin heard a twang inside the chair and pushed Lance off him. Standing, he helped Chris off of Joey's lap, pulling JC up as well. When Joey tried to push the recliner into a sitting position, though, it wouldn't budge. "Help me up," Joey said, stretching his arms out. Chris and Justin each took one arm and pulled Joey to his feet. He hobbled over to the couch and plopped down on the soft cushions.

JC sat on the footrest while Lance pushed at the back of the chair, but it wouldn't close. "Shit," JC muttered. "There goes our security deposit."

"It's Chris's fault," Justin said, sitting down beside Joey on the couch. "He started it."

"I didn't ask you guys to jump on, too," Chris pouted, sitting on the other side of Joey.

Lance kicked at Chris as he walked past him. "What did you think we'd do?" he asked, taking a seat on the arm of the couch beside Justin.

Chris sighed dramatically and rolled his eyes. "Such children," he muttered, and Joey laughed.

Suddenly the footrest collapsed beneath JC, dumping him to the floor as the recliner snapped into its original position. "Ow," JC said, rubbing his butt with one hand, and they all started laughing. "No one sit in this thing," JC said, smiling. "I don't want it to break again."

"Ten-four, roger dodger," Chris said, saluting JC. He draped his arm around Joey's shoulders casually and grinned at him. Joey grinned back, but he wished the others had stayed outside just a few minutes longer.

All I Ever Wanted
77. With Friends Like These
by NSyncGrrl

"This is the worst spaghetti I've ever had," Joey said, finishing up his plate full of noodles.

Justin frowned. "Complain to the chef, not me," he said. They were in the living room, eating dinner. "I only opened the can. Chef Boyardee made it."

Chris laughed. He sat on the floor beside Joey, and JC sat behind them on the couch. Justin sat in the recliner, even though JC didn't want him to, but he didn't push it back so he figured it would be all right. Lance sat on the floor between Justin's legs, and Justin stepped over him carefully when he stood up and headed for the kitchen.

JC followed him. As Justin set his plate in the sink, JC leaned on the counter and asked, "Can we talk?"

"About what?" Justin asked. He turned on the faucet and let the water run over his dish. He knew what this was about.

But JC put his plate in the sink under the water and said, "All of us. We need to talk."

"Tonight?" Justin asked. He had hoped to get Lance outside and just lie on the pier, snuggling close beneath a blanket, watching the stars come out.

"You have a hot date or something?" JC asked, grinning. When Justin blushed lightly, JC said, "Come on, please? We need to do this."

Justin sighed. "Okay," he said. JC went back into the living room and leaned down between Chris and Joey, talking low. When Lance glanced up at Justin, he jerked his head slightly, and Lance stood up.

Coming into the kitchen, Lance put his plate in the sink and said, "Justin, I love you, you know that, and you have many talents, but cooking is not one of them."

Justin leaned against Lance, one arm snaking around Lance's waist. Breathing into Lance's ear, he whispered, "And just what am I good at?"

Lance covered Justin's hand with his own. "Let's go outside and I'll show you," he whispered back.

Justin rested his head on Lance's shoulder. "We can't," he said softly. "They want to talk."

Groaning, Lance said, "Three guesses what it'll be about, and the first two don't count."

JC came into the kitchen, carrying the rest of the dinner plates. "Come

on, you guys," he said, pushing by them to the sink. "It won't be that bad, I promise." They followed JC back to the living room. Chris and Joey had moved into the middle of the room and sat with their legs crossed, their knees touching. JC sat down on the other side of Joey and crossed his legs, too. Patting the floor beside him, he said, "Have a seat."

Justin sat down beside JC, crossing his legs like the others, and Lance followed suit. JC frowned. "Move closer," he said, tugging Justin's leg. Justin scooted up until his knee rested against JC's, and then Lance moved in too, completing the circle, his knees against Justin's on one side, Chris's on the other. Justin looked at Chris, picking at a string on his shirt, and then his gaze shifted to Joey. Joey smiled slightly and looked away. "Okay," JC said. "I want us to hold hands." He held out his hands to either side, waiting.

Joey took JC's hand, and then Chris's. Lance picked up Justin's hand in one of his, Chris's hand in the other. With a glance around the circle, Justin took JC's other hand. Joey laughed. "So now what? We all hum and try to get the ghost of Elvis to appear?"

Chris grinned. "We should do that one day," he said, seizing the idea. "I haven't done a séance in years."

JC frowned. "Can we all be serious here?" he asked. Chris ducked his head, chagrined. Sighing, JC said, "Now here are the rules. We're going to be truthful, even if it hurts. We're going to keep our temper --" he looked at Justin -- "and not get physical. We're going to come away from this friends. Is that understood?"

They all nodded. JC squeezed Justin's hand and asked, "Do you want to start?" When Justin looked at him, confused, he prompted, "I think you have something you want to tell us. You and Lance?"

Justin chewed on his lower lip and thought about it. They knew he and Lance were together -- they shared a bed every night, Chris and Joey heard him in the hotel room, Joey walked in on them the other day, for goodness sake -- and yet now that they wanted him to say the words, his stomach was fluttery and nervous. Before he could say anything, though, Lance spoke up. His voice was quiet, but he looked around at the others with a steady gaze, smiling when he turned to Justin. "I want you to know, all of you, that you are my best friends. Ever. I don't know what I'd do without any of you." He took a deep breath. "But I love Justin."

"I love you, too," Justin said, his throat closing with emotion. He looked at Joey. "I don't want to hurt you. I don't want this to mess up the group or what we have together. But I'd never give Lance up, not even if it meant losing everything else. Without him, there is nothing else, not for me."

JC released a breath he was holding. "Okay," he said slowly. He looked at Chris and Joey, raising an eyebrow.

Joey sighed. "Lance, I like you," he said softly. "You know that. I like watching you, I like talking to you, I like just being near you." Justin felt a dull anger rise in him, but JC squeezed his hand, keeping him quiet, and Justin felt Lance's thumb rubbing his other hand gently. He looked at Joey and tried not to let the words hurt. "I want to tell you -- all of you -- that

I don't regret what happened that night we kissed. I am not sorry it happened. But Justin, I'm sorry it hurt you so much. Both of you."

"You were both drunk," Justin said softly, letting his anger go. "I don't think it was right, and the fact that it happened pisses the hell out of me, but I can --" He sighed. "I can understand why it happened. If you flirted with me the way you flirt with Lance, and then I got a little tipsy, I could see how it might happen."

Joey smiled sadly. "I didn't want this," he whispered. "I didn't want to like Lance this way, and I didn't want to make you jealous, and I didn't --"

"That's okay," Justin said. "Really, Joey, it's okay."

Joey sighed. "No, it's not," he said. "I've lied to you, Justin. I told you I wouldn't interfere and I couldn't stop myself when I got the chance. You have no reason to trust me, but I swear to you, it won't happen again." He looked at Lance, his eyes shiny with unshed tears. "I'm going to be happy for you."

"Thank you," Lance whispered, holding Joey's gaze for a moment before turning away.

JC looked at Chris. "Your turn," he said.

Chris grinned. "I love you guys, too!" he cried, trying to lighten the mood, but the look JC threw his way silenced him. He shifted uncomfortably and mumbled, "Sorry."

"I'm sorry we lost you guys," Lance said.

Chris looked at him and sighed. Beneath the playful tone of his voice ran a current of impatience. "Jesus, Lance, can't you two keep your pants on for more than a few hours at a time?"

"Hey!" Justin cried, indignant.

"You guys are always at it," Chris continued. "I get horny, too, but hell, I don't jump on Dani every five minutes we're together."

Justin tried to pull his hand away from JC, but JC held on tightly, refusing to let go. "Chris," Justin warned, trying to stand up.

JC pushed him back down. "Justin, calm down," he said. "Listen to him."

"I'm sick of this," Justin muttered, but Lance squeezed his hand gently, trying to comfort him.

"Justin," he said softly, "please."

Justin pouted as Chris said, "I think it's great that you two are together, really I do. I know what it's like to get all worked up over someone and want to get them alone for just a few minutes. But you two are always together. A touch here and there, a brief kiss, that's fine. Going off into the woods and getting yourselves lost is a bit much." Chris sighed. "I don't mind you getting a little cuddly when we're all together. But please -- we are all friends. Sometimes we want to be with you guys,

too. I'm sorry I pissed you off yesterday --"

"That's not why we ditched you," Lance replied, blushing. When Chris started to speak again, Lance hurried on. "But I understand what you're saying. You wanted this to be a fun little get together and we went off on our own. I'm sorry."

"At least tell us when you're slipping away for a little bit," JC suggested. "That way we know where you are, and we can cover for you if we have to. I mean, what if this happened in a photo shoot or an interview? They'd be like where are the others and we'd say what? We don't know?"

Joey grinned. "And you have to start being careful," he added. "I know you guys don't really fool around when we're all together, and I appreciate that, but we have another tour coming up and the last thing we need is paparazzi photos of you two kissing and holding hands all over the tabloids."

Lance looked at Justin, his eyes soft and compassionate. He knew this was hard for Justin to swallow -- he didn't like to be told what to do, particularly when it came to something he believed in as passionately as he did their relationship. "Do you see what they're saying?" Lance asked softly.

Justin glared at the floor but nodded. "Yeah," he whispered. Louder, he said, "But I'm not making an announcement every time we run off together. Sometimes it's just the heat of the moment, you know?"

"Just tell us if you think we'll need to know," Chris said. "I'm not saying tell the world, just tell one of us that you're getting away for a few minutes, that's it."

Nodding, Lance said, "Okay." Justin nodded and looked at JC. "That it?" he asked, hopeful.

"No," JC said. "My turn. I want you to stop fighting. All of you."

"I'm sorry I tackled you the other night," Chris said, squeezing Lance's hand. "But it really threw me when you grabbed me like that. I ... I didn't even recognize you."

Lance blushed. "That spider thing pushed me over the edge," he admitted. "I like a good joke as much as the next guy but when it's something like that ... you know how terrified Justin is of spiders."

"You're making me sound like a wimp," Justin said, laughing. "None of us liked that big ass thing."

"I thought it was kinda cute," Joey offered, but JC quieted him with a glance. "I'm sorry we were picking on you back at the hotel," Joey added, looking at JC.

"What did ya'll do?" Lance asked, grinning.

Chris shrugged. "Nothing much. Just kept JC awake."

"Now that wasn't funny," JC said. "We had to get up early the next

morning or we'd miss our flight. We've got to be more serious when it comes to things like that."

"Okay," Chris said. Grinning, he added, "I'm sorry we don't do this more often. I feel much better with this all out in the open now, you know?"

They all agreed. Joey let go of his friends' hands and wiped his own hands on his jeans. "My hands are getting sweaty," he complained. The others laughed.

Standing up, JC helped Joey to his feet, holding him around the waist to help him stand. "Group hug!" Chris called, pulling Lance and Justin to their feet. He reached around Lance and Joey and hugged them close. Each of the guys hugged the others, no one willing to be the first to let go. Then Chris started hugging harder, pulling them all closer together, and Justin felt squished between JC and Lance, both squeezing him so tightly, he couldn't breathe. Just when he thought he would pass out from asphyxiation, Joey stumbled back, losing his balance. They tumbled on top of Joey as they fell to the floor, arms and legs flying everywhere, giggling crazily.

Justin extracted himself from the others and sat back, grinning. "See?" JC asked, rolling off of Joey and looking up at Justin from his position on the floor. "It wasn't that bad, was it?"

Justin shook his head. As Lance climbed off of Chris and Joey, Justin asked, "Can we slip away now?"

Chris laughed. "Justin, you have the stamina of a horse, you know that?"

"Hung like one, too, I bet," Joey whispered loudly.

Justin blushed, about to say something mean, but Lance laughed and said, "I'm not saying a word." Turning to him, Justin saw the mirth that lit up Lance's eyes and he just grinned.

Cupping his crotch, Justin thrust into his hand and asked, "Don't you wish you knew?"

"Not really," Chris said, groaning. He looked at Joey and JC. "What about you guys?"

"Nope," Joey said, rolling his eyes.

"I don't think so," JC added, shaking his head. "Lance, he's all yours."

Lance pounced on Justin, knocking him back to the floor. "Did you hear him?" he asked, kissing Justin quickly. "Mine. All mine."

Justin shifted beneath Lance until their bodies pressed together comfortably. He wrapped his arms around Lance's waist and shoved his hands deep into Lance's back pockets, cupping his butt through his jeans. Lance leaned down, giggling nervously, but when they kissed again, his tongue slipped into Justin's mouth, and Justin moaned.

A pillow hit Lance in the back of the head. "Get a room," Joey said,

laughing.

"What a great idea," Justin replied, pulling Lance to his feet. They still had plenty of time to lie outside under the stars.

All I Ever Wanted
78. First Impressions
by NSyncGrrl

Outside a cool breeze blew in off the lake, and Justin held Lance's hand as he led him down to the end of the pier. He carried a large stadium blanket slung over one shoulder, and Lance had a thick downy comforter tucked under his arm. Lance waited while Justin spread his blanket out on the wooden pier, and then he handed the comforter to Justin to open, as well. Around them the night was alive with faint sounds -- the water lapping against the pier softly, the slight rustle of leaves in the breeze, the drone of cicadas hidden in tall grasses. Justin sat down on the blankets and tugged at the waistband of Lance's jeans. "Sit down," he said, his voice quiet in the darkness.

Lance let Justin pull him down to his knees, and he grinned. "That went over well," he said, meaning the talk they just had with the other guys. He leaned forward, his hands on either side of Justin to support his weight, and he nuzzled against Justin's neck, Justin's skin warm beneath Lance's lips.

Justin giggled and wrapped his arms around Lance's waist. Pulling him into his lap, Justin moaned as Lance's tongue danced behind his ear, tickling him. Lance shifted into a more comfortable position, his legs on either side of Justin's waist, straddling him, as he sat on Justin's crossed legs. Taking Justin's face in his hands, Lance looked down into his deep eyes, almost black in the darkness, and whispered, "I'm very proud of you, babe."

"Why's that?" Justin asked, his arms resting on Lance's legs, his hands clasped together behind Lance's waist.

Lance smiled and kissed his forehead. Then he kissed Justin's nose, and Justin closed his eyes, savoring the warm touch. "Because you controlled your anger," Lance said, his lips brushing Justin's lightly before pressing against them for a kiss. "You were upset at Joey and Chris and you didn't give into it."

"I couldn't," Justin said. "You guys were holding my hands, keeping me down."

Lance laughed softly. "Justin, honey," he said, trailing kisses down Justin's throat, "you really think JC and I could keep you back when you're in full fight mode?"

Justin leaned back and gasped as Lance's tongue licked the hollow of his throat. His hands slipped into the waistband of Lance's jeans, cold against Lance's hot skin. In his lap he could feel Lance's erection, pressing against his stomach, and he didn't want to talk anymore. "Lance," he moaned, but Lance hushed him with a kiss.

Lance breathed against Justin's neck and whispered, "The first time we met, I fell in love with you."

Justin felt a flame of desire lick through him at the words. "I didn't know that," he said, pulling Lance closer.

Lance looked at him and nodded. "Yep." He giggled. "Not the very first time," he corrected. "I was what, ten? Eleven? I don't remember."

Shrugging, Justin said, "Something like that." They knew each other vaguely through their voice coach, who gave both of them lessons, but Justin thought they had only met once or twice at recitals or parties before they started NSync.

"I mean when I came to audition for the group," Lance explained. He kissed Justin's neck, his lips tender on Justin's skin. "I saw you and thought my God, I want that boy."

Justin giggled. "I was only fourteen," he said.

"And I wasn't much older," Lance pointed out. "You were everything I always wanted to be -- handsome, cocky, smart, popular, athletic --"

"You are smart," Justin said. He rubbed Lance's back and moaned when Lance began to suck gently beneath his ear. "And you're handsome, and sexy, and mine." Justin bit Lance's neck playfully.

Lance wiggled in Justin's lap. "I'm being serious," he said, exasperated.

"Me, too," Justin replied. He kissed Lance quickly. "Tell me more."

"No," Lance replied, "you tell me." He looked at Justin, smiling. "What did you think when we first met?"

Justin blushed, an effect lost in the darkness. "Honestly?" he asked. Lance nodded. "I thought you were funny-looking."

"Justin!" Lance cried, a hurt look on his face.

Justin hugged him tighter. "Not in a bad way!" he said quickly. "But you had that funny hair, and you looked kinda ... feminine."

Lance closed one eye and squinted at Justin in a way that made him nervous. When he didn't say anything, Justin asked in a small voice, "You mad?"

Lance twisted his mouth into a grimace, as if debating on it, and then laughed. "No," he said, kissing Justin. Relief flooded through him. "I was a little girly, wasn't I?" Lance asked softly. Justin blushed again. Lance smiled. "When did you first start liking me?"

"I've always liked you," Justin said.

"I mean like that," Lance said, thrusting his hips against Justin for emphasis.

Justin grinned. "You mean when did I fall for you?" Lance nodded. Justin cocked his head to one side, thinking. "You remember last year, when we were on tour in Chicago?" Lance closed his eyes, thinking back, and nodded. "JC was asleep, I think, and Joey was out partying, and Chris

was with Dani, and you and I were in the hotel lounge with the stereo pumped at top volume, dancing, remember?" Lance nodded again. Justin recalled the evening vividly -- the music so loud it shook the window, the scent of Lance's cologne and sweat sharp in the room, the way every touch electrified him. He and Lance were still high from the concert, and they danced to a station that played back to back 80's hits. When George Michael's "I Want Your Sex" came on, Justin had taken Lance's hands and they jitterbugged around the lounge, laughing and singing along. Lance tripped and tumbled to the ground -- Justin landed on top of him, laughing. And then Lance looked up at him, and Justin saw something in those pale green eyes that made him shift onto Lance just slightly, so their bodies were pressed tight against each other. Justin stopped laughing and stared into those eyes and suddenly he knew. He knew. This was it. This was what all their songs were about, the love he sang about and had never known. It was there, in Lance's eyes, and in his heart, and suddenly he was terrified.

Then the hotel staff were banging on the lounge door, telling them to turn it down, and the moment was gone. And it took them almost a full year to finally admit what Justin knew that night. That they were meant to be together. "Do you remember?" he asked softly. "I knew I loved you that night."

Lance sighed happily, remembering. "I wanted to kiss you so badly," he admitted. "I cried myself to sleep that night. God, you were so close ..." His voice trailed off. "Why didn't you tell me? Justin, I would've given anything to know that you were interested in me back then."

Justin hugged him and smiled. "I thought you were just being nice to me," Justin said. "And now it kills me to know that all along you were interested in me."

"I guess it doesn't really matter," Lance said softly, cuddling against Justin. "We're together now. That's what counts." Justin nodded. In his arms, Lance shivered. "It's getting cold," he whispered.

"Let's go inside," Justin suggested. It was chilly. "Crawl into bed and keep each other warm."

"Forever," Lance said, kissing Justin hungrily. As they stood up, Lance asked, "Do you think Chris is right?"

"About what?" Justin asked. He picked up the blankets and took Lance's hand in his own. Together they walked back to the cabin.

"About us," Lance said. "Remember? He said we couldn't keep our pants on. Is that true?"

Justin grinned and leaned against him. "I know we keep them on longer than I'd like," he said playfully. Lance laughed. "I think he's just jealous," Justin said. "Or horny. Or both."

"Hmm." Lance sighed as they climbed the steps to the deck. On the top step, Lance stopped and pulled Justin to him. "I love you," he whispered, kissing him.

"I love you, too," Justin replied. He let his lips linger on Lance's, his

tongue licking them gently, enjoying the taste of him.

Suddenly someone banged on the sliding door, startling them. They jumped and saw Chris, pressed against the glass, his cheeks blown out comically. Laughing, Justin kicked at the door. It vibrated in its frame, and Chris jumped back, laughing. "They'll never leave us alone," Justin said.

Lance leaned against him. "Tonight we'll prop a chair against the door," he promised as they headed inside.

All I Ever Wanted
79. A Rainy Day
by NSyncGrrl

It was pouring outside. When he looked out the window, all Joey could see of the woods was draped in sheets of water. Rain pounded against the cabin with the ferocity of an oncoming train, and the din of the downpour drowned out everything else. Joey sat on his bed, his ankle propped up on all the extra pillows the guys could find in the cabin, and read the comic books they bought their first night there. He was so bored.

Chris knocked on the open door, coming into the bedroom when Joey looked up. "What'cha doing?" he asked, plopping down on the bed next to Joey.

Joey held up the comic. "Reading," he replied.

Chris rolled over on his back and folded his hands behind his head. His elbow barely touched Joey's hip. "Is it any good?" he asked, nodding at the comic.

"I know how it ends," Joey said, grinning. "I've only read it twenty times. Hell, I could probably recite it for you word for word, if you wanted."

Chris laughed. He looked up at Joey and didn't say anything. Joey tried to concentrate on the comic, but he could see Chris out of the corner of his eye, and Chris began licking his lips in a slow, seductive way that made Joey's groin ache, and finally Joey put the comic down and asked, "Is there something you want, or did you just come in here to bug me?"

"I want to get out of this place," Chris said, sighing.

"Where would you go?" Joey asked. Chris's t-shirt had a stripe down the center that zigzagged from his chin to his navel, and Joey ran a finger down the stripe, just touching the fabric lightly. When he reached the end, he picked at the shirt, tugging playfully until he exposed an inch of Chris's pale stomach. The button of Chris's jeans was undone, and Joey could just see a dark purple and black leopard print underneath.

Chris shrugged, and his shirt rose a little higher, exposing more skin. "I don't know," he admitted. "Anywhere. I'm so sick of being stuck in this place. It's been raining all day."

Joey looked out the window. They woke up this morning to the torrential downpour, and now it was late afternoon and the rain showed no signs of letting up. Justin and Lance kept to themselves, lingering in bed long after everyone else had eaten breakfast. JC sat on the couch, reading, and Joey decided to take it easy, let his ankle heal a bit. He tried to talk JC into swapping reading material with him, because JC had a novel he'd been nursing the whole trip while Joey just had the two comics he and Lance bought earlier, but JC wouldn't buy it. "Hey," Joey said suddenly, "why not take a run down to that market we stopped at before?"

"That gross market?" Chris asked, grinning.

Joey laughed. "Grosso's, silly. Buy me something to read."

"What do you want?" Chris asked, sitting up.

Joey shrugged. "Anything," he replied. "Really. Cereal boxes if they don't have any new comics. Greeting cards, maps, something. I'm bored."

"You wanna come?" Chris asked, scooting off the bed.

Joey wanted to, but he knew he had to stay off his ankle or it would never heal, and with the new tour dates coming up -- "Nah," he said, waving his hand dismissively. "Ask the others. Bring me back something good."

Chris smiled. "Okay," he said. He trailed a finger down Joey's leg, tapping the air cast around his ankle before leaving the room. "I'm going out," he announced. "Anyone coming?"

In the end Justin and Lance decided to come along for the ride. They left the cabin in a cacophony of noise, Justin complaining about the rain making his hair unmanageable and frizzy and so damn curly, Lance telling him to look in the closet for the umbrella, Justin, just will he please stop messing with his hair and look in the closet please, and Chris telling them both to hurry it up or he'd leave their sorry asses behind. Finally the door closed behind them, and Joey heard the engine of the Ford Explorer belch to life. Tires spun in wet gravel, and then they were gone.

Joey picked up his comic and began reading again. This time he read the ads, looking at every single minuscule word, and he was almost ready to fill out the order form for a batch of sea monkeys when JC tapped lightly on his door. When he looked up, JC smiled, slightly embarrassed. "Didn't mean to bother you," he said softly.

"No bother," Joey said. "What are you up to?"

JC shrugged. "Not much."

"You didn't want to go with the others?" Joey asked, frowning. If it wasn't for his ankle, he would've jumped at the chance to get away from this place for a little bit. But you shouldn't be jumping right now, his mind whispered, and he suppressed a smile.

JC shook his head. Looking around the bedroom, he asked, "You hungry or something?"

Joey laughed. "I'm always hungry," he said. "What do we have?"

"I don't know," JC admitted. "Let me go see." He left the doorway, and Joey heard JC rummaging around in the cabinets, looking for something to eat. When he came back he had a bowl full of grapes. "This is all I could find," he said, climbing up onto the bed. He crossed his legs and sat down, the bowl in his lap. "You like grapes?"

"I like anything as long as it's food," Joey replied, reaching into the bowl. He grabbed a handful of grapes and tossed them into his mouth. "I like food better than I like sex," he added, grinning.

JC laughed. "Joey!" he cried. "You can't mean that."

"Why not?" Joey asked, shrugging. "I eat more than I fuck." He glanced at JC. "Despite what the media thinks."

JC blushed and laughed nervously. "Everyone eats more," he said, popping a grape into his mouth. "You'd die if you didn't."

Joey looked at him for a moment and then laughed. "JC, you're priceless," he said. "I never know what you're going to say."

JC grinned. Nodding at Joey's leg, he asked, "How's the foot?"

Joey took another handful of grapes, this time tossing them one at a time into his mouth, savoring the cold watery taste of the fruit. "Okay," he said. "It still hurts if I move it too much but I think it'll be better in time for the tour."

"That's good," JC said. He stretched out beside Joey on the bed, moving the bowl between them. He looked at Joey closely, and suddenly Joey wondered what was going on behind those blue eyes. Before he could say anything, though, JC asked quietly, "Do you really want to know?"

"What?" Joey asked, laughing.

"You were going to ask me what's on my mind," JC said. "I know you were. Do you really want to know?"

Joey shrugged. "Sure," he said. JC's steady gaze unnerved him, and he turned back to the comic in his lap.

"I'm wondering what you're thinking," JC replied. He poked at Joey's arm. When Joey looked at him, he looked down into the bowl and picked out a few grapes to eat.

Joey frowned. What was he thinking? "It's a crappy day," he said. "I'm bored. I wish I could've gone to the store but I really need to stay off this ankle. And right now I'm thinking I could use some sea monkeys, and these x-ray glasses, and maybe these fireworks, too." He held the comic up for JC to see and pointed to the ad he was reading from. "But I really want those sea monkeys."

JC looked at him, surprised, and then he laughed. "What?" Joey asked, grinning.

JC shook his head. "Nothing," he said.

"No, what?" Joey asked again. "Tell me."

"Nothing," JC said, shaking his head. He rolled onto his back and stared at the ceiling. Then he laughed.

"JC," Joey said, frowning. "Tell me."

"No," JC said. "It's nothing, I swear."

"Well, if it's nothing, then you can tell me," Joey reasoned.

JC laughed again. "Actually, it really is nothing, but now you've built it up so much you don't believe me."

"You're right," Joey said, grinning, "I don't."

The phone rang. JC jumped off the bed and left the room. The phone stopped in mid-ring, and Joey could hear JC in the foyer, talking quietly. "Hello? ... No, he's not here, Dani. He went out to the store ... Fine, fine, and you? ... You want me to tell him to call you? ... Oh? Well, you want me to tell him you called? ... Okay, then. I'll tell him. Take care." He hung up the phone and came back into the room.

When he laid back down on the bed, Joey asked, "Dani?"

JC nodded. "Her aunt's having the baby now, so she's leaving and just wanted to let Chris know she would be out of touch for a few days."

"What do you think of her?" Joey asked suddenly.

JC shrugged. "She's nice enough," he said, eating another grape. "Not my type, but ..." He shrugged again. "She's okay."

Joey turned back to his comic. JC lay on his stomach and picked at the grapes left in the bowl. After a few minutes, he tossed one at Joey. It landed on the page he was reading and slid down to his lap, leaving a wet trail on the paper. Joey looked up to find JC grinning. "Talk to me," JC said.

"About what?" Joey asked. He picked up the grape and threw it back at JC, who ducked. It landed beside him on the bed.

JC shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "Read to me."

"This isn't exactly Stephen King," Joey replied. "I don't even know what's going on, really. I don't read this comic. But it's the only one they had."

"Well, tell me about it," JC said. He rested his head on his arms and studied Joey closely.

Joey frowned. "It's about this guy, and then there's this other guy, and this woman is trying to get the first guy to go with her to this party, where the other guy has planted a bomb, and then --" He sighed. "You're not following this, are you?"

JC grinned. "Not a word," he admitted. "But I like to hear your voice."

Now it was Joey's turn to blush. "What do you mean by that?" he asked.

JC shrugged. "I don't know," he said, meeting Joey's gaze. Joey took in JC's tousled hair, his large blue eyes, the sharp planes of his face, and he thought back to what JC had said to him when they were alone in the woods. "I don't want you like that." Oh yeah? Joey thought. Then why do your eyes say otherwise? Joey knew that look, or thought he did. That flirty look that crept into his own eyes whenever he spoke to Lance. The look in the eyes of all the girls he was ever with. That look, the one that

was in Chris's eyes the other day that made Joey lie awake last night and wonder just what was going on between them. And now it was here, in JC's eyes, and Joey didn't know if it was just the moment or the gray light creeping in through the window or the sound of the rain outside, or if it was something more.

Joey sighed and turned back to his comic. JC ate the rest of the grapes, and then rolled over onto his back and stared at the ceiling, lost in thought. An hour later, they were still like that, Joey rereading the comic and JC dozing lightly, when the others came back. Joey heard Chris's laughter before he came into the room, a brown bag in his hand. JC looked up as they entered.

Chris took one look at JC and asked, "What are you doing in my bed, boy?"

JC grinned. "Eating grapes," he said, though the bowl beside him was empty.

Chris picked up the grape Joey had thrown earlier from where it rested on the bed and pitched it at JC. It hit him on the forehead, right between the eyes. "There better not be any of these in the covers tonight," Chris warned, "or you'll be sorry. You thought I was being mean back at the hotel?"

JC laughed. Joey reached for the bag. "What'd you buy me?" he asked.

Chris pulled the bag back. "Nothing," he said, sitting down on the bed. Justin pushed by him and flopped down beside JC. Lance lay down on his side beside Justin, his arm around Justin's shoulders. "I bought you something," Justin said.

Joey eyed Justin warily. "What?" he asked.

Justin handed Joey a bag. Opening it, Joey pulled out a video tape with Superman Adventures written across it. "It's the cartoon," Justin said, as if Joey couldn't tell from the cover.

"Justin," JC groaned, "there's no TV here. How's he supposed to watch that?"

Justin shrugged, glaring at JC. "I thought he'd want it," he pouted. Lance laughed and ran a comforting hand through Justin's curly hair.

Joey was surprised Justin even thought of him at all. "Thanks, man," he said, smiling. "I'll watch it on the first VCR I see."

Justin nodded. "You're welcome," he said, and then he stuck his tongue out at JC. "See? He likes it."

JC rolled his eyes. Chris opened his bag and dumped a pile of magazines onto the bed. "I bought everything they had," he explained, as Joey picked up the latest issue of Good Housekeeping.

"Playboy?" JC asked, pulling the magazine out of the stack.

Chris shrugged. "I told you, I got everything. Time, Newsweek,

Seventeen, Tiger Beat, The National Enquirer, everything. Now you have plenty to read."

"Too bad we only have another two days here," JC pointed out.

Joey smiled. "Thanks, Chris," he said softly.

Chris nodded. "No problem," he replied. Then he pulled out a long piece of white paper and said, "You owe me, though. Fifty-six seventy-two." He handed the receipt to Joey.

"What?" Joey cried, dumbfounded. "I thought this was a sick present."

Chris just grinned. "Five six seven two," he said, holding out his hand. "Pay up, buckaroo."

"Right now?" Joey asked, incredulous.

Chris shrugged. "Or later," he said, raising his eyebrows suggestively. "I'll get it from you somehow."

Justin laughed, and Joey felt himself grinning foolishly. Now why does that sound so promising? he wondered, shuffling through the magazines on the bed.

All I Ever Wanted
80. Strong Enough
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was coming into the cabin when the phone rang. He picked it up, and behind him Lance stopped, waiting for Justin to move out of his way. "Hello?" Justin asked. Lance pushed him lightly, and Justin moved aside so Lance could step by him.

As Lance passed, Justin caught his arm and said, "Hold on." Lance turned, not sure if Justin meant him or the person on the other end of the phone, but Justin held the phone out to him and mouthed, "It's your mom."

Shit, Lance thought. He had talked to her the first night they got to the cabin and vaguely remembered promising to call her again, but it had slipped his mind. There was the hiking trip, and Justin -- and Justin, and Justin, his mind whispered -- and he just forgot. Taking the phone from Justin, he sat down in a chair by the phone table and said, a little guiltily, "Hi, Mom."

"Lance?" He could almost see her frown and the way her eyes flashed when she was angry at him. "I thought you said you would call."

He closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. "I did, Mom," he replied, "but I forgot. I'm sorry." He heard Justin close the front door softly, and he could hear the disappointment in his mother's silence over the open connection. "I'm sorry," he said again, lamely.

"Well," she said, and he wanted to kick himself. He hated when she got like this. He should've called her earlier, he knew that, she worried sick about him most of the time, but today Joey finally agreed to go outside and hang out with them for a bit, and they were going to go boating, so JC was getting a boat from the rangers' station and Chris and Joey went along for the ride, and Justin and he thought they would get a quick bite to eat before the others came back, and now this. "Mom --" he started, but she interrupted him.

"Are you boys having a fun time?" she asked in clipped tones.

"Yes," he replied, leaning back in the chair and looking up at Justin. Justin frowned at him, a questioning look in his eyes, but Lance just shook his head and looked away. "We're having a great time, Mom."

For a moment she didn't say anything, and he was going to ask her how she was doing when she asked, "When are you coming home?"

"Soon," he promised. He really didn't know when -- they had plans to fly down to Florida after this, see if the studio was ready for them, maybe spend a few days with Justin's mom and brother, who was back from summer camp and whom Justin really wanted to talk to about their relationship before he could hear it from anyone else.

"When?" she persisted. "When are you leaving there?"

"A few days," Lance said, sighing, and Justin sat down on Lance's lap, draping his legs over the arm of the chair. Lance held Justin's knees with one hand, the phone in the other hand against his ear. Justin ran a hand around the back of Lance's neck and leaned his head on Lance's shoulder. The weight of his body against Lance's was comforting.

"There's this girl I want you to meet --" she began, and now it was Lance's turn to interrupt.

"Mom," he began, anger rising in him at her words, "I don't want to meet any girls. I'm already seeing someone."

"If you're talking about Justin --"

Lance closed his eyes. He could hear the antagonism in her voice, and he didn't feel like arguing right now. "Yes, I'm talking about Justin," he replied. "We're dating, Mom. Do you know what that means? That means I'm not seeing anyone else. No girls you want to set me up with. No neighbor's daughter. No friend's cousin. I'm with Justin, remember?" Justin hugged Lance, watching his face carefully. Lance picked at the seam in Justin's jeans and didn't look at him.

"Lance," she said, her voice tight, "he's a boy."

"No shit," Lance muttered, and instantly regretted it.

"James Lance Bass," his mother cried, her voice going up several octaves. "Do not use those kind of words with me."

He sighed. "I'm sorry --"

"You know how I feel about this ... this ..." She seemed at a loss for words. "This phase you're going through. Do you know what the Bible says about same sex relationships? Should I read it to you?"

"No," he whispered. "This isn't a phase, Mother. You said it was my life and I can do with it what I choose. Remember? I'm not going out with anyone else, so you can just call this girl back up and tell her you're sorry for interfering in your son's life, but he's happily in love right now." He took a deep breath. "With a boy. Tell her that."

For a long moment, his mother didn't reply. Then she said brusquely, "We'll talk about this when you get home."

"I don't know when that will be," Lance said. Justin's hand was cool on his neck, and suddenly he wanted to cry.

"You just said a few days --" his mother pointed out.

"I said we're leaving here in a few days," Lance corrected. "We're going to Orlando. I don't know when we'll be up to see you and Dad."

"We?" she asked. "Are the others coming with you?"

"Only Justin," Lance replied. Before she could say anything else, he said, "I've got to go, Mom. I'll call you before we visit. I promise."

He didn't think she'd say anything else, but then she said, "Fine. I

hope you're having a good time. Good-bye."

As he hung up the phone, he thought, I was having a good time up until now. Justin kissed his cheek. "You okay?" he asked quietly.

Lance sighed. "Get up," he said. When Justin didn't move, Lance pushed him gently. "Justin, please --"

Justin stood up. "Are you okay?" he asked again, concern lacing his words. "Lance, what did she say?"

"Nothing," Lance said bitterly. Rising from the chair, he headed for their room, Justin right behind him.

"Lance, stop." Justin followed him into their room. Lance sat on the edge of their bed and picked at his nails. Justin knelt down in front of him and looked up into his face. "Lance, look at me."

Lance sighed. "Justin," he said, surprised when his voice cracked. He bit his lip and wiped at his eyes roughly. "She knows just which buttons to push, you know?"

Justin smiled. "She's your mother, that's why," he said softly. He took Lance's hands in his and rubbed them gently. "What did she say?"

Looking up at the ceiling, Lance blinked the tears from his eyes and said, "She thinks this is just a phase I'm going through. She wants me to go out with this girl she thinks I'll like. She said ..." He sighed again, and Justin squeezed his hands, a comforting gesture. "She said the Bible --" Lance ducked his head, raising his hands to his forehead, trying to block out the thoughts swirling through his mind.

Justin rubbed Lance's thighs, hugging his knees. "It's okay," he whispered. When Lance started to sob softly, Justin wrapped his arms around him and held him close. "Lance, honey, it's okay, really."

"She hates me," Lance whispered.

"She doesn't hate you," Justin murmured.

Lance rested his head against Justin's shoulder and sighed. Everything he had ever been taught told him that the way he felt for Justin wasn't right, but ... "How can this be wrong?" he asked, his voice barely audible, as if he were thinking out loud. "Justin, why can't she see that I love you?"

Justin didn't have an answer for that. He hugged Lance tightly, holding on until the tears passed. When they subsided, Lance pulled back and smiled grimly at him. "Oh God," he whispered, sighing. He didn't want to go home, not now. He didn't have the energy to argue with his mother. He never did.

Justin took Lance's hands in his and stared into his eyes. "Lance, listen to me," he said, and Lance looked into those deep blue eyes and wanted to drown in them forever. "I love you, you know that. It's not right or wrong, it just is. And no one can tell us different. Not your mother, not mine, not the guys, not any of the crew, not anyone. The way I feel when I'm with you ..." He sighed. The earnest look on his face made Lance's

heart swell, and his throat choked with emotion. "Lance, as long as we're together, we'll be strong."

"I don't feel so strong right now," Lance admitted. "I can't stand up to my mom, Justin. I just can't do that."

Justin frowned. "Then I'll be your strength. I'll hold you up. And you do the same for me, okay?" He took Lance's chin in his hand and smiled. "Okay?"

Lance smiled sadly. "Okay," he whispered. He heard the cabin door open, footsteps echoing loudly as the others came inside, and he wiped his eyes.

"Do you still want to go boating?" Justin asked. "I can tell them you're not feeling well --"

"I'm fine," Lance replied. He took a few deep breaths to compose himself. Then he looked at Justin and, raising Justin's hands to his lips, kissed them. "Justin, thanks."

"Anytime," Justin replied. He smiled brightly, lighting up the room, and suddenly Lance didn't feel so bad. The conversation with his mother wasn't as sharp in his mind anymore, and the crushed feeling in his chest disappeared. When Justin smiled at him like that, Lance knew there was nothing in the world that could come between them. As long as Justin was with him, he could face his mother. He could make her see this boy was what he wanted. This beautiful, sexy, wonderful boy, he thought as Justin kissed him tenderly.

All I Ever Wanted
81. Just Playing Around
by NSyncGrrl

Chris stuck out his tongue and studied it in the mirror above the bathroom sink. The taste of minty toothpaste made his mouth tingle, and in the bright light his tongue looked a sickly green from the jawbreakers he ate earlier. "Aaahh," he said softly. He didn't feel like going to sleep right now.

From the dark bedroom Joey asked, "You coming to bed anytime soon?"

Chris sighed and clicked off the bathroom light. In the darkness he navigated easily to his side of the bed, where he crawled on top of the covers and laid down, his hands folded beneath his body. He looked at Joey, just a shadow in the bed beside him, and he wondered how he could ask if he could stay with them in Orlando without sounding like he really wanted to. This would be the last night he and Joey shared a bed, and though they hadn't done anything at night -- no kisses, no hugs, no blowjob, his mind whispered, and he grinned at the thought -- Chris would miss it. The feeling of Joey beside him in the night, the way it made him feel safe in a way he hadn't felt since he was just a little boy. Waking up beside Joey and watching him sleep, which Chris loved to do but Dani always woke up before him and he never got a chance to watch her. The late night talks and giggles and just knowing that he could say something and Joey would laugh at it. Joey always laughed at anything Chris said. Chris loved that.

"Goodnight," Joey whispered. His back was to Chris, and Chris wondered if Joey was really all that sleepy or if he was just going to bed because everyone else was. They had to get up early in the morning, drive an hour and a half to the airport, and JC wanted them well rested. But right now? Chris couldn't sleep.

"Joey," he whispered. When Joey didn't answer, he said, a little louder, "Hey, Joe."

"What?" Joey asked. His voice was soft but clear -- no traces of sleep there.

Chris moved closer, leaning above Joey. Beneath him he could feel Joey's warmth, just out of reach, a soothing, comforting presence that made him want to crawl up against Joey's back and just lie there forever. Instead, he forced a grin on his face and said, "I've got this idea --"

Joey turned his head, and suddenly he was right there, his nose just inches from Chris's, and Chris could see his eyes shining wetly in the dark. "What kind of idea?" Joey asked. His breath was hot against Chris's face, and Chris didn't know whether to move back or scoot closer, so he just stayed still and tried not to think about how close Joey was, or how dark the room was, or how soft the bed was, or how his groin began to ache sweetly. "Chris?" Joey asked, frowning slightly. "What kind of idea?"

"Shaving cream," Chris said, trying to remember what he had been thinking of before Joey turned the intensity of his gaze onto him. "JC's probably asleep by now. Shaving cream, lots of it, and --"

Joey snickered. "We told him we'd cut it out, remember?"

Chris shrugged. "We said we'd be more serious," he corrected. "I'm serious about the shaving cream."

But Joey shook his head and turned away. "Get some sleep, Chris. We gotta get out of here at the crack of dawn."

Chris set his head on Joey's pillow and blew gently on the back of Joey's neck. "Joe-ey," he called in a low, singsong voice, and Joey scrunched up his shoulders, trying to block his neck from Chris. "Joe-ey."

"Chris, stop it." Joey bunched his shoulders up tightly, crossing his arms in front of his chest. "Get to sleep."

"I can't sleep," Chris replied. He reached out and ran one hand over Joey's shoulder. Joey was so unbelievably warm and solid and real, and Chris was pleased when Joey relaxed beneath his touch. "Come on," he cajoled. "It'll be fun."

"It'll get you in trouble," Joey said. "JC will kick your ass."

Chris giggled at the idea. "I'd win," he bragged.

Joey laughed softly. "Just because you can beat up Lance doesn't mean you're a champ," he said. "Take on Justin. Win that, and I'll be your biggest fan."

"Justin would kill me," Chris said, frowning.

"My point exactly," Joey said. "I could probably kick your ass, too. So who's to say JC can't?"

Chris let his hand trail down Joey's arm, stopping at the bottom of his sleeve, just before touching his skin. Then he traced his way back up around Joey's shoulder and along his neck, his fingers staying on the fabric of Joey's shirt. "Do you want to kick my ass?" he asked.

"No, I'm just saying," Joey replied. "I could if I had to."

Chris breathed against Joey's neck, and he heard Joey whimper at the heat of his breath. "Would you?" he whispered.

"Chris," Joey said, his voice cracking. He cleared his throat and said, "Get to sleep."

"Come on," Chris said, pulling on Joey's upper arm. "Shaving cream and JC asleep in an unlocked room. The opportunity is too good to pass up. Please?" He sat up.

Joey rolled over onto his back, his hip leaning on Chris's leg. Looking up at Chris, he said, "No."

"You scared?" Chris asked, laughing. "Come on, it'll be fun."

Joey shook his head. "We've been good this whole trip," he pointed out. "We pull something like this now, and JC will be livid. Hell, I share a house with the guy. I don't want to be looking over my shoulder constantly for payback, you know?" Before Chris could reply, Joey added, "Besides, if you do it, I'll warn him."

"You wouldn't," Chris said, smiling.

But Joey nodded. "Would too. I'll kick him awake and tell him to watch out, and then he'd know you were coming."

Chris frowned. He liked the playful tone of Joey's voice, and the pressure of Joey's hip against his leg, and he didn't think he was in any danger of rushing off to JC's room just right this second. But just to mischievous, Chris said, "I'll sit on you and keep you here. Then you can't warn him."

Joey laughed. "And you can't do anything, either, silly, sitting on me."

Chris thought for a moment and then said, "I'll tie you up." He saw Joey's eyebrows rise at the thought.

"Might be nice," Joey replied. "Being tied up, held at your mercy ..."

The image didn't help Chris any. His dick throbbed in his boxers from this bantering. God, it was so easy to flirt with Joey. Chris didn't know if Joey was flirting back or if this just came naturally to him, this soft voice and large eyes and the barely there touches that made adrenaline course through Chris, leaving him shaky and horny in its wake. This was what he wanted to feel when he was with someone. This was what was missing when he was with Dani.

Chris unhooked one of his necklaces, a long chain of silver balls, and he held it up for Joey to see. He snapped it taut between his hands and said, "I can tie you up now, if you want." He saw the anxious look in Joey's eyes, and then Joey licked his lips absently. Chris grinned. "Then I'll go pick on JC."

"I won't make it easy for you," Joey said. "I'm bigger than you are. I'll just knock you down and tie you up."

The idea had merits. But Chris lunged for Joey, and Joey moved out of his way so fast, and then Joey was on Chris's back, his arms wrapped tightly around Chris, his hands trying to pluck the chain from between Chris's fingers. Chris laughed and tried to pull away, but Joey was so large and strong, and it felt so good to be held in his arms, and Chris didn't really want to struggle but he had to, he couldn't let Joey think this was turning him on. And then they tumbled off the bed, Chris hitting the floor hard with his knee, Joey's shoulder landing with a loud crack on the wood, but Joey was laughing, and Chris was laughing, and suddenly Chris didn't care about waking JC up anymore.

Outside they heard angry footsteps, and when the door to their room flew open, they froze. JC stood there, soft light from the living room falling around him, masking his face in shadow. For a long moment he stood there, looking at them. Chris shifted beneath Joey uncomfortably, and Joey let him go, still leaning over him. When JC spoke, his voice was

tight with anger. "Do you mind?" he asked. "Some of us are trying to sleep."

"Sorry," Chris mumbled.

Joey frowned. "Yeah, sorry," he muttered.

JC closed the door. The floor creaked beneath his footsteps as he returned to his own room, and they heard his door close a little too forcefully. Chris sighed, dropping the necklace to the floor. Now he was tired.

But Joey began to giggle. "Well," he said, and Chris looked up to find him looking down at him, his smile devilish and so damn cute, "you woke him up anyway."

Chris laughed. He twisted beneath Joey and laid down on the floor. "Shaving cream would've been more fun," he said.

Joey dropped his head and laughed. The tips of his hair tickled Chris's chin, and Chris smiled. He reached up and ran his hands down Joey's chest, savoring the feel of flesh hidden beneath the thin t-shirt Joey wore. When Joey looked at him again, Chris pinched Joey's nipples playfully. "I guess we better get some sleep," he said.

"I'm wide awake now," Joey replied. He shifted until he leaned on his elbows above Chris, Chris's own arms caught between them. Joey studied Chris, his gaze roaming Chris's face until Chris was ready to say something, anything, to alleviate the tension between them. And then Joey asked softly, "What are you doing once we get to Florida?"

Chris shrugged. With Joey above him, Chris wasn't thinking of Florida right now. He wasn't thinking of much of anything, except the feel of Joey's body along his, and the slight bulge against his thigh, and the sweet pressure of Joey's hip against his own erection. He looked into Joey's deep eyes and said, "I'm not sure."

"Well," Joey reasoned, "Dani's still at her aunt's, isn't she?" Chris nodded. "And the studio might be ready for us, you know?" Chris nodded again. "So you really should stick around town for a while, just in case we can start recording right away."

"You asking me to stay with you guys?" Chris asked. Joey, JC, and Justin had a house in Orlando. Chris had crashed there before -- he even had his own room, as did Lance, though he didn't think Lance used his anymore.

Joey shrugged. "If you want."

That wasn't exactly the answer Chris hoped for. He wanted Joey to want him to stay, but he didn't know how to say that without sounding needy and opening himself up to getting hurt, so he just shrugged and said, "We'll see."

Joey stared at him for a moment more, and then he leaned down and kissed Chris quickly, the brief touch of soft lips on his leaving him hungry for more. But Joey stood up, helping Chris to his feet, and then crawled back into bed. Pulling the covers up over his shoulders, he whispered,

"Goodnight, Chris."

Chris stood by the bed, looking at Joey's broad back, and sighed. "Goodnight," he whispered, before climbing into his side of the bed.

Damn, he thought. Damn damn damn. He wasn't quite sure what he was so upset about, but he sighed and closed his eyes, and tried to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
82. Early Morning Blues
by NSyncGrrl

Joey was already in the kitchen when Lance came out of his room. It was early -- the world outside the windows of the cabin was draped in a purple twilight mist, and it was cool and damp inside. Joey leaned against the counter, a steaming mug of hot chocolate warming his hands. He watched Lance approach over the top of the mug, and when Lance glanced up at him he smiled and said sweetly, "Hey there."

"Hey," Lance replied, a little wary. He heard the water running in JC's room, but other than that, the house around them was quiet. Lance opened the kitchen cabinets, looking for a bowl, and asked, "How's your ankle?"

"Better," Joey replied. Lance could feel Joey's steady gaze on his back, and he tried to ignore it. "Did you have a fun week?" Joey asked.

Lance nodded, not turning around. He opened another cabinet, but it seemed as if JC had already packed away all of their dishes. The cupboards were bare. "Yeah," he said, thinking about it. "It was really great to be able to just forget about the rest of the world for a while, you know? Justin and I --" He turned and smiled quickly. "But I'm sure you don't want to hear about that. How about you? Did you have fun?"

Joey shrugged. "Would've been better if I hadn't twisted my ankle," he said, grinning. He frowned slightly. "What are you looking for?"

"A bowl," Lance said, closing the cabinets. "I had one out for this morning ..." He glanced around the counter, as if the bowl would instantly appear now that he was looking for it.

"JC took a bunch of stuff out to the car," Joey said. "Maybe it's out there?"

Lance sighed. "I told him not to pack it." He considered knocking on JC's door, interrupting his shower just to ask him what he did with the bowl. Then he noticed it on the counter behind Joey. "There it is," he said, reaching for it.

Joey looked down at him but didn't move out of his way. Lance didn't look up as he snagged the bowl with two fingers and pulled it towards him. There was a spoon in the bowl, just as he left it last night. Joey blew softly in his cup, the warm smell of cocoa enveloping Lance, and he watched Lance carefully. Lance walked around to the other side of Joey, where a paper bag containing boxes of pasta and other dry goods sat on the floor. Reaching into the bag, Lance pulled out a half-empty box of cereal and returned to his previous position at the counter. He pulled the bowl a little ways away from Joey and opened the cereal. As he poured in a healthy helping of Frosted Flakes, he picked a few pieces out of the bowl and stuck them in his mouth, chewing thoughtfully. He really didn't want to look up at Joey right now. He could feel Joey looking at him, and he

didn't want to see the look in those dark eyes. That look of pure desire that made his knees weak, despite the fact that he loved Justin.

So he turned away and opened the refrigerator. There was just enough milk left in the carton to fill the bowl, and then Lance took a spoonful of cereal and popped it in his mouth, closing his eyes to savor the cold milk and crunchy flakes. He glanced up at Joey and, around a mouthful of cereal, said, "Don't touch this."

Joey smiled. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm holding out for the first fast food joint we find. I could really use a fresh, hot biscuit right now." He let his gaze run down Lance's body and he licked cocoa off his lips unconsciously.

Lance felt a dull heat flush his cheeks. "Justin?" he called, raising his voice. When he didn't get an answer, he walked over to the door to their room and knocked gently. "Justin?" he called again, a little quieter. "Time to get up, honey."

Inside the room he heard Justin groan, and he grinned. Then the door opened and Justin came out wearing a pair of Lance's boxer shorts and nothing else. He scratched at his wild hair and blinked slowly at Lance. "What time is it?" he asked sleepily.

Lance kissed Justin's cheek quickly. "I don't know," he admitted, "but we gotta get ready to go."

"Hmm," Justin replied, shuffling into the kitchen. Lance followed him. When Justin sat down at the kitchen table, Lance set the bowl of cereal in front of him, and Justin stared off into space as he ate, mechanically raising the spoon to his mouth and chewing the cereal slowly. Lance leaned against the counter and smiled at him. Justin was so adorable when he first woke up, even if he was a bear until he ate his cereal.

The door to JC's room opened, and JC came out, already fully dressed, his hair still damp from his shower. "Look at this mess," he said grimly, sweeping his hand at the counter, where the cereal box and milk carton stood. He glared at Justin. "Did you have to eat something now? We've got to get this place clean before we leave."

"The place is clean," Lance replied. "Leave him alone -- he just woke up."

JC scowled and pushed between Joey and Lance. He shook the milk carton and frowned. "This needs to be thrown away."

"I'll get it, JC," Lance said, taking the carton from him. "Don't worry about it."

Glancing into the sink, where a spoon and pot rested, JC asked, "What's this?" He turned towards them, pointing. "Who did this?"

"I did," Joey said. "I'll wash them up."

JC sighed. "You guys have no concept of what I'm trying to do here, do you?" he asked sourly. "I wanted to leave in a few minutes and it seems like no one else wants to go. You two aren't ready, Justin is just now waking up, and where the hell is Chris, anyway?"

Joey shrugged. "Still sleeping, I guess," he said.

"That's just great," JC replied. "No one seems to care that we have to be at the airport by nine." He turned on the faucet and began to soap up the sponge to wash the dishes.

Joey stepped up behind him and took the sponge out of his hand. "I said I'll get this," he said softly. JC moved aside and watched as Joey washed the spoon and pot. As he rinsed them off, he looked at JC and asked, "What's your problem this morning?"

"Got up on the wrong side of the bed," Justin offered. His gaze shifted from the spot on the cabinets he had found so fascinating until it rested on Lance, and then he smiled before shoving another spoonful of cereal into his mouth.

Lance smiled back. "You need to sleep with someone, JC," Lance said, laughing. "Then you'll get up on the right side every day."

Joey laughed. "Is that your secret?" he asked, turning his smile onto Lance. He winked playfully, and Lance couldn't help but grin.

"You guys stop it," JC said. He kicked at one of the chairs as he passed by Justin, straightening it out beneath the table. "And go wake Chris up. We're leaving in a half hour. You aren't ready, you're stuck here."

"We're only teasing," Lance said, frowning. "Jesus but you're evil today."

JC glared at Lance. "I'm the only one ready to go!" he cried. "It's not my fault you and Justin were up half the night, or you --" he pointed at Joey -- "you and Chris were fooling around. I told you I wanted to leave early, and now you're all bitching because I'm the only one who got any sleep last night."

"Calm down," Joey said. He reached for JC, but JC shrugged away and picked up a few of the bags stacked alongside the cabinets.

"Leave me alone," JC snarled, heading for the front door. Over his shoulder, he said, "You guys get ready to go." As he passed Chris's room, he kicked out at the door. It rattled against the frame. "Get up!" he cried, and then went outside.

"This is going to be a fun day," Justin muttered, finishing his cereal. He picked up the bowl and drank the milk. Standing up, he set the bowl and spoon into the sink and hugged Lance. "Thank you," he whispered, resting his head on Lance's shoulder.

Lance ran a hand along Justin's bare arm and frowned. "What's with him today?" he asked as Chris dragged himself out of his room, his head in his hands. He crossed the living room and collapsed onto the couch. Curling up, he went back to sleep.

Joey shrugged. Turning back to the sink, he said, "Remember this, Justin. I'm washing your dishes. You owe me."

Justin kissed Lance, his lips tasting like sugary milk. "I bought you that tape," Justin pointed out. "Now we're even."

"That doesn't count," Joey said, laughing. He glanced at Chris, lying on the couch, and said, "We better get a move on. JC's pissed enough as it is." He tossed the soapy sponge into the living room, where it smacked against Chris's forehead with a wet sound. Chris frowned, rubbed away the dampness, rolled over, and kept sleeping.

Lance sighed as he led Justin back to their room. After a week of lounging around in bed until all hours of the morning, getting up this early was proving to be too much for them. Can't wait for the tour to begin again. Justin was right -- today was going to be fun. As fun as a root canal, Lance thought bitterly as he picked up their clothes from the floor, packing them away. He wondered what had gotten into JC, and already couldn't wait for the day to be over.

All I Ever Wanted
83. Not Like That
by NSyncGrrl

Lance dropped his bags on the floor of Justin's room and collapsed on the bed. After the day they'd had, he was ready to just crawl under the covers and wait for tomorrow to try all over again. They hadn't left the cabin until late, which pissed the hell out of JC, so by the time they reached the airport, he was barely talking to anyone. Then Joey and Chris started in on him, picking and playing and teasing, and by the time they boarded the plane, Lance thought JC would explode from anger. On the plane, Justin sat with JC to keep them from bothering him too much, and even though Lance understood, he still hated that. He wanted to sit next to Justin, to hold his hand, to talk to him during the flight.

Instead he sat between Chris and Joey, and it seemed as if they had a contest going to see who could make Lance embarrassed the most. Chris was winning, with a loud, obnoxious, and very graphic detail of the last blowjob he had, and then Joey started talking in that soft voice of his that sent shivers down Lance's spine, describing the way it felt to kiss him, and to hold him, and to touch him, and there were no other seats on the plane but Lance had to get away. Just when he was about to head for the bathroom and hang out there until the end of the flight, the plane hit a bad patch of turbulence, and Lance closed his eyes, praying fervently. He gripped the armrests and wished Justin was there instead of so many rows away. It got so bad at one point that the oxygen masks fell from the ceiling, and that didn't help Lance any. Damn, but he hated to fly.

And then they had problems getting a rental car. And then Joey and JC argued all the way home. And then there was a message from Lance's mom on the answering machine, and he could tell by her voice that she was still mad at him. And then this, and then that, and finally Lance dragged his bags up to Justin's room and wanted nothing more than to just call it a day. A very bad day, he thought grimly.

Justin came into the room behind him and closed the door, but it eased open a crack as Justin set his own bags on the floor beside Lance's. He took one of Lance's feet in his hands and untied his shoe, pulling it off. Tossing it aside, he pulled off the other shoe as well. Then he kicked off his own sneakers and crawled into bed beside Lance. Lying on his side, he looked down at Lance and smiled sweetly. "You look too pooped to party," he said softly.

"I am," Lance replied. He reached out and toyed with the bottom hem of Justin's shirt.

Justin ran a hand over Lance's forehead, brushing his hair back from his face. "I'm sorry about what happened on the plane," he whispered. He meant not being there during the turbulence -- Lance hadn't told him what Chris and Joey had been up to.

Lance shrugged. "How's JC?" he asked. He studied Justin's eyelashes and felt a flutter in his stomach each time Justin blinked. Not now, he

thought. I'm too tired to be in the mood.

"He's not talking," Justin replied. He frowned and chewed on his bottom lip in that infuriating way he had that made Lance want to kiss him forever. "I don't know what's gotten into him, but somehow we managed to piss him off royally."

Lance let his head rest against Justin's chest. "He'll get over it," he whispered. His hand strayed a little lower, picking at the waistband of Justin's jeans. Justin let his own hand trail across Lance's chest, caressing his nipples through his heavy chambray shirt, and then Justin began to unbutton the shirt slowly. When the shirt was completely unbuttoned, he ran his hand under the material, his fingers cool against Lance's warm skin. He picked playfully at one of Lance's nipples, and Lance closed his eyes in delight, letting himself respond to Justin's touch. "Justin," he moaned, and despite his weariness he felt himself getting hard, the familiar heaviness settling into his groin.

Justin leaned forward and hushed him with a kiss. His lips were soft and earnest, his tongue tracing Lance's teeth in an intimate way that excited them both. Lance's hand unbuttoned Justin's jeans, slipping beneath the thick denim to rub against Justin's swollen cock. His other hand came up to cradle Justin's head, burying itself in Justin's curls. Lance pulled Justin down into their kiss and Justin shifted onto Lance, his weight pressing Lance into the bed, until all he felt was the soft hardness beneath him and Justin, Justin, Justin on top. Justin's hands roamed Lance's chest, stroking his smooth skin until Lance trembled beneath his lover's touch. Justin's hands and kisses wiped away the memories of the day, dispelling the slight ache that had settled between Lance's shoulders, and he forgot JC's anger, Chris's goofiness, Joey's lustful words. All that mattered was that they were here, together, in Justin's bed, and Lance never wanted to let him go.

Justin moaned into Lance, his hands slipping down to cup Lance's dick through his jeans, and despite the fact that he was tired and wanted to sleep, Lance thrust into Justin's hand, his erection aching sweetly. Lance gasped and gripped Justin's shoulders tightly. Forget about sleep -- he wanted Justin now.

A soft knock interrupted them. Justin groaned. "Shit," he muttered, kissing Lance once more before looking over his shoulder. Lance pushed himself up as Justin rolled off of him. JC stood in the doorway, frowning. "JC?" Justin asked, and Lance began to button his shirt again.

"I'm sorry," JC said, sighing. He ran a hand down his face and backed out of the room. "I didn't mean to -- I'm sorry."

As he disappeared down the hall, Lance elbowed Justin. "He needs someone to talk to," Lance said softly.

Justin looked at him and licked his lips as his gaze traveled down Lance's half-naked chest and settled at the bulge at his crotch. "You sure?" he asked, not sounding too certain himself.

"Go," Lance said, giving Justin a small push. "I need to get some sleep anyway. Go on, he needs you."

Justin sighed and kissed Lance tenderly. Placing a finger against Lance's lips, Justin whispered, "I'm going to wake you up when I get back."

"I'll be waiting," Lance replied, laying back against the pillows. Justin blew him a kiss from the doorway and closed the door.

Sighing, Lance closed his eyes and tried to will away his erection. He hoped JC got over whatever it was bugging him right now, so Justin could come back soon.

In his own room, JC lay on his stomach in his bed, his head in his hands, and sighed. What's wrong with me? he wondered, closing his eyes in frustration. He didn't like Joey -- he told himself over and over again that he didn't like Joey like that -- but he couldn't get past those two little kisses. It wasn't as if he had never been kissed before, but Joey was the first guy, and the way he kissed felt so damn nice. "Do you still taste me in your mouth?" Joey had asked JC when they were going to the cabin. JC wished that he had had the guts to say yes.

Someone knocked on his door, and then he heard Justin call his name. "It's open," JC said.

Justin entered the room, closing the door behind him. He took one look at JC and pulled out the chair at JC's computer. Straddling the chair, he crossed his arms over the back of it and sat down. "What's going on, man?" he asked softly.

JC sighed. "I don't know," he admitted. He glanced up at Justin and saw the mix of exhaustion and lust that made his eyes shine brightly. "I'm sorry I interrupted you guys."

Justin shrugged. "Lance is tired anyway," he said. Grinning, he added, "Hopefully he'll be well rested by the time I get back. So what's up?"

JC studied Justin. How long had they known each other? Forever, it seemed. JC remembered Justin coming to him for advice when they were both teenagers and someone new had caught Justin's eye, and he wanted JC's opinion on how to win her heart. He remembered holding Justin the night he broke up with Britney, and he had cried into JC's shoulder until JC thought he would drown in the tears. But why did he feel so unsure about confiding in Justin now? Was it because he didn't know how he was feeling himself? Or because part of him whispered that he was getting all worked up over nothing? "Have you ever started liking someone just because you thought they might like you?" he asked, his voice quiet.

Justin frowned. "Not really," he said.

"Nevermind then." JC sighed. "You wouldn't understand."

"Try me," Justin replied.

JC took a deep breath. How could he say this without revealing too much? He didn't want the world to know he was upset over -- what? Joey Fatone's kiss? Justin would laugh. Choosing his words carefully, JC said, "Someone kissed me and now ..." He trailed off, unsure of where to go from there.

Justin offered, "Now you can't stop thinking about them?"

JC nodded. "Exactly."

For a long moment Justin sat there staring at him, and JC almost heard the wheels in his head turning, trying to figure out who it was. They hadn't seen anyone outside of the band for the past week. Softly, Justin asked, "Who is it?"

"I'd rather not say," JC replied.

"One of the guys?" Justin persisted.

JC sighed. "Don't worry," he said, "it's not Lance."

Justin frowned. "But it's someone in the group?"

"Justin, please." JC looked up at him, his eyes pleading. "Don't make me ... I don't want to say."

"Okay." Justin set his head on his arms and watched JC closely. JC picked at a loose string on the comforter beneath him, and wondered what Justin would say next. Finally, Justin asked, "Is it one of the band?"

"Justin!" JC cried, exasperated. Sometimes he wondered why he bothered trying to confide in him.

"Sorry," Justin muttered.

"I shouldn't have said anything," JC said. He could've kicked himself -- already he wished he had kept his mouth shut. Joey already told him how he felt -- his words rang in JC's head constantly. If I was lonely enough. If Joey wasn't interested, if those kisses were just spur of the moment things that meant nothing to him, then why did it make JC so damn pissed when he walked in on Chris and Joey horsing around last night? Because Chris looked like he was enjoying it, JC thought sourly. Whatever it was. And you can tell yourself you aren't lonely, but when you saw the look in his eyes you knew you couldn't deny that you wanted to be in his position, didn't you?

"JC, I'm sorry," Justin said again. "So you kissed and what else?"

"Nothing else," JC admitted. "Both times he --" He stopped himself, sighing. This was going to be hard. "Both times the person was drunk. And when I asked --"

Justin interrupted him. "They kissed you twice?" he asked. JC looked up at him and nodded. "And you don't know if they like you or not? Hell, JC, I'd say chances are, drunk or not --"

JC twisted his mouth into a sad smile. "But there's a problem. This person doesn't like me, I know, not the way I want to be liked. Not the way you and Lance like each other."

"You mean they don't love you?" Justin asked, confused.

JC nodded. "They're in love with someone else," he whispered. "And these kisses were just ... they just happened, and the first time I didn't

expect it, and the second time I was asleep, so --"

"It is one of us," Justin whispered, and JC groaned.

"Justin, please don't --"

"Is it Joey? Chris?" Justin grinned. "I know it ain't me cause I haven't kissed you ever, and you already said it wasn't Lance. So which is it? Joey or Chris?" He giggled. "JC, I didn't know --"

"Shut up," JC growled. He knew Justin would laugh. Turning away, he said, "Don't let the door hit you on the way out."

Justin sobered up quickly. "JC, I'm sorry," he said softly. "I didn't mean -- I just want to know who -- I'm sorry." When JC didn't reply, he asked, "Do you really want me to leave?"

No, his mind whispered. This was hard for JC, to talk about the way he was feeling, because he was the type who never really talked about his emotions. They sort of bubbled over into his everyday life and people just seemed to know what he was thinking or how he was feeling. But he felt most comfortable with Justin -- they went way back, the two of them, and if he didn't talk to someone, he was afraid he'd never get the sordid mess of his heart straightened out. Two kisses, he thought bitterly. All of this for two lousy kisses.

Only they hadn't been lousy. They had been wonderful. And part of him wanted to be kissed like that again. He might not like guys, he might not like Joey the way Justin loved Lance, the thought of doing anything else with Joey was just too much to even contemplate right now, but damn, that boy could kiss.

"Stay," JC whispered. "But promise you won't say a word to anyone."

"I promise," Justin said quickly.

JC pinned him with a steady gaze. "Not even Lance," he said.

Justin frowned, thinking it over, and then he nodded, saying, "Not even Lance. What if he asks?"

"I'm sure he won't," JC said. He couldn't imagine Lance hounding Justin for the facts -- he wasn't like that. He'd want to know what they talked about but he wouldn't press for details, JC was sure.

"Is it Joey?" Justin asked again. The earnest way he looked at JC scared him. "Because if it is, just let me know, and I'll lock you two in a closet together somewhere, anywhere, and you can kiss him until he gets Lance out of his head. I don't like the thought of him wanting --"

JC sighed. "Justin, it's not like that," he said, cutting Justin off.

"Well," Justin asked slowly, "what's it like?"

What was it like? JC wasn't sure. Trying to organize his thoughts, he said, "Most of the time I'm not really looking for anyone, you know? I have my music, and I have the group, and I don't need to be getting involved with anyone right now, not at this stage of my life. Maybe five

years from now, down the road a ways, I'll want someone to love, but right now I don't think I want the hassle of a relationship." He looked up at Justin, who frowned at the idea. "Does that make any sense?"

Justin shrugged. "If that's what you want," he replied, "but I couldn't live like that. I mean, if Lance and I weren't together, I'd probably agree with you, but right now -- right now I don't think I want to try to get by without Lance. He's everything to me."

JC nodded. "I know. And one day I want someone like that. But I'm not going to rush it. I'm not going to jump on the first person who comes along just because I can't wait for the right one so I'll settle for anyone. And he doesn't love me, I know. He loves Lance. He sat there at the cabin and told us all, point-blank. I couldn't live with that." JC sighed, shaking his head. "I'm not going to try to win someone over who doesn't even want to let go of something he can't have, you know?"

Justin frowned, more confused than ever. "I don't get it," he muttered. "Joey kisses you and you think you might like him because he might like you, but you don't want to hook up with him because of the way he likes Lance, and you don't want to even get into a relationship now ..." He looked at JC, his brow knitted over his eyes. "And yet you're upset and bitching at everyone and what's the problem again?"

"I just ..." JC sighed, rubbing his eyes with his hand. "I just don't want to ..." He took a deep, shuddery breath. "It hurts to see Joey and Chris --"

"Excuse me?" Justin asked, shocked. JC had to suppress a smile at the look on Justin's face. His mouth hung open as if he forgot how to close it.

"You didn't know?" JC asked softly.

"Where the hell have I been?" Justin asked, shaking his head. "When did this happen? Doesn't Chris have a girlfriend?"

JC shrugged. "I don't know what's going on between them," JC admitted. "But they're always together anymore, and I don't really know ... It hurts just a little bit to know that those kisses meant nothing to Joey. I mean, maybe it's just me, but a kiss should mean something, don't you think?"

"Anyone can give a kiss," Justin replied. "Look at Judas. He kissed Christ just before turning him in."

JC rolled his eyes. "Jeez, Justin, you really know how to cheer someone up." Funny thing was, he did feel better after talking with Justin. He felt more in control of the whole situation. So he felt something when Joey kissed him -- fine. So he was a little upset because Chris and Joey joked around and seemed to be getting it on together -- fine. He'd live with that. He didn't need a relationship right now, and if Joey wanted Chris, well then fine. He'd live with that, too. But he'd be damned if he let Joey kiss him again. And he wouldn't let it get to him when Joey flirted with him, or teased him, or smiled at him with that heart-breaking grin he had that made even the strongest fall in his wake. It had just made him feel so damn alone the night before, when he walked in to find Chris and Joey on the floor, giggling like teenagers, and he laid awake most of the

night, wondering what exactly was going on in that room. That's why he was cranky when he woke up, and then it seemed as if everyone was against him as he tried to get them together to leave, and then at the airport Chris and Joey were ripping on him and it was just too much. Let them have each other, he thought grimly, but leave me out of it. Don't make fun of the fact that I'm the only one in the group without someone, okay? Is that too much to ask? He didn't need anyone, he told himself, but he didn't need to be reminded that he didn't have anyone, either.

Justin laughed, sensing the subtle change in JC's manner, and then he asked, "Chris and Joey? Really?"

JC rolled his eyes. "I don't know what's up with them," he said. "But you watch. Tell me you don't see something there."

Justin nodded. Studying JC, he asked, "You okay, man?"

"Better," JC said. "Thanks." When Justin smiled, JC grinned back. "Go see if Lance is awake yet."

Justin stood up and headed for the door. "Don't have to tell me twice," he said. "If you need to talk --"

"I'll wait for you to answer before walking in next time," JC said, grinning. "Goodnight, Justin. And thanks."

"No problem," Justin replied, closing the door behind him. JC stared at the chair Justin just vacated and wondered if something was going on between Joey and Chris, and told himself it didn't matter, really, despite the fact that it hurt just a little to see them together. He wasn't going to let two little kisses and a bunch of harmless horseplay ruin their friendships.

All I Ever Wanted
84. Need You Tonight
by NSyncGrrl

Back in his own room, Justin found Lance sleeping where he left him, fully clothed on top of the covers. While he had been in JC's room, the sun outside set, plunging the room into an easy darkness illuminated by a single lamp beside the bed that Lance left on for him. Justin closed the bedroom door quietly, making sure it latched this time, and he locked it just because he could. Then he walked over to Lance's side of the bed and, sitting down on the edge of the mattress, studied his lover lying on his back, his head turned towards Justin. He was so achingly beautiful, with his pale skin and large eyes, and those lips ... Justin reached out and traced the curve of Lance's jaw with one finger. He appreciated what JC had said about not really wanting a relationship right now, but he couldn't imagine giving up this. I need you too badly, he thought as Lance moaned softly in his sleep at Justin's touch.

Slowly Justin finished unbuttoning Lance's shirt. He pushed the heavy fabric off of Lance, easing it down first one arm and then the other, until Lance lay on the shirt, his bare chest rising slightly with each breath. Justin ran his hand down Lance's chest, savoring the warmth beneath his touch, and Lance moaned again, louder, when Justin's fingers teased one of his erect nipples. He let his hand slip lower, rubbing against Lance's crotch gently before unbuttoning his pants and tugging the zipper down gradually, letting the sensation of being unzipped linger on the slight bulge already at Lance's groin. Lance's hand reached out and touched Justin's knee, and when Justin looked up from the zipper he found Lance looking sleepily back at him. "What time is it?" Lance mumbled.

Justin smiled. Lance wasn't quite awake yet. "Sshhh," Justin said softly. "You don't want to wake up now."

As if that was all the answer he needed, Lance nodded and closed his eyes again. On Justin's knee, Lance's hand was soft and comforting through the denim of Justin's own jeans. Justin stroked the white patch of Lance's exposed underwear, his hand barely pressing against the flesh hardening beneath. He watched Lance carefully, enjoying the pleasure that flitted across Lance's face, the way his cheeks were beginning to flush slightly, the way he curled in his bottom lip and bit down on it, whimpering in delight. Under Justin's hand, Lance's cock was stiff and swollen.

Standing up from the bed, Justin eased Lance's pants down to his ankles. Lance shifted to help him, and then the pants were on the floor, forgotten. Justin plucked off Lance's socks and rubbed his feet between his hands a little roughly, warming them. Lance's hand strayed to his erection, cupping it through his boxer briefs and squeezing himself gently. "Justin, come back," he whispered. He was waking up now.

Pushing Lance's hand away, Justin trailed his own hand up Lance's leg as he returned to his previous position beside him on the bed. Then he opened the little flap on Lance's underwear and stuck three fingers inside,

where it was hot and close and Lance was oh so hard. His fingers traced along Lance's thick erection, touching the soft skin of his balls briefly, and Lance moaned. His eyes were open now, and he watched Justin with a look of lust that enflamed the desire in Justin's blood. At that look alone, Justin found himself suddenly hard and aching for Lance.

Leaning down over Lance's crotch, Justin pulled his fingers out of Lance's underwear and held the flap open. He could see the red skin beneath, swollen, the white briefs clinging tightly to the outline of Lance's erection. Lance's heady scent filled Justin's nostrils, turning him on even more. His tongue darted out of his mouth and licked beneath the flap on Lance's briefs, and he tasted cotton and sweat and Lance, an intoxicating mix. As he licked along the edge of Lance's penis, Lance's hand fisted in his hair, tugging gently. Justin pulled back and let the flap close, hiding Lance's erection from view.

Then Justin kissed Lance's cock through the underwear, his lips leaving wet imprints on the taut material. He traced the outline of Lance's erection through the fabric, licking along the length until Lance's underwear was damp with his saliva. Lance wiggled his hips beneath Justin, rubbing against him, and when Justin's mouth closed over the sensitive tip of his penis, still hidden in his briefs, Lance thrust into Justin and sighed his name. Justin could taste the salty sweetness of Lance through the fabric and knew he was close to coming. But he wasn't ready for this to end so quickly. He stood up, Lance's hand disentangling from his curls and trailing down his muscular bicep until taking Justin's hand. Lance tugged at him lightly. "Justin," he moaned. He couldn't form words to say everything else he wanted to say right at this moment, so he just pulled at Justin's hand. "Justin."

Justin leaned down over Lance and kissed the hollow of his throat tenderly. He straddled him, his own erection throbbing through his jeans against the solid thickness in Lance's underwear, and he ran his arms around Lance's shoulders, pulling him close. His lips trailed up Lance's neck, kissing hungrily at the smooth skin, under and around and over his Adam's apple. Lance's hands rubbed Justin's shoulders, holding his body against him, and Justin wished he had thought far enough ahead to have taken off his clothes. He wanted to feel Lance against him, skin on skin, and he thrust into Lance, pushing him back into the bed, as he nipped playfully at the underside of Lance's chin.

Suddenly Lance's hands stopped on his back. "Justin," he said again, but this time there was a hint of pain in his voice that made Justin look at him in concern. As Justin sat up, Lance ran a hand down to his groin, frowning. "Ouch."

Justin rolled off of Lance and looked. There was a small dent in Lance's underwear where the zipper of Justin's jeans had pinched the fabric. Running his hands over the spot, Justin smoothed it out, and then he pulled down the waistband to see a tiny red area on the soft skin of Lance's lower belly, where the skin had pinched with the fabric. Easing the briefs down, Justin kissed the area, licking away the redness and pain and making it all better. "Take off your clothes," Lance said, pouting. "They hurt."

"I'm sorry," Justin purred. He pulled his shirt over his head and with a dancer's grace pulled his jeans and boxers off in one fluid move. Then he

eased Lance's briefs off, as well, before lying down beside him again. Justin took Lance in his arms and hugged him close, draping one leg across Lance's body. Their erections brushed against each other slightly, and Lance curled into Justin's embrace, resting his head beneath Justin's chin.

"How's JC doing?" Lance asked softly. His breath tickled Justin's upper arm, and Justin hugged Lance tighter. Lance's arms wrapped around Justin's back, pulling him close.

Justin shrugged. "Better," he said. He wanted to tell Lance about Joey but he had promised JC ... "He's just a little --" He sighed. "He told me not to tell anyone."

"That's okay," Lance said. His voice was low and he sounded sleepy again.

"You tired?" Justin asked, kissing Lance's forehead. Lance nodded, closing his eyes. Justin shifted his leg against Lance's crotch, and Lance moaned slightly. "Justin," he whispered into Justin's chest. He shivered. "I'm cold."

Justin let go of Lance long enough for the two of them to crawl beneath the covers, and then Lance snuggled against Justin again. Running his hands along Lance's back, Justin kissed him, his lips lingering over Lance's closed eyelids, his cheeks, his tender lips. "Are you really tired?" Justin asked, sucking along Lance's neck, just below his ear.

Lance murmured softly, and Justin wasn't quite sure what he said, but he rolled onto Lance and pressed him against the bed, his tongue tickling Lance's neck in an effort to keep him interested. "Lance?" he asked quietly, thrusting his hips into Lance. Between them their cocks rubbed together, and Lance gripped Justin tightly. Justin breathed into Lance's ear. "Lance, just please ..." His voice trailed off as he moved faster, the pleasure of holding Lance in his arms and rubbing against him taking him to the brink of orgasm. Beneath him Lance moaned, and Justin licked his palm, reaching down to coat his hard dick with his own saliva before he guided it into Lance. It was a tight fit, and Lance shuddered beneath him as he eased inside. "Lance," he whispered, covering Lance with small, hungry kisses as he pushed into him with a desperate rhythm. He felt a warm wetness spread against his stomach as Lance came, and he thrust harder, faster, almost there ...

Justin pushed Lance into the bed as he came, trying to get as far in him as possible. Lance bit Justin's shoulder, his teeth sinking into Justin's skin with a sweet pain eclipsed by Justin's climax. When Justin was spent, he collapsed on top of Lance and kissed him greedily. "Get some sleep," he whispered into Lance's neck. "I love you."

Lance shifted until his body rested beneath Justin's comfortably. Kissing away the imprints his teeth left behind in Justin's shoulder, Lance asked, "Can I tell you something?"

"Hmm?" Justin murmured.

"I love you," Lance replied, grinning.

Justin laughed softly. "You're so cute." He smoothed back Lance's hair and sighed as Lance closed his eyes and leaned into his touch. Between them he felt Lance's dick soften, and he buried his head into Lance's shoulder. It had been a long day, for both of them. With Lance in his arms, Justin fell asleep.

All I Ever Wanted
85. In the Eyes of a Friend
by NSyncGrrl

"This is so wrong," Joey said, frowning. He sat on the end of his bed with his legs crossed. Chris lay beside him, back against the pillows, and Joey heard him tapping the TV remote against his knee but all Joey could see was Chris's sneakers, dangling off the edge of the bed. It was late, and around them the house was silent, the others already asleep. Joey was exhausted -- his eyes had a grainy feel to them every time he blinked and all he wanted was to fall back and sleep for three days straight. But Chris wasn't the least bit tired and seemed to bounce off the walls, so Joey popped in the Superman cartoon Justin bought him back in Maine to watch before calling it a night. He pointed at the TV and turned back to Chris. "Do you believe this?"

Chris wasn't watching the TV. His gaze rested on Joey's back, and when Joey turned around he blinked lazily and raised his eyes to meet Joey's. There was a look there that made Joey's words catch in his throat. Chris didn't seem like his usual crazy self -- right now he was calm, only the endless tapping of the remote a clue to the energy coursing through his body. His tongue darted out to lick his lips quickly, and then he asked, "Believe what?"

Joey cleared his throat and turned back to the television. Suddenly he felt a nervousness creep into his hands, and his stomach felt weak and fluttery. The way Chris had been looking at him ... like he looked at Lance sometimes, when Lance wasn't paying any attention to him. What the hell? Joey thought, swallowing hard. He told himself that Chris was just being friendly, that Chris was tired, they were both tired, and he reminded himself that Chris had a girlfriend, so why for the love of God did Joey want to turn back around and smother Chris with kisses? "Believe what, Joe?" Chris asked again.

Joey jumped slightly. "This cartoon," he muttered, not really interested in the show anymore. His lips tingled at the memory of Chris's kisses, and his arms ached to wrap around his friend. We were lonely, Joey reminded himself, shaking his head. This wasn't supposed to ruin our friendship, remember? No one was to know, and it was only when we were lonely. And right now Joey wasn't lonely, Chris was here with him, and he was all too aware of Chris lying beside him in his bed, but he wanted to kiss Chris again, to hug him, and to ask him about that look Joey saw smoldering in his eyes. Joey really wanted to know what that look was all about.

"What's not to believe?" Chris asked. The steady rhythm of the remote against his knee was loud in the room.

Joey tried to remember what he was talking about. The cartoon ... "Oh yeah," he said, pointing at the TV. "Superman's all strong and shit and he's on New Krypton. That's bullshit."

"How is that bullshit?" Chris asked.

Joey turned around and sighed. "Because he's not on Earth," he said, rolling his eyes. "Jeez, Chris, don't you know anything?"

Chris tossed the remote at Joey, hitting him in the back. "Superman has super strength, doesn't he?" Chris asked. "I don't see what the big deal is here."

Joey leaned back on the bed and snagged the remote. Then he laid down beside Chris and tossed the remote up into the air, catching it deftly. "Superman gets his powers from the sun," Joey explained as if talking to an idiot. "New Krypton doesn't have a yellow sun. Therefore Superman shouldn't have any powers right now."

"This is a cartoon, Joey," Chris said. The next time Joey tossed the remote into the air, Chris reached out and grabbed it.

"No shit, Chris," Joey replied. "But they could at least get it right." He turned his head, and Chris was so close, his leg raised beside Joey, his hand just inches from Joey's head. Chris began to tap the remote against his knee again.

With a quick motion, Chris tapped the remote lightly against Joey's forehead. "Anyone ever tell you what a dork you are, Fatone?" he asked, grinning.

"I'm not a dork," Joey said, pouting.

"Are too," Chris said. He tapped Joey's forehead again. Joey reached out for the remote, but Chris pulled it away quickly.

Joey frowned. "It's getting late," he said, yawning. "Maybe you should go back to your own room now, okay?"

Chris let the remote fall, and then his hand ran through Joey's hair, the soft touch tingling Joey's scalp. "You really want me to go?" he asked quietly.

Just this second? Joey thought. I don't think so. He closed his eyes and let the feel of Chris's soothing touch push away everything else. "Joe?" Chris asked, his voice soft.

"What?" Joey asked. He didn't want Chris to stop rubbing his hair.

"What do you want?" Chris let his fingers entwine in Joey's hair, tugging lightly. When Joey didn't answer right away, he said, "Top of your head. What do you want?"

"What kind of question is that?" Joey asked. He didn't know what he wanted. "You mean out of life? Or in a relationship? Or what? What do you mean?"

Chris stroked his scalp. "Don't think about it. Just tell me. Whatever comes to mind when I ask you what you want."

"Gobstoppers," Joey replied. Chris's hand faltered, and then Chris laughed. "Really," Joey said, turning to look up at Chris. The smile on his friend's face made him grin foolishly. "Well, you asked."

"And of all the things you could've said, you chose gobstoppers," Chris replied.

Joey shrugged. "I love those things," he said simply.

For a moment Chris didn't say anything, and then he suggested, "Well, let's go get some."

"What?" Joey asked, sitting up. Chris's hand fell to the bed, where he picked up the remote and began tapping it against his knee again. Joey reached out and grabbed the remote, twisting it out of Chris's grip. "You mean you want to go out now?"

Chris shrugged. "Why not?" he asked.

"Because it's late," Joey said automatically. "Because we're both tired, and it's been a long day, and --" And the thought of Chris riding shotgun beside him in a dark car on a candy run to the local 7-11 was so delicious that Joey couldn't help but laugh. He shrugged. "Why the hell not?" he asked, clicking off the TV.

At the store, Chris wasn't satisfied with a pack of gobstoppers. He had to have a Slurpee, and some gum, a hot dog, nachos, a bag of chips, this magazine, that balloon -- it was like taking a kid shopping. Joey laughed as he watched the items pile up on the counter, and when the cashier rung everything up, Joey winked at her and said, "I'll get it" as Chris reached for his own wallet.

"You sure?" Chris asked. He frowned as Joey smiled disarmingly at the cashier.

"Sure I'm sure," Joey replied. As the cashier bagged their items, Joey leaned over the counter and pointed at her nametag. "Jenny?" he asked, reading. She nodded and he smiled again. "Now what's a pretty girl like you doing stuck at work on a night like this?"

She shrugged. "I don't know," she mumbled, looking at Chris. She handed him the bag, and Chris grabbed it, pushing Joey out of the store.

In the car, Chris dug into the bag and tossed Joey his gobstoppers. Joey looked at him, frowning. "What's your problem?" he asked as he opened the candy.

"Do you have to flirt with everyone?" Chris asked. He nodded at the store as they pulled out of the parking lot. "She's way too old for you."

Joey shrugged. "So? I was only flirting. It's not like I was going to take her home. You could be nicer to people, yourself."

"I am nice," Chris said, pouting.

Joey laughed. "My ass," he said, grinning. "You're only nice in interviews."

"I am not," Chris said. He turned away from Joey and stared out the car window.

Joey smiled. "I'm only kidding," he said softly. When Chris didn't reply,

Joey reached over and touched Chris's knee. "Chris? I'm kidding. You're nice."

Chris pushed Joey's hand away, but Joey caught Chris's hand in his and held it tight. Chris tried to pull it back, but Joey wouldn't let go. "Joey," he started, but then Joey veered off the road and brought the car to a stop. Around them the street was empty and dark, the quiet suburban subdivision asleep at this hour. Joey cut the engine off and looked at Chris, studying him in the poor light. "You're nice," Joey repeated. "Chris? Look at me." When Chris complied, Joey said it again. "You're nice."

"Is that all?" Chris asked quietly.

Joey pursed his lips. "What do you mean?" he asked.

Chris looked at him, and Joey saw it again, that look in Chris's eyes that hinted at something more. "Nothing," Chris muttered, turning away. Joey squeezed his hand gently, and when Chris pulled away again, Joey let it go. "Let's just go home."

Damn, Joey thought. He wanted to press it, ask Chris what he was talking about, but he knew his friend too well. Chris was the type who bit if cornered, and if Joey hounded him to explain himself, Chris would probably just shut up and refuse to say anything at all. The best way to get Chris to talk was just leave him alone and wait. Eventually he'd let Joey know what was on his mind. I want to know now, Joey thought, starting the car again. He pulled out into the street and headed home. The way Chris was acting lately made Joey wonder if the kisses and hugs and fooling around didn't mean more to him than he let on. An uneasy silence hung between them in the car, and Joey thought maybe he would like it if Chris was interested in him. Maybe he could move on, get past Lance and lose himself in someone else. The thought of losing himself in Chris was tempting. They were best friends, and Joey had so much fun when he was with Chris, and maybe it wouldn't be so bad if they could ...

"Joey, I'm sorry," Chris said suddenly, interrupting Joey's train of thought.

Joey turned into their driveway. "For what?" he asked, trying to play it off. Chris shrugged, and Joey laughed, dispelling the tension in the car. "You're sorry and you don't even know what you're sorry for?" he asked as he parked the car in the garage. "Then don't be sorry."

"Okay," Chris said, grinning, "I'm not."

Cutting off the engine, Joey turned to Chris and grinned back. "It's nothing, man," he said softly. "Really."

Chris got out of the car and led the way inside the house. It was after midnight, and the weariness of the day began to settle between Joey's shoulders, dragging him down. They shuffled down the hall, heading for their separate rooms. At Joey's door, Chris stopped and looked up at him, his eyes glistening in the darkness. "Goodnight," Joey whispered. He didn't want to wake the others.

"Goodnight," Chris replied. As Joey opened his door, Chris turned

away and began to giggle. "I'll miss sleeping with you," he said over his shoulder.

Joey laughed. "Yeah, right," he said, smiling. As Joey closed the door behind him, he wondered if Chris was being serious. It was so hard to tell with him -- everything was a riot, and if he thought someone was getting too close, he pushed them away with crude talk and cruel practical jokes. Joey would've believed him if he hadn't laughed when he said it. "I'll miss sleeping with you." The words haunted Joey as he kicked off his shoes and turned out the light. He heard Chris's laugh, saw the gleam in his eyes, and then he crawled into his bed and hugged his pillow, closing his eyes.

But honestly? I think I'll miss sleeping with him, too, Joey thought before drifting off to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
86. Lazy Afternoon
by NSyncGrrl

A hot haze hung in the air, and the afternoon sun hid behind a thin bank of rain clouds, threatening to open up at any moment. Justin sat on the porch swing and watched Chris and Joey toss a battered football back and forth. The purpose of their game seemed to be a contest to see who could hold onto the football the longest when the other tackled them. Already the grass in the backyard was torn up, small plugs of sod kicked up when Joey and Chris attacked each other.

Justin had a book open on his lap, but he had only read a few lines before he started watching his friends, looking at their innocent game through new eyes. All he saw was Chris and Joey, goofing off, but JC said he thought there was something more going on? Justin didn't know -- he didn't see it. Chris kept picking at Joey, trying to get under his skin, and Joey kept laughing off the insults and jokes as he tried to overpower Chris, grabbing him and tossing him to the ground whenever he could. And JC thinks they might like each other? Justin thought, shaking his head. This wasn't his idea of love, or even infatuation. A lazy afternoon spent in each other's arms, soft words and flirty glances, kisses as plentiful and gentle as a spring rain -- color him romantic, but Justin liked that stuff. Games were cool, too, as long as they involved tender touches, not rough-housing and horseplay. That wasn't love -- that was just two friends trying to best each other.

The screen door slammed, and Justin looked up as Lance came out on the porch. "Hey, babe," Justin said, patting the seat beside him on the swing. He noticed Lance's red eyes and sighed. "What happened?"

Lance sat down on the swing and gave it a small push, rocking them gently. He wiped at his eyes with the end of his sleeve and whispered, "Nothing much." He just spent the last half hour on the phone with his mother, and Justin had left them alone when the conversation got heated and Lance began to yell. Now Justin reached out and ran an arm around Lance's shoulders, pulling him close. Lance rested his head on Justin's shoulder and sighed. "She doesn't want you to come with me when I visit," he said, his voice low.

Justin frowned. He didn't want Lance to leave him. He knew that Lance's mother was having a difficult time accepting their relationship, and he thought maybe it would be helpful if he wasn't there, if she and Lance could just talk everything out, but the thought of Lance crying in his room after a particularly bad argument without anyone there to hold him made Justin shake with anger. Couldn't his mother see what she was doing to her son? Softly Justin asked, "Do you want me to stay here?"

"No," Lance replied. He ran a hand down Justin's thigh, his touch comforting through Justin's jeans. He sighed. "I told her I wasn't coming without you."

"You can't do that," Justin said. "This is your family."

"I know," Lance said, sniffing. "But they have to accept me for who I am, not who they want me to be. And I am with you. If they can't get past that, then I can't go there, not right now."

Justin rubbed Lance's shoulder. God, he wished this could be easier for them. Justin's own mother was cool with the fact that they were together, even though he had been scared to tell her. He just assumed Lance's mother would be okay with it, too. But now Mrs. Bass didn't even want to talk to him -- when she called and Justin answered the phone, he could hear the hostility barely veiled in her voice. It wasn't fair that she was doing this to Lance, forcing him to choose between Justin and his family. Justin wished there was something he could do, but what could he say? Nothing came to mind. So he just hugged Lance to him and held on tightly, hoping it was enough.

Lance pointed at the book in Justin's lap. "What'cha reading?" he asked, rubbing his nose.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. He closed the book and showed Lance the cover -- a Stephen King novel, one he got out of JC's room, but he wasn't very far into the story. Hell, he wasn't very far into the first page.

Lance grinned. "What, you're holding it just for looks?"

Justin laughed. "Trying to look smart," he said. Lance smiled up at him, and it was good to see him smile, despite the pain he must be feeling right now. Justin kissed Lance on the tip of his nose and asked, "Is it working?"

Lance squinted at him, pretending to ponder the question. "Well," he drawled, and Justin pouted. "Lance!" he cried. "You don't have to think about it too hard!"

Laughing, Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's waist and snuggled against him. "You can always make me feel better," he whispered, kissing Justin. His lips were soft and slightly damp, and Justin leaned into the kiss, wanting more.

Behind them the screen door opened again, and JC tapped Lance in the back of the head with the newspaper. "Knock it off, you guys," he said playfully, and Justin pulled back, grinning.

"Jealous, JC?" Justin asked.

JC scowled. "Of what?" he asked, sitting in the chair by the swing. "Not either of you, sorry." He opened the paper and buried his nose in the middle of it. Lance reached up and ran a hand around Justin's neck, pulling him down into another kiss. "I see you," JC said, not looking up from the paper.

Justin kicked at JC. "No one asked you to sit there," he said, grinning.

JC smiled. "You've got a room," he replied.

Suddenly they heard the tinny sounds of drizzling rain, and Lance frowned. "It's raining?" he asked. Fat raindrops hit the porch steps,

turning the white concrete a sordid gray. Out in the backyard, Joey dived for Chris's legs, knocking him back to the ground. Their laughter drifted to the porch, and JC shook his head. "What did I tell you?" he asked softly.

"I don't think so," Justin replied.

"What?" Lance asked, frowning.

JC looked up at Justin. "You didn't tell him?" he asked, surprised.

Justin shook his head. "You made me promise --"

"Promise what?" Lance interrupted. He looked between Justin and JC and asked, "What are you guys talking about?"

"Joey and Chris," JC said, nodding at their friends. Joey was on his back, his hands holding the football in a death grip. Chris straddled his stomach and tried twisting the ball away from Joey. The white t-shirt Chris wore had begun to cling to him where the rain soaked through, and dark grass stains marked the legs of Joey's jeans.

"What about them?" Lance asked, frowning.

Justin sighed. "JC thinks there's something going on between them," he said. Looking down at Lance, he added, "He thinks they're fooling around."

"With each other?" Lance asked, before he realized how stupid that sounded. He looked out into the backyard as Joey flipped Chris onto his back. The football was still between them, and they fought over it like dogs over a bone. Chris kicked out with one foot, catching Joey in the stomach, holding him at bay. "You're joking."

Justin kissed Lance on the forehead. Then he kissed his temple, and his cheek, and the soft skin just beside his mouth, and -- "Justin," JC warned. "I'd rather watch them fool around than watch you two make out."

Lance grinned against Justin's lips. "You're imagining things," he said, pulling back from Justin. Justin leaned back into his corner of the swing and smiled at Lance in the opposite corner. Lance winked at him, and Justin winked back.

"I can see you," JC said. "You two leave nothing to the imagination."

"He means them," Justin said. He reached out and ran a finger down the back of Lance's hand. Lance blew him a kiss, and Justin grinned. "That's just goofing off. Nothing more."

JC frowned. "Justin, you are blind."

"JC, I am not," Justin replied. He kicked out at JC again, the tip of his shoe brushing against JC's leg.

But JC shook his head. "You two are so wrapped up in each other, you can't see anything else."

Justin bit his lip and reminded himself that this was JC, his oldest

friend. Still it didn't stop the anger rising in him at the words. So what if he was infatuated with Lance? So what if he would rather stare into Lance's eyes and kiss him breathless than do anything else? "So what?" he asked, pouting.

"So nothing," JC replied. "I'm just saying there are things going on that you don't notice, is all."

"But Joey and Chris?" Lance asked, grimacing. "I thought Chris had a girlfriend."

JC laughed. "The president has a wife and that didn't stop him."

The rain picked up until it pounded against the ground, the noise drowning out the rest of the world. Joey and Chris ran to the porch, shaking the excess water off of them as they approached. Justin watched Joey carefully -- he wanted to see the smile Joey always turned on Lance, those little touches he used around Lance, the twinkle in his eye when he looked at Lance and he didn't think Justin was watching. But he didn't see any of that now, and he didn't see anything different in the way Chris was acting, either. Still, if Joey were interested in someone else, maybe he would stop bothering Lance. And if there was anything Justin could do to promote that, he would do it in a heartbeat.

So he watched Joey, and he watched Chris, and he wanted to see something, anything, to tell him that Joey was over Lance. Joey grabbed Chris into a headlock and began dragging him into the house, and Chris bit Joey's arm playfully. That isn't love, Justin thought, sighing disgustedly. That's just being stupid. He reached across the swing and laced his fingers between Lance's. Raising Lance's hand to his lips, Justin kissed his knuckles and winked at Lance when he smiled at him. This is love, Justin thought. He wished Lance's mom could understand that.

As Joey passed by, he grinned down at them, and Justin glared. Or Joey, for that matter, he thought. Please give that boy someone else to hound over. Please let him get Lance off his mind.

All I Ever Wanted
87. Ante Up
by NSyncGrrl

The five friends sat around the kitchen table. It was late -- darkness pressed against the windows, kept back by the bright lights above the table. After a movie, someone had suggested cards, and Justin sat between JC and Lance, shuffling a deck of cards in his hands. He was grinning in that easy way of his that made Lance's heart flutter, and when he looked at Lance, he winked. Lance's hand rested on Justin's knee beneath the table, but he moved it up slowly, brushing along Justin's inner thigh, as Justin shuffled the cards. Looking around the table, Justin asked, "What'll it be?"

"Poker," JC said. That was his game. Whenever they played, he always ended up with the winnings, money and jewelry and whatever else they threw in the pot. One time Joey lost his Gameboy to JC in a game of poker, and he was continuously trying to win it back, since it still had his Pokémon game cartridge in it and JC claimed he won it fair and square so he wouldn't give it back. JC loved poker.

Chris grinned. "How about strip poker?" he suggested, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

Joey laughed, but JC and Justin both frowned. "I think that's a game best played with a few ladies present," JC said. Looking across the table at Joey, he said, "No offense, but I've seen you guys without your shirts on. Does nothing for me."

"You sure?" Joey asked, grinning. JC blushed and looked away from his intense gaze. Glancing at Lance, Joey said, "I'm up for it. Hell, any game where you get naked is okay by me."

Justin frowned. "I don't think so," he said, shuffling the cards. Lance squeezed his thigh gently, and Justin looked at him, raising one eyebrow.

"Me either," Lance replied, answering Justin's unspoken question.

"Aw, c'mon," Joey wheedled. "I'm playing. I love strip games. Strip rummy, strip go fish, strip solitaire --"

Chris laughed. "Strip double solitaire," he ventured.

"You know that one?" Joey asked, grinning. "We'll have to play that sometime."

"No stripping tonight," Justin said, a hard edge to his voice. "Pick another game."

"Oh, grow up, Justin," Chris said, frowning. "What's the harm in strip poker?"

"I said no." Justin's voice was tight, and Lance heard the anger just beneath his words. Justin looked around the table with a menacing

expression on his face. "Pick another game or we're not playing."

"I'm playing," Joey said. "What's this we stuff? Since when do you speak for Lance?"

Justin glared at Joey. "I said we aren't playing strip poker," Justin said in a low, dangerous voice.

"I say we are," Joey replied, meeting Justin's steady gaze. "Now deal."

"Fuck you, Fatone." Justin tossed the cards on the table, where they fanned out. Pushing his chair back, he rose to his feet and leaned over the table. "You wanna play? Fine. But count me out." He looked at Lance, who sighed. So much for a nice quiet evening playing cards, Lance thought wryly. "Lance?"

"Just because you're not playing doesn't mean Lance isn't," Chris said.

Joey laughed. "Strip 52 card pickup," he said, grinning as he started to gather the cards together. Then he turned to Lance. "You in or not?" he asked.

Before Lance could reply, Justin stepped around his chair and shoved Joey. Lance stood up between them, one arm on Justin's chest, holding him back. "Stop it," he said, looking from Justin to Joey. "Both of you. I'm not in the mood for this shit tonight."

Justin pouted, and then he turned on his heel and stalked out of the kitchen. Joey sat back down and began gathering the cards together again. "What shit is that?" he asked amicably, trying to lighten the mood.

"I'm sick of you pushing him," Lance said. He looked at Chris, who turned away from the intensity of Lance's gaze. "You knew this would piss him off. Are you happy now? Huh?"

"He's being unreasonable --" Joey started, but Lance cut him off.

"Why is that?" Lance asked. He glared down at Joey and frowned. "Because he doesn't want to play? How's that being unreasonable?"

Chris sighed. "Just because he isn't playing doesn't mean you don't have to," he said again.

Lance sighed. "Chris, Joey, this may come as a surprise to you, but I don't want to play if Justin isn't. Strip poker with you guys is not my idea of a fun time."

JC spoke up. "I agree. New game."

Joey looked at JC for a long moment, and then turned to Chris. "New game," he said softly. "Majority rules."

Chris shrugged as if he was no longer interested in playing anything at all. Joey began to shuffle the cards and looked at JC. "Your choice. Straight up poker? Rummy? Gin?"

"Sit back down, Lance," JC said. Leaning forward, he closed his eyes, pretending to think about it. Then he said, "Poker. Straight up. We all

keep our clothes on. Okay?"

Chris groaned. "Until we lose our shirts to you," he muttered. JC always won poker.

"Let me go get Justin," Lance said. He glared at Joey as he passed. "If he still wants to play."

"No big deal if he doesn't," Joey muttered under his breath. Lance considered stopping but thought better of it. Joey was larger and stronger than he was, and a part of him realized Joey would like it too much if things got ... physical between them. He could imagine lying on the floor beneath Joey, his weight hard on top of him, his devilish face grinning down. Not something Lance wanted. So he ignored Joey and left the kitchen without another word.

He found Justin in the hallway, leaning against the wall, his arms crossed in front of his chest, pouting. Justin glanced up as he approached, and then looked away. Lance sighed. Standing in front of Justin, he ran his hands along Justin's arms, feeling the bunched muscles beneath his touch. "Justin --" he began, but Justin cut him off.

"Am I being unreasonable?" Justin asked through clenched teeth. He looked at Lance, his blue eyes dark and tortured.

Lance shook his head. "No," he whispered. He squeezed Justin's arms gently, trying to loosen him up, but he was hard and unresponsive.

"Because if I am," Justin continued, the anger still in his low voice, "just let me know. Tell me I'm being a dick and I'll step back, let you play along with their games. I just thought ..." He closed his eyes and swallowed thickly. "I don't want to see you sitting there naked in front of them."

Lance smiled. "What makes you think I'd be naked?" he asked playfully, tracing Justin's muscles in his arms.

Justin sighed. "Lance, you suck at poker," he pointed out. "If you play, you'll be the only one with no clothes on."

"I'm not that bad," Lance countered. Truth be told? He did suck at poker, big time. He usually refused to even play anymore.

Justin laughed, a short, rough sound, but it was a laugh nonetheless. "Lance," he said softly, his gaze devouring Lance. Lance met Justin's eyes and smiled.

Lance leaned closer, one hand rubbing up Justin's arm to massage his shoulder gently, the other hand straying below Justin's crossed arms to trail down the zipper of Justin's jeans. "What?" he asked, his voice just as soft. One finger reached up and brushed against Justin's clenched jaw, which loosened at the touch. Justin leaned into his hand and closed his eyes, sighing. When Justin didn't reply, Lance whispered, "You're not being unreasonable. You're being pissy and I'm sorry they got to you, but for what it's worth, I think you were right."

Justin looked at him suddenly. "You do?" he whispered.

Lance nodded. Tugging at Justin's zipper, he let his gaze roam over Justin's chest and said, "Now if it were just the two of us, strip poker wouldn't be such a bad idea, would it?"

Justin smiled, and his anger was gone. Uncrossing his arms, he caught Lance in a tight embrace and sighed. "Strip anything would be nice if it were just the two of us," Justin admitted. Lance tucked his head beneath Justin's chin and hugged him. He felt so warm and safe that Lance didn't want to go back to the table with the others. He wanted to stay here the rest of the night, in Justin's arms.

"You still pissy?" Lance asked. He looked up as JC stepped into the hallway.

"A little," Justin admitted, turning to JC.

JC blushed slightly, but he cleared his throat and asked, "You guys coming back?"

"You playing strip poker?" Justin asked, frowning.

JC shook his head. "I don't need you guys to strip just to know I'll beat you hands down at the game," he said, grinning.

Justin laughed. "Tell me about it," he said. Squeezing Lance gently, he looked down at him and asked, "You playing?"

Lance nodded. "I should warn you guys, though," he said, as Justin took his hand and let Lance lead him back to the kitchen. "I suck at poker."

"No shit," JC said, clapping Lance on the back. "When I'm playing, you all suck."

Justin laughed again, his hand comfortable in Lance's, and Lance hoped the game didn't last too long into the evening. Justin's little bout of jealousy had turned him on, and he was glad they weren't playing strip poker, or the other guys would get an eyeful when Lance got down to the bare minimum and they would all see his slight erection. Already he couldn't wait to lose and get Justin alone again.

All I Ever Wanted
88. Candy Coated Kiss
by NSyncGrrl

Chris stared into the darkness of his room and popped another gumbdrop into his mouth. What time was it? He didn't know. It was late, and he had been lying in bed for hours, it seemed. But when he sat up and looked at the clock, only fifteen minutes had passed since the last time he checked the time. Damn, he thought, sighing. Why can't I fucking sleep?

He knew the answer. Because his mind wouldn't stop thinking. If only he could turn it off, maybe he'd be able to get some rest. But every time he closed his eyes he saw Joey. What had ever possessed him to kiss Joey in the first place? He had been upset, and lonely, and Joey was just so willing to comfort him when Dani fooled around on him, and he had been so eager for the attention. How long had it been since he was with a guy like that? There had been Steven, back in college, but that was so long ago, Chris almost forgot how it felt to be held in strong arms against a masculine body. Almost. But with Joey, all those feelings came flooding back, leaving Chris shaky and hungry for more than just the few innocent touches and soft kisses they'd shared. The fact that they were friends didn't help matters -- Chris loved spending time with Joey, just being with him, watching him smile, hearing him laugh, joking and playing around and goofing off with him. And now? Now he liked Joey's touch, his kisses, his flirting and the way it made him feel when Joey looked at him with those sparkling brown eyes of his. What the hell am I supposed to do now? Chris thought bitterly.

He'd have to tell Dani. There was nothing else he could do -- he would rather be with Joey than her, and he needed to tell her now before things went any further between him and Joey. But then he wondered if anything would happen between them. Joey still had feelings for Lance -- Chris knew this. He understood the way it felt to long for someone he couldn't have. He was cool with it, because even though he knew Joey wanted Lance, Chris liked the way it felt to be close to Joey, and he knew when Joey touched him, he wasn't thinking of Lance. Chris could see it in his eyes. His large, deep, expressive eyes.

You're falling hard, Chris admonished himself, smiling. But he didn't care -- he was enjoying the ride. He could see a change in the way Joey looked at him, and he thought maybe he could make Joey fall for him, as well. Now wouldn't that make things interesting? Chris grinned in the darkness, imagining how nice it would be to stay in Joey's arms at night while they were on the road, back on tour.

But first, he had to tell Dani. He didn't want to lose her as a friend, but when he thought about her, the excitement he used to feel was gone. He needed that in a relationship, that feeling of being on the edge of a gaping abyss and looking down into the blackness, that dizziness that both thrilled and terrified him at the same time. And he just didn't feel that way with her anymore. He needed to let her know.

Just not right now, Chris thought, sitting up in bed. The clock read three in the morning, and he was fairly sure she wouldn't want to hear from him this late. But Chris wanted to talk to someone -- if he couldn't sleep, it wasn't fair that everyone else could. And he knew just who he wanted to wake up.

Snagging the bag of gumdrops, Chris left his room and tiptoed down the hall. He stopped in front of Joey's door and raised his hand to knock, but thought better of it. With a slight grin on his face, he tried the doorknob. It twisted easily in his hand. As quietly as possible, he pushed the door open slowly and peeked into the room.

Joey lay on the bed in just a pair of thin boxer briefs that glowed dimly in the dark room. An eerie light played across the bed, odd colors flitting across Joey's bare chest and legs, reds and greens that blinked and danced into the room. Pushing the door open wider, Chris saw that the light came from the television, muted but still on. The only sound in the room was Joey's light snores.

Coming into the room, Chris closed the door behind him and walked over to the bed. He reached out and touched Joey's leg, just barely brushing against the fine hairs on his thigh. Then he trailed his finger up Joey's hip, over his underwear, across the expanse of his chest, and down the inside of his arm. A brief smile crossed Joey's face and was gone. Sitting down on the edge of the bed, Chris opened the bag of gumdrops and picked out one of the sugary candies. He held it between his forefinger and thumb and dangled the candy over Joey's mouth. Joey's lips were slightly open, and his breath was hot against Chris's hand. Oh so carefully, Chris eased the candy between Joey's lips, and Joey's tongue licked out, wetting Chris's fingers and tasting the gumdrop.

Joey's lips closed over the candy, sucking greedily, and Chris felt the warmth of Joey's mouth as his tongue wrapped around Chris's fingers. Chris took his hand away and pulled out another gumdrop. He watched Joey's jaw as he chewed the first candy slowly, and when he swallowed it, Chris placed another one on his lips.

Joey's hand reached up and latched onto Chris's wrist. His eyes flew open, an unreadable expression in them as he stared at Chris by the faint light of the TV. His mouth opened wide, and his lips closed over Chris's fingers up to the knuckles. They were wet and soft and impossibly warm. Inside his mouth, Joey's tongue took the gumdrop out of Chris's grip and licked the sugar off of Chris's fingers. When Chris tried to pull back, Joey held him tightly. He sucked gently on Chris's fingers, and Chris closed his eyes so Joey wouldn't see how much this was turning him on.

Then Joey released Chris's hand, and Chris eased his fingers out of Joey's mouth, hating how cold and damp they felt after the heat of Joey. Softly, Joey asked, "You came to feed me candy?"

Chris grinned. "I couldn't sleep," he whispered. He didn't trust himself to speak any louder -- he didn't want Joey to hear the quiver in his voice.

Joey rolled over on his side and scooted back. Patting the bed where he was just laying, he looked up at Chris. "Lie down," he said.

Chris threw himself down onto the bed and, lying on his back, grinned

up at Joey. Beneath him the sheets were soft and warm from Joey's body, and Joey leaned over slightly, his closeness as sharp and dangerous as a dagger suspended above Chris. Joey studied him for long minutes, blinking slowly, still sleepy. Then he reached out and traced the curve of Chris's cheekbone, his touch feathery on Chris's skin. Chris swallowed hard and watched Joey's mouth spread into an easy grin. Joey rested his head in the crook of his arm and his breath fanned against Chris's temple, tickling him. "You have any more candy you want to share?" Joey whispered.

Holding up the bag of gumdrops, Chris said, "Right here. Want some more?"

Joey nodded, and Chris pulled out another gumdrop. He pressed it against Joey's lips, but when Joey opened his mouth, Chris got his finger away before it slipped inside with the candy. Joey leaned forward but Chris was quicker, and Joey pouted as he chewed on the gumdrop. Then Chris popped one of the candies into his own mouth, grinning at the sweet flavor. "Want another one?" Chris asked.

But Joey shook his head. "I'm tired," he murmured, snuggling closer to Chris. His lips brushed Chris's forehead gently.

Chris picked out another gumdrop and placed it on his own mouth. He bit the bottom of the candy and wiggled it between his lips, grinning.

Suddenly Joey sat up a little, leaning into Chris, and his lips closed over the gumdrop. His tongue licked the sugar from Chris's lips, his teeth biting the candy in half. Chris looked at Joey's closed eyelids and even though he promised himself he wouldn't, he couldn't help but whimper when Joey's lips touched his. Joey kissed the gumdrop out from between Chris's teeth, his tongue delving into Chris's mouth, warm and soft and large and sugary sweet mixed with Joey's own spicy taste. Chris moaned into Joey's mouth and grabbed a handful of Joey's hair, pulling him down. Joey ran his arms beneath Chris and hugged him close, his grip strong and exciting.

Pulling away, Joey rested his head on Chris's shoulder and sighed. Chris laid in Joey's embrace and closed his eyes, listening as his friend's breath evened out and Joey fell back asleep. Carefully, Chris eased his arms around Joey, lacing his hands together against Joey's back. Beneath Joey's weight, Chris felt safe and comfortable, and a welcome heaviness settled over him. He let Joey's gentle breathing lull him to a much needed sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
89. Interruptions
by NSyncGrrl

Lance was standing naked in the bathroom, one hand under the tub faucet testing the water, when the doorbell rang. Of course, he thought sourly. JC had called the gas company earlier because he said he smelled gas outside the kitchen window that morning, and the lady on the phone said the technician would be by before noon. Lance sat around all morning waiting and no one had shown up, so he finally decided to take a shower and get dressed. And the minute I'm about to step in the shower, he thought, cutting off the water, the tech arrives. Of course.

Wrapping a towel around his waist, Lance headed for the front door. Joey and Chris had gone to the mall earlier, and JC was down at the studio, trying to get an opening for them to practice, and where was Justin? Outside, somewhere. JC's Corvette was acting up a little and Justin thought he knew what the problem was. Nevermind the fact that Justin knew absolutely nothing about cars. But he had seen a show on TV and swore that the problem was easy to fix, and Lance was surprised he had been out in the garage for this long already. He just hoped Justin put everything back together the way he found it before JC came home. If JC saw Justin under the hood of his car ... Lance grinned at the thought of JC so apoplectic he would be rendered speechless. Sometimes it was easier to ignore Justin than argue with him, especially when he thought he was right.

Lance opened the front door to find a young man, about his own age, dressed in a grimy work uniform with the gas company's logo stitched onto one breast pocket. The man had a smarmy air about him, with his pasty skin and greasy hair that hung in front of shifty eyes. With a smile that slid across his face like oil over water, the technician held out one hand to Lance. "Hey, man," he said softly, the tone of his voice suggestive. He let his gaze run down Lance's body, lingering on the small towel draped around Lance's waist, and Lance wished he owned a bathrobe. "I'm here to read your meter."

I don't think so, Lance thought, but he swallowed thickly and shook the man's hand. His palm was too warm in Lance's hand, and Lance pulled his away quickly. "I think there's a leak," Lance said. "I'm not sure. I didn't call."

The man looked around him into the house, his eyes widening at the high quality furniture and large screen TV in the living room. Lance could almost hear his mind calculating the cost of furnishing the place. "Where's the meter at?" the man asked. Lance glanced at his shirt -- his name, Doug, was stitched on the other pocket.

"I'm not sure," Lance said again. He stepped out onto the porch and pointed around the side of the house. "I think it's around the back."

"Can you show me?" Doug asked, stepping closer to Lance, and Lance had to fight the urge to step back.

"I don't really live here," Lance replied. He tried not to look at the technician, but he felt the man's oily stare and now he really wanted a shower. Badly. "My friend --"

Justin's voice cut him off. "Who the hell are you?" he asked, stepping up onto the porch. Lance turned to him, relieved. Justin's denim shirt was covered with black oil and dirt. The sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, and his upper arms were filthy. He held a dirty rag in his hands and was cleaning off his fingers. He glanced at Lance, taking in his lover's bare chest and the towel around his waist, and then he frowned at the technician. When Doug didn't answer immediately, Justin stepped between him and Lance and asked, "Well?" The tech looked at Lance. "Hello?" Justin asked, anger slowly rising into his voice.

"From the gas company," Doug whispered. Clearing his throat, he spoke a little louder. "Someone called about a leak --"

"Around the back," Justin said, pointing. He glared at Doug, and Lance stepped back inside the house.

Doug smiled his slick grin. "Your friend was going to show me the meter," he said, nodding at Lance.

"My friend," Justin replied, emphasizing the word, "isn't dressed. You work for the company; you find the damn meter yourself."

Doug opened his mouth to say something else, but Justin followed Lance into the house and closed the door, leaving the technician standing on the porch. When Justin looked at him, Lance smiled sweetly. "You're a mess," he said softly.

"You're naked," Justin replied. "Why are you answering the door like that?"

"Who else is here?" Lance countered. "I was about to get in the shower when the doorbell rang. I couldn't just ignore it."

Justin sighed and rubbed his forehead with one grimy hand, leaving a small smudge of oil behind. Lance laughed. Stepping closer, he kissed Justin quickly. Justin grinned down at him. "Maybe I should join you in that shower," he whispered, nipping Lance's earlobe lightly.

"Not a bad idea," Lance replied. When Justin tried to hug him, though, Lance stepped back. "Take off that shirt," he said, "and wash your hands. You're filthy."

"It'll come off in the shower," Justin said. He reached out for Lance, his fingers leaving smudges along Lance's waist.

Lance brushed his hand away. "Justin, you need to clean up first," he admonished lightly. Pouting, he looked up at Justin and asked, "Please?"

Justin rolled his eyes and sighed. "Fine," he said, heading for the kitchen. He unbuttoned his shirt and dropped it in the foyer, the white tank top he wore beneath it outlining his perfect muscles. Lance thought about calling him back -- what was a little oil anyway, if they ended up in the shower? -- but then Justin was already at the sink, scrubbing his arms

beneath the running water.

The doorbell rang again. Justin looked back over his shoulder as Lance answered it. Doug stood there, and when he saw Lance, that slippery smile spread across his face again. "Hey there," he said. "Can I use your phone to call the office?"

Before Lance could reply, Justin was there, standing behind him. He glared at Doug over Lance's shoulder and ran one hot, wet arm around Lance's waist protectively. "What do you want now?" he asked, scowling.

"He wants to use the phone," Lance said. Justin opened the door and pulled Lance back against him. Lance could feel Justin's slight erection against his butt and knew that the thought of a shower together had turned him on. As Doug came into the house, Lance pretended to stumble and pushed against Justin's crotch slightly. He heard Justin's sharp intake of breath and suddenly he was horny, too, and he wanted this gas tech to just go away and leave them alone. Justin's hand tightened around Lance's waist, and Lance leaned back against Justin, arching his back to rub his butt against the growing bulge in Justin's jeans. Pointing to the phone in the foyer, Justin muttered, "Right there." When his hand strayed lower down Lance's belly, Lance caught it in both of his hands and held it tightly.

Doug looked at them as he dialed a number. "Go sit down," Justin whispered into Lance's ear, and he nudged him gently in the direction of the sofa, which was angled so that Doug wouldn't be able to see him from where he stood by the phone. Lance smiled at Justin and complied. Sitting down on the sofa, he propped his feet up on the coffee table, his knees spread wide apart, and leaned his head back, waiting. He heard Doug's voice as he talked to a dispatcher on the phone. He could just imagine the hateful way Justin was watching the technician right now, his arms probably crossed in front of his chest, all but tapping his foot in his impatience to get the man out of their house. Finally Lance heard the receiver being hung up, and Doug said something to Justin and laughed, but Justin didn't laugh back. And then the door opened and closed, and Justin came around the sofa to find Lance's legs open wide, the towel barely covering his own erection. The tip of his penis just peeked out from under the towel. Lance looked up at Justin and grinned.

Without a word, Justin stepped over the table to stand between Lance's legs. Leaning down, he kissed Lance hungrily, pushing him back against the sofa, his hand slipping beneath the towel to squeeze at Lance's dick. Lance grabbed a fistful of Justin's tank top and pulled him down, his tongue easing between Justin's lips to taste the sweetness of Justin's mouth as he laid down along the length of the sofa, Justin climbing on top of him. He knelt between Lance's open legs, supporting himself over Lance with one hand while the other continued to caress Lance's erection.

Lance unbuttoned Justin's jeans, tugging the zipper down slowly. Easing his hand into Justin's boxers, Lance stroked his hard cock and moaned into Justin's mouth. Justin pushed the towel out of the way and began to rub Lance's erection insistently, his tongue working in Lance's mouth. Lance had Justin's dick out of his pants and was squeezing it rhythmically when the doorbell rang a third time. "Fuck," he whispered.

"He is so dead," Justin said, breathless. Pushing himself off of the couch, he headed for the door.

"Justin --" Lance called out. Justin stopped and looked at him, desire and frustration written plainly on his face. Lance pointed at Justin's crotch and said, "You're hanging out, babe."

Blushing slightly, Justin tucked his dick back into his boxers and zipped up his jeans, leaving them unbuttoned. Then he winked at Lance and crossed the room in a few quick steps. Lance sat up and peeked over the back of the sofa as Justin threw the door open wide. "What is it now?" Justin asked, his voice barely held in check.

Doug glanced into the house. "I can't find the leak," he said, smiling apologetically at Lance. Lance rolled his eyes and plopped back down. Stretching his legs out, Lance lounged on the sofa and listened. "Maybe if you can show me where you smelled it --"

"I didn't smell it," Justin replied. "My friend did."

"Maybe he can show me --"

"He's not here." Doug must have looked over at the sofa, because Justin explained, "Not him, another friend."

There was a long pause. Lance could only imagine what Doug the gas tech was thinking now. Then Doug asked, "Well maybe you can just show me --"

Justin sighed, and if Doug had known him, he would've known Justin was at the end of his patience. What little he has, Lance thought, grinning. "In the kitchen," Justin said, his voice tight. The door closed and then Doug passed the sofa, Justin right behind him. Doug glanced over at Lance and smiled.

Angrily Justin pushed him, and he stumbled into the kitchen. "What are you looking at?" Justin snarled. "Keep going." Lance grinned.

Lance could hear Doug in the kitchen, trying to engage Justin in a conversation, but Justin wasn't talking. Chances are, Justin's mind was back in the living room with Lance, and the longer he had to wait to get back to what they were doing, the more his anger would grow. When Lance couldn't stand the throbbing ache in his groin any more, he called out, "Justin?"

Justin's head peeked around the corner. The frown on his face broke into a sunny smile when he saw Lance, still stretched out along the couch. "What is it?" he asked.

"What is it?" Lance replied. "Did you forget me already?"

"No," Justin replied. "He's trying to find the leak. It might take a while --"

Lance ran a hand down his stomach, over the towel, and pulled the towel up. Justin's words died in his throat and his eyes widened when he saw Lance was still hard beneath the towel. "Justin," Lance called again, his voice soft and deep. He ran a finger along the length of his erection,

closing his eyes at the pleasure of his own touch.

Justin disappeared back into the kitchen, and Lance heard his voice, angry and rushed. "Okay, you can't find it," he said, "fine. Leave. We'll call you when we smell it again."

"But --" Doug tried to protest, but Justin cut him off.

"You've got to go now," Justin said. "We're in the middle of something. We've got to go somewhere. You need to leave."

Lance flicked the towel back down over his crotch as Doug came out of the kitchen, Justin pushing him towards the door. "The leak --" Doug tried again, but Justin wasn't hearing it.

"I'll call the office," Justin said. Opening the door, he gave Doug a shove outside. "Really. Now get out." He closed the door, and then opened it again. "Ring the doorbell again and I'll kill you myself. Now get the fuck out of here." By the time the door slammed shut, Justin was already crawling over Lance again, fumbling with the zipper of his pants as his lips found Lance's. Lance pulled Justin down into his embrace, his mouth hungry for Justin's. Justin slipped his hand under the towel and took Lance's dick, squeezing gently. Lance eased Justin's own erection out of his boxers and pulled Justin down on top of him until their cocks rubbed against each other, hard and swollen and throbbing. Cupping Lance's balls in his hand, Justin eased two fingers inside of him and Lance moaned at the sensation. Forget the shower, Lance thought as Justin began to suck greedily at his neck. Lance held Justin in a tight embrace, his hands fisted in Justin's curls.

Suddenly the front door opened, and Lance felt Justin stiffen against him. "You told him not to knock," Lance pointed out as Justin sat up, scowling over the back of the couch.

"Hey Curly," Joey said, coming into the house. Lance sat up and smiled guiltily as Chris came in behind Joey. "Well, this is a surprise," Joey said wryly, pushing his sunglasses up on top of his forehead. His hands were full of shopping bags, and Chris carried more packages.

"You guys gonna make out in every room of the house?" Chris asked, dropping his bags in the foyer.

Lance ran a hand down Justin's arm. "Don't," he warned, when he saw the anger flare across Justin's face. Justin looked down at him and frowned. "Please," Lance said softly. "Don't fight."

"Fine," Justin replied. He rezippered his pants and pulled the towel down over Lance's crotch again as Joey and Chris came into the living room. Justin glared at them but didn't say a word.

"What are you two up to?" Joey asked. He nodded at the sofa. "Besides the obvious."

Lance shrugged. "I was getting in the shower when the gas man came."

"Did he fix the leak?" Chris asked.

"He couldn't find it," Justin said, sitting back. He shifted his erection into a more comfortable position and pouted.

Chris looked at the frustrated look on Justin's face and grinned. "Did you even let him into the house?" he asked, laughing.

"Yes, I did," Justin replied.

"And then what?" Joey asked. "You threw him out?"

"He was taking too long," Justin said, not looking at their friends.

Joey laughed and clicked on the TV. "You guys gonna hog up the whole couch, or can we sit here and watch the game?"

Lance stood up, gripping the towel around him tightly. "I've got to shower, I'm sorry," he said.

"Don't freeze," Chris joked. Eyeing the bulge of Lance's erection, hidden by the towel, he added, "You look like you need a cold shower right about now."

Lance blushed but ignored the comment. Joey and Chris plopped down on the sofa where he had been laying, already losing interest in him as the TV blared to life. As he passed Justin, Lance reached out and tugged at his lover's arm. "Come on," he whispered.

Justin let himself be pulled to his feet and followed Lance to the hallway. Away from the others, Lance kissed Justin's pouty lips and grinned. "What about that shower?" he asked.

"Sounds good to me," Justin replied. "At least no one can interrupt us there."

Lance laughed and then whipped the towel off of his waist. He let Justin look over his naked body, the wanting shining in his eyes, but when Justin reached out for him, Lance danced out of his way. "Catch me," he said, and then he ran down the hall, heading for the bathroom.

He heard Justin's laughter somewhere behind him. When he reached the bathroom, strong arms encircled his waist, trapping him, and soft kisses covered the back of his neck. He pulled Justin inside the small bathroom and closed the door behind them, locking it to make sure they would be left alone.

All I Ever Wanted
90. Nothing Else Matters
by NSyncGrrl

JC sat cross-legged on his bed, the phone to his ear, when Lance walked into his room. JC looked up from the planner open in his lap and smiled distractedly, even though the music coming through the receiver told him he was still on hold. "JC?" Lance asked softly.

JC grinned. "On hold," he said, motioning to the phone. "What's up?"

Lance shrugged. "Are we going into the studio soon?" he asked, his voice still quiet.

"I don't know," JC admitted. "I'm trying to get us a few days now. Hopefully as soon as two weeks' time. Why?"

Lance sighed. "No reason," he muttered. "Can we get in any sooner?"

JC rolled his eyes. "Lance, I'm trying --" On the phone the music clicked off, and JC spoke into the receiver. "Hello? This is JC Chasez, from NSync?"

Lance sighed again. JC looked up as he turned and left, the slump of his shoulders making JC wonder if he had said something that upset him. But he just didn't know when they could get into the studio, if at all, even though he wanted some practice time under their belt before the next leg of their tour. As he finished working out the details with the secretary over the phone, Justin came into his room. JC looked up as Justin closed the door behind him, and then the woman on the phone told him they could have a few days sometime next week, hold for the confirmation number please -- after writing it down in his planner, he hung up the phone and grimaced at Justin. "I'm sorry about that," he said. "I didn't mean to piss him off."

Justin frowned as he sat down beside JC on his bed. "Who?" he asked. "Lance?"

JC glanced at Justin, confused. "He was just in here," JC explained. "You didn't run into him?" When Justin shook his head, JC said, "I thought he got mad at me. He asked about the studio and I told him I didn't know --"

Justin laid back on the pillows, his arms stretched above his head, and stared at the ceiling. "You pissed him off?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know," JC admitted. "I got the feeling he wasn't too happy when he left."

"He's pissed," Justin said, "but I doubt you had anything to do with it."

JC closed the planner and looked at Justin closely. "What's wrong?" he asked. He hoped it had nothing to do with the relationship between Justin and Lance -- they didn't seem to have any problems when it came to each

other, and he would hate to see something crop up now, after they were out to the whole group.

Justin sighed and glanced over at JC. "It's his mother," he said. "She hates me."

"You?" JC asked, laughing. "Justin, you're the cutest thing since Hello Kitty. How could Mrs. Bass hate you?"

"She hates what I've done to her son," Justin replied. He sighed again, a heart-wrenching sound. "She doesn't like the fact that we're lovers. She doesn't like the fact that he likes me and I like him and we're both guys. She doesn't like --"

"The fact that her son is gay," JC finished. When Justin looked at him sharply, he sighed. "Why can't you say it, Justin? You're gay. Lance is gay. End of discussion."

"I'm not --" Justin started, but JC cut him off.

"Justin, you're in love with a guy. Hello? That's gay." JC frowned, daring Justin to argue with him.

Justin turned back to his contemplation of the ceiling. "I don't think of it that way," he said softly. "Why do we need to name it? Why can't it just be love? Not gay, not bi, not straight -- just love. That's it. Two people who want to be with each other more than anything else in the entire world. Love."

"Justin," JC started, and then he sighed. How could he argue with logic like that? "I know you love Lance. I know he loves you. But you have to face the fact that you're both male. That means most people won't accept your relationship. Do you ever stop and think about what the fans would say if they knew you two were together?"

"I don't care what they'd say," Justin pouted, but JC saw that he was thinking about it. Justin closed his eyes tightly, his jaw clenching like it did when he was really upset. "JC, do you think it's wrong? To feel this way? God, how could it be wrong? It feels so right when I'm with him."

"It's not wrong," JC said, reaching out to place a comforting hand on Justin's arm. "You just have to realize that not everyone will agree with me. Like Lance's mom."

"She hates me," Justin whispered. A single tear traced its way down the side of his face to dissolve in his curls. "Lance wants to go home so badly but she ... she doesn't want me to come with him."

"What are you going to do?" JC asked softly.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "I told him to go home without me, I'd understand. I mean, I hate being away from him, but if that's what we have to do ..." He shrugged again. "But I know it'll be hard for him, and I want to be there, to support him if nothing else, and she doesn't want me there. I don't know what to do."

JC rubbed Justin's arm and asked, "What does Lance want to do?"

"He wants to go home," Justin said. He turned to JC and smiled faintly. "Hell, who doesn't? And he wants me to go too. I would love to, but I just don't think it would be the best thing. I mean, she doesn't accept that we're together, she's definitely not letting us share a bed, you know?"

JC grinned. "You can sleep without him for a few nights," he said playfully, but the morose way Justin looked at him said otherwise. Growing serious again, JC said, "Justin, I don't know what to tell you. I've never been in your shoes. I've never dated a guy before, or had to deal with telling people I love that I'm not quite what they've always thought I was." JC closed his eyes, remembering the way it felt to kiss Joey, and then pushed the memory away. "I don't think I'm strong enough to do that, I really don't." Smiling at Justin, he said, "I want you to know I'm very proud of you, and very jealous, for having the courage to admit that you love Lance. I could never admit to loving a guy."

Justin smiled slightly. "You admitted to kissing one," he pointed out.

"Only to you," JC said. "And only because I was going crazy inside. I needed to hear myself talk about it, just to get it out. But I couldn't follow through with that -- I couldn't ..." He sighed. "I couldn't live like that, on love alone."

"You could live on music alone," Justin said. Leave it to him to twist my words around, JC thought.

But JC nodded. "Probably," he admitted, thinking about it. Music was his life, his whole existence. Without it, he didn't think he could survive. He only felt alive when he was singing, or in the studio, or writing lyrics, or working with someone on their voice and pitch and tone. Yeah, he could live on music. But love? He didn't think so. Some days he wondered how Justin managed to do it, throw caution to the wind and love Lance like nothing else mattered. He wondered when a snag would come in their idyllic relationship, something other than Justin's petty jealousy or Joey's overeager advances, to really test their meddle. Maybe Lance's mom was just what they needed, though he'd never tell Justin that. Maybe they needed her to oppose them so they could weather it together and see where they stood after the storm had passed -- he suspected they'd still be side by side, but he thought maybe they needed to be sure of it themselves. Maybe this was just what they needed to see if they really could survive in the real world on just their love for each other.

Justin sighed. "JC," he said, his voice low, "what should I do?"

"I can't tell you that," JC said. He picked at the spiral rings on his planner. "I think maybe you need to follow your own heart on this. If you feel like you need to go home with him, and if he feels like you need to be there with him, then go. Forget what anyone else says. Just do what you feel is right."

Justin snorted. "I always do what I think is right," he admitted.

"I know," JC said, smiling. "That's why you get into so much trouble."

"I do not!" Justin cried, but a slow smile spread across his face and JC was glad to see it didn't disappear. Turning to JC, he asked, "Am I really

that much trouble?"

JC laughed. "Let's just say I'm glad you're Lance's handful and not mine." Justin laughed with him. Suddenly an idea came to JC. "Hey, where's Lance's house? I mean, in relation to his parents'?"

Justin shrugged. "Close by, I think, but I'm not sure." He scrunched up his brow, thinking. "Maybe about an hour's ride away. Why?"

"Well," JC said carefully, "why not stay at his house? That way you two can still visit his parents, have the old heart to heart you desperately need to have with his mom, and still stay together by yourselves." He saw Justin think it over, his mouth twisting up at one corner as he considered the idea. "Well?" JC prompted.

"Might work," Justin conceded. "I'll have to ask Lance about it --"

"Tell him you thought it up," JC offered. "I don't mind."

Justin rolled his eyes. "He knows me too well," he said, grinning. "If I tell him that he'll know I'm lying."

"Will he get mad that we talked about his mom?" JC asked, concerned. He himself would be a little ticked if he found out the others were talking about his parents behind his back, even if it nothing bad was said. He was just funny about family that way.

But Justin shook his head. "He told me I should talk to you," he said. "We didn't know what to do, and he thought a fresh perspective might help out a lot."

"Is that why he came in here?" JC wondered out loud. "Jeez, I'm sorry, Justin. I didn't mean to brush him off like that."

Justin shrugged. "He wanted to know our schedule, that's all. You know how he is. Always wants to know where we're going next and why. If he can give his mom a specific date when he'll be home, he thinks she might let up a little, you know?"

JC nodded. "Well, I got the studio for next week. If you guys want to take off now, be back by then ..." He shrugged. "I have no problem with that."

"I'll ask him," Justin said. Sitting up, he smiled at JC. "I think he'll want to stay until after we're done in the studio. We might head on over to my mom's, though, see what's shaking over there. And JC?" His smile widened, and he said softly, "Thanks."

"No problem," JC said. "Anytime you need to talk, I'm here for you. For both of you. Remember that."

"I will," Justin said. As he left the room, JC wondered again what it would be like to live as Justin and Lance did -- so enamored with each other that they didn't care what the rest of the world had to say about them. He just couldn't live on a love like that, where nothing else mattered but just he and his lover. How he envied Justin's strength and conviction! How indeed, JC thought, turning back to his planner.

All I Ever Wanted
91. Grocery Shopping
by NSyncGrrl

There was nothing in the house to eat, or so Justin said, and he decided they needed to go to the store. "We've got plenty of food," JC said, opening the cupboard to display shelves full of boxed pasta and canned ravioli.

But Justin shook his head. "We're out of cereal," he said, and Lance laughed.

"Just because we're out of cereal doesn't mean we're out of food," he said. He sat at the kitchen table, working on the daily crossword. Justin pouted, and Lance reached out for him as he walked behind his chair.

"I need my cereal," Justin whispered loudly, letting Lance pull him into his lap.

"Then we'll go buy you some," Lance whispered back. He kissed Justin's cheek quickly, and JC smiled at them. He leaned against the counter and said, "Well, let's go to the store."

In the end, Joey and Chris wanted to know where they were going, and they ended up coming along, too. Justin got the car keys and wouldn't give them up, and Lance called shotgun when it was apparent that Justin was driving. JC sat in the back seat between Joey and Chris, and when Justin turned around at one point he saw that they both had their hands on JC's knees, whispering things to him that brought a deep blush to his cheeks. Lance laughed and placed his own hand on Justin's leg, high up on his thigh where he brushed against Justin's penis every time they turned a corner. Justin took the long, twisty road to the store, and when they arrived, he was already too horny to want to shop much. Get the cereal and get home, he thought as JC got a shopping cart. Cereal and home. That's it.

Unfortunately, the others had different plans. Chris began picking up everything he could find -- anything with a large, colorful package went into the cart. He kept saying, "Look at this! And this! Ooh, I need one of these!" Joey laughed at him, and when Chris would turn away from the cart, his eyes already drawn to the next item, Joey picked out something from the basket and set it back on the shelf. If Chris noticed that the cart wasn't filling up as rapidly as it should have, he didn't say anything.

JC wanted to go down every aisle, just to make sure he didn't miss anything. Justin followed him down two aisles, Lance's hand in his, and then he grew tired of looking at boxes of crackers and jars of pickles and bottles of ketchup, and he tugged Lance's hand gently, urging him to follow. "We'll be in magazines," Justin called as they ditched the others.

"You looking for something in particular?" Lance asked as he trailed behind Justin.

Justin shrugged. "I just wanted to lose them," he said, looking back at

Lance over his shoulder with that look in his eye that told Lance he was hungry and ready for something sweet. Like you, he thought, grinning slightly.

Lance laughed. "We're not going into the bathroom here," he said, shaking his head. "You can wait until we get home, Justin. A little self-restraint won't kill you."

"It won't?" Justin asked innocently as they turned down another aisle. A rack of books and magazines ran the length of the aisle, and Justin stopped in front of it, picking up the latest issue of Bop.

As he began to flip through the pages, Lance let go of Justin's hand and put his hands on his hips, looking over the rack. "No one ever died from a bad case of blue balls," he said, picking up Details.

"Sometimes," Justin admitted, glancing up from the magazine in his hands to run his gaze down Lance's sexy body, "I would argue that."

Lance laughed again. "You'll argue anything if you're in the mood," he said.

"I'm in the mood now," Justin said.

Lance looked at him over the top of his yellow tinted sunglasses. "You're always in the mood," he pointed out.

Justin grinned as the others turned into the aisle, JC pushing the basket. Chris snagged four bags of the hottest, spiciest potato chips as they passed the display, and when he dropped them into the cart, Joey put two of four bags back. Chris caught him out of the corner of his eye. "Hey!" he cried, grabbing the chips. He tossed them into the basket and looked at the contents critically. "Where's the rest of my shit?" He looked up at Joey, who leaned on JC's shoulder, both of them laughing so hard that tears ran from their eyes. "You put it all back? I wanted that stuff!"

JC pushed the basket past Chris, who punched Joey's arm, hard. Joey dodged a second punch and raced down the aisle, Chris on his heels. Justin dropped the Bop magazine into the cart as JC wheeled it by them. "What's that for?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

Justin grinned. "You'll never believe the great picture they have of Lance in there."

Lance blushed, setting his own magazine back. "Justin," he said, sighing. "What are you going to do with that?"

"Hang it up in my room," Justin said, pouting. JC laughed.

"Oh God," Lance groaned, rolling his eyes. "I'm not sleeping in a room with my own face plastered all over the walls."

"You won't see it in the dark," Justin pointed out. He tugged on one of the belt loops on Lance's pants, pulling him closer. He stuck his tongue out, licking along the edge of Lance's ear, and Lance bunched his shoulder up, giggling at the touch. "I want you," Justin whispered, his voice breathy and hot in Lance's ear.

"You'll have to wait," Lance replied.

"I don't want to wait," Justin said, pouting, but Lance laughed and pulled away as another customer came into the aisle.

After what seemed like hours, following JC up and down every single aisle, their cart was overflowing with soda and chips and whatever else Chris decided to pick up along the way. He watched Joey like a hawk, and now the game seemed to be putting the items back without Chris catching him, easier said than done. If Chris saw Joey headed towards the basket, he pushed him away or blocked his path, and Joey laughed as he tried to edge around Chris, reaching into the basket for the first thing he could grab and then running away with it, Chris in pursuit. Finally they reached the last aisle, where cheese and eggs lined one wall, ice cream in freezers lined the other. Justin picked up a can of Redi-Whip and looked at Lance, raising his eyebrows. "Justin, no," Lance said, laughing, as he tossed the can into the basket.

"Yum," Justin replied. "I like whipped cream."

Lance blushed at the suggestive tone in Justin's voice. "I'm not even going to ask what you plan to do with it."

In a loud whisper, Justin replied, "Well, first we'll get naked, and then I'll cover you with it, and then I'll lick it all off of you --"

"Justin!" Lance cried, looking around, but JC was too far away to hear them and there was no one else in the aisle.

Justin grinned. "Then I'll ... maybe I should get two cans? Ooh -- Cheez Wiz!"

"No," Lance said, taking the can of Cheez Wiz from Justin and putting it back on the shelf. "Cheese is not something I want to smell like when we're making love."

"Okay," Justin conceded. Turning around, he saw the display of ice cream toppings, and he made a bee-line for it. "How about this?" he asked, picking up a bottle of Hershey's chocolate syrup.

"How about not?" Lance replied. He looked at the display and frowned. "All this stuff is too sickening sweet," he pointed out. "You want something to lick off, we should go to that shop in the mall and buy edible lotion, or something."

"I liked the strawberries," Justin said. "Whipped cream should be fun."

"But that's about it," Lance added.

Justin picked up a bottle of Magic Shell. "Here's something," he said, grinning broadly. "It'll be like eating candy off of you."

Lance laughed. "It only gets hard on ice cream, silly."

"Why's that?" Justin asked, frowning. He read the back of the bottle but it didn't say anything other than Use as directed.

"It hardens when it gets cold," Lance pointed out. "It'll just be gooey

chocolate mess with us."

"Too hot, eh?" Justin asked, laughing. As he put the bottle back, Joey and Chris came up behind them. "Checking out the sex food?" Chris asked, grinning.

"What makes you say that?" Lance asked, trying to look innocent.

Joey laughed. "Now this pineapple topping is pretty good," he said, pointing to a small bottle. "But you have to be careful. It's really sticky and you can't get it out of hair all that easily."

Justin raised an eyebrow. "Really?" he asked, reaching for the bottle, but Lance slapped his hand away.

"We don't need that," he admonished. "We have whipped cream. That's enough."

"Whipped cream?" Chris shrieked, laughing. "That's some of the best! You got Redi-Whip, I hope?" Justin grinned, nodding. "You know what's really hot? Gumdrops."

"Gumdrops?" Lance asked, frowning, but a slow smile spread across Joey's face. He looked at Chris and replied, "Gumdrops. Now that's something."

"What do you do with them?" Justin asked.

Chris shrugged. Lacing his hands over Joey's shoulder, he leaned his head on his hands and said, "Put them in your mouth and kiss them off. Come on, Justin! You can figure it out."

Justin looked at Lance and found him grinning back. "Gumdrops," he said again, softer this time. He wondered where the candy aisle was in this store.

"Personally, I'd like to try Jell-O," Joey said.

Chris looked at him. "What flavor?" he asked.

Joey shrugged. "Doesn't matter. As long as it jiggles." He turned to Chris, and the corner of his mouth ticked unconsciously. There, Justin thought, surprised. Something in that look made him wonder if JC wasn't right after all.

"Let's go see what kind they have," Chris said softly, and Joey laughed.

"I'll race you," he said, taking off at a dead run down the aisle. Chris followed him, squeals from their shoes and their incessant laughter trailing behind.

Justin turned to find Lance chewing thoughtfully on his bottom lip. Grinning, Justin asked, "You don't think ..."

"JC might be right," Lance said slowly. "I don't know. Gumdrops?"

"We can see what they have," Justin said. Taking Lance's hand, he led

the way to the candy aisle. Already he forgot about Joey and Chris, his mind on what he planned to do once he got Lance back home.

All I Ever Wanted
92. Wanting
by NSyncGrrl

Joey was awake, but he didn't feel like moving or getting out of bed just yet. He hated taking naps late in the afternoon -- he never felt like pulling himself out of bed. It was like starting the day all over again, and he didn't like waking up all that much anyway. He usually stayed up too late the night before, and was still very sleepy when he was supposed to get up. If only there was a way to wake up that didn't involve dragging himself out of bed. Sighing, he rolled over onto his stomach and let one arm dangle off the bed. The other arm covered his face, shielding his eyes from the light. Should've turned that off, he thought grimly.

Someone knocked softly on his door. He didn't know who it was, but the door was slightly ajar and he heard them push it open further. From where they stood in the doorway, it would look as if he were still asleep. Maybe if he kept perfectly still, they'd go away. Unless it's Chris, his mind whispered, surprising him. He couldn't get those gumdrops off his mind, and that impossibly sweet kiss that left him weak and breathless and so damn confused. Was that just fooling around too? Or was it beginning to mean something more, to both of them?

Joey didn't know. He took a deep, shaky breath like people sometimes did when they were sleeping and told himself he didn't want anyone to disturb him, Chris or Lance or the Pope or anybody. Then faint footsteps came into the room, and the hinges of the door creaked as it eased closed. Joey felt the presence in the room with him, a whirlwind barely held in check, and he knew it was Chris just by the way he was breathing, a little too quickly. He felt his visitor sit down on the edge of the bed and it was all he could do not to move. For long moments he lay there, trying to ignore Chris, wondering what his friend was doing, or thinking, wondering why he didn't touch him or say something or do something, and just when Joey was about to turn over and ask him what he was doing here in the first place, Chris whispered in that singsong voice of his, "Joe-ey."

Joey buried his head into the pillow and groaned slightly for effect. If Chris was in a playful mood, Joey wouldn't make this easy for him. He'd have to work to wake him up. He grinned into the pillow, picturing the look on Chris's face when Joey told him that he had been awake the whole time. It would be priceless.

"Joe-ey," Chris called again, a little louder this time. His hand reached out and touched Joey's hip, and Joey could feel a comforting warmth through his boxers where it rested against him. Chris shook him slightly, and when Joey didn't respond, he spread his hand out, covering one of Joey's buttocks and squeezing gently.

Joey breathed in sharply. Chris's hand there suddenly had him hard and horny -- another second of that intimate touch and fuck pretending, Joey would roll over and pull Chris down to him and cover him with kisses. But then Chris's hand slipped up beneath the bottom of Joey's

shirt and rubbed against his back, and Joey willed himself to stay still. "Joey, Joey, Joey," Chris sang, his hand roaming Joey's back beneath his shirt.

He considered groaning. He considered muttering "Go away" in a groggy voice. He considered rolling away from Chris's touch, but then that insistent hand would probably find its way to his chest and Joey would really be hard pressed to pretend this wasn't affecting him. Especially if he opened his eyes and saw Chris's face. Then he'd be lost, and forget the fact that he liked Lance, forget the fact that Chris was only playing around, forget everything -- he'd be lost and want Chris so badly that his arms would ache with the need. So he just stayed where he was and didn't do anything.

Then he felt a feathery touch along the inside of his arm, tracing the veins barely visible just beneath his skin. The light pressure of Chris's fingers on his skin was maddening, and Joey couldn't take it any longer. When Chris leaned over him, his fingers gentle on Joey's upper arm, Joey sprang into action. He grabbed Chris around the waist, savoring the look of surprise on his friend's face. Lifting him up easily, Joey pulled him onto the bed and rolled over. For a brief moment Chris was on top of him, his weight pressed against Joey's erection for one sweet second, and then Joey threw him down beside him on the other side of the bed. Leaning over him, he wrapped his arms around Chris, pinning him to the bed. Joey grinned down at him and said, "You thought I was sleeping."

Chris grinned back. "Anyone ever tell you that you have a nice ass, Fatone?" he asked in reply.

Joey laughed. "No," he said. He pulled one leg up over Chris's own legs, holding him down.

Nodding, Chris said, "You do. Nice and round and very squeezable."

"Thanks for letting me know," Joey said. He studied Chris's face, trying to read the expression in his friend's eyes, but Chris was so good at goofing off that Joey wasn't sure what he saw there. "I'm glad it has your approval."

"I like your ass," Chris said, laughing.

Joey thrust his hips against Chris's legs, and he smiled to see the surprise and lust suddenly spring into his friend's eyes when Chris felt the thick hardness of his dick pressed against him. "I like you touching my ass," Joey whispered, surprised at his words. But it was true. Right now, he wanted Chris. Fooling around or not, God, he wanted this man.

"Joey," Chris began, a seriousness creeping into his voice, and Joey leaned down and kissed him, pressing him back into the pillows. He felt Chris's arms encircle his chest and pull him close, and he eased his tongue into Chris's mouth, tasting licorice and cherry flavored soda. When he tried to pull back, Chris held him tight, his own lips greedy against Joey's. Joey shifted on top of Chris and rubbed against him, his cock throbbing between them.

Beside the bed, the phone rang. Joey reached for the receiver, and Chris moaned beneath him, his own erection hard against Joey's. "Hello?"

Joey rasped into the phone, out of breath. Chris kissed his cheek and tried for his lips, but the voice on the other end made Joey sit up quickly.

"Hello?" It was Dani. "Who is this?"

"Dani," Joey choked, looking down at Chris to see fear leap into his friend's eyes. Clearing his throat, Joey said, "This is Joe. Um, hi."

Silence filled the air. Chris covered his face with his hands, his fingers spread so he could watch Joey. Just as Joey was about to say something else, Dani asked, "Is Chris there?"

"Chris?" Joey asked, as if he had never heard the name. "You want to --"

"Did I catch you at a bad time?" Dani asked, a little peeved. No, not at all, Joey thought sourly. I'm just making out with your boyfriend, babe.

"Chris?" Joey asked again, not trusting himself to say anything else. On the bed Chris shook his head violently, his eyes wide and scared. He mouthed the word no and when Joey held the phone out to him, he pushed it away. Placing the phone back to his ear, Joey said, "He's not here, Dani. I don't know where he is. I sort of just woke up."

"Oh." He wondered what she was thinking right this moment. Did she miss him? Did she want to hold him, to kiss him? Suddenly Joey felt like shit, and he climbed off of Chris to stand by the bed. Just what the fuck did he think he was doing, anyway? Fooling around with a man who had someone who loved him. A man who wouldn't want anything to do with him in the long run. Joey covered his eyes with his hand and didn't look at Chris.

"You want me to tell him you called?" Joey asked quietly. Slut, his mind whispered. You're a slut. You're a whore. You're a fucking jackass, Fatone. Don't touch Chris again. Can't you find your own damn lover instead of taking everyone else's?

"Sure," Dani said, trying to sound cheerful. Joey wanted to ask her if she missed Chris right now. He wanted to know if she wanted to feel him in her arms, to love him. He needed to know so badly. What would she say? But before he could get the words out, she said, "I'm going to be in and out most of the day, so I don't know if I'll catch him or not, but tell him I called."

"I will," Joey said.

"I really need to talk to him," Dani said suddenly, and then she hurried on. "Don't tell him that, he'll just get worried. It's nothing, really. Just wanted to say hi."

"Well, hi," Joey said, hoping she would laugh.

She didn't. Instead, she sighed and said, "Sorry I woke you. Goodbye." As Joey said goodbye, the phone went dead in his ear.

"Jesus," Chris whispered. Joey turned away from the bed without looking at him and started to pull on a pair of jeans. "Joe?"

"What?" Joey tried to keep his voice steady, the lust and hunger and desire he felt just moments before dissolving away, replaced with self-loathing and reproach. It was his own damn fault -- he knew Chris had a girlfriend. This was just stupid, silly shit they were doing, fooling around and goofing off and how in the world did he ever hope to not be affected by it? Had he seriously thought he could kiss and hug and mess around with Chris and not want it to lead to anything more? "What, Chris?"

"You're mad." It wasn't a question.

Joey sighed as he zipped up his jeans. "I'm not mad at you," he said. Running a hand through his hair, he added, "I'm such a loser. I told you I should leave you alone. You have a girlfriend."

"You're not a loser," Chris said softly, and Joey turned to find Chris lying on his side, propped up on one elbow. The intense way he watched Joey was disheartening. I want you, Joey wanted to say, but he bit his tongue. God, Chris, I want you so badly. What good would it be to tell him now? Chris smiled ruefully. "You told me no promises, remember? Nothing more."

But now it is something more, Joey thought. To me, it's a hell of a lot more. He liked being with Chris, he liked the way Chris made him laugh, made him feel alive and invincible, and did he really believe that would last? "Chris --" he started, but Chris interrupted him.

"Joey, I'm sorry she called us when she did." Joey looked at him, and Chris continued. "I'm sorry I didn't want to talk to her, but all I wanted was the moment and you and ... that's it. I didn't want her to interrupt that."

All I wanted ... Joey frowned slightly. Had Chris just said he wanted him? "Chris --" he tried again.

Chris cut him off a second time. "I'm sorry," he said softly. He looked at Joey with a tortured expression. "I'm sorry that she called, and I'm sorry you feel bad now. I can see it in your eyes. Please don't hate yourself just because we were fooling around when she called. Please."

"Is that all it was?" Joey asked softly. When Chris frowned, confused, Joey shook his head. "Nevermind," he said, heading for the door.

"Joey, wait." Chris sat up on the bed and caught Joey's arm as he passed. Joey looked down into Chris's upturned face, trying to read his friend's expression, but he couldn't. Suddenly his best friend was a stranger, his face and eyes and body hard to decipher, like a puzzle with a few pieces missing. He knew what he wanted Chris to say, what he wanted him to feel, but he just didn't know if he was seeing what he wanted to see, and not what was really there.

"What?" Joey asked softly. Chris's hand was hot against his arm, and Joey wanted to melt into that heat, but he couldn't. He just couldn't.

"Joey," Chris said, sighing. Tears filled his eyes and he blinked them back. Joey frowned, confused. "Joey, I want --"

In the hall someone laughed, and then a loud rapping banged on the door to Joey's room. Joey looked up as the door flew open, Lance stepping into the room, Justin right behind him. Lance grinned as he turned, but he took one look at Joey, standing beside the bed, Chris's hand on his arm, Chris's head bend to hide his face, and Lance's eyes widened. "Sorry," he said, skidding to a stop. Justin plowed into him, knocking him into the room.

"Hey --" Justin said, and then he saw Joey and Chris and he backed out of the room quickly. "Dinner's ready," he said, wrapping an arm around Lance's waist and pulling him back. "Everything okay here?"

"Fine," Joey replied. Chris dropped his hand from Joey's arm and nodded. He sniffled but when he looked up, the tears were gone. Only the redness high on his cheeks told Joey he hadn't imagined them.

"You sure?" Lance asked. His gaze shifted from Joey to Chris and back again. "If you need a few more minutes --"

"We're fine," Chris said, standing. He eased past Joey and then pushed his way out of the room.

Justin opened his mouth to say something, but Joey held up his hand. "Forget it," he said. He was too tired to explain right now. A weariness crept into his bones, and suddenly he wanted to crawl beneath the covers of his bed and cry. Instead, he smiled as brightly as he could and said, "You mentioned dinner?"

But Chris's words haunted him. "Joey, I want --" Jesus, Joey thought, what was he going to say? He wouldn't let himself think on it, though, because he didn't want to be disappointed when Chris eventually told him what he wanted, and it wasn't Joey.

All I Ever Wanted
93. Confessions
Part 1 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

Justin just had to know what was going on between Chris and Joey. If there was any way that they were going to hook up, he wanted them to, desperately. When they were together, Joey didn't flirt with Lance. He didn't look at Lance with those contemplative eyes, thinking thoughts Justin didn't want him to think. If he smiled or laughed or joked with Lance, it was toned down, muted, and the fact that he wanted Lance wasn't so painfully obvious. Justin loved his friends, even though they pissed him off from time to time -- he wanted Joey to be happy, to be able to get past Lance and move onto someone else, and he wanted Chris to be happy, and if they could be happy together ... well, he wasn't going to stand in their way. Hell, he was going to go out of his own way just to make sure they could hook up, if that's what they wanted.

But he didn't know if there was more behind their laughter and horseplay. Sure, they touched each other, but in fun and games, nothing more. And yet ... there had been that look they shared at the store, making Justin suspect that maybe they would try out that Jell-O idea of Joey's. And when he and Lance burst into Joey's room, it was so damn clear that they interrupted something, but Chris had walked out and Joey glossed the whole thing over, and Justin knew from experience you couldn't just get a moment like that back. How often had he and Lance been interrupted? Too often, he thought, frowning. He couldn't wait until they were out of the studio and could spend some time alone, away from the others. Even if it meant dealing with Lance's mom, Justin was so ready to leave the group for a few days, not worry about someone walking in on them wherever they were in the house, whatever they were doing.

So Justin waited until JC was out at a friend's house, and Joey was out in the yard cutting grass, and Chris was in his room playing video games, and Justin pulled Lance into the hall leading to the bedrooms and whispered, "I'm going to talk to Chris. Keep Joey busy if he comes in, okay?"

Lance nodded. That morning as they lay in bed, Justin had told him he wanted to know what was going on between their friends, and it was Lance's idea to just come out and ask them. Justin thought maybe Joey would be more open with Lance, and that left Chris for Justin to pester. He hoped that despite their bickering and petty arguments, they were still friends enough that Chris would confide in him, because one way or the other, Justin was going to know the scoop when he came out of Chris's room.

He knocked on Chris's door. When Chris called out for him to come in, Justin looked at Lance, standing at the other end of the hall, and took a deep breath to steady himself before opening the door and going inside. As he closed the door behind him, he noticed Chris stretched out on the bed, the game controller in his hands. Justin glanced at the TV. "What're

you playing?" he asked.

"Chrono Cross," Chris replied. "It kicks ass." He looked up at Justin and frowned. "What's up, dude?"

Justin shrugged. Now that he was here, how did he start? When he didn't say anything, Chris reached down on the floor and clicked the Playstation off. Dropping the controller, he studied Justin before asking, "You finished with that magazine yet?"

"What magazine?" Justin asked. At least they were talking, even if it wasn't about Joey.

"That teen thing you bought," Chris replied. He rolled over on his side and propped his head up in one hand. "I want that picture of Joey in there."

Justin laughed. "You gonna hang it up?" he asked. He had hung the picture of Lance up above his side of the bed, despite Lance's protests, but he refused to take it down. He thought it was cute.

But Chris shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "I just want it, just in case. You never know when something like that might come in handy."

"Sounds like a plan for a practical joke," Justin said. "I thought you and Joey were tight."

"We are," Chris replied. Grinning, he added, "Just have to keep him on his toes sometimes, you know?"

Justin sighed. Well, he thought, here it goes. "Chris," he asked, picking at the bedsheet, "have you ever been with a guy?"

Chris raised one eyebrow. "You asking because you want a piece of me?" he asked, laughing.

Justin felt his face flush in anger. "This is stupid," he said, standing. "I don't know what made me think we could talk --"

Chris reached out and grabbed Justin's arm. "Hey," he said, pulling Justin back. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean ... I mean, I didn't know ..." He sighed. "I didn't know you were being serious. Sit down."

Justin glared at him for a moment, but then Chris smiled and Justin sat back down on the bed. "Can you just pretend you're ten years older than me?" Justin asked softly. "Just this once?"

"Okay," Chris said, sitting up. He crossed his legs and closed his eyes. Taking a deep breath, he opened his eyes and looked at Justin. "Big brother mode. We're serious now. No more jokes, I promise."

Justin smiled in spite of himself. Turning towards Chris, he asked, "So. Have you ever?"

Chris grinned. "Any guy? Or do you want to know if Joey and I are doing it?"

Justin blushed again. Damn, he thought. Is it that obvious? "Any guy,"

he said, curious. They'd get to Joey.

"This may come as a surprise to you," Chris said, grinning, "but I like guys. And girls. I like pretty much anything, when it comes to sex."

"So you're bi?" Justin asked, frowning. He would've never guessed that.

"If that's what you want to call it," Chris said. "I always thought bisexual meant having sex with a guy and a girl at the same time. I've never done that, but if the offer ever came up ..."

"Chris!" Justin cried. "You wouldn't!"

Chris shrugged. "Why not? I'd try anything once."

"So have you ever been with a guy?" Justin asked again. Now he was really curious.

Chris nodded. "Back in college. You don't know what you're missing, not going to school. Keg parties, panty raids, sex, drugs, alcohol --"

"Didn't you study at all?" Justin asked.

"I was a Biology major," Chris joked, "specializing in Anatomy."

"You were not." Justin sighed. "Stop kidding around and answer the question."

"I did answer it," Chris replied. "Back in college. I even had a boyfriend for all of five minutes."

Now Justin was interested. "What was his name?" he asked.

"Steven," Chris said. "He was damn sexy, too. Gave the most amazing blowjobs. I mean, that boy could suck dick." Justin blushed at Chris's crude language, and Chris laughed. "He was the only guy I ever had sex with."

"Really?" Justin asked. "Did you pitch or catch?"

"Catch," Chris said quickly. "You?"

Justin shrugged. He didn't really want to talk about his relationship with Lance, but he couldn't expect Chris to just come out with all this and not get something out of him in return. "A little of both," he admitted.

"I would've guessed you'd be a pitcher," Chris said, frowning.

"Mostly," Justin said. He looked down at the bed and blushed again. "But it feels so good when --" He cleared his throat. "Guess I don't have to tell you that, huh?"

"You're preaching to the choir, Brother Justin," Chris said, laughing. "There's just something missing when I'm with a girl, you know? Like it doesn't mean that much because it doesn't demand enough of me. I'm inside but it's not enough. There's something that's keeping me apart from her, you know?"

"Well, no," Justin replied, "I don't know. I've never had sex with a girl."

Chris shrugged. "Well at least you're getting it from somewhere." He looked at Justin, the mirth leaving his face. "Just remember that's not all there is in a relationship, Justin. Believe me. One day you and Lance will find out that there are other things you can do together than get off. Despite what you think, you don't need sex to survive. A relationship is built on more than that."

"I know," Justin said, frowning. "We don't have sex all the time."

"Bullshit!" Chris laughed. "I hear you."

"You do not." Justin felt his jaw twitch in anger, and he tried to suppress the emotion.

But Chris looked at him with his "yeah right" stare and said, "Justin, you can't fuck quietly. My room is between yours and the bathroom. I hear you even when you don't think you're very loud. Tell me, is Lance that good?"

Justin's face grew hot. "Yeah, he is," he said bitterly. Forget Joey -- Justin didn't want to talk about this anymore. Leave it to Chris to make the way he felt for Lance sound base and animalistic and vulgar. He sighed. "I didn't come here to talk about my sex life."

"You came here to find out about Joey," Chris said quietly.

"Yeah," Justin whispered.

"What do you want to hear?" Chris asked.

Justin looked up at Chris, his eyes pleading. "I want to hear that Joey can get his mind off of Lance," he replied. "I want to hear that he'll fall in love with someone else and I don't have to worry about him hitting on Lance when I'm not around. Tell me that, and I'll be your biggest fan. Hell, I'll call Dani myself and break up with her for you. I just want to know that Joey isn't lying awake at night, thinking about my boyfriend."

Chris bit his lower lip. "I can't tell you that," he whispered. "I don't know how Joey feels about me. I only know that he still thinks about Lance, and it makes him sad, and sometimes I'm there for him. That's it."

Justin sighed. "Well, what about you?" he asked. "How do you feel about Joey?"

Chris shrugged. "At first it was just ..." He sighed. "I don't know, Justin. I mean, I think I know, but I have to talk to Dani, and I have to talk to Joey, and I don't feel up to talking to either of them about anything right now. When I'm with him, I don't think about it, because I haven't talked to her yet. But I don't want to talk to her, I don't want to hurt her, but I just can't ... I just don't know."

Justin frowned. "Fair enough. Do you ... I don't know, do you want to like him?"

"I want someone who makes me laugh," Chris said softly. "Someone

who likes my jokes and my style and doesn't want me to be more serious or more this or more that. I want someone who knows I'm not perfect and loves me anyway."

"Dani's not like that?" Justin asked.

Chris shook his head. "Whatever we had once together is gone," he admitted. "I don't know if it was ever there in the first place. Sometimes you just need someone to hold at night, and you don't care who it is."

"And now?" Justin prompted.

"And now I want Joey," Chris whispered, his voice barely audible. He looked up at Justin with large, frightened eyes, and said, "Don't tell him that, please. Let me work this all out first. Let me be the one to say it."

"I won't say a word," Justin promised. "But I'm going to keep after you. I want his mind elsewhere. He doesn't flirt with Lance when you're around, not anymore. So I want you to keep him interested, at least, until you figure out what it is you're going to do."

"Okay," Chris said, nodding. Then he shook his head and arms, loosening up. "I'm finished being serious now. I'm so close to beating this one boss monster ..." He rolled onto his stomach and reached for the game controller, discarded on the floor.

As he clicked the Playstation back on, Justin smiled and leaned back on the bed. "What's this game about?" he asked.

"Well, you've got your hero -- this dude here --" As Chris explained the convoluted story behind the game, Justin wondered if Lance had managed to talk to Joey yet. He wondered what Chris was going to do. Well, it was obvious what Justin wanted him to do -- break up with Dani and hook up with Joey. And Justin swore to do anything he could to help Chris come to realize that would be the best solution, for all of them. Then he wouldn't have to worry about Joey's wandering eyes and roaming hands anymore.

All I Ever Wanted
93. Confessions
Part 2 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

Lance leaned against the wall and prayed that Justin came out of Chris's room before Joey finished cutting the grass. "Keep Joey busy" Justin had said, and Lance's heart swelled at the words, the offhand way Justin said them, because it was proof that they were past that night when Lance kissed Joey. Proof that Justin trusted him again. So of course Lance said he would, but standing in the darkness of the hallway, Lance knew it would be easier said than done. Joey exuded this raw sexuality that terrified Lance, and he didn't know how long he could distract Joey before he had to run to the safety of Justin's arms, afraid of falling for Joey's charms again. He hoped Joey stayed outside and he didn't have to find out.

The sound of the lawnmower died away, and Lance groaned. Just my luck, he thought, sighing. So much for Plan A. Onto Plan B. Lance waited until he heard the front door open and close before stepping out of the hallway. Joey stood in the foyer, his white t-shirt clinging to his sweaty chest, his hair sticking straight up from his forehead where he wiped it back, the hair along his neck damp and slightly curled. He looked up at Lance and smiled, his eyes softening. This is going to be hard, Lance thought. He considered interrupting Justin and Chris, telling Justin he was sorry but he just couldn't talk to Joey about this, he couldn't sit in the same room with him and feel his hot gaze and not remember his kiss, he just couldn't do it. "Hey, Lance," Joey said, his voice soft. "What's up?"

Lance swallowed hard. You can do this, he told himself. Justin trusts you, now trust yourself. So he smiled back and shrugged. "Not much," he said. Glancing into the living room, he asked, "We're friends, right?"

Joey nodded. "Yeah," he said, taking a step closer to Lance.

"And friends talk, right?" Lance persisted. When Joey took another step, Lance looked up at him and thought, If not for Justin, before stifling that notion.

"Yeah, friends talk," Joey said. "You want to talk?"

Lance nodded. "Yeah, I do," he said softly. "Do you have a minute?"

Joey's smile widened. "For you? I have all the time in the world." He followed Lance into the living room, and Lance waited until he sat down on the couch before taking a seat on the opposite end, as far away from him as possible. When Justin was with him, it was so easy to ignore Joey, but when they were alone, there was just something about him, some neediness or wanting or desire that made Lance scared of his own weakness. And he didn't want to tempt fate.

Apparently neither did Joey, because he stayed on his side and didn't move any closer when Lance sat down. Lance looked at him and sighed.

"Joey," he started, unsure of what to say.

"Let me guess," Joey said, grinning. He closed his eyes and thought for a moment. Then he looked at Lance and said, "You've left Justin and now you want me."

"What?" Lance asked, not quite sure if Joey was kidding or not. "No, that's not -- no."

Joey laughed. "I'm kidding," he said. "Trying to lighten the mood. What's on your mind, Scoop? Just come out and say it."

"I ..." Lance sighed. "This is hard for me to ask you, because ... well, with the way you feel about ... I mean, I -- Oh fuck it, Joey," he cried, exasperated. "What the hell's up between you and Chris?"

Joey looked at him for a minute, a slight frown on his face, and then he laughed again. "Whatever he said, don't believe a word of it."

"He didn't say anything," Lance said. "Justin and I just thought maybe ... JC said he thought ..." This wasn't going well.

"JC?" Joey asked. He stretched one arm along the back of the couch and ran his other hand over his face. "You guys think there's something going on with Chris and me?" Lance nodded. "You guys talked about this?" Joey asked, incredulous.

Lance shrugged. "JC told Justin, and then they mentioned it to me. Justin didn't believe it at first, but then the other day in the store --"

"Jesus," Joey whispered. "That damn Jell-O remark. Lance, we were just fooling around."

"And then last night before dinner --" Lance tried again.

Joey sighed. "You haven't talked to Chris?"

"Justin's in his room now," Lance replied softly. Joey closed his eyes in frustration. "Joey, I don't want to pry, but we'd like to know --"

"So would I," Joey said, frowning. He turned to Lance, a haunted look in his eyes that was hard to read. "Lance, more than anything else right now, I would like to know what's going on between me and Chris. Because you know what? I don't know what's happening. We're the best of friends one moment, then all of a sudden it's like the Grand Canyon opens between us and there's no way to cross it."

"Do you like him?" Lance asked.

"I think so," Joey replied. "Yes. I do."

Lance sighed. This was getting a little easier. "Like you like me?" he asked.

Joey shrugged. "I don't know yet, but I think maybe, yes. I could fall for him."

"Do you still like me?" Lance asked. Please, he prayed, please say no.

But when Joey looked at him, he saw the answer plainly on Joey's face, and once again his prayers went unanswered. "Yes," Joey whispered. "But it's not so much, when I'm with Chris. I mean, it doesn't hurt when he's around, you know?"

Lance nodded. No, he didn't know, but he could guess. If Justin wasn't with him, and Lance had to see him with someone else day in and day out -- Lance could guess how painful that would be. "So," Lance said, "you and Chris have ..." He trailed off, hoping Joey would take the hint and pick up where he left off.

"We haven't done much," Joey said. "Hell, he's got a girl, Lance. I can't fool around with him."

"But you do," Lance said, not really asking. Joey nodded. "Does Dani know?"

"I don't think so," Joey replied.

"Is Chris going to tell her?" Lance pressed.

Joey shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "I don't know if this is just fooling around with him, or if it means something more, or if ... I just don't know."

"Why don't you ask him?" Lance suggested.

Joey laughed. "Yeah, right," he said. "Chris, excuse me, but is this working for you? I mean, I know you're all into this right now but what about the long run? What do you see happening with us?" He rolled his eyes. "You don't know much about relationships, Lance, if you think you can just ask someone how they feel about you without scaring them away."

Lance smiled. "You're right, I don't know much about relationships," he admitted. "Justin's the first one I ever got right."

"Is he your first?" Joey asked softly.

Lance wanted to ask first what but he knew what Joey meant. Lance shook his head. "I've had sex before, if that's what you mean."

"With a guy?" Joey asked, his eyebrows raising slightly.

Lance blushed. When had the talk turned to him? "No," he said. "Prom night. I thought it was expected of me. It was in the back seat of her car, and it wasn't all that fun. I remember the crinkle of her dress and it was over all too quickly, and afterwards all I could think was this was it?"

Joey laughed. "I know that feeling," he said, grinning.

Lance looked at him quizzically. "What about you?" he asked. "You ever been with a guy?"

Joey shook his head. "You're the first one I ever liked like that," he said.

"So now what? You don't like girls?" Lance frowned, confused.

"Shit," Joey drawled, grinning. "I still like girls. I love girls. Everything about them -- the way they smell, their hair, their boobs --"

"I get the picture," Lance said.

Joey shrugged. "But I don't know. I want someone who wants me. That's it. All the girls now just want that guy from NSync -- what's his name again? The fat one."

Lance sighed. "Shut up," he said. "You're so damn good at knocking yourself down, you know that?"

"I want someone with me on tour," Joey continued, ignoring him. His eyes grew misty, his voice wistful. "I want someone like you have Justin, someone to hold at night when the road gets lonely. I want someone who wants to be with me, with Joey Fatone, the guy who likes Superman and eating and video games and having fun. I don't want someone who can't see past the group." He shrugged. "At least with a guy, I know when I'm turning him on. I can feel him get hard, and I know what it feels like when I touch him because I feel the same way when I'm touched there, too. With girls it's very iffy. Some of them like this, some like that, some hate being touched there, some love it. You never know. They flirt with you and say they want you and kiss and hug and then when you want to do more, they shut down." He sighed. "I don't care if it's a guy anymore. And Chris -- well, he's so damn exciting. He looks at me in a way that makes me want to find out what he's thinking. He touches me and I want to touch him back. When we're alone together, no one else exists."

"I feel that way with Justin," Lance confessed. "We've been together for a few months now and you know what? It's like every kiss is the first one. Every time I touch him, it's like I've never felt him before." He looked sideways at Joey. "I shouldn't be telling you this --"

"It's okay," Joey said, grinning. "I'm not all strung out over you right now."

Lance smiled. "I can't get enough of him. I love him, Joey. Everyone should feel like this. And if you think Chris can make you happy, well, I want you to go for it. I want you to be happy."

"Thanks," Joey murmured. He laughed. "I guess Justin wants me with him, too, eh? Get my mind off of you."

Lance shrugged. That's what he thought Justin's motives were, too, but he didn't say anything. He heard a door open down the hall, and he grinned at Joey. "If you ever need to talk --" he started.

"I know where to come," Joey finished, smiling. "I'll let you know what's happening when something does happen, okay?"

"Okay," Lance said, nodding. Justin came out into the living room and smiled at them. Lance grinned back.

Joey looked up at Justin and pushed himself up off the couch. "I need a drink," he said, heading for the kitchen. "Yardwork makes you thirsty."

Justin sat down beside Lance. "Well?" he asked, his voice low so Joey

wouldn't overhear.

"He likes him," Lance whispered. He glanced up to make sure Joey wasn't standing nearby. "What did you find out?"

"Chris likes him, too," Justin said. He leaned against Lance's shoulder and giggled. "But don't say anything. He has to talk to Dani first."

Lance sighed. "And do what?" he asked. "Break up with her? You think that'll happen?"

Justin shrugged. Wrapping his arms around Lance, he hugged him close and sat back against the couch, pulling Lance down with him. "This should be interesting," he said, taking one of Lance's hands in his. He kissed Lance's knuckles and grinned. Changing the subject, he said, "JC said we'd be in the studio when?"

"Next week," Lance replied. "Tuesday, why?"

Justin shrugged. "I was thinking of staying at my mom's for a few days."

Lance snuggled closer to Justin. "Alone?" he asked.

"Of course not, silly," Justin said. "You're coming, too."

Lance nodded. It would be a good idea, get away for a little while, let Joey and Chris have some space. Maybe then something could happen for them. And some privacy would be nice, Lance thought, holding onto Justin tightly.

All I Ever Wanted
94. Headache
by NSyncGrrl

Lance looked at himself in the mirror above the bathroom sink and sighed. The light was out and the door closed, but morning sunlight shone through the thin red curtains and illuminated the room to a rosy dusk, and even that little bit of easy light made Lance's head pound. Last night he had talked to his mother, and things had not gone well at all. She didn't like the fact that it would be another two weeks until he came home, and she had been really ticked off when he told her he wasn't staying with her, but was going to stay at his own house, and he and Justin would visit her. He had to keep reminding himself he was an adult now, but it was so hard to listen to her silence over the phone and keep from apologizing. This was hurting her, he knew that, but she ... She has to realize this is hurting me, too, Lance thought grimly.

She wanted him to go out with a daughter of a friend of his father's, a girl going through a bad time right now, and normally Lance would've said yes, anything to comfort a friend. But he knew what this was all about -- it was a clever ploy to get him away from Justin, and Lance couldn't do that. "Mom, I'm not a little boy anymore," he had said last night. "It's my life. I can't let you run it."

To which she replied with that stony silence that was somehow more awful than any words she could have said, and when Lance hung up the phone, he crawled into bed and cried himself to sleep.

Justin had been in the kitchen with the others, playing a game of cards, and Lance didn't want to bother him. He didn't know what time Justin turned in, but when Lance woke up, he was there, cuddled up beside him in sleep, his arms comforting and protective around Lance. And Lance felt horrible, with a stuffy nose and grainy eyes, and a headache that begged to stay in bed. But they were leaving for Justin's mom's house today, and Lance forced himself to get up. Every time he blinked, the pain in his head increased, and he didn't know how he was going to make it through the day. He should've known better than to let his emotions get the best of him last night -- he always felt like shit when he cried at night.

In the mirror he could see how puffy his eyes were, how flushed his cheeks looked, how pale his forehead and lips were. He splashed cold water on his face, and even though it took the sting out of his eyes, it didn't help much. A pair of Justin's blue tinted sunglasses rested on the back of the toilet -- Lance put them on in an effort to hide his eyes and protect them from the light that was just too damn bright this morning. They didn't go well at all with his boxers and t-shirt, but at this point he didn't care. He had to pack, and he had to get dressed, and he still hadn't eaten breakfast, and he didn't know how the hell he was going to make it five more minutes, let alone the rest of the day.

Back in their room, Justin had a duffel bag open on the bed, and he was digging through the closet looking for something when Lance came

in. "Hey," Justin called, glancing over at him and flashing a quick smile. Lance raised his head to his temple, trying to block out the overhead light, and sat down on his side of the bed, his back to Justin. "You seen my blue shirt?" Justin asked.

Which one? Lance thought sourly. Justin only owned fifty blue shirts -- it was his favorite color. "No," Lance whispered.

"The mesh one," Justin said. He began opening the drawers of his dresser, and each squeak of wood on wood drove into Lance's head like a nail. "The one I wear with that tank top -- you know which one I mean."

"I know," Lance said, a little louder, surprised at the coarseness of his own voice. "I just haven't seen it."

"Is it in the laundry?" Justin asked.

"I don't know," Lance replied.

Justin sighed. "Well did you wash it?"

"Justin, I don't know!" Lance snapped. He rested his head in his hand and sighed. "I didn't do the laundry. I don't know where your shirt is."

He could feel Justin's gaze on his back, studying him. He could almost hear the shift of emotions on Justin's face -- anger at Lance's outburst, then confusion, and finally worry. Justin crawled onto the bed and ran his hands around Lance's waist. Resting his head on Lance's shoulder, he asked softly, "What's the matter?"

"I don't feel well," Lance replied.

"Where don't you feel well?" Justin asked, easing beside Lance to face him. Concern laced his eyes, and Lance wanted to bury himself in Justin's embrace and let everything else disappear.

"My head," Lance whispered.

Justin frowned and rubbed Lance's back with long, soothing strokes. "Did you take something for it?" Justin asked.

Lance shook his head just slightly. "I haven't even gotten dressed yet," Lance replied. Beside him Justin already had a pair of jeans on, even if he needed to change his t-shirt. And Lance? Well, these were the first clothes he found in the morning. He didn't even think he could take a shower right now, the way he felt.

Justin slid off the bed. "Lay down," he said.

"Justin --" Lance began. They had things to do; he couldn't just lay down.

But Justin was insistent. "Lay down," he said again, holding the covers up as Lance sighed and slipped beneath them. With his head down on the pillow, the pain faded a little, but it was still there, like music heard in another room, shaking the walls with its rhythm. Justin pulled the covers up over Lance and took off the sunglasses.

Lance covered his eyes with the blankets. "Too bright," he said, cringing.

Then he heard the light click off, and the room was plunged into sweet darkness. Lance sighed and peeked out from the blankets, but Justin was gone. For a long moment he debated getting out of bed again, but it felt so good to just lie down, and his head felt a little better, so he stayed where he was. Finally Justin returned with a glass of water in one hand, and he sat down on the edge of the bed, smiling at Lance. "Take these," he said, handing Lance a couple of pills.

"Aspirin?" Lance asked as he put the pills in his mouth and washed them down with the water.

Justin nodded. He brushed the hair back from Lance's face, his hand cool against Lance's flushed skin. Then he leaned down and kissed Lance's forehead, his lips damp. "Just rest," he said, standing up.

Lance reached out for Justin's hand. "I need to pack," he said softly.

"I'll do it," Justin replied. "Just lie down and make that headache go away."

Lance smiled. If he could do that, he would've already. Justin walked around to his side of the bed and clicked on the small bedside lamp, angling the lampshade away from Lance. Then he moved quietly through the room as he finished packing his clothes for their weekend trip. Lance watched him until his eyes grew too heavy to stay open, and then he listened to the comforting sounds of Justin in the room, trying to keep it down for Lance's sake.

By the time Justin came over to Lance's side of the room to pack for him, Lance was already asleep, the horrid pain of the morning forgotten.

All I Ever Wanted
95. Don't Miss This Chance
by NSyncGrrl

Justin and Lance left a little after noon, headed for Justin's mom's home, in the suburbs on the other side of the city. With the two of them gone, a strange sense of quiet fell over the house, and JC sat outside on the back porch just to escape the oppressive air inside. Chris was holed up in his room, determined to beat his newest video game and ignoring everything else in the process. He hadn't even come out for dinner -- Joey and JC sat at the kitchen table in an uneasy silence, and then Joey took a plateful of the lasagna he made into Chris's room. JC hadn't seen him since.

Out on the porch, JC was reading the newspaper, his mind on his friends. Justin told him about his talk with Chris, and like Justin, JC was surprised to learn Chris had had a boyfriend before he was in the group. They'd known each other for what, five years now? Longer? And JC never suspected Chris might swing both ways. You think you know someone, he thought, grinning. Well, it wasn't as if the subject ever came up.

Before now, he thought. The newspaper lay open in his lap, forgotten, and around him a faint dusk began to gather. JC looked at the paper, the words blurring a little as the sun began to set, and wondered how the whole thing between Chris and Joey had started in the first place. How long had it been going on? Was he so wrapped up in his music that he failed to see what was going on around him? No, he thought, that's Justin. Though he doesn't really have music on his mind, does he?

JC first suspected something when Joey hurt his ankle back in the woods. That kiss on the forehead really threw him -- he hadn't expected something like that from Chris, of all people. When he tried to talk to Joey about it, though, they didn't get anywhere, and then that comment -- JC closed his eyes, remembering the sting of Joey's careless words. "If I was lonely enough." JC knew then that Joey's kisses were nothing more than thoughtless affection from a drunken friend. And whatever JC had felt when they kissed meant nothing. To either of them.

The light clicked on overhead, pushing the encroaching darkness back beyond the porch. JC looked up as the screen door opened and Joey stepped outside. "What'cha doing, man?" he asked, sitting down beside JC on the swing.

JC shrugged. "Reading," he said, rustling the newspaper in his lap.

Joey laughed. "I never pegged you for a slow reader," he said. "How long you been reading the same page?"

"How long you been watching me?" JC replied, grinning.

"Long enough to know you aren't reading," Joey said. He stretched an arm along the back of the swing, behind JC. Lowering his voice, he asked softly, "What's on your mind?"

Without thinking, JC said, "I like the way you kiss."

The surprise on Joey's face was worth the terror that made JC's heart beat rapidly. Joey frowned and sat back, thinking. "You --" He cleared his throat and shifted beside JC. "I mean, you were thinking --" Suddenly Joey was at a loss for words.

JC grinned. "Joey, it's okay I know ..." He sighed. "I don't like you like that."

"You sure?" Joey asked, the color returning to his cheeks. He grinned and winked at JC. "I mean, if you're sitting here thinking about the way I kiss --"

"I was thinking about you and Chris," JC said.

"Oh." Joey ran a hand through his hair nervously.

JC took a deep breath. "Joey, I want to tell you something," he said. He folded the paper up and set it aside, and then toyed with the hem of his shirt. Glancing up at Joey, he said, "I don't want you to take this the wrong way."

"Okay," Joey said slowly.

"I don't want this to come between us," JC continued, "what I'm about to say."

"Alright." Joey looked at him closely.

JC sighed. "I'm going to be upfront with you. When you kissed me -- both times -- I ... I liked it. A lot. I couldn't stop thinking about it. About you."

Joey whispered, "I didn't know that."

"I know you didn't," JC replied. "Do you remember when we were talking, after you sprained your ankle and Chris left?"

Joey nodded. Before JC could say another word, Joey closed his eyes and groaned. "Oh shit," he said softly. "What did I say? I don't know what the fuck I was thinking."

JC's mouth twisted into a half-smile. "It's okay," he said. "You thought I said I didn't like you and what I meant was I didn't like you pining for Lance when he's with Justin. And then --"

"And then I told you I didn't like you," Joey whispered. "I told you I could, if I was -- Jesus Christ, Josh, I swear I didn't know ... I never meant ..." He covered his face with his hand and sighed, a shaky sound through his fingers. "Fuck."

"It's okay," JC said again. "Really. At first it hurt but I've given it a lot of thought and you know what? I could've fallen for you, Joey. I could've fallen hard. And it would've been fun."

Joey sniffled and sighed again. "JC --" he began, and then he shook his head. "You know what I would've given to hear someone say that to

me a few weeks ago? Anyone?"

"I know," JC said. "But I couldn't do it, Joe. I couldn't let myself love someone who wanted someone else. I couldn't look in your eyes and see your desire for Lance looking back."

"Why tell me this now?" Joey asked softly. "Lance said you thought Chris and me ..." He trailed off, not wanting to say more.

JC shrugged. "I don't want to see the same thing happen to you again," he admitted. "You're a great guy, Joey, and I really love having you as a friend. I don't want that to change -- I don't want you to think that now I want something more, because I don't." He looked up at Joey, his brow knitted in a slight frown. "Are you okay with that?"

Joey sighed. "I didn't think ... I mean, I didn't know ..." He shook his head. "JC, I think I'm ... I like Chris."

"I know," JC replied. "And I'm cool with that, really. I just don't want to see your chance with him slip away because you can't get past Lance."

Joey nodded. "That's how it all started," he admitted. "My wanting what I couldn't have, my needing someone, anyone, and his being there for me."

"And what is it now?" JC asked softly.

"I don't know," Joey admitted. "Sometimes I think he feels the same way I do, and other times I think this is all just a game to him."

"Why don't you ask him?" JC suggested.

Joey laughed, surprising him. "You and Lance," Joey said, grinning. "You two think it's just that simple, don't you? This is Chris we're talking about, dude. You're lucky if you get a straight answer out of him. I'm not going to ask him how he feels about me. He's liable to just laugh it off."

JC shrugged. "I don't think so," he said, remembering what Justin told him about his conversation with Chris earlier in the week. When Joey looked at him sharply, JC explained, "He's your best friend. He's not going to laugh at you if you're being serious."

"What about Dani?" Joey asked quietly.

"I don't know," JC admitted. "You'll need to talk to him about it. But please don't let this go, Joey. I hated to see you all torn up over Lance. If you have a chance to get over him, don't pass it up." When Joey didn't say anything, JC prompted, "Talk to him. Before it gets too late. Please."

Joey nodded. "I'm sorry," he whispered. "JC, if I even knew --"

"Well, you didn't." JC sighed. "I didn't go out of my way to tell you. Joey, it's okay. Just, please, talk to Chris."

"Okay," Joey said. He glanced at JC. "If things work out with me and him, will you ..." He shrugged. "I don't know. Will you be okay with that? I mean, hell I don't know. I don't know what I'm saying."

JC patted Joey's knee. "It's okay, Joe. I don't want the hassle of a relationship right now. Just ... can I ask you something?" Joey nodded, and JC asked, "Can you not pick on me about that? The other day in the car, you and Chris were just being evil, talking all that trash about the girls you'd had and the way it felt --" He shook his head. "I don't need to hear that stuff. I don't want you laughing because I'm not with anyone."

"I'm sorry," Joey said again. "We were just fooling around --"

"Sometimes you don't realize when you go too far," JC said.

Joey nodded. "JC, I'm sorry. I'll tone it down."

JC smiled. "Thanks." Standing up, he headed into the house, but he stopped at the screen door and looked back at his friend. "And Joe?" When Joey turned around, JC winked at him. "Talk to him. He won't laugh, I promise."

As the screen door closed behind him, he wondered why even the best of friends couldn't talk about something like that. Justin said Chris was interested, and Joey just said he was interested, so why was it so hard to just go for it?

Yeah, he thought wryly. Like it was easy for you just now. How many nights did you stay awake, thinking of those kisses? JC pushed the thought away. One day he'd find someone. In the meantime he just hoped they could get all this tension between the five of them out of the way before the next leg of their tour.

All I Ever Wanted
96. Coming Out
by NSyncGrrl

Justin had always loved his mother's home. It reminded him of his younger days, before the group, when he was just that funny-looking kid on the Mickey Mouse Club and the hardest thing he ever had to do was getting up the courage to ask one of the girls out. He had never really liked going out on dates -- he always felt awkward around girls, like they wanted him to be someone or to do something that he wasn't comfortable with and he didn't quite know what that was. Which was ironic, in a way, because wasn't the stereotypical gay male a girl's best friend? And here he was -- Wait a minute, he thought, stopping on the step. He was headed upstairs to his room, looking for Lance, and the thought froze him in his tracks. Did I just admit I was ...

He shook his head and continued up the stairs. Gay. The word had such negative connotations in today's society, Justin hated to associate it with himself. But JC had been right -- Justin was in love with a guy. He loved Lance. And Lance was definitely a guy. Just thinking of Lance made Justin hungry to hold him again, to feel their bodies pressed against each other, to feel the stiff hardness of his cock inside -- Okay, Justin conceded, if only to himself. So maybe I'm ... no, he still couldn't think it.

Opening the door to his room, he found Lance inside, his bag open on the bed as he unpacked. He pulled out a rumpled green silk suit and looked up as Justin entered the room. "Hon, what were you thinking?" he asked, shaking the suit to try to get the wrinkles out.

Justin grinned and sat on the edge of the bed. "I like the way you look in that," he said.

Lance rolled his eyes. "One, where are we going this weekend that I need to wear a silk suit? Two, it's silk, babe. You can't just fold this stuff up into a bag. Look at it."

Frowning, Justin reached out and smoothed the fabric with his hand. It crinkled up beneath his touch. "Maybe you can iron it," he suggested.

Lance laughed. He laid the suit out on the bed and said, "Three words. Dry clean only."

"That means you can't iron it?" Justin asked. "My mom has an iron. I can try --"

"Don't," Lance said quickly. He smiled at Justin, reaching into the bag for another outfit. "Please. You and an iron is not something I wish to see in this lifetime. If you even remotely like that outfit, please don't try to iron it."

Justin frowned. So he wasn't domestically inclined. In reality, he would've asked his mom to iron it, and then given it back to Lance and not said another word. Lance pulled out the jeans Justin packed for him, and then got to the shirts. "What the hell?" Lance asked, pulling out a

heavy white sweater. "It's not wintertime, Justin."

Justin shrugged. "I like that one on you," he said. He tugged at the waistband of Lance's pants playfully. "It clings to you. It's so damn sexy."

"And hot," Lance pointed out. "It'll come in handy if it snows, but I don't think Florida gets that this time of year." Tossing the sweater onto the bed, Lance sighed. "This is the last time I let you pack for me."

Justin pouted. "I was only trying to help," he said. He looked up at Lance with wide eyes and pulled his lips down a little more, knowing the effect it would have.

It worked. Lance sighed and pushed the bag aside. Sitting down on the bed beside him, Lance took Justin into his arms and rested his chin on the top of Justin's head. "And I appreciate it," Lance said softly. "Really, I do. Just don't ..." He shrugged. "Don't do it again."

Justin laughed. Taking Lance's hand in his, he toyed with Lance's fingers, squeezing the tips gently between his thumb and forefinger. "Lance," he asked carefully, "do you think of yourself as gay?"

Lance started to giggle. "Now there's a concept," he said, releasing Justin.

"No, really," Justin said, turning to face him.

Lance looked at him, a wide grin on his face. "Well, I'm in love with you. We sleep together. That sort of clears things up, don't you think?"

Justin frowned. "Do you like girls?" he asked.

Lance shook his head. "I like you."

"I mean --" Justin tried again.

Lance laughed. "I know what you mean. I've been with girls before and I don't like them. I like guys." He poked Justin's stomach gently. "I like you. So yes, I'm gay. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

Actually, yes, it was. Hearing Lance say it so matter-of-factly made it sound less like an insult and more like ... well, just something that was. Lance was gay. He loved Lance. So that meant ... Justin took a deep breath and said, "I think I'm gay, too."

To his surprise, Lance fell back to the bed in a fit of giggles. "Oh, God!" Lance cried, breathless with laughter. Justin's frown deepened. "Jesus! My boyfriend is gay! Now there's a surprise."

"Shut up," Justin growled. He stood up and glared down at Lance. Turning to leave, he muttered, "I'm glad you're enjoying this because it's hard for me to even admit --"

"Justin, wait." Lance grabbed his hand and pulled him back. Justin didn't meet Lance's gaze. "I'm sorry. Justin? Look at me." When he didn't comply, Lance reached up and took Justin's chin in his hand, forcing him to turn towards him. Justin tried to avoid Lance's eyes but he couldn't. He just couldn't. His own eyes filled with tears when he saw the love and

compassion in Lance's green gaze. "Justin," Lance said tenderly, "I'm sorry. I didn't know it was that hard for you. I'm sorry."

Justin sighed, slumping his shoulders. He took Lance's hands in both of his and whispered, "I always thought it was something bad, an insult or a curse. Something that wasn't me." Taking a deep breath, he continued, "I never really understood why all the girls liked me. I was never interested in them, and I couldn't see what they wanted from me."

"They want what I want," Lance said, pulling Justin down into his lap. His arms wrapped around Justin's back as Justin straddled him, a knee on the bed on either side of Lance's legs. As Justin sat down on Lance's thighs, Lance leaned his forehead against Justin's and said, "I knew I was gay when I first met you and fell in love. I just knew it. But I didn't tell you guys, because you were Mr. Sporty Spice and I was so sure you'd get all homophobic and push me away. And I wanted you, Justin, in any way I could have you. If it was only as a friend, then so be it. But I couldn't take the chance that you would've shut down around me if you knew the way I felt for you. If you even suspected the way I watched your body move, or the way I hung on your every touch, your laughter, your smile --"

Justin kissed him, cutting off his words. His lips parted Lance's gently, his tongue slipping into Lance's mouth with an ease that thrilled him. This was his, and every touch, every kiss, every look they shared emphasized that. This was all he ever wanted. As Lance's hands ran across Justin's back, pulling him closer, Justin pushed Lance back onto the bed. Justin cupped Lance's face with his own hands and kissed him again. Beneath them the silk suit grew more rumpled as Justin spread his knees, pressing his crotch into Lance's. "I love you," he whispered into Lance's mouth. One hand strayed to Lance's chest and began unbuttoning his shirt.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door, and Justin looked up as it eased open. "Justin -- you wanna shoot some ..."

It was his brother. He had a basketball in the crook of his arm and a look of shock on his young face. Eight, Justin's mind whispered. He's only eight but he knows enough to know what's going on here. "Jonathan?" Justin asked, sitting up.

Jonathan looked at them, Justin sitting on Lance's legs, Lance lying on the bed, his shirt disheveled and slightly open. Frowning, he asked, "Justin?"

"Get up," Lance whispered. When Justin didn't move, Lance pushed his knees gently. "Justin, get off."

Justin stepped back off the bed. Jonathan looked up at him, his eyes wide, unbelieving. "Jonathan, it's not --"

Then Jonathan turned and raced down the hall. They heard his footsteps echo as he ran down the stairs, and far below them, the back door banged closed. "Shit." Justin sighed and ran a hand through his curls, straightening them out. "This is just fucking great. Why can't he knock?"

"He did," Lance said quietly. He smoothed out the silk suit and didn't look at Justin.

"Why can't he wait before coming in?" Justin asked. "Three seconds. That's all we needed to at least stop --" He sighed again. "Dammit the hell. What now?"

Lance shrugged. "Talk to him."

"And tell him what?" Justin asked bitterly. "He's eight. He won't understand."

"You might be surprised," Lance replied. He took Justin's hand in his and kissed Justin's palm. "He's your little brother, Justin. You wanted to tell him, didn't you?"

"Yeah," Justin admitted, "but not like this."

"He deserves to know," Lance continued. A small smile tugged at the corners of Lance's mouth. "You told your mom. You told me --" Justin laughed, and he felt a little better when Lance's smile widened. "Now tell him."

Justin cradled Lance's chin in his hand. "Will you come with me?" he asked softly.

Lance shook his head. "That'll make it awkward for him. Just go talk to him. Shoot some hoops. Show him you're the same guy you've always been, just --"

"Gay," Justin whispered. "And in love. With you." He leaned down and kissed Lance tenderly, his lips lingering on Lance's own. "I'll be back to finish what we started."

"Don't rush," Lance replied. "I've got to take this damn suit to the cleaners."

Justin laughed as he left the room. He hoped Jonathan was more open than he had been at eight. Back then he hadn't even said the word "gay" for fear of getting his mouth washed out with soap. This is going to be hard, Justin thought, taking the stairs two at a time in an effort to catch up with his brother.

He found Jonathan outside, dribbling his basketball in the driveway. He didn't look up as Justin approached. "Jonathan --" Justin began, not sure what to say.

Jonathan frowned but didn't look up at him. "Why'd you have to bring him here?" he asked as he slapped the ball hard against the concrete.

Anger flashed through Justin. "Jon, that's not nice --"

"Why was he kissing you, Justin?" Jonathan glared at him, the steady thump thump thump of the ball loud around them.

Justin sighed. "Because he's my boyfriend." There, he thought. I've said it. He felt shaky and scared, and he waited for Jonathan's answer.

Jonathan caught the ball in both hands and faced him. He studied Justin for a moment, and Justin noticed for the first time how old his brother was getting. When had he started to grow up? In a low voice,

Jonathan asked, "So that's how it is?"

"Yes," Justin replied. "I'm ... Jon, I'm --"

"Are you a homo?"

Justin met Jonathan's frank stare, trying to control his temper. How could he respond to something like that? It was such a typical response, something he himself might have said at that age, that Justin decided the easiest way to deal with it would be to not let Jonathan see how much it bothered him to hear it. If he could deal with it, accept it, maybe Jonathan could too. So he laughed. "That's not a very nice word," Justin said.

Jonathan smiled, and the tension between them disappeared. "Isn't that what it means?" he asked innocently. "Two guys together?"

"Yeah but it's ..." Justin shrugged. "It's a little hateful, when you say it that way." Jonathan ducked his head and toyed with the basketball, a little embarrassed. "Jonathan, I'm your brother. I still like to play ball and hang out and do all that stuff. I'm the same guy who beats you at Mortal Kombat and eats your beans so Mom won't know you don't like them." He smiled disarmingly. "I'm the same person, Jon. I just ... I'm gay."

Jonathan studied him for a moment, and Justin let him think. Finally Jonathan tossed the basketball at him. Justin caught it deftly in both hands. From where he stood, Justin threw the ball at the basket above the garage. It sailed easily through the hoop and bounced away. Jonathan grinned. "Great shot," he said.

"Three points," Justin replied, grinning back. He tousled Jonathan's hair. "We cool, bro?"

Jonathan nodded. "We're cool," he said. Squinting at Justin, he asked, "Does Mom know?"

"Yeah," Justin said, nodding.

"How about Stevie?" Jonathan persisted.

Justin frowned. Stevie was their brother, and at five, Justin didn't think he really needed to know just now about he and Lance. "No," Justin said, pretending to think about it. "He's a little too young to understand right now. What do you think?"

Jonathan thought about it, and then he nodded. "I think you're right," he replied. "He's not old enough yet." Justin stifled a smile. Then Jonathan added, "You don't look gay."

"Jonathan!" Justin cried, laughing. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Jonathan shrugged. "You still look the same to me," he explained.

"I am the same," Justin replied. "I just like boys."

"Like Lance," Jonathan offered.

Justin nodded. "Like Lance." Grinning, he added, "I love Lance."

Jonathan laughed at that. "Are you cool with him?" Justin asked.

Jonathan shrugged again. "I guess," he said. "Just don't do any yucky stuff when I'm around, okay?"

Justin laughed. "Yucky stuff? You mean kissing?"

Scrunching up his face, Jonathan stuck out his tongue. "Yeah. That's gross."

"What's gross about it?" Justin asked, frowning.

"Everything," Jonathan replied. "Kissing is gross." He ran over to retrieve the basketball, dribbling it around the driveway.

Justin laughed again. "Sometimes I forget you're only eight," he said, grinning. "Okay, I won't do any yucky stuff in front of you."

"Promise?" Jonathan asked.

"Cross my heart," Justin swore, drawing an X over the left side of his chest with his finger.

Jonathan nodded solemnly. "And hope to die?" he added.

"They still say that?" Justin asked as Jonathan passed the ball to him. He set up for a shot and the ball sank through the hoop with a souging sound.

"Yeah," Jonathan said, racing after the ball. In a singsong voice he called, "Cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye."

Justin laughed, covering Jonathan to keep him from the basket. As they dodged around each other, Justin wished Lance's family was as understanding as his when it came to their relationship.

All I Ever Wanted
97. Brotherly Love
by NSyncGrrl

Lance opened his eyes. Around him the room was dark, the only light from the blue screen emanating from the television set, and it took him a minute to realize where he was. He felt something soft and unyielding behind him, something warm and familiar in his arms. Blinking a few times, he remembered Justin's house, cuddling up on the couch in the family room, popping a tape in to watch ... what? Something with Ben Affleck in it, but he couldn't recall the title. They turned out the lights and lay together on the couch, watching the movie, and somewhere between then and now, must have fallen asleep.

Lance looked down to find Justin curled beside him, sleeping peacefully. An afghan rested over the both of them, and Justin had it bunched in his fist, his fingers laced through the knitted blanket. From his position between Justin and the couch, Lance could read the LED display on the VCR, and the fact that it was hours after midnight surprised him. They started the movie after dinner. How long had they been sleeping here?

It didn't matter. Lance stretched slightly, not wanting to wake Justin, but he was still sleepy and the thought of spending the rest of the night on this cramped couch didn't do much for him. Carefully he climbed over Justin and eased out from under the afghan. As he stood up, Justin rolled back onto the couch, stretching in his sleep. Lance ran a hand across Justin's brow before quietly making his way to the kitchen. Without turning on the light, he poured himself a glass of water and drank it down greedily. God, he was thirsty. As he poured another glass, the light clicked on, and Lance turned around to find Justin's younger brother Jonathan blinking in the bright light.

"Hey," Lance whispered, squinting in the sudden brightness.

Jonathan yawned. "Hey," he said back. Motioning to the glass in Lance's hand, he said, "I just wanted a drink."

"Water okay?" Lance asked. When Jonathan nodded, Lance poured him a glass of water. Handing it to the young boy, he watched as Jonathan drank it down. When the water was gone, Jonathan wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his pajama top and looked up at Lance with wide, staring eyes. Lance finished his own water, aware of Jonathan's steady gaze on him.

"Is Justin up?" Jonathan asked, setting his glass in the sink.

Lance shook his head. "I gotta get him up," he said softly. "He's asleep in the den."

"Why wake him if he's already sleeping?" Jonathan asked, stifling another yawn.

Lance grinned. "Because when you sleep on the couch, you wake up

with a stiff neck and sore back, and you know how grumpy Justin is in the morning. Can you imagine if he was achy too?"

Jonathan laughed. "He wouldn't like that too much," he said.

"No, he wouldn't," Lance replied. Setting his own glass in the sink, he asked, "What are you doing up?"

Jonathan shrugged. "I was thirsty," he said. "I wasn't going to come down but I heard the water turn on so I figured it was okay."

Lance nodded. "Well," he said, taking a deep breath, "better go get Justin up."

"Can't you just carry him upstairs?" Jonathan asked. "My dad does that when I fall asleep on the couch."

Lance smiled. It hurt just thinking of carrying Justin anywhere, let alone up the flight of stairs leading to his bedroom. "He's too heavy for me," he admitted. Jonathan frowned, thinking. "What do you think I should do?" Lance asked playfully, not expecting a helpful answer.

But Jonathan surprised him. "Bring his bed down here," he suggested.

Lance laughed. "Jon, if I can't carry him, what makes you think I can carry his bed?"

Jonathan grinned. "Not his whole bed," he said, rolling his eyes in such an exaggerated way, Lance couldn't help but laugh again. "Just his pillows and blankets and stuff. We always used to do that. Camp out on the floor in the den."

Now there was an idea. "Will you help me?" Lance asked, seeing the gleam in Jonathan's eye. Jonathan nodded enthusiastically, and Lance followed him up the stairs, stepping carefully to avoid waking the rest of the house at this hour. Inside Justin's room, Lance grabbed the comforter and sheets off the bed while Jonathan juggled the pillows, and then they tramped back downstairs. By the light of the TV, Lance spread the sheets out on the floor in front of the couch, placing the pillows at one end as if he were making a bed. Then he shook the comforter out over the sheets, letting it fall softly to the floor. He looked up at Jonathan and grinned. "Like this?" he whispered.

Jonathan nodded. Lance leaned down over Justin and whispered into his ear, "Justin? Honey, wake up. Come on, I want you to lie down over here. Come on, wake up."

Justin moaned in his sleep and rolled over, reaching out for Lance. Lance shook him slightly. "Justin," he called again, his voice a little louder.

"What?" Justin asked groggily. He blinked once and, seeing the darkness around him, closed his eyes again.

"Justin, come on," Lance said, pulling him gently. "Just down here, to the floor. Come on."

Lance glanced over his shoulder at Jonathan and shrugged. Jonathan

came over and tugged Justin's legs off the couch. "Wake up," he said unceremoniously. He slapped Justin's butt hard. "Wake up, Justin."

"Ow," Justin muttered, trying to twist away from Jonathan. He slid off the couch and landed on his knees on the floor. Seeing the blankets spread out in front of him, Justin crawled beneath the comforter and snuggled into it, resting his head on his pillow. "Lance," he whispered, patting the floor beside him. "I'm on the floor. Now you come, too."

Lance grinned at Jonathan. "Thanks," he whispered.

Jonathan shrugged. "No problem," he said. He watched as Lance eased under the comforter. Justin pulled Lance close, and Lance laid his head beside Justin's.

Lance smiled at Jonathan, who yawned. "You should go back to bed," he whispered.

"Mom will be mad," Jonathan replied, nodding, but he stood there and watched them for another minute.

"We always used to do that." Jonathan's words earlier echoed through Lance's head. "Camp out on the floor in the den." Lance rolled over and flipped the edge of the comforter up. "You want to sleep down here?" he asked softly.

Jonathan's grin was all the reply he needed. As the boy climbed into the makeshift bed, Lance reached up and clicked the TV off, plunging the room into darkness. As he laid back down, Lance felt Justin's lips brush his neck gently. "Love you," Justin murmured sleepily, burying his head against Lance's back.

"Goodnight," Lance whispered to Jonathan.

"Goodnight," Jonathan replied. After a long moment, he said, "You're nicer than the girls Justin used to bring home. I like you."

Lance laughed. "I like you, too," he said. Beneath the covers, Justin's hands held Lance tightly, and Jonathan scooted back until he hemmed Lance in on the other side. Surrounded by a welcome feeling of comfort and warmth in the strange darkness, Lance drifted back to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
98. It's a Date
by NSyncGrrl

Lance heard someone knock on the bathroom door over the rush of running water. He turned the faucet off and reached back, opening the door. As Justin came in Lance met the gaze of his reflection in the mirror above the sink, and he grinned around his toothbrush. "Almost finished," he said, spitting out a mouthful of toothpaste into the sink.

Justin reached past him for his own toothbrush. Squirting toothpaste onto it, he replied, "No hurry." They were taking Justin's brothers out to the park this afternoon, and the two little boys had talked of nothing else all morning. They would have a picnic lunch and hang out at the playground, maybe play a little one on one basketball -- Lance thought maybe just Jonathan and Justin would play ball, because Stevie was too young and Lance couldn't sink a shot to save his life, and the last thing he wanted was to be upstaged by an eight year old. Then again, after the other night, Jonathan was Lance's new best friend, following him and Justin around constantly, talking nonstop about basketball and video games and Pokémon, always sitting next to Lance when they ate or watched TV. Even today, Jonathan said he thought maybe it would be okay if Lance and Justin held hands at the park, but nothing else. He frowned at them sternly, and Lance had to force the grin from his face. Beside him, Justin turned the water on and began to brush his teeth, too. From around the toothbrush, he said, "Jon likes you."

Spitting again into the sink, Lance took a handful of water and rinsed his mouth. "I'm glad," he said, looking up at Justin's reflection. "I like him, too. He's a sweet kid."

"That was a good idea," Justin continued, his words muffled through the toothpaste, "asking him if he wanted to sleep downstairs. You know how kids are. He loved that you even thought of it."

Lance splash the cold water onto his face, cool and invigorating this early in the morning. "It was his idea," he said, reaching blindly for a towel. Justin handed it to him, and he rubbed his face roughly. "I was going to get you up and drag you back upstairs."

"I'm glad you didn't," Justin said, smiling. Toothpaste foamed around his lips, and Lance grinned at him. "It meant a lot to him, that you thought to ask if he wanted to stay with us. I love you for that."

Lance blushed slightly and ducked his head. He had seen the eagerness in Jonathan's eyes, the desire to be a part of his older brother's life, and Lance knew how it felt to have an older sibling's boyfriend push you away. His own sister had dated a lot of jerks in high school, and when Lance just wanted to hang out with them, spend some time with her, the boy du jour always made him feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. Lance didn't want that to happen to Justin's brothers. And it was Jonathan's idea -- no reason why he couldn't camp out in the den, too.

Before he could say anything, Justin leaned close and kissed him on the cheek. "Justin!" Lance cried, laughing. An imprint of Justin's lips stuck to his cheek, outlined in sticky toothpaste. Lance wiped at the paste with the back of his hand and then with the towel. Justin laughed and rinsed his mouth, splashing water back at Lance. Lance got his hand between the faucet and Justin's palms and splashed Justin back. As he cleaned off his cheek, Lance stepped back from the sink, letting Justin shift into his spot to finish getting ready. Lance sat down on the edge of the bath tub and watched Justin's strong back, his narrow waist, his tight butt. Justin started to sway to some internal rhythm, and Lance heard low humming as Justin washed his face. When Justin danced around, Lance popped his butt with the towel. Justin caught it in his hands and tugged it out of Lance's grip, grinning.

Drying his face, Justin sat down beside Lance on the edge of the tub. Lance ran a hand down Justin's thigh, smoothing out the downy hair. "Today should be fun," he said softly.

Justin rubbed Lance's back. "Just me and you and my brothers," Justin replied, laughing. "Ought to be a riot."

"They're fun boys," Lance said, and Justin agreed.

"But sometimes ..." Justin shrugged. "I don't know. Don't you ever want to go out, just the two of us?"

Lance nodded. "We've never really gone out on a date," he pointed out.

"Never?" Justin asked, thinking about it.

Lance shook his head. "It's always us and the guys," he said. "The mall or the movies or the award shows. Always someone with us."

"When we got lost, we were out by ourselves." Justin grinned wickedly, and Lance squeezed his knee.

"That's not exactly my idea of a date," he replied.

"I know," Justin replied. He thought for a minute, his hand caressing Lance's waist with a feathery touch. "Well, tomorrow we head back to the house, and we'll be in the studio for a while. You know we won't feel like going out after a day of practicing."

Lance nodded. "How about when we go to my place?" he asked softly. When Justin looked at him, he grinned. "We could go to dinner, take in a movie, go dancing --"

"Line dancing?" Justin asked dubiously. He knew Lance's penchant for country music.

Lance shrugged. "It's not that hard," he replied. "You just dance in time with everyone else. You're pretty good at that already."

"But I don't know the moves," Justin added.

"I could teach you." The idea of teaching Justin how to dance, the two of them in a room alone, his hands on Justin's hips, watching Justin move

to the music -- it was almost enough to make him call off this day trip and start the lessons now. "It's not that hard," he said again.

Justin frowned. "I'll look stupid," he said.

"You won't look stupid," Lance replied, grinning. "Who are you planning to impress, anyway?"

Justin shrugged. "I just don't want to embarrass you."

"You don't want me to laugh at you," Lance corrected. Justin pouted, and Lance kissed his full lips tenderly. "I promise I won't laugh too loud."

"That's not really --" Justin started, but Lance cut his words off with another kiss.

Someone knocked on the bathroom door. "Lance?" It was Jonathan. "I made you a Pokémon deck. Will you play with me?"

Justin laughed. "I'm going to get jealous," he said, hugging Lance close. "My little brother just won't leave you alone."

Lance grinned. "Coming right out," he called. In a softer voice, he said, "Don't worry, Justin. He's not my type. Too young."

Justin kissed Lance's neck, his tongue tickling behind Lance's ear. "So it's a date?" he asked. "Dinner and dancing?"

Nodding, Lance agreed. "It's a date." As he kissed Justin again, Jonathan knocked on the door, louder this time, and Lance laughed. "It'll be nice to be in a house with no one else for once," he remarked. "No interruptions, no one rushing us to hurry up, none of that."

Justin licked his lips hungrily, his gaze running down the length of Lance's body as Lance stood up and stretched. The look in his eyes was a promise Lance intended to keep. "I can't wait," Justin replied.

All I Ever Wanted
99. What I Want
by NSyncGrrl

The television was on in the living room but Joey wasn't watching it. Joey sat on the couch, his feet propped up on the coffee table, and stared at the big screen, lost in thought. JC's words from the night before kept replaying through his mind, over and over again like an old 45. "I couldn't stop thinking about it. About you."

Why didn't I notice? Joey thought bitterly. Had he been that wrapped up in himself not to see the way his kisses affected JC? If he had only known that JC lay awake at night, thinking about them ... how many nights had Joey wanted someone to hold so badly that he wouldn't have cared who it was?

But that was the problem, wasn't it? JC wanted someone who wasn't in love with someone else ... like Lance, Joey thought. And Joey wanted someone, anyone, who wanted him. God, Joey thought, taking a swig of his beer. The alcohol had grown warm in his hand and tasted horrible, but he liked the way it made his head buzz this late in the afternoon. This is so fucked up.

So now what? JC didn't like him like that, which was what Joey had believed all along, only now he knew differently. Now he knew that if he hadn't been so caught up in Lance, then maybe he could've had something with JC. Maybe they could've had something special, something more than a few drunken kisses and the angst-filled tension that stretched between them like taffy. Fuck, he thought, closing his eyes in frustration.

And then there was Chris. Crazy, fun, sexy Chris. Who was there when Joey needed him, with his eager kisses and strong arms. Who woke him with sweet gumdrops and laughed at his jokes and teased him until Joey thought he would die from desire and need. Who has a girlfriend, Joey added sourly. Who calls when you're making out with him. Who doesn't know you're fooling around with her guy.

Only it wasn't really fooling around anymore, was it? Joey didn't know when things changed, but now when Chris kissed him, Joey wanted more. He wanted to feel Chris in his arms, in his mouth, on his tongue. He wanted to taste Chris and see the laughter in his eyes sparkling for him alone. He wanted to hear Chris breathe beside him, day and night. He wanted Chris to tell him what Joey thought he saw in those deep, dark eyes every time they looked at each other. Right now, more than anything else, he wanted Chris to want him.

And what did Chris want? Joey didn't know. Could JC be right? Could his unrequited feelings for Lance turn Chris away the same way it obviously turned JC away? If only I had known, Joey thought again, for the millionth time. But what would he have done, if he had known? He was already seeking comfort in Chris's arms, and he would have felt even worse if he knew JC kept remembering those kisses.

He never intended them to mean that much to JC.

Sighing, Joey downed the rest of his beer and crushed the can in his fist. He nudged the remote with his foot, hoping to bring it closer to him, but it fell off the other side of the table and landed on the floor. Joey didn't feel like getting up to retrieve it, or to turn off the TV. Right now he didn't feel like doing much of anything. He didn't even want to get another beer, even though he needed one, badly. Suddenly he had an uncontrollable urge to get smashed. Maybe then he could forget the sadness in JC's eyes when he told Joey that it would've been fun, the two of them. Fuck, Joey thought again. There was no other word he knew to describe the horrible way he was feeling right this second. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

He heard a door open down the hall. Probably Chris, Joey thought, staring blankly at the TV. JC was taking a nap, and when he slept, he slept hard. He'd probably sleep right up until dinner was ready. It was Chris's turn to cook tonight, though, and the way he'd been stuck in his room lately, playing his video game nonstop, Joey thought maybe he'd have to order in pizza or something. Even though Chris hadn't spent much time with him in the last few days, part of Joey was thankful for the game that distracted him. At least I haven't had a chance to talk to him, Joey thought as Chris walked out of the hall, like JC wants me to. Like I promised to.

"Hey, Joe," Chris called, stepping into the living room.

Joey looked up from the television and blinked. "Hey," he replied, frowning at the slur in his voice. He'd only had a few beers. Holding up the can in his hand, he asked, "Can you get me another drink?"

Chris looked at him closely. "I think you've had enough already," he said. "You got nothing better to do than get sloshed before dinner?"

"Chris --" Joey started, then turned away. What could he say?

Chris knocked Joey's feet down from the coffee table and sat down, blocking the TV from Joey's view. "Joe, look at me." Joey complied. He felt his face pull into a frown, and his eyes felt heavy and tired. How many beers did he have? "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Joey mumbled. I think I like you, he thought, watching Chris with hooded eyes. I missed a chance I didn't know I had with JC, and I don't want to miss a chance with you. But tell me, Chris, do I even have a chance with you?

"Are you tired?" Chris asked. Concern laced his voice, and Joey felt tears prick his eyes when he looked into Chris's face and saw the tender way his friend looked back.

Joey shook his head. He wasn't tired, though a weariness clung to his bones, making it hard for him to move.

"Are you lonely?" Chris asked. His voice was so soft, Joey wondered if Chris was speaking out loud or directly into Joey's mind.

Joey wanted to say no. He opened his mouth to say no, his lips were

already forming the word, when his heart surprised him. "Yes," he whispered. He dropped the crushed can and ran his hand over his face, sighing.

Chris ran a hand down Joey's thigh, his touch warm and gentle through Joey's jeans. "Lance?" he asked quietly.

Joey shook his head. "No," he admitted, raising his eyes to meet Chris's, "you."

Was that shock he saw in Chris's eyes? Lust, desire? He wasn't sure, and he wished he had one less beer in his system. He wished he had a little more courage to ask Chris what was going on behind those eyes right now. "Me?" Chris asked, placing a hand against his chest and raising his eyebrows in an attempt to mock the surprise that shone through his features. "Mr. Fatone is lonely for moi?"

Joey grinned in spite of himself. "You've been locked away with that game," he explained. "I haven't seen you in forever."

"Three days," Chris replied, holding up three fingers. "That's it, Joe. It's only been three days. But I'm almost finished, I swear."

"It seems like forever," Joey muttered.

"And you miss me already?" Chris asked, grinning.

Joey nodded. He did miss Chris -- he missed his friend's silly jokes, his crooked grin, his infectious laugh. He missed the way Chris looked at him, like he was doing now, with that strange flirty way he had that left Joey feeling as if he was the only one in the whole world that mattered at that moment. And face it, Fatone, his mind whispered, you miss his kisses and his arms around you and his sure and gentle touch. Yeah, he missed that, too. But even though JC wanted him to, he just couldn't bring himself to tell Chris that. After the few beers he'd had, Chris would think he was just drunk and brush it off. Joey didn't want to take that chance. So he just nodded again and said nothing.

Chris placed his hands on Joey's knees. Leaning forward, he closed his eyes and kissed Joey tenderly, his lips soft on Joey's own. His tongue slipped inside Joey's mouth, tasting cool and sweet, a welcome contrast to the flavor of beer on Joey's breath. Joey closed his eyes and leaned back, letting Chris kiss him. Chris shifted closer, placing his knees on the couch between Joey's legs. They pressed against Joey's crotch lightly, stirring his penis awake. Joey reached up and ran his hands around Chris's waist, moaning as Chris pressed him back against the couch, his lips eager and hungry against Joey's. He pulled back slightly and Joey tightened his grip on his friend's waist. "Don't," Joey whispered.

"I'm not going anywhere," Chris said softly. He ran his hands down Joey's thighs, across Joey's stomach, and up over his chest. Joey's nipples hardened beneath Chris's insistent touch. Joey arched his back, pressing against Chris's hands. He felt Chris's warm lips on his neck, just below his chin, his kisses faint and ticklish on Joey's trim goatee.

"Chris," Joey moaned. Chris silenced him with a kiss, his lips finding Joey's and closing over them easily. Joey leaned forward, his tongue

forcing itself into Chris's mouth. Joey wanted him -- forget Lance, forget JC, forget the fact that Joey had never been with a guy before. This was Chris, and right now Joey wanted him so badly it hurt. He hugged Chris to him and sat up into their kiss.

Losing his balance, Chris slid off the edge of the couch. One moment he was in Joey's arms, his hands between them, and the next he was on the floor between Joey's knees, giggling. Joey's arms felt empty and a coldness draped over him, but then he looked down at Chris, his disheveled hair spiked in all directions, his head resting on Joey's knee, and Joey started to laugh. Chris laughed with him, those incredible eyes looking up at Joey with an unreadable expression that made Joey's groin ache. "I slipped," Chris explained.

"I noticed," Joey replied. "And here I thought maybe you were going to give me that blowjob after all." He smirked, hoping Chris would remember the running joke from last week.

Chris's face grew serious, and his eyes intensified. "Do you want one?" he asked quietly, studying Joey's face.

Suddenly Joey grew nervous. Hell yeah, he wanted one. But what would that do to the fragile relationship he and Chris were forming now? It would change something, Joey was sure, but he didn't know what. He didn't even know what they had to change, and it terrified him that he might lose whatever it was they had now if they moved beyond the kisses to something more. But God, did he want more. "That's okay," Joey said, brushing it off.

But Chris persisted. "You don't want one at all?" he asked, wrinkling his brow. "Or you don't want one from me?"

"Chris, I --" Joey took a shaky breath, hoping to steady himself and still the hammering of his heart. It didn't help. Maybe JC was right -- maybe he should be honest with Chris. "Chris, get up."

Chris shook his head. "Answer the question, Joe."

"I don't want it to come between us," Joey sighed.

Chris watched him for a moment more, but when Joey didn't meet his gaze, he stood up and plopped down to the couch beside his friend. Joey reached out and caught Chris's hand in his, entwining his fingers through Chris's. "It wouldn't have to mean anything," Chris whispered, holding Joey's hand in both of his.

"It would to me," Joey replied. Chris looked up at him, searching Joey's face for something ...

Joey wasn't quite sure what he was looking for, but then Chris smiled sadly. "It would to me, too," he said.

Joey's heart quickened. "Chris --" he started, and then he shook his head.

"What?" Chris asked. When Joey didn't answer right away, Chris persisted. "Joey, what? Please tell me."

Joey sighed, a lonely sound. "Have you ever liked someone who was in love with someone else?" That was his dilemma, wasn't it? He liked Chris, and Chris loved Dani.

To his surprise, Chris caught his breath, and Joey looked up at him to find him nodding, his keen gaze never leaving Joey's face. "Yes," he whispered.

"What would you do?" Joey asked softly. "To tell them you liked them. What would you do?"

"I would ..." Chris trailed off, thinking. His hands squeezed Joey's gently, and he studied Joey's eyes, his nose, his lips. His gaze rested on Joey's lips. "I don't know," he admitted. "I'm chickenshit when it comes to telling someone I like them. I don't know what I'd do."

"Would you tell them?" Joey pressed. Please, he thought, please give me a hint, a clue, something for me to go on. Please tell me how to win you away.

Chris shrugged. "I don't know," he said again. His eyes grew misty and sad. "I want to -- I want to tell them. I want to tell them how much I love being with them, and how much it means to me when it's just the two of us, and how I want that feeling of breathlessness that hangs in the air between us whenever we're together to never disappear." He smiled at Joey. "That's what I would say."

Joey stared at him for a long moment. Yes, that summed up exactly how Joey felt about his friend. "What about the person they love?" he asked.

"Do they really love them?" Chris countered.

"I don't know," Joey whispered. Do you love her? he wanted to ask, but he kept his mouth shut.

Chris grinned. "Well, if I thought I had a chance, I'd take it. It would be me beside them every day, not the other person, and eventually they'd love me, too. I mean, if they already like me --"

"They do," Joey whispered. When Chris looked at him sharply, Joey met his gaze boldly.

Nodding, Chris continued, "Then I'd take it. It may sound mean, but if I liked someone and I thought they liked me, I don't think I'd care about the other person all that much." He looked at Joey frankly. "Especially if the other person doesn't love them back."

"What if they're with the person?" Joey asked. "What would you do then?"

Chris sighed. "Joey, you're not with anyone," he said.

Joey frowned. "But you're dating --" he whispered, and confusion flitted across Chris's face.

"Okay," Chris said slowly. "I'm lost. What are we talking about?"

"I'm not sure," Joey admitted. He had been talking about Chris, but what was Chris talking about? Sighing, Joey thought, Fuck it, and whispered, "I'm talking about you." Before Chris could reply, Joey closed his eyes and just let it out. "I like you, Chris. It's not just fooling around anymore, not to me."

"It was never just that to me." Joey opened his eyes as Chris raised Joey's hand and wrapped his lips around one of Joey's knuckles, sucking gently. He stared at Joey and said softly, "It's been a long time since anyone has made me feel the way I do when I'm with you. I didn't want to tell you because I know how you feel for Lance. But he's with Justin, Joe. You can't have him."

"And you're with Dani," Joey pointed out. He felt hollow inside. So all those kisses, all those touches, those looks, those soft words ... it had always meant something more to Chris? Joey could barely believe it. Chris's lips on his skin were warm and so damn soft.

Chris sighed. "I have to talk to her. But Joey? I don't want her. I want you."

"I want you." Joey felt a slow swelling in his chest that started to press against his heart, his throat, and he looked at Chris as if he were seeing him for the first time. "I want you." "Joey?" Chris asked, suddenly unsure. "Say something. Please."

"I want you." Joey pulled his hand out of Chris's grip, and he saw fear leap into his friend's eyes. Reaching for him, Joey ran his arm behind Chris's shoulders and pulled him close, his lips searching for Chris's own. He felt Chris's hand rub along his chest, encircling him, and he leaned into the touch. Then their lips met, and Joey kissed Chris hungrily, his hand grabbing a fistful of Chris's hair and pulling him into the kiss. Chris moaned into Joey, his breath hot against Joey's cheek, his tongue sweet and thick in Joey's mouth. Easing back slightly, Joey's lips tugged at Chris's upper lip and he whispered, "I've been hoping you'd say that one of these days."

Chris grinned. "I need to talk to Dani. But I'm serious, Joey."

"So am I," Joey replied. He kissed Chris again, savoring the feel of soft lips on his. "I want to be with you. Not just these stolen moments, either. I like you. But you know what? I want that to grow into something more." Taking a deep breath, he added, "I want to love you. I want you to show me how."

Kissing him, Chris promised, "I will. But first I have to tell Dani. I can't dick her around anymore."

"Okay," Joey said. He traced the curve of Chris's cheek with one finger, marveling at the silky feel of skin beneath his touch. "I'll wait."

"You swear?" Chris asked, his smile slipping a little.

Joey nodded. The dark mood that had descended over him with the first beer lifted, leaving him exhilarated and trembling with relief. Chris liked him -- he wanted him. "I've waited this long," he said, grinning. "I can wait a little longer."

"First I want to beat Chrono Cross," Chris said.

Joey frowned. "Not that long," he teased.

"I'm almost through," Chris said, excited. He rubbed his hand along Joey's back and laughed. "I'm this close to the end of the game, I just know it. Then I'll call her."

"And tell her what?" Joey asked, resting his head on Chris's shoulder. His body hummed with the beer and the thrill of Chris's words. "I want you."

Chris shrugged in Joey's arms. "I'll think of something," he promised. Joey grinned and closed his eyes. "Joe?"

"Hmm?" He was getting sleepy now that the tension between the two of them was gone, and it felt so nice and comfortable to just lie in Chris's embrace.

But Chris pushed him up gently. "Um, I left the Playstation on. I'm sort of in the middle of the game ..."

Joey laughed and let Chris stand up. Then he laid down on the couch, the cushions still warm from Chris's body. "Wake me when you win," he whispered. "And cut off the TV, okay?"

"Sure," Chris whispered. He leaned down and kissed Joey's cheek, and his words rang through Joey's mind again. "I want you." Joey smiled and let the alcohol lull him to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
100. Lying Beside You
by NSyncGrrl

Okay, Chris thought, glancing at the clock, so I lied. He told Joey he'd be finished with the video game by ten o'clock, and he played it nonstop all evening, desperate to win. His plan was to beat the game, call Dani, and then ... then sleep with Joey, his mind whispered. Yes, that was exactly what he planned to do. The thought of touching Joey intimately, of letting Joey touch him, made Chris's stomach flip as if he were just a teenager again about to go out on his first date. And he loved the feeling.

But first, the game. He wanted to beat it so it wouldn't be hanging out there, always nagging at him to play, and now that Joey confessed that he liked him, Chris wanted to have nothing else on his mind but Joey, Joey, Joey. Chris wondered what it would feel like, to have sex with Joey. He knew Joey's kisses, soft, insistent, his tongue an expert in Chris's mouth. He knew Joey's touches, the way it felt when Joey was hard and pressed against him, the way it felt to be held tight in Joey's arms. But the idea of having sex with Joey excited him, and after they talked earlier today, he felt like an overeager puppy every time Joey looked at him with those gentle eyes and winked. He had never wanted anyone so bad.

There was a knock on the door. "It's open," Chris called. He glanced up from the TV as Joey entered, wearing only a pair of boxer shorts and carrying a pillow. Chris let his gaze run down Joey's chest before lingering on the thick bulge in Joey's shorts. Chris licked his upper lip and turned back to his game. "What's up, Joe?" he asked, hoping Joey didn't notice the slight break in his voice.

Joey tossed his pillow at him. It landed beside Chris at the foot of the bed. Joey laid down on his stomach and hugged the pillow. Closing his eyes, he buried his head into the pillow and sighed. "I'm staying here tonight," he announced.

"Okay," Chris replied. No argument there.

"I'm tired of that game," Joey added, "and I'm not even playing it."

Chris grinned. "Do you want to play it?" he asked. "I'm almost finished."

"You keep saying that." Joey looked up at him and said, "I don't think you know how much farther you have to go."

"Give me another half hour," Chris said. "Then I'll turn it off. I promise."

Joey sighed again and rolled his eyes. Pushing himself up on his elbows, he kissed Chris's arm, his lips soft and warm and damp. Then he snuggled into the pillow again and closed his eyes.

Chris looked down at him and smiled before turning back to his game. What the fuck am I going to tell Dani? he thought. He didn't want to tell

her that he and Joey were going to hook up -- he remembered her comments back at her house, about how guys shouldn't be with guys, and that had made him mad. She didn't know about his liking guys because the subject never came up, and he didn't want her to think he was leaving her for Joey. He wasn't. This had been building for a long time now between them. Ever since that night she fooled around on him, the first night he ever kissed Joey, Dani had grown distant. They still talked on the phone but it was in short sentences surrounded by silences that spoke volumes. She was never home when he called her, and she rarely called him back. When was the last time they had sex? The first night after the tour was over, he thought, thinking back. Then a few days later the guys joined them at Dani's house, and even though Chris shared her bed every night, they slept on separate sides. Even if things hadn't unfolded as they did -- Lance and Joey at that party, Joey hating himself for that brief moment of weakness, Chris so eager to comfort him -- even if none of that ever happened, Chris had to admit that he and Dani would've broken up sooner or later. He just couldn't let this drag on forever. He had to let her know he wasn't satisfied, and he wanted something more.

And right now? That something was Joey. Sweet, flirty, sensual Joey. Who was lying here beside him, while Chris played his video game. Dani hated when he obsessed over guy stuff like that. Joey was his best friend -- he understood him better than anyone else, so he was cool with his obsessive side, his crazy side, his "throw caution to the wind" and "who the fuck cares" attitudes. And ever since this afternoon, when Joey told Chris he liked him -- no, wanted to love him -- Chris had felt a rush of euphoria sweep over him like a wave, crashing against his soul and leaving him drenched in its wake.

Then why are you playing a game instead of playing with him? his mind whispered. Chris looked down at Joey again, noting the broad, smooth expanse of Joey's back, the way his muscles stretched across his shoulders, the faint shadows of his long eyelashes falling on his unshaven cheeks. Leaning down, Chris clicked the Playstation off and dropped the controller to the floor. Then he stretched out beside Joey, running a hand down Joey's arm, savoring the warmth beneath his touch. Joey moaned and shifted slightly, burrowing into the pillow a little more. "You finished?" he murmured, his eyes still closed.

"For now," Chris replied. He touched Joey's eyelashes with one finger, and they fluttered against his skin softly, like the wings of a butterfly.

Joey sighed sleepily. "Well now I'm tired," he said, his voice low. His cheek vibrated under Chris's finger as he spoke, and Chris smiled.

"I'm tired, too," he admitted, resting his chin on Joey's arm.

Joey rolled over slightly, easing his arm out from under Chris, and then he draped it around Chris's neck and hugged him close. Chris rested his head on Joey's pillow, his forehead touching Joey's, and Joey's breath fanned his cheek gently. Beneath Joey's warm weight, Chris felt safe, and he closed his eyes, not wanting to lose the feeling. "Chris?" Joey whispered.

"What?" Chris asked.

"The light is on," Joey pointed out.

Chris shrugged, snuggling closer to Joey. "Tough shit," he murmured.

"Shouldn't you turn it off?" Joey asked.

"I'm not moving," Chris declared. When Joey started to sit up, Chris grabbed onto his waist and held him down. "And you aren't, either."

"Okay." Joey cuddled against Chris.

After a few minutes, Chris asked, "Joey?"

"Hmm?" came the soft reply.

Chris grinned. "I can't sleep."

"Cause the light's on," Joey said. "Turn it off and you'll fall asleep."

"I don't want to move," Chris replied. He reached up and traced Joey's lips with his finger. Joey opened his mouth and Chris's finger slipped inside, encased by Joey's hot, damp lips. Joey's tongue curled around the tip of his finger, sucking gently. Chris rubbed Joey's chin with his thumb. "Now I'm definitely not getting up," he said. Joey smiled. "Hey, Joe?"

"What?" Joey asked around Chris's finger.

"How many guys have you been with?" Chris asked.

Joey opened one eye and stared at him. "I've never been with a guy before," he whispered as Chris eased his finger out of Joey's mouth. Chris outlined Joey's lips, leaving them shiny with Joey's saliva. Then he leaned close and kissed Joey tenderly, his tongue slipping into Joey's mouth where his finger had just been.

"How many guys have you kissed?" Chris asked, curious.

"Three," Joey replied.

Chris grinned. "Let's see, me, Lance, and who else?"

A thin blush crept into Joey's cheeks. "Chris, I --"

"Who else?" Chris persisted. "Come on, Joe, you can tell me."

"Chris, no --" Joey buried his head in the pillow, trying to hide from Chris.

Chris touched his cheek. "Is it one of the guys?" he asked. "Not Justin, I'm sure. JC?"

Joey's blush deepened. "Chris --"

Chris giggled. "You kissed JC?" he asked, rubbing Joey's cheek gently with his thumb. "What did he kiss like?"

"I don't remember," Joey mumbled. "I was drunk, and I don't really remember it."

"Does he?" Chris thought the idea of quiet, shy JC kissing Joey,

particularly after all the tension between the two of them, quite funny.

Joey nodded. "Chris, please don't say anything --"

"I won't," Chris promised quickly. He kissed Joey again.

"Are you mad?" Joey asked.

Chris laughed. "Mad? Why should I be mad? I'm not Justin."

Joey smiled at that. "I just didn't want you to think --"

"Joey, shut up," Chris said, kissing him again. He kissed Joey's closed eyelids, his cheek, his lips. Joey sighed and let Chris cover his face with soft, feathery kisses. When his breathing turned to quiet snores, Chris closed his eyes and fell asleep in Joey's embrace.

All I Ever Wanted
101. Back Home
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was exhausted. He leaned against Lance's back as Lance unlocked the front door of the house Justin shared with the others. It was either very late or very early -- all Justin knew was that he was tired and wanted nothing more than to lay down in his bed and sleep until noon tomorrow in Lance's arms. They had planned on returning to the house this afternoon, but Justin's mother wanted to take the Justin's brothers out shopping for school, and they wanted Justin and Lance to come along. After the way Jonathan took to Lance, how could Justin look into his young face and hope to say no?

So they went school shopping, and then stopped for lunch, and then it was back to the stores, and Justin had never seen such a mad rush for notebooks and pens and paper -- had it been like this when he was growing up? He didn't remember. There were kids everywhere, and mothers yelling to their children, and Justin just wanted to leave. When they got back to his mother's house, though, his stepfather decided to treat everyone to dinner at a local marina, despite Justin's insistence that he and Lance get going. And then they went to a movie, and out for ice cream, and by the time he crawled behind the wheel of his car, he was exhausted. Finally, they were home. Finally, they could get some sleep.

Finally. Lance got the door open and they stepped inside. The house was silent and dark, the others already asleep, and Justin eased the door shut behind him, hearing the latch catch in the darkness. Lance reached back and took Justin's hand. Squeezing it gently, he whispered, "Guess no one waited up for us."

Justin smiled. "Guess not," he whispered back. He let Lance lead him to their room, where he clicked on the lamp beside the bed and sat down, kicking his shoes off. "I just want to sleep forever," he said, sighing.

Lance locked the door. "You very tired?" he asked.

Justin looked up to see the smoldering shadows in Lance's eyes, and his weariness fell away like a discarded towel slipping from his body. When had they last made love? All weekend long they slept in each others' arms but didn't do anything else, not with Justin's parents and brothers sleeping just down the hall. "Not too tired," Justin whispered, and a small smile spread across Lance's face.

In three steps he crossed the room and stripped off his jacket. Tossing it to the floor, Lance began to unbutton his shirt, and when the last button slipped free and his shirt hung open, exposing his bare chest, he took Justin's face in both hands and pulled him into a kiss. His lips sucked on Justin's lower lip gently, but a hunger pulsed beneath his insistent touch. Justin ran his hands around Lance and leaned back, lying down on the bed. He pulled Lance down on top of him, and Lance climbed onto the bed, straddling Justin. His kisses were demanding, pushing Justin into the downy covers of the bed. His hands ran down Justin's chest, tugging his

sweater up. Justin reached down and grabbed the bottom of the sweater, helping Lance undress him. Lance sat up long enough for Justin to pull the sweater off over his head, and then Lance's hands were beneath Justin's arms, his touch gentle and ticklish as he traced down Justin's sides. Justin closed his eyes, a slight moan escaping his lips, as Lance leaned down and sucked gently at his neck. "I love you," Lance whispered.

Justin opened his mouth to reply when Lance's lips closed over his again, his tongue easing into Justin's mouth with a desire that ignited them both. Lance trailed wet, tiny kisses down Justin's chin and neck, his tongue dancing in the hollow of Justin's throat, his lips sucking along Justin's collarbone. Justin felt the familiar ache in his groin as Lance's kisses aroused him, making him hard with longing and need for his lover. With an expert touch, Lance kissed down to Justin's nipples, licking them with long, slow strokes of his tongue like a cat, making the tender buds achy and erect in his mouth. Justin moaned and grabbed Lance's hair in both hands, pressing Lance's lips against his chest as he thrust against Lance, rubbing his erection through his jeans. "Lance," he whispered, breathless. "Now."

"In a minute," Lance replied, kissing down Justin's stomach to the waistband of his jeans.

"I don't have a minute," Justin said. Releasing Lance, he unzipped his jeans and tried to pull them down, wiggling beneath Lance. "Lance, now," he said again. He was close to coming, he knew it. It was because he hadn't been with Lance in so long, and Lance knew just where to kiss him to turn him on, and he wanted Lance so bad -- "Lance," he moaned again, looking at his lover with an exasperated expression on his face.

"Oh, all right," Lance said, grinning. He rolled off of Justin and sat back as Justin slipped off his jeans, his boxers quickly following suit. Lance reached for Justin's swollen cock, his hands encircling the hard, thick shaft and squeezing gently. Justin fell back to the bed, trying to keep a reign on the pleasure coursing through his body, but Lance's touch on his dick was maddening. "Lance," Justin breathed, turning his head to look at him pleadingly. "Lance, please."

"Okay, okay," Lance conceded, standing up. He pulled his own pants down and eased out of his briefs. "Jeez, Justin," he said as he undressed, "so much for a romantic evening, huh? I want a little foreplay and you're ready to squirt all over the place."

Justin pouted. He could be just as romantic as the next guy, really he could. But right now he wanted Lance inside of him. Fuck romantic. He wanted sex. "Lance," he started, but then he saw Lance's own thick cock, erect and throbbing, and he grinned. "I'm not the only one ready to come," he said.

Lance smiled. "I was kidding, honey," he said softly. "I want you just as much as you want me. Where did we put that tube ..." His voice trailed off as he opened the top drawer of Justin's dresser, looking for their lubrication.

Justin watched Lance's round butt and whispered, "We don't need it. Get back here."

"I'm not going to hurt you, Justin," Lance replied. "It's around here somewhere. Two seconds won't kill you."

Sitting up, Justin grabbed Lance's waist and pulled him back to the bed. "Your two seconds are up," he growled into Lance's ear. Lance giggled and tried to squirm away, but Justin held him tight. His lips closed over Lance's earlobe, sucking gently, and his hard erection pressed against Lance's leg, the soft feel of flesh on flesh exciting him.

"I remember where it is," Lance said. He tried to sit up but Justin wouldn't let him go. "Justin," he warned.

Justin grinned. "Spit works," he said.

"It's in my drawer," Lance said. Justin rolled onto his back and let Lance crawl over him. "I can just reach it --"

As Lance's legs straddled Justin's head, Justin took Lance's hard cock in his mouth, effectively cutting off Lance's words as his lips closed around Lance's thick shaft. Lance fell to the bed, catching himself with his hands before he fell onto Justin. He moaned loudly and thrust into Justin's mouth, and Justin ran his tongue around the swollen tip of Lance's penis, tasting the salty fluids leaking from him. Justin knew Lance was close, too. Easing Lance's dick out of his mouth, Justin whispered urgently, "Okay, now."

Without further prompting, Lance scrambled back down over Justin. Justin spread his legs and then Lance's fingers slipped into him, a delicious sensation he had missed. As Lance guided his cock into Justin, he kissed him greedily, and whatever discomfort Justin felt as Lance entered him was kissed away. After the first few thrusts, Justin came explosively, whimpering into Lance's mouth as his juices erupted between them. Lance leaned over Justin, raised up on his hands, his elbows locked as he thrust into Justin, harder, faster, almost there himself. Justin gripped Lance's elbows and moved in rhythm with him. He watched Lance's face -- his eyes closed tight in pleasure, his mouth open slightly, his breath ragged and quick, high spots of color on his cheeks. Beads of sweat glistened along his forehead, and when he came, his face went slack with release, his mouth opening into a perfectly shaped O. Justin cupped Lance's face in his hands and pulled him down into a kiss. "God, Lance," he whispered softly. Lance's eyelashes fluttered against his cheek as Justin kissed Lance's eyes, his nose, his temple. "It's been forever ..."

"It's been a few days," Lance corrected, grinning. "Thank goodness we're not staying with my parents when we visit."

"Jesus," Justin cried, laughing. "I'd die for sure."

Lance wiggled inside of him, and then sat back, pulling out. "We can't have that," he said playfully. "Even though no one ever died from lack of sex."

"I would," Justin pouted, "if you were with me all the time and I couldn't have you."

Lance kissed him, his lips lingering on Justin's until Justin felt himself begin to harden again. "You can have me whenever your heart desires,"

Lance whispered. As Justin began to pull him down again, though, Lance said, "But right now we both need a shower. Come on." He tugged Justin up off the bed.

Justin tried to pull Lance down to him. "We don't need a shower," he said as Lance staggered against him. He landed on Justin's chest and looked up at him, grinning.

"Justin," he said, standing up again, "you're messy."

"It's just cum," Justin said, rubbing at his belly. His hand came away sticky with his own fluids.

Lance sighed. "A shower won't hurt you," he said. Turning away, he grabbed a towel from the shelf in the closet and said, "But if you don't want to take a shower with me, then I guess I'll just take one all by my lonesome. Just don't expect to come crawling into bed and snuggling up to me when I'm all nice and clean and you're still ..." He let his voice trail off as he motioned at Justin. He pulled his face into a distasteful frown that Justin wanted to kiss away.

"I'm coming," Justin said, sighing. Actually, Lance in the shower was a pleasant image, and Justin was already looking forward to curling up beside Lance in the bed, the faint scent of soap and shampoo enveloping them as they drifted off to sleep. Lance wrapped the towel around his waist and led the way to the bathroom. Justin grabbed a towel for himself and followed, eager to watch the water runnel down Lance's body in tiny rivulets. Stepping up behind Lance in the darkness of the hallway, Justin whispered, "I love you" and kissed the back of Lance's neck.

Lance giggled at the soft touch and then they were in the bathroom, locking the door behind them and the rest of the world away.

All I Ever Wanted
102. Coffee Talk
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stood by the kitchen sink, looking out at the pre-dawn world beyond the window. He held a coffee mug in his hands and blew across the top of the mug, trying to cool the hot coffee inside enough to drink it. He blinked and took a sip of the coffee, wincing at the heat and the taste. He didn't like coffee all that much, to be honest, but he only got about five hours of sleep the night before and JC was already at the studio, waiting for them to show up. Lance smiled, thinking of Justin still asleep in their bed. We really wore each other out last night, he thought, remembering the feel of Justin in his arms. God, he loved that boy.

Behind him someone shuffled into the kitchen. Turning, Lance saw Joey wearing a thin pair of boxers and a FuManSkeeto shirt that Lance could've sworn belonged to Chris. Joey smiled at Lance. "What time did you guys get in last night?" he asked sleepily.

Lance shrugged. "Late," he replied. He watched as Joey opened the refrigerator and pulled out the carton of milk. When he opened the carton and began to raise it to his lips, Lance said, "Don't do that." Joey raised an eyebrow at him, and Lance handed him a glass. "Have you been drinking out of it all weekend?"

"No," Joey admitted, pouring milk into the glass.

Lance watched him put the milk back into the refrigerator. Good, he thought. He could just imagine Justin's reaction now, if he drank a bowlful of milk with his cereal only to learn that Joey had been drinking from the carton all along. Justin was very picky about things like that, not wanting to drink after or share cups with someone else. Other than me, Lance thought, grinning. Of course Justin drank after him -- they kissed so often sometimes, Lance was afraid to see what would happen when the winter came and one of them caught a cold. That would be a nightmare.

Joey hummed tunelessly as he got a bowl out of the cabinets. Then he found a box of cereal and poured himself a bowl. Sitting down at the kitchen table, he left the box open on the counter, and Lance busied himself with closing the box back up. "This will get stale," he admonished as Joey dumped his glass of milk into his bowl.

"No, it won't," Joey replied, scooping a spoonful of cereal into his mouth. As he crunched it loudly, he looked at Lance. Lance turned away from his steady gaze and sipped at his scalding coffee. It burned his tongue but he needed to shake the sleepiness from his mind if he hoped to be any good in the studio this afternoon. Suddenly Joey stopped chewing and asked, "Can I ask you something?"

"Sure," Lance replied.

"Do you and Justin use condoms?"

Lance choked, spitting coffee into the sink. "What?" he asked,

incredulous. "Where the hell did that come from?"

Joey laughed. "Just curious," he replied.

Lance narrowed his eyes. "I don't think it's that simple."

Shrugging, Joey said, "I just wondered. I mean, I always use condoms, but then again I've sort of slept around, you know?"

"Well," Lance said, taking a deep breath, "not that it's any of your business, but no, we don't."

"Why not?" Joey persisted. Lance glanced at him. "I'm not being a perv, Lance, I promise. I'm just ... curious."

"About my sex life?" Lance asked dubiously.

"About sex with a guy," Joey replied, and a thin blush crept into his cheeks, making Lance wonder what had happened over the weekend between Joey and Chris.

So Lance turned to the sink, away from Joey, and began to clean up the coffee he spilled, but in a quiet voice he said, "We didn't really think about it, I guess. The first time was very spontaneous. Justin just happened to have bought some lubrication at a sex toys store and --" Lance shrugged -- "I don't know, we just did it. We didn't have any condoms. And now it's like why bother?"

"Aren't you afraid of disease?" Joey asked.

Lance cocked his head and looked at him. "Joey, please. Justin's never had sex before. I used a condom the only time I ever did it with a girl. What diseases are we talking about here?"

"Oh," Joey said thoughtfully. He shoveled another spoon into his mouth. "Lubrication?" he asked.

Lance sighed. "Joey, I really don't think we should talk about this --"

"Does it embarrass you?" Joey asked, watching Lance closely.

Lance shook his head. "But it's sort of private, you know? I'm not going to share all the intimate details of my loving Justin with you."

"I don't want you to," Joey said. "I'm just, I don't know. I've never had sex with a guy before. I always thought it would be a little painful, you know?"

Sitting down at the table across from Joey, Lance took another sip of his coffee and shrugged. "I wouldn't say painful," he admitted. "Maybe a little uncomfortable at first, but you get used to it. It's better than you'd think." Grinning, Lance added, "A lot better."

Joey laughed. "Must be if you two are always at it."

"We aren't always --"

"Lance," Joey interrupted, looking at him over the spoon, half raised to his mouth. "How often do you two do it?"

Lance blushed. "Despite what you guys think, we're not always having sex." He saw a shadow move along the wall outside the doorway leading into the kitchen, and he wondered who was up, listening in on their conversation. He had an idea it might be Justin. He hoped the topic didn't make him angry -- Justin was funny when it came to Joey, even though Joey didn't really flirt much with Lance anymore. Well, no more than his usual flirting that he did with everyone. Since he and Chris had been spending more time together, he seemed to have other things on his mind than catching Lance's eye. And Lance wondered if he'd miss the attention.

The doorway was behind Joey, so he didn't notice the shadow in the hall. "How often?" he pressed, finishing up his cereal.

Lance shrugged. "Once or twice a week, maybe," he said. "I've never really thought about it. It's not like we count --"

"When's the last time?" Joey asked.

Lance blushed again. "Joey, I don't think --"

"I heard you two last night," Joey said, grinning. "You were really loud in the shower."

Laughing, Lance said, "We weren't doing anything in there." Thinking about it, he added, "How could you hear us in the shower? Your room's down the hall."

"Because I didn't sleep in my bed last night," Joey admitted. He stood up and set his bowl in the sink.

"You and Chris?" Lance asked.

Joey shrugged. "We've talked," he admitted. "He told me he wanted me. Me. Do you know how that feels, to have someone tell you they want you?"

"Yeah," Lance said softly. Justin knew that phrase turned Lance on more than anything else he could say, and in public he often whispered it into Lance's ear, his voice breathy and hot, and Lance would be hard pressed to wait until they were alone again before he could touch Justin's body and lose himself in his kisses. "What about his girlfriend?"

"I don't know yet," Joey said. "We'll see."

"What's he going to do about her?" Lance persisted.

Joey shrugged again. "I don't know, Lance. We're just taking it real slow right now."

Lance understood completely. It had taken him and Justin a long time to finally get together. How long did it take for them to kiss? Or for Justin to say he loved him? Or even for them to make love? If anyone knew about taking it slow, it was Lance. Sometimes it seemed as if the first five years of their friendship had been leading up to their relationship as lovers, and other times Lance was left breathless and trembling at the sudden intensity of it all. He felt as if he was swept away in a whirlwind of love and emotion, and he never wanted the storm to stop.

The shadow on the wall shifted, and then Justin came into the kitchen, bleary eyed and yawning. He wore just a pair of boxers, and Lance knew he just pulled on the first thing he found when he woke up because they were on inside out and backwards. Lance smiled at him, and Justin looked at Joey blankly for a few seconds before sitting down in Joey's seat, his head in his hand. Closing his eyes, he looked as if he were about to fall back asleep. Lance stood up and kissed his forehead tenderly. "Morning, glory," he whispered.

"Morning," Justin mumbled. He reached out for Lance, his arms encircling Lance's waist. He rested his head on Lance's stomach and muttered, "I'm not looking forward to today."

"Rough night?" Joey asked, grinning.

Justin glared at him, about to say something, when Lance intervened. "Let me get you something to eat," he said, extracting himself from Justin's embrace. He got out a bowl and spoon while Joey sat down at the table in Lance's seat, across from Justin. Justin laid his head down on the table, waiting while Lance poured cereal and milk into the bowl. "So what time did you guys get in last night?" Joey asked.

Lance set the bowl in front of Justin and tapped him on the head to get his attention. Justin sat up and dived into the cereal, hungry. "Late," he replied, glaring at Joey. "What were you two talking about?"

"Sex," Joey said, before Lance could speak.

Lance hit his arm. "Justin," he said, hoping to explain before Justin got angry.

To his surprise, Justin simply shrugged. "I guess the great Italian Stallion doesn't know everything there is to know about doing the nasty, eh?"

Joey laughed. "To think I'd ask a backwater country boy --"

"Hey!" Lance cried, relieved when the tension in the room vanished, even if it was at his expense.

Justin grinned around a mouthful of cereal. "Well, you're asking the right person if you want an expert."

Lance blushed. "Stop it," he said, sighing. Justin winked at him playfully.

Joey stretched as he stood up from the table. "I better get Chris out of bed. JC will be pissed if we're late."

"We're already late," Lance replied, glancing at his watch. It was only a few minutes past six in the morning, but when it came to their singing, JC was relentless. "We were supposed to be there two minutes ago. I'm surprised he's not --"

The phone rang. "Calling us right now," Justin finished for him. He gulped down the rest of his breakfast and Joey raced down the hall, heading for Chris's room. Sighing, Lance went to answer the phone. JC

would be mad.

He was. "Where are you guys?" he asked before Lance even had a chance to say hello.

"We're coming," Lance said. "We're just running a little late."

JC sighed. "I finally get space in the studio and you guys can't even show up --"

"JC, we're on our way," Lance replied. He looked back at Justin, who blew him a kiss before leaving the kitchen. "We're leaving now."

"When?" JC asked.

"Now," Lance replied. Then, thinking about it, he said, "Fifteen minutes."

"Five," JC said.

"Ten," Lance compromised. "JC, we'll be there, I promise. We're out the door. Ten minutes."

JC groaned. "I should find a new band," he threatened. "Guys who take their talent seriously. Guys who --"

"JC, you're holding me up," Lance said, grinning. "We'll leave in ten minutes."

"No," JC said, "you'll be here in ten minutes. You're leaving now."

"We're leaving now," Lance promised. As he hung up the phone, he sighed. Justin was right -- he wasn't looking forward to today, either.

All I Ever Wanted
103. Serious Fun
by NSyncGrrl

It was late afternoon, and they were in the studio. Justin and Lance shared a microphone, and every word Justin sang was intended for Lance alone. Once or twice Justin's voice broke during a particularly romantic part, and Lance would duck his head and smile sweetly up at Justin. They held hands, just the barest of touches, Lance's fingers in Justin's palm. "And I will take you in my arms, and hold you right where you belong. Til the day my life is through, this I promise you."

JC sighed as Justin poured too much emotion into his voice, losing himself in the music. "Cut," he called, taking off his headphones. He cut off the music and glared at Justin, who was ignoring him. Justin brought Lance's fingers to his lips and kissed them gently. "Hello?" JC asked. "We're rehearsing here. What's with you two today?"

"Nothing," Lance replied, clearing his throat. When Lance didn't meet JC's angry gaze, JC turned it onto Justin.

Justin shrugged. "Chill out, JC. I just like this song, that's all."

"You're all over each other," JC said, though that wasn't quite the truth. Still, every time he looked up to cue Justin, who should have been watching him for his signal, Justin was staring at Lance. "Can't you be serious for a minute?"

"I am serious," Justin replied, his jaw clenching in anger. "What's your problem, JC? I'm on the song. I know the words. I know when I come in. I don't have to watch for your cue."

"Maybe I want this to go smoothly," JC countered, taking a step closer to Justin. "Maybe I'm just a little miffed that you guys were only a half hour late this morning. Maybe I'm mad that all of you took a two hour lunch break. Two hours! And you know what? Maybe I'm sick and tired of watching you two undress each other with your eyes while I'm trying to sing."

"That's not fair," Lance said, his own voice growing angry. "We're not --"

"Bullshit!" JC cried. He heard giggling behind him, and turned around. Chris had his head in his arms, resting on Joey's shoulder, trying not to laugh. Joey grinned broadly, and when JC glared at them, Joey started to laugh. Chris turned away and kneeled down, doubled over with laughter. "Don't even start," JC warned. Throughout the song he had ignored Chris and Joey, which was easy to do -- they were behind him. But he saw their reflections in the sound booth window, and he saw the faces they were making at each other, sticking their tongues out and pulling their lips and cheeks into huge grins and frowns. JC didn't know if they were just goofing off with each other or making fun of the others, of him, but at this point, he didn't care. "Am I the only one who thinks this is important?" he

asked, glaring at each of them in turn. "Am I the only one who gives a shit here?"

"No," Joey started, sobering up. He pulled Chris to his feet and frowned at him. "JC, really --"

JC turned away. Pinning Justin with his gaze, he demanded, "Can't you just concentrate on the music, just for once?"

Justin scowled, biting his lip. "Fuck you, JC," he said bitterly. Lance looked at his feet and scuffed his shoe against the hardwood floor of the studio, and didn't say anything. JC saw Lance squeeze Justin's hand, chastising him for his words, but Justin looked away from JC and didn't apologize.

Sighing, JC said, "I'm going to check the tape. When I get back, I want you all to be ready to rehearse. I'm sick of this shit."

As he left the studio, he heard Justin mutter, "When you get back," but the rest of his words were cut off as the door shut behind JC. Jesus, JC thought, sighing. Can't they see how important this is?

Okay, maybe he was a little hard on them. He would allow himself to think that, even if he never said it out loud. As he entered the sound booth, he looked into the studio and watched them from the safety of the darkness inside the booth. Lance was standing close to Justin, talking quietly, turned away from the others. Justin's face was a war of emotions, anger and sadness, and JC regretted his harsh words. He was just tired of seeing that love in Justin's eyes every time he looked at Lance. He was tired of seeing Lance look back in that sweet, sexy way he had that made JC want to cry. You lied, JC thought sourly. You told Justin you didn't want anyone right now and damn you, you lied.

In the back of the studio, Joey was squatting on the floor, picking at some old tape someone once used to mark where to stand during practice. Chris sat behind him, leaning his back against Joey's. As JC watched, Joey reached behind him and hooked Chris's arms in his, and when he stood up, he picked Chris up, as well. Chris laughed and kicked his legs out as Joey bent over, Chris lying along his back, Joey's elbows crooked around his. Joey bent over farther, and Chris flipped over Joey's head, his feet landing on the floor easily. It's no wonder Joey likes him, JC thought, sighing. Chris is a lot more fun than I am. What do I do for fun? Stress out in the studio. And then bitch when no one else is as serious as I am.

JC pressed a few buttons and waited as their rehearsal tape rewound. Was he lonely? Was that why every little thing the others did today pissed the hell out of him? He loved being in the studio, and he wanted the others to have fun, because he knew they loved singing and the music and each other. That was why they were here in the first place. But was he letting his own feelings get in the way?

He watched as Joey jumped onto Lance's back, interrupting his conversation with Justin. Lance staggered beneath Joey's weight and then fell to the floor, Joey on top of him. Chris laughed and jumped on top of Joey, and JC could see Lance laughing, trying to crawl out from under them. Justin's face broke out in a grin, and he laughed as he pushed Chris

off of Joey. When he landed on the floor beside Joey, Chris reached up and tugged at Justin's leg until he collapsed on top of them both. JC clicked on the microphone between the studio and sound booth and listened as their boyish laughter filled the darkness around him. He wanted to be a part of that. But how could he? If he walked in on them now, they would scramble to their feet and watch him with hooded expressions, wary of another outburst.

More than anything, he wanted to be with them right now. It was his own fault, for pushing them away. Sure, Justin and Lance were closer to each other than he ever hoped to be with either of them, but did he have to let that come between them? And Chris and Joey's antics -- did he have to let them get to him? He could laugh and have fun and be just as spontaneous as either of them, couldn't he? All day long he had been quick to judge them all, his temper rising when he thought it was the way they were acting that was affecting the rehearsal, slowing them up.

But maybe it was him. The singing and the music and the producing made this fun for him -- maybe Justin needed Lance's sweet smile to make it fun for him, or Joey needed Chris's silly games to make it fun for him. Maybe they were being serious, but JC was just too wrapped up in getting it right to let it simply be right.

With a slight grin on his face, he headed back into the studio, picking up a tape he had made the other day just for a joke. He had planned on playing it earlier, but when the others were late, it pissed him off, and his mood deteriorated as the day went on so he never got around to popping it in. As he predicted, when he entered the studio, his four friends hurried to their places, looks of contrition on their faces. Justin caught his eye and pursed his lips, about to say something, but JC ignored him and went straight to the sound system. Ejecting their music mix, he put in the new tape and cued it up. "I've got something a little different," he said, keeping his voice neutral.

"Do you have the lyrics?" Joey asked softly.

"You know them," JC said, taking up a position at his mike. He looked around at the others and motioned them to come over. "Don't worry, I won't bite again," he said, smiling.

Justin stepped forward and placed a hand on JC's arm, squeezing gently in apology. JC grinned at him, and then Justin ran his arm around JC's shoulders, his other arm around Lance's waist, hugging him close. Joey stood on JC's other side, his arms draped over JC's and Chris's shoulders, Chris's arm around his waist. Then the music started, and the opening strands of "Hangin' Tough" blared through the studio.

Chris fell to the floor in a fit of giggles. Rolling onto his back, he looked up at them as Joey turned away, cackling wildly. Lance laughed and JC grinned at them. Only Justin frowned. "I don't know the words to this," he said seriously.

"It's a joke," Chris cried, laughing harder.

"I thought we were singing --" Justin's frown deepened, and JC felt sorry for him. He knew Justin long enough to know that Justin was trying to be serious because he thought that's what JC wanted, and he didn't

realize that JC was kidding.

"Hanging tough!" Joey sang into the microphone. "That's all I know." He hung on JC and sang loudly, off-key. "Hanging tough."

"I know the words," Lance said, a little embarrassed. "But I'm not singing them."

Justin looked at JC closely. "I thought you said we needed to get serious."

"That doesn't mean we can't have fun," JC said, grinning. "I've got the words, if you guys want them."

Chris held his hands out into the air. Joey and JC each took one of them and hauled Chris to his feet. "I'm so there," he said. "Where are the words? Is this the whole album? I want to sing lead on What'cha Gonna Do About It."

"Your voice isn't that pitch," Joey pointed out. "I think you should do Please Don't Go Girl. You have that one, JC?"

"Who is this group?" Justin asked. He still wasn't sure if JC was playing around with them or not.

Lance kissed his cheek quickly. "New Kids on the Block," he said. "Remember Joe McIntyre? Jordan Knight? We met them at the awards show back in May."

"This is them?" Justin asked, daring to smile slightly. "No wonder they went solo."

"They were the NSync of their time," Joey said, laughing. "Years from now people will say Justin Timberlake? Wasn't he one of those boys in that band, you know which one, sang that song where they were dolls in the video?"

"Action figures," JC corrected. He pulled copies of the lyrics out of his bag and passed them around. "We're action figures, not dolls."

"My bad," Joey said, laughing. As he read over the words, JC stopped the tape and cued it back up again. Suddenly the rest of the evening didn't look too bad.

All I Ever Wanted
104. No Games
by NSyncGrrl

Dani's answering machine picked up on the fourth ring, like Chris thought it would. He listened to her voice, telling him to leave his number and a message and she'd get back to him. Yeah, right, he thought bitterly. When the beep sounded, he said, "It's me. Dani, we need to talk. I don't know where you are or why you haven't called me back, but this is important. I need to talk to you now. Are you there?" He counted to ten, waiting. Then he said, "Call me back. Tonight. I don't care what time it is. We need to talk tonight." As he set the phone back down, irritation flashed through him. This phone tag was pissing him off. He was about to just call her up and dump her on the machine. Then she'd call back, he was sure.

He heard soft footsteps behind him as someone crept into his room. Grinning, he asked, "Joey?" and started to turn around.

A large hand clamped over his eyes, blinding him. Chris tried to pull it away, but the person behind him held on tight. Then a strong arm wrapped around his waist, and Chris could feel someone warm press against him. "Joe?" he asked, a little concerned.

There was no reply, just a ragged breathing in his ear and a tightening of the arm around his waist, and then he was dragged backwards. Chris tried to dig his heels into the rug, but he was barefoot and his feet had no traction on the carpet. "Joe, if this is you, say something," Chris said anxiously. He was pulled out of his room and into the hallway, the person holding him never releasing his grip. "This isn't funny."

Actually, it was a little funny. Chris had never been abducted before. And he knew this was one of the guys, even if it wasn't Joey. Who it better be, Chris thought suddenly. The intimate way he was being held, blinded by one hand and clutched against the stranger's body, even if he didn't know who it was, was arousing him slightly. He picked at the fingers over his eyes, trying to pull them away, but he couldn't get under them. As he stumbled, trying to keep up with the stranger's steps, he felt the strength in the arm around him, supporting him, and then he caught a whiff of Joey's spicy aftershave. In response, his groin tightened, and he went limp, forcing the person to carry him more than drag him. This could be fun, Chris thought as he heard a door close in front of him, and then he was tossed unceremoniously onto Joey's bed.

Joey stood grinning over him. "I've kidnapped you," Joey said. "Tonight, you're mine."

Chris laughed. "I've never been kidnapped before," he replied, sitting up. "What's the ransom?"

Joey pushed him back down onto the bed and stretched out above him. One hand by Chris's head supported Joey, and he leaned into Chris's face, their noses inches from each other. "No ransom," Joey replied.

"Who'd pay it anyway?"

Pouting, Chris said, "Dani might."

"Bullshit," Joey replied, laughing. "She won't call you back to talk, you think she'll call to cough up fifty-five bucks?"

"Is that all I'm worth to you?" Chris asked, laughing.

"That's what I owe you, remember?" Joey asked. Chris thought back to the cabin, when Joey twisted his ankle and Chris spent over fifty dollars on magazines just so he'd have something to read.

Chris shrugged. "You can at least try for a hundred," he suggested, "make a little bit of a profit off of me."

Joey laughed. Damn, he was so close, suspended above Chris as if their proximity to each other didn't turn him on in the least. Then he stood up, and Chris felt a vacuum where he had been. He wanted Joey to touch him again, to hold him, to lie down beside him. Grinning, he stood up, too. Joey eyed him warily. "Where do you think you're going?"

Chris pointed to the bedroom door. "I'm not quite done with that game yet --" He started for the door, hoping Joey would stop him.

He did. Grabbing onto Chris's waist, Joey pulled him back to the bed. Chris fell on top of Joey, laughing. "You're not playing that game tonight," Joey growled. "You don't seem to grasp the concept of being kidnapped. You're not going anywhere."

"What about the bathroom?" Chris asked, grinning. He rolled over until he lay on his back. Joey was propped up on one elbow beside him, smiling down at him.

"Only if you absolutely positively need to go," Joey said.

Chris laughed. "So I'm stuck here, huh?"

Frowning, Joey ran a gentle finger down Chris's cheek, tracing the curve of bone beneath flesh, and Chris leaned into the touch. "That sounds like you don't want to be here."

"Will it be fun?" Chris asked innocently. He liked the soft feel of Joey's finger against his face.

Joey shrugged. "I can make it fun," he whispered.

Sighing dramatically, Chris rolled his eyes and said, "Well, then I guess I can stay for a little while."

"Oh, you're too kind," Joey replied. A devilish smile spread across his face, and Chris felt his heart begin to race. "So, what would make this fun for you?"

"You're not asking ..." Chris trailed off, not quite sure what Joey meant. His words said one thing, but that gleam in his eyes said something completely different, something that made Chris hard just thinking about what Joey might be asking.

Joey shrugged. "Tell me, Christopher Alan, what you like." His finger trailed down Chris's neck and followed the curve of his collarbone. Back and forth that feathery touch traced across his upper chest, along the slight shelf of bone.

"I like that," Chris whispered.

Grinning, Joey shifted until he leaned over Chris and looked down into his face. "What else?" he asked.

Chris shrugged. "I don't know, Joe. What do you like?"

"Candles," Joey replied. When Chris raised an eyebrow, Joey said, "Not like that, pervert. I like a dark room lit only by candles."

"I like taking baths," Chris offered. "We can light candles in the bathroom."

Joey frowned. "I saw that on The X-Files once," he said. "A serial killer placed candles all over the bathroom and then killed women in the bathtub."

"Well, I promise not to kill you," Chris said, laughing. "I don't remember that episode."

"Maybe I'd die from pleasure," Joey whispered. He leaned down and brushed his lips against Chris's, the touch barely there.

Chris opened his lips as Joey pulled away. "I'll die from suspense," he replied. "Damn, Joe. Kiss me already."

"No," Joey said, grinning. "I'm holding you prisoner. Since when do you get to say what goes?"

Chris started to sit up. "I'm not your prisoner --" he started, but Joey pulled him down and rolled on top of him, his weight a heavy, sweet pressure along Chris's body. Chris could feel Joey's erection against his hip, and he knew he wasn't the only one turned on by this little game of Joey's. Chris placed his hands on Joey's shoulders and pushed at him, but Joey didn't budge. When he was about to say something, Joey ran his arms around Chris's shoulders and hugged him close, his lips finding Chris's, kissing hungrily. Chris moaned as Joey's tongue slipped into his mouth, and he held Joey's head in his hands, pulling him into the rough kiss.

When Joey pulled back, he looked at Chris with embers smoldering in his eyes. "We never did anything but kiss before," Joey whispered, breathless. "Tell me what you like, Chris. Tell me how to love you."

"Let me show you," Chris replied, but Joey shook his head.

"Tell me," he said. "I want this to be fun for you."

Suddenly someone knocked on Joey's door. Chris laughed. "Now I know how Justin feels," he said, his breath ragged. Frustration coiled into his body, and he wanted to scream at whoever was on the other side of the door.

"Go away," Joey yelled. Chris giggled.

JC's voice carried into the room. "Is Chris in there? He has a phone call."

"Is it Dani?" Chris asked. Joey rolled off of him as he sat up.

"No," came the reply. "A friend from college, she said."

"Yeah, right," Chris said, laughing. When Joey looked at him, he explained, "Ever since we became the best thing since sliced bread, all these friends I didn't know I had back then are coming out of the woodwork now."

Joey laughed. "I know what you mean." Raising his voice, he said, "Take a message, JC. Chris can't come to the phone right now."

For a long moment JC didn't say anything. Then they heard him mutter, "Okay," and he walked away.

Chris flopped back onto the bed. "Where were we?" he asked.

"You were telling me what you like," Joey said. He picked at the hem of Chris's t-shirt, and then his hand slipped beneath the light fabric, his touch warm and soft along Chris's stomach.

As his fingers eased up Chris's chest, tickling his nipples, Chris closed his eyes and moaned. "I like that," he whispered. Joey pinched Chris's nipple playfully, sending a shiver of pleasure through Chris's body. "Damn," he whispered, "I really like that."

"When is Dani calling you back?" Joey asked.

Chris shrugged. "I don't know," he replied softly. Frowning, he looked at Joey and said, "I don't want to do anything until I tell her, Joe. I mean, anything more than we've already done. Are you okay with that?"

"Sure," Joey said.

Chris still felt as if he had to explain. "I'm not dumping her for you. I want you to know that. I haven't been happy with her for a long time now. I just don't want you to think that I'm leaving her for you, and that down the road somewhere I'll leave you for someone else. I'm not like that."

"Chris, you're my best friend," Joey said, sighing. "I know you and Dani weren't working out back when we started fooling around. I mean, if you have to come to me for loving, something's not right there, you know?"

Nodding, Chris said, "I just don't want you to think I'm going to hurt you."

"I won't let you," Joey replied.

Chris bit his lip, indecisive. Then, before he could lose his nerve, he said, "Every relationship I've ever had went bad when sex entered the picture. I don't want that to happen to us. I want you, Joey. God, I want

you so badly. But I don't want to lose you. I don't want sex to ruin anything between us."

To his surprise, Joey laughed. "You've just never had it good enough yet," Joey said, his eyes sparkling. "One taste of me and you'll never be able to leave."

Chris laughed. "You're that sure of your talents?"

Joey nodded. "Hell, half a million women can't be wrong."

"Half a --?" Chris laughed. "Please, Fatone. I know half a million women don't lie awake at night aching for your touch."

"But you do," Joey replied. Chris felt a light flush burn his cheeks, and then Joey kissed him again. "Stay here with me, Chris. Tonight, and tomorrow night, and every night after that. We don't have to do anything but kiss and hug and hold each other tight. Then when you're ready, you can show me how to love you."

Chris studied Joey's eager expression, thoughtful. How easy would that be? To just spend his nights in Joey's arms? To wake up in the morning with Joey right there beside him, holding him close? Eventually it would lead to sex, he knew -- he wanted it to. But until he broke it off with Dani, he had been afraid Joey would be distant, waiting. And now Joey wanted him to stay here, beside him, until he was ready for more. How could he refuse an offer like that? "Can I bring my Playstation in here?" Chris asked softly.

"No," Joey said, laughing. "You can play it in your room and then come in here and sleep. No games in here."

Chris pouted, but Joey kissed him again, biting Chris's lower lip gently. Laughing, Chris said, "Okay, okay, no games. Jeez, Joey, you're out to change me already."

"I am not," Joey replied, suddenly serious. He looked Chris in the eye and said, "I love the way you are, Chris. You change and I'll kick your ass. You hear me? I love your craziness and your wildness and your obsessiveness. That's what makes you who you are. Don't change."

"I was kidding," Chris said softly, but his heart swelled at Joey's words. How many girls had he dated who claimed to love his wacky nature only to try to get him to be more serious or more reasonable or more composed once they started dating? Chris never understood that. They loved a part of him that they only wanted to change as soon as they had a chance. What was up with that? Meeting Joey's earnest gaze, he said, "I won't change, I promise. But don't you change, either. I love your flirting. Don't feel like you have to stop that just for me."

"You're not the jealous type, eh?" Joey asked, grinning.

Chris laughed. "No, I'm not. I only get jealous if you sleep around on me."

"I won't do that," Joey said sincerely. "I promise."

"Will you kiss me now?" Chris asked. "Please?"

Joey sighed and rolled his eyes. "Well, since you said please --"

"Shut up and kiss me already, Fatone." Chris laughed as he pulled Joey on top of him again, their lips eager and insistent, and part of him hoped Dani didn't call him back tonight, just so they wouldn't be interrupted again.

All I Ever Wanted
105. Commercial Break
by NSyncGrrl

Friday night. After a long, grueling week in the studio, practicing for ten hour days, everyone was too tired to do anything more than stay home. So Chris found a movie on HBO and they crashed in front of the TV, Chris and Joey on one end of the couch, Justin and Lance on the other, JC in the middle. When the movie was over, JC and Justin went to the kitchen to refill everyone's drinks and get some more popcorn. Lance watched Joey and Chris from the corner of his eye. Joey just sat there, his legs propped up on the coffee table in front of them as he ate the last of the popcorn. Chris was squeezed between Joey and the end of the couch, one leg draped over the arm of the sofa while the other rested beside Joey's on the table.

All night long Lance had watched the two of them covertly, but they weren't very visible with their relationship, whatever it may be. Joey had said they were taking it slow, but at the rate they were going, Lance wondered if there was such a thing as too slow. Lance still felt the warmth of Justin's hand where it rested along his back during the movie, and he wondered how rude it would seem if they were to call it a night and head for their room in the next half hour.

Chris had the remote in his hands, and once the credits finished rolling and the next movie was announced, he began flipping through the channels, looking for something else to watch. "Friday nights used to rock," he said, changing channels so quickly, Lance didn't have a chance to realize what was on before they were already on another channel. "Where did all the good shows go?"

"Moved to Sunday night," Joey replied. He tossed a handful of popcorn into his mouth and grinned at Lance. "Want some?"

"No thanks," Lance replied. "Chris, can you go a little slower? How can you tell what's on?"

"I can tell," Chris replied, clicking the remote faster.

Joey laughed. "You're going to break the TV."

"Here," Chris said, stopping on a commercial. "We'll stay here."

Lance sighed. "It's a commercial," he complained. "If we're just going to watch ads all night, I'm going to bed."

"You know you aren't going to sleep," Joey said, grinning.

"I didn't say I was," Lance replied, blushing lightly. "I just said I was going to bed."

On the TV, the Backstreet Boys' Burger King commercial came on. "This is the one I was telling you about," Chris said, laughing. "Check out the end -- that Burger King dude is totally hitting on Howie."

"That's Kevin," Lance said, frowning. "He's hitting on him? What do you mean?"

Chris sighed. "Jeez, Lance. You know what I mean. It's the way you and Justin look at each other in a room full of people. You don't want anyone to know but we see it. Look -- there! See?"

Joey began to laugh. "Damn! Kevin's getting some tonight! What do they say? We do it your way?"

Chris giggled. "See? I told you. They're totally into each other."

"I didn't notice," Lance said, pouting.

"Look next time," Joey replied. "You missed it. It was classic."

"Kevin's not all that cute," Chris commented. "I thought that was Howie. He's not all that great looking, either."

Lance shrugged. "I think Nick is cute," he said, before clamping a hand over his mouth. He did not just say that out loud.

But Joey heard him and turned to look at him with sparkling, mirth-filled eyes. "Woohoo!" he cried, his voice impossibly loud in the small living room. "Did I just hear what I thought I heard? You looking at another man? Justin will have a fit!"

Chris cackled beside him. "Lance thinks Nick is cute!" he called out as JC and Justin came into the room.

"Shut up," Lance muttered. His cheeks burned and he didn't look up as Justin sat down beside him.

JC laughed. "Nick? Lance, I would have never guessed he'd be your type."

"Shut up," Lance said again, sighing. How could he have let that slip? "I don't think he's all that. I'm just saying that of the five of them, I think he's the cutest one." God, the hole dug deeper.

JC glanced at Justin. "Gotta keep a tight rein on this one," he joked. "Next awards show, you don't want him running into Nick --"

"Shut up," Lance said again, rising to his feet. "Jesus, I was just making a comment and you guys have to blow it all out of proportion."

"It's okay," Joey said, frowning. "For what it's worth, I think AJ is cute."

"Which one is he?" Chris asked.

"The tall, sexy one," Joey replied.

Chris nodded. "He is cute."

Lance looked down at Justin, who hadn't said a word. Justin looked back at him with an unreadable expression on his face, and Lance sighed. "Fuck," he mumbled, stomping out of the living room. He knew Justin was

the jealous type, and yet he had to go and say something stupid like that to Joey and Chris, just kidding around, when he knew they'd make a big deal out of it. And now Justin was probably mad at him, and every time he tried to explain it just got worse and worse, and now JC started in on him, too ... he slammed the back door as he stepped out onto the porch. Fuck this, he thought bitterly.

The door opened behind him, and when it closed he knew it was Justin. "I was only kidding," he muttered. "Justin, I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking."

A hand touched his back tentatively, and then Justin said, "Lance, it's okay. I understand."

"You do?" Lance asked, turning. He searched Justin's dark blue eyes, trying to see what he was thinking, and all he saw was a mirror of the love he felt for him. "Justin, I don't think --"

"Sshhh," Justin replied, placing a finger against Lance's lips. "He's on TV, not here with us. How can I be jealous of that?"

Lance shrugged. "I just don't want you to think I think about him," he said, "because I don't. Chris said he didn't think Kevin or Howie were cute and I just had to come back with something, you know?"

Justin smiled and kissed him tenderly. "You do realize I'm going to be watching him like a hawk when we see them again, don't you?"

Lance giggled and hugged Justin. "If those two say anything to him, I will just die --"

Laughing, Justin said, "Then I'll have to get angry." He wrapped his arms around Lance and held him tightly. "You want to go back inside?"

"Not really," Lance admitted. "I was thinking we should slip away from them, anyway."

"And do what?" Justin asked playfully.

Lance shrugged in his arms. "Let's just sit here a minute, okay?" he asked, leading Justin over to the porch swing. Justin sat down and pulled Lance into his lap. Lance slipped off to one side and draped his legs over Justin's thighs. Justin's arms slipped beneath Lance's shirt, drawing him close. Lance kissed Justin softly, his lips savoring the feel of Justin's, his tongue tasting Justin's sweetness. Justin pushed Lance back against the arm of the swing, one hand caressing his back, his stomach, tickling his nipples. Lance shifted into a more comfortable position and kissed Justin again, demanding this time, more insistent. Justin moaned and clutched Lance closer, hungry for more.

The screen door slammed behind them. Justin looked over his shoulder as JC came outside. JC hit Lance's legs, knocking them off the swing, before sitting down beside Justin. "So this is where the party is," JC said, grinning.

"It's a private party," Justin replied. "No one invited you."

The screen door opened again, and Chris came outside, Joey right

behind him. "Here's a tip, Lance," Joey said, leaning down over him. Whispering loudly, he said, "They hate it when you scream out the other guy's name in bed. Trust me on that."

Lance pushed Joey away. "You guys leave him alone," Justin said, hugging Lance. "You say one word to that Nick boy and I'll hurt you both."

Chris sat down on the porch and sighed. "Well, there goes that idea. I was going to try to get him on the phone tonight, too."

Lance kicked out at Chris. "Stop it," he said, pouting. "You're going to get me in trouble and then I'll have to sleep alone tonight."

Joey laughed. "Somehow I seriously doubt that," he said. He looked at JC and then asked, "Maybe we can call Nick up anyway. What do you think of him, JC?"

JC blushed. "Hey, leave me out of this," he said, shaking his head. "I'm not into the Backstreet Boys."

"Aw, c'mon," Chris cajoled. "You don't think any of them is cute? Not one?"

"We're picking on Lance, here," JC replied, "not me."

"Well, not me, either," Lance said. "Let's pick on Joey."

Joey laughed. "Sure, pick on me," he said. He found the football he had left out on the porch a few days before and tossed it into the air. Catching it deftly, he said, "I don't mind. Pick on me all you want. Anyone up for a game?"

"It's late," JC pointed out, but Chris scrambled to his feet. "Me," he said, running out into the back yard. Joey pegged the football at him and followed, his laughter carrying back to the porch.

Justin hugged Lance and grinned. "How about Brian?" he asked softly. "He strikes me as your type, JC. But didn't he just get married or something?"

"Can we just drop this?" JC asked. "I'm not hooking up with a Backstreet Boy, I'm sorry."

Lance laughed. "Just trying to get you laid, man," he said.

JC blushed lividly. "I thought we agreed to pick on Joey," he pointed out.

"And he ran away," Justin replied. Lance looked into the darkness of the night, where Chris and Joey wrestled for the football.

"So will I," JC said, jumping off the swing and heading into the back yard. "Hey!" he called out, and Joey fumbled the ball. When he saw JC, he grinned and tossed the football to him. As JC tried to dodge away from him, Chris tackled JC to the ground, laughing.

Lance smiled. "That was an effective way to get rid of them," he said, propping his legs up on the swing again.

Justin grinned as he kissed Lance tenderly. "My thoughts exactly," he whispered against Lance's lips before delving in for a deeper kiss. Their friends' laughter echoed around them, and Lance held Justin's face to his, definitely not thinking of anyone but Justin, Justin, Justin as they kissed.

All I Ever Wanted
106. Among Family and Friends
Part 1 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

Joey knocked on the half-closed door to Justin's room and waited. "Come in," Lance called from inside, and Joey pushed the door open further.

"Hey," he said softly, entering the room. Lance sat on the edge of his bed, a suitcase open on the floor in front of him. "You getting ready to leave?"

Lance nodded. Glancing up at Joey, he said, "We leave Monday morning."

Coming closer, Joey sat down beside Lance and asked, "You looking forward to going?"

Lance shrugged. As he folded a shirt into the suitcase, he said, "Part of me wants to go, see my family again. And part of me can't wait to get Justin alone, all to myself." Joey grinned at the easy way Lance admitted his feelings for Justin. Lance sighed. "But it's not going to be fun. My mom will see to that."

"Why's that?" Joey asked, frowning.

Lance sighed again. "She doesn't like Justin," he said softly. He stared into the suitcase for a minute before continuing to pack.

"She always seemed to like him before," Joey said, thinking about the times he had met Diane Bass. She was a very strong woman who kept Lance on a short leash throughout the first few years of the band, but Joey always thought she liked the group and the guys.

"That was before I fell in love with him," Lance replied. He looked at Joey, and Joey saw the torture in his eyes, a haunted, scared expression that shocked him. Unconsciously, he reached out and placed a comforting hand on Lance's shoulder, squeezing lightly. "She's not comfortable with the fact that we're together. It galls her that I'm in love with a guy."

"So it's not really him," Joey offered. "She'd feel the same way about any guy you dated."

"I know," Lance said quietly, "but that doesn't make it any easier to deal with. It's going to be hard."

Joey thought for a minute. "Maybe it would be better if Justin didn't go," he said softly.

Lance laughed bitterly. "I want him to go," he said. "I couldn't take a week without him. It sounds selfish but it's true. And you know what? My mom needs to accept this. I mean, I'm not choosing Justin or my family. Fuck that. I'm going to be with Justin. My family needs to understand." He

sighed. "We love each other, Joey. It's not just sex or some phase I'm going through. I can't imagine life without him. It's that simple."

Joey sighed. A few weeks ago hearing those words from Lance would've plunged him into a dark despair, because he had wanted Lance to say that about him. And now? Well, a small sadness still lingered, and while he was jealous of what they had together, it wasn't just because he wanted Lance. Sure, he still had a soft spot in his heart for his friend, and he thought maybe he always would. But now he could watch Justin and Lance and know what he wanted was a relationship like the one they had together. Maybe with Chris, you will, his mind whispered. "If you ever need to talk," Joey said, squeezing Lance's shoulder again before taking his hand away, "you can always call me. I'll be here."

"Thanks," Lance said, smiling. "That means a lot to me." As he packed away a pair of jeans, he said, "But I know that's not what you came here for. You're not going to ask me any more questions about sex, are you?"

Joey laughed. "I haven't thought up any new ones," he admitted. "When I've got one, though, I know who to ask. Justin said you're the expert."

"Justin's just teasing --" Lance started, but Joey cut him off.

"Lance, Justin is dead serious," Joey said, grinning. "If you weren't so good, he wouldn't want it all the time."

"He's nineteen," Lance reminded him, "at the peak of his sexuality."

Joey laughed again. "Jeez," he said, "you make me sound old."

"Chris is old," Lance joked. Turning to Joey, he asked softly, "How's that working out?"

Shrugging, Joey said, "It's going. We're --"

"Taking it slow, I know." Lance nodded. "So what's on your mind?"

Joey grinned. "My mom called today."

Lance looked up and smiled. "How's she doing?"

"Okay," Joey replied. "She wants us to come over for dinner tonight. All of us, spend the night, leave tomorrow after a late brunch." It was Saturday -- if they came back early enough Sunday, Lance and Justin would be able to finish packing in plenty of time to catch their flight Monday morning.

"Sounds good," Lance said. "I love her cooking."

Joey grinned. "I hoped you'd say that. I wanted to ask if you'd come."

"Sure," Lance said, shrugging. "Did you ask the others yet?"

"Chris is going," Joey said. "JC's asleep but I know he'll go -- free food. I can't find Justin --"

"In the laundry room," Lance replied. "Shrinking my clothes, more

than likely. Or mixing colors and whites. I told him I'd do the laundry but he insisted."

Joey laughed at the idea of Justin washing clothes. "That bad?" he asked.

Lance rolled his eyes. "You have no idea. I love him to death but that boy is a domestic nightmare."

"I heard that," Justin said, stepping into the room. He held an overflowing basket of clothes in his hands. The clothes were just tossed into the basket, wrinkled and unfolded, and Justin dumped them onto the bed. "Here's your laundry," he said, pouting. "See if I offer to do it again."

"Justin, come here," Lance said, reaching for Justin's hand. Justin let himself be pulled over to Lance, and then he sat down on Lance's knee. He picked at a thread on his jeans and didn't look at them as Lance said, "Honey, you know you suck at housework."

Joey fell back on the bed, laughing. Beneath him the clothes were warm and soft, and then he felt Justin kick his shin. "Shut up," Justin muttered darkly.

"Justin," Lance said again, his voice tender. Joey watched as Justin frowned, trying to stay angry, but then he looked at Lance and the tension faded from his face. He ran an arm around Lance's waist and hugged him. "I suck at laundry," Justin admitted softly. Joey couldn't help but laugh again.

Lance kissed Justin quickly. "Joey's mom wants us to eat over tonight."

Justin licked his lips. Looking past Lance, his gaze settled on Joey. "What's she cooking?" he asked. "Lasagna? I love her lasagna."

"I don't know," Joey said. "She wants us to stay the night and have a large brunch in the morning."

"Your mom rocks," Justin said, and Joey nodded, agreeing with him. "Get off our clothes," Justin added. "You're wrinkling them."

"They're already wrinkled," Joey said, sitting up. "You have to fold them when they first come out of the dryer or it's too late."

"Is not," Justin said playfully. He rested his forehead against Lance's and looked sideways at Joey. "Okay, you can leave now." He kissed Lance, a brief touch of lips that promised more.

Joey shook his head. "You haven't said if you're going or not." He watched as Justin ran his thumb along Lance's jaw.

"Can we share a room?" Lance asked, turning to Joey. Justin rested his head against Lance's and looked at him as well.

Joey shrugged. "Why not?"

"Will your mom be cool with that?" Justin asked.

Joey nodded. "I don't see why not. It's only one night. Just don't keep the whole house awake with your weird sex noises."

Justin kicked him again. "We wouldn't do that," he said. "Not with your mother in the house."

"Why not?" Joey asked, grinning. "I've done it before."

Justin laughed. "Oh?" he asked, his eyes gleaming mischievously. "And will you do it again?"

"If you're asking about Chris --" Joey started, but Lance finished, "They're taking it slow."

"Is that what you call it?" Justin asked, kissing Lance's cheek. He glanced at Joey. "You leaving now?"

Joey grinned. "You can wait a little longer," he said. "It's been a long time since the three of us could just be together without a lot of animosity in the room, you know? I miss that."

Justin sighed dramatically. "Great," he said, standing up. "Now you're going to get all mushy on us."

Joey punched at Justin, who dodged his arm and laughed. "I'll help fold your clothes," Joey offered.

"Please," Lance said. "Leave it to Justin and they'll go in the drawers all bunched up like they are now."

"I'm not that bad," Justin replied, laughing. He shook out a gray t-shirt and began rolling it up.

Lance sighed. "That shirt used to be white," he told Joey. "And that's not folding, Justin."

"It's a t-shirt," Justin said. "It doesn't need to be folded."

Joey laughed and picked up a pair of Speedos. Holding the tiny trunks up, he asked, "Whose are these?"

Lance blushed a deep red. "Justin, why did you wash those?" he asked, snatching them from Joey's hand. "Maybe it's better if you don't help out."

Joey laughed again, glad that the tension between the three of them was starting to disappear. It was easier watching Lance and Justin together, now that he wasn't so alone. Tonight would be fun, all of them at his parents' house, drinking beers and eating his mother's fabulous cooking. And then falling asleep with Chris in his arms ... he was already looking forward to it.

All I Ever Wanted
106. Among Family and Friends
Part 2 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

They left late in the afternoon. At first Joey wanted to drive, but as they walked out to the car with their overnight bags, JC asked for the keys. Joey shook his head. "They're my parents," he said. "My car. I drive."

"Come on, Joey," JC whined. "You never let me drive."

"You drive all the time," Joey said. Then he looked at JC, a slight pout pulling at the corners of his friend's lips, and he sighed. Handing the keys over, he said, "Fine. You drive. Just don't get us lost."

JC took the keys from Joey. "Thank you," he replied softly.

Joey laughed. "But I get --"

"Shotgun!" Chris yelled, racing for the car. Joey dropped his bag on the sidewalk and ran after him. "Not fair!" Joey cried. "I was going to call it!"

Chris stood against the passenger side door, laughing as Joey tried to push him out of the way. JC unlocked the door using the keychain remote, and as Joey managed to get Chris out of the way, he tugged on the door handle, not realizing it was unlocked. The door flew open and Joey staggered back, surprised. Laughing, Chris leaped into the seat and pulled the door shut behind him, and then stuck his tongue out at Joey from inside the safety of the car. "That's the last time you drive," Joey muttered as he climbed into the back seat. He slapped Chris in the back of the head as he sat down. Chris laughed again.

Joey's parents lived just outside of the city, and it took a good hour to get to their house. Mrs. Fatone was waiting for them, and when Joey rang the doorbell, she opened the door wide. "Joey!" she cried, her Brooklyn accent bleeding through her words. "Just in time to help your momma with dinner. Come in, come in!"

They filed into the house, each of them getting a rib-shattering hug from Momma Fatone. Joey laughed as his mother poked at JC, saying he wasn't eating enough, and then his father was there, shaking hands with everyone. Joey's brother Steven was there with his latest girlfriend, and his cousin Erin from Long Island, and before long everyone was settled in the den, cold beers in hand. Justin and Lance shared an overstuffed recliner, Lance's hips tight against Justin's, and they shared a longneck bottle of beer between them. Steven's girlfriend was talking to Lance, but Justin ignored her, his hand straying to Lance's knee every now and then as if to assure himself that Lance was still there.

JC sat on the couch between Erin and Steven, trying to listen to both of them at the same time. Erin was a pretty raven-haired girl with a thick New York accent, and she kept touching JC's hand to get him to look at

her. It worked. Before long JC wasn't listening to Steven so much as he was watching Erin talk. Chris sat on the floor at the foot of Joey's chair, talking to Joey's father about sports. Joey was laughing along with them when he saw his mother in the doorway. She nodded behind her and, excusing himself, Joey got up and followed her into the kitchen. "Junior, can you give me a hand?" she asked.

"Sure, Momma," Joey replied. Bowls of food lined the countertops -- salads and pastas and cheeses and breads. There was enough food in the kitchen alone to feed an army, but Joey knew that after the guys in the den were through, the bowls would be empty. As he gathered up the silverware, he said, "Thanks for having us over."

"You boys need a good home-cooked meal every once in a while," his mother said. She carried a few of the bowls into the dining room, and Joey began to set the table. "You don't stop by enough."

Joey blushed lightly. "I know, Momma, I'm sorry. We've just been busy lately."

"Busy enough to take a week-long vacation in the woods and not stop by and see your momma?" she asked, frowning at him.

Joey laughed. "We needed the time off," he explained, but his mother held up a hand to stop him.

"I know, dumpling." Joey's blush deepened at the term of endearment. His mother continued, "I'm just saying, is all." Lowering her voice, she leaned across the table and whispered loudly, "Erin's just broke up with Alan. Again. She needs someone to talk to tonight. Where should we sit her?"

"So that's what this is all about," Joey said, laughing. "You playing match-maker again?"

Mrs. Fatone shook her head. "Sometimes a girl just gets lonely, needs a man to tell her she's pretty," she replied. "How about next to Lance? He's such a nice boy."

Joey sighed. That would be fun. He could almost see it now, Justin and Erin in a brawl over Lance's attention. Justin was strong but Erin could hold her own, and while it might have been an interesting fight ... "Momma, I have to tell you something."

"About?" she asked. She raised her eyebrows but didn't look up from the table, where she was setting the plates out.

Joey finished putting the silverware out. "I don't think Justin would like it if you sat Lance next to her," he said carefully.

"Why not?" his mother asked, shrugging. "I just want her to have someone to talk to, Joe."

"How about JC?" Joey offered. "He's not seeing anyone." When his mother looked up at him, Joey looked away. "You see, Justin and Lance are sort of ... well, they're kind of ..."

"Together?" his mother asked, and when Joey turned to face her, he

was surprised to see her smiling. "Honey, I know that."

"You do?" Joey asked quietly. "I mean, how --?"

His mother laughed. "It's written all over the both of them. The way they look at each other. The way they touch each other. Please, Joe, I'm a mother. I notice these things."

"And you're okay with that?" Joey asked. "I mean, I knew you would be, but ..." He couldn't believe how well his mother was taking this. "Are you sure?"

She nodded. "Joey, baby, you remember my brother Harry?" When Joey nodded, she continued, "He's that way, too. Has always liked his boys. So I'm fine with it, really."

Joey frowned. He never knew his Uncle Harry was gay, not that he saw him enough to know. Harry lived out in the Midwest somewhere, and the last time Joey had seen him was when Joey was in grade school. Quietly, he asked, "So can you sit Erin with JC? He could probably use the attention himself, too."

His mother studied him for a long moment before nodding again. "Sure," she said. "Where do you want to sit?"

Next to Chris, he almost said, but then stopped himself. It was one thing that his mother was cool with Justin and Lance's relationship, but they weren't her flesh and blood. Joey remembered the way Lance said his own mother was dealing with her son being gay, and he wondered if his mother's acceptance would fall short of her own son, too. So he just shrugged and muttered, "Anywhere is fine with me."

His mother went into the kitchen, and when she came back, hands full of food, Chris was right behind her, salad bowls balanced precariously along his arms. He winked at Joey behind Mrs. Fatone's back, and Joey grinned. Reaching for the bowls, Joey helped Chris set them around the table. "So, tell me, Joey," his mother said, putting the food out, "are you seeing anyone now?"

Joey glanced at Chris, who smiled but didn't look up at him. "Not really," Joey replied. As Chris walked behind him, he ran a hand along Joey's waist, his touch ticklish and secretive. Joey felt a foolish grin spread across his face, and he forced it away.

"And you, Christopher?" his mother asked. "How's Dani?"

Chris shrugged but said nothing. Mrs. Fatone went back into the kitchen, and Joey looked at Chris, frowning. "You could at least make something up," he said quietly.

"Why lie?" Chris asked. He came around the table and stood beside Joey, one hand on his hip. Leaning on the table, he looked at Joey, a hungry gleam in his eye. "What should I have said? Mrs. Fatone, I want your son?"

Joey grinned and leaned down towards Chris. The warm scent of Chris's musk cologne filled his senses, and he breathed against Chris's ear softly, about to say something. Chris stepped closer, his hand brushing

Joey's lightly. Then Joey heard his mother's voice, calling the others for dinner, and he kissed the curve of Chris's ear before stepping back. Chris sighed and turned away as Mrs. Fatone entered the dining room, a large, steaming casserole dish full of lasagna in her hands, everyone else behind her.

As he sat down beside Chris, Joey felt Chris's hand on his knee, just a brief touch but enough to bring that goofy grin back to Joey's face. Joey edged his chair closer to Chris's until their knees touched beneath the table and dove into the lasagna. Suddenly he was starving, and not just for his mother's cooking, either.

All I Ever Wanted
106. Among Family and Friends
Part 3 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

After dinner, everyone retreated into the den, where Mr. Fatone had a game on TV. As the hour grew late, Justin slipped further and further down into his chair, the alcohol from the couple of beers he'd had beginning to work its way through his body. Lance sat on Justin's knees, nursing the same bottle he'd had for the last few hours. Joey sat in the middle of the couch, his arms draped across the back, Chris and JC on either side of him. Joey's cousin Erin sat on the other side of JC, her hand straying to brush along his leg, his arm, every time he smiled her way. Joey's older brother Steven sat on the floor in front of the couch, his girlfriend next to him. Joey's father sat across the room from Lance, in his recliner, and Mrs. Fatone was in the kitchen, cleaning up. As the game wrapped up, she came into the den and navigated over to Lance. "Honey," she said softly, leaning down over him, "you two can have the room at the end of the hall."

"You sure?" Lance asked. Joey had mentioned that he told his mother about their relationship, but Lance didn't know exactly how Mrs. Fatone felt about it. He wasn't going to say anything about sleeping accommodations -- he thought he'd wait until everyone decided where they'd sleep, and then he'd crawl beside Justin anyway.

But Mrs. Fatone nodded. "It's fine, really," she said, patting his leg. "You boys look tired. Maybe you should call it a night soon."

Lance glanced behind him to look at Justin, who struggled to keep his eyes open. Justin blinked owlishly and then grinned at him. "Hmm?" he asked, thinking Lance was asking him something.

"Nothing," Lance replied, smiling. Justin couldn't hold his alcohol well, and after the way he'd been guzzling beer since eating such a large meal, Lance was surprised Justin was even still awake. Standing up, he took Justin's hand in his and pulled him to his feet. "Come on, babe," he whispered, wrapping a supportive arm around Justin's waist. "Time for bed."

"I'm not tired," Justin mumbled, but he leaned against Lance and closed his eyes as Lance said goodnight to everyone and thanked Mrs. Fatone for the lovely dinner once again. Justin's hands slipped around Lance's waist, hugging him close as he rested his head on Lance's shoulder.

"Come on," Lance whispered, leading him out of the den. They had stayed at the Fatones' home before, and Lance found his way easily up the stairs and down to the end of the hall, to a small guestroom containing just a full-sized bed with a tiny table and lamp to one side. He led Justin to the bed and sat him down, and then turned to close the door. As it latched, he felt Justin's hands on his waist, pulling him back. "Justin," Lance said, smiling, as Justin's lips pressed against his neck.

Justin murmured into Lance's skin, his lips hot and wet as he sucked gently on Lance's neck. Lance turned around in his arms and let Justin push him back against the door. "Justin, it's late," Lance whispered as Justin's hands trailed down his chest. Justin silenced him with a kiss, his tongue tasting like beer, insistent in Lance's mouth. Moaning, Justin licked Lance's chin, his breath warm and coppery as he nuzzled Lance's neck. Lance pushed Justin away slightly and began to unbutton Justin's shirt. Justin leaned against him, and Lance couldn't get the shirt off. "Work with me here, babe," he whispered.

Staggering back, Justin pulled the shirt off over his head, still partially buttoned. Lance reached out to steady him, grabbing a hold of the waistband of Justin's jeans. Justin unzipped his jeans and pulled them down, but his sneakers were still on and the pant legs tangled up over his shoes. He reached down, trying to kick off his sneakers, and then he staggered back and plopped on the floor. Looking up at Lance with large, watery eyes, Justin pouted. "Lance," he whined. Then he laid back on the floor and sighed pitifully.

Lance looked down at Justin, naked except for his boxers and his jeans bunched around his feet, and he laughed. "Honey, come on," he said, bending down to remove Justin's shoes. As he tugged off Justin's jeans, Justin closed his eyes and sighed again. "What's on your mind?" Lance asked softly.

"I'm sleepy," Justin said, his voice a little slurred.

"You drank too much," Lance replied, leaning over him.

Justin nodded sagely. "I know."

Lance laughed again. Taking Justin's hands in his, Lance hauled Justin to his feet. "Come on, dollface," he said playfully. "The bed is right here."

"I can go to sleep," Justin said, leaning against Lance.

"Yes, you can go to sleep now," Lance said. He pulled back the covers on the bed and laid Justin down. Justin curled beneath the blankets, but when Lance started to cover him again, Justin stopped him. "Take these off," he muttered, tugging at his boxers.

Lance sighed. "Justin, hang on a minute." Justin laid back against the pillows and stared at Lance, who laughed again. "You're cute when you're drunk," he whispered, removing Justin's boxers.

When he tried to pull up the covers, though, Justin stopped him again. "You lie down too," he said, pouting.

"I have to get undressed first," Lance replied, covering him with the blankets. He turned on the lamp beside the bed and walked back to the door, clicking off the overhead light. When he turned around, he saw Justin trying to extract himself from the sheets. He had kicked off the comforter and was struggling with the flat sheet when Lance said, "Justin, lay down, babe."

"Come here," Justin said, falling back to the bed. The light from the lamp fell across him in soft, amber rays, making his skin a dusky hue, his

curls a golden halo around his head. His large, dark eyes stared at Lance hungrily. "Come here," he whispered again, "please."

Lance looked at his lover and sighed. As he crossed the room again, he stripped off his own clothes, finally climbing into bed beside Justin, their naked bodies pressed together with just the thin sheet between them. Justin picked at the sheet, a frustrated look on his face. "Under here," he said, frowning. "Lance --"

Grinning, Lance crawled under the sheet and laid on his back. Justin cuddled up against him, his hand caressing Lance's nipple, and Lance hugged Justin close. Resting his head on Lance's chest, Justin murmured, "Talk to me."

"What do you want me to say?" Lance asked quietly. His fingers traced gentle circles onto Justin's bare back.

Justin shrugged. Yawning, he said, "Anything. I like hearing you talk. I can hear your voice echo through your heart." Lance smiled at that. As he thought about a topic to talk about, something until Justin managed to fall asleep, his hand stopped its rhythmic rubbing on Justin's back. "Don't stop," Justin said, reaching back for Lance's hand. "I like that."

Lance began rubbing Justin's back again. "What do you want me to talk about?" he asked.

Justin sighed and snuggled closer to him. "Tell me what we're doing next week," he said, his voice soft and sleepy. He closed his eyes as Lance started to talk.

"Next week," Lance said, thinking. Probably arguing with my mother, he thought, but he didn't say that. That's the last thing Justin needed on his mind before drifting off to sleep. So Lance smiled and said, "Well, it'll be just you and me. No one else to walk in on us. No one else to interrupt us. We'll go to a club one night. Remember, you promised me a date --" Justin grinned at that, hugging Lance tighter -- "and then we'll visit my parents, and um ...". He shrugged. "I don't know. What do you want to do?"

"Kiss you and hug you and make love to you in the kitchen," Justin said.

Laughing, Lance asked, "The kitchen? Why there?"

"Because no one else will be there," Justin replied. As he talked, his voice grew softer and softer, until Lance was sure he was close to falling asleep. "Just me and you. I'll lay you down on the table, and kiss your clothes off, and then we'll --"

"We'll break the table," Lance said, grinning at the image of Justin and him spread out on top of his kitchen table.

Justin shook his head, his curls tickling Lance's chin. "No we won't," he replied, sighing.

"We'll flip it over," Lance said. "It's not that sturdy."

Justin frowned. "Maybe the counter, then," he said.

"There's always the kitchen chairs," Lance suggested.

"Yeah!" Justin cried, sitting up. Lance laughed at the enthusiasm shining in Justin's eyes, and then Justin laid his head back down on Lance's chest. "The chairs. That would be fun."

Lance closed his eyes for a minute, his hand stroking Justin's back gently. Justin's breath fanned his chest, and as it evened out, Lance knew Justin was finally falling asleep. "Justin?" he asked softly. Justin sighed in response. Lance kissed the top of his head, inhaling the clean scent of Justin's hair.

Suddenly Justin shifted in his arms and looked up at him, his eyes slipping closed. He blinked rapidly, trying to stay awake. "Lance?" he asked, a little confused.

"Go to sleep," Lance replied, kissing Justin's forehead. Justin snuggled against Lance's shoulder and sighed.

"I'm awake," he mumbled. "Talk to me."

Lance grinned. "Justin, honey, I'm getting sleepy, too."

"Hmm." Justin hugged Lance tighter. "What are you thinking about right this second?" he asked.

"You," Lance said. "How much I love you. How I love to hold you, and how great it feels to have you in my arms."

Justin smiled and closed his eyes. Leaning back against Lance's shoulder, he kissed Lance's neck with slow, lazy kisses. "I love you, too," he whispered.

Lance bit his lip, and before he could stop himself, he asked, "Justin? What do you think will happen when this is all over?"

Frowning, Justin asked, "What this? The tour? Or us?" As Lance opened his mouth to reply, Justin said, "We'll never be over, Lance. I swear to you. I want you forever with me. Forever."

"I meant the group," Lance said. He knew in his heart that Justin's words were true -- he wanted Justin with him, too. Forever.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he whispered. "I haven't thought that far ahead."

"Will you ..." Lance trailed off, unsure of how to phrase his thoughts into words. "I mean, could you consider ... I know how much your family means to you, but have you ever thought of moving a little farther away from them?"

Justin sighed against Lance's neck, his breath hot and gentle. "How much farther?" he asked.

Lance shrugged. "I thought maybe you could come live with me," he said softly. He held his breath and waited for Justin's response.

Justin picked his head up and looked at Lance. Despite the alcohol in

his system, his blue eyes were deep and clear like the ocean. "You don't have to --" Lance started, but Justin's eyes filled with tears. "Lance," he whispered, his voice breaking. He cleared his throat and tried again. "I'd love to," he said simply.

Lance let out the breath he'd been holding. "We can talk about it more later," he said, but his heart beat wildly inside his chest, and he felt a lightness rush through his veins, igniting his body. If Justin weren't holding onto him so tightly, he thought perhaps he could just float away. Together. Justin would live with him and they could be together. Now they just had to work on the forever part of it.

All I Ever Wanted
106. Among Family and Friends
Part 4 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

Back in the den, Joey caught his brother's gaze and the slight jerk of his head, and knew Steven wanted to ask him something. Excusing himself, Joey pushed up off the couch, his hand brushing Chris's shoulder lightly as he stood up. Gathering the empty beer bottles, he asked, "Steve, will you help me clean this place up a little?"

"Sure," Steven said, rising to his feet. He took some of the bottles from Joey's hands and followed him into the kitchen.

As Joey tossed the bottles into the trashcan beneath the sink, he asked, "Something bothering you?"

Steven laughed. "That obvious?" he asked. He leaned back against the sink and studied Joey closely. He thought for a minute and then asked, "How long have they been doing that?"

Joey didn't have to ask who. He had seen Steven's raised eyebrows when Lance helped Justin from the room, Justin's arms holding Lance tightly. But he wasn't quite sure what Steven thought they were doing. "Doing what?" Joey asked softly.

Steven shrugged. "They're like ... dating, right? Is that what they call it? I mean, I always kind of thought Lance might be ... but Justin? And together?"

"What's wrong with that?" Joey asked, narrowing his eyes as he looked at his brother.

"Nothing," Steven said quickly. "I just never pegged Justin as the type, you know? It's a little surprising."

Joey watched the guarded expression on his brother's face and wondered what he really thought of men loving men. "What would you think the type would be?" he asked carefully.

Steven shrugged again. "I don't know," he admitted. "Flaming, maybe. Overly feminine. Drama queens, you know. You've met them."

"And I know Lance," Joey said. "He's none of that. He's just polite and gentlemanly and soft-spoken. And you thought he was gay? Before tonight?"

"Joe," Steven said, sighing, "he's too polite. He's so nice to girls, but he never seems to have one, you know? Even Julia commented on it earlier tonight, after talking to him. It's like he's the perfect guy, always asking the right questions, always smiling at the right moment, a disarming combination of innocence and charm. And he doesn't seem to know he does it. I mean, girls know a guy like that can't be real, you know?"

Joey laughed, and the slight tension between them dissipated. "You're jealous," he said, winking at his brother.

"Damn straight," Steven said, nodding. "Girls fall all over themselves for a guy like that."

"And so did Justin," Joey pointed out.

Steven bit his lip. "How long have they been together?" he asked quietly.

Joey shrugged. "A couple of months," he said. "Since the beginning of the summer."

"Are they serious?" Steven asked, curious.

Joey gave him one of his patented "are you kidding?" looks. "As a heart attack," he replied. "Steve, you need to see them like I do, twenty-four seven, and you think you're jealous now? God, you couldn't imagine having it so good."

"No shit?" Steven asked, grinning. In a more contemplative tone, he mused, "I wonder what that's like." Then he grimaced. "Nah, I just can't see it. I am just not attracted to guys in the least." He shook his head to emphasize the point.

Joey laughed again. "Well, no one asked you," he said. "Leave them alone."

"I'm not going to say anything," Steven shrugged. "Whatever rocks your boat, you know?"

Joey punched his arm playfully. Opening the fridge, he grabbed a handful of bottles and handed them to Steven. "Get back in there," he said. As his brother left the kitchen, Joey was glad that he hadn't asked him how he felt about gay relationships. He wondered if his brother had ever suspected he might like Lance himself.

This is the first time you've managed to talk about Lance being with Justin without feeling even a tiny bit depressed, he thought suddenly, and he grinned as he grabbed a few more beers out of the fridge and closed the door. Maybe his mind just had other things to occupy itself with ... other things like Chris, he thought. He wondered how Chris was holding up. Joey noticed he had grown more and more quiet as the night wore on, drinking more and losing the edge to his personality that made him so quirky and fun with others. He wondered if maybe Chris was upset that he couldn't get in touch with Dani -- Joey knew if the tables were turned, he would be going insane trying to reach her right now. It would piss him off to no end if his so-called girlfriend never returned his calls. It's almost as if she knows he's about to dump her, Joey thought sourly.

He looked up as Chris entered the kitchen. "Hey, man," Joey said softly. Smiling a little, he added, "I was just thinking about you."

A slow smile spread across Chris's face. "You were?" he asked. "That's funny, because I've been thinking about you all night long."

"What's up?" Joey asked, seeing the weariness in Chris's eyes. He set the beer bottles down on the counter and reached out, trailing a finger down Chris's arm.

Chris shrugged and stepped closer to him. "I want Dani to call me back," Chris admitted. "Now, right this second. I just want to be free from --" he sighed -- "everything. I want this game with her to be over between us so I can move on."

To you, Joey read in his eyes. "Why don't you call her from here?" he suggested. He took Chris's wrist in his hand and pulled him another step closer.

Chris shook his head. "Because it's late," he said. "And I'm tired. And I don't want to wake your parents up when it gets ugly." The Fatones had already turned in for the night, and the last thing Joey wanted was for them to wake up to the sound of Chris yelling into the phone.

"It won't be that bad," Joey offered. His thumb stroked the soft skin of Chris's arm.

"It will be awful," Chris replied. "So I'm going to go to bed and not think about it."

Joey smiled. "Easier said than done."

"Not if I'm properly distracted," Chris said, grinning.

Joey leaned closer, and Chris raised his hand between them, his fingers gentle on Joey's chest. Joey whispered, "You know which room is mine?" Chris nodded. "I'll be up as soon as I can. I promise."

"Okay," Chris whispered back. "I'm kinda tired so don't hate me if I fall asleep."

Joey kissed Chris's temple. "I'll just wake your ass up," he promised.

But it took longer than he thought to break away from the others. Erin went to bed a little after Chris did, and after JC walked her to her room, he decided to call it a night, as well. Steven's girlfriend Julia remembered she needed to get up early the next morning, so that left just Joey and Steven, drinking beers and watching ESPN until Joey could barely keep his eyes open. It was well after midnight, and the beers had settled into his system, making him drowsy. He thought of Chris in his bed and finally managed to convince Steven they should hit the sack.

When he closed the door to his room, Joey saw that Chris was sound asleep, curled into himself beneath the covers of Joey's bed. He had left the bedside lamp on for Joey, and with overly cautious steps, Joey walked over to turn it off. Just as he was about to do so, Chris sighed in his sleep, and Joey turned to look at his friend. He caught his breath at the sight of the smooth skin of Chris's face, unlined and innocent in sleep. Reaching out, he ran a hand down the curve of Chris's jaw, rubbing his thumb against the short goatee at Chris's chin. Joey's hand continued over the blanket, tracing the outline of Chris's body underneath, his arms, his legs, the curve of his buttocks. Beneath his touch, Chris moaned slightly. Joey rolled him onto his back and leaned down, his lips closing over Chris's

urgently. Don't wake him up, his mind whispered, but his body told him otherwise.

Chris shifted beneath him, one knee bending as Joey's hand trailed down Chris's leg, grabbing him just behind the knee. Pressing Chris back against the pillow with his kiss, Joey spread Chris's legs apart and climbed onto the bed, kneeling between them. Chris's hands came up to cradle Joey's face, pulling him deeper into their kiss.

Then Joey broke away, breathless. Nuzzling Chris's neck, he whispered, "Wake up, sleepyhead."

"I'm awake, I'm awake," Chris mumbled. His hands roamed through Joey's hair, tugging lightly, as Joey laid down on him, his erection already hard against Chris's groin.

Biting gently at Chris's neck, Joey murmured Chris's name, his words slurred from the alcohol. He felt one of Chris's hands caress his back as the other one pressed his head against Chris. He began to suck the hollow of Chris's throat, his tongue darting out to moisten the soft skin. Beneath him Chris moaned. "I like that," he whispered.

Joey kissed Chris's throat and thrust against him, the rough denim of his jeans rubbing his swollen cock, and he felt Chris start to harden, as well. "I want you," Joey breathed, his voice harsh. He had never wanted something, someone, as badly as he wanted this man beneath him right this second. "Call her and tell her now. I want you now, Chris."

Chris looked at Joey, his face unreadable by the faint light of the lamp, and then he reached for the phone on the bedside table. A sudden uneasiness washed through Joey, cooling the fire in his veins. "Chris, I'm kidding," he said, but Chris dialed Dani's number, a determined set to his features. He looked at Joey as he listened to the phone, and Joey held his breath.

Then Chris closed his eyes and his lips thinned out to a tight line. "Damn it the fuck," he whispered, hanging up the phone.

Joey didn't have to ask -- the answering machine again. He rolled off of Chris until his head rested on the pillow beside Chris's head, and he watched his friend carefully. He saw the pain in the way Chris frowned slightly, the way his jaw was tensed, the furrow in his brow. Leaning forward, Joey kissed his cheek tenderly. "I'm sorry," he whispered.

"Yeah, well," Chris said, sighing, "me too." He turned in Joey's arms and snuggled beside him. For a long moment, neither of them said anything. And then, in a small voice, Chris said, "I like you lying on top of me."

Joey grinned. "Why's that?" he asked, grateful to change the subject. He eased closer to Chris, his arm and leg draped across Chris's body.

Beneath him, Chris shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "It makes me feel safe. Like when I was a little kid and I had a bad dream, and my dad would let me crawl into bed with him. I would lie under the covers beside him and all the bad dreams would go away. You make me feel like that."

Joey didn't know what to say. He knew Chris's father had passed away a long time ago, and he couldn't imagine losing his own father, but he thought it was probably still a sore spot in Chris's heart. "No one ever said anything like that to me before," Joey whispered.

Chris rested his head against Joey's chest and hugged him close. "No one's ever made me feel this way before," Chris whispered back.

"I'm sorry I made you call her," Joey replied.

"You didn't," Chris said. "I'm sick of this. I was thinking of calling her before you said anything."

"You sure?" Joey asked. He kissed Chris, and as Chris's tongue slipped between Joey's own lips, he felt the fire from earlier re-ignite.

"I'm sure," Chris whispered against Joey's mouth. He ran his hand down Joey's arm, rubbing gently. Joey closed his eyes and felt the alcohol in his blood respond to Chris's sure touch, and soon his kisses began to linger along Chris's skin. He sighed as Chris reached back and clicked off the lamp, and then he drifted off to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
106. Among Family and Friends
Part 5 of 5
by NSyncGrrl

Justin woke up with a slight ache right behind his left eye. No more beers for you, he thought grimly. Beside him Lance lay sleeping, his face buried under the covers. Just the blonde tips of his hair peeked out from beneath the blankets. Moving slowly, Justin extracted himself from Lance's embrace and got out of bed. When he stood up, his head began to pound a little harder, and he considered falling back into the bed and going back to sleep. He looked back at Lance, sleeping peacefully, and sighed. But he had to go to the bathroom something fierce, and he should see if Mrs. Fatone had anything for his head. Lance would still be here when he came back.

Lance's words from the night before echoed in his head. "I thought maybe you could come live with me." Justin smiled despite his headache. A tightness swelled inside his chest, every heartbeat echoing through him in rhythm with Lance's words. "Come live with me." Thank you, Jesus, Justin prayed, grinning. It felt so right, to think of him and Lance living together. He had been hoping they could talk about what they'd do once the tour was over. Justin couldn't stand the thought of Lance returning to his home in Mississippi without him, or of himself staying here in Florida without Lance by his side. In his mind he had run through possible ways to broach the subject without forcing Lance into an awkward situation -- he didn't want to rush things, and if Lance didn't feel comfortable with them living together, Justin didn't want him to feel like he had to say yes. Sure, they were together now, and during the tour, but moving into someone else's house was a big step that made things between them a bit more ... permanent.

And God knows I want that, Justin thought, running a hand down Lance's body over the blankets before he pulled on his boxers and jeans. He had been afraid Lance wouldn't want to move in together. He thought maybe this whole thing with his mom would raise doubts in Lance's mind about their relationship. Justin didn't want that to happen. He didn't want to have to come between Lance and his mother. He knew Lance loved him, but he knew that Diane Bass still had a strong hold over her son, and he was just a little bit afraid that if he wasn't on guard this coming week, she'd try to steal Lance away from him. And Justin wasn't going to let that happen.

Justin picked with the buttons on the shirt he wore yesterday, but he couldn't seem to get them undone. The pain in his head flared, and he closed his eyes against it, wavering. Then he reached for Lance's sweatshirt on the floor and pulled it on over his head. With a glance back at Lance, still asleep, Justin left the room.

A quick look in the medicine cabinet above the bathroom sink proved fruitless, so Justin trudged into the kitchen in search of aspirin. He found a bottle in the pantry, and filled a glass of water to wash down the pills. As he sipped at the cold water, he wandered into the den and found JC

already there. JC sat on the couch, his feet tucked beneath him, sipping coffee and writing in a notebook lying open on his lap. Justin sat down on the other end of the couch and stretched one leg along the cushions between them. JC looked up at him and smiled. "You're up early," he said, his voice low so as to not wake the others.

Justin shrugged. "I've got a headache," he said, drinking the rest of his water.

Laughing, JC said, "I'm sure you do. You and beer don't mix."

Justin smiled ruefully but didn't say anything. JC was right -- Justin wasn't a fun drunk. He got drowsy, and maybe he got a little cute when he and Lance were alone, but mostly he just fell asleep. And he didn't need to drink to do that. Nodding at the notebook in JC's lap, Justin asked, "What are you writing?"

"A song," JC replied. "Just something that's been rolling around in my head for a while now."

"Can I hear it?" Justin asked, but JC shook his head.

"It's not done," he said. "It's nowhere near being done."

"A love song?" Justin asked, smiling. JC could write some really great love songs. Justin often wondered where he got the inspiration, seeing as how he hadn't dated anyone in a long time.

But JC shook his head. "Not really. Kind of an anti-love song. About a guy who loves someone he can't have, and he knows this so he tells himself he doesn't want anyone at all, and he pushes the person he loves away."

"That's sad," Justin said, frowning. "That's downright depressing, JC! Can't you think of something happy to write about?"

JC grinned. "It's just a song," he said.

"Are you depressed?" Justin asked softly.

JC looked at him and laughed. "No," he said, scoffing at the idea, but Justin thought he saw something in his friend's eyes that said otherwise.

He could tell JC was uncomfortable with the question, so hoping to change the subject, Justin asked, "So how'd it go last night, you and Erin?"

A thin blush crept into JC's cheeks. "She's Joey's cousin, Justin," he said, bashful. "She just broke up with her boyfriend. She only wanted someone to talk to."

"Yeah, right," Justin replied, grinning wickedly. "I saw the way she was looking at you."

"Justin, nothing happened," JC said, sighing.

Justin winked at him. "Not even a goodnight kiss?"

"No," JC said. "I'm not that careless with my kisses."

Justin laughed. "I'm just teasing you," he said. He raised his glass to his lips and frowned when he discovered it was empty. Setting the glass down on the coffee table, he said softly, "Lance asked me to move in with him."

Looking up from his writing, JC studied Justin for a moment. "How do you feel about that?" he asked finally.

Justin grinned foolishly. "I feel wonderful," he admitted. "God, JC, how could I say no? This is what I want."

"Are you sure?" JC asked, a little concerned. "This is big, Justin. Do you think that you're ready for it?"

Justin nodded. "I am so sure, JC. This next week will be like a trial run, you know? And even though I'm worried how things will go with his mom, I'm really looking forward to it being just the two of us."

"Justin," JC said, his voice low, "I want you to know that I think it's wonderful, what you have with Lance."

"Sometimes I think it makes you mad," Justin admitted. He picked at the back of the couch and looked sideways at JC, afraid to see how his words would affect his friend.

But JC just smiled sadly. "It makes me jealous," JC said. "It makes me wish I had something like that. And sometimes it does makes me feel lonely."

"I don't want that," Justin said. "I try to tone it down, really I do, but I just can't not touch him or look at him, and sometimes it's so hard to not let my feelings show."

"I know," JC whispered. "I'm glad you've found this, Justin, I am. I just want you to know that when I get a little pissy about it, I'm sorry. It's not you, it's me."

Justin laughed. "God, JC, you make it sound like we're breaking up or something!"

That brought a smile to JC's face. "I just want you to know that we're still friends," he said. "One day I hope to find someone who is to me what Lance is to you. I hope you never lose that."

"So you think it's a good idea," Justin asked, "us moving in together?"

JC nodded. "I'm surprised it's taken you two this long to discuss it." When Justin looked at him, JC explained, "I just assumed you would get a place of your own once the tour ends."

Justin blushed. "JC, I can't wait for tomorrow night. We'll be alone for the first time in forever. No offense, but you know ... sometimes you guys ..."

Laughing, JC said, "Sometimes we interrupt you just when things are starting to get good, huh?"

"Yeah," Justin said, grinning. Someone trailed a hand across his shoulders, and he looked up to see Lance, smiling down at him. "There's my sweatshirt," he said, rubbing Justin's arm. He wore Justin's shirt from the night before and his own rumpled jeans.

Justin leaned his head back against Lance's chest, and Lance bent down and kissed him tenderly. "I couldn't work the buttons on that one," Justin whispered.

Lance laughed. Looking at JC, he asked, "What'cha writing, Josh?"

"A song," JC said.

"A sad song," Justin corrected.

Lance laughed again. Justin looked behind him as Chris entered the den, dressed in a long t-shirt that hung low over his boxers. Yawning, Chris pushed Justin's leg off of the couch and curled up on the cushions, cuddling up to JC. "Someone's still half asleep," JC commented, trying to push Chris away, but Chris held on tightly to his arm and didn't budge.

"Late night, Chris?" Lance asked, hugging Justin's neck.

"Hmm," Chris murmured, but didn't reply. Justin wondered where Chris had slept -- back at the house he had noticed that Chris tended to visit Joey late at night, and once or twice he actually saw Chris leave Joey's room in the morning, but he didn't know if they were sleeping together or just talking or fooling around or what. He knew Chris was trying to get in touch with Dani, and he assumed it was to talk with her about their relationship, but beyond that, he didn't know what was going on between Chris and Joey. He only knew that Joey seemed to have finally gotten over Lance -- the tension between them had disappeared once Joey turned off the high-powered flirting, and for that Justin was grateful. He could see how uneasy Lance was at times around Joey, and he knew that Lance was strong enough to ward off their friend's advances, particularly after that party, but it still made him uncomfortable and jealous to see Joey trying to steal Lance away from him.

And that seemed to have stopped, now that Joey and Chris were ... well, doing whatever they were doing. Justin made a mental note to ask Chris about it when they managed to get a moment alone. He was very curious how things were working out between his two friends, particularly since they didn't seem affectionate or flirty in public. If it weren't for the last talk he had with Chris, and then what Lance and JC gleaned from Joey, Justin would think they were merely best friends goofing off, with nothing more to it than that.

Definitely not the kind of thing he and Lance had going, he mused as he ran his hands along Lance's arms, wrapped around his neck. He couldn't keep his hands off of Lance -- he wanted to touch him every second, to make sure that he was there by his side, or to remind anyone watching that they were together and Lance was his. He had yet to see that kind of thing developing between Chris and Joey -- Joey flirted with everyone, and Chris could be touchy-feely when he was in one of his silly moods, like he apparently was right now, hanging onto JC like a drowning man and pretending to still be sleeping. The look of consternation on JC's face was priceless, though, and Justin had to laugh as JC tried to shake

himself free from Chris. "What're you writing?" Chris asked, peering around JC's arm.

JC covered the notebook with his hands. "Nothing," he said, trying to hide it from Chris.

Lance laughed and rested his chin on the top of Justin's head. "It's a song," he said. "You know how JC is about his music."

"Let me read it," Chris whined.

JC stood up and pushed Chris back to the couch. "No," he said, taking a seat in one of the chairs in the room. "Not until it's finished. Keep this up, and maybe not even then."

Chris collapsed to the couch, burrowing into JC's vacated seat. Stretching out, he stuck his bare feet in Justin's lap, kicking at his thighs. When one of his feet strayed too close to Justin's crotch, Lance reached down and slapped Chris's leg. "Hey, watch the jewels," he growled, leaning over Justin protectively. "Don't go kicking at something you can't hope to replace."

Laughing, Chris pulled his legs under himself and curled into a fetal position at the end of the couch. "Oooh, that was cold," he said. "How would you know?"

Lance hugged Justin tightly. "I wouldn't want to," he replied, kissing Justin's cheek quickly. Justin beamed up at him with his sweetest smile. God, he loved this boy.

"Maybe you can ask Joey," Justin joked as Joey came into the den, scratching his mussed hair and yawning loudly.

"Ask me what?" Joey asked, blinking. He fell into the recliner and reached for the TV remote.

Chris laughed. "They want to know if I rock your world," he said, grinning.

Justin looked over at Joey, surprised to find him blushing faintly. Then a goofy grin spread across Joey's face. "I plead the fifth," he said, his voice taking on a thick New York accent. He sounded to Justin like a mobster from one of the Godfather movies. Winking at JC, Joey said, "Ask JC."

"I wouldn't know!" JC cried, looking up at them from his notebook, a frown on his face, as the room erupted with laughter.

All I Ever Wanted
107. We Need to Talk
by NSyncGrrl

As soon as they walked in the door to the house Joey shared with JC and Justin, Chris went straight for the answering machine. He held his overnight bag over his shoulder as he played the messages.

Beep. "Lance, it's your mother." Of course, Chris thought. "What time does your flight leave again? Call me when you get in."

Beep. "Lance, it's your mother again." Chris rolled his eyes. "Your sister is in town and she said make sure you call her the minute you walk in the door tomorrow. She's only here until Wednesday so don't forget to call her."

Beep. "Um, hi. I'm looking for Justin." It was his brother, Jonathan. "Hi, Lance! If you're there. Guess what? I finally got Porygon. I saved it for you to see. Anyway, Mom says I can't talk long but I just wanted to say hi. Hi Justin! Hi everybody else who lives there! Bye now."

Beep. "Chris." It was Dani. Chris turned up the machine but there was nothing but silence from her. In the background he could hear his dogs barking. He missed them. Finally Dani sighed and said, "We have to talk. Call me."

Chris felt a hand on his shoulder, and he looked up to see Joey standing there. Joey squeezed gently and said in a quiet voice, "Good luck."

"Thanks," Chris replied, sighing. He headed for his room, intent on calling Dani back. But he sat on the edge of the bed and stared at the phone, suddenly terrified. What would she say? What would he say? He wanted to know why she hadn't returned his calls until now. He wanted to know if she was avoiding him. He wanted this to go smoothly and he still wanted to be friends, but he just didn't want her in the way anymore. I want Joey, he thought. Now if I can just tell her that without her going ballistic and killing my dogs.

Someone knocked on the door. "Come in," he called, and turned as Joey entered the room.

He held two envelopes in his hand. "Invitations," Joey said. "The Video Music Awards in New York."

"When?" Chris asked.

"Thursday," Joey replied. He tossed the envelope addressed to Mr. Christopher Kirkpatrick onto his bed. "You can bring a date."

Chris winked. "You have any plans Thursday night?" he asked jokingly.

Joey laughed. "You asking me out?" he countered, and then he shook his head. "Sorry, dude, I'm already taken. I have a fabulous evening

planned for me and my momma."

Picking up the invitation, Chris said, "Maybe I'll go by myself."

"You're going with me," Joey said. "With all of us. Don't start this going by myself crap. You aren't a solo artist."

Chris grinned up at Joey. He appreciated what his friend was doing, the rough humor, the quick smiles, the teasing. Trying to take his mind off of the chore of calling Dani. "Joey, thanks," he whispered, and he didn't mean about the invitation, either.

Joey sat down on the edge of the bed and placed a hand on Chris's knee. "Call her," he said. He looked at Chris with those compassionate brown eyes, and Chris had to struggle to keep from getting lost in that warm gaze. "She's half a world away -- she can't do anything to you but scream and yell."

"And hurt my dogs," Chris said, scared.

"Puh-leaze," Joey replied, rolling his eyes. "She loves those damn mutts as much as you do."

"Mutts?" Chris cried, clutching at his chest. "I paid top dollar for those dogs! They're pure-breds."

Joey laughed. "She ain't gonna hurt the dogs. Just call her and talk. Do you want me to stay here while you do it?"

The idea was inviting, but Chris didn't want to make Joey uncomfortable when the talk turned ugly. "No," he said, shaking his head. "It's just ... I'm not ..." Chris sighed. "I don't want to dump her on the phone, you know? We've been together for a while now -- I've never dated anyone this long before. I think she deserves to be told face to face. So she knows I'm sincere when I say I still want to be friends. I just don't want to be lovers anymore."

Joey frowned. Looking at the invitation in his hand, he asked, "Why not take her to the VMAs? You need a date. The two of you can talk afterwards."

"Are you sure?" Chris asked. Dani hated award shows, but if she wanted to talk to him as badly as it sounded on the machine like she did, then maybe she would agree to go. And Chris could ask her to bring the dogs, too. Then he'd feel better about telling her that he was breaking up with her, if he knew the dogs were safe. He didn't really think she'd hurt the dogs, but he had seen her angry before. He wanted the dogs here, with him.

But a night of pretending to be a couple again, with Joey right there -- Chris didn't know how that would go over. "Joey, I don't know --"

Joey cut him off. "Chris, it would be perfect. Really. You show up at the awards and see what happens."

"This isn't a last ditch effort to salvage anything we had," Chris said, looking at him. He wanted Joey to understand that. "I want you to know that. This isn't to see if things can work out between us, because they

won't. I'm sleeping in your hotel room that night, Joe."

Grinning, Joey took Chris's hand in his. Then he raised Chris's hand to his lips and kissed his wrist. With his steady gaze never leaving Chris's face, Joey opened his mouth and bit gently, his teeth a sweet pressure, his lips warm and damp on Chris's skin. "You better sleep with me," Joey growled.

Chris laughed. "Do you promise to bite? I like that."

Joey smiled sweetly. "I promise to do anything you want me to do, anything at all."

Sighing, Chris said, "Well, let me call her. You're sure it's okay if she comes with us?"

"Chris!" Joey cried, exasperated. "Give me the damn phone and I'll ask her myself. Hi, Dani? This is Joey, from the group. I want to know if you'll be Chris's date for the VMAs on Thursday. You will? Good. He'll be breaking up with you after the show. Oh yeah, and bring the dogs."

Chris laughed. "Maybe I could just say that?" he asked, smiling.

Joey handed him the phone. "Dial," he said. "It's not just a soap anymore." As he left the room, he said, "I'm heading for a nap. If things go bad and you need someone, wake me up."

"That's a big ten-four, good buddy," Chris said in a deep voice, and Joey laughed as he closed the door behind him.

Before he could lose his nerve, Chris dialed Dani's number. But when the answering machine picked up, he almost cried in frustration. After the beep, he sighed. "Dani --"

"Hello?" Dani picked up the phone, cutting off the answering machine. "Chris? Is that you?"

Anger rose in him. She had been sitting there, listening to the phone ring. She had caller ID -- she had to have known it was him. After a pregnant pause, he said, "You've been avoiding me."

Dani sighed, and he could see her in his mind's eye, her eyes closed, her lips a white line slashed across her face, her nose twitching in that way it did when she was pissed off. "I was at my aunt's," she said.

"Why didn't you call and tell me you were leaving?" Chris asked. Why are you doing this? he thought. Just ask her to come to the show and hang up.

"She was having problems with the baby," Dani replied, and something in the way she said it made Chris think that she had practiced the words until they flowed from her lips without a hitch. You're lying, he wanted to say.

But he didn't. "Dani," he sighed, running a hand over his eyes.

"Chris, I need to talk to you," she said. "It's ... kind of important." She paused. "It's about us."

He nodded. Then, realizing she couldn't see him, he said, "I think that's a good idea. We do need to talk."

"Not over the phone," Dani said quickly. "Are you coming back soon?"

"No," Chris whispered. "I'm going to stay here until the next leg of the tour."

Dani sighed again, and he heard the exasperation in her voice as she said, "Chris, this isn't ... I mean, I ... shit."

Taking a deep breath, he asked, "The video awards are Thursday. Do you want to come with me?" A stony silence filled the connection. "I'll pay your airfare. And the hotel room." Silence. "You don't have to stay with me."

"I don't know," Dani said.

Chris sighed, giving into the anger. "Well, fuck, Dani. You want to talk but not over the phone. What, you want me to fly out there? Drop everything and just hop on the next plane? Well, I'm sorry, but I can't do that. We've got to rehearse, and spend some time in the studio --" And I'm not leaving Joey, Chris thought, not now, not when we're so close to getting together -- "I'm just not gonna do that, I'm sorry."

He listened to her breathe, and he thought he heard someone in the background, talking quietly, but he wasn't sure. "Do you have company?" he asked.

"No," she whispered, and now he knew she was lying.

"Dani --"

"I'll go," she said. "You happy? I'll go. Send me the ticket and I'll meet you there. Thursday, you said?"

"Yes," he replied, relieved. "Can you ... can you bring my dogs?"

She cleared her throat. "I was going to, anyway. I want you to take them back with you. If you're staying there for a while, you can take care of them."

"I'll send you a ticket," Chris said softly.

"And I want a hotel room," she said. "Not in your hotel. Not anywhere near the crowds."

"Okay," he whispered.

"One night only," she added. "Thursday. I want to fly into LaGuardia that morning and leave early the next day. I can't take too much time off from work."

Chris sighed. Yeah, right, he thought bitterly. "How's that going?" he asked. Dani was the president of his company, and that was another reason he wanted to make sure things were cool between them once this whole mess was over. She had a great head for business, and he didn't want to lose her as an employee, or a friend. He just didn't love her, and

he didn't want to stay in a relationship with her anymore when he what he wanted now was Joey.

"It's going well," she said, the tension in her voice fading away as she talked business. He listened to her quote figures for the past month and he knew she was good for the company. Whatever it was that had happened between them to drive them to this point didn't change that. But he wasn't looking forward to the awards show, and he didn't even want to think about what they would say to each other afterwards.

And then his mind turned to Joey, and the promise of his warm bed that night. You can do this, he told himself. Look at all you have to gain. Joey will be there for you, no matter how bad it is. You will be with him after it's all over. Just keep that in mind. Joey is waiting for you.

All I Ever Wanted
108. Like and Love
by NSyncGrrl

Their flight into Jackson was delayed by an hour, and with the rush hour traffic Lance hit heading home, he and Justin didn't get to his house until after the sun began to set. An orange glow lit the tops of the trees, setting them aflame, as Lance navigated the quiet streets of his subdivision. Justin sat beside him in the passenger side of the car, a bag of Chinese take-out food on his lap. Justin looked out of the window, his head back against the headrest, and he sighed as he watched the houses pass by slowly. "This is such a pretty neighborhood," he said softly. Turning to Lance, he smiled and added, "I think I'll like living here."

Lance winked at him. "I think I can make it pleasant for you," he said. He reached over and placed his hand on Justin's knee. Justin took his hand and looked back out the window.

Lance's house was set back at one secluded end of the subdivision. As he drove into the garage, Lance noted that the grass needed cutting, even though he had paid a local boy to keep it trimmed while he was gone. It was a large house, with an attached garage, two bedrooms, a study, a den, and a room Lance had set up as a place for the band to crash when they visited. He was looking forward to moving his stuff around to make room for Justin -- he felt as if they had begun to cross into a deeper, more meaningful stage of their relationship, where they were both taking on the huge responsibility of leaving the rest of the world behind to be together. It terrified and thrilled him at the same time, but he knew he was ready for it. He knew Justin was ready for it. And he knew these few days together would be precious gems that he could look back over during the tour as a reminder of what was to come once they took a break from the group.

Cutting off the engine, he climbed out of the car and stretched languidly. He was hungry, tired, and horny, and not necessarily in that order. As Justin got out of the car and stretched, Lance said, "Just leave the bags here. We can unpack later."

Justin nodded. "I just want to eat," he said, carrying the bag of food they had picked up on the way home. He followed Lance up the steps to the door leading to the house. Lance remembered the last time they had been alone in the garage together. It had been raining, and they were both wet and cold, and when Justin shivered Lance couldn't stop himself from reaching out to warm his friend. And to think we've come this far, Lance thought, unlocking the door. Inside the house was dark, and he clicked on the kitchen light as Justin closed the door behind him. Lance watched him set the bag of food on the kitchen table, noticing the way Justin's sweatpants emphasized the swell of his buttocks, the bulge of his cock. Suddenly the fact that they were together alone in his house hit him full force, and he wanted Justin. Now.

"Justin," Lance said, his voice low. He stepped up to the kitchen table, where Justin was unloading the contents of the bag, pint-sized carryout

cartons of rice and noodles and steaming meat.

Justin smiled at him but didn't look up. "I know, I know," he said. "I'll call right now."

He thought Lance wanted him to call the guys, let them know they got in safely. And his mom, and my mom, Lance thought. He didn't want to wait for all those calls to be over. "Justin," Lance said again, but Justin turned away and headed for the phone, on a small table in the hall by the stairs.

"Okay, Lance," Justin said, laughing. "I'm calling already."

Lance followed him into the hall and sat down on the bottom step of the carpeted staircase. He began to unbutton his shirt slowly, his eyes never leaving Justin's face. Justin picked up the phone and began to dial. Leaning back, Lance let his shirt fall open and trailed a hand down his bare chest, unbuttoning his jeans and easing the zipper down over his throbbing erection. "Justin," Lance said again, softer this time.

Justin glanced up at him, looked back at the phone, and then looked up again, his eyes wide, his mouth open slightly. His gaze drifted over Lance's body, lingering on the swollen bulge poking through his open zipper. Lance heard a small, tinny voice as someone picked up the other line of the phone, and then Lance said, "Come here."

Justin hung up the phone and obeyed. He reached out, his hands on Lance's knees, and then he kneeled down between Lance's legs on the step below the one Lance was sitting on. He ran his hands down Lance's thighs and leaned into him, kissing his stomach, his strong hands supporting Lance's waist. Justin's lips were hot and wet on Lance's stomach, and as he kissed his way up Lance's chest, Lance leaned back on his elbows, Justin's chest pressing sweetly against his aching crotch. Lance gasped as Justin's mouth closed over one of his nipples, and then his lips were covering Lance's own, kissing him greedily. "Dinner can wait," Lance whispered, pulling Justin close.

Justin moaned as Lance's hand came up between them and cupped his own budding erection. Lance's tongue forced its way between Justin's lips, hungry and insistent. He tugged at Justin's shirt, trying to pull it off, and Justin tried to help him, but it was taking too long. Lance was so damn close -- all day long he had been looking forward to this, his house, his man, his lover. He thought he could hold it in long enough to get them both undressed but now he didn't think he could make it. "Justin," he sighed, pushing Justin back.

Justin leaned over him, his hands on the steps to either side of Lance, and he smiled down at Lance. "What?" he asked, his breath ragged. He thrust against Lance, his body rubbing Lance's dick through his underwear, and Lance closed his eyes as a wave of pleasure broke through him.

"I'm not going to make it," Lance whispered. "Jesus, Justin, I can't hold it anymore. I'm not going to be able to --"

Suddenly Justin crawled back down over him, kissing his lower stomach as he eased down the waistband of Lance's boxer briefs. Lance

felt the pressure of his underwear disappear as the taut fabric was pulled down, his jeans spread open wider. Justin's lips kissed Lance's swollen penis, and then he took Lance's thick shaft into his mouth, his tongue licking around the sensitive tip in slow, lazy circles. His tongue was soft and warm around Lance's member, and thin rivulets of his saliva dripped down the hard length.

Lance grabbed fistfuls of Justin's hair and pulled him down, thrusting his cock deeper into his lover's mouth. He moaned as Justin's hand closed around his dick, kneading his solid erection as Lance thrust faster. Justin's tongue rubbed along his dick, the tip of his penis brushing against the hot roof of Justin's mouth, and Lance raised his butt off the stairs as he came explosively, pushing into Justin over and over again until he collapsed to the steps, exhausted and spent. He closed his eyes and laid back, breathless.

Justin leaned above him, kissing his chest and neck until his lips found Lance's. Lance could taste a salty sweetness in Justin's mouth, his own juices, and he ran his tongue around Justin's teeth, tasting himself on Justin's tongue and lips. "Justin," he whispered.

Justin cradled Lance's cheeks in his hands and smiled against his lips. "What's the difference between like and love?" he whispered.

"I don't know," Lance sighed, giggling. "Is this a joke or something?"

"Something like that," Justin replied. "What's the difference between like and love?"

Lance tried to think of an answer, but his mind was numb, Justin's saliva cooling on his wilting erection, and all he could think about was Justin, pressed against him, and the fact that they were on the stairs of his house, of their house, and Justin had just ... "I don't know," Lance whispered again. "I can't seem to think right now."

Justin laughed and kissed Lance's neck. Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's neck, hugging him close. Between them he still felt Justin's slight erection, but Justin's kisses were soft and lingering, the urgency in them gone. "A spit and a swallow," Justin whispered into Lance's ear.

"I don't get it," Lance replied, frowning.

Justin giggled against his neck and kissed behind his ear. "You hungry?" he asked.

Lance nodded. "Starving," he admitted. He was always hungry after an orgasm.

Justin stood up and headed for the kitchen. Lance sat up carefully, his back sore from where he had been lying on the step, and he tucked himself back into his jeans. He zipped them up and was just about to follow Justin into the kitchen when Justin came back, his hands full of all the little Chinese food containers. He handed a few of them to Lance, and then pulled a pair of chopsticks out of his pocket. Lance laughed. "How am I supposed to eat with these things?" he asked. He opened the containers and set them around his feet on the steps.

Justin shrugged. "I thought it would be fun," he said, sitting between Lance's feet. "Ow!" he cried, turning towards Lance and reaching into his other pocket. He extracted a pair of forks and grinned sheepishly. "But these are probably more practical."

"Probably," Lance said, laughing. He took one of the forks and dived into the container of lo mein. Justin leaned against Lance's leg and tried to eat fried rice with the chopsticks, but more rice landed on his lap and the carpet than in his mouth. Seeing the forlorn expression on Justin's face as he frowned at the food, Lance said, "You're vacuuming that up."

"Maybe I should use the fork," Justin said, and Lance nodded.

"Maybe." Lance smiled and scooped a huge forkful of rice out of Justin's container and dumped it into his.

"Hey!" Justin cried. He pulled Lance's container down until he could look into it, and using the chopsticks, he tried to steal some of the noodles. When it looked like they were going to end up on the floor, Lance helped him, shoveling a handful of the lo mein into the container of fried rice in Justin's hands. "Thank you," Justin said, smiling sweetly like a little boy.

Lance looked into the other containers, searching for the chicken he thought they had ordered. "Didn't we get any meat?" he asked.

"Already had mine," Justin joked, poking at Lance's crotch with the chopsticks. He looked at Lance with a twinkle in his eye, and Lance knew what he was going to say before he even opened his mouth.

"Don't even say it," Lance growled, but Justin giggled and said it anyway. "With cream of some young guy."

Lance groaned. "That's the lamest joke," he said, but when he saw how much it tickled Justin, he laughed, too. "Maybe when we're finished the main course, you can serve up dessert."

"Sounds promising," Justin replied. "What do you have in mind?"

"Something hot and sweet," Lance said, grinning. He took another helping of rice and looked at Justin. In a soft voice he said, "This is going to be fun."

Justin nodded and managed to wrap a few noodles around his chopsticks, but they slipped back into the container before he got them into his mouth. Frowning, he tried again, with the same results. Finally he just picked up one of the noodles with his hand and stuck it in his mouth. "Don't you have a fork?" Lance asked.

"Right here," Justin replied, holding it up. "I just wanted to try these things --" he set the chopsticks aside -- "I don't know how people eat with them. No wonder all those Chinese people are so skinny."

Lance laughed. "Except for sumo wrestlers," he pointed out.

"Are they Chinese?" Justin asked. "Or Japanese?"

"I don't know," Lance admitted. He reached out and brushed Justin's

cheek, so soft beneath his touch.

Justin looked up at him and smiled. "I wish we were going to be here all week," he whispered.

Lance shrugged. "We'll be back," he said. They had received invitations to the Video Music Awards before they left Florida and had to change their plans. Instead of spending the full week at Lance's house, they would only stay until Thursday morning. Then, if all went well, they'd fly back in for the weekend before returning to Florida and the rest of the group.

"Lance," Justin began, and then looked into his food, as if he were afraid to speak what was on his mind.

"What is it, darling?" Lance asked, studying Justin.

Justin looked up at him, his eyes shiny and large. "I want you to know it means a lot to me," he whispered, "to be here with you. I know it's going to be hard, with your mom and ..." He took a shaky breath, releasing it slowly. "And everything, but I just want you to know that I love you. And I'm ... thank you for asking me to live here with you. It means the world to me."

Leaning down, Lance kissed Justin's forehead. "I wouldn't have it any other way," he whispered. "Thank you for saying yes."

Justin raised his head and met Lance's lips with his own, their kiss tangy with a hint of soy sauce. "So," Justin said, turning back to his food, "what's on the agenda for tomorrow?"

Lance shrugged. "I gotta call Stacy," he said. "She's only here until Wednesday. So maybe we can get together with my family tomorrow."

"That'll be fun," Justin said, rolling his eyes. "Would you get mad at me if I told you that I'm scared?"

"No," Lance said softly. "I'm scared, too."

Justin sighed. "Well, let's try not to think about it right now. Let's think about something else."

"Like what?" Lance asked.

"Like dessert," Justin said, grinning. He winked at Lance, and suddenly Lance started to laugh. "What?" Justin asked, the smile slipping on his face.

"Oh my God!" Lance cried, bending over his knees as he laughed. "I get it now."

"Get what?" Justin asked.

"A spit and a swallow," Lance said. "That's funny!"

Justin grinned. "It took you long enough," he said. "What's a good joke if I have to explain it to you?"

"I'll have to remember that one," Lance said, sobering up.

Justin narrowed his eyes. "Who else you gonna tell it to?" he asked suspiciously.

"Oh Justin, grow up," Lance said playfully. "You know I can't remember jokes anyway."

Justin laughed. "I'm just kidding," he said.

"So what was it like?" Lance asked, curious.

Shrugging, Justin admitted, "I don't really know. I just swallowed as fast as I could. I didn't want to choke."

"Oh God," Lance groaned, laughing again. "Can you imagine having to call 911 on that? Can you send an ambulance over here? My boyfriend's choking. On what? You don't really want to know."

Justin laughed and then kissed Lance's knee, leaving behind a wet imprint of his lips on Lance's jeans. Setting his food aside, he wrapped his arms around Lance's leg and rested his head on Lance's knee. Looking up at him, Justin said, "I'm tired of eating. Let's go right into dessert now."

"Justin, I'm not finished yet," Lance said. "I gotta refuel if I'm going to be going all night long."

Justin smiled at that. "Okay, but eat quickly."

"You don't want me to get sick," Lance pointed out. "Then we couldn't do anything, and that wouldn't be fun at all." Justin sighed and watched Lance finish the lo mein. "You could unpack the car," Lance prompted.

"I don't feel like it," Justin said. The car was overflowing with luggage, most of it Justin's belongings that he wanted to leave here as evidence of his moving in.

"You can have the second bedroom, if you want," Lance suggested.

But Justin shook his head. "I'm moving in to be with you, silly. I'm sharing your bed."

Lance grinned. "I know. But maybe you want a place you can call your own, you know? Someplace to hide away from the world. Someplace to go to when we fight."

"We never fight," Justin said.

"Bullshit," Lance replied, laughing. "We argue a lot."

"But that's not fighting," Justin pointed out. "That's just messing around. We always make up before we go to sleep."

Lance shrugged. "I just thought you'd like the room. Someplace to make your own."

"I'm still sleeping with you," Justin said.

"If you didn't, I'd get mad," Lance replied.

"Then I'll take the room," Justin said. "I'll put up all my posters of Lance Bass in there."

Lance groaned. "Please don't," he said, but the resolute expression on Justin's face told him it was a losing battle. That room would be wallpapered with glossy pictures from teeny-bopper magazines when Justin was through. "Just keep the door closed," Lance added, laughing.

"I need posters of you in there," Justin said, pouting. "I'm going to make that my creative room, where I'll go to write all the songs I'm going to write about you. So I need inspiration, don't I?"

Lance laughed again. "No posters in my room, though," he said. "Just yours."

"Okay," Justin agreed.

"Why don't you call everyone now?" Lance suggested as he finished up his dinner. "And apologize to whoever it was you hung up on."

Justin grinned. "I think it was JC. I'll be like JC? Sorry, man. I was gonna call you but then Lance seduced me. He looked so damn sexy that I just had to give him a blowjob. No hard feelings, eh?"

Lance laughed. "Don't say that. The last thing JC needs is the mental image of you and me getting it on."

Standing up, Justin kissed Lance, his lips lingering on Lance's own. "I love you," he whispered.

"I know," Lance replied.

"Lance!" Justin cried. "You're supposed to say I love you, too."

"You know I do," Lance said. He pulled Justin down into another kiss to prove his feelings for him.

Justin began to push him back to the steps, wanting more, but Lance broke away and laughed. "Call them first," he said. "Our mothers will start to worry soon."

Justin grinned. "And then you better be finished eating. Fifteen minutes. That's all the reprieve you get before I tear into you like a sex-crazed fiend."

"Fifteen minutes," Lance said, nodding. "I'll be waiting."

All I Ever Wanted
109. Breakfast in Bed
by NSyncGrrl

The first thing Justin heard before he opened his eyes was silence. Deep, still, penetrating the world. The house was silent around him, the air suspended as if waiting. It reminded him of the quiet of the woods, back at the cabin, but there was a sense of aloneness that startled him, a feeling that there was no one else in the entire house but him. And Lance, his mind whispered, feeling Lance's strong arms secure around his waist. Listening, he could barely hear Lance's faint breathing behind him, and the shock of waking up in such a still, quiet place slowly dispersed. He wasn't alone; he was with Lance. Right where he wanted to be. Where he was supposed to be.

His stomach rumbled, hungry, and Justin stretched slowly, turning in Lance's arms to study his lover's face by the early morning light. Lance's mouth was curved into a slight smile, his skin pale as porcelain. Justin imagined he could almost see the movement of blood through the tiny veins just beneath Lance's neck. Lance's eyelashes fluttered against his cheeks, long and beautiful. A few scraggly hairs grew at his chin, his own version of a five-o'clock shadow that Justin thought was too cute for words. A piece of lint clung to his chin, and with a gentle touch, Justin reached up and brushed it away. Lance leaned into his hand, sighing in his sleep.

Justin's stomach growled again, louder. That Chinese food they ate the night before hadn't lasted long, considering they had worked it off -- Justin was a little sore, but everything ached in such a sweet way that he couldn't wait for another night like the one they just spent. Even after all that, he still didn't want to leave the shelter of Lance's arms. But right now I'm starving for something a bit more substantial, he thought. A man can't live off love alone ... though I'm tempted to try. As carefully as he could, he slipped out of Lance's embrace and pulled on his boxers from the floor. Then he trotted downstairs to see what he could find to eat.

On their way home last night, they had stopped at a small grocery and picked up a few things they'd need to see them until Thursday -- cereal, some lunch meat, eggs, milk, butter, bread, drinks, stuff like that. What didn't belong in the refrigerator was still in bags on the kitchen table where Justin left them. He made himself a bowl of cereal and stood at the sink, eating it as he looked around the room. I should make him breakfast, he thought suddenly, as he finished his own.

Eggs. Lance liked eggs. Justin began looking through the cabinets, searching for a pot, but he couldn't find any. What kind of kitchen was this? No pots, no pans, nothing to cook in. You don't even know how to cook eggs, he told himself. It couldn't be too hard, he reasoned. Just crack them open and heat them up. Once they hardened, that was it. Right?

Maybe. But where were the pots? He looked around the room, lost. Everyone had pots and pans in their kitchen. Why didn't Lance?

Then his gaze settled on the phone in the hallway, and he grinned. He knew just who to call. He dialed and waited, listening to a phone ring five hundred miles away. Just as he was about to hang up, someone picked up the other end. "Hello?"

"Jonathan?" Justin asked. "Hey bud, it's me."

"Hey, Justin!" Jonathan covered the phone with his hand and called out to their mother. "Mom! It's Justin!" Turning back to Justin, Jonathan asked, "What are you doing up so early?"

"How early is it?" Justin asked, looking around for a clock. He didn't see one.

"Like before seven," Jonathan replied. "I'm going to the bus stop now."

Justin smiled. "Well, have a great day at school today," he said.

"Okay. Is Lance there?" Justin could hear the excitement running beneath Jonathan's voice, and he wondered what new Pokémon he had caught that he wanted to tell Lance about now.

Justin glanced upstairs. "He's asleep," he replied. "I can have him call you when you get home."

"Okay!" Jonathan agreed. "Wait, I gotta go. Here's Mom. Bye!"

"Bye," Justin said. He waited until his mother picked up the phone. "Hi, Mom."

"Hi, honey," she said. "Jonathan! Don't forget your lunch! Sorry about that. What's going on?"

"Nothing," Justin admitted. "I just woke up. Mom, I can't find any pots in Lance's kitchen."

His mother laughed. "What do you want me to do about it?" she asked. "Mail you one of mine?"

Smiling, Justin said, "No. Where do you think he'd keep them?"

"Did you look inside the oven?" his mother asked.

"Why would he keep them there?" Justin countered. He hadn't thought to look inside the oven. "Wouldn't they melt?"

"Only if you turn it on without taking them out first," his mother replied.

Justin laughed. "Yeah, I guess so. Hold on." He picked up the phone and carried it down the hallway. The cord reached as far as the kitchen doorway, and he set the phone down on the floor. The cord to the receiver was much longer, and Justin could easily reach the oven with the receiver cradled between his cheek and shoulder. Opening the oven, he saw a dozen pots and pans, resting inside. "Here they are," he said, extracting a large silver pan. The others clattered against each other, but he shut the oven quickly to cover the sound. He didn't want to wake

Lance up now.

"Is that all you wanted?" his mother asked.

"No," Justin admitted. "How do you make eggs?"

His mother laughed. "I hope you just want to scramble them. It would be too hard to explain an omelet over the phone."

"I have a feeling any omelet I make would end up scrambled," Justin replied, laughing. He listened to his mother, following her instructions as she talked him through making breakfast.

When the eggs were cooked and bread toasted -- Justin didn't need his mother to tell him how to use the toaster -- Justin put the phone back on its table and, after profuse thanks to his mother, hung it up. Then he found a lap tray in the pantry, and he set the plate full of eggs and toast on it, placing a napkin and fork beside the plate. A glass of milk and ... he frowned. He needed something else. Remembering the flowering bushes he had seen in the front yard as they drove in last night, Justin took a knife and opened the front door. Luckily this was a sleepy suburban subdivision, and the kids were already off to school -- otherwise his loose boxers and naked chest would've raised a few eyebrows. The concrete steps were cold beneath his bare feet, and when he reached the lawn, the grass was cool and wet. Suddenly he wanted to lie down in the dew, Lance beside him, feel the coolness cover his skin. Tomorrow morning, he told himself. We'll wake up super early and come outside and make slow love in the grass. Now that was a delicious idea.

Using the knife, Justin cut the stem of a large hydrangea blossom, the flower a faded blue like the color of the Midwestern sky. As he started back for the door, though, he noticed a large, black bug crawling around on the petals. "Yuck," he cried, disgusted, and flung the flower away. He looked around and spotted a tall, pretty flower, a deep pink it was almost purple. He didn't know what it was and it was the only one of its kind, but it was gorgeous. Justin studied the blossom carefully, looking for bugs, but he didn't see any so he cut the stem and took it inside. Placing it on the napkin beside the fork, Justin picked up the tray and carried it slowly upstairs.

Lance was still in bed. "Wake up, sunshine," Justin said softly, setting the tray on the floor. He crawled beside Lance and kissed his cheek. Lance moaned beneath him and rolled onto his back, but didn't open his eyes. "Lance," Justin called, his voice gentle. He kissed Lance's slightly parted lips. Lance kissed him back but didn't wake up.

Sighing, Justin held Lance's nose closed as he kissed him again, keeping his lips against Lance's. He felt Lance shake his head, and then Lance's hand slapped at his. "Wake up," Justin said again, grinning.

Lance looked up at him sleepily. "I'm up," he said, yawning. "Kisses would've been nicer than trying to suffocate me, though."

"You weren't responding to my kisses," Justin pouted.

Lance smiled. "I wanted you to take your time," he replied. "I was planning on waking slowly, kiss by kiss."

"And your breakfast would've gotten cold," Justin said.

"Breakfast?" Lance asked, sitting up. Justin picked up the tray from the floor. "You made me breakfast?"

Beaming, Justin nodded. "Eggs," he said. "That's all we have. I didn't think you'd really want cereal."

Lance eyed the eggs carefully. "Who helped you? Or do they have directions on the back of the carton now?"

"Lance!" Justin cried, hurt. "I can cook."

"Justin," Lance said gently as Justin set the tray over his lap, "you can't. The sooner you realize this, the better it'll be for both of us. Remember that time you tried to make a cake?"

Justin blushed but didn't say anything. So he sucked at cooking. "I can learn," he offered. Snuggling against Lance's arm, he hugged him and said, "You can teach me."

"I don't cook much, either," Lance said. He picked up the flower and twirled it around in his fingers. "This is beautiful," he whispered.

"The other one had a bug on it," Justin whispered back.

Lance laughed. Setting the flower down, he picked up the fork and began to eat the eggs. Justin watched him carefully. "Are they okay?" he asked.

"Wonderful," Lance said around a mouthful. He kissed Justin on the forehead. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," Justin replied. "My mom told me how to make them."

Lance laughed again. "You woke her up just for this?"

Justin shook his head, cuddling closer to Lance. Lance draped an arm around him and continued eating. "No, she's up to get the boys to school. Jonathan wants you to call him this afternoon."

"Okay," Lance replied. "I need to call Stacy, too. And my parents." Last night Justin had called Lance's mom to let her know they got in okay, and she said they were invited for dinner tonight. Justin had the impression that she wasn't too happy to hear from him, but Lance thought it might mean something to her that Justin was the one who thought to call. Justin didn't know if that were true or not, but he planned to be on his best behavior tonight. It felt strange, trying to impress Lance's parents, people he already knew, but he wanted them to like him. Not as Justin, singer of NSync, but as Justin, Lance's lover. He wanted them to accept the relationship he had with their son. How could they not? "I'm taking my mother to the VMAs," Lance commented as he ate.

"Me too," Justin said.

"You're taking my mother too?" Lance joked. "Does she know yet?"

Justin grinned. "I'm taking my mother, silly," he said. He closed his eyes as he rested against Lance.

"Britney will be there," Lance pointed out.

"She can talk to JC," Justin replied. "That boy needs to get laid something fierce."

"Maybe the Backstreet Boys will be there," Lance said. "Who do you think he'd like?"

Justin shrugged. "A lot of people will be there. We can set him up with ..." He let the sentence trail off, thinking. "Eminem," he said finally. Lance laughed. "What? They'd be cute together."

"God, Justin, JC would kill you just for thinking that!" Giggling, Lance added, "That would be funny, though. Maybe Christina? He knows her, right?"

"I heard she's dating one of her dancers," Justin replied.

"Oh?" Lance finished the eggs. "Which one?"

"I don't know," Justin said. "I don't know them by name. Maybe that one in her new video."

Lance rolled his eyes. "Oh, that one," he said sarcastically. When Justin looked up at him, he said, "There are only like fifty guys in that video."

"Who said it had to be a guy?" Justin countered, laughing when he saw the contemplative look on Lance's face. "I'm kidding. It's a guy. I think."

"Maybe she and Britney could hook up," Lance suggested. "Then Britney could keep her cotton picking hands off of you."

Justin laughed. "You didn't just say cotton picking, did you? Jeez, I thought that went out with the Rubik's Cube! I haven't heard that one in years."

Lance grinned. "Well, now you're in Mississippi, boy. You'll hear it everywhere. Picking cotton ain't a foreign concept here."

"You ever picked cotton?" Justin asked.

"No," Lance admitted. "I imagine it isn't fun, though some plantations around here work it into their tours. But what would you do with a piece of raw cotton?"

Justin laughed. "I want to sit next to you at the show," he said. He turned and licked one of Lance's nipples. "I want to sit next to you and hold your hand and whisper sweet nothings into your ear."

"What does that sound like?" Lance wondered aloud.

Sitting up, Justin cupped his hand to Lance's ear and whispered, "Nothing, nothing, nothing." Lance giggled and twisted away from his hot

breath. Justin grinned. "You sore from last night?" he asked.

"No," Lance replied. "You?"

Justin held his forefinger and thumb an inch apart and said, "Just a little bit. Right here." He pointed to his thighs, which still quivered slightly from their exhaustive sexual workout the night before. "It feels like I do right after a concert."

"You should take a bubble bath," Lance commented. "Something to soothe your muscles."

"Will you take one with me?" Justin asked sweetly.

Lance shook his head. "We need to unpack," he said. They had left most of the stuff in the car, and Justin didn't even want to think about dragging all those bags and boxes full of his stuff up here. "We should go shopping, buy something for the show. And we need to get ready for tonight. I want my parents to fall in love with you, just like me." He kissed Justin tenderly. "Thank you for breakfast."

Justin grinned against Lance's lips. "How are we ever going to get everything we want to do worked into the next two days?" he whispered.

"We'll have to save some of it for when we get back," Lance replied. "Like the date you promised me. Remember?"

"How could I forget?" Justin asked. "You still have to teach me how to line dance."

"We don't have to go dancing," Lance said. "Just a club. Dinner, a few drinks, and then back home for something a little spicier."

Justin laughed. "I feel better now," he admitted. "I wasn't really looking forward to doing to Boot-Scootin' Boogie in public."

Lance sat back and studied Justin, his eyes gleaming. "You're going to look so damn sexy in a cowboy hat," he said.

"Oh God," Justin groaned, but the thought of Lance in a cowboy hat ... well, that would be something to see. Taking the tray off of Lance's lap, Justin said, "Get dressed, boyfriend. We've got a lot of unpacking to do."

All I Ever Wanted
110. In the Back Seat
by NSyncGrrl

Joey was sitting on the couch in front of the TV watching 2ge+her when the TV suddenly clicked off. Joey looked up to find Chris standing behind the couch, remote in hand, grinning down at him. "Get off your lazy ass," Chris said. "We're going to the store."

"I was watching that," Joey complained, reaching for the remote. Chris held it up out of reach. Turning back to the TV, Joey pouted. "I'm not going anywhere with you. Give me the remote."

"We're going to the store," Chris said again. "Get your shoes on."

"Take JC," Joey countered. "I'm not going. You're being mean."

Chris laughed. "JC's asleep."

Joey sighed dramatically. "Of course."

"C'mon, Joe," Chris said, leaning down over the back of the couch. He placed his hands on Joey's shoulders and ran them down the front of Joey's chest, his cheek against Joey's own. "Come on."

"No," Joey said again, trying hard not to smile. Chris's arms around him were a pleasant sensation, and he began to think of ways to get Chris to come around the couch and sit down beside him. Tugging on Chris's arms, Joey whispered, "Come here."

"No," Chris said, laughing. "I'm going to the store. Get up and come with me."

"What store?" Joey asked. He turned and looked at Chris, his face just inches from Joey's. Joey looked at Chris's mouth, and then deliberately licked his own lips. He heard Chris's sharp intake of breath and knew he could talk his friend out of the trip to the store. "Chris?" he asked quietly.

Chris cleared his throat. "You know, I can't wait for Friday night," he whispered.

"Why not?" Joey whispered back.

"Because then Dani will be back in LA," Chris whispered, "and you will be mine." He leaned forward and brushed Joey's lips with his.

"You don't really want to go to the store, do you?" Joey asked.

Chris stood up. "Get up," he said, tugging at Joey's arms. "We're going to an adult store."

"A what?" Joey asked, laughing, but he stood up at the thought of walking through a sex shop with Chris.

"An adult store," Chris said. "You know, sex toys, porn films, dirty

books, stuff like that."

Joey felt his cheeks heat up, and he busied himself with tying his shoes. "Looking for something in particular?" he asked.

"Glow-in-the-dark condoms," Chris said, watching Joey. "Blueberry flavored body lotion. Edible underwear."

"I'm not eating underwear," Joey said, laughing.

Chris ran a hand down Joey's back, tracing his spine through his t-shirt. Joey leaned back into his touch. "I've never eaten it, either," Chris said, "but I've always wondered what it tastes like."

Joey laughed again. He had to admit the thought of Chris eating underwear off of his body made his groin ache. He followed Chris out to the car and climbed into the passenger side seat. As Chris shifted gears to back out of the driveway, his hand brushed against Joey's upper thigh. When he finally got the car up to fifth gear, Joey caught his hand as he pulled it away and held it in his own, high up on his thigh. "Joey," Chris said as they eased to a stop at the end of the block, "I need to downshift."

"Keep your hand there," Joey commanded, releasing Chris's hand. His fingers curved around Joey's thigh, squeezing gently. Joey reached for the gearstick. "I'll shift for you."

The adult sex store was in a rundown strip mall between a laundromat and a comic shop. Joey stood between Thore's Comics and Thriller Books, wondering which to go into first. Chris made the decision easy -- he headed for the comic shop. "Didn't know this was here," Chris said, laughing as he held the door open for Joey.

Joey found a Superman shirt he didn't have, and then they went next door to Thriller Books. Joey winked at the woman behind the counter as they entered, but she had her nose buried in a paperback romance and didn't look up at them. They were the only ones in the store, for which Joey was grateful -- he could just see the tabloids now, if anyone caught the two of them in a store like this. He looked around, trying to see everything at once.

Chris took his hand and dragged him over by the lotions. "We'll need some of these," he said, picking out a package of condoms. Glow-in-the-dark fun! the package declared. Five neon colors!

"Why glow-in-the-dark?" Joey asked.

Chris shrugged. "To make it fun," he said.

Joey grinned foolishly. "I think it'll be fun anyway," he said.

Chris elbowed him in the ribs. "I know that," he replied, "but this will make it ... interesting. It'll be your first time, you know. I want to make sure you remember it."

"I'll remember it," Joey said, laughing. "Damn, you make me sound like a blushing virgin."

Glancing back at the cashier to make sure she wasn't watching them, Chris leaned forward and kissed Joey's shoulder. "Regular condoms are boring," he whispered.

Joey picked up a package of condoms decorated with animal prints. "Rowrr," Joey growled.

Chris laughed. "Get 'em," he said. Picking up a bottle, he said, "We'll need this, too." He read the label. "Self-heating lotion. Tastes like milk chocolate."

"I thought you wanted blueberry," Joey said, laughing. Just standing here talking to Chris about this in such a nonchalant manner was turning him on.

Chris looked over the bottles on the shelf. "They don't have any," he said. "Chocolate doesn't sound bad. You like chocolate."

Joey nodded. Looking around the small store, he asked, "What about the underwear?"

Chris shrugged. "I don't see any," he admitted. "But this should be enough. For now."

Joey followed him to the counter. As the girl rang up their items, a bored expression on her face, Joey picked up a package marked Mehndi Mix. "What's this?" Joey asked.

Without looking at him, the girl replied, "Henna tattoo dye."

Chris looked at him and raised his eyebrows. "Get it," Chris said.

Joey smirked and grabbed two. "I'll get one for Justin, too," he said. "I'd like to see what kind of a tattoo he'd give Lance."

Laughing, Chris said, "One that reads Property Of right across his chest like those shirts you find in college bookstores."

On the way home, Joey opened the bottle of lotion and smelled it. It had a sickening sweet smell like candied liqueur. "This stinks," Joey said, wrinkling his nose.

"You don't have to eat it," Chris replied. "But it feels really good when it starts to warm up. Trust me."

"I don't know," Joey said warily.

Chris pulled off the road and parked the car in a patch of high grass that almost covered the windows. "I'll show you," Chris said, smiling. "Get in the back seat."

Joey laughed nervously. "Chris," he started, but Chris cut him off.

"There's no one around for miles," Chris said. "Anyone driving by won't be able to see inside. It's better than being at the house, where JC might hear us." He looked at Joey skeptically. "Unless you don't want to do it."

"Do what?" Joey asked, his voice cracking slightly. Suddenly his palms were sweaty, and he had to remind himself that this was Chris, they had kissed before, they had fooled around before, but he had no idea what Chris had in mind to do to him in the back seat of the car, and the slight erection that had started to throb in his pants back at the store grew harder at the way Chris's eyes glistened right now.

"Get in the back," Chris commanded. Without another word, Joey climbed between the seats and sat down on the back seat of the car. Chris followed him, plopping down beside him, a silly grin on his face. "Don't worry," he said, "I won't hurt you."

"I'm not worried about that," Joey said, running his hands down his thighs to dry them off. "I thought you wanted to wait until you broke it off with Dani before we did anything else."

Chris shrugged. "Two more days," he said. "I've waited long enough." He placed his hand on Joey's crotch, his eyes widening at the bulge in Joey's pants. "Damn, Joe, you hard for me or what?" Joey blushed as Chris laughed. "Unleash this thing," Chris muttered, unzipping Joey's jeans. Joey leaned back and closed his eyes as Chris stroked his stiff cock through the thin fabric of his underwear.

Then Joey felt Chris's hands ease down the waistband of his briefs, and he moaned as Chris encircled his erection with expert fingers. "I haven't done this in a long time," Chris whispered.

Joey opened one eye and looked at him. "You've done this before?" he asked, a little out of breath. When Chris shrugged, Joey ventured, "How many guys have you been with, Chris?"

Chris shrugged again. "A few," he said, his hand squeezing Joey's thick hardness. "Before Dani. Mostly guys I met in clubs, just quick blowjobs in the bathroom, that's it. Once I dated a guy, back in college."

"Did you have sex?" Joey asked, curious.

Chris nodded. "Does that surprise you?" he asked, his fingers working on Joey's dick. Joey moaned and thrust into Chris's hand.

"A little," he admitted, closing his eyes again. "You lied to me."

"When?" Chris asked sharply. His fingers brushed across the sensitive tip of Joey's dick, sending a thin sliver of delight through Joey's body, and his mind went blank. "When did I lie, Joe?"

"When you told me," Joey gasped, "that you had never seen another dick before. Remember? You told me just yours."

Chris grinned. "I didn't want you to get all freaked out on me," he admitted. "I didn't want to scare you away."

Joey thrust into Chris's hand again. He felt a slight pressure where Chris rested his hand on his balls, and he reached out with his hand until he grabbed onto Chris's knee. Squeezing gently, Joey whispered, "You don't have to worry, Chris. I'm not going anywhere, trust me."

Chris laughed, relieved. When he let go of Joey's penis, Joey took a

few deep breaths, trying to compose himself. He watched as Chris poured a small amount of the self-heating, chocolate flavored lotion into his palm, and then he wrapped his hand around Joey's erection again, the lotion oily and cool as his fingers slid up and down Joey's hard length. Within minutes, Joey felt a penetrating heat begin to rise from his cock, a tingling sensation that heightened his pleasure. "God, Chris," Joey sighed. "Damn, that feels good."

"See?" Chris asked, kneading Joey's erection gently. "I told you so."

"Does it really taste like chocolate?" Joey asked, laughing breathlessly.

Chris shrugged. "Let's see," he said. Releasing Joey, he leaned down and licked Joey's dick from the base to the tip, his tongue hot and wet and incredibly soft. Joey breathed his name. When was the last time someone did that to him? Chris sat up and kissed Joey, his tongue forcing its way into Joey's mouth, warm and oily and tasting like Tootsie Rolls. Joey kissed him hungrily, Chris's hand straying to his cock again, squeezing, kneading, rubbing, bringing Joey so close, so damn close -- "Well?" Chris asked, sitting back. "What do you think?"

"Jesus," Joey whispered. He thrust into Chris's hand. "I think it's wonderful."

Chris laughed. "I meant the lotion," he said, nipping at Joey's nose.

Joey felt his tongue tingling with the self-heating lotion. He looked at Chris thoughtfully, searching his friend's eyes. Then he whispered, "Two more days. Only two more days until there's nothing in the way."

Chris grinned. "I can't wait," he whispered, kissing Joey again. Then he glanced up and frowned. "Oh shit," he said, letting go of Joey's dick.

"What?" Joey asked, turning around. Out of the back window he saw flashing lights as a police car pulled to the side of the road, directly behind their car. "Fuck," he said, closing his eyes in frustration. He tucked himself back into his pants as Chris clambered into the front seat. Joey scooted down and zipped up his jeans, moaning as the material closed over his aching cock.

Chris rolled down the window as the police officer approached the car. She peered into the back seat at Joey, a slight frown on her face, and he smiled at her, knowing that he probably looked flushed, his eyes hooded, his lips full and pouty. Chris ran a nervous hand through his hair and asked, "Yes, ma'am?"

"You boys having car trouble?" she asked, glancing past Chris to look at Joey again. Joey shifted uncomfortably and pulled his t-shirt down over the bulge in his jeans.

"No, ma'am," Chris said, shaking his head to emphasize his point.

She frowned. "This is private property. I'm going to have to ask you to move along."

Chris nodded. "Yes, ma'am," he said again. "We just stopped for a minute. My friend --" he jerked his thumb back at Joey -- "he got a little carsick. I just pulled over for a minute. We're leaving now."

"Okay," she said, and waited while Chris backed out onto the road. Joey waved at her as they drove away.

Climbing back up front, Joey buckled himself into the passenger seat, a goofy grin on his face. His dick still throbbed from the heat of the lotion and the memory of Chris's tongue. "Damn," he muttered. "You were right, that lotion is good."

Chris laughed. "See what you have to look forward to?" he asked.

Joey couldn't wait.

All I Ever Wanted
111. What Are Sisters For?
by NSyncGrrl

Justin stood at the kitchen sink, up to his hands in soapy water. Lance leaned on the counter beside him, a towel in hand, and watched as Justin rooted around in the water for another dish. As he scrubbed it with the sponge, his voice rang throughout the kitchen, raised in song. "Si siente un frio tu corazon. Serè tu abrigo, tu ilusiòn. Hasta ya no respirar, yo te voy a amar." The Spanish slipped off his tongue like honey, and he looked at Lance as he sang, his face earnest, each word spearing Lance's heart.

Lance smiled. "I don't know what you're saying," he said, drying the dish once Justin rinsed it off, "but it sounds beautiful."

Justin grinned. "I don't know what I'm saying, either," he admitted. The lyrics were from the Spanish version of their song, "This I Promise You," and Justin had been singing it all day long, after listening to the demo tape they did back in August. He washed another dish and rinsed it off before handing it to Lance. When Lance tried to take the dish from him, though, Justin held onto it and wouldn't let go. Lance looked up to see the mirth shining in Justin's eyes, and he let Justin pull the dish and himself closer. With the wet dish between them, Justin kissed Lance tenderly. Gazing into Lance's eyes, Justin picked up where he left off in the song and sang the English lyrics. "I've loved you forever, in lifetimes before --"

The doorbell rang. Lance kissed Justin, cutting off his song. "Hold that thought," he said, setting the towel down on the counter. He glanced at his watch as he headed for the front door. It was only two in the afternoon -- he and Justin had spent all morning unpacking the car and rearranging everything in the house to accommodate Justin's stuff. After Lance made them a quick lunch of ham sandwiches and chips, Justin started to wash the dishes, surprising Lance. They had two hours before they had to leave for Lance's parents' house, which was an hour's drive away. He had hoped to go shopping for some clothes, since he didn't know what to wear to the awards, but they'd have to do that tomorrow. They still had so much left to do to settle Justin into the house.

The fact that they couldn't keep their hands off each other was really setting them back, but Lance grinned, remembering the sweet kisses they shared after lunch, and he hoped that whoever it was visiting now wouldn't take up too much of their time together. It was already Tuesday, and they only had one more day here before they had to fly to New York and meet up with the others. Sure, they were sharing a hotel room there, and they'd be back in the house by Friday night, but he was savoring these long, slow hours spent together.

Lance opened the door to find his sister Stacy standing there. She squealed when she saw him, dropping her purse to the ground and hugging him tight. "Lance!" she cried, squeezing him until he thought he would pass out from lack of oxygen. "It's been forever!"

"Stace --" he gasped, hugging her back. He grinned. "I can't breathe."

"Sorry," she said, releasing him. "God, look at you! You look great." She stood back and studied him intently, and suddenly he knew she knew. He just knew it.

"Mom told you," he said softly. Behind him he heard Justin call his name, curious to see who was at the door.

Stacy smiled sadly. "Are you mad?" she asked.

Lance bit his lip and shook his head. He wasn't mad, not really, but he had wanted to tell her himself. So if she knew, that meant his dad must know, too. Lance closed his eyes and stepped aside, holding the door open for Stacy to enter. "It's my sister," he called out. To Stacy, he said, "We're just finishing up lunch." He closed the door and led the way into the kitchen.

Justin looked over his shoulder as he rinsed his hands off. "Hey, Stacy," he said, smiling. "How've you been doing, groovy chick?"

Stacy laughed. "Fine," she replied, hugging Justin around the neck. "Look at you -- Lance will domesticate you yet."

Justin looked at Lance, raising an eyebrow to silently ask if she knew about their relationship. Lance nodded slightly, glad he and Justin could communicate so easily without the need for words. He didn't want to say anything out loud until he talked to Stacy about how she felt about them. So he grinned at her and said, "He's quite the homemaker anymore." Counting off on his fingers, Lance added, "He made breakfast today, and did laundry the day before, and just finished the dishes --"

"Shut up," Justin said playfully, slapping Lance with the towel as he dried off his hands. "You'll ruin my reputation." He blushed slightly, and Lance laughed.

Wrapping his arms around Justin's neck, Lance pulled him into a quick embrace and kissed his cheek. He felt Justin's hand brush along his stomach, and then he let go. "I should really finish unpacking," Justin said, smiling at Stacy, "leave you two alone for a while."

As Justin headed upstairs, Lance asked, "Would you like something to drink?"

Stacy shook her head. "Can we just talk?" she asked. Lance nodded and led her into the living room. She sat down on the couch and watched as Lance took a seat in the chair across from her. Her lips pulled into an easy smile. "I think you two are cute together," she said.

"It's more than that," Lance said, sighing. "Jeez, Stace, how did Mom tell you? Did you know your brother was gay? I'm sure it was a shock."

"Not really," Stacy admitted. When Lance frowned, she explained, "I've always sort of known it, Lance. I mean, I'm your sister. I've known you forever. And it was a little obvious whenever the guys came by the house, the way you looked at Justin. I knew you liked him."

"You did?" Lance asked, blushing. He had never told anyone how he

felt for Justin, even though he had secretly been in love with him since the group formed. Part of him wanted to die when he thought of all the time wasted, all those sleepless nights, all those lonely mornings. But he was glad they had never rushed into things, because this was definitely worth waiting for. It made it seem as if they would always be together, because in his mind, they already had. "Mom was surprised."

"She knew," Stacy said, waving her hand dismissively. "She'll get over it, believe me. I mean, it could be worse. You could be a slut about it, you know? I tried telling her that but she wouldn't listen to me. I told her you were with one guy, someone we all knew and loved, someone who was a friend, not some stranger off the street or someone you picked up at a club. You aren't into the drag scene --" She looked at him skeptically, and he shook his head quickly, grinning -- "and you aren't the type to sleep around. So it could be worse."

Lance sighed. "I love him," he said simply. "God, Stacy, you can't imagine the way I feel when I'm with him. It's like I'm only half a person on my own. All my life I search for the missing parts and then I find them all wrapped up in him. He completes me. I know it sounds like a bad jewelry commercial, but it's true."

Stacy laughed. "I understand, Lance, really. And while I'm a little ... uncomfortable with the ... thought of you two actually ... doing anything ... well, I think I'd probably be a little squeamish even if you were with a girl, to tell you the truth. There's just something about the idea of my little brother having sex that I just don't want to think about."

He smiled at her careful choice of words. A huge weight lifted off of his heart -- he had been terrified to tell her, and now he didn't even have to tell her, not really. It surprised him to know she always thought he liked Justin. He remembered many a night when he would come into her room after all the others had fallen asleep, just to talk to her, and he would ask timid, half-worded questions about love and sex and boys, and hope that she didn't realize who it was he wanted the answers for. She had concocted some outrageous schemes for him, ways to get the "girl of his dreams" as she put it, but he was too chicken to do anything about it and so he'd go back to his own bed with a feeling of loneliness so deep, it ached. What he wouldn't have given to know she suspected it was Justin he wanted so badly -- then maybe it could have made things easier, just to have someone to talk to. Rising to his feet, he hugged her tightly. "Thank you, Stacy," he whispered, blinking back tears. "God, it feels so good to have someone understand."

Stacy hugged him back, replying, "I'm not the only one, Lance. Mom stands alone in her views of this, believe me."

As Lance sat back down, he sniffed and asked, "Dad?" When Stacy nodded, he looked at the ground, suddenly afraid. "I wonder what she said to him."

"He's the one that told me," Stacy said. Lance looked at her, surprised, as she continued. "I was over at the house when she called you at the cabin and I overheard her talking. I figured out what it was all about, but I didn't know it was Justin, not yet. When she hung up, I asked what was up and she wouldn't tell me. So Dad comes in and says you're dating Justin, and I'm like Timberlake Justin? And he says yes. And then I

said well, what's wrong with that?"

Lance laughed. Stacy was just like their mother, outspoken and firm when she spoke with others. Lance always envied that about her. He himself favored his father, who was a quiet, strong presence in the house, but who preferred to let his mother run things as she saw fit. Until now, Lance thought. She's not running my life anymore. I have Justin now. "What did he say to that?" Lance asked.

Stacy shrugged. "We talked about it later on, just the two of us. He says it surprised him a little, but there's so much hate and violence in this world, that if you can find someone who loves you, then more power to you."

"Dad said that?" Lance asked, surprised.

Stacy nodded. "Not exactly in those words, but that was the gist of it. So I stopped by to tell you not to worry about tonight. We'll win Mom over, I promise. You're not alone in this."

"Thank you," he replied softly. It meant a lot to him to know that he wouldn't have to fend all three members of his family off of Justin.

"Did I tell you I think you two are cute?" she asked, laughing.

Lance blushed. "Yeah," he said, grinning. "God, it's good to see you."

Stacy beamed at him. "It's good to see you, too," she said. "But I've got to get going soon -- lot of errands to run before I even think about dinner tonight. So tell me what's going on with you, twenty-five words or less."

Laughing, Lance said, "I can sum it up in one word. Justin."

"You're that serious?" she asked.

Lance nodded. "I've asked him to move in here with me," he admitted. A loud crash from upstairs interrupted them. Stacy looked up as if she could see what had happened through the ceiling, and Lance rose to his feet, sighing. "If he doesn't tear the place apart first," he added, laughing. Stacy followed him upstairs. At the top of the steps, Lance called out, "Justin? Baby, you okay?"

"I fell," Justin called back. "I'm fine."

Lance entered the second bedroom, Stacy right behind him. Justin was on the floor amid a pile of boxes and papers and toys, all scattered around him. Lance remembered the boxes had all been stacked on top of each other before they went downstairs to eat lunch -- how they all ended up on the floor was a mystery to him. "What happened?" he asked, kneeling down beside Justin.

"Lance, I'm fine," Justin said, but he let Lance help him to his feet. Brushing off his butt, Justin added, "The boxes fell."

"I can see that," Lance replied. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, really," Justin said, smiling at Stacy. Then he edged closer to

Lance and whispered softly, "Is everything cool between you two?"

Lance grinned. "You knock over these boxes just to find out what we're talking about?" he asked.

"No," Justin replied, pouting. "I was climbing on the boxes and they fell."

"Why were you climbing on them?" Lance persisted.

Justin shrugged. Looking up at the ceiling, he admitted, "There was a spider in here."

Lance looked up, and out of the corner of his eye, he saw Stacy look up as well. "Where?" he asked, craning his neck back. "I don't see a spider."

"There it is," Stacy said, pointing up near the ceiling fan. It was just a small black spider, the kind that were quite common everywhere Lance had ever been.

Lance sighed. "Justin, that's just a little one."

"But it's hairy," Justin said. "I don't want it here."

"So you practically kill yourself trying to kill it," Lance said. He felt Justin's hand creep into his, and he squeezed Justin's fingers gently. Raising Justin's hand to his lips, he kissed Justin's knuckles and asked softly, "Do you want me to kill it for you?"

Justin nodded. Before either of them could move, though, Stacy had found an old book, and she tossed it up against the ceiling. It slapped against the spider and fell back to the floor, a black smudge on the white paint the only proof that the spider had ever been there. "Dead," she pronounced, taking the book into the bathroom to clean it up.

Justin turned to Lance, his eyes wide. "Your sister's a brute," he said.

Lance laughed. "Then I'm glad she's on my side," he said. Kissing Justin, he added, "Tonight won't be so bad, babe. I promise."

All I Ever Wanted
112. Family Ties
by NSyncGrrl

"I'm nervous," Justin whispered. He touched the small of Lance's back and Lance reached out for his hand. They stood on the Bass' front porch, dressed in jeans and casual sweaters, and Justin couldn't stand still. He shifted from foot to foot, and when Lance squeezed his hand reassuringly, he smiled tightly at his lover, terrified. Sure, he had met Lance's parents before, but he knew how Mrs. Bass felt about their relationship and he really wanted to change that. Justin wanted her to accept Lance as who he was, her son in love with him.

Lance kissed Justin's cheek. "Me, too," he admitted. Taking a deep breath, he rang the doorbell. Justin heard it echo throughout the house, and he forced himself to stop moving. As the door opened, Justin squeezed Lance's hand one more time before letting go.

Stacy smiled at them and stood aside, letting them in. "What's the temperature like in here?" Lance asked softly as she hugged him.

"Chilly," she replied, hugging Justin. "But don't worry. Mom's just being her usual righteous self."

Lance laughed, and Justin dared to smile as they followed Stacy into the living room, where Lance's parents were waiting. Mr. Bass stood at the bar, nursing a Scotch on the rocks, and Mrs. Bass sat on the couch, the set of her shoulders almost as tense as Justin felt. Justin's smile slipped when he looked at her and she didn't smile back. He stepped slightly behind Lance and hoped the evening could only get better. "Hi, Mom, Dad."

Mr. Bass turned towards them and smiled, and suddenly Justin felt a little of the awkwardness in the room disappear. "Hello, son," he said, setting his drink down and hugging Lance. He looked at Justin and held out his hand. When Justin took it, his own hand lost in the strong grip, he pulled Justin into a bear hug. "Hello, Justin. Good to see you both."

Justin looked up as Lance went to his mother. She hugged him tightly, her eyes closed and her face crumpled like a used tissue. "Mom," Lance said gently, and she sobbed once.

Stacy placed a hand on Justin's shoulder and led him to a wingback chair beside the couch. "Can I get you something to drink?" she asked. He shook his head.

Reaching out for him, Lance caught Justin's hand before he could sit down. He pulled him over to where his mother stood, his hand encircling Justin's waist. Justin looked at the floor, unsure, and then met Diane Bass' steady gaze. "Hello, Mrs. Bass," he whispered, suddenly afraid.

For a moment he didn't think she'd reply. Then she said, "Hello, Justin," the slight edge in her voice cooling the room. She didn't offer a hug or her hand, or made any move to touch him in any way.

Beside him, Lance sighed. His hand trailed across Justin's waist as Justin turned and walked back to the chair. As he sat down, Lance took a seat at the end of the couch closest to him. Stacy frowned and said, "Mom? I think dinner's almost ready. Can you help me in the kitchen for a minute?"

Justin could feel Mrs. Bass' judgmental gaze on him like lead, weighing him down, pinning him to the chair. Then she followed Stacy out of the room, and the tension was gone. He glanced up at Lance, noting his wavering eyes and tight-set lips, and Justin's hands twisted in his lap. He wanted to take Lance's hand in his, to reassure him with a touch, but he couldn't. He couldn't with the memory of the animosity in Diane Bass' gaze.

Mr. Bass sat down beside Lance on the couch. "How are things with you, son?" he asked, but he looked at Justin.

Justin smiled halfheartedly as Lance replied, "Okay, Dad. Um, what about you?"

His father shrugged. "It's a little cold in here right now," he said, winking at Justin.

Justin couldn't help but laugh. Lance smiled, relieved. "Dad, I'm sorry --" he started, but his father held up one hand to silence him.

"You don't have to apologize for who you are, Lance," he said. He glanced up to make sure that his wife was still out of the room, and then he leaned forward and said, "As long as you're happy. That's all I'm concerned about. Are you happy?"

Justin watched the lines in Lance's face smooth out as he broke into a wide grin. "I've never been happier," he admitted. Reaching out, he covered Justin's hands with one of his and caught Justin's eye. "Dad, I'm ... I'm glad you're okay with this."

Leaning back against the couch, his father took a sip of his drink and, in his soft Southern drawl, said, "The way I see it, I can be angry like your mother and deny the fact that you've grown up. You're who you want to be now. We can't control that. Or I can accept the person you've become. You're still my son. And I'm trying to show your mother that." He sighed. "It'll take some time."

"I know," Lance replied, and Justin could hear the faint Mississippi accent creep into his deep voice as he spoke. "Dad, I appreciate it, really. And I didn't want to say anything right off the bat, what with the way she feels about this whole thing, but I want you to know that ..." He sighed. "Justin's moving in with me."

His father nodded. "Stacy told me. That's quite a leap in any relationship." He studied Justin, who met his steady gaze earnestly. He must have seen what he was looking for in Justin's eyes, because he nodded again and looked at Lance. "Are you ready for that, son?"

"I've never been more ready in my whole life," Lance admitted. He squeezed Justin's hand and smiled at him. Justin felt his heart soar at that small smile, and he grinned back. "This isn't something we're jumping

into, Dad. We've known each other for years. You know that."

Mr. Bass patted Lance's knee. "Then do what you feel is right. But don't tell your mother just yet. We'll break it to her gently. Let's just get through tonight."

"Okay," Lance said, nodding. Stacy came into the room, smiling. "Dinner's on the table," she said, leading the way to the dining room.

As they stood up, Lance leaned towards Justin and whispered, "You're awful quiet, doll."

Justin smiled. "I'm still nervous," he answered. Despite Mr. Bass' kind words, he still felt the need to win over Lance's mother. But after her cold reception, he wondered if that wasn't a losing battle. "You're dad's cool."

Lance kissed the back of Justin's hand quickly. "He surprised me," he admitted, and then they followed Mr. Bass into kitchen, where Stacy and Mrs. Bass were setting out a pot roast, potatoes, and salad. Lance took a seat next to his mother, and Justin sat down beside him. Beneath the safety of the table, Justin let his hand rest on Lance's thigh, and Lance's hand covered his, the touch comforting. Stacy sat across from them, and their parents sat at either end of the table. They ate in an uncomfortable silence, and Justin watched Mrs. Bass carefully, but she ignored him, intent on her meal. As he ate, Justin wondered how he would ever get her to like him.

After dinner, Mrs. Bass stood to clear the table. Justin rose to his feet and picked up his and Lance's plates. "I'll help you," he offered.

She looked up at him, surprised, and he smiled warmly, hoping to thaw the ice in her eyes. Then she nodded and led the way into the kitchen. "You can set them down here," she said, pointing at the counter beside the sink.

"Mrs. Bass --" he began, setting the plates down.

She sighed. "Justin," she said, turning towards him, "you're a nice boy. I've always liked you. But you have to understand that this --" she waved her hand in the air -- "this is difficult for me."

"I can imagine," Justin whispered. He wanted to tell her he loved Lance, but he didn't think she wanted to hear that just now. Taking a shaky breath, he gathered up his courage and asked, "Do you think maybe you can give me a chance? Just to show you that I'm ... that we ... can you just give me half a chance?"

"I don't know," she admitted.

What could he say to that? Nothing. He bit his lower lip and watched her scrape the dishes off into the sink. How could he make her see how much he loved Lance? How right they were together? What could he do to make her understand?

Nothing came to mind. Sighing, he returned to the dining room and finished clearing the table. Lance looked up at him, questioning, but Justin looked away. He didn't want Lance to see the sadness in his eyes.

The rest of the evening passed in a blur, and the only thing Justin remembered were Diane Bass' ice chip eyes and the way she held herself stiff and unyielding when he dared to hug her as they left. In the car on the way home he held Lance's hand in his and stared out the window at the darkness passing them by. The radio played quietly, a country station that faded in and out as they drove. Justin could barely make out the words of the song, but what he heard made him want to cry. Lance sang along softly, his deep voice the perfect counter to the female singer's voice. "Compromise and realize you can never really run everything you start. You can't deal me the aces and think I wouldn't play. Don't let this be the reason you would walk away." Justin closed his eyes and wished Lance's mom could just try and understand the way they felt for each other.

Lance glanced over at him. "You okay?" he asked gently.

Justin sniffled. "Yeah," he said. He sighed. "Lance, I'm sorry about tonight."

"It's not your fault," Lance replied. "You were wonderful."

"I've never felt so unwelcome in my life," Justin whispered. He felt Lance's hand tighten in his, and he blinked back tears that threatened to fall. When they got back home, Justin trudged upstairs, his head and his heart heavy. Lance sat on the edge of the bed and watched as Justin fumbled with the buttons on his sweater. He couldn't get them undone. He sighed, exasperated. Damn, he thought. He just wanted tonight to be over.

"Justin, come here," Lance said, his voice low.

Justin sighed. Running a hand across his eyes, he said, "Lance --" but Lance took his arm and pulled him down onto the bed beside him. Hugging him close, Lance whispered, "It's okay, baby, really. You did the best you could."

Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's waist and buried his head against Lance's chest. "I just want her to give me a chance," he whispered.

"Well," Lance said, and Justin listened to the way his voice rumbled through him as he talked, "she could be nicer to you. I'm not going to stand for this cold shoulder treatment, not when we have to fly to New York together." Lance had asked his mother to join them at the VMAs on Thursday, and after the way things went tonight, Justin wasn't looking forward to that at all.

Justin sighed. "I love you," he whispered, kissing Lance's neck gently.

"I love you, too," Lance replied. He rubbed his hand along Justin's back. "I don't feel so bad about it now that I know how Stacy and Dad are dealing with it. But we have to work on Mom. We'll win her over, I just know it. Someday."

"I hope you're right," Justin mumbled. As he undressed, though, he wondered if Mrs. Bass would ever accept him as Lance's lover. Somehow he doubted it. Turning off the light, he crawled into bed. He stared into

the darkness of the room and thought about all the years to come, all the holidays and family gatherings and awards shows, where he'd have chance after chance to convince Diane Bass that he was the one for her son.

Out in the hall, Lance clicked off the bathroom light and navigated easily to his side of the bed. Justin felt him slip beneath the covers, and then his arms enveloped Justin. He pulled Justin against him, and the soft touch of bare skin in the dark made Justin feel good for the first time all night. Lance kissed the back of Justin's neck and snuggled into him, holding him tightly. His breath caressed Justin's shoulder gently. "Justin," he whispered, kissing him again, "please don't let it worry you so much. I feel much better about it. I don't want it to bother you."

"I can't just forget it," Justin replied. He turned over in Lance's arms, and in the darkness he could see the faint outline of Lance's features, his shiny eyes, his full lips.

Lance kissed him, his lips tender and loving on Justin's. "Maybe we can erase it just a little bit," Lance whispered. He kissed Justin's cheeks, his nose, his eyelids. His lips were cool and damp on Justin's forehead, and when his tongue slipped into Justin's mouth, Justin tasted mint toothpaste and the sweetness of his lover. He let Lance's kisses soothe the ache in his heart and blot out the memory of the evening.

All I Ever Wanted
113. Such a Tease
by NSyncGrrl

Chris lay on his stomach in Joey's bed, his arms hugging his pillow tightly. He seriously thought Dani was cheating on him. Where did that come from? he wondered. He hadn't thought of her since they hung up the phone two days ago -- he was so intoxicated on Joey and the fact that in just another few days he'd finally get a piece of him. God, he was so damn horny anymore. Every time Joey was in the room Chris felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise at the electric intensity of Joey's closeness. He could almost picture it now -- they'd be in Joey's hotel room after the VMAs were over, Joey naked and large and hard above him, and Chris would come before Joey even entered him. He wanted him that badly.

And the few moments stolen this afternoon didn't help matters any. Chris's tongue still tingled with the memory of the way Joey tasted, chocolatey and sweet and so incredibly hard. So thick. Chris felt a familiar ache in his groin as he remembered holding Joey's dick in his hand, squeezing it slowly, wanting to savor the moment. But the last thing he needed was a hard-on before falling asleep, so he tried to think of things to make it go away. His dogs -- he'd have them back with him soon. He couldn't wait to see them again. God, he missed his dogs. Dani -- now that was going to be fun. His budding erection almost wilted completely when he played out the coming scene in his mind, his telling her that he wanted to be friends, her telling him ... what? That she's cheating on him. He was so sure of it. The only question was how long had it been going on?

"Chris?" Joey asked softly. In the darkness Joey rolled over to face him. Chris was turned away, but he felt Joey's warm breath on the back of his neck and whatever attempts he had made to get rid of his erection were thwarted at that gentle caress. "Are you asleep?"

"Yes," Chris replied, grinning. He was glad it was dark and Joey couldn't see his expression, because he heard the urgent hunger beneath Joey's words and knew what was on his friend's mind. He just knew it. Maybe because somewhere in the back of his own mind, he had been thinking the same thing.

"Are not," Joey replied. Chris heard the smile in his voice and then Joey's hand was on his waist, rubbing back and forth, pushing his t-shirt up slightly with each pass. "I was just thinking maybe ..." Joey let his voice trail off as his hand slipped beneath the waistband of Chris's boxers. Chris felt his skin prickle at the touch. "Well, we were so rudely interrupted this afternoon, and I was thinking maybe we could ..." His hand eased further into his boxers, his fingers brushing across Chris's butt until he cupped one cheek in his hand. Squeezing gently, he leaned closer and whispered into Chris's ear, "Maybe we could finish what we started."

Chris buried his face into the pillow to cool his flushed cheeks. Joey's hand was so warm and strong on his ass, and Chris knew that he wouldn't

get to sleep anytime soon. Still, he couldn't help but pick on Joey just a little bit. "Maybe later," he said, trying to keep his voice even. "I'm trying to sleep now, Joe."

Joey slapped his butt, the smack loud in the darkness. His skin stung sweetly, and then Joey rubbed it away. "Dammit, Chris," Joey whispered, the frustration ringing clearly in his words. Chris had to bite his lip to keep from laughing. "I want you. I want you now. Fuck Dani."

"I don't want to," Chris replied, giving into the giggles.

"You don't want to what?" Joey asked, confused.

Turning over, Chris whispered loudly, "I don't want to fuck her." Then he collapsed back to the pillows, laughing.

Joey pulled him close, and Chris could feel Joey's hard erection insistent against his upper thigh. "Chris, stop messing around," Joey said. "You're teasing me."

"Damn straight," Chris replied. He heard Joey growl, the sound arousing him even more, and then Joey rolled Chris towards him and climbed over top of his friend, his lips latching onto Chris's neck greedily. "I can be a tease, too," Joey whispered, his breath hot against Chris's skin. Chris dared to touch Joey's chest as Joey thrust his hips against Chris's own, rubbing their erections together almost painfully. Chris closed his eyes at the pleasure that shot through him, but when he tried to pull Joey closer, Joey was gone.

"Joe?" Chris asked in a small voice. His dick ached fiercely, and he wanted Joey back above him, his weight pressing Chris down into the bed, his lips kissing him, his hands roaming his body. Instead he could barely see Joey sitting cross-legged on his side of the bed, watching him. Chris could almost see the smile on Joey's face. "You're evil," Chris whispered, falling back to the pillow.

"And you're not?" Joey asked softly.

"The way things are going," Chris added, "we're going to explode before we even get a chance to have sex."

Joey laughed. "Sit up," he said. When Chris turned towards him, Joey repeated himself. "Sit up, Chris."

Chris obeyed, pushing the pillows up behind him. "What do you have in mind?" he asked. He had left the lotion and condoms in his own room -- the temptation to use them would be too great if they were beside the same bed he and Joey shared.

Scotting closer, Joey laid down beside Chris and looked up at him, propping himself up on his elbow. "Tell me what you like," he whispered. He trailed a finger down Chris's stomach, over the waistband of his boxers, and along the bulge at his crotch.

Chris caught his breath at the soft touch. "What do you mean?" he asked, trying to think coherently.

"I've never done this before," Joey admitted. "Tell me how to give the

perfect blowjob."

"Oh my God," Chris whispered, closing his eyes. His blood rushed at Joey's words. "You mean --"

"You've wanted one for how long now?" Joey asked playfully, his finger constantly moving across Chris's dick, only the thin fabric of his shorts separating their flesh. Chris couldn't form words to answer him. "Just to warn you, though, I'm not swallowing. So you better tell me when you're about to get off." Chris nodded. "Well?" Joey asked. "Tell me."

"You want me to talk during it?" Chris asked, incredulous. He didn't think he could do that.

Joey squeezed his cock gently. "If you can," he said, laughing. He sat up and spread Chris's legs apart. Kneeling between them, he leaned down over Chris and said, "I'm waiting."

Chris didn't know how to start. The mere thought of explaining how to give a blowjob to Joey while he was getting one himself ... Jesus, how did he begin? "Um ..."

"Chris?" Joey asked, laughing. "You have done this before, right?"

"Yeah," Chris said. Clearing his throat, he leaned back against the head of the bed and said, "Unbutton my shorts."

Joey leaned down and took the waistband of Chris's boxers in his teeth. Tugging, he unsnapped the shorts, his breath feathery along Chris's lower stomach. His chin brushed against Chris's erection, and Chris thought he would die from desire. "Now what?" Joey asked, blowing softly against Chris's hot skin.

"Oh God, Joey, I can't do this," Chris whispered. "I can't ... just suck it. I don't know how else to explain it to you, just suck it and that's all there is to it."

Joey laughed softly. "You're such a wuss," he said, but his voice was gentle. Chris didn't say anything. "Maybe I can just give you a handjob instead," Joey suggested. "Maybe then you could talk me through it."

"Joe --" Chris was on the verge of tears. "God, Joe, talk about teasing." Joey leaned forward and kissed Chris's lips gently. Chris trembled beneath Joey. "Please," Chris whispered.

"If this isn't up to par," Joey said, "it's all your fault. You're the expert here."

"Jesus, Joe," Chris replied. "You've jerked off before. It's just like that."

"Only with my mouth," Joey countered. "I've never done that before. I'm not that flexible."

Chris laughed. "If you were, what would you need me for?"

Joey smiled. "Because it's more fun with two," he whispered. He kissed Chris once more before crawling back down between his legs. He

eased Chris's dick out of his shorts, kneading the stiff member gently, and Chris leaned back against the headboard, closing his eyes. He thrust into Joey's hand. "I'm assuming you're enjoying this," Joey said.

"God," Chris replied. He kept his voice down -- Joey's room was right next to JC's, and the last thing Chris wanted was for him to hear them. "Joey, please."

He felt warm, soft lips encircle the tip of his penis, and he almost came at the sensation. He had forgotten how it felt to be inside the wet, hot darkness of someone's mouth. And this was Joey -- his best friend, his soon-to-be something more. Joey's hand kept a steady rhythm on the shaft of his dick while his tongue worked over the tip, circling around it with deliberate slowness. His other hand caressed Chris's stomach, causing butterflies to flutter beneath his touch. Chris felt himself melt in Joey's hands, sinking back into the bed.

Then Joey let go of his cock and slipped the full length into his mouth. Chris thrust off the bed, into Joey, wanting to be deeper, further inside. Joey's hand slid beneath him to raise his buttocks off the bed as Joey moved up and down Chris's dick, his tongue licking everywhere at once. Chris grabbed Joey's head, taking fists full of Joey's hair in his hands, and pushed Joey down against him. Joey's lips closed over the base of Chris's dick, and Chris knew he was about to come. He pulled Joey back by his hair, and the moment he was free of Joey's mouth, the air cold on his wet dick, he came in Joey's face. Joey scrunched his eyes closed as the thin milky fluid covered him.

Chris fell back to the bed. "Sorry," he whispered, breathless.

"You come too damn quick," Joey said. "I was just getting into it."

Chris sighed. "I just couldn't help it," he said. Reaching over beside the bed, he turned on the light and looked at Joey. White cum clung to his beard and eyelashes, and Chris laughed. "God, Joe. I've wanted you so badly. I just couldn't help it."

Joey grinned and licked the juices off his lips. "That's okay," he replied. He held up the hand that had encircled Chris's dick at the start of the blowjob. It was wet and sticky, and Chris could see the dampness in Joey's own shorts. "I got off on it, too."

Laughing, Chris said, "You're a mess, Fatone. Go wash up."

"I hope I don't run into JC on the way to the bathroom," Joey said, laughing. He pulled up his t-shirt and rubbed the cum off his face. Chris reached out and touched Joey's stomach lightly. "I'll be right back," Joey said.

Chris snapped up his boxers. "Hurry back," he said. "I like to cuddle once I come." He slid back down under the covers and waited. He heard the water running down the hall, and then Joey was back. He closed the door softly behind him and quickly changed into another pair of boxers and a clean t-shirt. Chris watched Joey dress, admiring the cut of his buttocks, and his mind whispered, Two days. Then he's all yours.

Joey climbed on top of him as he got into bed. Turning out the light,

he whispered, "Well? How did I do?"

"Not bad," Chris admitted. He snuggled into Joey's embrace. "I've had longer."

"That's your fault," Joey said.

"I've never had one from someone like you," Chris said.

Joey shifted off of him. "What do you mean?" he asked, still partially lying on top of Chris.

Chris shrugged. "From a close friend. My best friend. From someone I've wanted as much as I want you."

He felt Joey's lips along his neck, kissing tenderly. "Every time you say that, I could just burst. Say it again."

"What?" Chris asked. "I want you?" Joey bit his neck gently, and Chris groaned. "I like that," he whispered.

"You like it a little rough?" Joey asked against his skin. "You like it when I bite and slap and horse around?"

"I like anything you do," Chris whispered. "I want you."

Joey sucked on his neck. "I love to hear that," he said, rolling on top of Chris again. He pressed him into the bed and Chris made a mental note to say it as often as he could, to remind Joey that he was what he wanted.

All I Ever Wanted
114. A Day Without You
by NSyncGrrl

"Justin."

Justin heard Lance's soft voice in his ear and he rolled over, blinking at the early morning light in the bedroom. He saw Lance sitting on the edge of the bed, dressed in a sharp blazer and tie. "Where you going?" Justin asked, his voice bleary with sleep.

Rubbing Justin's arm gently, Lance said, "I've got to go into the office. Just for a couple of hours. They want me to sit in on a few meetings, that's it. I'm sorry."

The office. He must mean FreeLance Productions, his budding company. Justin sighed. The last day they had together here and Lance had to work. "When are you coming back?" Justin asked, glancing at the clock beside his side of the bed. It was only a little after seven in the morning.

Lance shrugged. Leaning down, he kissed Justin's forehead. "Before two, I promise."

"Noon," Justin said. He kissed Lance's lips and wanted to pull him back into bed with him.

Lance smiled sweetly. "One o'clock," he compromised. "I'll meet you somewhere for lunch."

"We only have one car," Justin pointed out. He took Lance's hand and held it tightly, not willing to let him go.

"Stacy is coming by a little later," Lance said. "I told her we needed to get some shopping done and she said she'll give you a lift to the mall. How's that? We can meet there and eat something. Then we can see what we can find to wear to the show." He smiled again. "I wish I could stay here with you."

"We'd spend all day in bed," Justin whispered. "Why don't you call in sick?"

Lance grinned. "I can't do that," he said. He kissed Justin, his lips lingering on Justin's own. "Call me around noon and let me know where you want to meet for lunch. Stacy will be here a little before then, maybe. You'll be all right by yourself for a few hours."

"I don't want to be by myself," Justin replied. "I want to be with you."

But he knew how much the business meant to Lance, so Justin rolled into the covers and tried to go back to sleep. He heard the front door shut and it was all he could do to keep from jumping out of bed and run outside, tell Lance to fuck the company, get back in here with him and forget the rest of the world. What a wonderful idea, he thought as far

below him, the car roared to life. And then Lance pulled out of the driveway and his chance was gone, and somehow he managed to fall into a light, uneasy sleep until the phone rang, waking him up again. Reaching for the receiver, he noticed it was now after nine, and he wondered briefly when Stacy was supposed to show up. He had to take a shower, get dressed, get something to eat ... placing the phone against his ear, he mumbled, "Hello?"

Silence filled the connection. "Hello?" Justin asked again, a little more alert this time. Just as he was about to hang up, he heard a small sigh on the other end of the line. "Is Lance there?"

It was Lance's mother. Justin collapsed back against the pillows and closed his eyes, and the memory of her last night came back strong and painful all over again. "No," he whispered. Clearing his throat, he said, a little louder, "He went into the office today, Mrs. Bass. He should be home sometime later this afternoon."

For a moment, he thought she would hang up without saying another word. And then she said, "I was calling to find out the flight information, for tomorrow."

"Let me get the tickets," Justin said. He set the phone down on the bed and crawled over to Lance's bedside table. The airplane tickets were in the top drawer. He read the information to her, the time they left and the gate they would leave from, the flight number and what time they were slated to arrive at LaGuardia. "Lance said we should meet at the front concourse," Justin said. "Near the fountain. He said you'd know what he meant."

"I do," Mrs. Bass replied, but she didn't elaborate. "Thank you." And then she hung up.

Justin sighed and hung up the phone. Replacing the tickets in Lance's drawer, he decided it was time to get out of bed. Maybe after a long, hot shower, he'd feel better.

But no such luck. After his shower he sat on the edge of the bed in his towel, a blank expression on his face. If Lance saw him now, he would've laughed and said Justin was zoned out again. But he's not here, he thought. Justin stared at a spot on the wall and thought about all the things he could be doing. He had to finish unpacking -- the other bedroom was in shambles right now, as Justin was in the process of moving in. He had to eat breakfast -- his stomach was beginning to rumble. He had to get dressed -- yes, that was something he should do. Get dressed. He had to get dressed before Stacy arrived. Lance hadn't said when she was coming by. He had to eat breakfast -- already thought about that, his mind whispered, but his eyes refused to look away from the fascinating space between the dresser and the closet door.

The phone rang again. Slowly Justin turned towards it as it rang again. On the third ring, Justin reached out for it, shaking himself into the present moment. "Hello?" he asked before he even got the receiver to his ear.

"Hey!" Joey's voice boomed across the miles, and Justin found himself grinning. "Whassup?"

"Um, nothing," Justin replied.

"You sound out of it, my man," Joey said, laughing. "You okay?"

Justin nodded. "Fine. Just woke up."

Joey laughed again. "Where's Sir Lancelot?" Joey asked. "I gotta talk to him."

Justin picked at the hem of the towel around his waist. Suddenly he was aware of cool drops of water dripping down his back from his hair. "At work," he said.

"Work?" Joey asked, incredulous. "What the fuck?"

"I know, right?" Justin smiled. "But he's at work, and I need to get dressed, and what are you calling him for anyway?" He stretched languidly and wondered how Joey was making out with Chris. Or if he's making out with him, he thought, trying to stifle the jealousy that arose in him just because Joey called to talk to Lance.

Joey laughed. "Whoa, boy. Calm down. I just wanted to find out how it went last night. He was really worried about the whole dinner with the parents thing."

"It sucked," Justin admitted. He plopped back on the bed and reached his arms above his head. Staring at the ceiling fan, he said, "His mom didn't even look at me if she didn't have to. She hates me."

"Well," Joey said, his voice light, "you are a little annoying at times, but I don't think she knows you well enough to hate you yet."

"I'm hanging up now," Justin said, pouting. He didn't need to hear Joey's jokes right now.

"Oh Justin, stop it," Joey admonished. "I'm just trying to help."

"Well, you're not," Justin said.

Joey grew silent. Then he asked, "She's really not going for you two, eh?"

"No, she's not." Justin sighed. "I don't feel like talking about it right now, Joey. Can I just tell Lance you called and he'll call you back when he gets in? It'll be later, though. Like four or five, maybe."

"That's cool," Joey replied. Then softly he added, "For what it's worth, I'm sorry. I really am. I wish it were easy for you."

"Do you?" Justin asked. "Do you really?"

Joey sighed. "Yeah, Justin, I do. Believe it or not, I care about you. About both of you. Despite everything that's happened between us these past few months. Or maybe ... maybe because of it. I don't know. I just don't ... I'm going now. Goodbye."

"Joey, wait." Justin thought about everything that had happened between him and Joey since he and Lance had gotten together. "I'm

sorry," he whispered. "And thanks."

"No problem," Joey said easily. "But I'm really going now. JC and Chris are fighting over the remote. Just have Lance give me a call later, if he wants. Take care."

"You too," Justin whispered, and he listened as Joey hung up the phone.

To his surprise, someone picked up the other end of the line. "You can hang up now," Joey said.

"I'm going to," Justin replied, laughing. Sitting up, he replaced the receiver and fought the urge to pick it up again and see if Joey was still there.

At noon Justin used the phone downstairs to dial the number to Lance's cell phone. He let it ring five times, and just when he was about to hang up, he heard the connection click open. "Hey, baby boy," Lance said softly, and Justin smiled to hear his voice.

"I miss you," Justin pouted. "You gonna be able to slip away in an hour?"

"You betcha," Lance replied. "You should've seen the way everyone glared at me when the phone started to ring in the budget meeting, though. If looks could kill, I'd be lying on the floor right about now." Justin laughed. "How has your morning been?"

Frowning, Justin said, "It would've been better if you were here with me."

"I know," Lance said, and Justin could hear the smile in his voice. "I want to be there, trust me. I'm having a hard time keeping my mind on work. All I can think of is the way you looked this morning, lying in bed. Have I ever told you how beautiful you look in the morning light?"

Justin grinned. "No," he admitted. "You'll have to tell me tomorrow morning. Your mother called."

"What did she want?" Lance asked. "She didn't ... are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Justin said, waving a hand in the air to dismiss Lance's comment. "She just wanted the lowdown on the flight tomorrow. And then Joey called for you."

Lance laughed. "Damn, I'm popular today. What did he want? Or did he even tell you?"

"He wanted to know how it went last night," Justin said softly. "He said to call him later."

Lance murmured something, and then said, "Babe, I've got to get back in there if I hope to leave at one. You have any idea where you and Stacy are going?"

"She's not here yet --" Justin heard the doorbell ring. "Hold on, there she is." He set the phone down on the steps and raced to the door.

Flinging it open, he smiled at Stacy and said, "Lance wants to know a place I can meet him for lunch inside the mall."

Stacy laughed. "Well, hello to you, too!" She came into the house and headed for the phone. Picking it up, she said, "Lance? We're going to Northpark. I'll have him stay at the food court and wait for you, okay?" She looked over at Justin and then said, "Yeah, okay. I'll tell him. See you then." Hanging up the phone, she said, "Lance says he loves you but he's got to go back in the meeting now."

Justin smiled. "Northpark?" he asked. "Where's that?"

"Jackson," Stacy replied. "You ready to go?"

It took a little less than an hour to get to the mall. By the time they arrived, Justin was anxious to see Lance again, and he practically jumped out of the car when Stacy drove around, looking for a place to park. "Right here," Justin said, pointing to an empty spot along the outside of the mall parking lot.

"I'm not hiking five miles just to shop," Stacy replied, easing the car down another aisle. "We'll find someplace close. I always do."

True to her word, Stacy managed to snag a spot just beyond the handicapped parking, but it took fifteen minutes of continuous driving to get it. Justin was ready to scream at her to just stop the car and let him get out when they finally stopped. "Wait up," Stacy called as Justin hurried across the parking lot to the mall.

He stopped and waited for her. "I'm sorry," he said sheepishly.

"Your legs are longer than mine," she replied. Taking his hand, she let him pull her into the mall. As they waited in the food court for Lance, Stacy leaned over the table they shared and whispered, "Remember this is Mississippi, not New York or San Francisco. Public displays of affection will not win you fans."

"I know," Justin muttered, though he hadn't really thought about it. But he looked around and didn't see anyone he'd peg as a gay couple. He hoped he could keep his hands to himself when Lance finally showed up.

"Hey there, beautiful," someone said behind him, and Justin turned to find Lance leaning down over the back of his chair. Justin beamed up at him, and Lance allowed himself a quick kiss on Justin's temple. To anyone watching, it might have looked platonic, but Justin knew otherwise. Lance sat down between Stacy and Justin. "I see you got here all right. I was afraid you'd still be driving around, looking for a spot."

"I'm not that bad," Stacy started, but Justin interrupted her.

"It takes her forever to park!" he said, laughing.

She kicked him under the table. "Does not," she replied, but she laughed, too. "Where's your car, Lance? BFE?"

"Not quite that far out," he admitted, "but they're in the same zip code. This place is packed!" Looking around, he asked, "You guys eat yet?"

"We were waiting for you," Justin said. He covered Lance's hand in his and squeezed gently. "What's good here?" he asked, looking around.

They ended up at Ruby Tuesday's, and after a filling lunch, Stacy left them to do some shopping of her own. Lance and Justin walked around the mall, hands shoved deep into their pockets. They stood close enough that every few steps, Justin's elbow brushed against Lance's back, and when Lance turned slightly to talk to him, his arm leaned into Justin's stomach. Once or twice Justin placed a hand on Lance's back and bent over him possessively, particularly when a salesperson drifted too close to Lance for Justin's comfort. They finally found a shop where Lance picked out a simple white sweater and a brown pair of patchwork suede pants that he wanted Justin to buy. "This will look great on you," he said, holding the pants up against Justin. "What do you think?"

"I think it'll be hot," Justin commented. "It's only September."

"But this is New York," Lance reminded him. "It's chilly at night. And you know they always have the a/c on in those places. Remember the last awards show we went to?"

Justin nodded. It had been a hot day in the middle of summer and they just wore the thinnest of shirts, but by the end of the night they were shivering from the air conditioning. "Okay," he said. "I'll get this. I like it."

It took another hour to find something for Lance to wear. Justin kept suggesting outfits, but Lance thought most of them were too wild or too sporty or too dressy, and he couldn't find anything he liked. Justin was beginning to get tired -- they had spent almost three hours in the mall, and his feet ached from walking. He wanted to stretch out in a hot bath, Lance against him, and just soak forever. Calgon, take me away, he thought, grinning, as they entered one more store.

Justin saw the outfit first. "Look at this," he said, holding up a light denim jacket with sequined flames shooting up from the pockets. He turned to Lance, his eyes wide. "Oh Lance, you have to get this."

Lance laughed. "Justin," he started, but then he took the jacket and looked it over, contemplative. Finally he said, "I kinda like it."

There were jeans that matched the jacket, and a sleeveless tan ringer tee completed the outfit. For fifty dollars more, the store would adhere rhinestone appliqués to any piece of clothing, so Lance had his initials put on the breast pocket of the jacket. Justin grinned foolishly as Lance paid for the outfit. "I really think that rocks," he admitted.

"It's something different," Lance said. "My mom will have a cow."

Justin laughed. "Damn, Lance. I haven't heard that one in years." He held out his hand for the bag. "I'll carry it."

"I've got it," Lance replied.

"Give it to me," Justin said. "I want to hold it."

Lance frowned. "You've got the other bag," he said.

Justin sighed. "I just wanted to carry it for you."

Laughing, Lance said, "Fine. Here, you can carry it."

"Thank you," Justin sniffed. "Can we go home now?"

"God, yes," Lance said, sighing. "I am exhausted."

"Me, too," Justin admitted. "Do you think Stacy's still here?"

Lance shook his head. "I seriously doubt it." He placed his hand on Justin's back, a light touch that made Justin ache for more, but Justin held bags in both hands and remembered what Stacy said about being overly affectionate in public. This is Mississippi, he reminded himself, not New York. But tomorrow we'll be in New York, and who's to stop us from touching in public then?

"What do you want to do tonight?" Justin asked as they headed for the nearest exit.

Lance shrugged. "We can't stay up too late," he pointed out. "Our flight leaves at what, nine?"

"Eight thirty," Justin corrected. "Your mom's meeting us at the fountain an hour before."

"Which means we have to leave at six thirty," Lance said. Sighing, he added, "Jeez, we might as well fall out when we get home."

Justin laughed. "I'm about ready to." As they walked across the parking lot to the car, he said, "Stacy was right. You did park out in BFE."

"I didn't feel like driving around," Lance replied. "I couldn't wait to see you again."

"Maybe we can just watch a movie or something," Justin said. "Call Joey first, though. I don't want him interrupting anything."

Lance bit his lip. "I wonder how he and Chris are getting on."

"Or getting off," Justin added, winking at him. They reached the car, and Justin waited as Lance opened the trunk. Setting the bags inside, he said, "Ask him."

Lance laughed. "I know what he'll say. They're taking it slow." He closed the trunk and opened the passenger side door for Justin.

Justin nodded. "Well, ask him what they're wearing to the awards. I don't want to be underdressed."

"You won't be," Lance said. "You're going to be the hottest person there."

Justin slid into the car. "Unless Lil Kim outdoes me," he said. "I can't beat that outfit she wore last year."

Lance walked around the car and climbed into the driver's seat. Closing the door, he leaned over and kissed Justin, his lips insistent

against Justin's own. Justin eased his tongue into Lance's mouth, hungry for him. "I've been waiting for that all day long," Lance whispered.

"Me, too," Justin replied. Placing a hand on Lance's thigh, he whispered, "How fast can we get home?"

"Not fast enough," Lance said, starting the car. "Let's see."

Justin settled into his seat and squeezed Lance's leg gently. Suddenly he didn't want to spend the night in front of the TV anymore.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 1 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stood in the bathroom of their hotel room and frowned at himself in the mirror. His eyes were a little bloodshot and he looked tired. No wonder -- he didn't sleep well last night. Despite their promises to get to bed early, he and Justin had stayed up well past midnight, cuddling on the couch and watching movies on cable. He didn't know when they fell asleep, but he woke up a little after six in the morning with a sore back and a slight headache, which only got worse as they rushed around the house, trying to get ready to go. They left late and arrived at the airport twenty minutes after his mother got there, which meant that she wasn't in the best of moods to begin with. And it was only eight in the morning.

He sat between her and Justin on the plane, and luckily they were both tired enough that they fell asleep as their flight took off. When they landed, she was still cool to Justin, but at least when he spoke to her, she answered him, even if it was in clipped tones. Lance hoped they would have a few hours to catch up on their sleep once they got to the hotel, but the other guys were already waiting for them at Radio City Music Hall to rehearse their number for the night. And then it was dinner out on the town, all five of them with their mothers -- except for Chris, who brought Dani along, and Lance had to admit that he thought he had it bad with his mom's attitude, but Dani looked pissed to all get out and he couldn't imagine how that was going over. Joey joked the whole time, trying to lighten the mood, and Chris played off her icy air, but Lance could feel the tension radiating from that end of the table to where he sat. At least at dinner his mother had Justin's mom to talk with, and the way they kept looking over at him and Justin made him wonder if they weren't speaking of their relationship. He hoped Mrs. Harless managed to break through his mother's objections about them, or at least shed a different light on the whole thing.

And then it was time to head back to the hotel and get ready for the show, and all Lance wanted to do was collapse on the bed. But instead he showered and dressed in the jeans and t-shirt Justin picked out for him, and as Justin was getting ready, he stood staring at himself in the bathroom mirror and wished he had some eyedrops, or some Vivarin, or something to make this night go by a little smoother. Eyedrops would be nice -- he was going to look horrid if anyone decided to take close-ups of him tonight.

Justin stood in the doorway and twirled around. "What do you think?" he asked, showing off the outfit Lance helped him buy.

Lance looked up and grinned. The sweater clung to Justin's chest and waist in a sexy way that stirred Lance's groin, and the pants were tight along Justin's legs. "You look great," Lance admitted. "So good, I can't wait to get you out of it."

Laughing, Justin came into the bathroom and stood behind him. He

wrapped his arms around Lance and hugged him tightly. Resting his chin on Lance's shoulder, he looked at their reflection in the mirror and asked, "How long do we have to wait?"

"I'm not sure," Lance admitted. "Three hours? Four? How long is this thing anyway?"

Justin kissed Lance's neck, his lips cool behind Lance's ear. "I don't know," he whispered, and his hands rubbed Lance's chest, arousing his nipples beneath his shirt. "Let's show up late."

Lance grinned. "I don't think that would go over well," he said, leaning his head back on Justin's shoulder. He reached behind him and ran his hands down Justin's thighs, the suede pants soft beneath his fingers. Justin trailed his hands down Lance's stomach and over the thick denim of his jeans before cupping Lance's crotch in both hands. Lance moaned as Justin squeezed his hardening cock gently, and he thrust into Justin's hands. Suddenly showing up late didn't sound like a bad idea.

The door to their hotel room opened as Joey barged inside. "Hey!" he called, and then he saw them. Frowning, he said, "You guys going with us or what?"

"You leaving now?" Justin asked. Lance stood up and ran a shaky hand through his hair, but Justin's hands were still on his crotch. He pulled them away reluctantly.

"Right now," Joey replied, laughing at them. As they came out of the bathroom, Joey pointed at Lance's pants and said, "You might want to pull out your shirt to cover that up."

Blushing, Lance untucked his t-shirt to cover the bulge in his jeans. "Justin's fault," he said, taking the jacket Justin handed him.

Justin kissed his cheek quickly. "All my fault," he said softly. "Blame me." As Justin closed the door to their room, he looked down the empty hall and asked, "Where are the others?"

"I lied," Joey said, leading the way to his own room. "We aren't leaving right this second. JC's not ready yet."

Lance laughed at the frustrated look that flitted across Justin's face. "Then we still have a few minutes," he said. "We can finish what we started."

Taking Justin's hand in his, Lance kissed his back, the sweater rough against his lips. "I think someone is horny again," he whispered.

"I am," Justin admitted. He draped an arm around Lance's shoulder and pulled him close. Lance hugged Justin's waist and let him lead the way into Joey's room. Chris lay on Joey's bed, giggling as his two dogs jumped all over his chest and face. Releasing Lance, Justin crawled onto the bed and attacked Korea, the smaller of the two dogs. Yipping, she turned to bite him, but he pulled his hand back quickly. "I see Dani brought your dogs," he said, laughing as Busta covered Chris's face with wet, sloppy kisses.

"They're coming home with me," Chris said in a childlike, sing-song

voice. "You're going to stay with Joey's mommy in Florida, isn't that right, Busta? When we go on tour, you and Korea are staying with Joey's mom and pop."

"Do they know that yet?" Lance asked, walking around the bed to sit down on Chris's other side. He leaned against the pillows and watched Justin and Chris play with the dogs while Joey went back into the bathroom to brush his teeth.

"They'll find out," Joey replied as he turned the water on. "They like dogs."

Lance picked a piece of lint off of Justin's sweater. Justin looked up at the touch, and then he crawled closer to Lance, that hungry look in his eyes that Lance loved to see. Lance leaned forward for a quick kiss, but Justin had other plans, and he pressed Lance back against the pillows as his tongue parted Lance's lips, demanding and insistent. Lance moaned, and then Chris called out, "Joey! They're doing it again! Make them stop."

Justin slapped the top of Chris's head. "Shut up," he said, pulling his hand back quickly as Chris tried to bite it. He kissed Lance again, and Lance wondered how late was too late to show up at the awards.

Then Joey flung a handful of cold water at them, dousing Justin's curls and sprinkling Lance's face. "Hey!" Lance cried, laughing. He saw the furious look on Justin's face and caught his arm, holding him back. "Watch it, Joey."

Joey grinned. "You're not making out in my bed, boys. Let's pretend we have someplace we have to be in five minutes, okay?"

"I'm going to get you for that," Justin growled. He ran a hand through his hair, shaking the water out of his curls.

Joey laughed and grabbed a light jacket. "Promises, promises," he said. "I'm ready. Let's get going."

"You're not wearing that," Justin asked, still playing with his hair. "Jeez, Lance, and you thought we'd be underdressed."

Joey looked down at his KISS t-shirt and frowned. "What's wrong with this?" he asked.

Chris sat up. "Nothing," he said. He broke into song. "If never I met you, I'd never have seen you cry. If not for a first hello we'd never have to say goodbye. If never I held you, my feelings would never show --"

"We get the point," Lance said, sitting up. "You're a hard luck woman."

Justin laughed. "This is an awards show, Joey, not a concert. You look ridiculous."

"I'm not the one dressed for winter," Joey replied.

"I like this outfit," Justin said. "I know I look good in it. Lance told me so."

Lance felt a thin blush creep into his cheeks at the look Joey threw his

way. "Well, I like this outfit," Joey said, sounding hurt, "so leave me alone about it."

"If it helps, Joe," Chris said, standing up, "I think you look good in it."

"Thank you," Joey said, glaring at Justin haughtily.

Before Justin could reply, someone knocked on Joey's door. They looked up to see JC standing there, a long brown jacket with a high fur collar covering his outfit. Justin laughed. "Jesus, Josh, who died and made you the pimp daddy?"

"Why do you say that?" JC asked, looking down at his jacket.

Joey fell against Chris, both of them laughing uncontrollably. "Who are you trying to impress in that?" Chris asked.

"This is why you're taking your mom tonight," Joey said. "You'll never get a date in that." He reached out to touch the coat, but JC slapped his hand away.

"A few prostitutes," Lance offered, giggling, "but no one else."

"Shut up," JC scowled. "I like this."

Justin smiled. "You're not sitting with us, are you?"

JC glared at him. "I sure as hell ain't sitting next to you."

"We're not going to get a seat at all if we don't get going," Lance pointed out. JC turned and led the way from the room, Joey and Chris right behind him. They kept reaching out to touch the coat, brushing their fingers along the fur behind JC's neck, running their hands along the leather back. JC tried to shrug them away but they couldn't keep their hands off of the coat.

Justin caught Lance in a quick embrace before they left Joey's room. "Oh God," he said, laughing. "Can you believe that coat?"

Lance grinned and kissed Justin. Chris stuck his head back into the room. "You two gonna grace us with the honor of your presence tonight, or what?"

"Coming," Lance said, extracting himself from Justin's arms. Justin held onto Lance's waist, trying to pull him closer. "What's gotten into you tonight?" Lance whispered.

"You," Justin said. They stopped with the others to wait for the elevator, and Justin's lips pressed against the back of Lance's neck. "You're intoxicating, baby. I can't keep my hands off you."

Joey frowned at them. "You're going to have to, Justin. There will be cameras everywhere. Unless you're ready to tell the world you two are an item."

Justin glared at him over Lance's shoulder, his arms around Lance's waist holding him tightly against his own body. "Joey --" he started, but JC cut him off.

"He's right," JC said softly. "You don't want to jeopardize the group, do you? Imagine how our fans would feel if they knew their golden boy was gay."

Lance felt Justin rest his head against the back of his neck, and Lance sighed. "JC, it's not --"

"The world will come tumbling down," Chris said darkly. "Chaos will reign supreme, and the Anti-Christ will arise from the rubble --" Joey elbowed him when he saw the expression on Lance's face and Chris shut up.

Justin laced his fingers together on Lance's stomach and sighed, a sad, shaky sound, but he didn't say anything. Lance rubbed Justin's hands and said, "Guys, you know we're careful in public."

"Justin just said he can't keep his hands off of you," JC pointed out. "Maybe you two shouldn't sit together. Joey's right -- this is MTV. You know there will be cameras everywhere. Someone somewhere is likely to see you doing something that can be misinterpreted."

The elevator arrived, and Joey held it open. Lance looked at JC and saw the concern in his eyes -- he wasn't doing this to be mean. He was doing it for the good of the group, for their best interests. As much as it hurt to admit it, Lance knew he was right. He glanced at Chris, a slight frown on his face, and then at Joey, who shrugged and smiled sadly. "Okay," Lance said softly, and he felt Justin's arms tighten around him. "What do you suggest?"

"You two can't sit together," Joey started, but Justin looked up at him and cried, "That's not fair!"

"You can't," Chris said. "You know it, Justin."

Lance turned and saw the anger in Justin's eyes, the disappointment in the set of his jaw, the sadness in his pouty lips. "Baby," he said softly, trailing a finger down Justin's cheek.

Justin closed his eyes in frustration. "Fine," he muttered. Lance felt Chris's hand on his back, pulling him out of Justin's arms. The tortured look on Justin's face tore at Lance's heart, and he had to turn away. As he followed Chris into the elevator, he didn't think the rest of the evening would be as great as he had hoped.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 2 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was pissed. He understood that he and Lance had to be careful. He knew that. But the last few days had been so wonderful, just the two of them together constantly, and he wasn't ready for it to end. All day long the thought of sitting next to Lance at the awards was the only thing that kept him going. He knew JC was right, that they couldn't let their fans know about their relationship, not yet, but that didn't make it any easier to sit here when Lance sat all the way at the end of the row, so far away. Justin glanced down to where Lance was sitting and frowned. He hated this.

Lance sat beside his mother, and some girl was standing in the aisle beside him, talking. Justin thought maybe it was Mandy Moore, but he wasn't sure. He saw Mrs. Bass laugh at something the girl said, and then Lance laughed and looked over at him, that winning smile of his brightening Justin's mood. He winked at Justin before the girl touched his arm and he turned back towards her. Justin felt a flash of jealousy tear through him -- why could she touch Lance so innocently when Justin himself could not? It didn't seem fair.

Beside Justin, his own mother was talking around JC to Mrs. Chasez, and JC leaned forward in his seat, his arms crossed on the back of the seat in front of him. Justin felt his steady gaze but didn't look up from his lap, where he frowned at his hands and wondered why Lance couldn't even sit on the other side of his mother. Why did he have to sit all the way down there? Justin couldn't hear his voice, or his laugh, or even see that look in his eyes that he loved so much. "Justin," JC said softly, "smile."

Justin sighed and rubbed his eyes. "I don't feel like it," he whispered.

"JC!" Someone plopped down in the seat next to Justin, and he groaned to hear Britney's cheery voice in his ear. "Hey, Justin! JC, I just love that coat! It's so classic!"

JC grinned. "See?" he asked Justin. "I told you this coat rocked. Thanks, Britney. You look very pretty tonight."

She laughed. "Thanks!"

Justin forced a smile as he turned to face her. "Hey, Brit," he said softly.

She frowned. "What's wrong with you?" she asked.

JC leaned forward and whispered loudly, "Justin's in one of his pissy moods."

"Shut up," Justin growled. JC laughed, and Britney placed a hand on Justin's arm. "Are you okay?" she asked.

Suddenly Lance was pushing past JC. "Hi, Britney," he said, a little too brightly. Justin smiled up at him as Lance leaned against the back of the seat in front of Justin. Lance caught Justin's eye and grinned before turning to Justin's mother. "I just wanted to come over and say hi to the lovely Mrs. Harless tonight. How are you doing, pretty lady?"

Justin's mom laughed. Winking at Britney, she asked, "Isn't he the sweetest?" She took Lance's hand in hers and he leaned down to kiss her cheek. He rested his hand on Justin's thigh to steady himself, and Justin's spirits rose at the touch.

As Lance started to stand up, Justin caught his hand and tugged him gently. "Sit down," he said. He glanced at JC, who shrugged, and then Lance sat on his knees.

Britney touched Lance's arm, and he turned to look at her. "So what've you guys been up to?" she asked.

Lance shrugged and looked at Justin. Justin sighed. "Not much," he admitted. "Just hanging out until the tour starts up again. What're you up to?"

She smiled and turned her attention back to Justin. "My God," she said, rolling her eyes, "things have been so hectic for me." As she rambled on about her own tour, Justin eased his hand beneath the jean jacket Lance wore and rubbed his back in small, slow strokes. Lance leaned on the armrest, listening to Britney talk, but Justin noticed the way his brow furrowed every time Britney touched his arm. At one point she rested her hand on Justin's, and before he could pull away, Lance took Britney's hand in his and asked about one of the rings she wore. If Justin didn't know better, he'd think Lance was being a little overprotective, and he had to admit it was turning him on.

"Where are you sitting?" Lance asked Britney.

She shrugged. "Right here," she said, smiling at Justin. "You look like you need a date tonight."

"I've got a date," Justin said, and Lance looked at him sharply. Grinning, Justin said, "My mom. She's my girl tonight."

Lance laughed as Joey came down the aisle. "Okay, Scoop," Joey said, winking at Britney, "show's about to start. Time to get back to your seat."

Justin glared at him, but Lance squeezed his knee gently and stood up. He looked at Justin sadly and walked back to his seat, Joey right behind him. Joey sank into the seat between his own mother and Dani. "Has anyone told you how gorgeous you look tonight?" Joey asked Dani when she looked at him.

She didn't say anything, and then Chris elbowed her. "Thank you," she replied coolly, turning to scowl at Chris. "I hope you appreciate this," she hissed.

Looking behind them at the crowds filling in the room, Chris muttered, "Just pretend you're having a good time. Is that too much to ask?"

"You had to sit me next to him?" Dani asked quietly, studying Chris's face.

"What's wrong with that?" Chris asked. Irritation flared through him. Dani didn't arrive in town until just before dinner, and every time she spoke to one of the guys, her barbed words were quick and cutting. It was obvious to everyone that she didn't want to be there, not in New York, not at the awards, and definitely not with Chris. When he took her hand to lead her to their seats, she almost pulled away. He couldn't wait until after the show, when he could tell her that it was over, everything between them was finished, and he wouldn't have to deal with her attitude anymore.

Truth be told, Chris wanted to sit next to Joey, but he didn't because he felt that might be unfair to Justin and Lance. If they had to be separated, then he didn't think he and Joey should sit together, either. He knew Dani didn't like Joey, but when she balked at sitting next to him, Chris had just mumbled, "Tough shit." It was ironic, really, that she sat between them, as she was the only obstacle keeping them apart. And after tonight, there will be nothing at all between us, he thought.

Dani sighed and turned away. Looking down the aisle, she noticed Justin's pout and asked, "What's his problem?"

Chris glanced at Justin and shrugged. "He's upset because we won't let him sit by Lance."

"Oh, please," Dani said, rolling her eyes. "How childish is that?"

Chris frowned, angry again. "Leave him alone. There's nothing wrong with wanting to sit next to his own boyfriend."

"I wouldn't pitch a fit just because I couldn't sit next to you," Dani said sourly.

Bitterly, Chris replied, "There's a difference, Dani. They're in love."

She looked at him and didn't say anything else, but her eyes told him all he needed to know. And we aren't, they said to him. Not anymore. The love between us, if it was ever there at all, is gone. Chris thought maybe it had been gone for a while now, and tonight was just a formal way to end things between them.

Around them the lights blinked, signaling that the show was about to begin. "Just try to enjoy yourself," Chris whispered, settling back in his seat. Beside him Mrs. Bass looked at them; Chris smiled tightly and reminded himself that tonight he would sleep in Joey's arms again, and Dani's caustic comments would be just memories tarnishing the rest of the evening.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 3 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Intermission. As his mother stood up, Justin glanced down the aisle. Lance stood at the end of the aisle, his own mother beside him, and then they started to walk away. Sitting up in his seat, Justin asked, "Where's he going?"

JC frowned. As if he would know. He looked at Lance and shrugged. "Bathroom?" he suggested.

Justin started to stand up, but JC put a hand on his arm to hold him back. "I need to go," Justin said.

"No, you don't," JC replied. He studied Justin and sighed. "I know this is hard for you, Justin. But you can't follow him to the bathroom. Do you know how many people will be in there? You can't hope to get him alone right now."

"Fuck this," Justin muttered, falling back into his seat, an evil scowl on his face. JC sighed again and was about to move a seat closer to talk with him when Britney came back from backstage.

Seeing the empty space between them, she squeezed her way past Justin's legs and sat down. "So," she asked, a little out of breath, "what did you guys think?"

"About what?" Justin mumbled.

She frowned at him. "About my performance! Duh."

JC smiled. "I liked it," he admitted. "That outfit was something else."

"Left nothing to the imagination," Justin replied darkly.

JC frowned. Just because Justin was pissed didn't mean he had to take it out on Britney. "Justin --"

"You didn't like it?" Britney asked, hurt. Justin merely shrugged and turned away.

"JC liked it," he replied. "Talk to him about it and leave me alone."

Britney turned to JC, frowning. "What's his problem?" she whispered.

JC sighed. "He's just a little upset right now," he said carefully. "Not at you."

Looking from him to Justin and back again, she asked softly, "Did you two have a fight?"

"He's just mad," JC said, shaking his head. He didn't know what else to say without telling her about Lance. He didn't think Justin had told her

yet, or she wouldn't be hitting on him so blatantly. And it wasn't JC's place to tell her.

"Justin, what's wrong?" she asked sweetly. When she reached out to touch him, Justin shrugged off her hand.

"Talk to JC," he said again, "and leave me alone." He kept his face turned away and prayed she would listen to him. Please, Justin thought, please leave me the fuck alone. He looked up as Joey came down their row, whispering apologies as he made his way back to his seat. Lance and Chris were behind him, and the smile on Lance's face made Justin's heart ache. He wanted to be with them right now, not here next to Britney. He wanted to be the one who put that smile there. He moved his legs to one side as Joey edged past him.

Joey stopped and leaned down over Britney. Placing a hand on either armrest, he grinned down at her and whispered loudly, "Damn, girl, but you've grown up nice."

Britney blushed and JC laughed as she slapped Joey's arm playfully. "I'm glad someone noticed," she said, throwing a look at Justin that he ignored. Coyly, she asked, "What are you doing after the show?"

Winking at her, he said, "Chris and I have plans, babe. Sorry. Maybe some other time." As he moved on down the row, Justin wondered what plans those would be, with Dani still in town until tomorrow.

Lance tripped over Justin's foot, and Justin caught his arm. "You okay?" he asked, a little concerned. The simple touch set his heart racing, and he wanted to pull Lance into his lap, hold him close and never let him go. Fuck Britney. Fuck MTV and the rest of the world. This was his lover, his man, and Justin wanted to be with him now so badly he could taste it.

"Fine," Lance said, turning the intensity of his smile onto Justin. Justin felt a slip of paper being pressed into his hand as Lance stood up, and then Lance was edging past Britney, commenting on the skimpy outfit she wore for her performance. "I wonder what your fans will think," he said as he kept moving. Britney didn't have a reply to that.

Justin opened his hand. In it was a small piece of brown paper towel, torn from the dispenser in the bathroom. He opened it carefully. One side was blank; on the other side, in a thick black marker, was written an I, a heart, and a U. I love you. God, how sweet, Justin thought, looking at Lance only to find Lance looking back. Lance winked at him and kept moving towards his seat. Justin started to stand up before he realized Chris was in front of him. With a slight smile, Chris said gently, "C'mon, man. Join us down at the other end for a little while."

Justin grinned. As he passed Britney, she caught his hand. "Where are you going?" she asked.

Justin pulled his hand away, his eyes on Lance. "Down here," he said. He glanced at JC, a torn expression on his face. He didn't want to hurt Britney's feelings -- they had been friends a long time -- but she was being very overbearing tonight, and all he wanted to do was spend three minutes, three minutes, with Lance.

Reading his emotions, JC took Britney's hand in his and asked, "Jeez, Brit, this ring is awesome! Where'd you get that?" She giggled and Justin moved on, breezing by the empty seats until he reached Lance.

He sank into Lance's mother's seat. Lance smiled sweetly at him and asked, "How's the show from that end of the row?"

Justin rolled his eyes. "I'd rather be down here," he admitted. Leaning closer, he whispered, "I love you, too."

Lance laughed. "Do you know how hard it was to find someone in the bathroom who had something to write with? I almost had to settle for lipliner."

Frowning, Justin asked, "Who had lipliner in the men's bathroom?"

Lance rolled his eyes. "You don't want to know." He took Justin's hand in both of his and asked, "Are you going to any parties afterwards?"

"Only the one back at the hotel," Justin said, grinning. "The private party I'm throwing in our room."

"Am I invited?" Lance asked innocently.

"You're the only one who is," Justin replied.

Chris sat down in his seat beside Justin. "Okay, you two," he said, "no hand holding. I'm going to have to separate you."

Justin stuck his tongue out at him, and on the other side of Chris, Joey laughed. "Don't do that again," he said, laughing, "or you're likely to lose that thing. And I don't think Lance would appreciate that."

"You leave his tongue alone," Lance growled. "I happen to like it just fine."

"I'm sure you do," Joey replied, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively. "Tell me, Lance, what hidden talents Justin has rolled up in that tongue of his."

Anger flashed through Justin, but then Joey laughed and turned away, searching the crowds behind them, and he let the comment slide. They were only teasing, he knew, and the last thing he wanted was a fight here, in public. "You're just jealous," Justin said.

Joey placed a hand on Chris's knee unconsciously, and without turning back around, said, "Not anymore." Chris covered his grin with the back of his hand. Suddenly, Joey stood up. "Come on," he said, slapping Chris's leg. "There's someone I want to talk to."

"Who?" Chris asked, standing up. He followed Joey out of the aisle, looking around the half-empty auditorium. He couldn't see anyone Joey would particularly be interested in. "Joe, who?"

"Eminem," he replied, starting up the aisle.

Lance turned around sharply to watch him disappear into the crowd. "Eminem?" he asked. He looked at Justin. "Jesus, he's not --"

"He's going where?" Justin asked, frowning. He looked up at Chris. "Is he serious?"

Chris shrugged and hurried after Joey. JC called out, "Where are they going now?"

"To talk to Eminem," Justin replied. He shrugged at the look JC gave him, and then they all turned around to watch Joey and Chris weave their way through the crowd.

Britney laughed nervously. "He's crazy," she said, and Justin had to agree with her. He squeezed Lance's hand and hoped all the talk of Eminem packing lead tonight was just that, talk. He wondered what the hell was going through Joey's mind right now.

Honestly? Joey didn't know what he was thinking. He was bored, and he was tired of Dani's self-righteous attitude, the way she looked at him as if he were dirt, the way she treated Chris as if he were dirt, the way she sat upright in her seat and just exuded this air of "fuck you all." He was sick of it. He wanted to tell her that Chris tasted of gumdrops and chocolate and his dick felt so right in Joey's mouth. He wondered what she had to say to that.

But this was Chris's show -- he didn't want to interfere. He wasn't going to jump the gun and rush things along. Chris would talk with her tonight, and then he'd come back to him. To his room. He wanted to tell her that, to brag to her that tonight he'd get some of Chris and she wouldn't, ever again. And he couldn't say that, either. So he wanted to get some of that energy out of him before he did say it, and when he found himself picking on Justin again, he forced himself to stop. He hoped Justin appreciated that. He had looked around the auditorium looking for someone else to pick on, and only one name came to mind.

He didn't even know if Eminem knew who he was. In his video, there had been that lookalike with the red hair, but Joey's red tips were gone at the moment. He didn't know what he was going to say, really. His heart hammered in his chest, and he turned around, suddenly not sure if this was such a good idea.

Chris was right behind him. "Eminem?" he asked softly, a slight smile on his face. Shaking his head, he said, "You're crazy, Joe."

Joey grinned. That was all he needed to hear. "Come on," he said, tugging Chris's arm. "This could be fun."

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 4 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Joey squatted down beside Eminem's seat and smiled as the rapper turned towards him, a slight frown on his face. "Who are you?" Eminem asked suspiciously. He glanced up at Chris before turning back to Joey.

Joey smiled disarmingly. "Joey Fatone," he said, holding out his hand. Eminem looked at it but didn't move. Nodding up at Chris, Joey said, "My friend Chris."

"Chris what?" Eminem asked, looking at Chris again.

"Kirkpatrick," Chris replied softly. "You gonna shake his hand or just leave him hanging?"

Reluctantly, Eminem took Joey's hand in his. Joey's grin widened. Eminem's hand was soft and slightly cool, and he had one of those limp handshakes that Joey hated. "You guys are from NSync, right?" he asked. Joey nodded. Glancing over at where the rest of the group sat, craning their necks to watch them, Eminem asked, "Is this a joke or a dare or something?"

Joey shook his head. "They think we're whacked, coming over here." He winked at Eminem. "Or maybe they think you'll whack us. Rumor has it you're packing."

"I ain't," Eminem said, a slight smile on his lips.

"Congrats on the win," Joey said. "You might not believe this, but I think you deserve it."

Eminem looked up at Chris. "Thanks."

The lights blinked around them. "That's our cue," Joey said, standing up. When he stuck out his hand again, Eminem shook it without hesitation. "Take care, man. And good luck."

"You too," Eminem said. He shook Chris's hand and watched as they walked away.

"My God," Chris whispered as they made their way back to their seats. "I thought you were dead for sure."

Joey laughed. "He ain't all that bad," he said. "Besides, just think of what the others are going to say."

Lance caught them as he stood up to let them into the row. "What he'd say?" he whispered.

Joey grinned at him. "Nothing much," he replied. He squeezed past Lance's mom and Dani, who glared at them.

"You idiots," she hissed as Joey and Chris sat down on either side of her. "He could've killed you."

The lights dimmed around them and Chris bit off his sour reply. Personally, he was impressed with Joey, going to talk to Eminem like that after all the animosity the media built around their group and the rapper. He'd have to remember to tell Joey that later on tonight, when they finally managed to get some time alone together.

When the next intermission came, Justin wanted to go back down and sit with Lance, but Lance's mother didn't get up and he was a little afraid of what she might say to him, if anything, if he came down there. Fuck it, he thought, standing up. Britney caught his arm. "Where you off to now?" she asked.

"I'm going to talk to Lance," he replied.

She frowned and asked, "Justin, are you mad at me or something? You've been so distant all night long."

He sighed. "Brit, it's not you --"

She cut him off. "Maybe we can do something after the show, just the two of us. Maybe we can talk."

Shaking his head, he looked at her and said, "I can't."

"Why not?" she asked.

Justin sighed again. Glancing down the row, he caught Lance looking at him, a slight frown on his face. "Brit --" He looked at her earnest face, her sad eyes, and he knew he had to tell her. "Come on," he said, taking her hand in his.

"Where are we going?" she asked, standing up.

He led her down the row. "We can talk now." When they reached the end of the aisle, Lance looked at him, an unspoken question in his eyes. "Come on," Justin said, tapping his leg.

Lance glanced at Britney and frowned. "Where --" She shrugged and took Lance's hand. "Justin, where are we going?" he asked as he followed them.

Justin pulled them towards the stage door. He held the door open for Britney, taking Lance's hand from hers as he passed. "What are you doing?" Lance whispered, but he didn't take his hand from Justin's.

"We're going to talk," Justin replied. He led the way to a small, empty dressing room. Closing the door behind them, he said, "Britney, sit down."

She obeyed. "Justin, what's this all about?" she asked, looking from him to Lance. Her gaze rested on their hands, Justin's still in Lance's.

Justin sighed. "Britney, how long have we known each other?"

"A long time," she said carefully.

He nodded. "And I've got to tell you something, Brit. Something important. Something you can't tell anyone else."

"Okay," she said slowly. She looked at Lance, curiosity written plainly on her face.

"I'm serious, Brit," Justin said. He looked at her beseechingly. "Remember when you told me about that time you slept with that dancer?" She tossed her hair, widening her eyes as she motioned towards Lance, but Justin ignored her signal. "Remember you swore me to secrecy? It's like that."

"Justin, please," she said, nodding at Lance.

"Britney, I'm trying to tell you something," Justin said, anger rising in him. "This is something you can't just blow off. You have to swear to me you won't tell another living soul."

Britney sighed dramatically. "Jesus, Justin, I swear already. What is it?"

Sighing, Justin closed his eyes. This was harder than he thought. He knew Britney, and he knew she had a tendency to gossip. He just hoped their friendship meant enough to her that she'd keep her mouth shut about this. JC would kill him if he knew what he was about to do. "Remember when I told you, a while back, that I was seeing someone?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," Britney replied. "Is that over? I mean, you're here with your mom --"

"I'm ..." He sighed. "Britney, I'm ... I'm with Lance." The shock on her face made fear bubble within him. "Don't say a word, Brit, the guys know, my mom knows, but I can't go public, you know that, please --"

"Okay," she said, holding up her hands. "Okay, okay, just ... calm down, Justin, please." She looked at Lance and took a deep, shaky breath. "How long have you two been ..." She trailed off, unsure of what she wanted to say.

"Dating?" Lance spoke up, his voice gentle. "A while now."

"Are you serious?" Britney whispered.

Justin nodded. "I love him," he said. "I've never felt this way about anyone before. And I don't want you to think that I'm dissing you, because I'm not, Brit. Really. But I love Lance. And I can't ... I don't like you like that, and I don't think it's fair to either of us if you keep flirting with me. And it's not fair to Lance."

Britney was silent for a moment. Then she blinked quickly, and Justin knew she was on the verge of tears. "So it isn't me," she said softly.

"No," he replied.

"You and Lance ..." She looked at Lance, frowning slightly.

"Britney, I love him," Lance said, squeezing Justin's hand gently.

"We're moving in together. Please don't make this harder than it already is."

Britney nodded. "Okay," she said, taking another deep breath to steady herself. "I don't really understand --"

"I'm not asking you to," Justin said. "I'm just asking you to, I don't know, to respect the fact that we're together. I told you before you had to cut out the touchy-feely stuff. I'm serious now. I really want it to stop." Now she really looked like she would cry. Justin closed his eyes and said, "Stop it, Britney. Stop it right now. I don't want this to ruin our friendship, but if you say a word about it to the press, I'll never trust you again."

"I won't say anything," she mumbled. "Justin, I can't believe you're --"

"Gay?" Lance prompted.

She nodded. "I dated you before," she said. "I've kissed you --"

"A long time ago," Justin said. "We were just kids. Britney, I've never been so sure of anything else in my whole life. Lance is all I've ever wanted." He saw the heart-broken look on her face and sighed. "Brit, I'm sorry. I don't like you. I love Lance."

"Okay," she said again, her voice soft. Standing up, she wiped her fingers under her eyes and blinked a few times to clear away the tears. "Okay, fine. That's cool. Justin, I'm cool with that. Really." She looked at him, and then at Lance, and forced a smile on her face. "Okay. Um, I guess, okay. Good luck. Really. I mean that."

Yeah, right, Justin thought, and he pulled Lance into his arms as Britney headed for the door. With a glance back at them, she left the room. "God, Justin," Lance whispered, turning to face him, "you think she'll keep this to herself?"

"She's going to have to," Justin replied. Taking advantage of the fact that they were alone for the first time all evening, he kissed Lance, Lance's lips soft and gentle beneath his. "I just got tired of fending her off. And I know it upsets you to see her all over me. I hate that, too."

Lance touched Justin's cheek, his fingers feathery on Justin's skin. Resting his forehead against Justin's, he stared into Justin's eyes, his green gaze full of love. "I can't wait until this night is over," he whispered. Kissing Justin, he added, "I know how hard that was for you. You didn't have to do it. Thank you."

"I had to do it," Justin said. "For us." He kissed Lance tenderly, only pulling away when the lights dimmed slightly to signal an end to the intermission.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 5 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

"Ten minutes," the stagehand called as she hurried past the dressing area set up backstage. JC sat at a lighted table, watching his reflection in the mirror as the makeup artist fussed with his hair. Over to one side, Chris and Joey rehearsed their dance steps, every few beats running into each other and laughing.

Justin waved away the wardrobe assistant trying to straighten his shirt. He plopped down on the leather sofa nearby and pulled Lance down into his lap. "Ten minutes," he whispered in Lance's ear. Running his hands down Lance's bare arms, he let Lance slide down beside him.

Lance laid down on the couch, his head in Justin's lap. Justin felt the sweet pressure against his crotch and wished he could get Lance to himself for a few minutes. The memory of the brief kisses they shared earlier sparkled like diamonds in his mind, and he ran his fingers through Lance's hair, thinking about the things he wanted to do once the night was over and they were in their hotel room, together, alone. "Justin," Lance said, grinning, "watch the hair."

Tugging on Lance's hair gently, Justin smiled. "They can spray it again before we go on." He let his other hand caress Lance's arm where it lay across Lance's chest, and Lance caught his hand, intertwining their fingers together. Justin leaned down to kiss Lance and felt someone slap him on the top of his head.

Looking up, he saw JC glaring at them. "You two stop it," he said, frowning.

Justin grinned sheepishly. Sitting back, he smoothed down his curls and said, "Sorry, JC."

JC pushed Lance's legs off the couch and sat down. Lance stretched his legs out across JC's lap and smiled at him. "Sorry," he said, but he didn't let go of Justin's hand.

"I just don't want anyone saying anything," JC muttered. He was still a little angry that Justin had told Britney, but he knew it was something that needed to be done. And now that she realized Justin was off limits, she had turned her full attention onto JC. JC wasn't really interested, but he had to admit that it was nice to have someone fawn over him. Britney laughed at everything he said, and the way her eyes sparkled when she looked at him was intoxicating. A few more hours and he could find himself drunk on that blue gaze, if he wasn't careful.

But that was something he wasn't ready to do. He had known Britney too long to be interested in her like that. He knew she could be petty and manipulative when it suited her needs, and right now he just wanted to make sure that she wasn't upset enough over Justin's little announcement

to leak it to the press. So if that meant soothing her wounded ego and telling her what she wanted to hear for the rest of the evening, he would do that. For Justin, for Lance, for the group.

And for yourself, his mind whispered. Admit it. You like the way she looks at you, like you're the only one who matters tonight. He may not be interested in her like that, but he couldn't fool himself that it made him feel a little less lonely every time she looked his way.

"What's on your mind, Josh?" Justin asked quietly. "You nervous?"

JC became aware of his shaking knee. "No," he said, placing a hand on his knee to keep it still. "Maybe a little. I hope this TV thing goes off without a hitch."

Lance laughed. "It will," he said. "We only rehearsed it what, twenty times this afternoon? It'll be great."

Justin touched the tip of Lance's nose with his finger. Tracing the gentle curve of his nose up to his forehead, Justin trailed his finger across Lance's brow, drawing a lazy number eight over and over again on Lance's skin. The soft touch was soothing, and Lance closed his eyes and sighed. "You leaving with Britney?" Justin asked.

Shaking his head, JC said, "No."

"She asked you yet?" Justin asked.

"No," JC admitted, "but I can sort of tell she's working up to it."

Lance smiled. Without opening his eyes, he asked, "You going to go?"

"I don't think so," JC said. He looked over at Chris and Joey, who had grown tired of dancing and were now heading their way.

Chris took a seat at the dressing table JC just vacated and Joey stood behind him, can of hairspray in hand, while he sprayed Chris's hair until it shone. Joey laughed as Chris covered his face with his hands. "That's enough, Joe," he said, his voice muffled. "My hair won't move an inch now."

Joey turned and caught JC watching him. Winking at JC, he said, "You need some more shellac on your 'do, Josh?"

JC smiled. "No," he said, blushing slightly.

Joey turned and sprayed in his general direction. "You sure?" he asked, laughing.

Peeking out from between his fingers, Chris looked at JC in the mirror and grinned. "Joe," he said softly, and Joey stepped around beside him, cutting off his view of JC.

"What is it?" Joey asked quietly. The smile stayed on his face but his eyes grew serious. "You okay, man?"

"Fine," Chris whispered. In less than an hour the show would be over and he'd have to talk with Dani. "I'm scared," he admitted. He looked at

Joey, his eyes wide and dark. "I don't know what to say to her. I don't know how it's going to go."

Joey placed a comforting hand on Chris's shoulder. "Remember I'm waiting," he said gently. "Remember that. When things get bad tonight, remember I'm thinking of you."

Chris took a deep breath. Releasing it slowly, he said, "Okay. Thanks, Joe."

Leaning down, Joey was going to whisper something in his ear when the stagehand called out, "Places, people." So instead he squeezed Chris's shoulder gently and kissed his cheek, right in front of his ear. He turned around to find the others already on their feet. Justin held Lance's hand in his and Lance stood slightly behind Justin, leaning against Justin's arm. JC met Joey's gaze, an unreadable expression in his eyes. Joey grinned. "Sorry about that," he said, laughing. As Chris stood up, Joey winked at JC. "I know, I know. If Justin can't do it, I can't, either."

"I wasn't going to say that," JC said softly. He turned and walked away, heading for the stage.

Joey looked at Justin, who shrugged and followed JC, Lance right behind him. "Come on, Joe," Chris said, pulling his arm. "Time to go on."

Joey sighed and followed Chris to the stage. If JC wasn't interested in him, if he wanted him to get together with Chris, then why did it always make Joey so sad when JC looked at him the way he did?

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 6 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Their performance was flawless. The audience loved Joey's little stint in the middle of it, where he called the music to a screeching halt in order to catch his breath. Lance had to admit it was a cute idea, what with all the jokes and media attention Joey seemed to get surrounding his eating habits. Joey himself suggested it, and it had been funny. When the lights went out, Lance felt a hand on his back, and he turned to find Justin behind him. Sweat dripped from Justin's brow, and he smiled brightly at Lance as they headed for the dressing room off the back of the stage. Tugging the microphone off of his head, Justin said, "Anyone ever tell you how great you dance, white boy?"

Lance laughed and pushed through the door to the dressing room. He held it open for Justin, and then leaned against it as it eased closed. Catching Justin's hand in his, Lance smiled at him when he turned around, a questioning look on his face. Lance locked the door behind him and whispered, "Come here."

Grinning, Justin said, "Your mike --"

"It's not live," Lance said. He pulled off the microphone and tossed it to the ground. "Come here," he said again, drawing Justin closer.

Justin placed his hands on the door on either side of Lance's head and leaned down over him. "What do you have in mind?" he whispered, his voice thick. Lance's hand came up between them and caressed Justin's chest through his sleeveless black shirt.

Watching his hand trace along the design in Justin's shirt, Lance pouted. "I just thought maybe we could ..." He shrugged. "You looked so damn fine out there on stage. I love the way you move." He looked up at Justin, his eyes wide and oh so green, and then he grabbed Justin's collar and pulled him down into a rough kiss. His tongue licked along Justin's lips before diving between them to taste the cool wetness of Justin's mouth. Justin caught his breath at the intensity of Lance's desire, running like a current beneath his kiss.

"Wow," Justin whispered when Lance released him. He brushed Lance's hair from his forehead and leaned closer, until his eyelashes fluttered against Lance's cheek. "Do you know how much it turns me on when you get like this?" he asked.

Running his hands down Justin's chest, Lance grabbed fistfuls of Justin's shirt at his waist and pulled his body against his own. He felt Justin's hardening erection through his jeans, and he rubbed his knee up Justin's thigh, pressing gently into his crotch. Justin moaned against him, breathless, and Lance's lips found Justin's again. Justin ran his hands down Lance's bare arms, savoring the feel of his lover's flesh beneath his touch. Breaking their kiss, Lance murmured, "Tell me what we're going to

do tonight."

Kissing Lance's chin, Justin whispered, "We're going to change clothes ..." His tongue licked along the curve of Lance's jaw, tasting salty sweat. "We're going to go back to the auditorium ..." He kissed Lance's cheek, trailing tiny kisses around his ear until he caught Lance's earlobe in his mouth. "We're going to watch the rest of the show ..." Lance moaned softly as Justin bit his ear gently and then kissed behind it, nuzzling his neck. "When it's all over, we're going to go back to the hotel, and I'm going to undress you --"

"Tell me how," Lance breathed, easing his hands between them. He rubbed the bulge at Justin's crotch, and Justin's sharp intake of breath was all the encouragement he needed to work Justin's zipper down. Slipping his hand into Justin's jeans, he stroked Justin's thick cock through his underwear, and Justin thrust against his hand. "Tell me how you'll undress me, Justin," Lance whispered again.

Licking his lips, Justin kissed along Lance's neck. When he spoke, his words tickled Lance's skin. "First I'll start with your jacket," he whispered. "I'll push it down off of your shoulders and let it fall to the floor." He kissed beneath Lance's chin, sucking gently. "Then I'll unbuckle your belt and unzip your jeans --" Lance pressed along Justin's erection, cutting off Justin's words for a moment. He sighed into the hollow of Lance's neck. "And then I'll pull off your shirt, and tear off your jeans, and love you --"

Lance chuckled softly. "What about my underwear?" he asked.

"Dammit, Lance," Justin growled. "I'll rip that off, too."

"And then what?" Lance asked. "You'll still have all your clothes on."

"I'll take all of them off, too," Justin said. He licked Lance's throat, his tongue wet and soft along Lance's skin. "Stop being so contrary."

Lance laughed as Justin's lips closed over his. "And then what?" Lance asked into Justin's mouth.

Justin thrust against Lance's hand, rubbing his hard erection against him. "And then I'll kiss you and love you all night long."

"That's a little ambiguous," Lance said. "Tell me how."

Justin sighed. "Lance!" he cried, exasperated. "I don't want to talk right now."

Grinning, Lance asked innocently, "What do you want to do?"

Taking Lance's hand in his, Justin stepped back from the door, his eyes smoldering. Lance stood his ground for a moment. "The others will be wondering about us --"

"Let them wonder," Justin replied, and Lance let him pull him away from the door.

But Lance couldn't help but tease Justin just a little bit. "Justin, we have to get back soon --"

"Lance," Justin whined, sitting down in the nearest chair. He reached for Lance and pulled him down towards him. Lance placed a knee on either side of Justin's legs and sat on Justin's lap. "Stop being so mean to me."

"I'm not being mean," Lance said, running his hands down the front of Justin's shirt. He poked at the bulge of Justin's erection and said softly, "I wish we could go back to the hotel right now."

"Me, too," Justin murmured. He began to unbutton Lance's shirt. When he got the first three buttons done, he slipped his hands inside and rubbed Lance's nipples gently. Lance closed his eyes and leaned into Justin's touch. Bending over Justin, Lance kissed Justin's neck, his cheeks, his lips. Justin tore at the other buttons on Lance's shirt until they came free, and then he ran his hands around Lance's back, beneath the fabric, along Lance's bare skin. Lance hugged the back of the chair, pressing himself deeper into Justin's mouth, hungry for him.

Someone pounded on the dressing room door. "Open this up, you guys!" Chris called through the door.

"Go away," Justin called out. "We're busy right now."

The pounding came again, harder this time. "Justin, open up," JC called. "You two have had plenty of time to get dressed."

"Is that what we were supposed to be doing?" Lance whispered against Justin's neck.

Kissing Lance, Justin raised his voice and said, "We're not finished yet."

"Hey!" Joey called out, and Lance jumped at the suddenness of his voice. Justin hugged him closer and giggled. "Hey, anyone got a key to this room?" The doorknob rattled loudly.

Lance stroked Justin's swollen cock through his underwear and grinned. "Five minutes," he called out, his eyes never leaving Justin's face. He watched as Justin closed his eyes and leaned back in the seat, moaning loudly as Lance pressed against his dick. "Just give us five more minutes."

"Please," Justin hissed, though Lance was quite sure none of the others heard him. "Oh Lance, please --"

The doorknob rattled again. "Lance!" JC called, his voice harsh. "Unlock this door now! Justin!"

"Shit," Lance muttered, standing up.

Justin caught his wrist. "Lance, no," he whispered. "Please, no, don't let them in here. I don't want this to be over so soon."

"I don't either, baby," Lance replied, smiling sadly. He looked at Justin's flushed cheeks and pouty lips, and he wanted to stay locked away in this small dressing room with him forever. "We've only got what, another hour?"

"And then interviews," Justin said, groaning, "and the limo ride back to the hotel, and we'll have to beg off from all of those parties ..."

"And finally end up in our room," Lance pointed out, "alone for the first time all day long. Think of what fun we'll have."

A slow smile spread across Justin's face. He looked up at Lance with hooded eyes and smirked. "We won't get any sleep tonight."

"Not if we're lucky," Lance replied. He pulled Justin to his feet and caught him in a quick embrace. Kissing him tenderly, he whispered, "Until tonight."

Justin's lips covered his greedily. When he pulled back, he tugged at Lance's lower lip, unwilling to let go. "Tonight," he agreed as the guys outside pounded on the door again.

Lance zipped up Justin's pants and smiled. "They're going to be pissed that we aren't even dressed yet."

"I know," Justin said, grinning. He pulled his shirt off quickly and turned away, searching for his sweater. Only another hour or two, he told himself. He could wait that long. But just barely.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 7 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

JC saw the frustration in Justin's eyes when the show ended and they walked their mothers to the limo that would take them back to the hotel, and he thought it wouldn't hurt anything if Justin sat next to Lance at the post-show interview with MTV. "Just don't do anything," he cautioned as Justin flashed him a dazzling smile and hurried to catch up with Lance, walking between Joey and Chris. Justin leaped onto Lance's back, and Lance staggered forward, laughing as he caught Justin's legs in his hands and carried him piggyback style. In a room set aside for the interviews, Justin sat between Joey and Lance on the tiny couch, covering his microphone every few minutes to whisper something in Lance's ear. Chris clambered over the back of the couch and squeezed next to Joey on the end, and JC sighed as he sat on the floor, so eager for this night to be over already.

Fortunately, the interview went quickly. Kurt Loder asked them a few questions about the shows, the awards they had won, and the evening's performances, and that was it. Afterwards they milled around outside of the interviewing area, a little uncertain of what to do next. JC watched the indecision flit across Chris's face as he debated in his mind what to do, and then he took a deep breath and said, "I've got to go, guys."

Smiling, JC nodded. "We know," he said. He knew Chris was going to break up with Dani -- though no one told him outright, it was hard to miss the way the two of them had acted towards each other all night long, the cold shoulders, the short words, the frowns and sighs and glares that made JC wonder how Chris could stand sitting next to her if she was bothering him that much. He had been afraid this would happen when he told Joey about Chris's infatuation with him. He knew that if Joey was insistent enough, he could win Chris over, and eventually one of them -- Dani or Joey -- would have to go. JC sighed and watched as Joey walked with Chris a little ways away from the group to talk with him, and he couldn't help but wonder if this was the way it was meant to be.

Chris felt Joey's hand on his shoulder, and he was grateful for the touch. He wasn't looking forward to the limo ride back to Dani's hotel, her icy attitude, her silence, her emotionless eyes. When had it come to this between them? Once they had been the best of friends, and now ... what? They hated each other? No, that wasn't right -- he didn't hate her. He just felt chained to her, and he didn't want that. He wanted to be free. Then did they have nothing civil to say to each other anymore? He didn't know. He wanted to find out, and he hoped that the dread building inside of him at the thought of what they'd say to each other was overblown. He stopped across the hall from the others and turned towards Joey. Behind him, Chris could see JC watching them with a troubled gaze, a slight frown on his face. Justin and Lance stood slightly behind him, leaning against the wall, Justin's arm around Lance's waist and Lance's head on Justin's shoulder.

Turning his attention to Joey, Chris smiled sadly and said, "Well." Suddenly he didn't want to leave, at least not with Dani.

Joey touched his cheek, his fingers cool and gentle. "It's going to be okay, Chris, really. Just remember what I told you earlier. I'll be waiting."

Chris nodded. "Okay," he said. Why was this so hard? "Joe, I ..." He sighed. Searching Joey's face, he whispered, "Dani and I were great once. We were such good friends. How did it come to this? What if the same thing happens to us?"

"It won't," Joey said, anger creeping into his voice. He leveled a finger at Chris and said, "Don't worry about that, Chris. That won't happen to us. No matter what we do, we'll always be best friends. Do you hear me?"

Chris nodded again, relieved. He knew Joey wasn't like Dani, but he still wanted to hear the words spoken out loud. "Well, I better go," he said, sighing. He looked around the hall, still fairly crowded with celebrities and reporters, and he waved at the others. JC and Justin waved back; Lance had his eyes closed and didn't see him. Then Chris noticed Eminem coming out of the interview room, and on a whim, he waved again.

To his surprise, Eminem raised his hand in a halfhearted wave and headed their way. "Don't look now," Chris said, and Joey turned around as the rapper came up to them. Chris glanced at the others, grinning at the shock on JC's face. Justin shook Lance awake as Chris said, "Hey."

Eminem didn't smile back. "Hey," he said, holding out a hand that Joey shook heartily.

"Em, my man!" Joey cried loudly, laughing. He clapped Eminem on the back and winked at Chris. "You really stole the show tonight. What'd you get, three awards? Four? That fucking rocks."

"Well," Eminem said, shoving his hands into the pockets of his oversized jacket, "you guys didn't do too badly yourselves. You won the fan award. Isn't that the only one that counts?"

Chris shrugged. "Depends on who you talk to," he said. Looking up at Joey, he added, "Joe, I've got to get going. Dani's waiting."

Joey smiled sadly. "Call me if you need to," he said, punching Chris's arm playfully. Chris punched him back and turned away, laughing. Joey watched him until he vanished into the crowd, and then he turned back to Eminem. "So where's your posse?" he asked, grinning.

Eminem shrugged. "Around here somewhere." Nodding at the others behind them, he asked, "That yours?"

Joey waved jauntily at them, pleased to see the stunned looks on their faces. "Yeah," he said. "They're good boys. Not your type, maybe, but I like them."

Nodding, Eminem said, "I just wanted to say, um ... no hard feelings, right?" He looked up at Joey, his eyes questioning.

"None at all," Joey said. "Hell, if you can't laugh at yourself now and

then, you're in the wrong business."

Eminem laughed. "I liked your performance. Not the whole thing, just that bit with the ..." He waved his hands and Joey laughed.

"The hold up guys, I'm out of breath part?" he asked, pretending to wheeze.

"Yeah, that." Looking over Joey's large build, Eminem said, "I'm surprised a white boy like you can dance."

Joey grinned. "I'm surprised a white boy like you can rap."

For a moment something flashed behind Eminem's eyes, and then he laughed. "Some say I can't."

"What the fuck do they know?" Joey asked.

"Who the fuck cares?" Eminem asked, agreeing with him.

From across the hall, JC raised his voice. "Joey?" he called out. When Joey turned towards them, JC nodded towards the exit. "You coming?"

Eminem glared at JC. "Maybe I'll see you around," he said.

"Sure," Joey said, knowing he'd probably never see the rapper again. "Congrats again, man. And I mean it."

"Thanks," Eminem said softly as Joey ran over to where the others were.

"You made a new friend," Lance said, grinning, as Joey came up to them.

Joey blushed lightly. "He just wanted to congratulate us."

"Congratulate you," JC pointed out, leading the way to the limos. "He didn't come over here and start talking to us."

Joey shrugged. "Maybe because you guys didn't go out of your way to talk to him. He ain't that bad."

Justin frowned and looked back over his shoulder, but Eminem had disappeared into the crowd. "You kidding? He hates us. What the hell ever possessed you to talk to him in the first place? He could've killed you."

Joey sighed, exasperated. "Justin, shut up."

Justin punched Joey's shoulder hard, and Joey turned around, ready to fight. His face was bunched with a sudden anger, and he saw Justin's emotions running behind his eyes, the frustration and desire building up all night long, looking for a release, an outlet, any outlet. And why are you angry? Joey asked himself. Not because he hit you but because you're worried about Chris. So don't take that out on Justin. Don't give him a reason to fight you, not when you two are finally becoming friends again. When JC pulled at Joey's arm, Joey dropped his fist. Lance stepped a little in front of Justin and frowned. "You guys stop it," he said. Looking back at Justin, he asked, "Please?"

"Fine," Joey said, shrugging off JC's hand. He started to walk away, his steps long and furious. JC hurried to catch up, Lance pulling Justin along behind them.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 8 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Chris followed Dani to her room in silence. They hadn't said a word to each other on the way to the hotel, sitting far apart on either end of the back seat of the limo, staring out opposite windows, each lost in their own thoughts. Chris prayed things went smoothly between them, but when he saw the flint in her eyes and the steely set of her jaw, he knew he was just kidding himself. He wished they could just come right out and say it, just say goodbye and leave it at that. But no, they had to be adults about it, they had to talk it through.

He didn't want to do that. He just wanted to leave.

Dani unlocked her door and stepped inside, clicking the light on. Chris followed her, closing the door behind him. Kicking off her heels, Dani stood in front of the dresser and looked at herself in the mirror. The reflection of her eyes shifted to him, her gaze running down his body and then back up again to meet his eyes. He couldn't read the emotion behind her cool dark gaze, and he sat down on the edge of the bed. Running a hand through his hair, he sighed shakily. "Joey was right," he said softly, looking at her back. "You look gorgeous tonight."

"Thank you," she replied.

As she took off her earrings, Chris said, "Thank you for bringing my dogs."

"You're welcome," she said. "Chris --"

"Dani," he said, cutting her off, but he just sighed again, unsure of what to say. "Thank you for coming tonight. I appreciate it."

"Do you?" she asked. She turned around and faced him, a slight frown on her face. Studying him for a moment, she sighed and said, "Chris, we need to talk."

"I know," he whispered. But why was it suddenly so hard to find the words that needed to be said?

Dani closed her eyes. "Chris, I want you to know that I love you." Chris covered his mouth with the back of his hand, trying to stifle a sob. He didn't want to hear this, not now, not with Joey on his mind. He had wanted this to be easy, but he looked at the set of her chin and knew it wouldn't be.

"Dani, don't --"

She interrupted him. "But I'm not in love with you, Chris. Not anymore."

Chris blinked back tears that suddenly clouded his vision. "What the

hell is that supposed to mean?" he asked bitterly. "You see that in a movie somewhere, or read it in a book? What the fuck do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I don't ..." Dani sighed and turned away. Leaning on the dresser, she hung her head and whispered, "I'm in love with someone else."

"Fuck," Chris said softly. Hadn't he suspected as much? Yes. But that didn't stop the pain and anger and hurt from welling up inside of him. "Who is it?" Chris asked. "Someone I know?"

"No," she whispered. Taking a deep breath, she said, "Someone I work with, but you don't know him. I'm ... I'm sorry."

"The fuck you are," Chris replied, giving into his anger. "How long, Dani? How long have you been seeing him? How long have you been fucking me around?"

Turning towards him, she crossed her arms in front of her chest and covered her eyes with one hand. "A while now," she admitted. "Jesus, Chris, I didn't want to hurt you." She looked at him with large, almond eyes that pleaded for him to understand. "Do you have any idea how lonely it is, to lie in bed while your boyfriend is on tour? I never got a chance to see you anymore, you rarely called, I felt like you were slipping away from me. And ... and I just didn't have the strength to hold on, not anymore."

"You want to talk about loneliness?" Chris asked through clenched teeth. "Try spending all day on the road, every night in a different bed, a sterile bed, alone. Wake up in the morning just to move on. What the fuck do you know about loneliness?"

Dani's lips thinned out into that fine white line he knew so well. "Don't you dare get righteous on me, Christopher Alan," she said, pointing at him. "You want to talk about lonely? Then tell me why the hell Joey answered the phone when I called your room one morning. Tell me that."

"Joey --?" Chris's mind whirled. "When was this?" He tried to think back over the past few months. He had spent the night in Joey's arms for the first time back at the rancher, in California, when Dani first told him she fooled around with someone else. After that they didn't do anything until just recently, except ... except for that one time, his mind whispered, that time Joey walked in on Justin and Lance and he didn't want to sleep alone. You invited him to your bed then, remember? "When --"

"Do you think I'm blind?" Dani cried, tears shining unshed in her eyes. She blinked rapidly, trying to keep them from falling. "Do you think I wasn't going to figure it out? Jesus, Chris, I knew about Steven. I knew about all those guys you used to pick up at clubs -- Molly all but told me when we started going out."

Molly -- "She told you?" He had sworn her to secrecy. Then again, when he brought Dani home for the first time, his sisters were smitten with her, and he should've known that girls talked to each other about stuff like that. But he hadn't thought his own sister would tell his girlfriend

that he liked guys. Pursing his lips, he asked, "Why didn't you say anything to me?"

"What was I supposed to say?" Dani replied, pouting. "Chris, do you like to get fucked by other guys?"

Leaping to his feet, Chris grabbed her shoulders and shook her slightly. She met his livid gaze boldly, her jaw set. He stared at her red eyes, her flushed cheeks, trying to control his anger, not trusting himself to speak. "Let me go," she whispered. When he didn't release her, she shrugged in his tight grip. "Chris, let go now."

He pushed her back against the dresser and turned away. "Fuck you, Dani," he said bitterly, wiping a hand down his face. Heading for the door, he said, "I'm leaving. Goodbye."

"Chris, wait," she sobbed, and he turned to find tears coursing down her face in thin black lines. She wiped at her cheeks, smearing the makeup across them in long dirty streaks. She tugged at the ring on her finger that he gave her last Christmas. "Oh, fuck," she sighed. "Please come off, please --"

"Dani," he sighed, his anger drying up like ink to leave him feeling hard and scorched. His bones felt hollow and brittle, and the tears he thought he would cry as he left burned in his eyes but refused to fall. "Keep it. It was a gift, Dani. Keep it."

She looked at him with sad eyes and whispered, "I'm sorry, Chris, really I am. I just ... how could I hope to compete with someone like Joey? Someone you see every minute of every day? I can't ... He's like the air you breathe. I can't be that for you."

Biting his lip, Chris mumbled, "It just hurts to know you were ... you cheated on me, Dani."

"I told you about it," she replied. "At first that was all that happened, that one night."

"And that's when ..." Chris sighed and looked at the ceiling, not able to look at her. "That's when Joey and I -- Dani, believe me, it was nothing at first. To him, anyway. Part of me always wanted it, and I was pissed at you, and I was a little drunk, and I was so alone ..." He dared to look at her, eyeliner runneling down her face in faint lines like soft watercolors running in the rain. "I didn't know you called that morning. That was the only other time we ... I didn't know you called."

Dani lowered her eyes. Twisting her hands together, she admitted, "You wouldn't have. I hung up when he answered. I heard the sleep in his voice and just hung up the phone. And then ..." She sighed, a shaky sound that rattled like bones in her chest. "That's when I let myself ... I mean, that's when I called --"

"I get the picture," Chris said, holding up a hand to cut her off. "So you just came out here to what, give me my dogs?" She nodded. "Tell me we're through?" She nodded again. "And you know what? I came here to tell you the same thing."

She laughed, a sound that held echoes of madness in it. "Oh fuck, Chris," she said, smiling through her tears, "so now what?"

He shrugged. "You go back to whoever it is you have waiting for you, I guess," he said. "And I'll ... I'll go back to Joey."

"And what about us?" she asked softly.

"There is no us," Chris replied. "Not anymore."

Pushing her hair back from her face, Dani took a deep breath to compose herself. "Can't we be friends again?" she asked. "I mean, I still like you, Chris. I still care for you. I just don't want to sleep with you anymore. Isn't there some way we can still be cool with everything else? Like we were before?"

Chris sighed. "I don't know," he admitted. "I just ... I don't know." He looked at her and smiled sadly. "Don't worry -- you don't have to start looking for a new job. You're great for the business. This doesn't change that."

She smiled, relieved. "Thanks," she whispered. "Chris, I'm sorry."

"Me, too," he whispered. "I'm leaving now, Dani. I'll ... I'll call you sometime."

He watched her wipe the makeup from her eyes, her fingers coming away black. Her eyes looked bruised and swollen. "Okay," she said, nodding. "Goodbye."

As he waited for the elevator to take him down to the lobby, Chris pressed his thumb and forefinger against his eyelids until he saw red spots float across his vision. "Jesus," he whispered. He had hoped he would feel light and free when he left Dani's room, but instead he felt dirty and tired and depressed. He thought of calling Joey and asking him to come pick him up -- the thought of riding back to his hotel in that limo alone was almost too much to bear. But he didn't want Joey to see him like this. So he waited for the elevator doors to open and told himself he wouldn't cry.

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 9 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

In the limo back to the hotel, Justin held Lance's hand and resisted the almost overwhelming urge to pull him closer. But the back window of the limo wasn't tinted, and he didn't want JC to get all bent out of shape just because someone might see them. Across from them, Joey laid stretched out across the seat, his eyes closed, one hand over his worried brow. His legs were in JC's lap, and JC stared out the window, stealing glances every now and then at Joey's face. JC's hands were on the seat beside him, almost as if he were afraid of touching Joey. At one point on the ride home, the limo stopped suddenly, and JC placed a hand on Joey's leg to keep him from sliding into the floor. He looked around at the others guiltily but didn't remove his hand when the limo started to move forward again.

When the limo eased to a stop in front of their hotel, Justin didn't wait for the doorman. He pushed out of the limo, pulling Lance with him, and didn't even bother with the revolving doors. Instead he led Lance to the cart entrance, where a bellhop was pushing a cart full of luggage into the hotel. Lance laughed as Justin squeezed past the cart. "Justin, wait," he called out as Justin all but ran to the elevators, Lance's hand tight in his.

"I can't wait," Justin said, a silly grin plastered over his face. He glanced back and saw JC and Joey just getting out of the limo, Joey laughing at them. Let him laugh, Justin thought, pressing the button for the elevator. When Lance stopped beside him, he leaned against Justin, and Justin could feel his slight erection through his jeans. "Come on," Justin pleaded, watching the lights above the elevator as the car slowly traveled down to the lobby.

When the doors opened, Lance pulled Justin inside. "Hey!" JC called as he extracted himself from the revolving doors. "Wait up, guys."

"As if," Justin said, holding the close button until the doors eased shut. He pushed the button for their floor and prayed that no one interrupted them. Then the car started to move, and Lance's hands were on his chest, grabbing his sweater and pulling him close. Justin stumbled into Lance and pressed him against the wall, his hands cradling Lance's head as their lips met. Lance kissed him hungrily as Justin thrust against him, and Lance's hands slid down between them to fumble with the button of Justin's pants. "Lance," Justin moaned as Lance unzipped his pants and stroked his hard erection through the thin fabric of his boxer briefs. With eager hands, Justin pulled Lance's shirt out of his jeans and unzipped them, the button holding them closed popping off in his haste. "Oh fuck."

Lance laughed. "Guess I won't wear this again," he said, and then Justin's hands were in his pants, rubbing and squeezing and all he could do was close his eyes and let the sensation of Justin's familiar touch wash over him. When he opened his mouth to moan, Justin was there, covering Lance's lips with his own. Lance ran his hands around Justin's waist and

slipped them beneath his pants and underwear to cup Justin's tight buttocks. He pulled Justin against him as his tongue explored Justin's mouth, hot and wet and oh so sweet.

The elevator eased to a stop, and Lance pulled Justin towards the doors, not quite willing to let go of him completely. Justin's hands held onto Lance's waist, his mouth sucking along Lance's neck as Lance leaned against the doors, waiting for them to open. Justin reached down into Lance's underwear and rubbed below his hard cock, massaging Lance's balls. Lance's knees went weak with desire, and when the doors opened, he staggered out into the hallway and fell to the ground, pulling Justin down with him. He rolled over in Justin's embrace and Justin's mouth found his, his tongue licking through Lance's lips greedily as he thrust his hips against Lance's. "Justin," Lance moaned, risking a quick look around the empty hall. "Baby, we can't --"

Justin silenced him with another kiss. Lance gripped Justin's curls in both hands and pulled him down against him, and then Justin was kissing his cheeks, his chin, his neck, his lips hungry for him. "Justin," Lance whispered. "Jesus, Justin, we have to get to our room, baby."

Justin's hand strayed across Lance's stomach, tickling him before it slipped lower to stroke his aching erection. "I don't know if I can make it to the room," Justin breathed. "Dammit, Lance, I've wanted you all night long."

Lance began to giggle. "We're in the middle of the hallway," he pointed out. He looked up to see the numbers above the other elevator slow to a stop at their floor. Pushing Justin up, he said, "Someone's coming. Get up."

Justin looked over his shoulder as the elevator doors opened and JC stood there, his arms crossed, his lips pulled into a tight frown. "You couldn't wait two seconds for us, could you?" he asked angrily.

Behind him Joey caught one glance of Lance and Justin on the floor and started to laugh. "You guys can't even wait to get to your room," he said, grinning. "Now that's bad."

Justin scrambled to his feet and helped Lance up. Glaring at Joey, he was about to say something when JC covered his eyes and said, "Justin, zip it up, will you?"

"At least I'm not hanging out," Justin mumbled, tugging the flaps of his pants closed, but he didn't zip them up. He pushed Lance down the hall, stumbling after him. "I guess I don't really need to hang out the Do Not Disturb sign now, do I?"

Joey laughed. "We'll knock every five minutes," he called after them, "just for not waiting for us."

"You do and you're dead!" Justin promised. Lance stopped at their door, smiling. "Give me the key," he said softly.

Justin grinned at him. "Find it," he whispered. Leaning against Lance, he kissed Lance's neck and breathed, "It's in one of my pockets."

Lance laughed a deep, throaty laugh that enflamed Justin's senses. Slipping his hands into Justin's back pockets, he squeezed Justin's buttocks gently. "Found it," he whispered, removing the key from one of the pockets. He ran it through the card lock and Justin turned the door handle. The door pushed open, tumbling them into the room. Lance landed on the floor again, and as Justin kicked the door closed behind them, he pulled Justin down on top of him. "The bed's over there," Justin whispered.

"Since when do you have the patience to wait until we get into bed?" Lance countered. He tugged at Justin's sweater impatiently. "Take this thing off."

Justin complied. The air-conditioned temperature cooled his skin until Lance's hands drifted over his muscles, teasing his nipples erect. He straddled Lance and, leaning down over him, began to kiss Lance hungrily. Pushing Lance's jean jacket back off of his shoulders, he tried to pull off the jacket and Lance's shirt at the same time. "Lance," he whined, sitting back a little bit. "Help me here."

Lance sat up enough to shrug out of the jacket, and then Justin had his shirt up over his head, blinding him. With his hands caught in the fabric, Justin kissed Lance's nipples, his tongue drawing circles around them until they ached. "Justin, please," Lance sighed, arching his back to press his nipple into Justin's mouth. He shook off the shirt and let Justin push him back to the floor. Beneath him, the thick carpet was rough and smelled slightly musty, but Lance was beyond caring. As Justin's tongue trailed between his nipples, Lance tried to push Justin's pants down, but the angle was all wrong. "Justin, this isn't working," Lance said, sighing.

"I know," Justin admitted. Rolling off of Lance, he kicked his pants down to his ankles as Lance shoved his own jeans down, too. Their underwear followed suit, and before Justin could do anything Lance was on top of him, pushing him back to the floor, his thick hardness rubbing insistently against Justin's stiff erection. "My turn," Lance whispered, licking Justin's nipples as if they were candy.

Moaning beneath him, Justin grabbed Lance's ass in both hands and pulled his legs up until he straddled Justin's hips. His fingers eased into Lance, widening him, and Lance sighed his name. Justin let Lance shift down his legs, and then Lance's hot mouth closed over Justin's throbbing dick, his tongue working over the tip of his penis until Justin thought he would explode. "Lance, stop it," he said, breathless, "please."

Lance pulled away, his saliva cooling on Justin's cock, and then he was back over Justin, kissing along the curve of Justin's jaw. Justin spread Lance's buttocks again and eased his hard length into his lover, slowly at first, mindful of the lack of lubrication. But then Lance shifted, pushing Justin further into him, and Justin thrust into Lance, savoring the tightness, the heat, the pressure on his dick. Between them, Lance's erection rubbed along Justin's lower belly, hard and thick and swollen. Justin held Lance's hips as he thrust up into him over and over again, his thoughts a mantra repeating finally, yes, finally, my God, yes yes yesyesyes. He felt Lance come, his juices hot and wet between them. "Oh God," Justin moaned, and he cried out Lance's name as his own orgasm flooded his system and he came, holding Lance down as he thrust as far inside of him as he could, his mind numb with desire and the relief of

release.

Lance fell down over him like a puppet whose strings had been cut. "Justin," he breathed against Justin's throat, and Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's back, hugging him close. Inside Lance, Justin's erection softened, but he wasn't ready to pull out, not yet. After being kept apart all night long, Justin didn't want to let go now. Cuddling into Justin's embrace, Lance whispered, "I'm going to have rug burns on my knees in the morning."

Justin laughed softly. "I've got them on my butt," he said.

Raising his head, Lance leaned down over Justin's face and smiled. "I never thought I could want you so badly," he said, kissing Justin's nose.

"I never thought we'd make it to the room," Justin admitted. He ran a hand through Lance's hair, smoothing it down. "We should sit apart at every public event," he suggested, "if the sex is this good afterwards."

Lance grinned. "I don't know if I can do that again. I almost gave in when we managed to get that dressing room to ourselves."

"You?" Justin asked. "Shit, Lance, I was so ready to just throw off the rest of the show. I didn't care who walked in on us at that point." Pulling Lance down into a lingering kiss, he whispered, "Did I tell you how much I love you today?"

"You might have," Lance replied, covering Justin with hungry kisses, "but tell me again."

All I Ever Wanted
115. A Star-Studded Affair
Part 10 of 10
by NSyncGrrl

Joey laughed as he passed the closed door to Justin and Lance's room. "Must be nice to be that young and that energetic," he said, grinning.

Beside him JC shrugged. "And that in love."

Joey looked at him sharply, trying to read the expression in his friend's eyes, but all he saw was an exhaustion that they both felt. "Why didn't you hook up with Britney tonight?" he asked softly, continuing down the hallway.

JC shrugged again. "She's not really my type," he admitted.

Joey grinned. Elbowing JC, he said, "She doesn't have to be your type once you get the lights out."

"I'm not like that," JC said, a slight smile on his face as Joey's suggestive tone. Pausing in front of Joey's room, he asked, "You waiting for Chris?"

"Yeah," Joey replied. He looked around and pointed to the hotel lounge, across the hall from his room. "You wanna wait with me?"

JC nodded. "I can," he said, following Joey into the lounge. They sat on an old loveseat, JC looking at the small TV while Joey sat sideways on the couch, his arm along the back, watching the hall for Chris's arrival. Twisting his hands in his lap, JC risked a glance at Joey and asked, "So you two are going to, um ..."

Joey shrugged. "You were right, Josh," he said, smiling at the memory of Chris in his arms. "He wants me. Me. That's all I ever asked for, from anyone."

Frowning slightly, JC asked, "What about Dani?"

"I'm waiting to find out myself," Joey admitted. He hoped things between Chris and Dani were resolved tonight. He knew it was going to be difficult, to break off something like that, and he knew that for days and weeks and months afterwards he would be shaking out pieces of Dani's relationship with Chris, like slivers of a broken mirror that had embedded themselves into the carpet of Chris's life. But he had been there before, cleaning up after a messy ending, and he wanted to be there for Chris so badly that he almost wished Chris would call him to come by Dani's hotel and pick him up. You told him you were waiting, he thought. He knows that. So just wait. Joey sighed. Looking at JC, he noticed the thin lines by his friend's eyes and asked quietly, "Does it bother you?"

"What?" JC asked, a little too sharply. He looked up at Joey, his eyes narrowed, and studied him.

Joey shrugged and looked away from the intensity of JC's gaze. "Us hooking up," he said.

"Why should it?" JC asked, but Joey saw the way his hands picked nervously at his coat and he wondered that himself.

"Sometimes I think ..." Joey let the thought trail off. Looking at JC, he asked, "Are you lonely?"

"What?" JC asked again. Before Joey could elaborate, he shook his head and turned away, but Joey saw something flash behind his eyes that belied his words. "No. I'm ... no. I've got the music, I've got you guys --"

"But is that enough?" Joey asked softly. When JC didn't answer right away, Joey continued, "Sometimes I don't think it is."

JC sighed shakily and put a hand over his eyes. "I'm tired, Joey," he said, his voice low. "Please ... let's not talk about this right now, okay? There's nothing to talk about. We're just waiting for Chris."

Joey heard the elevator doors open down the hall. "JC --" he started, reaching out for him. He placed a hand on JC's shoulder, but JC shrugged it away.

"Please," JC whispered. He took a deep breath and met Joey's frank gaze, his eyes red.

Joey touched JC's hand, about to say something else, when Chris peeked around the corner into the lounge. When Joey looked up at him, Chris smiled weakly. His eyes were red and swollen, and the way he wiped at them told Joey that the storm hadn't passed yet. "Hey," Chris said gruffly.

"Hey," Joey replied. He crossed his arms on the back of the couch and looked at Chris. "How'd it go?"

Chris shrugged. "I don't really feel like talking about it right now," he said, glancing at JC.

"Well," JC said, standing up, "I'm going to bed. See you guys in the morning." As he left the lounge, he clapped Chris on the shoulder. Without turning back to look at Joey, JC left.

Chris watched him walk down the hallway to his room. "Joe?" he asked quietly. He turned back towards the lounge and found Joey still watching him intently. "Can we go ..." He sighed. "I mean, can we ..." He pointed at Joey's room across the hall.

"Sure," Joey said, standing up. He stretched as he walked around the table, and when he reached the doorway, he placed his arms around Chris's neck. Leaning down, he set his forehead against Chris's and stared into his friend's troubled eyes. Chris held onto Joey's elbows and blinked away a fresh wave of tears that threatened to fall. "You going to be okay, Chris?" Joey asked softly.

"I'm going to try," Chris replied. He sighed again and looked at Joey's face, his gaze lingering on Joey's mouth. Then he looked down at Joey's

arms around his neck, and his hands trailed across their strong length with the gentlest of touches. "Joey, I know you were looking forward to tonight, but I'm just not ... I don't think I'm ... I mean --"

"You're not in the mood," Joey prompted, and Chris nodded. "I understand. Shit, I've waited this long, haven't I? What's one more night?" He smiled and kissed Chris's nose, bringing a smile to Chris's face, as well. "You want to go into my room?"

"Please," Chris whispered, raising his eyes to meet Joey's. Joey draped an arm across Chris's shoulders and led the way across the hall. As he unlocked the door, he felt Chris's arms snake around his waist, and Chris curled into his chest the way Joey often saw Lance snuggle against Justin. He hugged Chris tightly and closed the door behind them. "Let me turn on a light," he started, but Chris shook his head.

"You don't have to," he replied. "Joey, just hold me, please."

With slow, deliberate steps, Joey helped Chris to the bed. Chris sat down on the edge and began to pull off his jacket. As Joey's eyes adjusted to the darkness, he began to undress, kicking off his shoes and pulling down his jeans, until he just stood in his boxers and t-shirt. Chris stood up and tugged at the hem of the shirt. "This too," he whispered.

Joey pulled off the t-shirt as well. He felt Chris's warm hands against his cool skin, tracing his muscles with a desperation Joey couldn't understand. Chris picked at his nipples, pinching them erect, almost as if he wanted to believe that Joey was real, that he was here with him in this room, that they were together. Without a word Joey eased Chris's shirt off over his head, tossing it aside, and then he kissed Chris gently, his lips soft on Chris's own. Chris's hands encircled Joey's neck, clutching at his hair as he pulled him down into their kiss. Joey laid Chris back on the bed, crawling over top of him, one knee on either side of Chris's body, and his hands roamed Chris's chest with soft caresses that only hinted at the urgency and lust running through Joey's veins.

Joey's hands found the waistband of Chris's jeans, and he unzipped them slowly, careful not to linger on the slight bulge at his friend's crotch. Chris didn't want to do anything tonight, nothing more than kiss, and Joey would respect that. There was plenty of time in the days to come for them to discover every inch of each other. Joey could wait one more night.

As he eased Chris's jeans down, he heard Chris's shoes hit the floor as he kicked them off. "Joey, I'm sorry," Chris whispered, running a hand down Joey's arm. "I know you want to --"

"Chris, I understand," Joey said as he got Chris's jeans completely off. Letting them fall to the floor, he crawled under the covers and, patting the bed beside him, said, "Come here."

Chris obeyed. As he slid beneath the sheets, his back to Joey, Joey pulled Chris tight against him. His strong arms enveloped Chris, his hands holding Chris's own, and he draped one leg over Chris's hips protectively. His own erection ached sweetly against Chris's buttocks, but he ignored it. Kissing Chris's ear, Joey whispered, "I know it hurts. When you want to talk about it --"

"I can talk about it now," Chris said. He shifted into a more comfortable position and burrowed closer to Joey. "She dumped me."

"You're kidding," Joey said softly, his teeth closing gently over the top of Chris's ear. How could she not want this man, who felt so warm, so alive, so right in his arms? He didn't know and he was glad that she had walked away from Chris, if only because Joey wanted him for himself.

Chris nodded, his hair tickling Joey's chest. "She's been cheating on me."

"You sort of knew that," Joey pointed out.

"I know," Chris whispered, "but that doesn't make it any less painful."

"I'm sorry," Joey breathed, his tongue licking the back of Chris's ear.

Chris shuddered from the pleasure in the simple touch. "She knew about us."

Joey kissed Chris's neck. "I figured she might," he admitted. "She wasn't exactly Ms. Congeniality around me, you know."

Chris sighed. "So I guess we sort of both fucked each other around," he said. He wiped at his eyes again, not wanting to cry.

"Are you still friends?" Joey asked.

"We'll see," Chris replied.

Suddenly a faint growling filled the room, and Chris laughed. It was a shaky, unstable sound, but at least it was a laugh. "Who's that?" Joey asked.

"Busta," Chris said, sniffing. "He growls when he sleeps."

Joey grinned against Chris's neck. "I almost forgot they were here," he admitted.

"They sleep hard," Chris replied. "When I come in from a show, they never wake up. They suck as watchdogs." The growling started again, and Chris called out sharply, "Busta!" The sound stopped. "He'll start up again in a few minutes."

"Chris?" Joey asked softly.

"Hmm?" Chris murmured.

Closing his eyes, Joey hugged Chris tightly. "I just want you to know that ... you don't know how much it means to me that you're here right now."

Wiggling closer to Joey, Chris replied, "I know. I can feel your appreciation hard and thick against my ass." Joey laughed. In a small voice, Chris whispered, "I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

All I Ever Wanted
116. Worth the Wait
by NSyncGrrl

Chris woke up slowly, Joey's warm, heavy weight pressed against him stirring his groin. Blinking in the gray light of the hotel room, he looked at the alarm clock. 6:24. The alarm was set to go off at seven, their flight back to Florida leaving at nine. Chris wondered when Dani's flight left. He sighed, remembering the night before, the way she looked, so lost, so alone, so small, with her makeup smeared down her cheeks in thin, black lines. He hoped she would be okay.

She'll be fine, his mind whispered, and in the pre-dawn light of a nondescript hotel room, he knew it was true. He would be fine, she would be fine, they would move on with their lives and put the times they shared behind them. They would move on. He wondered briefly who she had in her life now, but then he pushed the thought away. It didn't matter. She didn't want him, and he ... you have what you want, he told himself, snuggling back against Joey's body. He felt Joey shift behind him, his thick cock rubbing Chris's butt, and suddenly Chris wanted him. Now. "Joey?" he whispered.

Joey mumbled incoherently against Chris's back. Chris rolled over in Joey's arms and looked at him. In the faint light that shone through the closed curtains, Joey looked impossibly young. His hair was disheveled and unruly, standing straight up from his forehead, and Chris ran a finger along Joey's beard, tracing the curve of his jaw down to his lips. With soft, gentle strokes, Chris outlined Joey's lips with the tip of his finger. "Joe-ey," he breathed in a lilting voice. When Joey opened his mouth to respond, Chris slipped his finger inside the hot, wet darkness, and Joey moaned as he sucked on Chris's finger. Chris ran his other hand between them, trailing down Joey's warm belly and over the bulge in Joey's boxers. "Joe-ey," Chris breathed again, and he felt Joey's dick stir beneath his gentle touch.

Joey nipped Chris's finger playfully but his eyes stayed closed. Frowning, Chris eased his hand under Joey's boxers, entwining his fingers with thick, kinky hair before taking Joey's dick in his hand. Joey caught his breath and his eyes flew open, staring at Chris with that dark, sensual gaze of his. All signs of sleepiness were gone, and Chris felt Joey grow hard in his hand. "You ready?" Joey asked as Chris slid his finger out of Joey's mouth. "Or are you just playing around?"

"I want you," Chris whispered. He watched Joey lick his lips, felt Joey's arms around him tighten, and he grinned at the lust he saw in Joey's eyes. "Now. I'm sorry about last night."

"No need to be," Joey murmured, kissing Chris's neck. He rolled on top of Chris, pressing him into the bed as he thrust his hips against him. "Tell me again that you want me," he said.

"I do," Chris replied, his own erection beginning to throb where Joey leaned into him. "Oh God, Joey, I want you." He unsnapped Joey's boxers

and pushed them down just enough to ease his thick cock out of them. Squeezing gently, Chris stroked Joey's dick in both hands and closed his eyes as Joey kissed him, his lips opening Chris's own, his tongue licking inside his mouth.

Joey reached out for the table, fumbling for the small paper bag behind the alarm clock. Pulling the bag onto the bed, he broke away from Chris long enough to tear the brown paper open. Chris thrust up against Joey, his own erection aching beneath Joey's weight. "Sit up, Joe," he commanded.

Joey sat back on his knees and frowned at the box of glow-in-the-dark condoms in his hands. "I can't get this damn thing open," he said, frustrated. "Fuck."

"Give it to me," Chris said, taking the box from Joey. He tore open one end, tossing the cardboard aside, and dumped the contents of the box into his hand. When Joey reached for one of the condoms, Chris pulled back. "I want a blue one," he said, sifting through the individually wrapped condoms.

"Just give me one," Joey growled, but Chris grinned when he noticed that Joey managed to snag a blue one before he grabbed the rest out of Chris's hand and threw them behind him onto the bed. He bit the tiny square package and tore it open, splashing a few drops of lubrication onto Chris's stomach.

As Joey positioned the condom over the tip of his own penis, Chris said, "Let me help."

"I know how to do this," Joey replied, pinching the tip of the condom before easing it down around his hard shaft. The lubrication on the condom dripped onto Chris's leg, cool and damp.

"Well, fine," Chris said, laughing. Joey's swollen red skin turned the condom a deep purple color, and Chris watched as Joey's cheeks flushed from the pleasure of the tight latex around his dick. "Do you know how sexy you look?" Chris asked.

Joey grinned at him, a devilish smirk that only enhanced his appearance in Chris's mind. Before he could say anything, though, he had the condom completely on and Chris said, "It's not glowing."

"It's not really dark," Joey replied. He pushed Chris back on the bed and, hooking his fingers beneath the waistband of Chris's boxers, pulled the shorts off, exposing Chris's own thick erection. He ran a finger down the length of Chris's shaft, grinning as Chris leaned back and moaned loudly.

"Let me see," Chris said breathlessly. He pushed Joey's hand away and sat up.

Joey sighed in frustration. "Chris," he whined. "Jesus, just lay down already."

"In a minute," Chris said. He cupped his hands around his eyes and leaned forward.

"It's a little late for a blowjob," Joey said, grinning. "I already got the damn thing on." Chris ignored him and leaned down over Joey's erect penis, trying to block out the light with his hands. He thought he could see just a faint glow surrounding Joey's dick, a bluish light like fading neon. "Well?" Joey asked.

"I think we have to leave them out in the light longer," Chris replied, "but I can see it a little bit."

"Good," Joey said, pushing Chris back to the bed. "Then I guess they work, right? We can't take them back anyway -- they're all over the place, thanks to you."

Chris laughed. "Thanks to you," he said, pulling Joey down over him. "You're the one who couldn't get the damn box open. Now are you going to fuck me or what?" Joey kissed Chris hungrily, silencing him.

"You don't have to be so crude," Joey whispered. He slid one hand down Chris's body until he squeezed Chris's hard cock, and then his fingers brushed along Chris's balls, his touch feathery and intoxicating.

"Sometime today, Joe," Chris sighed.

"Tell me what to do," Joey said, kissing Chris's neck.

Chris laughed breathlessly. "Fuck, Joe, you've done this before."

"Only with girls," Joey replied.

"And this is no different," Chris said. "Only it's not as confusing. There's only one place to stick it."

Joey laughed against Chris's neck. "I've never had sex with anyone who talked as much as you do."

Chris grinned. "Joe --" he started, and then Joey eased one finger up inside of him, a sensation Chris hadn't felt in years, and his words died on his lips as he slid down onto Joey's hand. "Oh, Jesus Christ, Joe," he whispered as another finger slid into him.

"Is this right?" Joey asked, but Chris's closed eyes and open mouth was all the encouragement he needed. Spreading his fingers apart slowly, he guided his throbbing cock into Chris, holding onto the base of his dick to keep the condom in place. A look of discomfort flitted across Chris's features and was gone, wiped away as Joey thrust into him. Joey gasped as Chris's tight muscles pulled him deeper inside. "God," he moaned, thrusting into Chris. "You're so damn tight."

Chris grabbed onto Joey's ass, pulling him closer, further into him, as Joey thrust harder, deeper, faster. He hugged Chris to him, his body rubbing against Chris's hard dick with each thrust. Joey's breath was ragged in his ear, and Chris moaned loudly in rhythm with the thump of the bed against the wall. "Harder, Joe," he hissed, and Joey complied. "Fuck me harder, Joe." When Chris came, he felt his warm juices explode between them as if he had burst. A few hard thrusts later, Joey came too, driving deep inside of Chris as his orgasm ripped through him.

"Christ," Joey whispered, breathless, and Chris shivered in his arms,

satiated. "Jesus, Chris," he moaned, "if I had known it would be like this, I would've given up on Lance a hell of a lot sooner."

Chris wrapped his arms around Joey's neck and grinned against his shoulder. "You just haven't had any in a long time," Chris said. "When's the last time you had sex?"

"Just now," Joey replied. Kissing Chris tenderly, he whispered, "No one else matters before now. Just me, just you, just us, lying together here."

"Slick with cum," Chris added.

Joey laughed. "You're crude," he said, nibbling along Chris's neck.

"But you like it," Chris pointed out.

As Chris covered his face with soft kisses, Joey growled, "I love it."

All I Ever Wanted
117. Even Exchange
by NSyncGrrl

"So," Justin said, sitting down in the chair beside Joey, "you get any action last night?"

Joey glanced around the airport terminal where they were waiting for their flights. Chris was on the pay phone, calling his mother, and JC stood by the window with Lance, watching the planes land. Joey's mom sat a little ways away, with the other guys' mothers, and Dani had already left. She hadn't even waited to say goodbye. Lance turned and looked over at them, a small frown on his face, and Joey wondered what Justin had in mind, coming over to talk to him. At least they were in public -- Justin was less likely to make a scene, if he had come over to pick a fight. He was probably still a little upset about the night before, and Joey recalled that it had been his idea to separate Justin and Lance for the show. He wondered if Justin still dwelled on that fact. So Joey took a deep breath and, prepared for Justin's attitude, said, "Justin --"

Leaning closer, Justin grinned. "You look like you got laid," he whispered loudly, and Joey looked around to make sure no one had overheard him.

"Is it that obvious?" Joey asked, remembering the feel of Chris in his arms, Chris's tightness around his cock, and he found himself getting turned on at the memory, a slight smile pulling at his lips.

Justin shrugged and sat back against the chair. Looking over at Lance, he said, "I see the same look every morning in the mirror. And on Lance's face when he wakes up."

"You guys do it every morning?" Joey asked, incredulous. Even at his best, he wasn't that horny. "You're shitting me."

Justin shrugged again but didn't respond. Joey grinned -- Justin was good at talking tough, but when it came to Lance, he shut up quickly. Joey thought maybe Justin didn't like talking about his sex life just because he didn't want anyone to conjure up any mental pictures of Lance in the throes of passion. Joey had imagined that before, how it would be to make love to Lance, how Lance would look at him with large bedroom eyes and whisper his name. The thought used to depress the hell out of him, and he'd be moody and dark for days.

And now? Well, now he knew that Chris was quick to smile when Joey pulled out of him, and his eyes sparkled like dark treasures when he came, and the way he moaned Joey's name when Joey first eased into him set Joey's heart racing. And maybe there was something to be said for sex in the morning, every morning, the way Justin seemed to like it. Just to goad his friend, though, Joey asked, "Do you guys do it every night too?"

Justin glared at him and stood up to leave. Joey caught his arm and

pulled him back down into the seat. "I'm just picking on you, Justin, Jesus," he said.

"Let go of me," Justin replied, twisting his arm out of Joey's grip.

Joey sighed. "Justin, I'm not asking to get any visuals here, believe me."

"I'm not going to talk to you about Lance," Justin said, pouting.

"Oh, but you want me to talk to you about Chris?" Joey countered. When Justin looked up at him, Joey met his angry gaze steadily and waited.

Finally Justin sighed, releasing his ire. "I just wondered," he mumbled, looking away to where Chris stood, talking into the phone and watching them. When Chris saw Joey look over, his mouth pulled into a crooked half-smile and then he turned away.

"I'll tell you on one condition," Joey said softly. Justin turned back to him, suspicion in his eyes. Leaning closer, Joey whispered, "You have to tell me something, too."

"Something like what?" Justin asked, distrustful.

Joey sat back and shrugged. "Anything you'd like. But it's got to be about you and Lance. And it's got to be of equal worth. I mean, I'm not going to say that Chris fed me gumdrops one night and all you tell me is that you and Lance make out."

"Gumdrops?" Justin asked, but Joey just shrugged again. Sighing, Justin said, "Okay, fine. You start."

Closing his eyes, Joey tried to think of something he could say that wouldn't be too revealing. He wondered briefly if Chris would be bothered by this little game, but he didn't think so. In fact, if Chris knew they were playing it, he'd probably hang up the phone and come over to join in, and Joey thought that would be interesting, to hear what Chris thought of his affections. And if Lance came over to tell on Justin -- well, Joey thought maybe this would be a great thing to do the next time they were all together and had a few beers in their systems. Things would really liven up then.

Joey opened his eyes and looked at Justin. "We used glow-in-the-dark condoms," he said.

"We don't use them," Justin said quickly.

"I already know that," Joey reminded him. "Tell me something else, something I don't know."

Justin turned away and looked at Lance, thinking. Finally he admitted, "Recently we haven't been using much lubrication."

"Ouch," Joey said, but Justin shook his head. Grinning, he said, "Spit works just as well, Fatone. And it's much more fun to apply."

Laughing, Joey said, "I can imagine."

"Your turn," Justin said. "Tell me about Chris and Dani."

"What do I get if I do?" Joey asked.

"I'll tell you about ..." Justin let his voice trail off, unsure. Looking around the terminal, he saw their mothers talking together and he said, "I'll tell you about Lance's mom."

Joey already knew a little of that, but not as much as he'd like, so he said, "They broke up. She had been cheating on him, and she thought he was cheating on her, too."

"With who?" Justin asked.

"With me," Joey replied. At the incredulous look on Justin's face, Joey admitted, "We started fooling around a while back. No one was supposed to know about it. She called his room one morning and I answered the phone."

"Define a while back," Justin said, but Joey shook his head.

"Lance's mom," Joey reminded him. "You don't get two questions in a row."

Justin sighed. "She's just not going for the whole my son is gay bit. She said it wasn't me, it was the situation and the relationship and I just don't know how I'm going to get her to see that Lance was meant to be with me." Justin looked at him sharply, but his words held no sting for Joey, not after this morning, and Joey smiled sadly at him. He felt bad for Justin, he did. He wondered how that would be, to have someone in his own family hate someone he was dating. Then again, in the past, he had never dated anyone long enough for her to grow on his parents. Softly, Justin added, "She doesn't even talk to me. We could be the last two people on Earth and she'd never say another word."

"Does she know you're moving in together?" Joey asked.

Justin shook his head. "No," he whispered. "I'm sure she'll figure it out, though, when I'm always there, but Lance's father thought it would be better not to say anything about it right now."

"How's he taking this?" Joey asked.

Justin frowned at him. "Since when do you get all the questions?" Joey laughed, and Justin smiled shyly at him. "So tell me when you and Chris started."

Glancing over at Chris, still on the phone, Joey thought back to the first few stolen kisses he had shared with Chris in the dark, when Chris was drunk and smelled of Jack Daniels, his mouth sweet like ripe strawberries. "Remember that night Dani told him she had fooled around on him? The night I had to bail your sorry ass out of jail?" Justin grinned, remembering the night in question. "That was the first time we spent the night together."

"You do anything then?" Justin asked.

Joey shook his head. "Made out, that was it. This morning was the first

time we went all the way."

Justin laughed and said, "You want to know why I got stopped for speeding that night?" When Joey shrugged, Justin said, "Lance was ..." He blushed suddenly and looked away. "I mean, we ..."

Joey studied him for a moment before hooting with laughter. He clamped a hand over his mouth as people in the terminal looked over at them, and Justin ducked his head, embarrassed. "A handjob?" Joey whispered, but with the slight shake of Justin's head, he laughed even harder. "A blowjob? Jesus, that's priceless! You got stopped because Lance was sucking your --"

"Shut up," Justin hissed, angry again. He glanced around to make sure no one had noticed them, but when he saw the curious looks everyone threw their way, he sank into his chair and pouted. "Joey, shut the fuck up."

Joey couldn't stop laughing. "With Chris passed out in the back?" he asked, and Justin's fist flew out, catching him in the upper arm. A flash of pain licked along his bicep and was gone, replaced with a hot ache that would probably bruise. "Hey," Joey cried, sobering up. He pushed Justin out of spite. "Keep your fucking hands to yourself."

Justin jumped to his feet, his face livid, ready to fight. He shoved Joey's shoulders, angry. "Leave me alone," he growled as Joey stood up.

Suddenly Lance was there, pushing between them. With a hand on Justin's chest to hold him back, Lance glared at Joey and then turned to Justin, anger in his voice. "What's going on here? You two were the best of friends a second ago."

"Ask him," Joey said balefully, rubbing his arm. "He's the one who punched me."

"You're the one who wouldn't shut up," Justin pouted.

"You're the one who --" Joey started, but JC stepped up beside Lance and frowned at him. The disappointment in JC's eyes was hard to miss and painful to see, and Joey's words dried up in his throat. He turned and began to pick up his bags. "Fuck this," he muttered. Glaring at Justin, he walked away, heading for Chris and the safety of the phone booth, where he could cool down. There was just something about Justin that brought out the beast in him.

As he approached the booth, Chris hung up the phone. Glancing behind Joey at the others, he asked softly, "What happened?"

Joey shrugged. "He pissed me off."

"Just like that?" Chris asked, grinning. "You two were having a good time a few minutes ago. Talking about me?"

"What makes you say that?" Joey asked, suddenly afraid.

Chris shrugged. "You kept looking over here. Now unless you're that horny and you want another piece of me --"

"I do," Joey whispered, and Chris smiled.

"-- Or you two were talking about me," Chris finished. "Justin want to know if I fuck good?"

Joey laughed. "He wanted to know if I got any," he admitted. "I told him I wasn't going to talk to him about it, not unless he told me something in return."

"Sounds fair," Chris said. Leaning back against the phone booth, he looked at Joey and asked, "Find out anything good?"

Joey shrugged again. "Mostly about Lance's mom. That's going to be a bitch for them. Oh, and that night I bailed you guys out of jail?" Chris nodded, and Joey leaned against the wall beside him, studying the way the hair in Chris's goatee curved around his chin delicately. Leaning closer, Joey breathed in the sweet scent of Chris's cologne and sighed. He whispered, "Lance was giving him a blowjob on the way home. That's why Justin was speeding."

"Shit," Chris drawled, grinning. He looked up at Joey and said, "I'd have been off the road, dead in a ditch somewhere, if someone sucked my dick while I was driving."

"Well, you're lucky he's got more control than that," Joey said. "You were passed out in the back seat, remember."

Chris gasped. "Oh fuck!" he cried, covering his mouth as he giggled. "I forgot about that. No wonder Justin was so pissed when we were in the slammer."

Nodding, Joey said, "I know how it is to get interrupted by a cop."

Chris laughed. "We have to try that chocolate stuff again," he said, changing the subject. Then he asked, "Did you pick up any good tips from him?"

"What do you mean?" Joey asked.

Chris shrugged. "They're always at it. They can't keep their hands off each other. Did you find out what their secret was?"

Joey laughed. "I'd rather find out on my own," he said, trailing a finger down the sleeve of Chris's shirt. "I don't need Justin to tell me," he breathed, and Chris grinned up at him with a look of promise that set Joey's groin aflame.

All I Ever Wanted
118. More Than That to Me
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was quiet the whole flight back to Mississippi, and with his mother right beside them, Lance didn't want to ask him what he and Joey had been talking about. As they drove home, Justin stared out the window balefully, and Lance felt his anger simmering in his silence. In a quiet voice, Lance asked, "What's on your mind?"

"Nothing," Justin replied, pouting.

Glancing at his lover, Lance asked, "So it's completely blank right now?" He saw Justin smile slightly, and he ventured to add, "You're still mad at Joey."

"A little," Justin admitted.

"About what?" Lance asked. When Justin didn't say anything, he asked, "Don't you want to tell me?"

"It was kind of about you," Justin whispered.

Lance figured as much. "Let me guess," he said softly. "You asked about Chris and Joey said something about you and me together. You got what, mad? Embarrassed?" As he eased the car down their street, he frowned and asked, "Does it embarrass you, Justin, being with me?"

"God, no," Justin said quickly. He turned to Lance, his eyes wide and earnest. Taking Lance's hand in his, Justin said, "Please believe me, Lance, I love you. I don't care who knows it. I love you."

"Then why does it bother you when Joey says anything about us?" Lance asked, pulling into the driveway of his house. Their house, he corrected himself.

Justin sighed. Lance pulled into the garage and turned off the engine. "I don't know," Justin mumbled, getting out of the car.

Lance followed him into the house. "Justin," he began, but Justin held up a hand to cut him off as he walked into the hallway, heading for the stairs.

"Lance, I don't want to talk about Joey right now," he said, kicking off his shoes. He shoved them into the corner behind the phone table.

"Well, I do," Lance said. Justin stopped on the bottom step and looked at him, surprised. Lance turned and walked into the living room, his heart pounding in his chest. He hoped Justin loved him enough to follow him.

He did. As Lance sat down on the couch, Justin stood in the doorway and leaned against the wall. "Why?" he asked.

Lance sighed. "Justin, come here."

Justin didn't move. "Why do you want to talk about Joey, Lance?"

"You know," Lance began, feeling a dull ache rise inside of him, "every time you get mad at Joey, it makes me wonder if there's a part of you that somehow thinks I want to be with him."

Justin closed his eyes, but not before Lance saw the frustration and pain in them. "Lance, no," he whispered, shaking his head. He stepped away from the doorway and knelt on the floor in front of Lance. Taking Lance's hands in his, Justin looked at him with pleading eyes and said, "I don't think that, Lance. Trust me."

"But do you trust me?" Lance asked quietly. As Justin nodded, he added, "Sometimes I wonder what else I can do to make you see that I love you, that I want to be with you, with only you. I asked you to move in with me because I want you by me every moment of every day. I don't want anyone else, Justin. I wish you could see that."

"I do," Justin whispered.

"Then why do you get so pissed with Joey all the time?" Lance asked. He couldn't understand what it was that made Justin so angry whenever he talked with Joey anymore, unless Justin was afraid of losing him. And how in the world was Lance supposed to prove to Justin that he had nothing to fear?

Justin sighed shakily, and Lance saw tears pool in his crystal blue eyes. "Lance," he started, and then he lowered his head to Lance's lap, where their hands were intertwined. His forehead was hot against the back of Lance's hand, and Lance pulled one of his hands away to stroke Justin's curls. Justin took a deep breath and sniffed loudly.

"Baby, please don't cry," Lance said, blinking back tears of his own. He hadn't meant to start this -- he had only wanted to ask Justin to leave Joey alone. Now that Joey had Chris, Lance just assumed the animosity between him and Justin would disappear. "Justin, I'm sorry I brought this up. I just ... I just want you and Joey to get along again, like you guys used to before ..." Before he kissed me, he wanted to say, but he didn't want to hurt Justin any more with the memories the words would unleash.

"Lance," Justin sobbed. He sighed and wiped his eyes roughly. Lance felt warm tears on his hand, and he caressed Justin's head, his fingers delving into Justin's soft curls. "I just hate the way he laughs at me," Justin whispered, turning to lay his head in Lance's lap, "at us. He doesn't take anything seriously, and he acts like it's just sex, and it's not that, not to me. He doesn't understand the way I feel for you, Lance, and it pisses me off when he acts like it's all a big joke or something."

"That's just the way he is," Lance replied. He pulled Justin up off of the floor, his arms encircling Justin's waist. Justin curled into Lance's lap, resting his head on Lance's shoulder. Rubbing Justin's back, Lance said soothingly, "It's his way of dealing with things. He doesn't mean anything by it."

Justin shrugged, snuggling closer to Lance. "I don't know," he whispered. "I just don't like it. You mean more to me than just sex. Why can't he see that?"

"He can," Lance said, kissing Justin's forehead. "He knows the way we feel for each other. But he's ..." Lance sighed. "He's not the commitment type, Justin, you know that. So he thinks about it in a different way than you do. You just have to accept that. Or stop talking to him about sex."

"I just wanted to know what was going on with him and Chris," Justin replied. He pouted as he picked at the collar of Lance's shirt. "I want to know he's not thinking of you anymore."

"What does it matter what he thinks?" Lance replied. "I'm not thinking of him." When Justin didn't respond, he said, "I'm with you, Justin. I don't want anyone else."

"I know," Justin whispered.

"Then don't get so pissed off at him anymore," Lance said, hugging him close. Justin felt so small and vulnerable in his arms, and Lance wanted to hold him forever, to protect him from the whole world and keep him safe. "I don't like you two fighting. We'll all be friends, remember?" Justin nodded against his chest, his breath feathery on Lance's neck. Leaning his head onto Justin's own, Lance grinned slightly and added, "Don't let him get to you, baby, please?"

"I'll try," Justin said, sniffing. He rubbed his eyes against Lance's shoulder and sighed lustily. "It's just ... it's Joey and the way he talks like sex doesn't mean anything to him and I don't feel that way. I just can't see myself having sex without the love. I don't think I could do it, that I'd want to do it. He thinks I'm always horny but it's only because I love you so much, I can't stop myself from touching you, from wanting you to touch me."

Lance eased Justin down onto the couch and stretched out beside him, propped up on one elbow. He trailed one finger down Justin's chest, and Justin ran an arm beneath his body, encircling his waist. His other hand caught Lance's and held it tightly. "Is that all that's bothering you?" Lance asked gently.

Justin looked down at their hands, laced together across his stomach, and shook his head. "Your mom," he whispered, and before Lance could say anything, he hurried on. "And the flight yesterday and the rehearsal and the show and then not getting enough sleep the past two nights and the flight home ..." He trailed off and looked at Lance with sad eyes.

Smiling, Lance said, "You're pooped."

"Yes," Justin agreed, pouting again. "I just want to sleep forever."

"You're that tired?" Lance asked, rubbing his hand across Justin's stomach in slow circles.

"Yeah," Justin said, studying Lance's face. His gaze rested on Lance's mouth, and Lance licked just the tip of his tongue along his lips, watching the way Justin's eyes widened as he did so.

"Then I guess you don't want me to do this," Lance said, leaning down over Justin. He kissed Justin's forehead, his lips soft against the warm skin.

"You can if you want," Justin murmured, and Lance fought the urge to smile again.

"How about this?" he asked, kissing Justin's cheek. He breathed into Justin's ear. "You probably don't want me to do this."

Justin's hand squeezed his. "No, you can," he whispered, closing his eyes.

Lance eased his hand down Justin's stomach and over the waistband of his jeans. Pressing against Justin's crotch, he felt his lover harden beneath his gentle touch. "And I'm sure you don't want me to do this," he said, and he couldn't hide his smile when Justin opened his mouth and gasped in delight.

"I don't want you to," Justin sighed, "but please don't stop."

Lance closed his mouth over Justin's, kissing him tenderly, as his hand stroked Justin's budding erection through his jeans. "But you're tired," Lance pointed out, kissing his way over Justin's chin and down the curve of his neck.

Justin grabbed Lance's hand in his. "Don't stop," he said, thrusting into Lance's hand. He sighed as Lance kissed him again, his tongue licking Justin's lips before venturing inside.

Rolling over slightly, Lance laid his head down beside Justin's and resumed rubbing his stomach. "You really need some rest," he pointed out.

"Lance," Justin whined, frustrated. He took Lance's hand in his and moved it lower down his body until it rested on his crotch again.

"I love you," Lance whispered into Justin's ear as he closed his eyes, a little tired himself.

Justin sighed, a heart-wrenching sound that made Lance laugh at the neediness in it. Then Lance cupped Justin's dick through his jeans and squeezed gently. He kissed Justin's cheek again, and Justin turned towards him, his eyes so large and blue, Lance thought he was looking into the sea. "I know I've told you this before," Lance said softly, "but your eyes are gorgeous."

A small smile spread across Justin's lips. "I don't remember you ever saying that," he whispered.

"They're like the ocean," Lance said, studying Justin's eyes. "I can see so much in their depths."

Justin shifted beside Lance, curling into him, and Lance hugged him close. With his lips barely touching Lance's own, Justin stared at him and murmured, "Tell me what you see."

Lance gazed into Justin's eyes. "A million secrets," he said, "a million dreams, a million --"

"-- Ways I love you," Justin added, cutting off Lance's words with a kiss. He cuddled against Lance and closed his eyes, resting his head

against Lance's chest as Lance held him tight.

All I Ever Wanted
119. Feeling Left Out
by NSyncGrrl

Back in his Florida home, JC rinsed off the dishes before setting them into the dishwasher. He watched Joey clearing the table out of the corner of his eye and wished Joey would just hurry up and tell him that they were going to watch a movie. He knew Chris was planning on it -- he had seen the bag from Blockbuster's, Chris was sitting in the living room, waiting to start the tape, and JC just wished Joey would tell him already so he could beg off and retire to his room. His mind already formed the words -- "I'm tired, Joey, really, it's okay. Watch it without me. I'm going to sleep. No, really, I'm fine." -- but Joey wasn't talking and JC wanted to just scream to alleviate the tension in the room between them.

But that wouldn't do. He'd have to explain himself then, and he didn't know why he felt exhausted and weary and so damn hollow inside, like he was made of glass and someone had blown fiberglass inside of him, filling him up with cottony white crystals deadly to the touch. You're tired, he told himself, and it was true. The past few days had been a blur of activity, and he wanted to spend the coming weekend catching up on his sleep. Maybe then he would feel better. Maybe then he would feel whole again.

As he rinsed off another plate, Joey came up behind him, standing so close that JC could feel his presence radiating like a wildfire against his back. Joey slipped a cup into the sink, his arm snaking past JC's waist, and JC shifted to one side, out of the way. In a quiet voice, Joey said, "We're going to watch a movie now."

His words tickled the back of JC's neck. Not looking up from the sink, JC frowned and wanted to say that he was tired, that he was going to bed, and he'd see them in the morning, enjoy the show. But when he opened his mouth, his own words startled him. "What movie?" You don't want to see it anyway, a small voice inside of him whispered, but he ignored it.

Pushing beside him, Joey stuck both hands into the sink and picked up some silverware. He held it beneath the running water as JC bent to stick the plate in the dishwasher rack. JC felt Joey's gaze on his back and wished his friend wasn't so damn intense all the time. How was it that just being in the same room with Joey could make him feel awkward and clumsy, like he felt in elementary school when the teacher called his name and he didn't know an answer? "Something Chris picked out," Joey replied, watching him. "Something strange, I guess. I never heard of it before but Chris says it's supposed to be good."

JC forced a laugh. "I don't think so, Joey," he started, but Joey cut him off.

"Come on, man," he said, sighing. "It's just us three until Justin and Lance get back on Monday. You'll like it, I promise."

"What if I don't?" JC asked, turning back to the sink. He leaned against the edge of the sink, watching the water splash over Joey's hands, and then he took the silverware carefully from Joey, his fingers closing over Joey's for the briefest of moments before Joey pulled away. "I'm really kind of tired right now," he added, shaking the water off of the silverware before sticking it into the dishwasher.

"Who isn't?" Joey asked. He bit his lip and studied JC for a minute. Then he said, "I don't want you to feel left out, JC. I don't want you to think that just because Chris and I are going to watch a movie, you're not welcome to join us."

JC sighed. "I don't think that," he muttered, but truthfully? It had crossed his mind.

"We're not like Justin and Lance," Joey continued, handing JC cups as he washed them. JC frowned as he placed the cups into the dishwasher, glad that his back was to Joey and he didn't have to look at him. "We don't need to touch each other every five minutes to reassure ourselves that we're there and aren't going to fade away in a puff of smoke at the stroke of midnight. We're not like that, JC. I don't want you to be uncomfortable around us."

I'm not, JC thought suddenly, just you. Now where did that thought come from? JC didn't know, and he shut down that part of his mind before he could find out. "Joey, I'm --"

"JC, please." JC turned and looked at Joey, those warm, pleading eyes, the small pout, the tousled hair. Jesus Christ in highest heaven, JC thought, sighing again. "Fine," he whispered. "I'll watch the movie."

The grin that tugged Joey's lips and crinkled his eyes lit up the room, and JC found himself feeling a little breathless at the intensity of it directed his way. At him. JC thought maybe that grin could clear out the cobwebs inside of him, if Joey smiled at him long enough. From the living room, Chris called out, "You guys coming or what? I'm starting the movie now."

"You are not," Joey replied, raising his voice, and JC closed the dishwasher. "You start it now, Chris, and you'll have to rewind it when we get in there."

"Then hurry your asses up," Chris called back. "And bring some beer."

Laughing, Joey opened the refrigerator as JC started the dishwasher. With Joey's grin etched into his mind, he wondered what the hell he thought he was doing, sitting with them, watching a movie. Didn't they want to be alone? If JC had someone, he would want to be alone with them, cuddle up on the couch in front of the TV, arms wrapped around each other -- stop it, he told himself, pushing the thought away. Joey handed JC a beer. "Come on," he said, still laughing, as he led the way into the living room.

"It's about damn time," Chris muttered, looking past Joey at JC. "You joining us, JC?"

"If that's okay," JC replied. Joey plopped down on the couch beside

Chris and draped both arms along the back of the couch.

Chris shrugged. "Sure," he said. He pressed the play button on the remote as JC sat down on the other side of Joey. Before JC could ask, Chris said, "I Spit on Your Grave. A classic."

"Horror?" JC asked, suddenly wondering if he shouldn't head on into bed anyway. But Joey's arm along the back of the couch, just behind his neck, was a weight holding him in place, and JC couldn't move if he wanted to, even if Joey wasn't touching him.

"Cheesy horror," Chris replied, grinning. "You'll love it. It's about this girl and these guys who are in the woods --"

"Don't tell us," Joey said, slapping the back of Chris's head. "We're watching it, aren't we? We'll figure it out, I'm sure."

Chris laughed and stuck a finger into his beer bottle. Then he shook the bottle and pulled out his finger, foamy with ale, and flicked it at Joey. Joey wiped at the beer on his face and laughed. His hand brushed JC's shoulder absently as he stretched his arm out along the back of the couch again, and JC took a long swallow of his beer, wondering just how long the movie was going to be.

Halfway through his third beer, JC found his eyes too heavy to keep open, and he kept jerking his head back, trying to stay awake. At one point Chris asked him if he was tired, and JC thought he said no, but the next thing he knew, Joey's strong arms were around his shoulders, leading him stumbling to his room. Without turning on the light, Joey led JC to his bed, and JC sank into the soft mattress gratefully. "You want to take your jeans off?" Joey asked gently, and JC nodded, already slipping off to sleep.

He felt Joey's hands at his waist, unbuttoning his jeans. With sure hands Joey unzipped JC's jeans and then they were gone, tossed away to the floor, and the sheets were cold and crisp against JC's skin. Suddenly he felt flushed and hot, and he burrowed deeper into the sheets, trying to cool off. "Joey," he whispered, blinking owlishly at his friend.

"Get some sleep, Josh," Joey whispered, pulling the covers up to JC's chin.

JC nodded. "Stay with me," he murmured, closing his eyes, but not before he saw the look of confusion and fear that crossed Joey's features.

"I've got to get back to the movie," Joey replied, the frown on his face evident in his voice. "You don't want me to stay here."

"Just 'til I fall asleep," JC said. The way he felt, that wouldn't be very long. He rolled over onto his side, away from Joey, and he felt Joey's warm hand through the covers, rubbing his back. "Joey," he whispered again, and then he slipped into a deep sleep, his lips tingling with the memory of a pleasant sensation that he couldn't quite recall at the moment.

All I Ever Wanted
120. Not Just the Sex
by NSyncGrrl

Chris looked up as Joey came back into the living room after helping JC to bed. He saw the slight frown on Joey's face but didn't say anything as Joey sat down beside him on the couch. Pressing the play button on the remote, Chris said, "I paused it for you."

"Thanks," Joey said softly, but he stared at the TV as if he wasn't really looking at it so much as looking through it, and Chris could tell he was distracted by something on his mind. Chris paused the tape and watched Joey's face closely. After a few seconds, Joey turned to him, blinking. "What?" he asked.

"What's up?" Chris asked.

Turning back to the TV, Joey mumbled, "Nothing."

"What are you thinking about?" Chris persisted.

Joey shrugged. "I'm thinking that you better just play the damn tape because there's only like twenty minutes left of this fucking movie and I want to know how it ends."

Chris laughed and pressed the play button. "It's not that great," he said. Then he asked, "JC asleep?"

"Yeah," Joey said quietly, and he frowned again.

Chris pressed the pause button. "Joe --"

Joey grabbed the remote from Chris's hands. "I said let me finish this movie," he growled, pressing the play button. Chris felt tears prick his eyes and a pout pull at his lips at Joey's gruff demeanor. Had JC said something to him to put him in such a foul mood? Chris wasn't the jealous type, he knew Joey had kissed JC before, and he saw the way JC acted around Joey, as if those kisses were still on his mind, but Joey was here with him and he had no reason to think that their budding relationship was in jeopardy. Did he? Joey glanced at him from the corner of his eye and saw the sad expression on his face. Sighing, he put an arm around Chris's shoulder and hugged him close. "Chris, I didn't mean --"

"It's okay," Chris said, pulling away. "Watch the movie. That's what I got it for anyway."

"Now you're mad," Joey said.

"No, I'm not," Chris replied. He wasn't mad. He wasn't.

"Yes, you are," Joey said. "You're mad because I don't want to talk right now."

Chris sighed. "Watch the fucking movie," he said, crossing his arms in

front of his chest. "You're going to miss the ending. Just watch it and shut up."

"Don't tell me to shut up," Joey said. He crossed his arms too, imitating Chris, and he bunched his face up into a tight scowl.

Chris grinned in spite of himself. "Do I look like that?" he asked.

"No," Joey pouted. "You look worse."

"I do not," Chris replied, fighting the urge to laugh. He scrunched up his face and put on his meanest frown. "Now I look worse."

"No, now you look funny," Joey said. He grabbed Chris by the waist and began tickling him mercilessly.

Chris struggled to hold onto his angry expression, but Joey's fingers dug into his stomach and he couldn't help but laugh. "Stop!" he cried breathlessly as Joey tickled him. Chris uncrossed his hands and raised them in front of him, trying to ward Joey off.

And then Joey's tickles turned to caresses, and he pushed Chris back against the couch, stretching out on top of him, his lips eager and hungry on Chris's neck and face. "You're starting to act like Justin," Joey whispered, nuzzling behind Chris's ear.

"I am not," Chris mumbled, closing his eyes as Joey's hands roamed his chest, teasing his nipples erect through his thin t-shirt.

Joey's lips closed over his, warm and damp. Joey's breath was coppery from the beer, and his tongue tasted like malt as he eased it into Chris's mouth. Chris ran his hands up Joey's chest to cradle his head, holding his face as they kissed. "Are too," Joey whispered. "You scared of JC?"

"No," Chris said. What was there to be scared of?

"Don't be," Joey breathed. He kissed beneath Chris's chin, his lips eager as they sucked along his skin.

Chris sighed. "Joe," he started, but Joey cut him off with another kiss.

"I want you," Joey whispered, leaning his head against Chris's as their lips brushed together. "Maybe a few weeks ago it was different. Maybe then I just wanted someone who wanted me. I was lonely and anyone would do, anyone at all. But now I just want you."

Chris ran his hands around Joey's neck and frowned. "Joe," he whispered, not quite sure how much he wanted to say. When Joey sat up a little and looked at him frankly, Chris studied those compassionate brown eyes and held his breath. "It's not just the sex. If we never fucked again, I could live with that. But I can't imagine not having you around. Your jokes, your flirting, your ..." He sighed. "Damn, Joe, everything about you. When I say that I want you, please understand that. It's not just the sex stuff."

Joey looked at him, a strange expression on his face, and he didn't say anything for a moment. Fear seized Chris's throat, choking off the flow of words that rambled in his mind. Joe, please don't run from me, he

thought, not now. Please. He opened his mouth to say something, anything, to fill the silence between them.

And then Joey kissed him again, his lips insistent, his tongue demanding. "Chris," he whispered, and Chris closed his eyes at the desire he heard in the way Joey said his name. "JC doesn't like me like that, he told me. I don't like him. I could've, but I don't. I like you. I want you."

"He told you tonight?" Chris asked as Joey thrust his hips against him. Chris raised a knee to let Joey's crotch rest more comfortably against his own, where the beginnings of an erection already throbbed.

"No," Joey admitted, licking his lips and Chris's at the same time.

"Maybe that's changed, then," Chris replied. "Tonight --"

"He was drunk," Joey said. "He just didn't want to impose on us, that's it. He was a little on edge and he drank too much and fell asleep. That's it."

Chris frowned as Joey kissed him again. Why didn't he believe that? Shifting beneath him, Chris rubbed his groin against Joey's, and Joey sighed into Chris's neck. "Let's go to bed," he murmured. "I don't want him waking up to go to the bathroom and finding us out here."

The thought didn't please Chris any, either. Clicking off the TV, he let Joey help him up from the couch. Joey's hands latched onto his waist, his mouth nuzzling against Chris's neck. As he led the way down the dark hall to Joey's room, Chris unzipped his jeans, rubbing his dick through his underwear to keep it hard. He stopped and let the jeans fall to the ground, and as he bent to pick them up, he heard Joey's zipper in the darkness. Then Joey's hands were around him again, his hands finding Chris's swollen erection and squeezing gently. Chris gasped as Joey pulled him back against his own body, and Chris felt Joey's hard cock already stiff in his boxers.

At Joey's door, Chris fumbled with the doorknob as Joey rubbed against him. The smooth metal slipped in his hands as he tried to turn the knob while holding onto his jeans. "Joe, I can't --"

Joey opened the door, and Chris tossed their pants aside as he headed for the bed, pulling his t-shirt up over his head. He heard the door close, and then Joey's hands were on his back, his lips kissing Chris's neck. His hands rubbed along Chris's arms, and Chris turned, reaching for Joey's face. Suddenly the ardor that had gripped him in the other room dissipated, and all he wanted to do was curl into Joey's arms and fall asleep. "I'm so damn tired," he muttered. "Fuck, Joe."

"Are you swearing or asking?" Joey asked, and Chris could hear the grin in his voice in the dark room.

Laughing quietly, Chris shrugged. "I wanted to but now ..." He sighed. "I'm just exhausted. I don't think I'd do much for you tonight."

"Chris," Joey whispered into his ear, his breath hot, "you don't want to do anything?" Chris shrugged again. Pulling back slightly, Joey said, "You're still mad."

"I'm not," Chris said, sighing. "Aren't you tired, Joe?"

"Yeah," Joey admitted, "but I'm also horny as hell. For you." His hands were warm on Chris's arms, and Chris laughed.

"Now who's starting to act like Justin?" he asked playfully.

Joey laughed at that. "I never said there was anything wrong with having sex all the time."

"Lay down," Chris commanded. As Joey sat on the bed, Chris caught Joey's shirt and tugged it off. "You sleep in too many clothes, Fatone," he said.

Joey reached up and ran his hands along Chris's chest. "That can change," he murmured, kissing Chris stomach.

Chris pushed him back to the bed. "I said lay down."

"Yes, sir," Joey replied, laughing. Chris slapped his leg and then Joey asked, "You coming down here too?"

Without answering, Chris rubbed Joey's thick dick through the thin fabric of his underwear. Joey moaned in the darkness, his hands encircling Chris's wrist, trying to pull him down. Chris slipped out of his grasp and unsnapped Joey's boxers. "Chris?" Joey asked softly, and then Chris's hands were on his swollen erection and Joey moaned again, words lost as he gave into the sensation.

Crawling onto the bed, Chris spread Joey's legs apart, easing his arms beneath Joey's knees and bending down between them. He licked Joey's dick from his balls to the tip, and Joey grabbed Chris's head, moaning his name loudly. "Keep it down," Chris said, smiling. "You want to wake up JC?"

"Fuck," Joey sighed. "I don't fucking care. Do that again."

But Chris had other plans. Starting at the tip of Joey's penis, he licked sideways across the hard length, short little licks like a cat cleaning itself. By the time he reached the bottom again, Joey's breath was coming in short, even bursts in the same rhythm as Chris's tongue strokes. Chris licked the soft, cool sac of Joey's balls, his tongue moving in slow, easy circles around and around until Joey sobbed his name. "Chris, please," in breathless tones that begged for more.

Chris eased down Joey's boxers with his hands, lifting Joey off the bed to get them down off his butt, all the while never letting his tongue rest for too long on one spot of Joey's crotch. He licked back up to the tip of Joey's penis, already weeping beneath his ministrations, and he kissed away the salty pre-cum, sucking gently. Joey whimpered on the bed, his hands clutching Chris's hair. Then Chris trailed down the throbbing length again, his breath cooling his saliva as his tongue headed for Joey's balls. At the base of Joey's shaft, Chris wrapped his lips around Joey's hard dick and kissed it. Then he took Joey's balls into his mouth, his tongue licking down below them to where his fingers waited to slide inside of Joey. Joey's sac rolled between his lips as he let it slip out of his mouth, his tongue licking Joey's skin and his own fingers. With baited breath, he

eased one finger into Joey slowly, mindful of the tightness that wanted to keep him out.

Joey moaned in delight, his legs weakening around Chris and collapsing to the bed. "My God," Joey breathed, and then "Chris, oh God Chris, oh Jesus please --"

"You finding religion, Joe?" Chris asked, and then Joey's hands were on his own dick, trying to rush along his orgasm. Chris kissed his hands away and took his hard length into his mouth, his lips closing over the quivering tip before Joey grabbed his head and forced him down, thrusting up into him. Chris just opened wider and relaxed as Joey thrust into him again, harder, faster, and Chris eased another finger into Joey's ass. Joey's cock spasmed, his juices flooding Chris's mouth as he came, and Chris swallowed reflexively, tasting the salty sweetness that was Joey. For a long moment afterwards he waited, Joey still in his mouth, and then Joey pulled Chris up to him, his mouth eager for Chris's. Chris crawled over Joey's body, hungry for Joey's kisses. He wrapped his arms around Joey's chest and let Joey's tongue explore his mouth, Joey's wet dick cool against his own erection through his underwear.

Falling back to the bed, Joey sighed. "Is that what I taste like?" he whispered.

"Yeah," Chris said, crossing his arms on Joey's chest. He rested his head in his hands and closed his eyes, feeling Joey's soft breath along his cheeks. "You taste good." Joey laughed and wrapped his arms around Chris. "You tired yet, Joe?"

"Now I am," Joey replied. "Exhausted, thanks to you. Damn, Chris, where'd you learn to do that?"

Chris grinned. "I hope you paid attention. That was lesson one in how to suck dick."

"I can't wait for lesson two," Joey said, rolling over and pressing Chris back against the bed. He kicked off his boxers and removed Chris's underwear, rubbing their cocks together, making Chris hard all over again.

Chris shifted into a comfortable position beneath Joey and asked, "Did you like it up the ass?"

Kissing his neck, Joey growled, "You're so damn vulgar, Chris."

"Answer the question, Joe." Chris laughed as Joey bit his neck gently and whispered, "Yes."

Suddenly the phone rang, startling them both. Chris glanced at the clock, surprised to see it wasn't quite midnight yet. "Who the fuck could that be?" he asked as Joey reached for the receiver. He picked it up in mid-ring.

"Hello?" he asked, his voice quiet in the darkness.

Silence filled the other end. Joey waited. "Hello?" he asked again. "Who the fuck is this?" Chris covered his mouth to stifle his giggles.

"Hey, Joey." It was Justin.

"Justin?" Joey asked, and Chris pinched Joey's nipples. "What the hell are you doing calling at this hour? JC's asleep."

"I'm calling to talk to you," Justin answered, but he didn't sound too sure about it. "You busy?"

Joey laughed. "Not anymore," he said. Running a hand through Chris's hair, he added, "Services at the Church of Chris just ended. What's going on over there?"

"The Church of --" For a moment Joey thought he'd have to explain it to Justin, but then Justin laughed, and the tension between them was gone. "So you've converted, eh? Seen the light and have been saved, praise the Lord."

Joey laughed again. "You could say that," he replied, tracing the curve of Chris's cheek with one finger. "You just call to interrupt us, or did you want something?"

Justin fell silent, his steady breath filling the long distance connection. In the background, Joey could hear springs creak, and he wondered if Justin and Lance were lying in bed right now, like he and Chris were, just talking before they fell asleep. "Justin?" he asked gently. "What did you want?"

"I wanted to say I'm sorry," Justin said quickly. "About this morning. I'm sorry."

Joey hadn't expected that. An apology? From Justin? "Did Lance make you call me?" he asked, and Chris's hands rubbed along his back, trying to soothe away the anxious way Joey's muscles bunched. "You called me just to --"

"Joey, listen," Justin said, and Joey closed his mouth, complying. "This is hard for me to say, and I'm not going to say it again. Lance didn't make me call you. He said it would be nice and I thought about it and I'm really really sorry. I don't want to get mad at you anymore. It's too damn tiresome. I just want ..." He sighed, a weary sound, and Joey thought he heard Lance murmur something to console Justin, but he couldn't be sure. "I just want us to get along. Please."

"Okay," Joey said slowly. "I can do that. But I want you to stop hitting me all the time. You get too bent out of shape whenever I try to talk to you anymore."

"I'm sorry," Justin whispered. "I just ... I love Lance, Joey. It hurts when you act like it's just sex between us, because it's not. You don't know how it is when we're alone. All you see is what you want to see."

Joey sighed. "I figured it wasn't just sex," he said, and Chris laughed again. "Jesus, Justin, if it was just sex, don't you think I could've won Lance away from you? I've had a lot more experience in that field than you have." He could almost see the frown on Justin's face in his mind. "I know Lance loves you. I know that. And you know what? It doesn't bother me anymore. Because I still care for him, yes, I won't lie to you about

that. But I don't want him like that. I don't want anyone but Chris." Beneath him, Chris snuggled closer into his embrace. "Justin?"

"I'm still here," Justin sighed, the relief in his voice coming through the phone loud and clear. "Joey, I'm sorry --"

"So you said," Joey interrupted. "And I accept your apology. I'm sorry if I made you think I didn't think you and Lance were serious together. I'm sorry if I ever said anything to make you think I thought you two were just fucking around. But I'm kind of tired now and I just want to get back to what I was doing before you called. Okay?"

"Okay," Justin replied. "Okay, I understand. I'll talk to you later."

"Okay," Joey said again. "Goodnight, Justin. Tell Lance I said hey."

"Goodnight," Justin said. "Tell Chris I said way to go, Brother Joe."

Joey laughed as he hung up the phone. Chris asked, "He say he was sorry?"

"Yeah," Joey said, burrowing his head against Chris's neck.

"He made you laugh," Chris pointed out. "What did he say?"

"He called me Brother Joe," Joey said, grinning. He kissed Chris's neck hungrily. "Of the Church of Chris. He said way to go."

Chris laughed and hugged Joey tighter. "Brother Joe. I like the sound of that."

All I Ever Wanted
121. Siblings
Part 1 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

The phone rang shrilly, shattering the early morning stillness. Blindly Justin reached for the phone, unwilling to let go of Lance completely and roll over in the bed to answer it. Beside him Lance stirred and then began to stretch, yawning awake. "Hello?" Justin mumbled into the cordless phone. Nothing. Not even static, or the silence of an open connection. "Hello?"

"Turn on the phone," Lance whispered, smiling as he snuggled closer to Justin. Justin frowned at the phone in his hand, a little confused as it rang again. Lance reached up and pressed the phone button on the handset, cutting the ring off.

Justin placed the phone to his ear again. "Hello?" he asked a third time.

"Hey Justin!" His little brother's chipper voice filled his ear, and Justin fell back to the pillow, groaning. "Wake up!"

"I'm up," he growled. "What time is it?"

"Seven thirty," Jonathan replied. "My cartoons don't come on until eight so I thought I'd call you and say hi!"

"Jesus," Justin whispered, and Lance laughed gently against his chest. "Jon, I am so tired right now. It's Saturday."

"I know," Jonathan said.

Justin closed his eyes and sighed. "I like to sleep in on Saturday," he said. Actually, he liked to sleep in any day of the week, but he and Lance had taken a nap when they came home yesterday and stayed up late into the night, and he had looked forward to waking slowly beside Lance and lazing about in bed until noon or so. He could feel Lance's hands caress his side and back, his hair tickling Justin's chest where his head rested, and he knew Lance would be wide awake by the time he hung up the phone. And then he'd want to get up and eat, and Justin just didn't want to jump into the day like that. He wanted to stay in bed as long as possible with Lance by his side. And he didn't want Lance to get up, not right yet. "Jon," he said, yawning, "I'm falling back asleep here. Talk to Lance." He shoved the phone into Lance's fumbling hands.

"Hello?" Lance asked, his voice gruff and deep first thing in the morning. He rolled onto his back, his arm around Justin's shoulders pulling him closer. Justin cuddled against Lance's chest and closed his eyes, listening to the sound of Lance's voice echo through his body.

"Hi Lance!" Jonathan sounded like he had been awake for quite some time already, and he laughed. "Did you guys stay up too late or what?"

Lance smiled. "We got to bed late," he admitted. "Your mom said you could call us this early?"

"She's still asleep," Jonathan replied. "She said I could call you, though, so I guess she doesn't care when I do it. I finally beat the Elite Four! With my level 63 Pikachu, too. Can you believe it?"

Lance couldn't even understand it, but Jonathan sounded excited about it so he laughed and said, "That's great, Jon. So you finally finished the game, then?"

"Oh no," Jonathan said gravely. "I've still got to catch Mewtwo."

Oh yeah, Lance thought. Right. Forgot about Mewtwo. "So what are you doing now?"

"Getting ready to watch cartoons," Jonathan said. "Eating my cereal. Talking to you. What are you doing?"

Lance rubbed Justin's curls and hugged him. Cradling the phone between his chin and shoulder, Lance glanced over at the clock and sighed. It was so damn early ... "Just waking up," Lance said. "Justin's going back to sleep, though."

Jonathan laughed. "Is he really moving up there with you?"

"Who told you that?" Lance asked carefully.

"Mom did. She said Justin was moving into your house." Jonathan took a bite of something crunchy, toast or a bagel, and as he chewed, he asked, "Is he?"

Lance looked at Justin, his hair so light, so soft this early in the morning. "Yeah, he is," Lance replied, tugging gently at Justin's curls. "Is that okay with you?"

"Sure," Jonathan said. "Can I come visit? I've never been to Mississippi before."

Lance laughed. "You're not missing much."

"But can I come?" Jonathan persisted. "Please?"

Justin looked up at Lance. "What did he say?" he whispered.

Turning the phone away from his mouth, Lance said, "He wants to visit."

Justin pressed his body against Lance's, his skin smooth along Lance's own. He draped one leg over Lance's hips and shifted onto him slightly, his knee pressing against Lance's crotch sweetly. Reaching up, he tugged at the tiny hairs on Lance's chin and smiled. "Well, can he?"

"On one condition," Lance said into the phone, smiling. He watched Justin's face carefully, studying the way the light played across his features, making him look somehow older. He wiped at the shadows along Justin's jaw, where faint hairs began to grow since he hadn't shaved in a while. "You have to get good grades. Then you can come over."

Jonathan sighed dramatically. "Lance!" he cried. "I won't get a report card until the middle of October! I don't want to wait that long."

"Do you have any tests this week?" Lance asked.

"Yes," Jonathan replied. "A science test. I hate science. I'm so going to bomb the test, I know it."

"Well," Lance suggested, "study hard, get an A or a B, and you can come back with us next weekend."

"That's not fair," Jonathan said, but his voice had a dreamy quality to it, as if he was already planning how to ace the test. "You promise you'll let me go if I get a good grade on it?"

"I promise," Lance replied.

But Jonathan asked again. "You swear?"

"I swear," Lance said. Justin grinned at him and Lance smiled back.

"Pinky swear," Jonathan said.

"What's that?" Lance asked. At Justin's frown, he mouthed the words. "Pinky swear." Justin held up his hand, his fingers curled into a fist with just his pinky sticking out. Making a fist of his own, Lance mimicked Justin, who then hooked his pinky with Lance's.

"He did," Justin yelled into the phone. Lance held it out for him to speak into. "Jon, he pinky swore. So you get an A and you're coming here next weekend."

"Or a B," Jonathan pointed out. He whooped loudly, and Lance held the phone away from his ear and grinned. "Oops, woke up Mom. Gotta go. Talk to you later, Lance."

"Okay," Lance said, laughing. "Bye, Jonathan."

"Bye, Jon!" Justin called.

"Bye, Justin! Bye, Lance!" In the background, Lance heard someone call out Jonathan's name, and then the phone went dead.

Justin held up his hand, still connected to Lance's by their pinky fingers. "You've never done this before?"

Lance shook his head. "Nope," he said, rolling over to set the phone on the bedside table. Justin shifted off of him and grabbed onto Lance's waist, pulling him back against his body. Kissing Lance's neck, he rubbed his hands along Lance's stomach, and Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's, sleepy again. "What are we doing awake at seven thirty on a Saturday morning?" he asked.

Justin snuggled up against him and kissed the back of his neck. "We're idiots," he whispered. "Should've let the phone ring."

"I like talking to your brother," Lance said. "We'll have to clean this place up if he's coming to visit."

"I don't feel like cleaning right now," Justin replied. His lips were cool on Lance's skin, and Lance had to admit that right this second, he didn't feel like cleaning much, either.

Lance laughed. "I don't mean right now, silly. I mean today."

"How about tomorrow?" Justin suggested, but Lance turned his head to look at him, frowning slightly.

"No," he said, and Justin kissed his cheek. "Today. Tomorrow I want to go out."

"Out where?" Justin asked, trailing tiny kisses along the curve of Lance's chin until he reached Lance's lips.

"Out on a date," Lance replied. "Remember you said you'd take me out."

Justin giggled against Lance's neck. "Line dancing?"

"We don't have to," Lance said. "I'm thinking dinner at a club, maybe dancing, maybe. Then home."

"You're easy to please," Justin murmured, sucking behind Lance's ear as one of his hands drifted down Lance's belly to entwine in the kinky hair at his crotch.

Lance felt himself begin to harden at the gentle touch, and Justin rubbed a little more insistently. "Sometimes I'm just easy," Lance said, and Justin laughed again. "Will you go out with me?"

"Do you even have to ask?" Justin replied. He stroked Lance's groin, his fingers rubbing beneath Lance's dick to caress his balls.

"Yes," Lance said, trying to sound as if he were pouting, but it was so hard to do when Justin's fingers danced over his skin like that, soft and silky. "You always have to ask someone out. You can't just assume that they want to go out with you."

"Lance," Justin whispered, and Lance murmured, "Hmm?"

"You don't have to ask me when I'm your boyfriend already," Justin said, kissing Lance's neck.

"Yes I do," Lance said.

Justin laughed. "Lance, you don't. Just tell me what you want to do and we'll do it. You don't have to ask me."

"I want to go out tomorrow," Lance said.

Justin squeezed his stiffening member gently. "Okay," he said, nuzzling Lance's neck. Lance could feel Justin's own erection begin to harden against his butt. "We'll go out tomorrow. See? That wasn't hard, was it?"

"No," Lance admitted. Then, with a small grin, he added, "I want to clean the house today."

Justin sighed. "Lance!" he whined, and Lance laughed. "You said --"

"I know what I said," Justin muttered, and then he rolled Lance over in his arms and whispered, "Now let me tell you what I want to do."

As he kissed Lance tenderly, Lance whispered, "I think I already know," and he was glad that Jonathan woke them up this early after all.

All I Ever Wanted
121. Siblings
Part 2 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

"Justin," Lance grunted, bending his knees a little bit more to line up the cordless screwdriver with the bracket, "hold it steady, will you?"

"I'm trying," Justin replied, holding the heavy wooden shelf above Lance. "This thing is heavy."

Lance sighed. "Hold it against the wall, Justin." He held the screw in the bracket and tried to screw it in, the noise from the cordless screwdriver drowning out the music playing quietly on the other side of the room. The screw twisted and fell to the floor. "Fuck," Lance cursed, bending to retrieve the screw.

Justin felt the shelf slip down the wall slightly. "Lance, can you hurry up?"

"I'm trying," Lance said, standing back up. He hit the top of his head on the bottom of the shelf. "Fuck," he cursed again, dropping the cordless screwdriver to clutch at his head. He pushed past Justin and stood up, his head in his hands. "I told you to hold it steady, Justin! Jesus Christ."

"Lance, I'm sorry," Justin said, easing the shelf down to the floor. He hurried over to Lance, reaching for his head. His hands covered Lance's, trying to pull them away. "Let me see."

Lance twisted away from him. "I'm fine," he muttered.

But Justin was insistent. "Lance, let me see it." He stood on his tiptoes and touched Lance's head gently.

Lance winced. "Justin, please."

Justin felt a small bump beneath Lance's hair. "Baby, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to --"

"I know, I know," Lance said, swatting away Justin's hands. "Just ..." He sighed, closing his eyes. "Jesus, Justin, it hurts like a bitch."

Justin bit his lip, upset. He didn't mean to let the shelf slip, and he didn't know Lance would get hurt when he stood up. It was late in the afternoon, and they had been working on getting Justin's stuff moved in all day long, and they were finally making progress when Justin decided he wanted a shelf in his room, so they drove out to the hardware store and bought the heaviest damn thing they could find. He had liked the wooden finish, and he convinced Lance it couldn't be that hard to install. So he held the shelf while Lance tried to screw it to the wall, and first he couldn't put it where he wanted it because Lance said the struts were in the wrong place behind the wall, whatever that meant, and then the shelf got very heavy very fast, and he kept shifting his weight from leg to leg hoping to make it easier to hold, and Lance couldn't get the screws in

right because the shelf kept moving. And then this. "Lance, I'm sorry --"

"I know," Lance said again, frowning. He rubbed his head and sighed, glaring at the shelf. "Do you really need that thing up today?"

"No," Justin whispered. He took Lance's hand in his and kissed his cheek. "Let me get you some ice."

"I'm fine," Lance said, but Justin shook his head and led Lance downstairs.

"Come on," he said, heading for the kitchen. "The least I can do is make it better."

Lance let Justin seat him in one of the kitchen chairs, and he watched as Justin opened the freezer. Taking out an ice tray, he stood by the sink and twisted the tray. Ice cubes rattled into the sink, and Justin scooped them up in a dry dish towel. Then he set the towel on Lance's head, holding it closed. "This better?" he asked.

Lance looked up at Justin standing over him, concern shining brightly in his blue eyes, and he smiled. "Yes," he said softly, placing a hand over Justin's to hold the towel to his head. "Thank you."

"Well, it's my fault," Justin said, but he smiled at Lance and ran his other hand down Lance's cheek. Lance leaned into Justin's touch and sighed. "We don't have to put the shelf up right yet."

The doorbell rang. Lance looked up at him, a slight frown on his face. "Who's that?" he asked.

Justin laughed. "How should I know?" he asked. He extracted his hand from Lance's and went to answer the door. Stacy stood there, a smile already on her face. "Hey, Stacy," Justin said brightly.

"Justin!" Stacy cried, hugging him. Stacy was one for hugs. Justin stepped aside and let her in. "Where's my baby brother?"

"In here," Lance called, and Justin followed Stacy into the kitchen.

"Lance!" she cried, taking one look at the makeshift ice pack on his head. "What happened to you?"

"Justin hit me," Lance said, and Stacy whirled on Justin, anger already clouding her features. Lance laughed. "I'm kidding, Stace. We had a little trouble putting up a shelf." He caught her wrist, forcing her to look at him again. "I'm kidding, really."

Justin glared at Lance. "I'd never hit you," he said, pouting. The mere thought of even thinking of striking Lance made him shake.

Lance sighed. "I was only kidding," he said again. "My God, you two can't take a joke --"

"Don't joke about something like that," Justin interrupted, and Stacy said, "Lance, that's not funny."

"Fine," Lance said, a little angry himself. He sat back in the chair and

closed his eyes. "Just forget I said it."

No one said anything for a moment. Finally Stacy asked, "Did you get the shelf up?"

"No," Lance replied. "Justin wanted to put ice on my head so we came down here instead."

Looking at Justin, Stacy said, "Maybe I can help you."

"It's heavy," Justin said, shaking his head.

"Let me see," Stacy said, and Lance sighed. "You might as well show her, Justin," he said, his eyes closed. "She won't let up until you do."

Justin grinned. "This way, girlfriend," he said, pointing to the stairs. With a glance back at Lance, he asked, "Will you be okay down here by yourself?"

Lance smiled. "I think I can manage," he said, winking at him. "Just hurry back, baby boy."

Justin laughed and raced up the stairs to catch up with Stacy. He led her into the guest room -- my room now, he reminded himself -- and pointed at the shelf. "There it is," he said. He watched her look around the room, a slight frown on her face. "You can see the few holes in the wall where we tried to put it up, but I just can't hold it for very long."

"Sounds like a personal problem to me," Stacy said, grinning. Justin felt his cheeks begin to heat up, and Stacy laughed. "I'm just kidding, Justin. Can you hold it up for me?"

"You gonna put it up?" he asked, incredulous. Then he laughed. "If I couldn't hold it for Lance, what makes you think I can hold it for you?"

Stacy shrugged. "Let's just try." Stepping over to the wall, she picked up the cordless screwdriver and lifted the shelf up. She groaned beneath its weight. "You gonna help me or what?"

Justin laughed and took the shelf from her. He held it up against the walls with both hands, and Stacy bent down beneath the shelf, squinting at the brackets. "You didn't," she said softly, and then began to laugh.

"Didn't what?" Justin asked, confused.

Stacy backed up and motioned for him to put the shelf down. "You two are priceless," she said, giggling. "You put the brackets on the shelf first."

"So?" Justin asked, frowning.

"So you're supposed to put them in the wall first," she said, "and then screw the shelf onto them. Didn't you read the directions?"

Justin glanced at the box that the shelf came in. It was lying discarded on the floor, the directions still folded up inside. "It didn't look too hard," he admitted. "I didn't think we needed to read them."

"Lay the shelf down here," Stacy commanded, pointing to the floor.

Justin did as she said, turning the shelf over to expose the brackets. Kneeling onto the shelf, Stacy unscrewed the brackets quickly, the whirl of the cordless screwdriver filling the room with a white noise. In minutes she had the brackets free from the shelf. Then she said, "Hold it up where you want it again."

Justin complied. With a pencil she found on the floor, Stacy marked on the wall where she had to put the brackets. As she lined up the first bracket with the mark she had made, Justin muttered, "This is much easier."

"No shit," Stacy replied, laughing. She leaned against the screwdriver as the screw wound its way securely into the wall. Holding her hand out for another screw, she looked at Justin and asked, "So this is your room now?"

Justin handed her another screw. "Yeah," he said. "I told Lance I didn't really need it, since I sleep in his --"

"Ah, please," Stacy said, holding up her hand. Screwing in another screw, she tested the bracket to make sure it was secure before moving onto the second one. "No offense, Justin, really, but that's just a bit too much information for me, you know? Lance is my brother. I know he's grown up now but I don't want to know about his sex life."

Justin laughed. "I was just saying," he started, and then the sound of the screwdriver drowned out his words. When Stacy took another screw from him, he asked, "Do you mind that I'm living here?"

She looked at him sharply. "Not at all," she said. "Should I?"

Justin shrugged. "I know your mom isn't going to be cool with it," he said softly.

"She doesn't know," Stacy replied. "And I'm not my mother. I think it's great that you two are together. I've seen how happy you make him."

"Except for today," Justin said, smiling ruefully. "I'm sure he's not too happy right now."

Stacy shrugged and screwed in the final screw. "He'll live. You guys really need to read the directions next time, though. What do you think they put them in there for?" Justin laughed. "Okay," Stacy said, stepping back. "Put the shelf on top of them."

Justin did. It was much easier to hold the shelf in place with the brackets already fastened to the wall. He leaned down on the shelf as Stacy bent underneath it and screwed the brackets back into the wood. "There you go," she said. Justin stepped away cautiously, almost afraid to let go of the shelf. But it stayed in place.

"Not bad," he said, smiling at her. "Thanks."

Stacy grinned and handed him the cordless screwdriver. "No problem. What are you going to put on there?"

Justin motioned to a box resting at the foot of the bed. "Just some books and stuff," he said. Digging into the box, he pulled out a bunch of

teeny-bopper magazines and set them aside as he looked for something to set on the shelf.

Picking up the first magazine, Stacy flipped through it. "You actually read these things?" she asked.

"I just bought them for the pictures," Justin admitted. He felt himself blushing again and he reached for the magazine, but Stacy pulled it away.

"Pictures?" she asked, grinning.

Justin turned away. "The ones of Lance," he muttered. "I ... just please give it back."

Stacy laughed and handed the magazine to Justin. "What are you going to do, hang them up?"

"Yes," Justin said, taking the magazine from her. He didn't meet her eyes.

And then she smiled. "That is so damn cute," she said softly.

"It's sort of a running joke," Justin said, but Stacy cut him off.

"You don't have to explain," she said, laughing.

Behind her, Lance asked, "Explain what?" Justin looked up to see Lance standing in the doorway, a slight grin on his face.

"Where's the ice?" Justin asked.

"Melted," Lance replied. He nodded at the shelf. "It looks good. You like it?"

Justin nodded. "Yeah. You should sit down."

Lance sighed. "Justin, it's just a little bump. I'm fine." Looking at Stacy, he asked again, "Explain what?" Stacy pointed to Justin's magazines, and now it was Lance's turn to blush. "Justin," he started, but Stacy laughed again.

"It's cute, Lance," she said. "You don't have to be embarrassed by it."

"You should see the one I have back at the other house," Justin said, grinning, and Lance covered his eyes with his hand.

"Justin, please," he groaned. "She doesn't want to know."

Stacy leaned close to Justin and whispered loudly, "I've got some great pictures at my place, too. They aren't out of magazines but you'll like them. I'll bring them with me next time."

"Stacy, no," Lance said, rolling his eyes. "Those pictures are horrible."

Justin's grin widened. "Now I really have to see them."

"They're yours," Stacy said, winking at him.

Justin stepped around her to kiss Lance's cheek quickly, and Lance

glared at Stacy playfully. "Thanks," Justin said, wrapping his arms around Lance's waist and hugging him. "And thanks for helping me with the shelf. You kick ass, Stace."

She sighed loftily. "I know," she said, and all three of them laughed.

All I Ever Wanted
122. Save the Last Dance For Me
Part 1 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

To be honest, Justin didn't really want to go to a country western bar. He wasn't into country music, and the thought of watching a bunch of square dancers do the Achy-Breaky wasn't his idea of a good time. But Lance wanted to go so badly -- Justin could see it in his smile -- and Justin just didn't have the heart to say no. So he pulled on a pair of jeans and a Fubu t-shirt underneath an unbuttoned flannel shirt, a pair of sneakers and a dark blue bandanna studded with rhinestones. Then he sauntered into the bathroom to look at himself in the mirror.

Lance glanced up from the sink, where he was shaving. He wore just a towel around his narrow waist, and Justin let his gaze run down his lover's strong body. Suddenly he didn't want to go out anymore. Lance took one look at Justin and frowned. "This is a country club, baby," he said, running the razor easily along the underside of his chin, "not one of your ghetto joints. You can't wear that."

"Why not?" Justin asked, pouting. He pushed next to Lance so he could see himself in the mirror. "I look fly."

"You do," Lance conceded, rinsing the razor off, "but you'll look funny where we're going."

"Then let's not go," Justin said. When Lance looked at him sharply, Justin sighed. "I know you want to do this, Lance, but I don't think country's my thing, you know? I don't think I'll have a good time."

Lance twisted his mouth into a frown as he shaved beneath his nose. "You'll be with me," Lance pointed out. "Won't that make it a good time?"

"Yes, but --"

"But what, Justin?" Lance rinsed off the razor again and looked at him in the mirror.

In response, Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's bare waist and rested his head on Lance's shoulder. "Can't we just stay here instead?" he whispered, watching Lance shave in the mirror.

Lance sighed dramatically. "Justin, I'm hungry --"

"I know," Justin said softly.

"-- And we're going out to eat," Lance continued as if he hadn't been interrupted. "You said you'd go out with me, remember?"

"I know," Justin said again. He pouted and hoped maybe his sad eyes and full lips would win Lance over.

No such luck. Lance flicked his razor at him, sprinkling his cheeks and

nose with water. "We won't be out long," Lance said. "And when we get back, then we can fool around, okay?"

Hugging Lance tighter, Justin sighed. "I want to fool around now," he whined.

Lance laughed and washed his face. Toweling it dry, he said, "Let's go see if we can't find you something ... more appropriate to wear tonight."

"I like this," Justin said, following Lance into their bedroom.

"I like that, too," Lance admitted as he began to rummage through the closet. "But you'll look out of place there, trust me."

Justin flopped down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. He tried not to think about the club they'd go to, someplace Lance called Outlaws' Bar and Grill. He tried not to think about sawdust on the floor and banjos in the band and the clomp clomp clomp of cowboy boots on the wooden dance floor. Lance will be there, he reminded himself, so this will be fun.

Lance tossed a black shirt at him. "Put this on," he said. Justin sat up and looked at the shirt -- it was long-sleeved, with silver buttons down the front and a dark blue yoke and cuffs that matched his bandanna. Justin thought it wasn't that bad, and it would go nice with his jeans. He shrugged out of his other shirt and pulled the black one on. As he buttoned it up over his t-shirt, Lance grinned. "You look like Johnny Cash in that."

"Johnny who?" Justin asked, leaving the top few buttons undone. Lance stepped closer and buttoned up the remaining buttons. "Lance," Justin said, tugging at the collar, but Lance slapped his hands away and slipped a bolo tie around his neck.

"There," he said, stepping back. He gave Justin an appraising look and said, "You need a pair of boots."

Justin shook his head. "I'm not wearing --" and then Lance was handing him a pair of black cowboy boots with intricate scrolling etched into the weathered leather, and Justin shrugged. "These are nice," he admitted, kicking off his sneakers to pull on the boots.

"Roll up your jeans, Justin," Lance said, squatting down to help him. The towel at his waist split open invitingly, and Justin sat on the bed, watching for the occasional flash of flesh as Lance rolled up the hem of his jeans. Lance glanced up at him and grinned. "See something you like?"

"Now I really don't feel like going," Justin said, smiling, as he reached out to touch Lance. He brushed the towel off of Lance's knee and it fell back along Lance's leg, exposing more skin. As Justin trailed his finger down the inside of Lance's thigh, Lance stood up and shook the towel back down into place. Justin kept his hand on Lance's thigh and looked up at him, his muscular chest, his strong arms, his narrow waist -- Justin sighed longingly. "Please?" he asked in a small voice.

Lance laughed. "You're so cute when you beg," he said, leaning down to kiss the top of Justin's head. Then he turned away. "Now about the hat --"

"I'm not wearing a cowboy hat," Justin balked as Lance pulled a black cowboy hat out of the closet. Justin rolled his eyes. "Lance --"

"There's nothing sexier than a man in a cowboy hat," Lance replied, a silly grin on his face. He looked at Justin. "Nothing."

Justin frowned. "Really?" he asked, studying Lance carefully. He thought they looked a little stupid himself, but if it really made Lance's blood start pumping ... "You think so?"

Nodding, Lance inspected the hat, brushing away tiny flecks of dust. "Nothing at all. Jesus, but I love a guy in a cowboy hat. It just turns me on something fierce. And you know, every guy there tonight will be wearing one." He started to put the hat away. "But if you'd rather not --"

"Give it to me," Justin said, reaching for it. There was no way he'd be the only one without a hat now. Frowning at the hat, Justin twirled it around in his hands and asked, "Can I wear it over my bandanna?"

Lance smiled. "Sure," he said, and Justin settled it onto his head. Lance straightened it out for him and then kissed Justin's nose. "You look so damn sexy I could just eat you up."

Justin kissed Lance tenderly, their lips soft and gentle. "Is that a promise?" he whispered into Lance's mouth. His arms came up behind Lance to envelope him in his embrace.

Giggling, Lance stepped out of the safety of Justin's arms. "Later," he said, grinning. "I've got to get ready to go."

Justin sighed dramatically and caught Lance's towel as he moved away. "Lance," he said, sitting back down on the edge of the bed.

Lance wiggled his hips and the towel fell away from his body. Justin tossed it aside and laid down on the bed, his hands crossed behind his head, to watch Lance get dressed. "Are you watching me?" Lance asked, slipping on a pair of boxer briefs.

"Yeah," Justin admitted. "You can dress a little slower, you know."

Lance laughed and pulled on a pair of jeans. Turning away from Justin, he pulled on a thick white t-shirt and tucked it into his jeans. Justin tilted his hat down over his eyes and waited. As Lance stepped into faded brown cowboy boots, he shrugged on a brown suede vest, and a well-worn brown cowboy hat completed the outfit. When he turned back around, Justin pushed the hat up and caught his breath at the sight. "Damn," he muttered. He had to admit that while he thought cowboy hats were a little funny, that one sure looked good on Lance.

Lance smiled at Justin and crawled over top of him. "C'mere, cowboy," he growled, lying down along Justin's body. Pushing his own hat back on his head, Lance kissed Justin with a sudden passion. "I've changed my mind," he said. "We're not going."

"Oh yes we are," Justin replied, laughing at the frustrated look that crossed Lance's face. "You think you're the only one who can play like that? Get up, boyfriend. We're going out."

"Justin," Lance whined, and for a second Justin's resolve wavered when he looked at those wide green eyes and those perfect lips pulled into a slight pout. And then Lance sighed and rolled off of him, and if there had ever been a moment when he could've agreed to stay home and Lance would've listened, it was gone.

But that didn't stop him from trying. Holding onto Lance's waist as he stood up, Justin said, "We can stay, if you want."

"I don't want to anymore," Lance replied, and Justin heard the mischievousness in his voice that was so damn infuriating. He tugged Justin up off the bed and led the way from the room. "Come on, babe. Dinnertime."

Justin caught Lance's waist again, pulling him into a tight embrace. Turning in his arms, Lance held Justin's chin in his hands and kissed him, a sweet surprise that took Justin's breath away. Justin stumbled against Lance, falling into the kiss, and they leaned against the railing of the stairwell as Lance's tongue forced its way into Justin's mouth with a possessiveness that made Justin ache for his man.

The squeal of wood on wood filled the air, and Lance pulled away from Justin. "Jesus," he whispered, looking at the railing.

Justin started to laugh. "Must be a little loose," he said, shaking the railing. The squeal came again, and Lance took Justin's hand in his.

"Stop that," he said, leading the way downstairs. "We'll fix it later. I'm hungry."

"I'm hungry for you," Justin replied, following him. "How long will we be out?"

"Not long," Lance promised. "But we have to get there first."

All I Ever Wanted
122. Save the Last Dance For Me
Part 2 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Justin could hear country music pouring out into the parking lot as Lance stopped the car. Cutting off the engine, Lance smiled at Justin. "You know this isn't a gay bar," he said carefully.

"Okay," Justin replied. His stomach growled, and he started to climb out of the car.

Lance caught his arm. "Do you know what I mean?" he asked softly.

Justin flashed him a winning grin. "Yeah," he said, taking Lance's hand off his arm and kissing the knuckles. "It means we have to be careful. Don't worry, baby, I can wait."

"You sure?" Lance asked, suspicious.

Justin laughed. "Sure, I'm sure," he said, but as Lance straightened his cowboy hat squarely on his head, Justin wondered just how long he could wait. He didn't think it would be for too long if Lance kept looking at him with that gorgeous smile.

Inside Outlaws', the music was loud and twangy, and Justin grinned in spite of himself at the way Lance's eyes lit up. A young girl about their own age led them to a small table, close to the bar. Lance tipped his hat at her as he sat down, smiling at her in that slow, shy way he had that always warmed Justin's heart. "What'll it be, boys?" she asked.

"You mind if I drink?" Lance asked Justin, who shrugged.

"Not if I'm driving," he replied, opening the menu to glance at the food. Suddenly he was starving, and he looked over the entrees as Lance asked for a beer. When the girl turned his way, Justin shrugged again. "A Coke, Pepsi?" he asked. "And some of these Cheese Pistol thingies. Are they any good?"

Lance smiled at him from across the tiny table. "You hungry, babe?" he asked, looking around the room. People pushed against each other for space at the bar, while couples and families lined the room in booths and tables, eating or waiting for their food. A crowded dance floor stretched away on the other side of the bar, and Justin could hear a live band tuning up beneath the canned music, getting ready to go on. When Justin didn't answer him right away, Lance asked, "Hello? Earth to Justin."

"What?" he asked, snapping his attention back to Lance. Then he grinned sheepishly. "I'm sorry, baby. I'm just ..." He looked around the room again, cowboy hats and bandanna prints and denim and leather. "Wow. I didn't realize people really got into this stuff."

Lance laughed softly. "What, you thought I was the only one?"

"No," Justin admitted, "but I ..." He shrugged. "I always thought country wasn't cool, you know?"

Lance laughed again. "Maybe back in the day, but everyone likes Garth Brooks and Faith Hill anymore." He sat back as their server returned, setting their drinks and cheese sticks down in front of them. Taking a sip of the frothy beer, Lance asked, "You ready to order?"

"Sure," Justin said. He ordered a steak and fries -- always a safe bet -- and Lance ordered the same. As the waitress left again, Justin grinned at Lance. "Have I told you yet how damn sexy you look tonight?"

Lance closed an eye and twisted his lips to one side, pretending to think. "Hmm, I don't think so, no."

Justin laughed. "Well, you do," Justin replied. He looked around the room again. "You're the hottest thing in here tonight. The girls can't keep their eyes off of you."

Lance's foot bumped his under the table. "I don't know about that," he said coyly. "I've got some stiff competition tonight."

"From who?" Justin asked, frowning. Then he saw the smoldering look in Lance's eyes and felt his cheeks heat up. "Oh," he said, ducking his head. "You mean me."

"Yeah, I mean you," Lance countered. "So, you looking forward to going back to Florida tomorrow?"

Justin shrugged. "Not really," he admitted. He toyed with the straw in his drink and sighed. "I don't know, I really like it being just the two of us, you know? I love that."

"I do, too," Lance said softly, covering Justin's hand briefly with his. Taking another sip of his beer, he added, "I think it was awesome when you called Joey to apologize."

"Really?" Justin asked, looking at him.

Lance nodded. "I hate it when you fight with him," he said. "If it'll help, I'm going to lock you two into the same room once we get back and not open the door until you're friends again."

Justin laughed. "I don't know if I'd go that far," he said. "I'd miss you."

"You wouldn't be in there long," Lance said, grinning. "Trust me. You two would knock each other down trying to get out of there, now that Joey has Chris."

"I wonder how that's working out," Justin said aloud. Their server approached with their steaks, still sizzling on the plates. After she refilled Lance's beer and left, Justin said, "You ask him. He still likes you."

"He likes you, too," Lance said, digging into his meal. "Just don't get all evil with him and he'll tell you, I'm sure."

Justin sighed. "And then he'll ask me about you, and I don't want to

hear him laugh at me again."

"Baby, he won't," Lance said. Frowning, he asked, "Do you want me to talk to him about that? Because I can, if you want me to. He's not going to know why you keep getting mad at him if you don't tell him."

Justin sighed again and took a bite of his steak. Chewing it thoughtfully, he wondered if Joey really cared whether or not his teasing made Justin feel bad. "I don't know," he mumbled. Then, hoping to change the subject, he said, "Thank you for letting Jonathan come visit us."

Lance smiled around a forkful of food. "He's a sweetie," he said. "It was his idea. And we've got to stop by your house on the way back anyway to get more of your stuff. As long as it's okay with your mom."

"I'm sure it will be," Justin replied. "He's got her wrapped around his finger. He's spoiled rotten."

Lance laughed, his eyes twinkling merrily. "Like someone else I know," he said, and his knee brushed against Justin's beneath the table.

"I'm not spoiled," Justin pouted, but he knew he was. He knew that Lance was way too good to him, and he couldn't imagine life without him.

After their meal, Lance led Justin over to the bar to free up their table for another couple. He was nursing his third beer, and Justin could see pink spots high on his cheeks and his eyes were a little too shiny. "You okay?" Justin whispered, concerned, as he leaned against the bar.

Lance nodded. "Fine," he said, his eyes wide as he tried to look everywhere at once. "I want to dance. Dance with me."

"I don't think that's a good idea," Justin replied. As far as he could tell, they were the only gay couple in the place, and he could conjure up a dozen stereotypes he didn't want to test out tonight. He looked around and sighed. "Maybe it's time we get going," he offered.

"I want to dance," Lance said again, pouting. Damn, Justin thought, watching Lance's lips pull into a sweet pout. If you only knew what that does to me, Lance. You'd get your way every single time.

"I'll dance with you, cowboy," someone said, and Justin turned to find a couple of girls dressed in tank tops and jeans standing behind him. One was a tall blonde, the other -- the one who spoke -- was shorter, with curly auburn hair hidden beneath a wide cowboy hat. She glanced at her friend, who shrugged.

Justin felt a sudden twinge of jealousy stab through him at the thought of this pretty girl dancing with his man. But he knew Lance wanted to dance, and he didn't think he could stand that sad look on his lover's face any longer. "Fine," he said, leaning back against the bar. "Dance with her."

"You sure?" Lance asked, skeptical. He set his beer on the bar and frowned at Justin.

"I'm sure," Justin said, shrugging. Then he leaned close to the girl and

whispered, "Enjoy it while you can, honey, because he's coming home with me tonight."

She threw him a strange look as Lance led her to the dance floor. Justin watched them dance for a few minutes before he remembered the girl's friend, standing beside him. "So," she said, edging closer to him, "want to buy a girl a drink?"

Not really, he thought, but he smiled at her, that brilliant grin he reserved for the photographers when he didn't want them to capture how he was really feeling at the moment. "Sorry, I can't," he said. "Underage."

"You're kidding," she said, laughing. Nodding at Lance's half-empty beer, she said, "Your friend is legal."

"And he's not buying you a drink, either," Justin replied sweetly. "He's dancing with your friend."

A look of irritation flitted across her face and was gone. "You'll have to forgive her," she said quietly. "She's such a flirt."

"And that bothers you?" Justin asked, studying her for the first time. He noticed the little lines along the girl's forehead, the slight frown that tugged at her lips. "Are you two ..." He let the sentence trail off, hoping she caught his drift.

She did. "I thought you looked safe," she admitted. "Correct me if I'm wrong, but something about you just screams couple to me."

Justin shook his head. "You're not wrong," he replied softly.

"Good," she said, a little more confident. "Then I don't feel so bad that she wanted to dance with him."

Justin laughed as Lance led his dance partner back to the bar. They were both flushed from dancing, and Lance had a hungry look in his eyes that brought a silly grin to Justin's face. Finishing his beer, Lance whispered, "Let's go now."

"Now?" Justin asked, grinning. "You wanted to dance."

"And I did," Lance said, nodding. "Now I want to go home."

Justin sighed dramatically. "Maybe I want to stay here," he started, playing around, but when Lance leaned against him, Justin felt the hardness of his erection through his jeans and damned if he didn't want to go home now, too.

"I want you," Lance whispered slowly into Justin's ear, his malty breath curling around Justin's neck, intoxicating, "to come home with me, right now, because I want you to touch me, and kiss me, and love me, all night long."

"Shit," Justin drawled. "How can I say no to that?"

"How indeed," Lance replied, grinning as he led the way from the bar. Out in the parking lot he stumbled against Justin, who caught him with strong, steady hands. "You've got to drive," he said solemnly, as if Justin

didn't already know this.

"Where are the keys?" Justin asked.

Lance leaned back against the passenger side of his car and looked at Justin with a smoky gaze. "In my pocket," he said.

Justin grinned and stepped closer to Lance. Running his hands down the front of Lance's jeans, he felt Lance's thick cock bulging at his crotch, and Lance closed his eyes, moaning at Justin's gentle touch. And then Justin heard the jingle of metal and slipped his hand into Lance's front pocket. His fingers brushed Lance's dick through the pocket, and then he extracted the keys and kissed Lance quickly on the lips. "You're bad," he whispered.

"Just get us home," Lance replied. "I'll show you how bad I can be."

Justin unlocked the car door. Lance slipped inside, and Justin couldn't wait to get home.

All I Ever Wanted
122. Save the Last Dance For Me
Part 3 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Justin fumbled to get the key into the lock. Inside the house, he heard the phone begin to ring, and behind him Lance held onto his waist, his eager hands groping at Justin's crotch while his lips sucked along the back of Justin's neck. And the damn key didn't want to turn. "Dammit the fuck," he muttered, frustrated. He wanted to get into the house now.

Then the door popped open and Justin stumbled inside, Lance right behind him. As Lance closed the door, Justin snagged up the phone. "Hello?" he asked, a little harshly. As soon as he hung up, he planned to turn the damn ringer off. Let the machine get it for the rest of the night -- Lance was in the mood and Justin didn't want to lose this moment.

"Justin," came the voice on the other end, and Justin frowned. It was Lance's mom.

"Hello, Mrs. Bass," he said softly. "I'm sorry about that, we just got in --" Lance's hands tugged at the waistband of Justin's jeans as he looked up at Justin, his eyes shiny and a little unfocused. "Come on, Justin," he whispered. "Hang up and come on."

Justin tried to concentrate on the phone. Mrs. Bass asked, "Is Lance there?" and Justin wondered if she really wanted to talk to her son when he was in this drunk, playful mood.

"He's ..." Justin sighed. No use lying to her now. "We went out and he had a little something to drink, Mrs. Bass. He's not really ... he's kind of goofy right now."

Lance giggled at that, leaning his head against Justin's chest. Biting at the buttons on Justin's shirt, he tried to unbutton them with his teeth. As he wrapped his arms around Justin's waist, Justin closed his eyes and prayed that Lance's mother didn't want to press the issue, not now, not tonight. "Hang up the phone," Lance whispered loudly.

"It's your mother," Justin replied, covering the receiver with one hand.

Lance laughed again. "Hi, Mom," he called.

On the phone, Mrs. Bass sighed. Justin could almost feel the disappointment radiating from the receiver, but Lance was already kissing along Justin's neck, and Justin didn't know what to say to get her off the phone before things went much farther between them. "Did you both go out just to get drunk?" she asked, disapproval thick in her voice.

"We went out to dinner," Justin said, not sure why he felt the need to explain himself to her. "Lance had a few beers with his meal, that's it."

"What about you?" she pressed.

Justin grinned as Lance's hands clutched him close. With his teeth he had already worked two buttons free in the middle of Justin's shirt. "I'm only nineteen," he replied. "I'm not old enough to drink."

Silence filled the connection. Then she said quietly, "I assume you drove home."

"Yes, ma'am," Justin replied, and Lance sighed loudly. "Hang up the phone, baby," he said against Justin's chest.

"Well," Mrs. Bass said, and then, "Have him call me in the morning before you leave, will you?"

"Okay," Justin said. He waited for her to hang up first. When she didn't, he ventured to add, "Goodnight, Mrs. Bass."

"Goodnight, Justin." The phone went dead in his hand.

Hanging up the receiver, Justin hugged Lance and whispered, "You're bad. That was your mother, babe. You could've gotten us both into a lot of trouble."

Lance laughed. "Let's go outside," he whispered.

Justin grinned. "What about the bedroom?" he suggested, but Lance was already pulling him through the house, heading for the kitchen door. He didn't turn on the porch light as he stepped out onto the back porch, Justin's hand in his. The night was warm with a slight breeze that rustled the trees surrounding Lance's yard, and in the darkness Lance guided Justin to the large porch swing. Sitting down, he pulled Justin into the space between his legs and ran his hands along Justin's back as Justin looked down into his upturned face. "Lance," he whispered, as Lance's lips found his, tasting sweet and alcoholic. Breaking away from the kiss, Justin said, "I want to get something to drink."

Lance pouted. "I drank enough for both of us," he said, kissing Justin again.

"Just one beer," Justin replied. "For us to share. I'll be right back."

Lance sighed dramatically and rolled his eyes, but he let Justin step away. Inside the kitchen, Justin grabbed the first bottle he saw in the fridge, eager to return to Lance and the dark safety of the porch. The thought of lying out there under the stars and making love outside, the glimmering of desire and outright horniness he saw in Lance's eyes, the intoxicating warmth of Lance's mouth in the cool night air ... Justin was already hard and willing just thinking about it.

Justin laughed as he stepped out onto the porch again, the bottle in one hand. "I never knew you were a horny drunk," he started, intent on telling Lance he should drink more often if this is what happened, but he looked up at his lover and the words dried up in his throat. Lance was stretched out on the porch swing, one leg dangling while the other was propped up on the swing beside him. One hand supported his body, the other was draped over his knee. He looked at Justin with eyes like twin fires in the night.

And the only thing he wore was that damned cowboy hat.

Justin felt the bottle slip through his fingers. He heard it hit the porch and roll away. "Come here," Lance purred, and Justin tripped over Lance's clothes, discarded on the ground, in his haste. Lance caught him easily, his strong arms enveloping him, pulling him down onto the swing. "Justin," Lance whispered, his breath hot against Justin's cheek.

Justin kissed him hungrily, his tongue easily parting Lance's lips as his hands caressed Lance's soft skin, his bare shoulders, his arms. His fingers danced across Lance's erection, and Lance gasped in delight. He tugged at the buttons on Justin's shirt, and Justin helped him unbutton them. As he tried to shrug out of it, though, he felt a thin wire tighten around his neck. "Ack," he choked, and Lance slipped his fingers beneath the bolo tie, loosening it.

"You're supposed to take this off first, baby," Lance murmured, and then the tie was gone, followed by the shirt, and Justin tugged off his t-shirt, as well. Lance undid his jeans, and they were pushed to the ground as Justin stepped out of the cowboy boots. Only his boxers were left, and when he bent to remove them as well, Lance eased Justin down to the porch, the boxers around his ankles, forgotten as Lance's lips began to suck at his nipples. Justin moaned and laid back on top of their clothes, still slightly warm in the night air. Lance's hand strayed to Justin's crotch to stroke his stiff member with gentle, loving caresses, and Justin closed his eyes, giving into the sensation. When Lance crawled on top of him, Justin moaned his name into Lance's mouth as they kissed again. Their erections throbbed between them, each shift of their bodies sending shivers of pleasure through them.

Lance sat back on his knees, straddling Justin's legs. With slow, careful motions, Lance eased his fingers inside of Justin, working him wider. He stroked Justin's thick erection, his hand sliding easily up the swollen length as Justin thrust his hips into Lance's hand. Justin arched his back, pressing Lance further into him, his breath coming in quick pants. His hand cupped Lance's knee, the other reaching between Lance's spread legs to rub his hard cock. "Come here," Justin commanded, trying to sit up.

"Justin --" Lance said, and then Justin leaned down and took Lance's dick in his mouth, his saliva covering the stiff member. Lance sat back further and thrust into Justin's mouth once, twice, as Justin's tongue worked around his cock. Then Lance pushed him back. "Almost there," he whispered. "Stop or it ends here. I'm too drunk to get it up again."

Justin giggled and fell back onto the porch. He raised his knees and spread his legs wide apart as Lance crawled between them, guiding his hard erection into Justin. Justin grabbed onto Lance's back, his hands pulling him closer, further inside. Wrapping his legs beneath Lance's buttocks, Justin cried out Lance's name as his lover's thickness filled him, and each thrust washed waves of euphoria through him. Within minutes he came, hugging Lance to him as his juices spread out between them, warm and wet and sticky. Justin heard Lance grunt against his neck, and several thrusts later, he felt Lance shove into him as he came forcefully. Justin began kissing the sweat away from Lance's fevered cheeks as Lance rested on top of him, suddenly spent.

Nuzzling into Justin's neck, Lance gripped Justin's curls in both hands and sighed sleepily. Half-formed kisses trailed along Justin's neck, just

below his ear, and Lance cuddled up into Justin's arms. "Lance?" Justin asked quietly. Around them the sounds of the night began to seep into his consciousness, the crickets chirping, the leaves in the breeze. "Lance, come on, honey, it's getting a little chilly out here."

Lance murmured something against Justin's skin, already falling asleep. Justin eased his hands between them and pushed up gently. "I just want to lie here forever," Lance said, snuggling closer.

Justin laughed softly. "Here?" he asked. He pushed at Lance again, a little more insistent this time. "On the back porch? Naked? What will the neighbors think?"

"I don't care," Lance growled, but he let Justin help him into a sitting position. Justin wiped at the sticky mess on his belly, and Lance tossed his t-shirt at him. After cleaning them both off, Justin stood and helped Lance to his feet. Lance sighed lustily.

"What's wrong, baby?" Justin asked, taking Lance into his arms and leading him back inside, where it was well-lit and warm. On the way in, he picked up the cowboy hats, fallen to the side in the heat of their passion.

As he closed the door, locking the night outside, Lance muttered, "Our clothes --"

"They'll still be there in the morning," Justin said, his voice soothing. He placed Lance's cowboy hat on his lover's head and sighed at the sight. "Damn," he said softly. "You were right. There is nothing sexier than you in that hat."

Lance laughed and tugged at Justin's hand. "Put yours on too," he said, and Justin obeyed.

Cocking the hat jauntily, he whispered, "I feel like a fool."

"A sexy fool," Lance replied, leading him up the stairs to their room. At the top of the staircase, Lance turned and wrapped his arms around Justin's neck. Rubbing his hips against Justin's where another erection was already growing hard between them, he pulled Justin in for another kiss. His hat knocked into Justin's, tumbling both off their heads. Lance laughed as his lips brushed Justin's. "Oops," he giggled.

"Oops," Justin agreed, following Lance to the bedroom. As he crawled under the covers beside his lover, he thought maybe getting a little country now and then wasn't all that bad after all.

All I Ever Wanted
123. Still Friends
by NSyncGrrl

In the early morning light, Chris slipped out of the warmth of Joey's bed and stretched languidly, his naked flesh pimply in the cool dark bedroom. Busta slept by the bed on the floor, nested in Chris's boxer shorts, discarded the night before. Bending down, Chris tugged the shorts out from under the dog. "Gimme these," he whispered as Busta growled in his sleep. Chris growled back, baring his teeth, and the dog rolled over on its back, whimpering playfully. Chris rubbed Busta's belly and pulled on the shorts. As he stood up, he noticed his other dog Korea sleeping on the bed between Joey's legs. Chris petted her awake, pausing to run a hand down Joey's leg, hidden beneath the covers. Joey groaned, shifting in the bed, but he didn't wake up. Pulling on one of Joey's t-shirts, Chris left the room, whistling softly for the dogs to follow.

After feeding them in the kitchen, Chris went to his old room, careful to keep it down. He didn't want to wake JC or Joey, not at this hour, especially when he knew they'd probably be up late tonight once Justin and Lance returned. As quietly as possible, Chris unhooked his Playstation from the back of his television and took it into Joey's room. With only the scant sunlight falling through the closed blinds to work by, he hooked the game console up to Joey's TV. He set the main console on the floor and tossed the controller onto his side of the bed. Korea trotted in from the kitchen and pounced on the controller, growling low as she shook it playfully. "Stop it," he admonished, swatting her away. She glared at him balefully before retreating to the safety of Joey's arms, still eyeing the controller.

Clicking on the TV, Chris kept the volume off and turned on the Playstation. Then he crawled back into bed, slipping his legs beneath the covers as he started up his saved game. As he leaned back against the pillow, Korea started chewing on the cord draped across Chris's lap. He laughed and pushed her away. When she tried again, he held up one knee, blocking her view of the cord, and then he crossed his legs, catching the cord between them. The dog settled into the space beneath his knee and, sighing once, fell back asleep.

Beside him, Joey rolled over in his sleep and snuggled closer to Chris, flinging one arm across Chris's lap while he laced the other one behind Chris's waist. Hugging him, Joey rested his head on Chris's hip and sighed himself. With his eyes still shut, Joey whispered, "Tell me you didn't bring that game in here."

Chris laughed. "Don't ask then," he replied.

Joey squeezed at Chris's crotch through the covers. Chris moaned at the gentle touch. "I told you no games in here," Joey mumbled. "Now I'm going to have to punish you."

"Why does that sound so appealing?" Chris asked, grinning. A slow smile spread across Joey's face, and Joey cuddled against him. As he

opened his mouth to reply, however, the phone rang beside Chris. Frowning, Chris answered it before the ring could wake JC. "Hello?" he whispered.

"Chris? It's me." Dani. Her voice was low and clear, as if she had been up for hours already.

Chris felt his throat go dry. "What time is it there?" he whispered. "Dani?" He felt Joey's arms around him tighten, and he knew Joey wasn't asleep anymore.

He heard Dani strain to look at a clock. "A little after four," she replied. "I just had to call you. You'll never guess what's happened."

She was right -- he couldn't guess. He hadn't seen her since the night of the VMAs, when he planned to break up with her and instead she dumped him. It still hurt, even though he hadn't wanted to stay with her. He wanted Joey. But he had never been dumped before, and it hurt. A little part of him still ached at the memory of the good times they spent together, and the last few weeks when he wanted Joey so badly and held off because of her. And she had been wanting someone else all along. If they only told each other a little sooner, talked about it before it came to a head in an anonymous hotel room in New York! "Chris?" she asked, concerned. "You still there? I didn't wake you up, did I?"

"No," he said quickly. "I'm still here. Just playing a game."

"Oh," she said, and he remembered how much she hated his video game habit. "Well, I hoped you'd be up."

Chris paused the game and rubbed Joey's arm gently. "What's going on?" he asked.

She laughed. "I have to tell you," she said, excitement creeping into her voice. "I just sent you an email about it but I didn't think you'd check it anytime soon, and I wanted to tell you myself anyway."

"Jesus, Dani," Chris said, a little anxious. "What is it? Tell me already."

Still, she paused for dramatic effect, and if it wasn't for Joey's tight embrace, Chris would've jumped off the bed in frustration. Then, taking a deep breath, she said, "Nordstrom's is taking the bid."

"Fuck, yes!" Chris cried. He whooped loudly, scaring Korea, who scrambled off the bed and ran yipping from the room. Beside him Joey frowned, looking up at Chris with blinking, bleary eyes. Chris leaned down and planted a wet, sloppy kiss on Joey's nose. "Nordstrom's took the bid!"

"Yay," Joey replied, yawning. "Bid for what?"

"They've agreed to sell my clothes in their stores," Chris explained. For months Dani had been in a legal battle with a dozen different stores, and even though the tour had usurped most of Chris's time, he managed to sit in on a few meetings here and there. He was surprised to find that Nordstrom's wanted the line, since they had been the one store most opposed to the idea of carrying FuMan Skeeto clothing, but he wasn't going to question it now.

Joey smiled, a gorgeous sight so early in the morning, and Chris leaned down for another kiss. His lips pressed against Joey's hungrily, Joey's tongue barely tasting him. As he pulled away, Chris sighed into the phone as he studied Joey's sparkling eyes. "Fuck, Dani," he said happily. "This fucking rocks!"

Dani laughed. "I thought you'd say that," she said. "What's Joey say now that you woke him up?"

"Ask him yourself," Chris replied, placing the phone against Joey's ear. "Tell her what you think," he whispered.

"Hey Dani," Joey said sleepily, yawning again. "I think it fucking rocks." At the way his smile widened, Chris knew Dani was laughing again.

Taking the phone back, Chris grinned foolishly. "This is so great," he said, gushing. "Damn. I mean, damn. You really made my day, girl."

Dani laughed again. "I know," she replied. Sobering up, she asked, "So how's everything going?"

"Okay," Chris said, nodding. "You?"

"Fine," she said, and he could hear the smile in her voice. "Everything's great, Chris. I'm ..." She sighed. "I was a little upset about the whole mess when I left New York, but I'm doing really really great now. Are you?"

"Dani, I couldn't begin to tell you," Chris said, looking down at Joey. He ran a hand through Joey's disheveled hair and said softly, "I'm happy, for the first time in forever." Joey closed his eyes, a smile on his face at Chris's words.

"Me too," she whispered. Taking a deep breath, she said, "And look at the time. I've been up all night long haggling with this damn contract, and I just need to crash right about now. Mike hit the sack hours ago."

"That's his name?" Chris asked. Mike -- Dani was right, he didn't know anyone by that name.

"Yeah," she replied. Then, before she could change her mind, she said quickly, "Chris, I'm glad things are cool between us."

"Me too," he agreed. Joey brushed his fingers across Chris's crotch again as he shifted into a more comfortable position, and Chris felt the pleasant stirring in his groin at Joey's innocent touch.

"Check your email," Dani said. "Conference call info in there -- tomorrow night, you need to be there."

"Will do," Chris said. He moved beneath Joey's heavy arm and grinned when Joey held onto him tightly. "Thanks for calling, Dani." He meant it.

"You're welcome," she said, yawning. "I'll keep in touch. Talk to you later."

"Okay," he said, hanging up the phone. For a moment he stared at the

TV screen, wondering why it wasn't moving, and then he unpaused the game. Damn, he thought, still high from the conversation. Nordstrom's. Damn.

Beside him Joey sighed, a sad, lonely sound that surprised Chris. "I'm so jealous of her," he moaned, and Chris frowned.

"Jealous?" he asked, confused. "Joe, there's nothing to be jealous of --"

Joey sighed again and snuggled into Chris's hip. "She got a larger rise out of you this morning than I did," he said, grinning as he squeezed Chris's dick through his shorts, and Chris laughed, hardening at the touch.

"A few more minutes," he said, slipping further beneath the covers and deeper into Joey's embrace, "and you'll get more than just a fuck yes from me."

"Fuck?" Joey asked, kissing Chris's neck greedily. "I thought you'd never ask."

Chris laughed and twisted in Joey's grip, enjoying the warmth of the covers pulled over them, the strength of Joey's body, the closeness of his friend. Joey's hands caressed Chris's chest, slipping under the thin t-shirt Chris wore to pinch at his nipples. His fingers fiddled with the hard buds, tickling Chris and turning him on. He rubbed his butt into Joey, feeling the thick hardness of Joey's cock through the boxers he wore, and he wished he hadn't pulled on the clothes after all. Reaching back, Chris trailed his hands down Joey's hips, the smooth, naked skin electric beneath Chris's fingertips. Joey moaned into Chris's neck and rubbed his hips into his. "Can I just tell you how horny you make me first thing in the morning?" Joey whispered, his breath hot in Chris's ear.

"How horny?" Chris asked coyly. Joey growled and wrapped his arms around Chris, hugging him close. Laughing, Chris asked, "Only in the morning?"

"Shut up," Joey purred, his voice like silk.

"How about in the afternoon?" Chris persisted. "Or at night? Do I make you horny at night, Joe? Or is that someone else you're thinking about then?"

Joey cupped Chris's chin in his hand, his fingers brushing along Chris's lips. "You," he whispered, and Chris bit at Joey's fingers playfully. Joey eased a finger between Chris's lips, rubbing along the soft inside of Chris's mouth as he thrust against Chris gently. "I think about you," he said. "Morning, noon, and night."

Chris sucked at Joey's finger and moaned. He was going to ask about midnight, too, just to be contrary, but then Joey's lips found his and the words were lost in their kiss. Turning in Joey's arms, Chris ran his hands along Joey's bare chest and over his shoulders, pulling him closer. "Can I just tell you how much I want you right now?" Chris whispered, and Joey murmured softly.

"Tell me," he commanded.

A knock interrupted them. "Fuck," Chris whispered. He had forgot to close the door behind him when he brought the Playstation into Joey's room. Joey rolled over and peeked out from the covers, Chris sitting up slightly to see, as well.

JC stood in the doorway. "I'm sorry," he said. "I heard ... I'm sorry."

"Wait," Joey said, sitting up. The covers fell to his waist before he realized he was naked, and he pulled them back up over his chest. "JC --"

"I'm sorry," JC said again, stepping out of the doorway. "I didn't mean ..." He sighed and left.

"Shit," Joey said, running a hand through his hair.

Chris frowned. "If I have nothing to worry about," he asked, his voice low, "then why do you always look so upset when JC's around?"

Joey looked at him sharply. "He's my friend," he said, a little harshly. "Yours, too. And he's lonely, Chris. Jesus, can't you see that? Can you imagine what it's like living in a house where everyone's got someone and you have no one?"

Chris hadn't thought of it that way. He supposed it would be hard, if he were the only one of the group who wasn't with someone else. When he first noticed Justin and Lance getting together, he had to admit it made him a little jealous to watch them, especially when they didn't think anyone saw the tender touches and loving glances they were constantly exchanging. "I guess it would suck," Chris admitted, but he wondered just how lonely JC was for someone, anyone, and just how much he wanted that someone to be Joey.

"Come on," Joey said, climbing out of bed. Chris watched him pull on his boxers and a t-shirt, and he pouted from the safety of the covers.

"Joe-ey," he said in that singsong voice of his that he knew would get him what he wanted. When Joey turned around, Chris sighed dramatically. "Maybe you didn't hear me the first time. I said I want you. Now."

Joey climbed onto the bed and kissed Chris quickly. "What's more important, healing a friend's wounded heart or stroking your never-ending libido?"

"It's not never-ending," Chris pouted, but he knew Joey was right. He would feel just downright horrid if they had sex now, knowing that JC was in the next room moping because he walked in on them. My own stupid fault, he thought, letting Joey pull him out of bed. You're a dumbass, Chris, face it. Close the damn door next time and he won't interrupt you. "Can we do it after we soothe his ego?"

Joey laughed. "Come on, Christopher Robin. We can do it every night this week, if that will make you happy."

Chris sighed again. "I guess that'll do."

Laughing, Joey took his hand and led him down the hall to JC's room. The door was closed, but Chris could hear the TV inside, turned up loud.

Probably to drown out any sounds we'd make, he thought, feeling bad for his friend. He'd have to remember to tell Joey how sweet this was of him, to sacrifice their morning together just to make JC feel better. Joey knocked on the door, and from inside they heard JC's muffled voice call out, "It's open."

Joey opened the door and stepped into the room, Chris right behind him. JC sat on the bed, remote in hand, staring at the TV. "Hey, JC," Joey said softly.

JC sighed. "Joey, I'm sorry --"

"No problem," Joey said, brushing the comment aside.

Chris spoke up. "My bad, for leaving the door open."

JC looked at them with large, sad eyes. He pursed his mouth and sniffed once. "I heard you through the wall," he said. "You sounded excited, or something, and the phone had just rung, so I thought ..." He trailed off and shrugged.

Grinning, Chris said, "That was Dani. Nordstrom's is going to carry my clothing in their stores."

JC smiled. "That's great," he said. He looked at Joey before turning back to the TV and the cartoons he was watching. "That's terrific, Chris."

Joey crossed the room in two steps and jumped on the bed beside JC. He leaned back on the pillow and rested his head against the side of JC's hip. "What'cha watching, Josh?" he asked, stretching out on the bed.

JC glanced at Chris with a frozen expression on his face. Following Joey's lead, Chris climbed over them both and settled onto the bed on the other side of JC. "Ooh, Sailor Moon," Chris said, lacing his hands behind his head. His elbow rested behind JC's back, and he smiled up at JC. "I love this episode."

Frowning, JC looked from Chris to Joey. "What are you guys doing here?" he asked.

"Watching TV," Chris replied. He sang along with the theme song. "Fighting evil by moonlight --"

JC laughed in spite of himself. Joey poked at his leg and said, "We thought you might want some company."

"Thanks," JC whispered. "You didn't have to --"

"Shut up," Chris said, hoping to alleviate the dour mood in the room. He grabbed for the remote. "I can't hear the TV."

Joey laughed and slapped his hand away from the remote in JC's lap. "If you can't hear this, you're deaf," he said.

JC settled back against the pillows and smiled. "I should turn it down a little," he admitted.

"Yeah," Chris said, "now that we ain't doing anything next door you

don't want to hear."

A faint blush crept into JC's cheeks, and Joey looked across him at Chris, his eyes wide and disbelieving. Chris stuck his tongue out at Joey and laughed. "What?" He looked at JC. "What did I say?"

"Shut up and watch the show," Joey said, grinning.

"Every night this week," Chris reminded him, ignoring the confused look that crossed JC's face. "You promised me, Fatone. Every freaking night."

All I Ever Wanted
124. Understanding
by NSyncGrrl

Justin felt soft lips on his, kissing him awake. A sweet tongue slipped into his mouth, and the heady scent of Lance's musky cologne filled his nostrils, exciting his blood. Gentle hands caressed his chin, stroking his cheeks and neck, and for another moment Justin kept his eyes closed, savoring the sensation of his lover's familiar touch.

And then Lance whispered, "Wake up, sweetheart."

Opening his eyes, Justin blinked at Lance and tried to remember where he was. The room was dark, lit only by the soft amber glow that fell from the lamp on the bedside table. He was in their room in Florida, at the house he used to share with JC and Joey. Suddenly the events of the day flooded his mind -- the flight here, shopping with the guys, dinner at a restaurant by the mall, lying down when he got back, falling asleep on top of the covers of his bed. He stretched his arms above his head and leaned his cheek into Lance's palm. "What time is it?" he asked, yawning.

Lance smiled down at him and stroked his cheek with one tender thumb. "A little after eight," he said, his voice quiet. "I didn't think you wanted to sleep all night."

"I don't," Justin replied, but right now he felt warm and safe and cozy, lying here with Lance beside him, and he didn't feel like moving. "Lay down with me," he said, pouting slightly.

Lance chuckled softly and crawled onto the bed, snuggling up against him. As he rested his head on Justin's chest, Justin draped an arm around Lance's shoulders, rubbing gently. "What are you thinking about right this second?" Lance asked.

Justin sighed. "How much shit I have to pack this week," he replied, and Lance laughed again. Smiling, Justin added, "I should just throw it all away and buy new stuff."

"It won't be so bad," Lance said. "I'll help you. And we'll get the others to help, too."

"They won't," Justin replied. "I know it. Chris will be like I've got a new game I have to beat, and JC will say he's working on another song, and Joey will just laugh and tell me it's mine, I didn't need any help buying it, I don't need any help packing it up."

Lance let his hand roam Justin's chest, his touch soothing through Justin's thin sweater. "Well then, I'll help you," he said again. Someone knocked on their door, and Lance called out, "Come in."

Joey stepped into the room. "Hey," he said, his eyes twinkling as he smiled at them. He winked at Justin. "The slumbering beast awakens."

"Shut up," Justin said, kicking out at him. Joey caught his foot easily

and laughed as Justin tried to twist out of his strong grip. "Let me go."

Letting Justin's leg fall back to the bed, Joey sat down, slapping Justin's thigh to get him to move over slightly. "I'm going out for ice cream," he said. "You guys wanna come?"

"Where to?" Lance asked, and Justin had to admit that ice cream sounded like a good idea.

Joey shrugged. "Micky D's?" he asked. "They have those McFlurry things."

"The others going?" Justin asked, stifling another yawn.

But Joey shook his head. "Chris is playing Chrono Cross --"

"Didn't he finish that yet?" Lance asked, groaning.

Joey grinned. "Not yet. He's been ... distracted." Justin laughed at that. He could only imagine the distractions Joey had provided for Chris since they returned from the awards show. Joey slapped his leg again and finished, "JC is sleeping. Again. That boy sleeps hard. So you guys want some ice cream or what?"

Lance sat up and looked at Justin. Justin knew what he was going to say before he even said it -- he could read it in the set of Lance's jaw, and he wanted to tell him no before he opened his mouth to say the words. But before he could, Lance said, "I'm a little tired. Can you guys bring some back for me?"

Justin glanced at Joey, who was watching him carefully. Dammit, he thought. When Lance had said he should talk to Joey, Justin agreed. They needed to talk. But now that Lance was giving them an opportunity, Justin had to admit he was a little scared. Joey frightened him, just a little, with his quick wit and sharp tongue, his words like shards of glass that he tossed aside carelessly at times, unaware of how they fell or who they cut along the way. Justin didn't know if he was in the mood to dodge Joey's wounding words, not tonight.

But he couldn't ignore the look in Lance's eyes, the silent plea that begged Justin to patch things up between the two of them. Justin sighed. "What do you want?" he asked softly, and Lance kissed him quickly, despite the fact that Joey was still in the room.

"Pick out something," Lance replied, rolling onto his back so Justin could sit up. "One of those flurry things. Are they good?"

Joey laughed and stood up, heading for the door. "They're da bomb," he said, grinning at them. "You'll love 'em, you'll see."

As Justin followed him, Lance caught his hand and held him back. When he looked down at his boyfriend, Lance smiled up at him and whispered, "Be good."

"I will," Justin replied. When he started to walk away again, Lance tugged him back.

"Give me a kiss," he said, and Justin grinned as he bent down and

kissed him. "Hurry back," Lance whispered against Justin's lips.

"I will," Justin promised. This time when he tried to follow Joey, Lance let him go. Out in the hallway, Justin heard Joey in his own room, talking quietly to Chris. Standing in the doorway to Joey's room, he tried not to overhear, but he watched as Joey stretched out over the bed and kissed Chris's ear roughly. Chris glanced up at Justin and flashed him a sunny grin before turning back to his game. "Get me a Butterfinger one," he said, and Joey nodded.

"We'll be right back," he said, rising. Justin waited until he left the room before following him down the hall and out to the car. As Joey backed his Acura out of the driveway, he looked over at Justin and asked, "Sleep good?"

Justin blinked slowly and yawned, trying to wake up fully. "Yeah," he mumbled. "Just had a long day, you know?"

Joey laughed. "I know what you mean. How was your weekend?"

Shrugging, Justin replied, "Okay." He stared out the window at the darkened streets as Joey headed for the local McDonald's and wondered how to broach the subject they needed to talk about so badly. The radio played softly, and the lights from the businesses they passed streaked wet colors along the window. Justin watched their neon lines play across the glass and sighed.

"Did you tell Diane yet about you moving in?" Joey prompted.

"No," Justin whispered.

"What about Stacy?" Joey asked.

Justin smiled at the memory of Lance's older sister. "She's so damn cool," he said, picking at the hem of his sweater. "She's like the big sister I never had, you know? Always looking out for Lance, for both of us, really. She can do like anything. She rocks."

Joey laughed. "Well, I'm glad she doesn't mind you screwing her brother."

Justin felt the anger gather in him at Joey's thoughtless words. He tightened his lips and his jaw twitched as he struggled not to say anything mean. "He's not going to know why you keep getting mad at him if you don't tell him," Lance had said, and Justin knew he was right. Twisting his hands in his lap, Justin wondered how he could tell Joey just how pissed off his words made him, and why.

But Joey glanced over at him, a small frown on his face, and asked, "Jesus, why is it I can't open my mouth without you getting mad enough to deck me?"

"Joey," Justin started, and sighed. He ran a hand across his forehead and tried to control his emotions. "You make it sound so ... so slutty, or something. We don't just screw around. It ..." He sighed again, tears pricking his eyes. "It's so much more than that, and you just can't see it."

To his surprise, Joey pursed his lips and said softly, "I do see it, Justin.

I do. I just ..." He shrugged. "I don't know how else to say it."

"I don't, either," Justin replied, thinking about it. "But you make it sound like sex is just so damn casual and it's not, not to me. It means a lot to me when Lance and I ... when we make love."

He blushed when Joey laughed at that. "Shit," he drawled, and Justin picked at his fingernails, not looking at Joey. "Justin, sex isn't all that glorious. It's just fucking. It's fun but it's not all that."

"It can be," Justin replied. "If you really love someone --"

"Please," Joey said, but his voice was low and held no conviction.

-- If you do," Justin continued, "then it's something special. You can't tell me it's just fucking when you're with Chris." When Joey didn't reply, Justin nodded. "Maybe in the past, Joey, with the girls you picked up in clubs and after shows, maybe that was just fucking. A different face, a different bed, but the same body night after night. Just fucking. But Chris?"

Quietly, Joey said, "He's my best friend."

"And Lance is mine," Justin said. "I love him more than I've ever loved anyone else. Anyone. And it's not just the sex, either."

"I know," Joey said. He studied the road and didn't look at Justin. "I thought you were getting all bent out of shape because you didn't want me thinking of Lance in that way."

Justin frowned. "In what way?"

"As someone having sex," Joey said, shrugging. "Someone naked and in the throes of passion. Someone --"

"I get the point," Justin said. Maybe that was part of it, too. Maybe he didn't want Joey thinking about Lance like that, but to tell the truth, he didn't want anyone thinking of Lance but himself.

"If you can forgive Lance for that night," Joey asked gently, "why can't you forgive me?"

Justin frowned. "I have forgiven you," he admitted. "I just don't want you making fun of us together. I feel like you try to belittle our relationship at times. Like it's not real. Or meaningful. Or forever."

Joey sighed. "I don't mean to do that," he said. "Jeez, Justin, I didn't know that's the way it came off to you. I just ..." He shrugged as he pulled off the main road, into the McDonald's parking lot. "I just want you to lighten up a little, I guess. You're too damn serious about Lance anymore. Which is great, really, but you have to have fun, too. I mean, sex is fun. You seem to act like it's sacrilegious or blasphemous to even talk about it. You act like sex is a holy thing, and that's putting too fine a light on it."

"It means a lot to me," Justin pouted as Joey eased the car into the drive-thru. Two other cars were ahead of them, and Joey put the car into neutral as they waited.

He looked at Justin and laughed. "I'm sure it does," he said. "It's great. Sex is awesome. But it gets boring after a while if you take it too seriously. Tell me, do you guys always do it in the bed?"

"No," Justin replied, frowning. "We make it interesting."

Laughing again, Joey drove forward as one of the cars ahead of them moved up. "How interesting?" he wanted to know.

Justin shrugged. "In the shower," he said. "In the pool." Joey raised his eyebrows at that but didn't say anything. "On the back porch --"

"Here?" Joey asked, grinning.

Justin grinned back. "No, Lance's house. This past weekend."

"Your house," Joey pointed out. "That must've been fun. It was dark?"

"Very," Justin said. "We don't just do it in bed, Joey. And I'm not always dead serious when it's just me and Lance, either. You don't see us when we're alone. It's like we're the only ones who exist when no one else is there. We're so good together."

"I know what you mean," Joey whispered. "It's like you're the only ones who are real."

Justin smiled. "Exactly! I just ... I guess I just thought you were trying to criticize us, make us feel like shit and break us apart."

"Justin!" Joey cried, and then it was their turn at the drive-thru. Leaning out the window, Joey ordered four McFlurries, and when the cashier told him to drive around, he did. "Fuck," he muttered, picking up where he left off before ordering. "Justin, I know you don't believe me, but I don't want to come between you and Lance. I swear. I know I've said it before, and I've gone and done some stupid shit because I'm a fuckhead and can't get my act together sometimes, but I don't want to come between you guys. I don't want you two to break up. I just don't think I could watch that pain."

Justin wished he could believe him. He wanted to believe him. He wanted to get along with Joey, because he was cool and always laughing, and he could brighten a room with just his contagious smile alone. He knew Joey confided in Lance sometimes, and he didn't want them to lose that. He wanted to believe that they could be friends, all three of them, without Justin having to worry about ... well, about anything, really. When Joey reached into his pocket for some money to pay for the McFlurries, Justin dug out his wallet. "My treat," he said, handing Joey a twenty dollar bill.

Joey looked up at him. "You sure?" he asked.

Justin shrugged. "Just take the money," he said, grinning. "But there's a catch."

"What's that?" Joey asked suspiciously.

"You have to help me pack this week." Justin held his breath and

waited.

Joey laughed. Taking the twenty, he pulled the car up to the cashier window. "I can handle that," he said. "First dibs on anything you throw away, though."

"Deal," Justin replied. As Joey handed him back the change, he asked, "So how's everything with Chris going?"

Joey smiled, his eyes sparkling. "Let me just say that I am so fucking happy right now," he said, handing Justin two of the McFlurries as the cashier gave them to him. Justin set them between his legs and took the next two as well. Driving out of the parking lot, Joey sighed. "I love being with Chris. He's so damn funny. Even during sex. He's so crude it's funny."

"Crude?" Justin asked, setting the McFlurries down on his legs. His hands were cold from the ice cream, and he held them by their tops to keep his hands off of the freezing cups. "Like crude how?"

Joey laughed, thinking. "It's hard to explain," he said. "But it just turns me on to hear him talk when we're alone together. And you thought I wasn't serious enough about sex? You haven't heard Chris's pillow talk yet."

"And hopefully never will," Justin pointed out, making Joey laugh again.

Back at the house, Justin headed for his room, a McFlurry in either hand. He nudged the door open with his foot and smiled at Lance, stretched out on the bed. "Hey there, sexy," he said, sitting down on the bed.

Lance sat up. "Hey yourself, baby boy." Taking the McFlurry Justin offered him, Lance dug into the ice cream and said, "You're still alive. What about Joey?"

"We didn't fight," Justin replied, laughing.

"You talked to him?" Lance asked, licking the ice cream off his spoon.

Justin watched Lance's tongue and nodded. "We talked," he said, as Lance licked up the spoon, lapping at the ice cream on it. "We're cool. You know what that does to me, watching you eat this?"

"I can imagine," Lance replied, grinning as he took another spoonful of ice cream and stuck it into his mouth. He pulled the spoon out slowly, closing his eyes to savor the ice cream, and Justin almost whimpered. "Eat your ice cream," Lance said, pointing at Justin's cup, forgotten in his lap. "What flavor did you get?"

"Same as you," Justin said, taking a spoonful of the ice cream and sticking it into his mouth as he watched Lance eat. Damn, but he loved this boy. When Lance stuck the spoon into his cup again, Justin leaned forward and kissed him quickly. Sitting back, he licked his sticky lips and said, "I love you."

Lance grinned. "I know," he said. "I love you, too." He looked up as

someone knocked on their door, and Joey pushed into the room, Chris right behind him. "Can we join you guys?" Joey asked.

"Sure," Justin said, and Joey plopped down on the bed, stretching out beside them. Chris sat down in front of Joey's legs and leaned back against him. "How's the game going?" he asked Chris.

Chris shrugged. "I'm stuck. I think I suck at this game."

"You got pretty far," Joey said as he dove into his ice cream. He stuck a spoonful in his mouth and pointed the empty spoon at Chris. "You're just stuck at the end, that's it. That doesn't mean you suck." Grinning, he added, "But if you want me to tell them how you really suck --"

"Shut up," Chris growled, but he laughed at the shocked look on Justin's face, the blush rising into Lance's cheeks. "You guys don't need to know how I suck."

"You're right, we don't," Lance said quickly, and they laughed as they ate the ice cream.

All I Ever Wanted
125. One of Those Moods
by NSyncGrrl

JC sat on the porch, a notebook open on his lap, and tried to write. It was a beautiful day, cool with a crisp hint to the air that whispered autumn wasn't too far away. The grass looked too green, the sky too blue, not a cloud in sight -- the perfect day to write. But JC couldn't seem to make his jumbled words flow from the tip of his pen onto the paper, and he didn't know why.

Every time he tried to write, his mind started playing that damn song he had heard on the radio when he woke up that morning. He didn't know the name of it, didn't even know who sang it, couldn't remember anything but two lines of the chorus, and yet he couldn't seem to get the stupid tune out of his head. "Don't wanna love you if you don't love me. Don't wanna need you when you won't need me too." Now what the fuck did that mean?

JC sighed and doodled in his notebook. The lyrics to the song in his head were scribbled in his small, tight writing all over the piece of paper, squeezed between curly lines and small clouds and tiny hearts he had drawn in the margins of the page. Think of something, he commanded, anything. Just get that damn rhythm out of your head. Tune into the music that's always there inside, your own music, and fuck that song.

Good advice. He turned to a clean sheet in the notebook and frowned, resolved not to get up until he had written something of his own. Staring out into the back yard, he thought about what he wanted to say. "Don't wanna love you if you don't love me --"

"Fuck," he muttered, rubbing his eyes. He hated when a song stuck in his head, especially one like this, a bubblegum pop tune by a would-be one-hit wonder. Bitter today, aren't we? he thought, sighing. Under his breath, he sang, "Don't wanna need you when you won't need me too." He wished he knew more of the lyrics. At least then he wouldn't drive himself crazy over the two lines he did know.

Think of something else, he told himself, and so he wondered where the others were. Justin and Lance were inside, he knew that, packing up the last few years of Justin's life into cardboard boxes to move to Mississippi. JC had claimed he needed to write just to get out of helping them. He would miss Justin, but he knew this was the right thing for his friends at this point in their lives, and he wished them all the luck in the world. But he didn't want to sit there in the room watching their secret looks and hearing their loving banter. He didn't want to deal with that right now.

I want to write a song, he thought, and he did. But he couldn't think around the music playing in his head right now, that damn "don't wanna love you" song. He wondered when Joey and Chris would get back from the store. They had gone on a beer run, stocking up for later in the week, and when Joey asked if he wanted to go with them, JC said no. He needed

to write. Needed to. There was so much in him that he didn't know where to start or what to say. He only knew that he had to get it out before it consumed him, and he wanted to put it down in a song.

"Don't wanna love you if you don't love me ..." he sang softly, and then sighed again. "Fuck this," he pouted, tossing his pen into the back yard. It landed in the grass, sticking up like a dart. For good measure, JC threw the notebook out after it. The papers fluttered in the air and then crumpled as they landed in the grass. "Fuck everything. Fuck fuck fuck."

He felt a little better. Not much, though. He looked around for something else to throw, but there was nothing close at hand, just his glass of iced tea and his beeper on the small table beside him. He pitched the beeper off of the porch, throwing it as hard as he could, but it was small and didn't make any sound as it landed in the back yard. Then he picked up the glass and tossed it out, too. Iced tea flung out in a graceful arc, ice cubes winking at him as the sunlight kissed them, and then the glass landed on the ground, unbroken, the ice clinking as it hit the glass. "You in a pissy mood?" someone asked behind him, and JC turned around to find Justin standing on the other side of the screen door.

"Is it that obvious?" JC replied darkly. He turned back around and glared at the back yard. "You done packing?"

"Hell, no," Justin said, stepping out onto the porch. The screen door slammed shut as he sat down on the porch swing, close to JC's chair. JC felt Justin's earnest gaze but didn't look at his friend. "Are you mad that I'm moving?" Justin asked softly.

JC frowned. "No," he said quickly. "That's not ... no, Justin. I think it's great. I think you and Lance are ready for this. I think it's wonderful. I'm not mad about that."

"Then what are you mad at?" Justin asked.

"Nothing," JC mumbled, and his mind whispered, "Don't wanna love you ..."

Justin grinned. "You're lying," he said.

No shit, JC thought. I've been doing that a lot lately. It comes easily. Once you start lying to yourself, lying to everyone else is just a piece of cake. He stared out at the notebook lying open in the grass, its pages lifting in the gentle breeze, and didn't say anything.

"You want to talk about it?" Justin asked.

"No," JC replied. "Not really."

Justin sighed. He frowned, trying to think of a way to get JC to open up to him. JC had never been the type to confide in anyone, even Justin, who he had known forever. It was always Justin coming to him for advice, Justin coming to ask his opinion on this or that, Justin telling him what he was feeling or thinking. JC never opened up like that. He offered his advice, he listened to his friend, and once or twice he'd talk about something that bothered him, but only when it was so damn painful that he couldn't not talk about it. And this wasn't that far, not yet.

You don't even know what this is, he reminded himself. You don't know why you feel like shit. You don't fucking know ... so how are you going to tell that to him? "Justin," he sighed, covering his eyes with his hand, "I don't know why I'm in such a pissy mood right now, okay? I just don't know."

"It's not me?" Justin asked, fearful.

JC laughed. "You're the last person I'd be pissed at," he replied. "Why would you think it's you?"

Justin shrugged. "Because of Lance," he whispered. "Because sometimes I think you ... I don't know, I think you're maybe a little ..." He sighed. "I don't know."

"A little what?" JC pressed, but he knew the answer. He just wanted to hear Justin say it out loud.

"A little jealous," Justin whispered. "A little lonely. A little left out."

JC sighed. "Yeah," he admitted, "sometimes I am around you two. But that's okay, I understand."

Justin frowned. "It's not okay," he said. "I don't want you to feel that way. Not around me, or any of the others."

The others -- JC sighed again. Under his breath he sang, "Don't wanna love you if you don't love me ..." He cleared his throat and asked, "You ever get a song stuck in your head?"

Justin laughed. "All the time," he admitted. "It's like on endless repeat, over and over again. I hate that."

"Me too," JC said. "I heard this song this morning and I don't know anything but two lines of it. And I can't get the damn thing out of my head."

"You should listen to the radio," Justin suggested. "Maybe you'll hear something else that will drown it out. What song is it?"

JC shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "I've never heard it before. Just some stupid pop song out now. Some chick sings it." Justin laughed, and JC added, "At least you have that uncanny ability to hear a song once and be able to sing it back perfectly. I'm not like that. So I've got to put up with this girl singing the same two lines until I'm just about ready to scream." He sang, "Don't wanna love you if you don't love me. Don't wanna need you when you won't need me too."

Frowning, Justin said, "I've never heard that one before. Not the happiest of lyrics, huh? No wonder you're in such a foul mood."

JC laughed. "I can't write my own songs when someone else's are playing in my head. You think listening to the radio will help?"

"It might," Justin replied. "Hell, it can't hurt any, can it?" Grinning, he added, "Or listen to a CD. Something different to shock that song right out of your system. Like Eminem or something."

JC rolled his eyes. "Yeah, right," he said, laughing. He didn't even own an Eminem CD. "Then that damn Slim Shady song will be stuck in my head, and I really will scream."

"Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?" Justin sang, and JC reached out and hit his arm playfully. Justin laughed at him. "Come on, JC. Stop being so pissy. Go pick up your shit and just write something."

Easy for you to say, JC thought. "I don't feel like it anymore," he replied. "Maybe I'll never write again."

"And maybe the sun won't rise tomorrow," Justin said, "but I doubt it. You're a musician. You write songs. Right now you don't think so, but you'll find your music again. You're just having a bad day." JC sighed. "You're entitled to one every now and then," Justin added. "This is your bad day for the month of September. So enjoy it while you can, because you can't have any more this month."

"Why not?" JC asked.

Justin laughed. "Because I said so. If you don't start cheering up soon, I'm going to have to hurt you."

Grinning, JC asked, "And that'll make me cheer up? Jeez, Justin, I've been going about it all wrong. I should've asked you to kick my ass from the start and saved myself a lot of trouble."

"Come help me pack," Justin asked suddenly.

JC shook his head. "Not my idea of fun," he replied.

"Oh, and sitting out here moping is?" Justin countered. JC had nothing to say to that. "Get up and come on. Please?"

"Fine," JC said, sighing. He pushed himself up out of the chair and headed inside the house. At the door, he turned and looked back at Justin. "You coming too, or are you going to make me and Lance do it all?"

Justin stood up. "I'm coming," he said. But first he stepped off the porch and picked up JC's notebook, the pen, the glass, and his beeper. He dumped them onto the porch swing and followed JC inside. "I've got a lot of shit to pack --" he started, leading the way to his room.

JC followed, humming softly to himself. At Justin's door, he pulled up short, surprised at the song now in his head. Damn, he cursed as the chorus of "The Real Slim Shady" played through his mind. One crappy song for another. Damn damn damn.

All I Ever Wanted
126. Middle of the Day
by NSyncGrrl

Chris sat on Joey's bed, engrossed in his video game. Joey lay beside him, flipping through a magazine and trying to ignore the growing ache in his groin. But Chris's elbow rested high up on Joey's thigh and each time he jerked the game controller, he brushed against the tip of Joey's penis, and Joey bit his lip at the sensation. He tried to tell himself he wasn't hard, because it was the middle of the day and the others were scattered throughout the house, and he didn't want to do anything they might overhear. He tried to tell himself he wasn't horny, because Chris was too wrapped up in his game to want to stop now and fool around. He tried to will away his erection, tried to think of things to make the blood stop pumping so rapidly through his veins, images of his mother, his sister, his Algebra teacher back in high school -- almost worked, that one -- but then Chris muttered, "Fuck" as the words Game Over flashed across the TV, and when he pushed against Joey's thigh to stand up, Joey almost moaned out loud.

"Are you tired of dying yet?" Joey asked, hoping the lust curling through his body didn't come through in the sound of his voice. He glanced up as Chris clicked off the Playstation.

"Let's have sex," Chris said suddenly, and Joey wondered when he had learned to read minds.

Joey felt a familiar coyness slip over him, and he tried not to smile as he asked, "Right this second?"

"Why not?" Chris asked, stretching. His t-shirt pulled free from his jeans as he raised his arms high above his head, exposing a strip of pale skin along his stomach.

"Because it's the middle of the day," Joey replied. He tried to remember his reasons for not wanting to do anything right now, but his mind went blank. "Because I'm reading," he added, grasping at straws. "And you're playing a game --"

"I turned it off," Chris said, as if Joey hadn't noticed. He turned off the TV as well and then walked over to the bedroom door, open just a crack. He pushed it closed and locked it, the sound of the latch loud in the small room. Climbing back onto the bed, Chris poked at the bulge in Joey's pants and whined, "Come on, Joe. I know you want me."

Was it that obvious? Joey grinned and thought maybe it was. He tossed the magazine onto the floor and grabbed Chris by the waist. Laughing, Chris squirmed in Joey's arms as he was overpowered by his friend. Joey pulled him down beside him and rolled over, pinning him to the bed. "You're right," he growled in Chris's ear as he pressed him into the mattress, "I want you. Right now." He thrust his hips, rubbing his hard erection against Chris's buttocks.

Chris pushed his butt up against Joey as he let Joey hug him close. Joey's hands encircled him, his fingers pinching Chris's nipples erect through his thin t-shirt. Joey bit the soft flesh of Chris's neck gently, and Chris moaned beneath him. Letting his hands drift down Chris's stomach, Joey unzipped Chris's jeans and eased one hand inside, cupping Chris's own erection through his underwear. A few strokes and Chris was hard and throbbing in his hand. "It helps if we undress," Chris whispered, moving against Joey, his butt rubbing Joey's hardness as Joey kissed along Chris's neck.

"Fuck clothes," Joey said, and Chris turned his head to kiss his lips. "We should walk around naked."

Laughing, Chris said, "Good idea. Then whenever we want to fuck, all we have to do is just do it."

"Like the Nike commercials," Joey said, squeezing Chris's cock. Chris thrust into his hand and closed his eyes as Joey kissed him, his tongue slipping easily into Chris's eager mouth. Chris turned in Joey's embrace and managed to unzip Joey's jeans, pulling his hard dick out of his pants and stroking his stiff member until Joey wanted to scream in lust and desire. Joey tugged down Chris's pants, Chris shifting beneath him to help him get them off, and when his underwear hung around his knees, his jeans at his ankles, Joey slipped a hand beneath Chris's balls, rubbing softly. Chris gasped as Joey eased a finger inside of him. Kissing Chris hungrily, Joey whispered, "Where did we put those damn condoms?"

"I don't remember," Chris admitted, his eyes searching Joey's. He grinned as Joey rubbed his thumb along the soft skin beneath his cock, one finger still inside of him. "I can't remember much of anything right now. Just keep doing what you're doing and for the love of God please don't stop."

Joey laughed. Leaning down, he licked one of Chris's nipples through his shirt, wetting the fabric and tracing around and around the tender bud until Chris gripped his head in both hands and pulled at his hair, moaning loudly. Joey hoped JC wasn't in his room right now. He wished he had thought to turn on the radio, or the TV, or something to cover any noise they'd make. But it was too late now, and Joey didn't even want to stop long enough to find the condoms, let alone turn on the radio or the TV or anything other than Chris. He rubbed his cock along Chris's thigh as he leaned over to open the bottom drawer of the bedside table. Chris pulled him back. "Where are you going, Super Joe?"

"To get the rubbers, silly boy," Joey said, grinning. Super Joe -- he liked the sound of that.

Chris sighed dramatically. "I'll do it," he said, sounding as if it was the last thing he wanted to do at this moment.

Joey kissed his nose. "Don't put yourself out or anything," he joked, trailing his hand up Chris's hard erection, kneading the solid member gently.

Pushing Joey's hand back down, Chris said, "I told you to keep doing whatever it was you were doing down there." Joey eased his hand back under Chris's balls, rubbing insistently and slipping two of his fingers

inside his friend. Chris moaned and reached blindly for the table, tugging at the drawer so hard that it almost pulled free of the runners. Earlier Joey had dumped all of the condoms into the bottom drawer and thrown away the packages, so they wouldn't have to struggle for one in the heat of the moment. Now Chris twisted in Joey's arms until he could look into the drawer, and despite Joey's demanding lips on his neck, his urgent hands caressing Chris's chest and groin, his fingers working Chris wider and wider apart, Chris still managed to take a deep breath and ask, "What flavor you want today?"

Joey laughed. "Just grab one." Chris's hand on his cock slipped free as Chris tried to sit up a little more to see inside the drawer, but Joey held him down. "Where are you going?"

"Pick one," Chris said. "A specific one. What do you feel like?"

Joey sighed. "Chris, they all work the same way," he replied, and he kissed the frown off of Chris's lips. "Fine," he said, giving in. "Tiger stripes. We haven't used that one yet."

"Rawr," Chris growled, picking one of the condoms out of the drawer. He settled back into Joey's arms and tore the tiny package open. Joey stroked Chris's throbbing cock as he watched Chris shake the excess lubrication off of the rolled up condom. "Give it here," Chris said, pointing at Joey's erection

Leaning back, Joey felt the cool dampness of the thin latex on his dick, and then Chris was rolling it down over his hard shaft with a quickness that surprised him. Joey pulled his jeans down a little farther, not wanting the zipper to crush between them, and then he rolled onto Chris and eased his way inside. His friend's hot tightness sucked him in, squeezing him until Joey was sure he'd come before he was all the way inside. He heard Chris's sharp intake of breath, a moan as Joey pushed completely into him, and then Chris moved beneath him, a steady rhythm that Joey matched easily. Joey ran his hands through Chris's hair as he thrust into him, kissing Chris's closed eyes, his cheeks, his forehead. When his lips found Chris's, Chris's hands wrapped around Joey's waist and slid into his jeans, cupping his butt, holding them tight together. With each thrust, Joey moaned Chris's name, over and over again, breathing it against Chris's skin, kissing it into Chris's mouth. Beneath him Chris whimpered his desire, his need, clutching Joey to him as he gave into the passion and the moment and Joey. When Joey came, he felt Chris spasm between them as his own orgasm ripped through him as well, and then their rhythm slowed until Joey pulled out of Chris and cuddled into him. "Chris," he whispered, his lips hot and wet on Chris's neck.

Chris ran his hands up Joey's back and hugged him close. "Can I ask you something, Joe?" he sighed.

"Hmm?" Joey murmured, not wanting to let go just yet. Chris shifted beneath him and Joey settled into his arms, content to just lie there for a little while longer. When Chris didn't answer him, Joey roused himself and asked, "What's on your mind, babycakes?"

Chris giggled against Joey and sighed. "I just want to ask you something, but I don't want you to ..." He sighed again. "I don't know, Joe, just forget it."

Joey pushed himself up and looked at Chris, his friend's gaze intense, his eyes watering slightly. "What is it, Chris?" he asked, frowning. "You can tell me. Heck, if we can have sex ..."

"I don't want you to get, I don't know," Chris muttered, looking away. He lowered his voice and said quietly, "I don't want you to get scared, or run away."

"From you?" Joey asked, grinning. He kissed Chris's forehead. "You couldn't scare me away if you tried."

But Chris pouted, uncertainty written plainly on his face, and Joey wanted to kiss it away. He nuzzled Chris's neck and waited for Chris to talk to him. When he did, his voice was soft and full of doubt. "What would you do if someone else wanted you?"

"What do you mean?" Joey asked, confused. He licked along the bottom of Chris's chin and inhaled his spicy, sweaty scent.

Chris shrugged. "You said you wanted only someone to want you," he reminded him. "What if someone other than me told you they wanted you now?"

Joey sighed. "You don't get it, do you, Chris?" he asked quietly. Chris shook his head and, placing his hands on Joey's cheeks, forced him to look in his face. Joey stuck his tongue out, trying to lick Chris's hand, but he couldn't reach it. Instead he bent down and kissed Chris's wrists, first one, then the other. "It's not just anyone anymore. It's you. I want you. Only you."

"No one else?" Chris asked softly, though his eyes wavered as he stared at Joey.

"Chris," Joey said, sighing. "Jesus, I thought it was obvious. Or are you still worried about JC?" Chris bit his lip but didn't say anything, and Joey rolled off of him, standing up beside the bed. He slipped off the condom and tugged his pants back up. "Chris, I'm telling you, JC doesn't want me. Trust me."

Chris sighed and pulled off his t-shirt. Wiping the cum from his lower belly, he frowned and jerked his underwear back up. "Whatever," he said as he pulled up his jeans, still lying down on the bed, and Joey frowned down at him.

"Don't go anywhere," Joey said, pointing at him. "We're going to talk about this when I get back from the bathroom. Do you hear me?"

Chris sighed and closed his eyes, lying back on the pillows of the rumpled bed. "Fine," he said softly. Joey hurried to the bathroom. He wrapped the condom in toilet paper and buried it in the waste basket, and then cleaned Chris's juices off of him before zipping up his jeans. Leaning over the sink, Joey stared at himself in the mirror and sighed. Fuck, he thought, frowning at himself. He didn't think JC liked him -- he was fairly certain that JC was just lonely, but not for him -- and he didn't want to think about Chris and JC fighting over him. Was this how Lance felt? he wondered. When I wanted him so badly and all he wanted was Justin, is this the way I made him feel? Upset, confused, like everything was

beyond his control? Fuck.

He didn't want JC. He knew this. He wanted Chris. He loved the way Chris made him feel, giddy and schoolboyish and just so damn relaxed. He loved the way Chris looked at him with those frank, earnest eyes, as if he was weighing each word he said before he spoke, and then he'd surprise Joey with his vulgar words or outrageous ideas, and Joey would have to laugh. That's what he loved about Chris the most, Joey decided -- the way Chris made him laugh. At himself, at Chris, at the world. And right now Chris was upset, Joey saw it in his eyes; he was afraid of losing whatever it was that they had together now, and Joey wanted to chase that fear away. Because it was unfounded. So what if JC liked him? So what if Lance were to start liking him now? Joey didn't care. He had Chris. That's all he wanted, he knew it.

When he came back into his room, Chris was sitting cross-legged on the bed, staring at his hands in his lap. "Joe, I'm sorry --" he began, but Joey sat down behind him and wrapped his arms around his friend, catching him in a huge bear hug.

"Chris, listen to me," he said softly. "I want you. I want only you. Not JC, not anyone else. I don't care who else wants me anymore. As long ..." He sighed. "As long as you want me too, that's all that matters now."

Chris rubbed Joey's arm where it rested around his neck. "I do want you," Chris replied. "I want you so badly, I don't want to lose you to anyone else. Does that make sense?"

"Perfect sense," Joey replied. He kissed the back of Chris's neck and squeezed him tightly. "You're not going to lose me, Christopher Robin. I promise you that. Not to anyone."

Chris sighed, his fingers gentle where they stroked along Joey's arm. Joey rested his chin on Chris's shoulder and waited. He watched Chris's fingers play along his arm, and he hugged his friend tighter. Then Chris asked, "What if the Pope wants you, Joe?"

Joey laughed. Leave it to Chris to try and lighten any mood. "What would he want me for?" he asked.

"You're Catholic," Chris pointed out. "He might want you to be a priest or something. You never know. What if he called you up out of the blue and wanted you? What then?"

"Well, I still wouldn't give you up," Joey said, hugging Chris. "Not even for the Pope."

"Okay," Chris said, nodding, "I believe you. If the Pope isn't going to get you, then JC sure as hell won't."

Joey kissed Chris's neck and growled, "I told you to stop worrying about him. And don't start worrying about the Pope, either. I'm pretty damn sure he isn't going to steal me away from you any time soon."

Chris laughed and leaned back into Joey's embrace. "Okay, then," he said, resting his head on Joey's shoulder. "No more worrying. But if the Pope calls, I'm hanging up on him." Joey laughed and started to bite

along Chris's neck with tiny nips, his teeth just barely closing over the skin. Then he kissed away the bite marks and wondered how soon was too soon for them to have sex again.

All I Ever Wanted
127. Looking for Advice
by NSyncGrrl

Joey found Lance out in the back yard, lying on his stomach in the grass. He looked up from a book he was reading as Joey approached. "Hey," he said, grinning up at Joey.

Joey sat down beside his friend and hugged his knees to his chest. "Hey," he said softly. "What'cha reading?"

Lance lifted the cover of the book so Joey could read the title. *Frankenstein*. "I just started it," Lance admitted. "I found it in Justin's closet and I never read it before so I thought I'd give it a try."

"Justin's read that?" Joey asked, impressed.

Lance laughed. "No, he bought it at a book sale once and forgot all about it." Smiling, he added, "Justin read? You kidding?"

"Oooh, that's cold," Joey said, but he laughed as Lance turned back to the story. After a few moments, Joey asked, "Am I interrupting you?"

"Not at all," Lance replied. He looked up at Joey again, squinting against the afternoon sun. "You want to talk or something?"

"Or something," Joey said, shrugging. He frowned at the grass as Lance closed the book and sat up.

Crossing his legs, Lance leaned forward, elbows on his knees, and laced his hands in front of him. "What's up?" he asked.

Joey shrugged again. "I just wanted to tell you I'm sorry," he said softly.

"For what?" Lance asked, confused.

Joey looked at Lance, studying his spiky blonde hair, his light green eyes, the way the hint of a smile toyed with the corners of his mouth. "For all the shit I put you through," Joey said, "when I wouldn't leave you alone. When I wanted you so badly --"

"Joey, that's all in the past," Lance said, interrupting him. He sighed. "I used to try to tell Justin you were just being yourself, just flirting because you're Joey and that's what you do best." Joey grinned at that. "And when I drink, I tend to get horny. I should've known that. I shouldn't have kissed you. It's as much my fault as it was yours. I'm just glad everything's working its way out now. So you don't have to apologize. It's over with."

Joey stared at Lance's hands and smiled ruefully. "But I know how you must have felt," he said, his voice low, "when you didn't want to hurt me by pushing me away, but you didn't want to hurt Justin, either. I ... I wonder ..."

"Wonder what?" Lance prompted.

Joey shrugged. "I wonder if it wouldn't have been better to just tell me off from the beginning," he said. He raised his eyes to Lance's, and Lance saw a deep pain in them, something that made him reach out and place a comforting hand on Joey's arm.

"I couldn't do that to you," Lance said. "You're my friend, Joey. I couldn't just tell you to get lost." He chewed on his bottom lip, debating on whether or not to continue. But Joey was with Chris now, and Lance knew his own feelings for Justin, he was secure in their relationship, and maybe his words would help Joey through whatever it was that seemed to be tearing him apart inside. "Can I tell you something, Joey?" He waited for Joey's nod, and then he smiled and said, "I liked your flirting, and all the attention you turned my way. I could've fallen for you, and I could've fallen hard. If it wasn't for Justin ..." He trailed off as his hand slipped off of Joey's arm and into the grass. He plucked at the tall blades and shrugged. "I've always loved Justin. Always. From the moment I saw him, I knew he was the one for me. But if things had turned out differently, if he didn't like me, too, and I had been alone when you started hitting on me, I would've given you a chance, Joey. I want you to know that."

Lance was surprised to see a faint blush creep into Joey's cheeks. "Thanks, man," he whispered. "I ... that means a lot to me, you don't know how much." Then he grinned and winked at Lance. "But I didn't have a chance, did I? Boy Wonder got to you first."

Lance laughed. "He sure did," he said, feeling a goofy grin on his face at just the thought of Justin. He sighed. "Joey, I hope you find something like this one day. It's just so ... there aren't words to describe the way I feel when I'm with him."

"Speaking of," Joey asked, looking around the yard, "where is he now?"

"Packing," Lance said. "Still. That boy has more shit than anyone else I've ever known. He saves everything." Joey laughed at that. Lance plucked at the grass and watched Joey carefully for several moments, sure there was something more his friend wanted to say. When he didn't speak, however, Lance said, "That's not the only thing on your mind."

"No," Joey whispered, and fell silent again. Lance waited, giving him time to think about what he wanted to say, if anything at all. Finally Joey sighed and asked quietly, "How do you tell someone you love them but you only want to be friends?"

Lance frowned. "You mean Chris --"

But Joey shook his head. "No, not Chris." He smiled sweetly and sighed. "You know what, Lance? I think I'm really, I don't know. I think he's good for me, I really do."

Lance grinned, the blush in Joey's cheeks and the glow in his eyes making Lance wonder just how good Chris was turning out for him. Maybe this was the one for Joey, only he didn't know it yet. "So you're happy now?" he asked.

Joey nodded. "Very happy. I didn't think I could be, after all the shit I pulled, all the hate I put myself through, but yeah, I'm happy."

"Then what's the problem?" Lance asked.

"JC," Joey whispered. Lance looked at him sharply, rubbing a blade of grass between his fingers. Joey closed his eyes and sighed. "Jesus, Lance. I kissed him before -- did you know that?" Lance shook his head. When had this happened? he wondered. "I kissed him, twice, just little kisses, nothing that meant anything to me, but I didn't know how much they bothered him."

"Bothered --?" Lance asked, confused.

Joey shook his head. "He didn't think they were just casual kisses from a friend. He told me he still thinks about them. He said --" Joey sighed, raising his gaze to the sky and blinking rapidly. "He said he doesn't want me but that he did, at one point. He said it was because of you that he didn't let me know how he felt."

"Me?" Lance asked. He had noticed JC seemed preoccupied and quiet lately, but he just assumed it was due to the stress of the tour and the upcoming album. He couldn't imagine JC having a crush on Joey, or even Joey kissing JC, or why he didn't know about any of it. And they didn't get together just because of him? Lance couldn't imagine why.

But Joey cleared it up for him. "He wants someone who loves him," he said sadly, "and I was so caught up in wanting you. He didn't want to deal with that."

"When did he say all this?" Lance asked.

Joey shrugged. "When he told me I shouldn't let Chris slip away. And you know what? I don't think he likes us together. He said he didn't want me but sometimes? Sometimes I wonder."

Lance rubbed Joey's arm gently but he didn't know what to say. He knew exactly what Joey was going through, didn't he? And that was thanks to Joey himself, wasn't it? He loved Justin so much, and when Joey told Lance he wanted a chance at him, Lance hadn't known what to do. How do you tell your friend you don't like them like that, he wondered, when you're with them all the time? How do you say that without losing their friendship? He didn't know -- things had fortunately worked out between him and Joey, but for a time there he had been weak and afraid that he would throw away everything he held so dear for that one moment of weakness. So how did he help Joey when he wasn't quite sure how he had managed to get through the same thing himself? "Joey," he said softly, "I don't know what to tell you. I'm sorry."

Joey sighed. "I don't know what to do. I don't want to hurt him, Lance, I don't, but I'm not going to give Chris up, not now."

"It's that good between you two?" Lance asked. At Joey's leer, he blushed and amended, "I didn't mean just the sex."

"I don't either," Joey replied. "It's him, Lance. Everything about him. And I don't want to tell JC that, what would I say? I'm sorry, Josh, but

those kisses were nothing to me, and I'm sorry you can't stop thinking about them? Jesus, how would that go over?"

"Not very well," Lance said.

Joey rubbed his eyes with one hand. "I know he's lonely. It has to be hard, with us all together and him ... where's that leave him? I mean hell, I was lonely before Chris and I hooked up. Even now I get jealous watching you and Justin together."

"I'm sorry --" Lance started, but Joey cut him off.

"It's not your fault," he said, "so don't apologize. It's just that you two have something I can't even begin to dream of, and I can't imagine how it makes JC feel when we're all together and he's still alone."

Lance bit his lip and thought maybe they should try to find someone for JC. But who? And how? JC could be so damn stubborn at times, and Lance could see it now, the furious look on his face when he found out they were setting him up on a date. Then he'd get pissed and just feel even worse. "Maybe I can ask Justin to talk to him," Lance suggested. Justin was JC's oldest friend. If anyone could talk to him, Lance thought maybe Justin could.

Joey sighed. "And say what? Yo, find someone and leave Joey alone? He doesn't want you and he doesn't want to hurt you, so just move on? I don't think so."

"Maybe I could just ask him anyway," Lance said, and he looked up when the screen door slammed as Justin stepped out on the porch, looking around. Lance raised his hand and smiled at him. Justin smiled back and hurried out to where he sat in the back yard with Joey, taking the steps two at a time in his haste. As he approached, Lance called out, "Hey, baby."

Joey turned and watched Justin walk towards them. "Hey, Justin."

"Hey, you two," Justin said, and he plopped down into Lance's lap, curling his legs beneath him as he sat on Lance's thighs.

Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's waist and hugged him. "How's the packing going?" he asked, grinning up at Justin.

Justin kissed Lance tenderly, his lips soft and eager, but when he started to push Lance back, Lance pulled away. Clearing his throat, he looked over at Joey and whispered, "Justin, we're not alone."

"I know," Justin said, kissing him again. Then he turned and winked at Joey. "Am I interrupting anything?"

"We were just talking about you," Joey said, grinning.

Justin frowned slightly. He looked between Lance and Joey and asked, "About what?"

"Just talking," Lance said, hugging Justin tighter. "Not really about you."

Justin looked as if he wanted to say something else, but he studied Lance's face and pouted slightly. Lance kissed his full lips again, and Justin sighed. "Okay," he said, "I don't need to know."

Lance felt his heart swell at the trust he heard in Justin's voice. "We're talking about JC," he said, and to his surprise Justin laughed.

"He needs to knock some boots," Justin said, wiggling in Lance's lap.

Joey laughed. "That's putting it mildly," he said, agreeing with him.

Justin frowned. "Maybe we could hook him up with someone," he suggested, and Lance laughed. "What?"

"I was just thinking that," he admitted.

"You weren't," Joey said, a thoughtful expression on his face. "You know, that might be interesting."

Justin laughed and ran his hands around Lance's waist. "Hmm," he murmured, cuddling against Lance. "Maybe Britney?"

"I don't think so," Lance said, shaking his head. "We want him to be happy, don't we?"

Justin pinched his back, and Lance giggled, squirming away from his fingers. "Britney's nice," he said. He looked at Joey. "What do you think?"

Joey shrugged and didn't say anything, but Lance could tell by the contemplative look on his face that Joey was considering it. It would be one way to get JC's mind off those kisses, and then JC wouldn't be so alone anymore.

All I Ever Wanted
128. Packing Up
by NSyncGrrl

"Lance," Justin whined from his spot on the closet floor. Lance sat on the bed, folding Justin's clothes into a box, and he couldn't see his lover from where he was, but something in Justin's voice told Lance that he was worn out. "Come here."

"No," Lance replied, a slight smile on his face. "I'm busy packing. You should be, too."

Justin sighed, a long, low sound that tore at Lance's heart, and Lance couldn't help but laugh. "I'm tired of packing," he said, and Lance could hear the pout in his voice.

"Then don't," Lance suggested. He folded another sweater into the box and added, "You can always just stay here."

"I don't want to," Justin mumbled. "I want to live with you. I just don't want to go through all this shit anymore."

Truthfully, Lance was a little tired of packing, himself. Since they arrived at the house on Monday, they had been working nonstop to clean out Justin's stuff, and the last three days had left the place in shambles, with half-filled boxes strewn about the room, books and videos and CDs stacked into wobbly piles, clothes everywhere. If he hadn't helped Justin make the mess, he would've had trouble believing it had all been hidden inside that one little closet. Now the closet was empty and its contents all over the rest of the room, and Justin sat on the floor of the closet, too tired to keep working. And it was his stuff. From inside the closet Justin sighed again, and Lance stood up, pushing the box in front of him aside as he stepped into the closet and looked down at Justin, sitting with his back against the wall, his knees raised in front of him. "You're so cute when you're pitiful," Lance said, grinning.

Justin looked up at him and pouted. "I don't want to do this anymore," he said, his eyes wide, weariness written across his face. "I just want it to be done already."

"And who's going to do it?" Lance asked, stepping into the closet. Straddling Justin's legs, he sat down on his lover's knees and looked at him, waiting for an answer.

"I don't know," Justin muttered. He reached out and took Lance's hands in his, tugging gently. His feet shifted on the floor, lowering his knees until Lance slid down his thighs and into his lap. Lance knelt on the ground and settled into a comfortable seat on top of Justin. "Maybe I can pay someone to help me."

"Like who?" Lance asked, entwining his fingers with Justin's. "We've already done most of it. Now all we have to do is put everything into boxes. That's it." Justin frowned but didn't reply. Leaning forward, Lance kissed Justin's forehead and whispered, "Just wait until we have to unpack

it all again."

Justin rolled his eyes. "I don't want to even think of that," he said, but he grinned and tried to twist his hands out of Lance's to hug him close.

Lance held onto Justin's hands with a tight grip, and when Justin frowned slightly, trying to pull away, Lance laughed. "I got you," he said softly.

"Lance," Justin whined, but he had to admit that being caught by Lance was one of the best things he could think of happening to him. "Let me go so I can touch you."

"You are touching me," Lance replied. He squeezed Justin's hands in his and smiled. "See? You're touching me there." Then he ground his hips into Justin's crotch, sending slivers of pleasure through Justin's body, and Lance found him hardening beneath his butt. "And you're touching me there. Where else do you want to touch me?"

"Kiss me," Justin said, looking up at Lance with his deep blue eyes.

But Lance laughed. "I don't think you're in the position to ask for anything right now," he said. A frustrated look flitted across Justin's face, and Lance grinned merrily. God, he loved it when Justin was getting horny and couldn't do anything about it.

"Lance," Justin sighed, his lower lip trembling slightly.

"Don't even do this," Lance warned, watching Justin's face grow sadder and sadder. "Justin, please. You can't play me like this. It's not fair." Another minute and he would hug Justin to him and never let go -- he was such a sucker for that pout.

Then Justin's sunshine smile broke through the clouds on his brow, and he grinned as he twisted Lance's hands, hoping to break free. "Oh, and this is?" he asked through clenched teeth, but Lance had been expecting it and his grip didn't falter. Sighing, Justin let his hands fall to his sides, and Lance pulled them up onto his knees as Justin closed his eyes in defeat. "Fine," he whispered. "Be that way."

Lance waited to make sure that Justin wasn't going to try to squirm away again, and then he leaned forward and with the briefest of touches, brushed his lips across Justin's. When Justin opened his mouth, wanting more, Lance pulled back. "Not so fast," Lance said, and Justin opened his eyes to stare at him longingly. "Don't be greedy."

"I love you," Justin whispered, and Lance kissed his full, pouty lips, just barely resting against them before pulling away again.

"I love you, too," Lance replied. "And I love playing with you. I love teasing you. Do you know why?"

Justin shook his head slightly. "Because you're mean," he said, smiling a little.

"Because it turns me on when you pout," Lance said, leaning in for another kiss. This time he eased Justin's lips apart and licked them with the tip of his tongue before breaking away. "Because I know you wouldn't

take this from anyone else, and that means the world to me."

"I still think you have a mean streak in you," Justin sighed, licking his lips as he watched Lance hungrily. "Are you going to tease me all afternoon with these little Smurf kisses?"

Lance laughed. "Do you know of a better distraction? We could finish packing, you know."

"Do we have to?" Justin asked, closing his eyes, his lips parted invitingly. He thrust his hips up into Lance as he waited for another kiss.

Lance felt Justin's growing erection rub against him and said, "Don't try to lie to me, Justin. I know this is turning you on, too." For emphasis, he wiggled his butt into Justin's groin, and a slight moan slipped through Justin's lips as his eyes scrunched closed tightly.

"I'm going to die if we do this all day," Justin said, sighing. "Can you kiss me again? Please?"

"You won't die," Lance admonished lightly. He leaned down and kissed Justin's bottom lip, sucking gently. Justin tried to raise his hands to Lance's face, but Lance kept them on his thighs. Justin kissed Lance's upper lip as Lance tugged at Justin's lip, eliciting another moan from his lover.

"Lance --" Justin started, but Lance cut off his words with a sudden rough kiss, his tongue delving into Justin's eager mouth, tasting Justin's sweetness, his tongue, his teeth, his cheeks. Releasing Justin's hands, Lance cupped Justin's face in his hands and pressed further into him, kissing away his breath. Justin wrapped his arms around Lance and moaned into his mouth, letting Lance's kiss push him back against the wall, and still he wanted more.

When Lance pulled away this time, Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's waist, clutching him close, and sighed. "Jesus," he whispered, and then Lance painted his cheeks with tiny kisses like the soft bristles of a brush, his breath drying the kisses on Justin's flushed skin. "Did I tell you today that I love you?"

Lance shrugged. "You might have mentioned it," he said in an infuriating, off-hand manner. Justin frowned as Lance kissed his brow, trailing his lips down the slope of Justin's nose until they found Justin's own lips again. "Can I tell you a secret?"

"Okay," Justin sighed as Lance's tongue danced on his lips.

Leaning closer, Lance turned Justin's face in his hands and ran his finger around the curve of Justin's ear, tracing a circle around his diamond earring. Justin closed his eyes and swallowed thickly, moaning at the soft caress. Into his ear, Lance breathed, "I love you, too."

Justin felt weak, and he hung onto Lance possessively. "Do that again," he whispered.

"What?" Lance asked, but then he licked the tender spot just in front of Justin's ear, and he felt his lover shiver beneath him. "Ooh, I think I've found an erogenous spot."

Justin gasped as Lance's tongue skimmed along his earlobe. "What's that mean?" he asked, his voice barely audible. "What's an erroneous spot?"

Lance laughed and hugged Justin against him. "Erogenous, baby," he corrected, his nose tickling Justin's ear. "It means that's part of your body that's super sensitive."

"I don't know about that," Justin replied, breathless. "I just know it feels awesome when you touch me there. Do it again."

Lance kissed along Justin's ear, his finger rubbing the kisses into Justin's skin. Justin grabbed fistfuls of Lance's shirt and clasped him close. "I can do this all day," Lance breathed.

Justin moaned in his ear and thrust his hips into Lance. "Please do," he replied. "Please." He rubbed his erection beneath Lance's buttocks and sighed. "Oh Jesus, Lance, please."

Giggling against Justin's ear, Lance replied, "Now how can I possibly say no to that?"

All I Ever Wanted
129. Tell Me
by NSyncGrrl

It was after ten at night, and Chris sat on the edge of Justin's bed, watching Joey's muscular arms lift stacks of books and pile them into an empty box. Justin was tossing clothes out of his drawers, and Lance picked the clothes up off of the floor and folded them into another box. Chris was in charge of packing away the CDs but he was tired of working and had decided to take a break, and now he couldn't look away from Joey's arms. He wanted to feel those strong arms around him again, to cuddle close to Joey in the bed and just drift to sleep. He sighed, and Joey looked over at him. "You giving up already?" he asked, his eyes twinkling in that way he had that made it seem like he was always kidding around.

"Chris," Justin said, glancing at him, "get off your ass and help us out."

"I'm sick of this," Chris said. "Fuck moving. We can finish in the morning."

Lance laughed. "We're packing the trailer in the morning," he replied. He had rented a U-Haul trailer earlier that day, and tomorrow he and Justin would leave for Mississippi again. It was Wednesday already -- Chris couldn't believe it had been a week since he and Dani broke up. A week of sleeping in Joey's arms. A week ... he just couldn't believe it. It seemed like only yesterday they had sex for the first time. Everything about Joey seemed so fresh and amazing and new.

JC passed by the door, headed for the bathroom. He had begged off earlier, claiming he needed to make a few phone calls, but Chris thought JC just didn't want to be with them because he ... he wants Joe, Chris thought, frowning. And I'll be damned if he's going to get him. He's mine. With a quick look at the others, Chris stood up and left the room. "Be right back," he muttered, but no one stopped him. A glance at the closed bathroom door told him JC was still inside, and Chris hurried down the darkened hall to JC's bedroom. Pushing the door open slightly, he slipped inside and walked over to JC's bed, where a notebook sat open, a pen tossed carelessly to one side of the paper.

Picking up the notebook, Chris flipped through it curiously. Each page was filled with JC's cramped script, songs and poems and bits of random thought, a few doodles, dates and odd things he just wrote down so as to not forget them. One page in particular caught Chris's attention, and he turned the page around so he could read the lyrics written across it, over and over again, the same words: "Don't wanna love you if you don't love me/Don't wanna need you when you won't need me too." Small hearts were scattered across the page, along with a few scribbles and some boxes JC had drawn. Chris frowned and turned the page.

"What the hell are you doing?" Chris turned around as JC stepped into the room, a scowl on his face. He took one look at his notebook in Chris's hands and said, "Put that down."

Chris closed the notebook but didn't put it back on the bed. He looked at JC with a level gaze and tried to read behind JC's livid expression, but all he saw was an anger that matched the ire rising inside of him. Tossing the notebook onto the bed, Chris said, "A few kisses, JC. That's all it was. Get over it already."

JC's mouth opened in surprise, and then he shut it, unsure of what to say. He glared at Chris and tried again. This time, the words came out. "They didn't mean anything to me," he muttered, but his gaze slid away and Chris knew he was lying.

He took a step closer to JC, who stepped back, away from him. "You had your chance," Chris hissed. "When I was still with Dani. Why didn't you tell him then? You knew how lonely he was. You knew how much it would've meant to him to know that someone cared about him when he was upset about Lance. And where were you then, huh? Answer me that, JC. Where the fuck were you then?"

"I didn't --" JC started, taking another step back. He pushed the door closed and leaned against it, his jaw bunched angrily. His eyes looked from Chris to the floor and back again, as if he couldn't stand to look at him but couldn't bear to look away. "I don't --"

"The hell you don't," Chris said bitterly. He clenched his teeth and poked JC's chest with one finger. "I see the way you look at him, like you're wondering what it would be like to hold him and kiss him again. Do you want me to tell you, JC? Do you really want to know what it's like?"

"No," JC replied, frowning. His eyes hardened, and he glared at Chris with something akin to hatred. "I don't want to know, Chris. I don't care."

"Bullshit," Chris whispered. Then, louder, he repeated himself. "Bullshit, JC. You don't speak to me anymore. You never want to hang out with us when Joey and I are together. And every fucking opportunity you get, you're knocking on our door like you hope to interrupt us or something. And you tell me you don't fucking care?"

JC bit his lower lip as his eyes filled with tears, and he looked somewhere behind Chris, trying to keep his composure. Chris poked at him again, a little rougher this time, and asked, "Why should I believe you?"

"I don't know," JC admitted, and a single tear slipped down his cheek. "I don't know, Chris. I don't even believe myself. How can I expect you to?"

That tear broke Chris's anger. He stepped back and looked at JC, at his friend, and watched as the younger man covered his eyes with one hand, hiding the redness and the tears. He choked back a sob and Chris felt his heart twist inside of him. "JC," he started, reaching out for his friend, but JC shrugged away his hand.

"I don't want to like him," JC whispered, and Chris had to strain to hear his words. He wiped his face with his hand and didn't meet Chris's gaze. "I don't want to make you angry, or insecure, or make him upset. I don't. I don't." His voice broke.

Chris sighed. "JC," he said again, and this time when he reached out, JC let Chris's hand settle on his shoulder. Chris squeezed gently but didn't know what to say. So instead of saying anything at all, he pulled JC into a hug, his arms encircling JC easily. JC resisted at first, but Chris held him tightly until he felt JC's arms latch onto his own shoulders. Burying his head into Chris's shoulder, JC sobbed again. "I'm sorry," Chris said. It was the only thing he could think of to say. "JC, I'm so sorry."

"I don't want him," JC whispered again. "I like you, and I like him, and you make him so happy ... I don't want to ruin that. But sometimes it's like the world is going on around me, people are living their lives and I'm just stuck on the sidelines, watching them pass by. I'm too wrapped up in my music that I'm afraid that I'm missing out on everything else."

Chris sighed. "And you think Joey would change that for you?" he asked gently. Joey was high on life, and he could make any day brighter with just his smile alone, but Chris didn't want to lose that so JC could be happier. He wouldn't lose it.

But JC shook his head and pulled away. Chris let him go. He rubbed his nose and wiped the tears from his face with the back of his hand. "I don't know," he whispered. "Chris, it's not him, okay? It's just ..." JC sighed and blinked away more tears. "It's just that ..."

"What?" Chris prompted. "What is it, JC, if it's not Joey?"

JC rubbed his eyes and sighed shakily. "I've never kissed a boy before," he said quietly. "I've never been kissed by a boy before. It's been so long since I've been with anyone, really, and I just can't get him off my mind. Sometimes it seems like he's hitting on me, like he wants me, too."

Chris frowned slightly. "That's just Joey's way of being ... Joey. You know that, JC. He's a flirt. He doesn't know how it makes you feel or he wouldn't do it."

"I'm so damn confused," JC mumbled, and Chris wanted to hug him again. "I know he doesn't like me, and I know I'm just lonely, so why can't I stop tearing myself up over him and his stupid, stupid kisses?"

"You need someone, JC," Chris said softly. "Someone you can relate to, someone who loves music as much as you do. Someone who can make you happy, too. Then maybe you can get Joey off your mind."

"If only it was that easy --" JC started, but Chris cut him off.

"It is," he said, touching JC's arm. "It is that easy, Josh, you just have to get out more often. How are you going to meet anyone sitting around this place all the time?"

JC sighed again. "The tour's coming up," he pointed out. "I don't want to get involved with someone right now --"

"We've got a few weeks still," Chris said. "Plenty of time to meet someone, get to know them a little. It doesn't have to be serious, not yet. Just something to make things a little easier, you know?"

"I know," JC whispered. "Jesus, I know."

Chris smiled and shoved his hands into the pockets of his jeans. "I'm sorry I was reading your notebook," he said.

"That's okay," JC replied. He sniffled and, taking a deep breath, exhaled loudly, trying to get himself back together. He placed his hands on his hips and looked at the notebook, lying closed on his bed. "It's not a journal or anything. Nothing personal or private in there, not really." He shuffled his foot on the rug and asked, "Are you going to say anything to Joey?"

"No," Chris said, shaking his head. "What's there to say?"

"Nothing, I guess," JC admitted. He looked up at Chris. "You really think I could hook up with someone before the tour?"

Chris rolled his eyes. "JC, please," he said, laughing to try and lighten the mood. "There are a million girls all over the world who would fight for a chance with you. And you don't know if you can find just one?"

JC smiled faintly. "What if I don't want a girl?" he asked, and he blushed at the quizzical look Chris gave him. "I mean --"

"I know what you mean," Chris said, grinning. "Hell, you can have whatever you want, man. You just have to go out and get it."

"Right now I just want someone," JC said. "You're right, it doesn't have to be anything serious. I just want someone who flirts with me the way Joey does. Someone to hold and lie with and it doesn't have to be anything else, not yet. Someone who likes me for me, who likes only me."

"And who likes music," Chris added. "You wouldn't be able to get along with someone who didn't."

JC laughed. "You're right," he said, nodding. "Someone who likes music. It doesn't have to be my music, even, just music in general."

"Well then," Chris said, clapping JC on the shoulder, "you'll have to go with us to the clubs one night. We'll find you someone, I promise." And then you can leave Joey alone, he thought. Because he's mine.

All I Ever Wanted
130. On the Move
by NSyncGrrl

JC set the last box down inside the U-Haul trailer and climbed out. He pulled the rolling door down and locked it, tugging on it once to make sure it was latched. Busta yipped around his heels, and JC scooped the dog up as he headed back for the porch where the others were gathered. The front door stood open, and Chris sat in a rattan chair, his dog Korea in his lap. He watched Joey talking to Justin, telling him something that made the younger boy nod. As JC approached, he caught the end of the conversation. "And make sure you drive carefully, you hear me? It's a long trip. Call when you get in, no matter what time it is. Okay?"

"Okay," Justin agreed, and he turned, flashing his smile at JC. "Everything packed?" he asked.

JC nodded. "Where's Lance?" he asked, setting Busta down on the porch. The minute the dog was on the ground, he ran back out to the car, yipping again.

"Right here," Lance replied from inside the house. As he stepped out onto the porch, he patted the pockets of his sports jacket and his jeans, checking to make sure he had everything. "Justin, where are --"

"I've got them," Justin replied, holding up the keys. Lance grinned and pulled the door shut behind him. "We ready to go?"

"Yeah," Lance replied, checking his watch. It was noon already, and they still had to stop by Justin's mom's house before they got on the road. Lance didn't know how well this trip would be -- fourteen hours in the car, driving nonstop. He hoped the time passed quickly, but he had a feeling it would be a long ride. He looked up at Joey and then turned his gaze onto JC. "You guys have any plans for this weekend?"

"Clubbing," Chris said, grinning as he scratched Korea under her chin. "JC's going out with us."

"Really?" Justin asked, and JC blushed slightly. "How'd you manage to get him to agree to that?"

JC shrugged. "I might not go," he said quietly.

"You're going," Joey said, laughing. "What about you guys? Anything fun on the schedule?"

Lance rolled his eyes. "Unpacking," he said, and Justin groaned. "We've got to get going. Jonathan gets off from school in another hour or so, and we still have a lot of Justin's stuff to pack up at his mom's place. We'll see you guys on Monday."

Justin led the way to the car. He unlocked the passenger side door and held it open for Lance. As he buckled up his seatbelt, Justin closed the door and hurried around to the driver's side. Sliding into the seat, he

leaned over and kissed Lance's cheek quickly as he buckled his own seatbelt. Laughing, Lance waved at the guys, still standing on the porch. Justin started the car and began to back out, but JC held up a hand. "Stop," Lance said, and Justin stepped on the brake.

"What?" Justin asked, and then JC ran out towards them and disappeared behind the trailer. Lance twisted in his seat and waited until JC came back into view, Busta once again in his hands. He nodded at them as he headed for the porch. "Damn dog," Justin muttered, but he was grinning and when JC waved one of Busta's paws at them, he raised a hand in farewell.

It didn't take too long to drive across town to where Justin's mother lived. Justin pulled up in front of the house and Lance frowned as he got out of the car. "You're a mile from the curb," he said, closing the door behind him.

Justin came around the front of the car, smiling sweetly. He took Lance's hand in his and led him to the porch. "I'm fine," he said. "If anyone can't see that big ass trailer, they're blind."

Lance looked back at the car, doubtful, but Justin had the front door open and was waiting for Lance to step inside. Shrugging, Lance closed the door behind him, and then Justin hugged him tightly, wrapping his arms around Lance's shoulders. "Justin," Lance warned, running his hands up Justin's chest to keep some distance between them, "your mother --"

Justin kissed his lips tenderly. "Fourteen hours," he whispered, "in the car, with my brother in the back seat. How will I manage to keep my hands to myself?"

Laughing, Lance suggested, "Maybe I'll have to sit in the back seat." He draped his arms around Justin's neck and kissed him quickly. "Besides, Jon might not be going."

Justin frowned. "You can't do that to him," he said, studying Lance's face. "You're going to let him go no matter what grade he got, aren't you?" He pouted when Lance's expression didn't change. "Aren't you?"

"We'll see," Lance replied, pulling away from Justin. "I'm sure he aced the test."

"But what if he didn't?" Justin persisted, but Lance didn't answer him. Justin led the way into the kitchen, calling out for his mom. When he found her standing by the oven, he snuck up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist. "Hi, Mom. Lance is being mean again."

"Again?" she asked, turning to wink at Lance. "How can someone as sweet as he is be mean?"

"Justin makes it so easy," Lance replied, stepping up to Mrs. Harless and planting a kiss on her cheek. "What'cha cooking?"

"I thought you boys might like some lunch," she said, stirring thick soup in a pot on the stove. "Sandwiches are in the fridge, and the soup will be ready in a minute."

After lunch, Lance followed Justin upstairs. On the top step, Lance

pushed past Justin and raced into his room. "Hey!" Justin cried, laughing, as he chased after Lance. From downstairs his mother called out his name, and Justin stopped running. "Sorry," he called down as Lance entered his room. Lance stepped to one side of the doorway and waited, back against the wall, for Justin to enter.

When he did, Lance grabbed his hand and pulled him back, his arms encircling Justin's neck as Justin's arms came up around his waist, his lips finding Lance's. His tongue slipped easily into Lance's mouth, and he moaned as Lance's hand roamed through his curls, pushing him closer. Justin hugged Lance against him and kissed him greedily, pressing him back against the wall with his desire. From far away, Lance heard the slight creak of the steps, and then he heard Mrs. Harless call from the stairwell. "Justin?"

Justin broke their kiss but didn't let go of Lance. "Yeah?" he asked, his voice thick as he looked down at his lover, hunger shining in his eyes.

"Jonathan started packing for you," his mother said, and Justin turned in Lance's arms to look around the room. Three large boxes sat open, clothes and toys and books just tossed into them. "Don't yell at him; he was only trying to help."

Lance laughed at the frown on Justin's face. "This isn't packing," Justin said, stepping over to the first box. Lance caught his hand and let Justin pull him over to stand beside him. Together they looked down into the box. "Half this shit ain't even mine," Justin said, kneeling down to sort through the contents of the box.

"Watch your mouth, Justin," his mother called, and then she went back downstairs.

"Yeah," Lance said, nudging Justin with one foot, "watch your mouth."

Justin grinned and faked a punch at Lance's knee. Lance danced back and sat down on the bed, laughing. As Justin pulled a pile of clothing out of the box, he groaned. "These don't fit me anymore!"

"See?" Lance asked, grinning. "And you wanted someone else to pack your stuff. See what happens when they do?"

Justin tossed the handful of clothing back at him, and Lance batted them onto the floor. "Now I'm going to have to unpack everything before I can even begin to pack," Justin said, sighing. "Did I tell you this sucks?"

"Not yet," Lance said, "but I'm expecting it any minute now."

Justin grinned. "Well then, not to disappoint you, this sucks."

Lance laughed again and watched Justin dig through the box. Suddenly his beeper vibrated against his waist, and he looked down at the number. It was his mother. "Oh shit," he muttered.

"Watch your mouth," Justin said, winking at Lance. He saw Lance playing with his beeper and added, "It's probably JC. What did we forget now?"

"It's my mother," Lance said, frowning. "I wonder what she wants."

Justin pointed to the phone on the table beside the bed. "Call her and find out."

"It's long distance," Lance reminded him, but Justin simply shrugged.

"Call her," he said. Raising his voice, he called out, "Mom?"

From downstairs Mrs. Harless called back, "I can't hear you, Justin."

Justin stood up and stretched as he left the room. Stopping at the top of the stairs, he yelled down, "Mom, can Lance call his mom?"

Lance sighed. "It's not that important, Justin," he said, but Justin called down again, "Please? I'll pay for it."

"Okay," Mrs. Harless said, and when Justin came back into the room, he handed the phone to Lance and dialed the number for the Bass' house.

"You remember her number?" Lance asked, impressed, as he listened to his parents' phone ring in his ear.

Justin shrugged and kissed Lance's cheek before turning back to the box. "Tell her I said hi," he said, and Lance wondered if Justin really wanted him to do that or if he was just saying it to be nice.

But then the ringing stopped, and his mother's voice came through the phone. "Hello?" she asked.

"Mom," Lance said, "I got your page. What's up?"

He could almost see his mother's smile as she said, "I just wanted to see when you were leaving, so I know when to expect you to get in."

"Late," Lance said, rolling his eyes. "I'll call you tomorrow but not when we get in. It'll be like three or four in the morning." He waited a moment and then added, "Justin says hi."

"Hi," she said, and Lance grinned in spite of himself. Covering the phone with one hand, he whispered, "She says hi."

"Really?" Justin asked, his smile brightening the room. Lance nodded and turned back to the phone, where his mom was asking when they were leaving and what route they were taking, and where they were stopping for dinner. "Mom," he interjected, "I'm calling from Mrs. Harless' phone. I can't talk for long."

"Well, drive safe," she said, "and tell Lynn I said hello."

"I will," Lance replied. "I'll call you tomorrow, okay? Love you."

"How sweet," Justin remarked as Lance hung up the phone. "Love you."

Lance reached out and snagged the back of Justin's shirt, pulling him into a tight embrace. "Love you too," he said, kissing the back of Justin's neck.

Justin giggled and squirmed in Lance's arms, but didn't try to get

away. Sitting down on Lance's lap, he sighed. "Do we have to take this stuff with us?" he asked. "Can't we get it next time?"

"Jeez, Justin," Lance said, laughing. "How many trips will it take to get you moved in?"

"I don't know," Justin admitted. "But I do know I'm never moving out."

"You better not," Lance growled, catching Justin's ear in his teeth. He nipped at the tender skin gently, and Justin melted in his arms.

"I love it when you do that," he sighed, resting his head on Lance's shoulder. Downstairs they heard the screen door slam as Jonathan came home from school, and Justin pushed off of Lance's lap. "Come on," he said, pulling Lance along behind him. "Let's see what he got on the test."

Justin took the stairs two at a time, his shoes clomping on the wooden steps. "Jon!" he called as he came downstairs, and his brother ran to him, holding a piece of paper.

"Look --" Jonathan started, and then he saw Lance on the steps and shoved past Justin. "Lance, look! I got a B!"

Lance laughed. "That's great," he said, taking the paper from Jonathan. Justin crossed his arms and grinned at them. "I guess this means you're going with us, eh?" Lance asked.

"Yipee!" Jonathan raced up the stairs past Lance, heading for his room. Lance laughed again and Justin took his hand in his. Kissing his knuckles, Justin whispered, "You're the bestest boyfriend."

"I'm your only boyfriend," Lance pointed out, and Justin stepped up on the step beneath his. Running his arms around Lance's waist, he rested his head on Lance's chest and hugged him tightly.

"Forever and ever," Justin said, pouting. "Remember I told you that?"

Lance ran his hand through Justin's hair. "You said you wanted me with you forever," he said, recalling the words Justin spoke when they spent the night at Joey's parents' house. But Justin had been a little drunk and Lance was surprised to find he remembered telling him that. It was the night Lance asked Justin to move in with him.

"I do," Justin said, kissing Lance's stomach through his t-shirt.

Lance laughed. "I like it when you get all mushy," he said, draping an arm around Justin's shoulders, "almost as much as I like it when you get jealous. Or when you pout."

"Then I'll have to remember to be mushy more often," Justin replied, squeezing Lance harder in his arms. "It's much more fun that pouting."

"Oh, but you do that so well," Lance countered, starting back up the stairs, Justin still holding onto him. "When you pout, you can get me to do anything."

"Anything?" Justin leered. He slipped his fingers through the belt loops

on Lance's khakis and tugged gently. Pouting, he asked, "Can you finish packing for me?"

"Anything but that," Lance laughed as they headed for Justin's room and the boxes waiting for them.

All I Ever Wanted
131. Saying It
by NSyncGrrl

Joey had to get out of the house. He had noticed JC seemed to shy away from him and Chris, and he didn't know if it had to do with the way he thought JC felt about him or the little talk Chris and JC had the other night. Chris still wouldn't tell Joey what had been said. But now JC was willing to go out with them tomorrow night, and Joey was all for that. Maybe he could find someone at the club, even if it was only for the night. Then Joey wouldn't feel so bad when he held Chris close in the bed, if he knew JC had someone holding onto him, too.

So after Lance left with Justin, Joey called up his mom and asked if he could borrow the old '67 Camaro they had stashed away in the back of the garage. It was a beauty of a car, even if it was so outdated, it got strange stares on the road. At one time it had been a cherry apple red, but weather and rust had dulled the finish to a burnished color like dried blood, but it still ran and the radio played loud and clear, and Joey just loved to drive with the top down and the wind in his hair. He could picture it now, one hand on the wheel, the other behind Chris's neck -- because this was his fantasy, wasn't it? And Chris was beside him in the car. And it was chilly because it was mid-September but the top was still down and the radio turned up loud to some R&B station out of Tampa, playing a string of old Motown that fit the mood.

And his mother said sure, take the car. After a quick lunch with JC and Chris, Joey drove over to his parents' house and snagged the keys from his dad, nodding in all the right places when his father told him not to rev the engine and don't forget to roll the top back up overnight. Finally he managed to slip behind the large white-rimmed steering wheel and backed out of the garage, the radio already tuned to that station in Tampa. After dinner he'd ask Chris if he wanted to go for a ride. They'd park somewhere and just talk, maybe. Or they'd fool around in the back seat -- gotta pull up the top for that one, he thought, grinning foolishly as the wind rushed past him. He shifted into fourth gear and raced back to the house, eager for the evening to begin.

When JC said he wanted to lie down after dinner, Joey sidled up behind Chris as he washed the dishes and whispered in his ear, "Let's get out of this place."

"Got somewhere specific in mind?" Chris asked, grinning. He placed the dishes into the dishwasher. As he bent over, Joey didn't step back, so Chris's butt bumped into Joey's groin, and Joey grabbed Chris's hips, holding him close. Wiggling against Joey, Chris asked, "Or are we just going to drive until we run out of gas?"

Now that sounded like a good idea. But it was a cool night, with a touch of autumn in the air, and Joey wanted to go to the beach. He loved the beach, especially at this time of the year, when the tourists were gone and the sound of the waves crashing in the dusk was soothing and a little lonely. He liked to cuddle on the beach in the fall nights, and right now he

couldn't think of a better place he'd like to be but on the beach with Chris in his arms. "Just get your shoes on," he said, letting Chris go to finish the dishes. He slapped Chris's butt and left the room in search of his own shoes.

Joey waited on the front porch for Chris, and within minutes he stepped outside, a thin leather jacket over his FuManSkeeto shirt. He tucked his keys into the pocket of his jacket and shoved his hands into the pockets of his jeans. "Ready," he said, and Joey stood up. Around them the evening was falling rapidly, dusk already forcing the street lights to turn on.

Reaching out for him, Joey draped an arm around Chris's shoulder and led him to the Camaro. "I was thinking the beach," he said, kissing Chris's temple roughly as he stopped beside the car.

Chris vaulted over the closed door and into the passenger side seat. "Can I drive home?" he asked, already fooling with the radio.

Joey slapped his hand away from the dial. "I have that set, silly. Don't touch."

As he walked around the front of the car, Chris hit the horn, a loud braying sound that startled Joey. Grinning, Joey slid into the driver's seat and asked, "You want to wake up Sleeping Beauty?"

Shaking his head, Chris pouted. "He's not coming with us."

"Then keep your hands off the horn," Joey replied. Starting the engine, he said, "Buckle up, buckaroo."

Chris snapped his seatbelt into place and stretched out in the front seat, one arm over the back of Joey's seat, and when his fingers curled into the hair at Joey's neck, chills ran down Joey's spine at the gentle touch. Rubbing his thumb and forefinger behind Joey's ears, Chris asked softly, "You like that, Joe?"

"Hmm," Joey replied, leaning into Chris's hand. "Whatever you do, don't stop."

Chris laughed. "My hand will get tired eventually," he said. "Why the beach?"

"Why not?" Joey countered. "I like the beach at night. It's romantic."

Chris laughed again. "Are you a romantic, Joe? I wouldn't have thought."

"Then I'll have to prove it to you," Joey said, grinning at the images that came to mind. Flowers, candlelit dinners, walks in the evening ... "This will be fun. Has anyone ever romanced you before, Chris?"

"Nope," Chris said, winking at him. "You'll be my first, Joe."

The beach was empty at this time of the evening, just as Joey had hoped it would be. He eased the Camaro to a stop just beyond the dunes, the car settling slightly in the shifting sand. Turning the radio up just a little bit louder, he nodded to the back seat. "After you," he said.

Chris grinned and asked, "Why not here?"

Joey slapped his arm playfully. "Because I don't want the gearstick up my ass," he replied. "Now get in the back so I can show you how romantic I can be, dammit."

Laughing, Chris clambered between the seats and plopped down in the back of the Camaro. Joey crawled back there beside him, easing Chris down against the seat. Scooting over, Chris made room for him, letting Joey slip his hands beneath Chris's leather jacket. He felt so warm, so alive, in Joey's arms. He kissed Chris's neck gently, his lips hot in the cool air, and Chris moaned beneath him, settling into a more comfortable position as he laid down on the back seat, Joey on top of him. As his tongue licked along the hollow of Chris's throat, Chris moaned loudly and gripped Joey's sweater, pulling him closer. "Keep it down," Joey giggled. "Jeez, you want the cops to show up again?"

Chris tugged at Joey's sweater. "Come here," he growled, and Joey climbed up a little closer, until his breath fanned Chris's cheek.

"Right here?" Joey asked, his voice low. He shifted until his leg rested along Chris's, the aching bulge in his pants pressed against Chris.

"That's good," Chris sighed, wrapping his arms around Joey's back. He stared up at the stars above Joey's head and moved his leg, rubbing Joey's erection. Joey moaned and kissed Chris hungrily, his lips closing over Chris's own.

Then Joey rested his head beside Chris's and watched his eyelashes flutter in the growing darkness, casting long dark shadows along Chris's cheeks. "Can I ask you something?" Joey whispered. Right now he felt at peace with everything, and despite the hardness in his pants, all he really wanted to do was just lie here beside Chris and talk. He wanted to listen to Chris talk to him. Right now the last thing on his mind was the other guys, the house, anything beyond the back seat of this car, the radio playing low soul, and Chris warm in his arms.

"What?" Chris whispered, turning to look at Joey. His eyes were twin pools of shadow that Joey couldn't begin to fathom.

Kissing Chris's chin, the short hair of his goatee tickling Joey's lips, Joey asked, "Have you ever been in love?"

Chris frowned. "Love?" he asked, as if it was a foreign concept, and Joey thought he saw fear flash through his eyes. "Like you mean really in love?"

"No," Joey said, grinning. "I mean not really. Of course I mean really in love! What else would I mean?"

Chris shrugged, a pleasant sensation in Joey's embrace. "I loved this girl once. I would do anything for her. I really fell for her hard."

"What happened?" Joey asked softly.

Sighing, Chris frowned and replied, "She cheated on me." Then he laughed, trying to brush it off, but Joey could sense the bitterness curled

into his voice. "Isn't that always the way? I was so sure Dani would be different, and surprise! She wasn't." He looked at Joey, studying his face, his nose, his eyes, until his gaze lingered on Joey's mouth. "What is it about me, Joe, that makes it so easy for people to fuck around on me?"

"I don't know," Joey whispered. He frowned at Chris and extracted one hand from beneath Chris's jacket. Gingerly he ran a finger down the curve of Chris's cheek, feeling a dampness beneath his touch that frightened him. "I'm not going to find out, either. I'm not going to fuck around on you, Chris, I promise."

Chris sniffled a little and sighed. "How about you, Joe? Have you ever been in love before?"

Joey shook his head, grinning. "Me?" he asked. "I'm not exactly Mr. Commitment, you know."

"What about Lance?" Chris prompted. "You said you loved him."

"I did," Joey whispered. He had loved Lance. Part of him still loved him, his innocence, his gentlemanly manner, whatever it was about him that drove Justin wild with desire and rushed to his defense -- Joey had seen that and wanted it for himself. But now it didn't hurt so much to know that Lance didn't want him, too. Now he could rest like this, on top of Chris in the darkness, and he didn't want to be anywhere else but right here in Chris's arms. When they had sex, no one else existed in the world but Chris. It wasn't like the girls he had slept with, when he lost himself in his own feelings, his own emotions, and didn't care what they felt or if they enjoyed themselves. It was all about him.

And now? Now it wasn't. Now he knew what Chris felt when Joey touched him there, or when he brushed against Chris's dick just so, or when he pinched Chris's nipples and Chris opened his mouth in that perfect little O that Joey thought was just the cutest expression he'd ever seen. He wanted to make Chris smile, and he wanted to hear that laugh of his all the time. Was that love? Joey didn't know. "I don't know what love feels like," he admitted. "Is it wanting to do anything for someone? Because if it is, then I love all you guys. I'd give my life for any of you, you know that."

Chris frowned. "That's love," he said, nodding, but there was a sadness in his face that made Joey wonder if he wanted a more specific answer. Joey wondered if Chris wanted to know if Joey was in love with him.

And right this second? Joey didn't know, not yet. "Tell me what you think love is, Chris," he said, tracing Chris's cheek with his finger again.

Sighing, Chris shrugged and stared up at the night sky. "Love is never being afraid to say what you have to say," he whispered. "Love is feeling safe. Love is knowing that no matter what happens, the other person will always be there for you. Always."

"Then I guess I love you, Chris," Joey said, and this time he saw the tears trail down Chris's cheek. He wiped them away tenderly.

Chris turned and kissed the palm of Joey's hand. "I guess I love you,

too," he whispered. He tightened his grip around Joey's chest and sighed again. "Does this change anything?"

"Like what?" Joey wanted to know. "We're already having sex. You want us to stop now that we admit it might be more than just lust?"

Chris shook his head. "We stop now and I'm going to have to hurt you," he growled, and Joey laughed quietly. "I just ... I know you aren't a one girl type of guy. I know you like to party and fool around and have a good time. I just don't want to scare you into thinking you have to love me, just because we're fucking each other."

"You're cute when you're vulgar," Joey said, grinning. "You know that? Listen to me, Christopher Robin." He turned Chris's face towards him. "Listen. I'm not saying anything because I have to. Hell, I've never even said the L word before. And now I am. I'm saying it because I want to. I love the way you feel in my arms. I love the way it feels when I wake up beside you. I love your laugh and your smile and your jokes. I love everything about you. If that's not being in love, then what is?"

"I don't know," Chris admitted. "You really love everything about me?"

Joey shrugged. "Everything but your dogs. They smell."

"They do not!" Chris cried, indignant, but his smile was back and the tears dried in his eyes, and Joey was glad they managed to stumble through saying the words, finally. "They don't smell."

"They do too," Joey replied. "But I put up with them because they're yours. Now that's love."

Chris sighed again. Cuddling closer to Joey, he stared up at the stars and muttered, "They don't smell."

Joey kissed him quickly. "Stop talking about them or I'll smother you with kisses," he threatened.

Chris grinned. "Is that a promise or a threat?"

Joey leaned over him and kissed him again, slower this time, his lips easing Chris's apart as his tongue slipped inside the warm darkness of Chris's mouth. The sea crashed against the beach somewhere beyond the car, the cool night breeze wafted around them, tinged with salt, and Dusty Springfield sang about the only boy who could ever reach her as Joey covered Chris in his sweet kisses and prayed the night would never end.

All I Ever Wanted
132. A Lazy Friday
by NSyncGrrl

Justin blinked awake and stretched in Lance's arms. Turning gently so as to not disturb his lover, he glanced at the clock beside the bed. Almost noon, he thought, amazed. They had reached the house a little after four in the morning, making very good time all the way from Florida to Mississippi, and Justin remembered calling his mother that early, leaving a message on her answering machine that they had arrived safely and were headed for bed. Then he called the guys, since Joey said to make sure he called no matter what time they got in, but JC answered the phone and Justin was pretty sure he had still been asleep, so he doubted his friend even remembered the call. But the number was probably on their Caller ID, or else one of them would've called by now, shattering the peaceful morning quiet of a lazy Mississippi Friday and waking them up.

He looked over at Lance, his smooth skin slightly dusky in the shadows of the room. His eyes fluttered gently in sleep, and very carefully Justin leaned over and brushed his lips across Lance's brow, kissing him in the soft spot between his eyebrows. Beneath his lips, Lance sighed, a sound like the one he uttered after he and Justin made love. Justin rubbed a stray eyelash away from Lance's cheek and nudged him gingerly. "Let me up," he whispered.

A frown crossed Lance's face as he rolled over onto his back, letting go of Justin. As Justin slipped out of the bed, however, Lance's hand latched onto his wrist and held him for a moment before falling back to the sheets. Quickly Justin pulled on a pair of boxers and the t-shirt Lance had worn the day before, and then he hurried downstairs, his stomach already growling. He'd let Lance sleep in for as long as he wanted to -- he had driven the last leg of the trip, almost eight hours straight through, and Justin wanted him to get his rest.

Justin paused in front of the door to the spare room -- your room, his mind whispered, and he knew it would take some time before he really thought of it as his, since he didn't stay in it -- and he eased the door open slightly. Jonathan lay sprawled across the bed, the covers twisted around his legs, snoring gently. Scratching at his curls, Justin let the door fall closed again and headed downstairs, intent on breakfast.

At the bottom of the steps, he stopped by the phone. Without thinking, he dialed Lance's parents' house, hoping Mrs. Bass wouldn't be evil enough to ruin the rest of his day with her cold attitude. But she would want to know they were in, and Lance promised to call her when they woke up, and since Justin was the only one up right now, he thought it only considerate that he let her know they got in okay. The phone rang three times, long, shrill rings, and just when he was about to hang up, someone answered. "Hello?" Mrs. Bass asked, a little out of breath.

"Mrs. Bass?" Justin asked, frowning into the receiver. "It's me, Justin."

She sighed, and he couldn't tell if it was out of disappointment or

because she was trying to catch her breath. "Justin," she said, "hello. I was just outside. What time did you boys get in last night?"

"Almost four thirty," he said, picking at the number keys on the phone.

"Hmm," she said, and he could hear her drinking something, iced tea maybe. "Well, thanks for calling. I was beginning to worry. Where's Lance?"

Justin looked up the stairs and said softly, "Still asleep. He's worn out since he drove the last few hours. I didn't want to wake him up."

"Have him call me later, will you, please?" Mrs. Bass asked.

"Sure," Justin replied. As he was about to say goodbye, she asked, "So what do you have planned for this weekend?"

Just moving in, he thought, but he bit his tongue before the words could escape. He understood that he was walking on shaky ground with Mrs. Bass, and even though she seemed pleasant enough right now, he wondered how fast she would shut down to him if he told her he was moving in with her son. He imagined her mind like a steel hunting trap, and the minute he said the words she would clamp shut, snapping off whatever niceties she had extended his way. So instead he cleared his throat and said, "My brother came up with us this time. We'll probably take him out to a few places, just chill out before the tour starts again next month."

"Jonathan?" Mrs. Bass asked, and Justin felt a surge of happiness thrill through him simply because she remembered his brother's name. "How old is he now?"

"Eight," Justin replied.

Mrs. Bass laughed. "They just grow like wildfire, don't they?" Before Justin could reply, she hurried on. "Well, tell Lance to give me a call when he gets up, and you boys take it easy today. Thanks for calling me."

"You're welcome," Justin said. "Goodbye, Mrs. Bass."

"Goodbye, Justin." She lingered a moment longer, and then she hung up.

Justin walked into the kitchen, his mind numb with the kind tone of her voice. He wondered if she was finally warming up to the idea of him and Lance being together, or if he had simply caught her at a good time. He didn't know, and right now he didn't care -- it made a silly smile spread across his face with the memory of their conversation, and he couldn't wait to tell Lance about the call. Now he was glad he was the first one up, and that he had thought to call her. He found his cereal in the cupboard and poured it into a bowl, covering it with the milk they had bought at the local 7-11 when they drove into town late last night. Or early this morning, he thought, taking the bowl and a glass of milk outside.

The screen door slammed shut behind him as he sat down on the porch swing. He pushed the swing with his feet slowly, back and forth,

and stared at the weathered wood slats of the porch, remembering the way it felt that night he and Lance laid out here beneath the stars, Lance's hands and lips so eager on his body, his coppery breath making Justin drunk with lust and desire. He smiled faintly at the memory, and hoped they had a chance to get together at least once this weekend, though with Jonathan in tow, it would be hard to find time alone. Though right now he's asleep, he thought, chewing a mouthful of the crunchy cereal. You can slip back into bed and wake Lance up with soft kisses and gentle caresses, touch his body until he responds and wake him up with your love. And hope Jonathan is too tired to wake up anytime soon.

The swing creaked slightly in the still morning air, and then Justin heard another, smaller squeak. He stopped the swing and listened, his spoon halfway to his mouth, but the sound didn't come again. Picking his foot up from the porch, he let the swing go again, frowning as he heard the creak of the swing's metal chain against the metal bolt in the roof of the porch. And then he heard the other sound again, a small, barely there squeak, and he stopped the swing again. He gulped down the cereal in his mouth and waited.

Finally, it came again, a tiny sound like the turning of a rusted key in a diary lock. Setting the bowl of cereal down carefully, Justin walked to the edge of the porch and listened. "Psst," he called, waiting for the sound. When it came, he thought it sounded like it was over near the bushes along the side of the shed a few feet away, and Justin stepped off the porch, his bare feet shuffling through the warm grass, still slightly damp with dew. He eased closer to the shed. "Psst," he called again, his voice gentle and low. As he neared the shed, he heard a rustling in the bushes and the tiny squeak mewed again. "Pssst pssst pssst." Kneeling down in the damp grass, Justin crept closer, one hand out towards the bushes. "Come here," he whispered. "Pssst psst ... come here."

The bushes parted, and Justin could see the wiggling nose of a small calico kitten peeking out from the greenery. Justin grinned at the long thin whiskers, the large golden eyes, the puffy hair covering the tiny face with a patchwork of black, brown, and white fur. "Hey there, baby cat," Justin cooed, edging closer. He stuck out one hand and waited as the kitten sniffed the air experimentally, looking at him with those huge saucer eyes full of fear. "Come here, baby. Come here."

Behind him Justin heard footsteps swishing through the grass behind him, and suddenly the kitten was gone, disappearing back into the bushes. Turning around, Justin saw Jonathan coming towards him. "Freeze," Justin hissed, and Jonathan stopped with one foot in the air, ready to step forward.

"What?" Jonathan whispered. "What is it?"

"A cat," Justin said, pointing at the bushes. He turned back around and eased his hand towards the bushes, calling for the kitten again. "Psst psst. Come here, kitty," Justin called softly, and the kitten poked its head back out of the bushes, its curiosity overriding its fear. With cautious steps, the kitten inched forward, nose quivering, and Justin struggled to keep his hand still as the kitten sniffed his fingers, the soft fur around its mouth tickling him. Very slowly he reached out and stroked along the kitten's back.

And then the kitten arched its spine and trailed along Justin's arm, purring like a choppy outboard motor. It ran between Justin's knees and hurried over to where Jonathan stood, rubbing along his legs. As he came over to his brother, Justin scooped up the fragile kitten in his arms, feeling scrawny ribs in his fingers. "You look hungry, baby cat," he said, petting the kitten beneath its chin.

"Can I hold it?" Jonathan asked, reaching for the cat.

Justin carefully placed the kitten into Jonathan's eager hands. "I think it's hungry," he said, draping an arm around his brother's shoulders. Leading the way back to the porch, Justin sat down on the steps and pulled his cereal over towards him. "Let it drink this."

Jonathan set the kitten down beside the bowl. After a few curious sniffs at the cereal, it began to lap greedily at the tepid milk. "He likes it!" Jonathan cried, as the kitten placed its front paws into the bowl, trying to get closer to the milk. Justin laughed at the way the milk beaded on the kitten's fur, and Jonathan stroked the cat's back. The rugged sound of its purr filled the air. "Can I keep it?" Jonathan asked suddenly.

"Here?" Justin asked, doubtful. "We can't keep a kitten here. We're never really home."

"I meant can I take it back home with me," Jonathan explained. "I need a kitten."

Justin laughed at that. "Mom might argue with that," he said. "I don't even know whose kitten it is."

Jonathan ran a hand around the kitten's neck. "It doesn't have a collar," he pointed out. "Maybe it's my cat."

"I don't think so," Justin replied, laughing at Jonathan's logic.

"What will we name it?" Jonathan asked, watching the kitten drink the milk hungrily.

"We aren't going to name it anything," Justin said, grinning. He reached out to touch the kitten's head, and as his fingers brushed along the pointy little ears, the kitten rubbed into his palm. "It is adorable, though."

"I know," Jonathan said. "Let's show Lance."

Justin shook his head. "Lance is sleeping. He's really very tired right now. I don't think we should wake him up just yet."

A frown crossed Jonathan's face. "But it's really his cat," he said. "You found it in his yard. Maybe he'll let me keep it."

"Jon --" Justin started, but the milk was gone and the cat began to lick at the soggy cereal along the bottom of the bowl, and Jonathan started laughing.

"He's eating a Frosted Flake!" Jonathan cried, picking the kitten up. It mewed softly and then the purring started again. Before Justin could object, Jonathan was inside the house, the kitten in his arms.

"Jon, no," Justin said, following him inside. With long strides he reached the hallway just as Jonathan started up the stairs. "Where are you going?"

"To show Lance," Jonathan replied. He nuzzled the kitten and with large, sad eyes, looked at Justin pitifully. "Please?"

Justin sighed. "Okay, fine," he said, giving in. He followed Jonathan upstairs, pushing past him when they reached the bedroom. Easing the door open, he saw that Lance had rolled back over in his sleep, one arm stretched across Justin's side of the bed. Entering the room, he placed a finger to his lips, motioning Jonathan to be quiet, and then he tiptoed up to the bed. Lying down behind Lance, he hugged his lover's body close to him, feeling Lance's smooth nakedness beneath the covers. Kissing Lance's neck, Justin whispered, "Lance. Lance, wake up."

Lance moaned and snuggled back against Justin until his body fit along Justin's perfectly, but he didn't wake up. With a glance at Jonathan, Justin nodded for him to come closer. Jonathan crawled onto Justin's side of the bed and set the kitten down in front of Lance's face. As it sniffed around Lance's cheeks, the kitten left dirty pawprints on the white sheets. Lance scrunched up his nose as the kitten tried to sniff it, and then he rubbed at his face, brushing the kitten aside. The kitten raised one paw and batted playfully at Lance's hand, and Justin hugged Lance's waist, burying his head into Lance's back to stifle his giggles. Across the bed, Jonathan covered his mouth with his hand and laughed quietly.

"Lance," Justin whispered again, and this time Lance groaned softly. "Lance, wake up." He rubbed Lance's stomach through the covers as the kitten tried to sniff Lance's face again.

"What?" Lance muttered, and then the kitten licked the tip of Lance's nose, the scratchy sound loud in the quiet room. Lance wrinkled his nose and wiped at it, sighing. "Justin."

Jonathan couldn't keep silent any longer. "It isn't him, Lance!" he cried, falling to the pillow in a fit of laughter. Justin sat up and watched as Lance opened his eyes to stare at the kitten, staring back. "It's my cat."

"Your cat?" Lance asked groggily, and then he glanced up at Justin. "What's this?"

"A cat," Justin replied. "A small one, just a kitten really. I found it outside."

Yawning, Lance asked, "And you brought it in?" He saw the pawprints on his sheets and sighed. "You're doing the laundry this weekend." Rolling over in Justin's arms, Lance laid on his back and frowned. "We can't keep it, you know that, don't you?"

"I want to keep it," Jonathan said, and Lance turned his head to look at Justin's little brother. "I need a kitten. Mom will let me keep it, I know she will."

Rubbing a hand over his face, Lance asked, "What time is it? It's too early for this."

Justin rested his head on Lance's shoulder. "It was in your yard," he pointed out. "So really it's your cat."

"It's not my cat," Lance replied. "And it's your yard, too."

"So does that make it your cat?" Jonathan asked, looking at Justin with hopeful eyes. Justin shrugged and cuddled against Lance. Lance moved his arm beneath Justin to hug him close, closing his eyes again. "Justin," Jonathan persisted, "if it's your cat, can I keep it?"

Lance sighed. "I'm not going to win this one, am I?" he whispered.

"You can if you want," Justin whispered back, but he didn't see how they could tell Jonathan the cat had to stay outside now. He watched the kitten explore the bed, leaving a trail of pawprints in its wake, and knew that Jonathan would have the cat. "I love you," Justin whispered, kissing Lance's cheek.

The kitten found an opening in the sheets and burrowed beneath the covers next to Lance's hip. Turning around in its new hiding place, the kitten wrapped its tail around its body and settled down to sleep, its head resting in its paws. Lance sighed again as the kitten nestled up to him. "I love you, too," he said, running a hand through Justin's curls. Glancing over at Jonathan, trying to tease the kitten through the sheet, he said, "You have to ask your mother first."

"I will," Jonathan promised, but Justin knew the kitten was already as good as his. "What should I name it?"

"Poofu," Justin suggested, remembering something Lance told him once. Lance swatted him playfully and Justin laughed.

"I like that," Jonathan said, grinning. "Poofu. Hey, Poofu! You're a cute kitty." He poked at the kitten through the sheet, who tried to catch his finger in its tiny teeth.

Lance moaned. "You had to suggest that name," he said, and Justin laughed again.

All I Ever Wanted
133. Jumpin' Jumpin'
Part 1 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

Joey knew Chris was watching him. He had just gotten out of the shower and stood beside the TV in his room with nothing but a towel around his waist, water still beading on his chest and shoulders, his hair damp and spiky, and he could feel the heat of Chris's gaze on his naked body like a fever, warming him. Tonight they agreed to go out to the clubs, take JC out for a night on the town, and Chris sat on the bed, already dressed. While Joey was in the shower Chris had turned the Playstation on, and with his back to his friend, Joey grinned to know that Chris wasn't really paying attention to the game anymore. "You almost ready to go?" Joey asked innocently, bending over slowly to retrieve a pair of jeans from the bottom dresser drawer.

He heard Chris's sharp intake of breath as his towel inched up the back of his thigh, offering a tantalizing view. When Chris didn't reply immediately, Joey looked back over his shoulder and asked sweetly, "Chris?"

Chris was staring at him, his mouth slightly open. "What?" he asked, shifting his eyes from Joey's butt to his face before his gaze wandered back again.

"You almost ready to go?" Joey repeated, standing up. He felt a stirring in his groin at the way Chris was looking at him, and even though it was only seven o'clock, he couldn't wait to get back home and beneath the covers of their bed, Chris in his arms.

"Yeah," Chris mumbled, his gaze sliding over Joey's bare chest to rest at the budding bulge at Joey's crotch, where the towel was beginning to tent over Joey's growing erection.

Joey looked at the jeans and dark FuManSkeeto shirt Chris was wearing over a long-sleeved thermal undershirt and grinned. "I like the long johns," he said, his eyes twinkling merrily. "Nice touch. The girls won't be able to stay away from you."

"I'm not going for the girls," Chris replied, the game controller forgotten in his hands. "I don't need to impress anyone. I've already got someone to sleep with tonight."

"Oh?" Joey asked, enjoying the coy banter. He unwrapped the towel from his waist and began to dry his chest and arms, rubbing the towel slowly over his body, his eyes never leaving Chris's face. "And who is that?"

Chris stared at him openly, lust rising into his brown eyes. Tossing the controller aside, he said, "Fuck the club. Come here, Joe."

Joey laughed. "No," he replied. "I've got to get dressed."

Chris shook his head and raised his eyes to meet Joey's. Joey's knees went weak at the expression in them. "Come here," he said again, and this time Joey obeyed, dropping the towel as he kneeled on the bed in front of Chris.

"I need to get ready," Joey whispered, but then Chris was touching him, his fingers on Joey's chest, his lips on Joey's own, his fingers teasing Joey's nipples erect, and Joey thought maybe a few minutes of fooling around wouldn't be too bad. He eased Chris back into the pillows and kissed him hungrily. "I thought about you in the shower," he whispered.

Chris ran an arm around Joey's waist, his hand squeezing Joey's buttocks gently. "Did you use your left hand or your right hand for that?" he replied, and Joey nipped at his neck playfully.

"Next time you're going in there with me," Joey growled, and Chris giggled beneath him. "Then I won't have to go it alone."

"All you have to do is ask," Chris said. With his hands beneath Joey's butt, he pulled his friend onto him, spreading Joey's legs so that he straddled Chris's hips. "Think we have time to take care of this?" he asked, easing a hand between them to poke at Joey's hard dick.

"Maybe," Joey breathed into Chris's mouth as he kissed him again. Right now the club and getting dressed were the last things on his mind.

Suddenly the door opened. "You guys --" JC began, and Joey scrambled for the covers, pulling them over him to cover his nakedness. In the doorway JC ducked his head, his cheeks flaring a vibrant shade of red, and he backed out into the hall. "Whoa, I am so sorry --"

Joey fell off the side of the bed with a loud thump. "No, wait, it's okay," Chris said, starting to get up, and on the floor Joey scrambled for the towel.

As Joey wrapped it back around his waist, JC shook his head. "No, really," he said, turning away. "Just holler for me when you guys are ready."

"Fuck," Joey muttered as JC closed the door behind him.

Chris sighed. "When are we going to learn to lock that damn door?" he asked, a little angry. As Joey tugged on a pair of boxer briefs, Chris turned off the Playstation and TV. Joey watched him closely, wondering why this time when JC interrupted them, Chris didn't get all insecure and start in on his "he likes you, too" speech. Unless ...

"You talked to him," Joey said, sure of it. He didn't know when, but now he could see it perfectly. JC had been a little nicer to Chris these past few days, a little less depressed and jumpy around Joey himself, and at first Joey just thought nothing of it. But agreeing to go to the club with them? That had to be Chris's doing. He had to have said something to JC.

But Chris shrugged and didn't look up at him. "Talked to who?" he asked, as if there was anyone else Joey might be talking about.

"What did you say?" Joey asked softly, sitting down on the edge of the bed. Chris sat back against the pillows and frowned, still not looking at

him.

"When?" he countered.

Joey sighed. "Chris, don't do me like this," he warned. "You talked to JC. What did you say?"

For a moment he didn't think Chris would reply. His lips bunched into a little bow as he picked at lint on his shirt, and then he shrugged and asked, "Did he tell you this?"

"No," Joey said. "But I can read you like a book, Chris. A few days ago if JC walked in on us like that, you would've been all bent out of shape by now. And you're not. So words must have passed between you two."

Chris frowned. Raising his eyes to meet Joey's steady gaze, he whispered, "I can't tell you."

"Why not?" Joey wanted to know.

But Chris shrugged, a small gesture. "I told him I wouldn't say."

Joey sighed. "Chris," he started, reaching out to place a comforting hand on Chris's knee. "I understand that you and JC are friends. We're all friends. But I'd like to think you and me ... I'd like to think we're something more. We sleep together. We have sex. I said I love you ... that doesn't mean anything to you?"

Chris's eyes wavered slightly. "It means everything to me," he whispered. "But I told him I wouldn't tell you. It ..." He sighed. "He didn't want me to tell you."

"You can at least tell me what you said," Joey pointed out. He edged closer to Chris and, resting his head on his friend's raised knee, and looked at him with large puppy dog eyes that he knew no one could resist. "Christopher Robin, please?"

It worked. Chris's lower lip trembled and then he gushed, "I told him to leave you alone, okay, Joe? Is that what you want to hear? I was being insecure and possessive and now you're going to be mad at me, and I don't even want to go to the fucking club anymore, I just want to crawl under the bed and forget about the whole damn thing, okay? I told him to leave you the hell alone. Are you happy?" He turned away and pouted, anger and sadness warring on his face.

Actually, Joey wasn't mad. He thought it was cute that Chris would confront JC about the little crush he might have on his friend. He pictured scrappy little Chris in JC's face about leaving his Joe alone, and damned if it didn't turn him on again. "Chris," he said softly.

"What," Chris replied, sighing.

"Chris," Joey said again. "Look at me."

"No," Chris pouted. "Just ... just get ready, will you?"

Joey scooted closer and reached out for Chris. His fingers brushed along Chris's cheek, and the ire in Chris's eyes faded like an extinguished

flame. Turning his face towards him, Joey said, "I'm not mad."

"I didn't have any right --" Chris began, but Joey cut him off.

"You had every right," he replied. "We're together, Chris. You and me. To me that means that no one else has any right to touch you, or to want you, or to love you but me. And I hope it means the same thing to you."

Chris caught Joey's wrist in his hand and held it against his cheek. "It does," he whispered. "I was just so tired of him moping around here and not talking to me just because he can't have you. So I told him to get over it. I told him to find someone else, and that's part of the reason he agreed to come with us tonight." Closing his eyes, Chris frowned. "I thought you'd be mad because you don't see the way he wants you."

"Yeah," Joey admitted, remembering his talk with Lance, "I saw it, just a little. And I couldn't think of a way to tell him I wasn't interested without hurting him."

Chris looked at him, hope in his eyes. "So you're not mad?"

"No," Joey said, scoffing at the idea. He laughed. "You want to know the truth?" he said, the sparkle back in his eyes.

"What?" Chris asked, a faint smile tugging at the corners of his lips.

"Just thinking about you getting so possessive about me?" Joey asked, and Chris nodded, urging him to continue. "It gets me hard just thinking about it."

Chris laughed. "Really?" he asked, and Joey spread his knees apart, crawling between them. He knelt on the bed in front of Chris and lowered himself down over his friend, rubbing his groin against Chris's as he kissed Chris's pout away. "Hmm," Chris moaned, running his hands down Joey's body until they rested on his hips. As he felt the pressure of Joey's hard cock between them, he said, "I see what you mean."

"You think we have time for this?" Joey whispered, kissing Chris softly. "Now I don't really want to go to the club, either."

"What about JC?" Chris asked.

"What about him?" Joey replied.

But Chris laughed and pushed Joey off of him. "Get dressed, Joe-bear. We're going to find someone for JC tonight. And then we can come home and fool around."

For a moment Joey didn't budge, and Chris pushed harder, trying to move him. Joey studied Chris's face until he felt sure that Chris wasn't upset anymore, and then he kissed Chris once again before getting up. "I can't wait until we get home, then," he said as he began to get dressed.

All I Ever Wanted
133. Jumpin' Jumpin'
Part 2 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

By midnight the club was rocking, people pushing together on the dance floor and along the bar so that everywhere Joey turned, someone was rubbing against him. Before long his face dripped in sweat, and the constant ache in his tight leather pants kept a goofy grin plastered on his face. Every chance he got he pulled Chris in front of him, whispering into his ear what he wanted to do once they got back to the house. Chris laughed and danced away, the beer in his hand splashing out of his cup. "Tonight, Joe," he promised, and Joey followed him to the bar, his hands on Chris's waist to keep him close.

Joey laughed as he pushed Chris against the bar. Chris raised his hand to get the bartender's attention and arched his butt into Joey's crotch, pressing against his hard erection that throbbed in time with the music. Easing next to Chris, Joey leaned on the bar and ordered another drink. Then he glanced down the bar and got a good look at the young blonde man sitting hunched over on the other side of Chris, nursing a mug of flat beer. "Well, I'll be fucked!" Joey cried, and Chris smiled up at him, a wise remark on the tip of his tongue. But he saw Joey looking past him and turned, only to find himself face to face with the rapper known as Eminem.

The rapper glared at them for a moment before recognition set in, and an easy grin brightened his dour features. "Fuckin' A," he said, extending a hand in front of Chris, which Joey shook heartily. "Joey and, um ..." He snapped his fingers at Chris, trying to recall his name.

"Chris," Joey offered, resting a hand on Chris's shoulder. Chris grinned and nodded at Eminem. "So what the hell are you doing down this way, man?"

Eminem shrugged. "Just chillin'," he replied, sipping at his warm beer. "What about you guys?"

Chris stepped back. "I'm going to dance some more," he said, turning to Joey. "You stay here and talk."

"You sure?" Joey asked, and Chris nodded. "I'll be right with you," he added, slipping over closer to Eminem so he wouldn't have to shout over the din of the music. As Chris disappeared into crowd, Joey called out, "And find JC!" Joey hadn't seen his friend since the last time JC bellied up to the bar for a refill on his beer. Part of him hoped JC had found a nice cozy corner and someone to cuddle up with, but he didn't think that was the case. More than likely, JC was hiding in the bathroom, ducking the crowds and the noise and just waiting for the night to be over.

Turning his attention to the rapper beside him, Joey flashed him a winning smile and said, "We just came out for a good time, man. Didn't think we'd run into you down here. I thought you were from where,

Chicago?"

"Detroit," Eminem corrected. "Fucking murder capital of America."

"And now you're here," Joey said, laughing, "the fucking vacation capital. One hell for the other, eh?"

"Yeah," Eminem said, grinning. "Something like that." He looked past Joey and frowned slightly. "Which Mouseketeer is this?"

Joey turned to find JC behind him, his blue eyes glazed and shiny from alcohol. "Hey," JC slurred, leaning onto Joey. He looked at Eminem and grinned foolishly. "Hey. Do I know you?"

"JC Chasez," Joey said, nodding at him. He stood up and let JC fall onto his barstool. "Where you been hiding all night, Josh?"

"I ain't hiding," JC mumbled. He frowned at Eminem beside him and looked over his shoulder at Joey. "I want another drink."

"I think you've had enough," Joey replied, shaking his head at the bartender who appeared to fill JC's glass. He glanced at his watch and decided it was time to get going. With JC's flushed cheeks and glassy eyes, he thought maybe the night was over for them. "Sit here for a minute, Josh, while I round up Chris. Hey," he said, turning to Eminem, "can you keep an eye on him until I get back?"

"Sure," Eminem said, eyeing JC warily. As Joey faded into the crowd, JC stared into his empty glass and tried to ignore the hot, mean gaze of the rapper sitting beside him. "Neat name," Eminem said, startling JC into looking his way. "How do you spell that?"

"J C," JC replied, frowning.

To his surprise, Eminem laughed. "I meant the Shazam part," he said.

"Oh," JC said, and then he spelled his last name. "Do you have a real name?" he asked. He looked at the rapper, taking in the short bleached hair, the intense blue eyes that seemed to stare through him, the full pout above the cleft chin, the pale, pale skin. "Or is it just M and M like the candy?"

"Do I look like candy to you?" Eminem countered, malice curled beneath his words, and JC felt his cheeks heat up with a faint blush.

"No," JC whispered, and hoped Joey found Chris and came back for him soon.

"Marshall," Eminem said, turning back to his beer. He sloshed the tepid liquid around in his mug and watched JC intently.

JC struggled to remember what he knew of the rapper, which wasn't much. "Marshall Mathers?" he asked. "Like the CD?"

"Like the CD," Eminem agreed, nodding. "What's the JC stand for? Or were your parents too fucked up to give you a real name?"

"It's Joshua," JC said, bristling slightly. He scanned the crowd,

searching for Joey, and wished the bartender would come back over to give him another beer. But the bartender ignored him, and the only person in the whole damn club who was paying any attention to him at all was this angry white man who sat beside him poised and deadly like a loaded .45. Hoping to smooth things over between them, JC asked, "What'cha doing here?"

Eminem glared at the beer in his mug and snorted. "Getting shit-faced," he said.

"You're a long way from home," JC pointed out. Had he heard the rapper mention Detroit when he came up to the bar? He thought so.

"What home?" Eminem asked. He turned his baleful gaze on JC, and JC shifted uncomfortably under the scrutiny. "What's home when your wife fucks around on you in your own bed?"

JC didn't know. He vaguely recalled that Eminem was married -- didn't he have a daughter? One of his songs mentioned a daughter, JC was almost sure of it -- but it was apparent even in his drunken state that his talk wasn't improving the rapper's mood at all. "Where are you staying?" JC asked, trying to think of something, anything, to say until Joey came back. Where the hell was he, anyway?

Frowning, Eminem demanded, "Why you want to know?" His gaze wandered down JC's body and back up to his face, which was blushing again, JC could feel it.

JC shrugged and turned away. The beers he'd had hit his stomach and churned through his veins, and suddenly he felt ill. He didn't want to be here, in this stupid club, looking for someone to sleep with. Who was he kidding? That wasn't his style. He had never picked up anyone in a club, or at a party, or even after a show. He just wasn't that type. Yet he had let Chris talk him into this because he wanted to prove to his friends that he was cool with their being together -- which you're not, his mind whispered, because why is it that everyone is so damn happy all the time and you're not? Don't you deserve to be happy too? -- and the prospect of another lonely Friday night at home was just too much to bear. And now? He wanted to just crawl into his bed and sleep until the morning, when he'd go into the studio to get away from Joey's oppressive presence and work on his music. As his stomach roiled and nausea flooded his body, JC concentrated on the image of him in the studio tomorrow, away from this club, from Joey, from this soft-spoken man beside him with the piercing eyes like needles stuck in his soul.

A couple of giggling girls pushed up to the bar on the other side of Eminem, knocking into his back. "Watch it, bitch," he growled, turning that wicked scowl their way, and the laughter died on their lips when they saw those gleaming blue eyes staring at them. Tension filled the air, and JC felt bile rise in the back of his throat. The stench of alcohol choked him, smoke watered his eyes, and he felt the color drain from his face. When Eminem turned back to him, he narrowed his eyes and asked, "You okay?"

JC shook his head. "I drank too much," he muttered. He laid his head down on the bar and closed his burning eyes.

A strong hand closed around his upper arm. "Oh shit," Eminem sighed. "Don't puke here." He tugged JC off of the stool, and JC wondered how someone with such cold eyes could have such warm hands. "You need to get some air. Come on, man."

Falling from the stool, JC felt those strong, warm hands catch him beneath the arms and help him stand. They stayed on his back and arm, guiding him through the crowds, and JC stumbled along, not quite sure where they were headed. As Eminem led him to a small door behind the bar, JC tried to shake the booze from his head, but his mind buzzed with a white, smoky haze and he felt like he did when he first woke up sometimes and hadn't yet opened his eyes, staring at a gray mist and wondering if he was still asleep or already awake. He didn't see Joey or Chris anywhere, and as he pushed through the door, Eminem right behind him, he wished he hadn't had so much to drink.

All I Ever Wanted
133. Jumpin' Jumpin'
Part 3 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

Outside the cold night air splashed against JC's hot skin, cooling his face. He looked around him, eyes wide and staring -- he was in a back alley behind the bar, warm hands still on his arm and back. A naked bulb in an open socket hung above the stoop, illuminating overflowing garbage cans and pushing the darkness back into ragged shadows that ebbed and flowed around him like the tide. Was the bulb spinning? The light cut the shadows into undulating waves that threatened to swallow him ... or was it his head spinning? He took an unsteady step and tripped down the few stairs of the stoop. "Easy, man," someone said behind him, and JC turned to find Eminem standing there, white hair, white skin, and deep eyes as dark and as dangerous as the shadows around them.

JC stumbled back, fear rising in his throat. "Jesus," he whispered, running a shaky hand down his face. "Where's Joey?"

"Back inside," Eminem said, jerking a thumb at the service door they just exited through. "You look like shit."

"I feel like shit," JC conceded. His stomach churned like the sea during a storm, his head was beginning to ache, and his knees felt rubbery and weak. Taking a few steps to distance himself from the intense man beside him, JC reached out blindly and grabbed onto the edge of the nearest trashcan. He leaned over it, almost gagging on the stench that enveloped him, and then the beer and his dinner rushed up into his throat and he held onto the trashcan tightly as he vomited into it. He felt a cool hand on his forehead, tears squeeze from his clenched eyes, his hands and body and legs shaking uncontrollably. Jesus, he thought bitterly when he could form the swirl in his head into coherent thought again. Jesus, if only this pain and sickness were over with already. I don't even want to die ... too much trouble. I just want to be dead.

He felt those strong hands, so soft, so impossibly kind, ease him away from the trashcan and help him to the bottom step of the stoop. Burying his head into his arms, JC curled into himself and wished the night was already over. He sobbed once and wiped at his mouth and nose with the sleeve of his denim jacket. "Jesus," he whispered, his voice shaky and foreign to his own ears. It scared him.

"Christ," Eminem said, and JC remembered he was there. The rapper sat down beside him on the stoop, his hip warm along JC's where their legs touched, and he frowned. "You're so fucked up. What the hell were you drinking?"

"Beer," JC whispered, sighing as he willed his body to stop shivering. His stomach roiled again and he closed his eyes, praying it would settle before another onslaught of nausea washed through him.

"You don't drink much, do you?" Eminem asked, his voice gentle, and

JC shook his head. "Well, maybe you shouldn't drink again."

"Maybe not," JC muttered. "Where's Joey?"

Eminem nodded to the door behind them. "Back inside. Just wait a few more minutes, man. You have to clear your head."

JC nodded and didn't say anything. He rubbed at his cheeks, trying to dry the tears that coated them. When had he started to cry? He felt like a fool, sitting here next to Eminem and crying. And throwing up. He couldn't wait to see what the rapper said about this little scene on his next album.

But Eminem just stared at him with those hard, frozen eyes, and JC looked at his feet, wondering what to say that might be a start to getting them back inside the club. He wanted to find Joey and Chris and he wanted to go home. He sighed, about to suggest they go back in, when Eminem said, "What the fuck do you have to get so drunk about?"

"What do you mean?" JC asked, knitting his brows together. He didn't look at the rapper beside him.

Eminem leaned closer, his head on his hand, and shrugged. "You're a pretty boy," he said, and JC blushed at the words. "I've always hated guys like you. Life is just handed to you on a silver platter, girls, money, fame, and you just piss it away. For what? What's worth making yourself sick over?" When JC didn't answer him, his words took on a harsh edge. "You're not married to some bitch who fucks around on you. You don't have critics breathing down your ass about your lyrics or your kiddie tunes. When a kid shoots his teacher, no one blames your songs."

"Just because I'm not cussing in my music," JC replied softly, "doesn't mean I'm not bleeding inside."

"What makes you bleed?" Eminem asked, studying him intently.

JC shrugged. "Stuff," he said, noncommittal. How would he ever begin to explain the whole sordid mess of his heart and soul to this man who hated him? Why would he even want to? Next thing he knew, Slim Shady would be singing about the fags in NSync and the guys would blame him. Justin and Lance are in love, he imagined himself saying, and it's so sickening sweet what they have together that it makes me want to die because I don't have that. Joey and Chris are fucking around and I don't know what all's up with that, but Chris told me to back off and I can't CAN'T stop thinking of the way it felt to taste Joey's tongue in my mouth. Yeah, that would go over big. So he kept his mouth shut and waited for Eminem to grow tired of him and take him back into the club.

But tonight was not JC's night, and Eminem didn't move from the step beside him. His leg pressed against JC's like a fiery brand, and even if there had been room to move over, JC was too scared to pull away. He didn't want to do anything to set off the dynamite he saw behind those eyes. "What kind of stuff?" Eminem prompted, but JC just shrugged again.

"I don't really want to get into it right now ..." JC let his voice trail off and hoped Eminem wouldn't press the issue.

He didn't. Instead he said, "Fuck it. I don't really give a shit. I'm just trying to be nice."

"Thank you," JC mumbled, wondering if nice was a foreign concept for Eminem. But he had been nothing but kind to JC so far, and JC began to think maybe the picture painted of him by the media was skewed, just a little. He couldn't resolve the anger and hatred he heard in "The Real Slim Shady" with this guy sitting beside him now, wearing baggy sweats and asking about his problems, but he had to admit he was enjoying the attention. "You don't have to be nice to me," JC said.

"I know that," Eminem said, grinning. "I do what the fuck I want to do." And right now you want to be nice to me? JC thought, daring to glance up at the rapper. He met those steady blue eyes and didn't doubt that this was a man who did what he felt like doing, said what he wanted to say, and left the rest of the world to its own devices.

Clearing his throat, JC whispered, "I'm sorry about your wife."

Eminem turned away. "Yeah, well," he said, sighing, "so am I. The bitch can't keep her fucking pants on. I don't need that shit."

"Was it someone --" JC started, but Eminem cut him short.

"I don't want to talk about it, okay?" he asked bitterly, glaring at JC. "I came all the way down here so no one I knew would see me. No one would ask me what's up and how I'm feeling and all that fucking shit, like they really give a fuck anyway. Nothing they say will make me feel better, you know?"

"Yeah," JC whispered. He knew exactly what Eminem meant. "They try to talk about it, thinking things will be better if it's out in the open, and you know what? I don't want to talk about it. I don't even want to think about it anymore, so why do I want to say it out loud?"

Eminem studied him closely, and JC wiped at his nose again, wondering if he had said too much. Please, he begged silently. Please don't ask me what I'm talking about, because I don't even know myself.

But Eminem didn't ask him. Instead he said quietly, "I hated guys like you in school. Popular, pretty, so damn lucky in everything you did."

JC laughed at that. "I was a nerd in school," he admitted. "You would've kicked my ass and stolen my homework. I wasn't Mr. Jock and I sure as hell didn't win any popularity contests. You might've hated me, but it would've been for different reasons, I'm sure." Eminem laughed at that. Shyly JC added, "I get the impression you hated a lot of people back in school."

"Define a lot," Eminem said, but he smiled and JC dared to smile back. "If you were a nerd, I might've liked you. If you were good in English and Algebra."

"I wasn't bad," JC said.

"Would you have let me copy your homework?" Eminem asked.

JC shrugged. "Depends," he said, thinking about who he had been in

high school. If a badass such as Eminem had asked for his homework, JC would've handed it to him on his mother's finest china, but he didn't want to say that. "What would I get in return?"

"Protection," Eminem replied. "I'd kill the asshole who fucked with you. Can't jeopardize my grades now, could I?"

JC grinned. "No, I guess not," he said.

"And you'd be off-limits," Eminem said. "I wouldn't kick your ass. That good enough for you?"

"It'll do," JC said in an off-hand manner that belied the rapid pounding of his heart. He was going to say something else, anything to keep the talk light and easy between them, when the door behind them creaked open, noise and music pouring out into the quiet night.

JC looked up to see Joey frowning down at them. "Fuck," he muttered, stepping out onto the stoop. He looked between JC and Eminem and said, "I've been looking all over for you guys."

"Your friend here got sick," Eminem said, pointing at JC. "Fucking puked his guts out in the trash."

Joey turned to JC, who ducked his head and sighed. "I'm fine, Joey," JC mumbled before Joey could say anything. "Just drank a little too much, that's it."

The frown didn't fade from Joey's face. "You ready to head on home?" he asked.

"Yeah," JC said, standing. He wobbled a bit and felt Eminem's hands on his waist, steadying him. And then Joey was there, his hands touching JC's back and arms as he stepped between them. "I'm fine, Joey, really," JC said again, shrugging Joey's hands off of him. "Where's Chris?"

"Getting the car," Joey replied. He glanced down at Eminem. "You got a ride, man? Where are you staying?"

Eminem stood, stretching languidly, and shrugged. "I can catch a cab," he said, yawning. "Hotel's down the street. Somewhere. Fuck it, maybe I'll go back inside and have another drink or three."

"We can give you a lift," Joey offered. When Eminem started to protest, he held up his hand and said, "It's no problem, really. You want a ride?"

The rapper looked at them with his wintry gaze and shrugged again. "Why the fuck not?" he asked. Joey grinned and guided JC down the alley, heading for the street. JC glanced over his shoulder to make sure the rapper was following them, and a wave of nausea passed through him again. He closed his eyes and turned back around, but he still saw those frosty eyes behind his, blazing like a blue fire in the darkness.

All I Ever Wanted
133. Jumpin' Jumpin'
Part 4 of 4
by NSyncGrrl

JC sat in the back seat of the car, his fevered forehead resting against the cool glass of the window as he stared out at the passing darkness. Beside him, the rapper Eminem leaned forward slightly, talking to Joey about something on the radio, or something on the news, or something someone had said, JC wasn't sure which. Every other word out of Eminem's mouth was "Goddammit the fuck" or "fuck that shit" or "dammit to hell," and JC couldn't follow the flow of the conversation. His head still buzzed faintly, a humming like power lines on a still, clear summer day, and his stomach wouldn't stop moving inside of him. Once or twice he swallowed quickly, tasting bile in the back of his throat, and he prayed he wouldn't throw up again. Ignored again, he thought, as Joey laughed at something Chris said.

After they dropped Eminem off at his hotel, an uncomfortable silence, as thick and oppressive as a shroud, draped over the three friends. Chris had the radio down low, and after a quick look to make sure JC was still breathing, he concentrated on the road and getting them home. Joey stared at JC in the side mirror, and JC closed his eyes to avoid the steady gaze. So much for a night out with the boys, JC thought sourly. He was never going out with Joey and Chris again. Why bother? When the night was over, he still ended up alone.

As Chris pulled into their driveway, he asked softly, "You want me to get him?"

Joey shook his head. "I'll help him inside," he said. He got out of the car and opened JC's door. JC felt the window move away from his head as he fell out into Joey's waiting arms. Helping him to his feet, Joey closed the car door and waved Chris into the garage. JC leaned against Joey's chest, the quiet thud of Joey's heart loud in his ears, the stench of the club on Joey's shirt. Beer and cigarettes tickled JC's nose, but underneath it all was Joey's own musky scent, and JC wanted to bury his head into Joey's chest until he found where that scent was hiding, just so he could breathe it in forever. It made him think of cold nights and warm arms, and he wanted someone to hold him so badly that he choked back a sob as Joey wrapped his arms around JC's shoulders and led him to the front door.

Inside the house was dark, and Joey helped JC to his room. "Come on, Josh," Joey said gently, easing the door to JC's room open with his foot. Joey's strong arms supported JC as he stumbled over to his bed. JC reached out with one hand, touching the bed to make sure it was there, it was solid, and it wasn't about to run away from him. He let go of Joey and forced his wobbly legs to support his weight.

But as Joey started to pull away, JC caught his arm and tugged on it gently. "Joey, please," he pleaded. Suddenly he didn't want to be alone, not tonight. "Stay with me."

"JC, I can't," Joey replied. He turned on the lamp beside the bed and frowned at him. "You know that. Are you going to be okay?"

"No," JC whispered. He looked down at the floor and sighed. "Can you at least bring me a drink?" he asked. "Some water, maybe?" Anything, he thought, anything to make you stay here just a little longer.

Joey studied him for a moment, that slight frown still creasing his brow, and then he said, "Sure." As he left the room, JC sighed shakily and shrugged out of his jacket, trying not to think as he waited for Joey to return. He heard water running through the pipes, an oddly comforting sound somewhere in the walls in the dead of the night. And then Joey was back, a glass of water in one hand. Offering it to JC, he watched wordlessly as JC gulped down the cold liquid, refreshing on his raw, hot throat.

JC handed the glass back to Joey. "Thanks," he whispered, staring intently at his friend.

"No problem," Joey said, setting the glass on the bedside table. He pulled down the covers on JC's bed and patted the pillows in an inviting gesture. "I know you've had a long night, but try to get some sleep, will you?" He smiled at JC. "I promise you'll feel better in the morning."

JC reached out and ran one finger down the sleeve of Joey's shirt. Joey frowned at the touch but didn't move away. Emboldened, JC took a step closer and smiled at Joey. His head was a whirl of thoughts but one thing was clear to him -- Joey was here, right next to him, his body just inches away, and if JC was ever going to do anything, it had to be now. He took another step, until the tip of his shoe touched Joey's foot, and he watched the look of terror that crept into Joey's dark eyes. Something in him surged at the fear he saw on Joey's face, and he gripped the front of Joey's shirt, pulling him closer. He looked at the sweet pout on Joey's lips and whispered, "I lied, Joey."

Joey swallowed, his throat clicking audibly. "About what?" he asked. His voice cracked slightly. "Josh --"

JC closed his eyes and pulled Joey against him. His lips brushed Joey's gently, and then he opened his mouth and ran his tongue over Joey's lips, so warm, so soft. Pressing his tongue between them, JC tasted a sweet spicy flavor he hadn't thought he'd miss. He licked behind Joey's teeth and for a long moment, Joey didn't pull away. JC ran his hands down Joey's chest and moaned his name.

And then Joey had JC's hands in his, holding him back, and he turned his face away from JC's eager lips. "Josh, stop," he breathed. "Jesus, please."

"Joey," JC moaned, kissing Joey's exposed neck. He twisted his hands out of Joey's and tried to wrap his arms around Joey's waist. "Is there anything I can say to make you stay here? Is it too late --"

"Josh, no." Joey pushed JC's hands away and stepped back. "Don't do this to me. No, okay? Just ... no." JC tugged at Joey's shirt, and Joey felt anger flare through him. He didn't want this to happen -- it was late and he was supposed to be with Chris, he needed to hold Chris tonight, not

JC. "You're drunk," Joey said, a little too harshly, and he pushed JC away. JC stumbled and fell onto the bed, shock written across the sharp plains of his face.

With hooded eyes, JC looked up at him sadly. "I want you," he whispered. "Is it too late for me to say that? Does it mean anything to you now?"

"No," Joey admitted. He frowned at the pain he saw in JC's face, but his friend was drunk, he didn't really want Joey, he was just confused and tired and alone. "You don't want me," Joey said, sighing. "You don't know what you want, and even though you might think so tonight, it's not me, Josh. It's never really been me."

JC pouted as Joey turned away. As he left JC's room, he closed the door behind him, shutting it gently, and he rubbed his eyes wearily as he walked down the hall to his own room. He found Chris already inside, his arms crossed against his chest. He looked up as Joey entered, his eyes hard and unreadable. "Well?" he asked, his voice tight. "What took you so long?"

Joey sighed. "Nothing," he muttered. He frowned at Chris. "What's wrong?"

Chris stared at him as if he were an insect under a microscope, and Joey ran his hands down the sides of his shirt, wiping away the sweat that suddenly formed on his palms. "Chris, what is it?" he asked, anxious.

"You tell me," Chris replied. "Tell me what happened, Joe."

Joey shrugged. "He wanted a glass of water," he said lamely, narrowing his eyes as he studied Chris. Did he suspect something? Had he seen the kiss? "Why don't you tell me what you want me to say."

Chris glared at him, and when he spoke, ice chipped his words. "I told you I loved you, Joe. I didn't say it just because you said it first. I meant the words."

"So did I," Joey began, but Chris continued as if he hadn't spoken.

"Yeah, you love me," Chris said bitterly. "You love all the guys, don't you? Is that all love is to you, Joe? Or does the word monogamous mean anything to you?"

"Chris, I'm not --" Joey closed his eyes and sighed. "He kissed me. You saw that, right? He kissed me. And did you even stand in the doorway long enough to see me push him away? To hear me tell him no?"

He waited. For long minutes that passed like funerals, Joey waited. The only sounds he heard were his own quiet breath and the steady tick tick tick of the alarm clock. Then he heard soft footsteps and he sensed Chris approach. When he opened his eyes, Chris stood in front of him, his soft lips set in a hard frown, the laughter in his eyes gone now. "I heard," Chris said. "And I gave you every fucking opportunity to tell me when you came in here what had happened. I asked you what took you so long." With one finger he poked Joey's chest, but when Joey tried to take his hand, Chris pulled away. "I know he kissed you. I know it meant nothing

to you. But why the fuck did you lie to me about it? If you love me like you say you do, Joe, then why did you lie and tell me nothing happened?"

"I don't know," Joey whispered, and he didn't. He hadn't thought to tell Chris. Maybe part of him remembered what had happened the night he kissed Lance, and he didn't want to relive that. He didn't want to hurt Chris. And now it seemed as if he had done just that, when he had been trying not to.

"Well, think about it," Chris replied. He headed for the door, his stride quick and angry. "I'll give you time. Hell, I'll give you all night. Think about it and tell me in the morning why you think you can lie to me if you love me so damn much."

"Chris," Joey called out, but Chris didn't stop. Joey ran to the doorway and watched Chris head down to his old room. "Chris, wait."

"Think about it, Joe," Chris replied. As he opened the door to his room, he turned back and looked at Joey with those dark, silent eyes. "Goodnight."

He closed the door behind him, and Joey heard the lock latch into place. Fuck, he thought, closing his own bedroom door. He flung himself out on his bed and clutched his pillow tightly, trying to ignore the fact that he was sleeping alone for the first time in forever. And it was all because he didn't think to tell Chris about JC's drunken kiss.

All I Ever Wanted
134. Another Stupid Mistake
by NSyncGrrl

Joey spent most of the rest of the night lying on his back and thinking about Chris's words. "If you love me like you say you do, Joe, then why did you lie and tell me nothing happened?" He didn't know. As he stared at the ceiling, he forced himself to think about it, like Chris wanted him to. The empty bed stretched around him like a desert, but Joey tried to think of why he had lied.

Because you didn't want to hurt him. Okay, true. He didn't want to hurt Chris. A few stolen kisses had torn Lance all to pieces, and while Joey didn't see Chris reacting the same way, he didn't want to chance it.

Because you didn't want him to hate JC. There was a point. Joey wanted everyone to be friends -- God, he thought bitterly, is this the way Lance felt when I was all over him? Did my flirting and desire make him lay awake at night, wondering how to fix things? If so, he was sorry. He hated the bare expanse of his bed, the empty feeling in his arms, the ache in his heart that beat in time with his throbbing cock -- he was so damn horny and Chris wasn't sleeping here tonight, fuck -- if Lance had ever lost sleep over him then Joey wanted to call him up and apologize again. This sucked, big time. He found himself reaching for the phone before he realized it was after two in the morning and he could just hear Justin now. They might be patching things up again, but he for one didn't want to wake Justin up this early. Heaven forbid.

And then his mind wandered back to the reasons he lied to Chris. Because he didn't want another Justin on his hands, he thought, but then realized that Chris wasn't Justin. Chris didn't mind Joey's flirting, he didn't mind the fact that JC had kissed him ... did he? No. He didn't say, "Why did you kiss him back?" He didn't say, "Why did you let him get so close?" What were his exact words again?

"If you love me like you say you do, Joe, then why did you lie and tell me nothing happened?" It was the lie that pissed him off. Joey sighed in the darkness and wished he had had the courage and foresight to just walk into the room and ... say what? "Chris, you'll never believe what happened. JC's so fucking drunk that he hit on me."

How would that have gone over? Joey didn't know, but he could almost picture the way Chris's dour expression would've smoothed out, his pout turning into a slow smile, the laughter daring to creep back into his puppy-dog eyes. Joey would've laughed and said, "He kissed me, can you believe it? I mean, it was a nice gesture but I don't want him. I want you." God, Chris, I want you. And then they would've had sex and giggled beneath the covers about JC and the scary moments they had spent looking for him in the club, when all the time he was out in the back alley with Eminem, of all people. Eminem! Joey still couldn't wrap his mind around that one.

Or maybe, his mind whispered insidiously, maybe you didn't tell him

because for a moment you didn't pull away. For a moment, you wanted JC too.

No. Joey shook his head at the ceiling and pushed the thought away. He didn't want JC, not now. JC had his chance, and even though Joey thought he might've given him another one had he asked, that was before Joey and Chris got together. And now Joey only wanted Chris. Sweet, irreverent, goofy Chris. He wanted him so much it hurt to think about the two of them sleeping in separate beds. And it wasn't the sex, it wasn't just that. He loved Chris. He did.

But are you in love with him? his mind snickered, and Joey sighed. In love? What was that? He didn't know -- he had never been "in love" before. But he loved the way he felt with Chris, even when he was torn up inside like he was now. He would feel so much better now if Chris was just lying beside him, just an arm's length away. Hell, they didn't have to touch. All he wanted was to see those shining eyes and hear that sexy voice. So what if he wasn't "in love," not yet? He'd get there soon enough, he was sure.

But not tonight, he reminded himself, and he wished he was a little more drunk. At least JC was probably passed out by now. Chris was probably curled into a tight ball beneath his covers -- don't think of him in the bed, he scolded himself, or you won't be able to wait until the morning to tell him you've thought about it. He wanted to sleep apart tonight, it was his choice, so don't you dare crawl over there yet. You weren't the one who kissed JC, remember, it was the other way around -- the pillows clenched in his fists, his head buried in the soft material -- stop it, Joe. Don't even go there -- his dogs cuddling beside him in the bed. Joey closed his eyes and tried to push the images away.

Tomorrow he would be much more awake, and the alcohol in his system would be gone, and he could beg Chris to forgive him. He'd grovel if he needed to, anything to make Chris come back to the safety of his arms.

The bed shook slightly, and Joey felt something cold and wet press into the palm of his hand. Then a warm tongue began to lick at his skin, and Joey reached out. As his hand touched short, coarse fur, he heard a soft yip and grinned. One of Chris's dogs had decided to sleep by his side tonight, it seemed. Joey pulled the small dog onto his chest, the warm weight comforting in the darkness. He guessed it was Korea, since she had taken a liking to him, and he ran a hand down her back, petting her. Before long she placed her head in her paws and huffed once before falling asleep.

Wondering exactly what he'd say to Chris in the morning, Joey fell asleep, too. A few hours later he awoke with a start. Gray light seeped into his room through the closed blinds and he blinked wearily. Glancing at the alarm clock, he wondered what time he had finally fallen asleep and why the hell he was already awake at seven in the morning. Then he felt the pressure in his bladder and pushed himself up in the bed. On his chest Korea whined in protest, rolling down into Joey's lap.

Picking up the sleeping dog, Joey whispered, "Sorry, girl. Nature calls." He set the dog on the bed and hurried down the hall to the bathroom. After relieving himself, Joey headed back to his room and his

empty, lonely bed. At the doorway to his room he stopped and looked back at Chris's closed door. It's morning, he reasoned as he crossed the hall. He knocked on Chris's door gently. "Chris?" he called, resting his head on the cool wood of the door. "You awake?"

"No," came the sleepy, muffled reply.

Joey grinned. "Chris, let me in."

"Go away, Joe," Chris replied. "I'm trying to sleep."

"Let me in," Joey said again. "We can sleep together."

"No," Chris said again.

Sighing, Joey asked, "Chris, please?" When Chris didn't respond, he ventured to add, "I've thought about it, Chris. Can't you let me in? Please?" He waited. And waited. Finally he sighed and whispered, "I'm sorry."

Then he let his hand fall to the doorknob. He tried to turn it but the door was locked. So he went back to his room and stretched out on the bed beside Korea. "He's still mad at me," he pouted as he stroked the dog's soft fur. He didn't blame Chris, not really, because he was still a little mad at himself, too. He should've seen the way JC was eyeing him, should've known what was coming when JC reached out to touch him. He remembered the way he had felt after he kissed Lance and he knew Justin hated him, knew Lance was hurting because Justin couldn't forgive him, not at first, knew he had fucked things up between them and feared things would never be the same again.

And now look at them, Joey thought, smiling because Lance was happy, even if it was Justin who made him that way. They're moving in together and you and Chris aren't that serious yet but you know he loves you and you know you can win him back. Just give him a little more time. That's all he could do, wasn't it? Give Chris more time to forgive him, for the kiss and the lie.

But Joey wanted Chris now. He wanted to cuddle up next to him instead of his damn dog and just talk about what had happened. He wanted to say he was sorry until Chris kissed the memory of JC's lips away. But how can I do that if he won't even open the door? Joey didn't know, and he didn't know who to ask, either. JC? He didn't think so -- this mess was mostly JC's fault. Note to self, he thought bitterly, never let that boy touch a beer again. He couldn't talk to Chris, because Chris wasn't talking to him. His brother? Joey almost laughed at the thought of trying to explain all of this to Steven, who would never be accused of being lucky in love. And with Justin and Lance so far away, who did that leave for Joey to turn to?

Joey frowned at the phone, debating. "Oh, the hell with it," he said, exasperated. Crawling over the dog, he snagged the phone and pulled it onto the bed beside him. It took him a moment to remember the phone number, and then he dialed, punching the numbers quickly before he could change his mind and talk himself out of calling Lance this early in the morning.

All I Ever Wanted
135. Taking Sides
by NSyncGrrl

When Lance woke up Saturday morning, he turned over in Justin's arms and watched the early morning sunlight kiss his lover's angelic features and bounce off his unruly curls. Justin always looked so beautiful when he slept, his young skin so smooth, his face innocent, his lashes dark against his cheeks, those full pouty lips always an impossible shade of red that reminded Lance of ripening cranberries. Content, Lance cuddled closer to Justin and ran a finger along the peachy fuzz covering his chin. The scant facial hair only enhanced Justin's boyish appearance, and at Lance's tender touch his lips parted slightly in a soft sigh. Placing his own lips against Justin's, Lance whispered, "I love you."

Justin moaned in his sleep, a sexy sound that enflamed Lance's blood, arousing him. Concentrating, Lance lay still and listened to the house around them, straining to hear if Jonathan was awake, but nothing disturbed the early morning silence beyond their closed bedroom door. So Lance parted Justin's lips with his own and eased his tongue into Justin's warm mouth. He kissed Justin with slow, gentle kisses that lingered on his lips and chin, increasing with intensity as his lust and desire for the boy holding him so tightly grew. "Justin," he whispered. He ran his hands along Justin's chest, rubbing the soft little nipples until they stood up beneath his fingers. Then he trailed tiny kisses across Justin's smooth cheek. Licking behind Justin's earlobe, Lance breathed, "Wake up, sunshine."

Justin's hands roamed down Lance's back, and he groaned sleepily. "Why?" he whispered.

Lance tugged on Justin's earlobe with his teeth, mindful of the small diamond earring he wore. "Because I want you to," he pouted, resting his head beside Justin's. He sighed into Justin's ear. "Because Jon's not up yet and I want you to love me."

"I do love you," Justin mumbled, snuggling closer to Lance.

Grinning, Lance reached down beneath the sheets and squeezed Justin's dick playfully. "I want you to make love to me," he corrected, "so get up, get up, get up." With each "up" he squeezed again, and Justin laughed quietly.

"I'm up," he said, pulling Lance to him. He stared at Lance with those deep blue, jewel-like eyes and kissed the tip of Lance's nose. "Why are you always so damn horny in the morning?" he asked.

Lance pouted. "And that's a bad thing?" he asked, looking at Justin with what he hoped were large, sad eyes.

Justin grinned and kissed him again, on the lips this time. "Not at all," he whispered, and Lance squeezed his hardening erection once more. "I love it when you get all horny on me."

"For you," Lance said, pushing Justin back to the bed. He climbed on top of Justin, straddling his waist. Grinning at him, Lance crossed his arms on Justin's chest and leaned down over him. He stared at Justin, drinking in his curls, his eyes, his sweet, sweet lips. Then, without another word, Lance began to kiss Justin's neck, below his chin. Justin leaned back into the pillow and ran his hands along the downy hair on Lance's thighs, rubbing gently. Slowly Lance kissed his way down Justin's throat, nipping at his collarbone playfully, and Justin moaned, his hands caressing Lance's thighs and hips. Lance slid down a little until he felt Justin's hard cock pressed against his butt, and his tongue licked circles around one of Justin's tender nipples, teasing it as Justin writhed beneath him in delight. As he kissed his way over to Justin's other nipple, intent on spending an eternity on the foreplay, until Justin begged to enter him, the phone beside the bed rang. "Don't answer it," Lance sighed, his breath tickling Justin's chest.

"I didn't plan to," Justin whispered, his voice thick with lust. The phone rang a second time. Two more rings, Lance thought, taking Justin's nipple between his teeth and plucking gently. Then the machine will pick up.

But the phone stopped in the middle of the third ring, and Lance knew Jonathan was up. Downstairs watching cartoons, probably, he mused, sucking on Justin's nipple. It is Saturday, after all. He listened, wondering who was calling this early anyway. And then he heard Jonathan call up to him. "Lance! If you're up, the phone's for you!"

Lance sighed. "Damn," he muttered, reaching for the phone.

"Don't get it," Justin said. He wiggled his hips beneath Lance's butt and ran his hands down the length of Lance's swollen cock where it rested against Justin's lower belly. He looked up at Lance with large, glossy eyes and pouted. "Please?"

Lance was tempted, but ... "What if it's my mother?" he asked, reaching for the phone again.

"Lance," Justin whined, kissing Lance's chest as he leaned over him to grab the phone. His hands slid around Lance's hips to cup his lover's buttocks, and he squeezed as Lance picked up the receiver.

"Hello?" Lance asked, gasping as Justin eased one finger inside of him. He cleared his throat and swallowed hard. "Hello?" he asked again.

"Lance?" Joey's voice was low through the phone, as if he was trying to keep it down. Lance wondered what possessed him to call this early -- weren't they going to the clubs the night before? Why would Joey wake up just to call him? "Hello?"

"Hey," Lance said quickly. Justin eased another finger inside of him, grinning when Lance closed his eyes and bit his lip, trying not to moan out loud. "Joey, I'm kinda busy right now ..."

"Oh," Joey replied, and Lance heard the sadness wrapped up into that one little word. Slapping Justin's arm, he frowned as Joey asked, "Did I catch you at a bad time?"

Lance slapped at Justin again, and this time he felt Justin's fingers slip free. "No," he said hurriedly. "Not at all. What's wrong?"

Joey sighed. "Why does something have to be wrong?" he asked. "Can't I call you just to talk?"

Lance got the impression he was stalling for time. "This early on a Saturday?" Lance countered. He looked down at Justin, sulking because Lance was on the phone and not paying any attention to him, and with one finger he poked at Justin's full lips. Justin opened his mouth and tried to bite the tip of Lance's finger. Lance pulled his hand away and grinned. "Did you guys go to the clubs last night?"

"Yeah," Joey said, sighing again. Lance poked at Justin's lips again, and this time when his mouth opened, Lance dipped his finger into it, poking at Justin's wet tongue. Justin clamped his lips down over the finger and began to suck gently, his tongue winding around the tip.

"What's wrong, Joey?" Lance asked again. Joey was his friend, true, but he wanted to get him off the phone right now so he could finish what he had started with Justin before Jonathan decided to come upstairs and drag them out of bed. Then they'd have to wait until tonight and Lance didn't think he'd make it that long, the way he felt right now. "We are kind of in the middle of something, you know."

"JC kissed me," Joey blurted out, and Lance slid off of Justin, frowning. He pulled his finger free from Justin's mouth and crossed his legs beneath him as Joey spoke. "Fuck, Lance, we went out and he got so damn drunk it wasn't even funny, and then he got sick, and when we came home I helped him to bed and I should've seen it coming, you know? But I didn't and he kissed me and I told him no, I pushed him away, but I didn't know Chris was right there, standing right there in the doorway the whole time --"

"Take a breath," Lance commanded. Justin frowned at the sudden change in Lance's mood and pushed himself up against the pillows, watching Lance's face carefully. He mouthed a question -- "What happened?" -- but Lance just shook his head. "Just take a deep breath, Joey, and calm down."

"I am calm," Joey said, but he was speaking too fast and Lance thought he heard tears in the back of his friend's voice, threatening to break. "So then I come into my room and Chris is like what happened and I didn't know he saw so you know what I said? I said nothing. I said nothing happened. And Chris asked again and I still didn't tell him, and then he told me he saw the whole thing. He wanted to know why I lied to him. I thought he'd be mad, you know?"

"I know," Lance said, nodding. He knew quite well that fear. How had he ever made it through those minutes when he waited for Justin to come home just so he could tell him about the kiss he shared with Joey? He didn't know -- he still didn't know how he made it through that night. "Where is he now?"

Joey sighed softly. "In his room. Fuck, Lance. He didn't want to spend the night in mine. And now his door is closed. What the hell am I supposed to do now?"

"Tell him you're sorry," Lance suggested, and Justin looked up from where he picked at the bedsheet, a scowl on his face.

"Sorry for what?" he asked, but Lance shook his head again.

"I'll tell you in a minute," he whispered, covering the phone with one hand.

"I told him that already," Joey said in his ear, and Lance turned his attention back to the phone. "Well, not really, but I tried. I knocked on the door and asked him to let me in, and he said no. I told him I wanted to talk and he told me to go away. What do I say to that?"

"What happened?" Justin persisted.

Lance frowned at him and tried to concentrate on Joey. "Okay, Joey, wait a minute," he said, thinking over what Joey had said. "Chris saw you and JC kissing --"

"What the fuck?" Justin cried, the scowl on his face deepening in anger.

"-- and now Chris won't come out of his room," Lance finished, waving at Justin to keep it down, leave him alone, just a minute, please. "Where's JC?"

"I don't know," Joey admitted. "Probably still asleep in his room. I don't care, either. At this point I just want Chris to talk to me."

"Well, he's hurt right now," Lance said, sighing. "You can't just expect him to want to hear what you have to say at a time like this. You have to give him room."

Joey sighed. "He has plenty of room," he said, smirking. "He's locked in it right now."

"That's not what I meant," Lance said. Justin watched him carefully, trying to figure out the conversation from what he heard of Lance's side. His forehead was creased and his lips pulled into a grimace, and Lance could see that Justin was remembering back to when Joey had kissed him and almost ruined everything they had together. What had Lance done then? He had kept out of Justin's way, let him come to terms with what had happened on his own, and after an eternity apart, Justin came back to him with open arms. And now they were stronger than ever. Maybe that would work with Chris, as well?

On the phone, Joey sighed again. "Lance, what the hell do I do?"

"Just ..." Lance sighed. "Joey, you have to give him time to think things through. He needs to be alone right now, even though I know you want to be there for him. He doesn't need that. You need to let him think about what happened and when he's ready, he'll come to you."

Joey thought over Lance's words. Lance picked at the bedsheet by Justin's hip and let him think. Finally, Joey asked, "So you want me to just let him stay locked up in there until he's ready to come out? That's fucked up. What if he needs to go to the bathroom, or walk his dogs?"

What about when he needs to eat?"

"He probably doesn't want to see you right now," Lance said gently. "Maybe you should consider staying someplace else for a little while."

"Like where?" Joey asked. "Fuck, Lance, I want to stay here. I want him to stay here with me."

Lance sighed. "I know that, Joey, but it's not that easy." Thinking, he added, "Maybe you can spend the weekend at your parents' house, hmm? Show Chris you're willing to give him the time he needs to think and stay away from JC at the same time."

"I don't want JC," Joey said, exasperated. "I want Chris. I want to prove that to him. And you think that my leaving will do that? I don't really see how."

"You want Chris back," Lance corrected. "So you have to give him space. When he's ready, he'll let you know. But he'll never be ready if you're always in his face." He remembered wanting to leave after Joey had kissed him, just leave the group and let Justin think about everything on his own, but he had been so sure that Justin didn't love him anymore. And look at us now, he thought, smiling at Justin, who was still watching him intently. Thank you Jesus for letting us get this far. "I'm not saying you have to leave, I'm just offering my advice. That's what you called for, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Joey said sadly. "I guess you're right. I'll think about it. Thanks."

Lance grinned into the phone. "Anytime," he replied. Then he waited, wondering if Joey had anything else he wanted to say.

"Um, I'll let you two get back to what you were doing," Joey said, and Lance laughed.

"I think the mood's pretty much shot to hell," he said, winking at Justin. This time a slight smile slipped across Justin's face and was gone.

Joey laughed, a contagious sound that made Lance smile again. "I'm sure you two can get it back up. Thanks again, man."

As he hung up the phone after their goodbyes, Lance ran a hand down Justin's leg, still hidden beneath the covers. "What the hell was that all about?" Justin asked angrily. "Joey's a fucking idiot, screwing around on Chris like that. What the hell was he thinking?"

"Justin, it wasn't his fault --" Lance started, but Justin interrupted him.

"Fuck that, Lance," he cried. "Why do you always stick up for him? Can't you see he's playing us all?"

Lance felt his own anger rising. "Justin, he's not like that," he tried to explain, but Justin didn't want to hear it. He got out of bed and tugged on a pair of boxers he found on the floor. "Why are you always so quick to judge him? Like everything's his fault?"

"Because it is," Justin replied. He left the room, leaving the door open,

and Lance saw the bathroom door across the hall shut when he entered. With his own door open he could hear the TV downstairs, the cheery sounds of Saturday morning cartoons carrying through the house, and then he heard Jonathan's innocent, boyish laughter. Fuck this, Lance thought. He wasn't going to argue with Justin this early in the morning, not about Joey, not again. Sliding out of bed, he pulled on his own boxers and a t-shirt he found discarded on the floor, and said a quick prayer that everything would work itself out by the time they got back to Florida tomorrow night. When Justin came back into the room, he covered his eyes with one hand and said softly, "Lance, I'm not mad at you."

"I know," Lance replied.

"I'm pissed off at Joey," Justin continued. Lance tossed him a t-shirt, which he tugged on quickly. "I'm pissed that he kissed JC. I mean, he doesn't even like Joey --"

"You're wrong, Justin," Lance said, cutting him off. "They've kissed before."

Justin looked at him, surprised. "I know that," he said. "I didn't tell you --"

Lance sighed. He had figured JC confided in Justin, and he didn't mind that Justin didn't say anything to him about it. "Joey told me," Lance said. "And he told me that he thinks JC likes him, even though he said he didn't. And then JC kisses him last night --"

"I'm sure that's not the way it happened," Justin snorted. "Joey was probably drunk and horny and took advantage of JC, that's it. Then Chris happened to see them, called his cheating ass on it, and now they're all at odds with each other."

Lance glared at Justin. "See?" he asked, ire creeping into his voice. "There you go again. It's all Joey's fault, isn't it?"

"Lance," Justin said, sighing, "it's too early for this shit, okay?"

"Fine," Lance replied. "You don't want to talk about it? Fine." He started to leave the room, intent on breakfast.

Justin caught his arm as he passed. He looked at Lance with earnest eyes so blue, Lance felt as if he were drifting in a roiling sea of emotion. "I love you," Justin said, studying Lance intently.

Lance sighed. He could never stay angry with Justin, no matter what they were arguing about. "I love you, too," he said softly. "Just ... let's not talk about this right now, okay? We'll only fight and I don't want that. Let's just wait until we get back and get the full story from everyone before jumping to conclusions, okay?"

"Okay," Justin said, nodding, but Lance could tell that Justin still thought Joey was to blame. He leaned closer, his lips brushing Lance's own, his tongue licking them gently. "I hate it when we're so rudely interrupted."

Lance smiled. "I'm going to be horny all day, you know that."

Justin kissed him tenderly. "Then tonight should be fun." He followed Lance out of the room and downstairs, his hand still on Lance's arm. Lance tried to imagine JC kissing Joey and part of him just couldn't do it -- JC didn't seem that type, not to him -- but he pushed the image away. He believed Joey, he did, but he would wait until he talked to Chris and JC before he talked with Justin about it again. He already knew that Justin didn't believe Joey, and he didn't want to argue about that, not here in their house and not with Jonathan present. Hell, he thought, grinning, you never want to argue with Justin. You just want everything to be roses as you live happily ever after. If only that could really happen.

All I Ever Wanted
136. Little White Lies
by NSyncGrrl

JC awoke in the morning with a splitting headache and a horrid, fuzzy taste in his mouth. The memory of last night's nausea washed over him when he tried to sit up, so he fell back against the pillows and closed his eyes. Damn, he thought as his stomach churned sickly. He didn't know if he had a bad hangover or if he was still drunk. He didn't know what time it was or where the others were, and he barely remembered that it was Saturday and he had time scheduled at the studio around noon. He wondered if he had slept through that, and then he wondered if Joey was mad at him. He figured Chris would be, but he hoped Joey wasn't. He hadn't meant to kiss him -- yeah, right, his mind answered. Like hell you didn't mean to. Admit it, Josh, you got off on it. You liked it, and when Joey left you thought about him until you finally passed out. So don't lie to yourself again and say you hadn't meant to do it.

He was sick of lying. He remembered telling Justin he wouldn't let Joey kiss him again. And that was a lie, wasn't it? Because if Joey came into his room right now and asked, JC would let him crawl beside him in the bed and hold him tight. He would forgive the way Joey said "no" last night and would let his strong arms wrap around him, and JC thought maybe then the pounding in his head would go away. Joey was wrong if he believed JC didn't really want him.

And who told him that? JC himself had, and that was a lie, too. Jesus, JC thought bitterly, what happened to the truth? Is it such a foreign concept to me now? But he hadn't wanted to interfere with Joey and Chris, and he didn't want to come between them, and he didn't want to think about the way Joey kissed and the way his eyes sparkled when he looked at JC, and if only JC had turned over in Joey's arms the night they shared that hotel room with Justin and Lance! If only he had gone to Joey after that whole mess with him and Lance, back at Dani's house! If he had paid more attention to Joey then, would he be the one without someone now? Would Chris still be with Dani and JC have someone to hold at night? He didn't know. Hell, he had lied to Justin when he told him he didn't like guys, not in that way, hadn't he? Lies, all of them lies. And he didn't know what the truth was any longer. If there even was a truth anymore.

Somehow JC managed to push the pain in his head away enough to stand up, and after his stomach settled and the nausea passed, he made it to the door of his room without falling to the ground. He opened the door slowly and stood in the doorway for long moments listening. The house around him was silent. He wondered if Joey was still in bed, Chris at his side. I don't fucking care anymore, JC thought sourly. And yes, that's another fucking lie.

In his wrinkled jeans and the black tank top he wore to the club the night before, JC shuffled down the hall and into the kitchen. There he found Joey, already at the kitchen table, a bowl of cereal in front of him. Joey looked up as JC entered the room, a wariness in his eyes that JC's

kiss had put there. "Hey," Joey said, his voice low.

"Hey," JC replied, heading for the sink. Turning on the faucet, he splashed cold water on his face and neck, running his wet hands through his spiked hair. He felt Joey's hot gaze on his back as he poured himself a cup of coffee, and he felt helpless and angry all over again. Leaning against the counter, he blew the steam off of the coffee and looked at Joey over the top of his mug. Joey looked down into his cereal.

"Are you feeling better?" Joey asked softly.

"No," JC replied. He wasn't. "How about you?"

"No," Joey whispered. He pushed the cereal around in the bowl and frowned at the milk.

JC sipped at the hot, black coffee carefully. "Where's Chris?" he asked. "Still sleeping?"

Joey shrugged. "I don't know," he replied. "He's not ..." He sighed. "He slept in his old room last night. He hasn't come out yet."

"Fuck," JC muttered. So Chris knew. "Did you tell him?" he asked.

"He saw us," Joey said. "He was in the doorway and he saw the whole thing."

JC sighed and closed his eyes. "So he saw you push me away. He saw that it was all my fault. What's he mad at you for?"

"For lying to him," Joey said gently, and JC blinked in surprise. "I didn't tell him when he asked what happened and he's mad about that. That I lied to him."

"Well, I lied to you all," JC said. "So he's probably pissed at me big time."

Joey stirred the cereal and sighed. "You didn't lie --"

"I did," JC asserted. He took another sip of the coffee and grimaced at the hot, grainy taste. "Fuck, Joey. I lied to you, I lied to him, I lied to Justin --"

Smiling faintly, Joey pointed out, "You didn't lie to Lance. So see? That's not all of us."

JC felt his heart wrench in his chest. "That is why I like you so much, Joey. You turn anything into a joke. Everything's fun and games with you." He stared at Joey and sighed. "You don't know how much I envy that about you. How much I want that part of you to be with me all the time."

"JC, please," Joey said. "Jesus, you know I'm with Chris. And now all of a sudden you're interested in me? Why is that?" He turned those large, brown eyes onto JC, who almost looked away from the sadness and pain he saw in the red-rimmed depths. "Why couldn't you have told me this sooner? When I was so sure the world was going to end because I didn't have anyone who loved me the way Lance loves Justin?"

"I didn't know it then," JC admitted. He shrugged and sipped at the coffee again. "Hell, maybe I still don't know it now. Maybe I'm just thinking I want you and that's not it at all. But I want a chance to find out."

Joey pushed the bowl of cereal away. "I can't give you that chance," he whispered. "I'm sorry for all the things I said last night, JC. I'm sorry if they hurt you. But I'm pretty sure I love Chris and I can't fuck it up with him, you know?" He looked at JC, his eyes pleading for his friend to understand.

JC understood. Once again he was the odd man out. Chris and Joey were the fun ones, the party boys, and JC never really got into that scene. Justin and Lance had always been together, being the youngest, and JC didn't fit in there, either. But he had always stood aside and watched the others have their fun, while he lost himself in the music and the performing and the tour. And when the tour started up next month, he'd find himself immersed in it once again with no time or energy to spare on worrying about being alone. He'd sleep every night without wanting someone because he'd be too exhausted.

But you still have a few weeks before the tour begins, he reminded himself, and Chris was right, you can find someone in that time, and it doesn't have to be anything serious. Hell, just something to pass the time and take your mind off of Joey. Watching his friend, JC said, "I hope you're not waiting for me to apologize, because I'm not going to." Joey bit his lower lip, and suddenly JC felt petty and mean. "I'm not sorry I kissed you. I am sorry I've been lying to you all this time, and I wish I had had the guts to tell you sooner, because then maybe you'd be sleeping with me at night and not Chris. So I'm not going to lie to you again and tell you I'm sorry when I'm not. Even if I hadn't been so damn drunk, I would've kissed you anyway. I'd do it again if I thought you would let me."

Joey stood up abruptly. "I'm leaving," he announced. Frowning at JC, he said, "I want us to be friends, Josh. I don't want things to change between us. But you can't kiss me, not again. I'm not interested in you, okay? I don't want to be mean but ..." He sighed and wiped at his eyes brusquely, trying to brush away tears that threatened to fall. "I love Chris. I'm almost sure of it. And I'm not going to let anything ruin that. I'm sorry."

"I can't change the way I feel," JC replied. He watched as Joey dumped the uneaten cereal into the sink and turned on the garbage disposal, its noisy whirl filling the silence between them.

Joey sighed and turned off the garbage disposal. "Well, neither can I. I'm sorry."

"So you said," JC pointed out. "Where are you going now?"

Joey shrugged. "Home."

"This is your home," JC said. He watched Joey intently. "You mean you're going to your mom's place?" Joey nodded. "For how long?"

"I don't know," Joey admitted. "Until Chris will talk to me again. Lance

says I should give him time --"

JC interrupted him. "So you've told Lance?" Joey nodded again. "Fuck. And I'm sure now Justin knows, too."

"You thought they wouldn't find out?" Joey asked. JC shrugged. At this point he didn't really care. "I've got to go," Joey said.

"So go," JC said. When Joey opened his mouth to say something else, JC held up a hand and said, "Don't say you're sorry again, Joey. I know you are. I don't want your pity, okay?" He looked at Joey with hard eyes and sighed. "That's not what I want from you."

"And I can't give you what you want," Joey whispered. "I'm sorry."

JC sipped at his coffee as Joey left the kitchen. He heard Joey's shoes scuff along the carpeted hallway, heard the faint tap of Joey's hand against Chris's door, heard Joey say he was leaving for his parents' house, if Chris needed to reach him, call him there, he would be waiting for the call. Then Joey waved at JC as he passed by the kitchen doorway, and the front door closed quietly behind him when he left.

JC sipped his coffee again and remembered last night's kiss, the passion he had felt, the way he had wanted Joey to respond, the way Joey didn't push him away, not at first. He wondered how he would ever drown out those memories, but he vowed to try.

All I Ever Wanted
137. Fighting Words
by NSyncGrrl

Lance thought it would be nice if he and Justin took Jonathan out for the day, so they went to the mall and a few comic book shops, and then Justin suggested they stop at a park to pass the time away. At the park a rough, sandy baseball field stretched out beside a small playground, and when they got out of the car, Jonathan ran to join a group of boys his own age, getting together for a makeshift game of ball. Justin walked over to the swingset and sat down on one of the swings. He watched Lance approach, taking in his lover's slim black jeans that fell to the top of his faded cowboy boots, the long-sleeved t-shirt he wore under a black vest, and his dark blue denim jacket draped over one shoulder. Lance smiled at Justin as he sat down on the swing beside him. Nodding out at the field, he asked, "You think Jon's having a good time so far?"

Justin grinned and took Lance's hand in his. "He's having a ball," he replied, glancing at his brother before turning back to Lance. "You look so damn sexy today, you know that?"

"I do now," Lance replied, looking at his boots as a light blush crept into his cheeks.

Justin sighed happily. "I love you," he whispered.

"I love you, too," Lance said. He raised Justin's hand to his lips and kissed his knuckles, his lips soft and warm. Then he smoothed his fingers over the spot.

"You're rubbing it away," Justin said, pouting.

Lance laughed. "I'm rubbing it in," he replied. "You don't want chapstick on your hand, do you?"

Justin shrugged. "I don't mind if it's yours," he said, looking out at the boys on the field again. His brother was on first base, and when he saw Justin look up, Jonathan waved at him. Justin raised one hand and waved back.

"Justin," Lance started, tugging on his hand, and Justin turned to look at him. "We're close to my parents' house, you know. Maybe we can run by there for lunch or something."

Justin frowned. "Are you hungry yet?"

Lance shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "But I told my mom we'd try to stop by sometime, and I figured we might as well do it today, since we're already out this way."

Sighing, Justin remembered the last time he saw Mrs. Bass, at the Video Music Awards. She hadn't warmed up to him any, though now she seemed a little nicer whenever he spoke to her on the phone. Still, he was afraid of another icy reception, and he didn't know if he was up to it

today.

Seeing the doubtful look on Justin's face, Lance sighed. "It's okay," he said, squeezing Justin's hand gently. "If you don't want to go, I'll understand."

"No," Justin said, shaking his head. "It's your mom. It's not right for me to tell you we can't see her."

"But if you don't want to --" Lance persisted.

"We can," Justin said, raising his eyes to meet that gorgeous green gaze. "We can stop. I'm just ... I'll be okay. Really."

Lance smiled sweetly. "I'll be with you," he reminded him. "One day she'll see the way we feel for each other and she'll just fall in love with you, just like I did."

Justin grinned wickedly. "I don't want her to love me the same way you do," he said, leering, and Lance laughed.

"I don't mean like that," he said, his green eyes shining merrily. Then he pulled Justin's swing closer to his and let go of Justin's hand. Reaching out, he ran his fingers through Justin's thick curls and asked, "When are you going to get a hair cut?"

Justin rested his hand on Lance's upper thigh, his fingers trailing along the inseam of his jeans, and leaned into Lance's gentle touch. Lance's fingers roamed through his hair, a wonderful sensation. "I thought you liked it longer," he said, closing his eyes.

"I do," Lance replied, "but you like it short. You don't have to keep it long for me." Lance leaned closer until the chains of their swings clinked together. "I like to bury my hands in it," he whispered into Justin's ear, "and I like to tug on it when we're making love."

"Which we didn't get a chance to get to this morning," Justin reminded him. He looked at Lance out of the corner of his eye and winked. "So we have to do it tonight."

"We will," Lance promised. "Come here." He gripped a handful of Justin's curly locks and turned his head gently until they faced each other. Then he leaned forward and with the briefest of touches, placed his lips on Justin's in a soft, barely there kiss. Justin's hand squeezed Lance's thigh, pulling his swing closer, wanting more.

Then they heard running footsteps crossing the packed dirt of the playground, and Jonathan called out, "You guys!"

Lance and Justin looked up as Jonathan stopped in front of them and leaned over, hands on his knees, as he tried to catch his breath. An angry red mark blistered high on Jonathan's right cheek, and when he wiped at it, he grimaced as if it hurt. Justin frowned as Lance let go. "Jon, what's wrong?" he asked, reaching out to touch Jonathan's cheek. Jonathan stepped out of reach and sniffed loudly. "What happened?"

"Nothing," Jonathan said, throwing a glance back at the field, where the kids he had been playing with earlier were helping one of the boys to

his feet. "Damn bastard," Jonathan muttered.

"Watch your mouth," Justin said, growing angry. "Did he hit you?"

Jonathan shrugged. "I'm fine," he said. Brushing at his cheek, he added, "This was just a chicken slap."

Lance looked from Jonathan to Justin and back again. "Jon, what happened?" When he saw fear creep into Jonathan's eyes, he said softly, "We won't get mad, really."

Jonathan looked at Justin doubtfully. "Justin's already mad," he replied, as if Justin wasn't even there.

Lance smiled and rested his hand on the chain of Justin's swing. "Justin's mad that boy hit you," he explained. "He's not mad at you."

"Not unless you started it," Justin added darkly.

"But I didn't start it!" Jonathan cried, his eyes filling with tears. "I didn't, I promise! I was on third when that fat kid in the yellow shirt asked if you were my brother and I said yes. He said you were a fag and I kicked him in the leg. So see? I didn't start it."

"He called me a what?" Justin cried, thunder in his voice to match the anger clouding his brow. Lance pushed him back down into the swing.

"What happened then?" Lance wanted to know.

Jonathan shrugged. "He said that you guys were fags because you were sitting so close and I told him to take it back. I told him that you weren't fags. I said he didn't know what a fag was, and he didn't know you guys so how could he know if you were fags or not, you know? So then he slapped me and I called him a girl and punched him in the stomach." He pouted and added, "And I kicked him again once he was down, just to make sure."

"Fuck," Justin muttered. The last thing he wanted was his little brother getting into fights because of him.

"Watch your mouth," Lance admonished.

"Sorry," Justin said, frowning. Then he stood up again. "I'm going to kick this kid's ass myself."

Jonathan stood in front of Justin and pushed on his stomach. "No," he said. "I already beat him up. You can't do it, too."

Justin looked down at his brother, that livid mark on his cheek like a raspberry birthmark marring his innocent face. He should've been more careful out here, where those boys could see them. But you weren't doing anything really, his mind whispered. Lance was playing with your hair, and you were touching his leg, and maybe you shared one little kiss. And those boys picked on Jon because of that? How cruel can kids be anyway? But Justin remembered his own childhood and knew that children could be very cruel, especially to kids they didn't know very well, like Jonathan, who had just happened onto their game. Clenching his jaw, Justin said, "Don't get into fights about me. Next time just tell them to mind their own

fucking business."

"I can't do that," Jonathan replied, rolling his eyes.

"Don't say those exact words," Lance said. Justin felt Lance's hand latch onto the belt loop at the back of his jeans, and the slight touch was comforting. "Just tell them to leave you alone. Don't get into a fight over it."

Jonathan pouted. "No," he said bitterly. "You guys aren't fags, and I'll drop kick anyone who thinks you are."

Lance laughed. "Jon," he asked gently, "what exactly is a fag?"

"A homo," Jonathan said, still pouting. "You know, one of those guys who are so flaming gay, you'd think they were on fire. You aren't like that. Neither of you. You're just gay." He hugged Justin's waist tightly. "I didn't like the way that kid said it," he mumbled into Justin's stomach. "I didn't like the way he acted like it was wrong that you two like each other. So I had to hit him."

Justin sighed and ran a hand through Jonathan's unruly hair. "Hitting someone isn't going to make them change their minds," he said softly. "And it doesn't make you feel any better either, does it?"

"No," Jonathan whispered.

Lance stood up and slipped an arm around Justin's waist. "Remember that," he said, looking at Justin pointedly. Then he draped his other arm around Jonathan's shoulders and said, "Maybe it's time we go someplace else. Jon, how does lunch at my mom's sound?"

"Does she cook good?" Jonathan asked, looking up at Lance.

Lance widened his eyes and nodded. "She's the best. Just wait 'til you taste her down home cooking."

Justin let Lance lead him to the parking lot and thought about what he had said, how hitting someone wouldn't make Jonathan feel any better. He thought about the times he hit Joey in anger and agreed. He only felt worse when it was over, probably because Joey never hit back. So don't go ballistic on his ass when you see him again, he told himself. Let him talk. Maybe Lance is right. Maybe there was a reason behind what happened. Maybe things will be worked out by the time you get there and you won't have to even say anything. Of the three maybes, he hoped the last one would be the truth.

All I Ever Wanted
138. Lunch with Mom
by NSyncGrrl

Maybe it was Jonathan. He was such a cute kid, and the hug he gave Lance's mom when he saw her again brought a wonderful smile to her face that didn't fade away when she looked at Justin. Or maybe it was the fact that Justin had been the responsible one last weekend, not drinking when he and Lance went out. His mother had really laid into Lance the next day about the few beers he had had that night, as if he wasn't old enough to get plastered if he wanted to. Or maybe she was just finally beginning to thaw out about their relationship, Lance didn't know. He did know that when Justin stuck out his hand to shake his mother's, she ventured a quick, emotionless hug, and she didn't seem so cold and distant towards him as they all ate a large lunch of fried chicken and cole slaw.

During the meal, Jonathan talked nonstop, and Justin grinned at every corny joke his brother told. Lance watched his mother covertly, pleased to see her smile so easily with Justin around. When they finished eating, Justin rose to help clean up, but Mrs. Bass placed a hand over his and said, "I'll get it, Justin. You boys just stay here." She ruffled Jonathan's hair as she cleared the table. "Lance? Can you help me out?"

Lance wiped his mouth with his napkin and rose. "Sure," he said, winking at Justin. As he took Justin's plate from in front of him, Lance leaned down and whispered, "See? It wasn't that bad." Justin smiled back at him, and then Lance followed his mother into the kitchen. As he set the plates into the sink, he waited for her to speak first.

"I hear you're getting a roommate," she said, looking at him archly.

Lance frowned, wondering if her earlier happiness was only a façade, and the news of Justin moving in with him had her so angry that she hid it from Jonathan. "Dad suggested I didn't tell you," he said carefully. "Are you mad?"

"A little," she replied, turning to the sink full of dishes. "I'm mad that you didn't tell me yourself. I'm your mother, Lance --"

"And you don't like Justin," Lance said.

"I don't like your relationship with him," she corrected. "Justin is a nice boy, a fine boy. He'd make a great friend --"

"And an awesome boyfriend," Lance added. "Mom, I love him. I can't help that. I'm sorry you don't approve of it but it is my life. And I want to live it with him. So I asked him to move in with me." He sighed. "There. You happy? I told you. He's moving in with me."

From out in the dining room, Lance heard Jonathan's boyish laughter, followed by an "Oops!" from Justin and the sound of something tumbling to the table. He glanced out of the doorway and saw Justin picking up the salt and pepper shakers from the table. Then he stacked them one on top

of the other, trying to get them to stay. But when he took his hands away, they toppled over again. Jonathan laughed as they landed on the table, and the grin on Justin's face melted Lance's heart. "Mom --" he started.

But she held up a hand and interrupted him. "Lance, honey," she said, sighing. And then she shook her head. "I can't help the way I feel about it, either."

"If only you knew how much it hurts me," Lance replied softly. "How much I wish you could just open your eyes and see how good he is to me, how good he makes me feel. Mom, I'm not asking you to love him. Just please ... today he was afraid to come over here because the last time he did, you made him feel like shit."

"I did not," his mother said, turning on the faucet.

Lance watched the sink fill with soapy dish water. "You did, Mom. You did. He felt so bad that night, and it tore me apart to see him like that. I don't want him hurt, because when he is, then I hurt. So when you're mean to him, it hurts me too." His mother pressed her lips together but didn't say anything. Gently, Lance added, "But you surprised me, Mom. You're really great to him today. Is it because of Jonathan?"

A faint smile crossed her face. "He's grown so much," she said, speaking of Justin's little brother. "Does he know ...?"

"Yes," Lance said. He leaned on the counter and watched Jonathan reach across the table for the salt shaker, and then Justin stacked it on top of the pepper shaker. This time when he took his hands away, it stayed, and Jonathan squealed in delight. "Justin told him. He's so cool with it, it's not even funny." Actually, Lance thought it was a little funny, that an eight year old boy would think nothing of his brother's gay relationship when an older woman had such a problem with her son's. "He wanted to come and see where Justin would be living, and I told him if he got a good grade on his science test, he could spend the weekend with us."

His mother turned and smiled as she looked at Jonathan. "See what you're missing, Lance?" she asked softly. "A family, a wife, children. You'd give that up for Justin?"

"All that and more," Lance replied. "I'd give anything just to be with him. He means that much to me."

"Well," his mother sighed, "what can I say to that?"

Lance didn't know. "What are you thinking right now, Mom?" he asked.

She shrugged. "I wish you told me about Justin's moving in on your own," she said.

"How did you find out?" Lance asked, curious.

"Your father told me." She sighed and turned off the water. "What happened between us, Lance? You used to tell me everything. And now you're grown up and I'm wondering if you're too old to confide in your

mother anymore."

"No, Mom," Lance said, placing a hand on her shoulder. "It's not like that, not at all. I just didn't want to make you mad. I can't talk to you about Justin. You don't want to hear it."

The phone in the kitchen rang, and Lance squeezed his mother's shoulder. She smiled at him, a tight smile that made her look sad and older than she really was. "Can you get that for me?" she asked, dipping her hands into the dishwater.

"Sure," Lance replied. He walked over to the phone and picked up the cordless receiver before stepping around the corner into the dining room. Jonathan looked up at him and smiled, and Justin reached out a hand for him. Lance took Justin's hand and let himself be pulled over to the table. "Hello?" he asked into the phone as he sat down on Justin's knee.

"Hi," a young male voice said on the other end of the line. Lance thought it sounded vaguely familiar. "I'm calling for Lance Bass. Is he there?"

"This is he," Lance replied. Justin slipped a hand around Lance's waist and rested his head on his back while Jonathan played with the salt and pepper shakers, running them over the tablecloth as if they were cars. He made little vroom vroom sounds as he drove the shakers around. "Who is this?" Lance asked into the phone, grinning at Jonathan.

"My name is Michael," the man said, excitement creeping into his voice. "You may not remember me, but I signed up with your FreeLance company for an album back a few months ago? Michael Ericson."

Lance thought about the few artists he had signed up with his entertainment company, but he couldn't put a face to the name. Nevertheless, his smile widened and he said, "Oh yes, Michael! Hi! How's the album going?" He felt Justin's arm tighten around his waist slightly, and Lance reached out to pat Justin's hand. Justin laced his fingers with Lance's and sighed against Lance's back.

"It's going fine," Michael replied happily. "I just wanted to thank you for giving me this opportunity. I ran into your sister the other day at the studio and she mentioned you would be in town this weekend so ..." He took a deep breath and hurried on. "So I was wondering if maybe you would let me take you out to dinner, to show my appreciation for all you've done for me."

Uh-oh, Lance thought. He didn't think that would go over well at all. "This weekend?" Lance asked, trying to think of a way to either beg out of the dinner date or take Justin along as well. "I'm kind of busy, and I have friends down, Michael. I don't think it would work out this weekend."

"Who is that?" Justin whispered, and Lance shrugged against him.

On the phone, Michael sighed. "I thought you might be busy. I know it's kind of short notice and all."

"Yeah, it is," Lance agreed. "And I'm leaving tomorrow, so I don't think we could really work it in."

"Work what in?" Justin whispered. Lance could hear the jealousy in his voice and had to admit it turned him on to know that Justin could get so uptight over just what he heard of a conversation between Lance and another guy over the phone. "Lance, tell me."

"In a minute," Lance replied, lowering his voice as Michael suggested, "Well, maybe I can just stop by for a few minutes tonight? If you don't have other plans. Just to say hey, if that's okay with you?"

Lance frowned. "You want to come over?" he asked. He felt Justin shake his head against Lance's back. "Tonight?"

"Why not?" Michael replied, laughing. "I'll bring over take-out, or something. It'll be fun."

"I have friends staying with me," Lance repeated.

"How many?" Michael asked. "I'll bring enough for them, too."

"I don't know ..." Lance sighed. He didn't really feel up to entertaining anyone tonight. In fact, he wanted to go home and take a nap right now, anyway. And then after dinner maybe curl up beside Justin on the couch and watch a movie with Jonathan, and after Jonathan went to bed, maybe finish what he had started this morning, and make slow, passionate love to Justin. With someone other than Jonathan there, they couldn't be as intimate as Lance would've liked. True, they tried not to kiss too much in front of Jonathan -- he was only eight, and made faces when they kissed -- but he didn't mind the cuddling and the touches. "Michael, this is really very sudden," Lance said. "I don't think it's such a good idea right now."

For a moment he thought he had hurt Michael's feelings because the phone was silent. Then Michael sighed. "I just thought ..." he started, and then he said brightly, "Okay, I understand. Maybe next time, what do you say?"

"Next time is fine," Lance replied, relieved. "I'll make time for it when I'm back in town, and we can take you up on your offer."

"We?" Michael asked, and Lance squeezed his eyes shut tightly. Shit, he thought. The pronoun came so easily to him anymore that he didn't think of doing something without Justin.

"We meaning me," Lance said, "and my friend. My roommate. If you come over the house, he'll be there, too." Justin giggled against Lance's back, and Jonathan laughed because Justin was laughing.

"Oh," Michael said in a small voice. "Listen, I'm recording tomorrow morning and I was wondering, if you're not too busy, maybe you can stop on by and hear some of the songs on the new album? If you want? But you said you're leaving tomorrow, aren't you?"

His voice was so hopeful that Lance didn't have the heart to say no. You did want to get into the studio sometime, check out the new artists, he reminded himself. Tomorrow their flight left at one, but a few hours spent at the studio in the morning wouldn't hurt. "Sure," Lance replied. "I'd love to listen in on a few sessions. Our flight doesn't leave until the afternoon."

"Great," Michael gushed, and when Lance hung up the phone, he felt a little guilty for not taking him up on the offer of dinner, as well. "Who was that?" Justin asked the minute Lance turned off the phone.

"Some guy named Michael," Lance said, setting the phone on the table. Jonathan drove the salt shaker up to it and crashed it into the side of the phone. "He's one of the artists with FreeLance Entertainment."

"And he asked you out for a date?" Lance turned to find Justin frowning, his eyes blazing with a possessive air.

Lance grinned. "No, he didn't ask me out on a date," he replied. "He wanted to take me out to dinner as a show of appreciation. Not everyone wants to go out with me."

"Yes, they do," Justin pouted. "Everyone wants you."

"Everyone?" Lance asked playfully. He enjoyed the pout and the sad eyes and the sulking.

"Yes, everyone," Justin said, pouting harder. "They want to take you away from me. Like this boy. He wants you for himself."

"Well," Lance replied loftily, "he can't have me. I'm yours and that's final."

Hugging him tightly, Justin sighed. "If you're mine then why are you going to see him tomorrow?"

"We're going to see him," Lance corrected. He ran his hands around Justin's neck and pulled him close. "I just want to go into the studio, hear what he sounds like. I have to keep up with my investments, don't I?"

"The studio?" Jonathan asked, his eyes growing big. When Lance nodded, Jonathan whooped loudly. "Yes! I've never been in a studio before. Is it cool? Will you guys sing? Can I sing too?"

Justin grinned. "Well, maybe it won't be too bad," he said. Looking up at Lance, he said, "But if he hits on you, I'm kicking his ass."

"Me too," Jonathan said, nodding. "You don't hit on my brother's man. I'll kick your ass."

Kissing Justin's forehead, Lance laughed. "Look what you're teaching him. You two are incorrigible."

All I Ever Wanted
139. Making Up
by NSyncGrrl

Chris wished Joey would knock on his door again so they could talk. He wished Joey hadn't gone to his parents' house, he wished he hadn't gotten so angry at Joey -- it wasn't his fault, not really -- but most of all he wished more than anything else that he had slept in Joey's room last night.

He had parked the car in the garage and hurried into the house, wanting nothing more than to bury his head into Joey's chest and fall asleep. He was tired, and more than a little drunk, and just happy they made it home without incident. It had taken a lot out of him, concentrating on the road in his inebriated state. The adult in him knew it was the wrong thing to do, drive while intoxicated, but the kid in him did somersaults at the thrill of the night and the club and the drive, and the fact that he didn't get stopped by a cop and they made it home alive.

As he passed JC's room, he had glanced through the open door and saw ... what? JC's hand on Joey's arm, and then JC grabbed Joey's shirt and pulled him close. Chris couldn't hear the words they spoke, if any at all, and when JC kissed Joey, a dull anger and surprise rose inside of Chris. He had to clench his fists at his sides to keep from rushing into the room and tearing them apart. His heart twisted in his chest -- Joe? he thought as a sick feeling curled around his soul. You said you didn't want him. So why --

And then Joey pushed JC away, and Chris heard him say no. When JC tried again, Joey pushed him onto the bed, anger in his low voice as he said no again. Chris slipped down the hall and into Joey's room, shaking, upset that JC kissed Joey but ... but Joey said no, he thought, folding his arms across his chest. He waited for Joey to return and reminded himself that Joey had said no.

But when he gave Joey a chance to tell him what happened, what had Joey said? "Nothing." That pissed the hell out of him. He could handle the fact that JC kissed Joey. He could handle that, because Joey said no and left JC and came to him. But then he lied, and Chris just couldn't stand that. He was an upfront person, told it like it was, regardless of who the truth might hurt, and he didn't want to be lied to. He knew why Joey did it -- he was scared of what Chris might think, of what he might say, but if Joey really loved him, there had to be some level of trust between them, something that wasn't built on lies and half-truths and secrets. There was nothing they couldn't talk about, despite their feelings. Joey had to learn that. And until he did, Chris would sleep without him.

Yeah, right, he thought, staring at the ceiling of his old room. After leaving Joey alone, Chris hadn't fallen asleep. He couldn't, so instead he turned on the television and watched infomercials, trying to get the image of JC kissing Joey out of his mind. Two hours later he had spent an obscene amount of money, the phone glued to his ear as he flipped channels and ordered everything the people on TV tried to sell him --

lights that stuck anywhere and lit just by pushing them on, a hammer that held nails in place, a roaster that could cook two whole chickens, hair towels that helped keep hair out of the way as it dried. He didn't know what he was going to do with that shit -- today he didn't even remember what all he bought -- but he thought maybe his Christmas shopping was done already. He had stopped at the NordiTrack commercial, finally turning off the TV and burrowing into the covers of his bed, wishing Joey's arms were holding him close.

He vaguely remembered Joey knocking on his door an hour later, asking to come in, but Chris had just fallen asleep and wasn't ready to forgive him yet. He was too sleepy to talk right then. A few hours later Joey knocked again and said he was leaving for his parents' house. When Chris finally woke up refreshed, it was about three in the afternoon, Joey was gone, JC was gone, and Chris wished Joey would come back so they could talk.

He doesn't know you want to talk to him, he told himself as he got out of bed. So call him and tell him to come home. He'll come. He wants you. He did, Chris knew this. Hadn't he told JC no?

After an invigorating shower, Chris dressed in a pair of baggy jeans, one of his old t-shirts, and a flannel shirt he found in Joey's closet. It was large and comfy, and smelled of Joey's spicy musk. Inhaling the pleasant scent deeply, Chris wrapped the shirt around his body and hugged himself tightly. Call him now, he told himself, and he headed for the phone by Joey's bed. What would he say? He didn't know but anything to get Joey back here.

As he picked up the phone, the doorbell rang.

Frowning, Chris hurried to the front door. He pushed Busta and Korea aside as the two dogs yipped at the door. The doorbell rang again. Chris flung the door open and glared out into the bright afternoon sun. A man about his own age stood on the porch, a large bouquet of flowers in his hands and a plethora of balloons around his head. "Delivery," he intoned, before Chris could say a word. "Mr. Kirkpatrick?"

"That's me," Chris said, taking the flowers. It was a fall arrangement, golden daisies, bronze mums, wildflowers the vibrant hues of autumn leaves -- simply beautiful. "What's this for?"

The delivery man shrugged. "Read the card." Handing Chris the balloons, he pointed at the writing on one of them. In blue letters across the silver mylar was written I'm sorry. "I guess someone's trying to apologize for something they did."

"Guess so," Chris replied. He set the flowers down on the floor and dug into his back pocket, searching for his wallet. As he handed the guy a four dollar tip, he said, "Thanks, man."

"No problem," the delivery man said, pocketing the ones Chris gave him. "If you want my advice? Accept the apology. Anyone who'd buy that arrangement and a dozen balloons has to have some money floating around, you know? You can always use someone like that."

Chris laughed and closed the door. Then he picked the flowers up and

carried them into the living room, where he placed them on the coffee table. He sat down on the couch and reached for the card, stuck among the flowers. Opening the tiny envelope, he pulled out the card and read the unfamiliar handwriting. It just said Love, Joe. As Chris put the card back in the holder, the doorbell rang again.

This time it was a woman, and the bouquet of sunflowers she held in her arms was staggering. "Mr. Kirkpatrick?" she asked around the bright yellow petals.

"Right here," Chris said, taking the flowers from her. "These for me?"

"Yep, sign here." He scrawled his name on the pad she held out and flashed her a winning smile, but she turned back to her van and frowned. "Can you give me a hand? I have a few more in the truck for you."

"How many more?" Chris asked suspiciously, stepping out onto the porch. Busta and Korea ran out around his legs to tussle in the grass. He followed the woman around to the back of her van, where the door stood open.

"All of these," she declared, sweeping a hand at the inside of the van.

"You're shitting me," Chris said softly. Flowers covered the van's interior, carnations and lilies and green plants he didn't even have names for. "What am I supposed to do with all these damn flowers?"

The woman shrugged. "Did someone die or something? I've never had a delivery this large, especially on a Saturday, not unless someone died suddenly."

"No," Chris replied, shaking his head. "No one died. Not that I know of, anyway."

He helped the woman take the flowers inside the house. They set the vases all over the living room, until the only thing not covered in petals and plants was the couch. Handing the woman a twenty as a tip, Chris told her to keep the change. As she left, he called the dogs back into the house and shut the door. "Get out of there," he admonished as Busta began chewing on a tigerlily that drooped a little too close to the floor. Korea yipped at the balloons, catching the ribbons in her teeth and tugging on them. The balloons dipped and swayed as if dancing, and Chris grinned foolishly. Damn, he thought, looking at the sea of flowers. All this to say he's sorry?

Behind him the phone rang, and Chris rushed to answer it. He caught the Fatone's name on the caller ID as he picked up the receiver. "Joe," he said, before the person on the other end could speak. He knew it was Joey; he just knew it. "Get back here now."

"You get the flowers?" Joey asked, and Chris could hear the smile in his voice.

"Hang up and get back here," Chris said again, turning to look at the living room full of flowers. "Now."

"On my way," Joey replied, and the phone went dead in Chris's ear. Chris waited, pacing in the foyer and smacking at the dogs when they

chewed on the flowers. When he heard a car pull into the driveway, he forced himself to stand still. He was still a little mad, he reminded himself. He still had to hear Joey's reasons for lying to him. But he already knew that he forgave Joey, and it made him giddy just to know that he would see him again.

The front door opened as Joey entered the house. He took one look at the flowers and grinned. "Damn," he said, winking at Chris. "Who died?"

"The delivery girl asked the same thing," Chris said. He watched Joey close the door and fought the urge to go to him. You're still mad, he told himself, but it was hard to hang onto the thought. Clearing his throat, he asked, "Do you have something you want to tell me?"

"Yeah," Joey replied. He sighed shakily and ran a hand through his hair. "I do. The couch?" Chris shrugged and led the way. He felt Joey touch his shoulder as he passed, a brief touch that made Chris want to cry. "Nice shirt," Joey remarked. "I've got one just like it."

"Not anymore," Chris said, grinning. The living room smelled like a field in summer during high bloom, floral scents clashing into a miasma that threatened to wreck havoc on Chris's allergies. What the hell was he going to do with all these damn flowers anyway? He shook his head and sat down on the couch.

Joey sat down beside him, turning to face him, and Chris almost gave in then. He couldn't stand to see the pain in Joey's eyes, those dark, compassionate eyes that usually sparkled whenever Joey looked his way. Now they were damp and filled with unshed tears, and Chris wanted to wipe those tears away. "Joe --" he started.

But Joey took his hand and wrapped an arm around Chris's shoulders, and as he slid closer, Chris felt his words dry up in his throat. He studied Joey's intense gaze, the little devilish beard, the bow of Joey's lips. As he watched, Joey raised Chris's hand to those incredibly soft lips and kissed the back of his hand. "Chris, I'm sorry," he whispered, locking Chris into the prison of those eyes. "I'm so sorry. I don't know how to make it up to you."

"This is a good start," Chris whispered back. He couldn't look away from Joey.

Kissing Chris's hand again, Joey said softly, "I lied because I didn't want to hurt you. I didn't want you to hate me. I don't want JC. I want you. I love you."

"Love is not lying," Chris said. "I know it was his fault, and I know you pushed him away, but you lied to me --"

"And I'm sorry," Joey replied. His eyes grew red as he struggled not to cry. "God, Chris, I promise you that I will never lie to you again. I swear it. Please. Just ... please."

Chris looked at him for a long moment, his heart breaking at the struggle he saw in Joey's face. Finally he sighed. "What am I supposed to do with all these flowers?" he whispered.

Joey laughed. "I don't know," he said.

Chris wiped his thumb across one of Joey's eyes, feeling the damp eyelashes curl beneath his touch, and then his arm slipped around Joey's neck, pulling him close. Leaning his forehead against Joey's, Chris said sternly, "Don't lie to me again, Joe. You hear me? Even if you think it'll piss me off to know the truth, don't fucking lie to me again."

"I won't," Joey promised. He frowned as a tear slipped down his cheek. "Please come back to me. Please don't leave me, not now. Please."

"I won't," Chris said, kissing the tip of Joey's nose. He felt Joey's arms envelope him into a warm, strong hug, and Chris hugged Joey tightly. Resting his head on Joey's shoulder, he sighed. "You do realize I now have to kick JC's ass."

Joey laughed again. Burying his head into Chris's shoulder, he didn't reply. In his arms, Chris felt Joey's body shake as he cried silent tears of relief, and Chris held him until the storm passed. "It's okay, Joe," he whispered against Joey's neck.

"Don't make me sleep alone again," Joey mumbled into Chris's shirt. "Please."

Chris held him tighter and swore he wouldn't. As long as Joey didn't lie to him anymore, Chris wouldn't let him sleep without him again.

All I Ever Wanted
140. Just for Emergencies
by NSyncGrrl

Joey wanted to move all of the flowers into his room, but Chris shook his head at the idea. "You want me sneezing all night?" he asked, grinning impishly. "I'll wake up every morning with snot all clogged up in my nose." They lay together on the couch, Chris propped up beside Joey on one elbow, his hand picking at the sweater Joey wore. Joey had his arms around Chris's waist as if he was afraid to let go, afraid he'd lose him again. When Joey had finally realized Chris wasn't angry with him anymore, he let Chris push him back down to the couch, and they cuddled together with the flowers like sentries around them.

"Well," Joey asked, "what are you going to do with all of them then?" He had spent a lot of money on the flowers, but it had been his mother's idea, actually. When he went home, his mom noticed his mood immediately, and after cooking him a huge pot of spaghetti to chase away his blues, asked what was bothering her little Joe-boy. Joey had shrugged and said he did something that made someone he cared about very upset, and his mother said simply, "Flowers." When he looked up at her, a questioning look on his face, Mama Fatone nodded and said it again. "Flowers, honey. That's the only way to ever say you're sorry."

So he had called a florist and had the first bouquet delivered. Then he thought maybe he was more sorry than just one vase, so he called another company and ordered everything he could, knowing he would win Chris over with the sheer volume of flowers. And he had to admit there were a lot of flowers. Maybe they could replant some of them, or give them away as gifts, or something.

Chris walked his fingers down Joey's chest to rub at the trim beard along Joey's chin. His touch was soothing and gentle. Answering Joey's question, Chris replied, "I don't know what I'm going to do with them all. Leave them here for the time being, I guess."

"JC might get mad," Joey pointed out. He thought back to his conversation with JC earlier that morning and wondered how the three of them could ever be friends again.

"Fuck JC," Chris said bitterly. "If he's pissed because they're here, I ain't moving them."

Frowning, Joey asked, "Are you really going to kick his ass when you see him again? It was just a little kiss. And he was drunk."

Chris thought about it, resting his head on Joey's shoulder. His breath tickled along Joey's throat as his finger continued to rub the hair on Joey's chin. "Maybe if he says he's sorry I won't hit him too hard."

"What if he isn't sorry?" Joey pressed.

"Then he deserves what's coming to him," Chris replied. "Hell, Joe. He knows we're together. He was there when I told you guys I broke up with

Dani. And then he pulls some stupid shit like this? After I told him to back off, too."

Joey hugged Chris, his hands rubbing along Chris's side and back. The flannel shirt he wore was soft as suede beneath Joey's touch, and Joey had to admit he kind of liked the way it swallowed up Chris's smaller frame. It made Joey himself feel big and strong and protective, to see the way Chris looked in his shirt. "I just don't want you getting hurt," Joey said. If JC and Chris got into a fight, Joey didn't want to have to be the one to tear them apart. He didn't think he could stand that, seeing two of his friends fight over him like that. Have to remember to tell Lance I'm sorry again, he thought. He's going to get sick of hearing it but I know now what he was going through with me and Justin.

"I can kick his skinny ass any day," Chris said, bristling with anger.

Joey didn't doubt it, but he didn't want to find out, either. Sighing, he held Chris and wondered what he could say to deter a fight. Nothing, really. JC had kissed him, Chris would beat him up, end of story. But Joey didn't want to be around to see it. "Chris?" he asked, hoping to change the subject.

"What?" Chris replied, pinching at one of Joey's nipples through the sweater he wore.

Joey laughed at the sensation. "You're not still mad, are you?" he asked.

"No," Chris said. "I told you that."

"Just wanted to make sure," Joey said. Then, grinning, he added, "Can we have sex now?"

Chris laughed. "We sort of missed out on it last night, didn't we?"

"Yeah," Joey said, remembering the way he had been so damn horny, lying in his bed alone, the leather pants he wore so tight that he thought he would come every time he moved. "I wanted you so bad, too. I couldn't wait to get home and get into you."

Laughing, Chris asked, "Is that your idea of sweet talk?"

Joey shrugged. "Why not? It's the truth. Isn't that what you wanted?"

"Well, here's the truth," Chris said, propping his chin onto Joey's chest so he could look him in the eye. "The truth is that I want you. Right here. Right now." He rolled on top of Joey, his legs straddling Joey's waist, and he looked at him with eyes like smoldering embers. "Fuck me, Joe."

"Now what kind of sweet talk is that?" Joey asked, laughing, but his cock throbbed at the words and he was already hard beneath Chris. "What if JC comes home?"

"Then he'll see what he's missing," Chris replied. "I don't care, Joe. I don't. He didn't care about my feelings last night when he kissed you, did he?"

"No," Joey whispered. And he hadn't cared about them this morning,

either. What had he said? "I hope you're not waiting for me to apologize, because I'm not going to." Joey thought that was a mean thing to say, and he never pegged JC as the petty type. So apparently he didn't care much, either. "We don't have any condoms," Joey pointed out, but the thought of having sex in the living room where anyone could just walk in on them was very arousing, and suddenly Joey didn't want to go to the bedroom, anyway.

Chris giggled. "Don't tell me you're never prepared, Joe. Where's your wallet?"

Wiggling his hips beneath Chris, Joey answered, "Underneath you. Get up."

"I ain't moving," Chris replied. He sat up and ran his hands under Joey's sweater. His fingers danced over Joey's nipples, teasing them erect. "But you're in luck, Joe."

"Why's that?" Joey asked, grabbing onto the waistband of Chris's jeans. He tugged at the button on the jeans, feeling the bulge of Chris's erection beneath his fingers.

"Because I have one in my wallet," Chris replied, grinning, "just for emergencies."

Joey laughed. "Well, break it out, boy," he said, unzipping Chris's jeans. "If this ain't an emergency, I don't know what is." He rubbed his hand against Chris's underwear, watching as Chris closed his eyes in pleasure. Moaning, Chris reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. He fumbled with it for a minute as Joey stroked his hard cock through the thin fabric of his underwear, and then he managed to get it open. As he pulled out the small, wrinkled package, Joey asked, "What kind is it?" He knew Chris had an aversion to plain, skintone condoms.

Chris tossed his wallet onto the coffee table. Holding up the package, he read the tiny printing on it. Joey could see the green condom rolled up inside. "Rainbow Condoms. Made in Colonial Heights, VA."

"That must be the condom capital of the world," Joey replied. "I've seen that city on a lot of them."

Chris thrust into Joey's hand and said, "We should go there one day, tour the condom factory. Maybe they hand out free samples?"

Joey laughed. "How are we going to do this?" he asked, running his hands around Chris's hips beneath the denim of his jeans. "If you don't want to move ..."

"I don't want to move much," Chris amended. He stuck the condom package in his teeth and edged down a little to sit on Joey's thighs. One hand stroked Joey's erection through his jeans as the other unzipped them. Joey moaned Chris's name as Chris eased his pants open. "Push up, Joe," Chris said, and Joey raised his butt off of the couch while Chris tugged down his jeans and underwear in one swift motion. The sudden air on his crotch made his stiff member ache sweetly, and when Chris ran a hand down his hard length, Joey whimpered in delight.

"This won't be fun for you if you don't hurry the hell up," Joey said, biting his lower lip as Chris stroked his dick.

Chris laughed. "Don't jump the gun, Joe. We don't know how long we have until JC comes back."

"I don't care," Joey growled, reaching for him, but Chris slid back further on his legs, beyond arm's length. "Chris, don't make me beg."

"That might be fun," Chris said, mirth twinkling in his chocolate eyes. Joey sighed dramatically, falling back to the couch, and Chris laughed. "Okay, okay," he conceded. "Not right now. Maybe later, though?"

"Maybe," Joey said, sighing. "Just please, Chris? Can we get on with this?"

Chris rose up on his knees and tugged his pants and underwear down. Then, sitting back on Joey's legs, he pulled them down past his knees. "This will be a little awkward," he said, his legs stretched out on either side of Joey.

"Makes it interesting," Joey replied, inhaling sharply when Chris's jeans brushed along his dick as he scooted up onto Joey's thighs.

Working quickly, Chris tore open the condom and rolled it down onto Joey's thick cock. Then, his hands behind him for support, Chris raised himself up until he was above Joey's groin. "Help me out here, babe," he said, and Joey cupped Chris's buttocks in his hands, pulling them apart gently as he eased inside. Chris leaned his head back, his neck smooth and pale, as he sat down, Joey's dick sliding into him easily. "Jesus," Chris whispered as Joey began to thrust into him slowly.

"Come here," Joey said, pulling on Chris's arms to sit up slightly. Chris leaned forward, his knees raised on either side of Joey's body, and Joey pulled at Chris's pants that kept them apart. When he got one leg free of the confining denim, Chris kicked it away, and then Joey embraced Chris, his arms cradling Chris's back as he sat up, thrusting into him. Between them, Chris's underwear stretched as Chris crossed his legs around Joey's waist. Joey's lips covered Chris's, kissing greedily, as he pulled Chris closer, thrusting deeper into him.

A small tearing sound punctuated their moans and gasps, and the resistance between them fell away as Chris's underwear tore down the seam. Chris hugged Joey, gasping with each thrust of Joey's hips that drove him deeper inside. Running one hand between them, Joey stroked Chris's hard erection, and Chris grabbed fistfuls of Joey's sweater, moving his hips in a steady rhythm that Joey matched. When he came in Joey's hand, Chris pushed Joey back to the couch and kissed him hungrily, his tongue licking down Joey's throat as Joey's own orgasm tore through him. For a moment he pushed into Chris, not wanting the hot, wet pressure on his aching cock to go away.

Then Chris kissed his lips tenderly, and Joey relaxed in Chris's arms. "Oh God," Joey gasped, trying to catch his breath. Chris brushed the sweaty hair from Joey's brow and grinned down at him. "I love you, Chris. I do. I swear I do."

"I believe you," Chris said, wiggling his butt, and Joey was surprised to find himself growing hard all over again. "I love you too, Joe. You're such a pretty boy. And you're mine. All mine. I'll beat JC away with a stick if I have to."

Joey kissed Chris's neck, soft, lazy kisses as their bodies cooled. "You think I'm pretty?" he breathed. No one had ever called him pretty before.

"Hmm," Chris murmured, resting his head beside Joey's. "I didn't thank you for the flowers."

"You just did," Joey replied. Laughing, he added, "If this is the way you say thanks, I'm buying you flowers every damn day."

All I Ever Wanted
141. Twenty Minutes
by NSyncGrrl

After dinner, Lance popped in a Pokémon videotape that Jonathan wanted to watch and settled down on the couch, Justin cuddled up beside him. Jonathan sat on the floor in front of the TV, his little kitten Poofu curled into his lap, too close to the screen for his own good but Lance wasn't about to say anything. As the theme music for the cartoon filled their living room, Justin snaked his arms around Lance's waist and rested his head against Lance's chest. Lance draped an arm over Justin and hugged him close, his mind hundreds of miles away. He wondered what was going on back at the house with their three friends. He wanted to call Joey and find out if things were okay between him and Chris. He wanted to know how JC was taking this whole thing. But he didn't want to argue with Justin again, so he didn't suggest calling. He'd find out soon enough. Tomorrow they'd be back, and he prayed everything would work itself out before then.

"What's on your mind?" Justin whispered, snuggling closer to Lance.

"Not much," Lance said, shrugging. He smiled and kissed Justin's forehead. "Just wondering how the others are doing."

Justin nodded but didn't say anything, and Lance wanted to kiss him again, just because he didn't want to pursue a fight, either. Sometimes Justin could be so sweet, Lance wanted to lick him all over like a lollipop. He grinned at the thought, and Justin glanced up suspiciously. "What are you thinking now?" he asked warily.

"I was thinking you're sweet," Lance replied. "Like a lollipop." He licked his upper lip in a suggestive manner.

Justin's eyes widened. "Damn," he said softly, and from in front of the TV Jonathan said, "I'm telling Mom."

Lance laughed. "Tell her he's being bad," he said, the frown creasing Justin's brow making him laugh harder.

Jonathan nodded but didn't turn around from the TV. "I will. He's said a lot of bad words today. She's going to wash your mouth out with soap."

"No, she won't," Justin replied, rolling his eyes, but Jonathan glanced back at him with a stern expression that said otherwise.

When he turned back towards the TV, Jonathan said, "You guys get a room."

"What!" Lance cried, laughing again. He grabbed a pillow from the end of the couch and pegged it at the back of Jonathan's head. Jonathan giggled and rubbed his hair as the pillow fell away, and then Poofu jumped on the pillow, tiny claws attacking the soft fabric. "Don't let her scratch that up," Lance said quickly.

"Don't scratch that up, Poofu," Jonathan admonished, picking the kitten up and placing her back on his lap. Lance could see a small paw reach out, stretching for the pillow's tassel, but it was out of reach.

"Did you call the airline?" Lance asked, turning to Justin. They needed to make sure they could take Poofu back with them to Florida. Mrs. Harless will love you for this, Lance thought. Jonathan still hadn't called to tell her he was bringing home a stray kitten.

Justin shook his head. "I forgot," he admitted. "I'll do it in the morning. First thing." He smiled wickedly. "Before we meet this new boyfriend of yours."

"Don't even go there," Lance warned. After his conversation with Michael earlier, Lance thought maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all, going down to the studio to hear his session. He was glad Justin would be there. Something about the way Michael had talked on the phone, so eager, so forward, had struck a wrong chord with Lance. You're being silly, he told himself, but he still couldn't shake the slimy feeling he had in his mind when he thought of the silky way Michael asked to take him out to dinner. He's just anxious to meet the man who's funding his dream. That's it. Still, Lance made a mental note to talk to Stacy about who she gave his schedule to in the future.

"You're his boyfriend," Jonathan reminded them, as if Justin could forget. "This other boy's just got to step off, that's it."

Lance giggled as Justin glanced up at him, a slow smile on his face. "You gonna tell him to step, Jon?" Justin asked, winking at Lance.

"Uh-huh," Jonathan said, nodding vigorously. "I'll be like dude, step off. Leave Lance alone. Don't make me kick your butt."

Justin collapsed against Lance's chest in a fit of laughter. "That'll scare him away," he said between giggles.

Lance slapped at Justin. "Leave him alone," he whispered. He thought it was cute that Jonathan wanted to stand up for him. He couldn't wait to see what happened tomorrow with the dynamic duo of Justin and Jonathan protecting him.

Wiping tears from his eyes, Justin sat up as Jonathan chuckled the pillow at him. "Shut up, Justin," he said, pouting. "I can't hear the TV."

Justin looked at Lance, that slight smile still on his lips, and Lance was surprised to see lust suddenly smolder in his sapphire eyes. "Let's go upstairs," Justin mouthed, nodding his head in the direction of the stairs.

"Now?" Lance asked, pointing at Jonathan. As Justin nodded, that smile widening into a sexy grin, Lance frowned. "Justin --"

"Jon," Justin said, standing up, "we're going to bed now." He tugged on Lance's hand, hauling him to his feet.

Jonathan looked up at them. "Now?" he asked, frowning. "It's not that late yet. It's only ten."

"You can stay up," Justin replied, and Jonathan's wrinkled brow

smoothed out. "Just remember to turn off the TV when you go to bed."

"Okay," Jonathan said, petting Poofu in his lap as he turned his attention back to the cartoon. "Night."

"Goodnight." Justin leaned down and kissed the top of his brother's head. When he stood up, Jonathan looked up at Lance and pointed to his hair.

Grinning, Lance leaned down and kissed his head, too. "Goodnight, Jon," he said, as Justin squeezed his hand, pulling him gently towards the stairs. "Your brother is overly eager," he added, laughing.

"My brother is horny," Jonathan said, laughing at the shocked expression on Justin's face. "I told you guys not to do that stuff down here."

"Well, we're not," Justin said sullenly. He led Lance upstairs, taking care to lock the bedroom door behind them. Lance clicked on a lamp beside the bed, casting shadows into the corners of the room. "Jeez," he said, pulling off his shirt, "the nerve of that kid."

Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's waist, the feel of cool, bare skin beneath his hands exciting. As Justin tossed his shirt aside, Lance kissed his neck tenderly, his lips warm and soft behind Justin's ear. Justin crossed his arms over Lance's, taking his hands and entwining their fingers together. As Lance's lips closed over his ear, Justin moaned and leaned back against Lance. "Lance," he whispered, breathless in his lover's arms.

Lance released Justin's hands and unzipped Justin's jeans slowly, one hand slipping into them as the other eased the zipper down. With just a few strokes, Justin was hard in his hand, aching for him. Pushing the jeans down to the floor, Lance hugged Justin close as he kissed along Justin's shoulders, sucking gently. Justin let his head droop forward as Lance's tongue licked along the back of his neck, his teeth nipping playfully here and there. His hands closed around Justin's swollen erection, rubbing insistently at the base of his shaft, kneading his balls with soft fingers, and Justin sighed. "Lance, the bed, please," he breathed, turning in Lance's arms.

Stepping backwards, Lance pulled Justin towards the bed, sitting down on the edge when the back of his knees bumped into it. Justin stood in front of him, his muscular chest golden in the lamp light, so beautiful, so gorgeous, a vision in flesh. "Justin," Lance whispered, pulling him down into a hungry kiss. "Can I just tell you how beautiful you are?"

"Please," Justin replied, pushing Lance back onto the bed. His fingers undid the buttons on Lance's shirt with expert ease, and once the last button was free, he pushed the shirt to the bed, exposing Lance's chest. As Lance tried to shrug out of the shirt, Justin's lips found his nipples, licking around them slowly, teasingly, his hands holding Lance to the bed where they held his shirt open. Lance shuddered beneath Justin's demanding touch, his tongue massaging the tender buds on his chest into hard diamonds. When his teeth closed over one of them oh so tenderly, Lance arched beneath him and felt his own cock throb in his jeans as he moaned his lover's name. He caught Justin's head as he drifted lower

down Lance's body and pulled him closer, his lips seeking Justin's own. As their bodies pressed together, their tongues tasting each other, their lips urgent, Justin leaned onto Lance, his nipples brushing against Lance's, sending flares of passion through both of them. Justin's hand found the waistband of Lance's jeans, unzipping them as he rubbed Lance's groin anxiously.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door. "Fuck," Justin muttered into Lance's neck. Raising his voice, he called, "Jon, we're busy here."

"You said you were going to bed," Jonathan replied, and Lance laughed beneath Justin. "He's got a point there," he whispered.

"Don't encourage him," Justin said. Reluctantly he pushed himself off of the bed and stepped back into his jeans. Tugging the zipper up, his erection painful in his boxers, he looked at Lance lying spread eagle on the bed, his chest bare, his zipper open to expose the white bulge of his underwear where his own erection throbbed, and Justin sighed. "This better be good," he mumbled, unlocking the door. He opened it just slightly and peeked out to find his brother standing on the other side, the kitten in his arms. "Jon, please? We're in the middle of something."

"I want to sleep in here with you tonight," Jonathan said.

"That's not such a good --" Justin started, but behind him Lance called out, "That's fine."

Turning, Justin frowned at Lance. "Baby," he said, sighing.

Lance sat up and shrugged. "Oh, let him," he said, smiling. "We're not going to sleep right yet, though, Jon. Can you give us a few minutes alone first?"

"Sure," Jonathan said, grinning. "Fifteen minutes okay?"

"Twenty," Justin bartered, turning back to his brother. "Watch the rest of your tape and then come back up, how's that sound?"

Jonathan twisted his mouth to one side as he thought about it. Then he held the kitten up and said, "You forgot to kiss Poofu goodnight, too."

Sighing, Justin leaned down and brushed his lips against the soft fur on top of the kitten's head. "Twenty minutes," he repeated. "When the hands are on the ten and the four, okay?"

Jonathan rolled his eyes. "That's more than twenty minutes," he said, laughing. "It's not quite ten yet."

"Please?" Justin begged, hoping his sad eyes and full pout would win his brother over. His cock ached fiercely and he just wanted to crawl back into the bed beside Lance and hold him forever. "Pretty please with a cherry on top?"

"Okay," Jonathan said, sighing dramatically. Justin flashed him a winning smile and locked the door. "Twenty minutes," his brother called through the closed door. "I'm coming back up then whether you're ready or not."

Quickly, Justin slipped out of his jeans, this time pulling his boxers off as well. He returned to the bed, easing Lance back against the sheets as he leaned down over him. "Twenty minutes," he whispered. "Not quite as long as I would've liked, but we can manage." He leaned closer, his lips seeking Lance's.

But Lance twisted his face away. "Eww!" he cried, laughing. "You kissed the cat, Justin."

Justin sighed. "Fuck," he muttered, throwing himself down on the bed beside Lance. He flopped back against the pillows and sighed. Pouting, he said, "I guess we might as well call him back now, huh? If you're going to be like that."

"Justin, baby, I'm just kidding," Lance said softly, grinning at him. "You get all riled up too easily." To emphasize his point, Lance grabbed Justin's hard dick in one hand and squeezed gently. Justin thrust into his hand and closed his eyes, moaning. Leaning over him, Lance ran a soft finger across Justin's lips.

"Rubbing away the cat germs?" Justin asked, grinning. In reply Lance kissed him tenderly, his lips parting Justin's as his tongue slipped inside the sweet warmth of his mouth. His hand massaged Justin's erection until it was solid and ready, and then Lance kissed his way down Justin's chin, his lips eagerly picking at Justin's nipples, his tongue tracing a path down his chest, over his stomach, around his abdomen, until he reached Justin's thick cock. Holding the length out fully with his hand, Lance kissed his way down to the swollen tip, his soft lips and hot, wet tongue arousing Justin until all his thoughts were jumbled colors of sensation and light. With the gentlest of touches, Lance licked the tip of Justin's penis, trailing around and around like the swirl in a lollipop, before he took Justin's member into his mouth. Justin arched his back as he thrust into Lance's mouth, his hands fisting in the sheets on either side of him as Lance sucked hungrily. "Lance," Justin moaned, reaching for his lover. "Lance, stop, please stop, I want ... I want, please oh please oh please."

Easing Justin's dick out of his mouth, Lance asked, "What do you want, baby?"

"You," Justin replied. "We only have twenty minutes."

"More like fifteen now," Lance replied, leaning back as he slipped out of his jeans and underwear. His butt was on the edge of the bed, and when he tried to kick his jeans off completely, he felt himself sliding backwards. "Whoa," he cried, pinwheeling his arms in an effort not to fall off the bed.

Justin caught one of his upper arms in both hands and pulled him back onto the bed. "Where are you going?" he asked, grinning as he pushed Lance's jeans onto the floor. Lance smiled at him and laid down on the bed, legs open wide in an invitation Justin couldn't refuse. Kneeling between his knees, Justin guided his stiff cock, still wet with Lance's saliva, into his lover. Lance moaned as Justin eased inside of him, grabbing Justin's curls in his fists as Justin thrust into him, gently at first, and then with increasing rhythm. One hand stroked Lance's hard erection while the other cupped Lance's face, his thumb in Lance's mouth. Lance sucked on it, biting as hard as he dared when Justin's tongue licked over

one swollen nipple. Moving to meet Justin's thrusts, Lance felt pleasure cascade over him, Justin's dick inside, his lips and tongue insistent on Lance's aroused nipple, his hand soft against Lance's cheek while the other was hard and demanding on Lance's own cock. After several long, intense moments, Lance came in Justin's hand. When Justin came minutes later, he kissed Lance tenderly, his lips claiming Lance for his own as their bodies meshed together perfectly.

"Jeez," Justin murmured, nuzzling Lance's neck. "How many more minutes do we have?"

"Don't know," Lance replied, breathless. "You take a shower. I'll change the sheets and join you in a minute."

"We might not have a minute," Justin pointed out. "Let's just stay here until he comes back."

But as much as Lance wanted to do just that, he didn't want Jonathan to find them like this, even if the door was locked. So he pushed Justin up and promised, "When we get back to Florida, we can cuddle all night long without anyone interrupting us."

"Except for the others," Justin said, grinning. He kissed Lance once more, his lips lingering on Lance's, and then he stood up. Yanking the sheet off of the bed, he wrapped it around his waist. He opened the door and yelled downstairs, "How much longer, Jon?"

"Eight minutes," came the reply. "You guys hurry it up! Poofu's getting sleepy."

Lance groaned. "That cat is not sleeping with us," he said, tearing off the rest of the bedsheets, but Justin's laughter said otherwise.

All I Ever Wanted
142. Catch Me
Part 1 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

The words echoed through JC's head all day long. "I can't give you what you want," Joey had said. "I'm sorry." Yeah, right, JC thought bitterly. He had spent all afternoon at the studio, losing himself in his music, and for those few hours he didn't think about Joey and his damn kisses, or Chris and the hurt he could just imagine on his friend's face. It had been just him and the songs and the notes, drifting over his soul, carrying him away to a place where he wasn't lonely because he had his music and his friends and that was all he wanted, really it was.

But it was a Saturday, and the studio executive had family visiting, so she told JC to pack it up and leave a little after seven, and as JC crossed the parking lot to his car, it all came crashing back around him. The pain in Joey's eyes. The taste of Joey's tongue, intoxicating and alcoholic and so sweet, JC ached just thinking about it. The fact that Joey was pissed at him, Chris was pissed -- hell, even Justin was probably pissed, come to think of it, and Lance, too. He didn't want to go back to the house, not now, with Chris moping in his room, Joey hiding away, no one home to talk to but the stupid dogs, and they didn't like him all that much anyway. Who could blame them, really? Who the hell was he kidding? You're just a lonely dickhead, he told himself, sliding behind the wheel of his car. When he started the engine, the radio played low, a sad song he didn't recognize. "I think I've already lost you. I think you're already gone. I think I'm finally scared now --" JC turned off the radio and sighed. He didn't know where to go.

So he stopped at 7-11 and picked up a six pack of Mike's Hard Lemonade, checking the alcohol content to make sure it would do the job. Hell, he thought grimly, enough wine coolers will do the job. You can't hold your liquor, Josh, who are you kidding? He drove around the city, keeping to the slums and poor sections, drinking the bitter lemonade and wondering what it was that kept him apart from the people he drove by on the streets, the hookers, the thugs, the bums. Hooded eyes watched his expensive car glide by with oily expressions and lust written plainly across scarred faces. JC thought maybe he should be frightened -- it was getting dark out, the sun setting, and he only had a quarter of a tank of gas left, he was on his third bottle of the lemonade that tasted vaguely like his mother's cooking sherry, and he kept glancing in the rearview mirror, hoping against hope that one time he'd look back and find the steely blue lights of a police car shining back. But even though he kept his foot on the accelerator, no flashing lights appeared. Even the cops didn't like him tonight.

Maybe it was the alcohol, or maybe it was just the fact that it was late and the car so quiet without the radio on, and JC wasn't used to the silence that let his own inner music bleed through. But despite the alcohol, JC couldn't seem to chase away the thoughts crowding his head. He couldn't forget the way he had told Joey he wasn't sorry. He wasn't. He wanted to be, wanted to beg for Joey's forgiveness, but he just

couldn't. He couldn't. And maybe Joey was right, when he said it wasn't him JC wanted. JC could admit that, and he nodded in the car, agreeing that he could admit it. Fuck, maybe it wasn't Joey at all. Maybe it was the wildness he sensed in Joey, the fun and laughter and carefree soul he saw behind Joey's eyes that excited JC, because truth be told? He wasn't like that. He had always envied people who lived life fully, who weren't afraid to just let go and fall into whatever it was God had planned for them.

And JC ... well, he had always hung back, hadn't he? Clung to whatever he could find, something solid like his music or sleep, hiding behind the calmness he projected to the world. And why was that, exactly? Because he was afraid. Afraid of letting go, of being free, of experiencing everything life held in store for him. He was afraid of falling.

So you fall in love with Joey, he told himself, because he's not afraid. You want him to teach you how to let go. How to just be yourself and live your own life, without the training wheels. You want him to take your hand and hold onto you while you fall. Because you're scared and you don't want to fall alone.

Well, he wasn't in love with Joey. JC liked him, to be sure. He dreamed of his kisses and wondered how it felt to hold him in the night, but that wasn't love. JC had only been in love once before, and it wasn't this. This was infatuation, nothing more. He wanted Joey to show him what it was he was missing in his life, what else there was out there beyond his music and his friends. He wanted to fall in love, maybe not with Joey, but with someone. Someone who could help him overcome his fears, someone who would catch him when he fell.

Was that asking too much? He stepped on the gas and sped through a stop light as it turned red, watching the police car stopped in the lane beside him at the intersection, but the cop didn't take the bait. Angry, JC reached for another bottle, only to find that they were all empty now. All six, gone. And the pain still ached in his chest. Fuck this, he thought, speeding through the now empty streets. What time was it anyway? How long had he been driving? A glance at his gas gauge showed the needle dangerously close to E, and JC laughed. Fuck this shit, all of it.

He slowed down as he approached the main strip, busy this time of the evening. Kids milled around the street, hanging outside of clubs and grouping into ragtag gangs, looking for excitement, adventure, something different from the rest of their lives. JC thought maybe that's what he was looking for, too, and he pulled into the first parking space he found, stumbling a bit as he got out of the car. Looking around, he thought he remembered this area from the night before -- wasn't that the dive Joey took him to last night? He thought maybe it was, and he threw himself across the street, heading for the loud music and bright lights of the club, hoping to drown inside.

The place was crowded, impossibly so. JC squeezed through the mass of bustling bodies, intent on the bar. Another drink or two wouldn't hurt, something to chase away these blues, that was all. Leaning on the counter, he motioned the bartender over and ordered the hardest drink they had, straight up. The bartender frowned at him, but JC flashed his ID and a glass of strong amber liquid appeared by his hand. JC gulped it down, fire pouring down his throat and curling into his stomach like a dragon, and JC blinked the tears out of his eyes. Looking around the club,

he wondered who would talk to someone like him on a night like tonight.

"Well, well, well," someone said in his ear, malice dripping like honey from the words. "If it isn't Mr. NSync."

JC felt a hot hand clamp onto his shoulder, and he turned as the person stepped around to stand in front of him. He forced his eyes to focus on ... Eminem? JC remembered that bleached hair, the pale skin, those dark eyes like daggers boring into him. "Hey," he said nervously, surprised to hear the slur in his voice. On his shoulder, Eminem's hand burned through his jacket, and JC thought he would go up in flames if he didn't stop touching him soon.

"Shazam, right?" Eminem asked, grinning wickedly, and JC wondered what he had been drinking. "Where's that other friend of yours? Joey? He around here somewhere?" Eminem craned his neck, trying to see over the crowds.

JC shook his head. "No," he whispered.

"What?" Eminem asked, turning that intense gaze on him again. "Where the hell is he?"

"Home?" JC offered, not quite sure himself. "He's not here."

Narrowing his eyes, Eminem asked, "You here alone?" JC nodded. "Well, shit," Eminem said, taking a long swallow of his own drink, and JC noticed that his eyes were black, black, so incredibly black. There was no blue in them, not at all. JC wondered if there was something more than alcohol coursing through Eminem's veins right now. "Where's that fuck buddy of his? What's his name?"

"Chris?" JC asked, his throat closing up with sudden fear.

"Yeah," Eminem said, nodding. "Where's he at?"

"Home," JC said again, more sure this time.

Eminem snorted into his drink. "You guys fight or something? Everything not all glitter and gold in Boyband Land tonight?"

"Shut up," JC growled, turning towards the bar. He didn't want to hear this, not now. As he raised his glass to drink, Eminem knocked it out of his hand. It shattered on the bar, splashing cold alcohol into JC's lap.

"Don't fucking tell me to shut up," Eminem warned, his eyes blazing. "Fuck you. I was just trying to be nice to your sorry ass."

"Yeah, right," JC muttered, using a few nearby napkins to mop at the mess on his pants.

Hands like claws grabbed his collar, pushing him out of the seat. The people beside him moved away as Eminem shoved him down to the barstools, leaning over him with a hellish leer twisting his lips, his eyes livid and shiny. "What the fuck did you just say?" he demanded, his voice dangerously low.

JC felt his heart hammer in his chest and wished he had gone home

after all. He closed his eyes and gulped reflexively, praying that whatever happened was quick and not as painful as he feared. "Nothing," he mumbled. He wondered why no one said anything to this angry man pinning him down. Did no one really care what happened to him tonight? You're just another face in the crowd here, he reminded himself. They don't know you. They aren't going to jump to your defense because to them, you're nobody. Nobody at all.

Eminem shook him slightly. "You looking for a fight, Shazam? Because I am. Fuck. I am so ready to just kick someone's ass tonight. Is it going to be yours?"

"No," JC whispered. Damn, he thought, his mind reeling. At least with Chris you know he wouldn't kill you. He'd just beat you up. But you had to come here, didn't you? You had to come here, and now you won't just get your ass kicked, you'll probably get killed, as well. And then this bastard will sing about it in his next album, about how it felt to beat you up in a nameless club and leave you bleeding on the sidewalk ... JC let his mind run with the image. It was easier than meeting that black, hateful gaze staring into his soul.

Suddenly JC saw a hand appear on Eminem's shoulder, the black nails and tattooed knuckles a stark contrast on light skin. "Back off, man," a soft voice said, slicing through the noise of the club like a knife. JC looked past Eminem to see someone he thought he should know -- a white tank top, a golden cross as large as anything Justin would wear, baggy jeans that hung loosely around a narrow waist. Dark tattoos etched into tanned arms, a long, lean, sinewy body humming with strength. But JC couldn't see the face and couldn't place the rest of it. "Who --" he whispered.

And then Eminem released him, shrugging the hand off his shoulder. "Mind your own fucking business, asshole," he roared as JC struggled to sit up. The barstool fell out from beneath him, dumping him to the floor, hard enough to knock the wind out of him. He felt something cold and wet seep into the butt of his jeans as he struggled to breathe, choking for air, as above him Eminem was pushed back against the bar.

"Leave him alone," that soft voice said again, deceptive as its owner held Eminem at bay. "What the hell'd he do to you?"

"Fuck you," Eminem growled, launching himself at the stranger. They struggled briefly, two titans clashing in the midst of chaos, and then a gunshot shattered the night. A hush fell over the club, and despite the music blaring at top volume, everything seemed unreal and unnaturally still and oh so quiet.

JC felt paint chips fall into his hair from the ceiling, and the bartender leveled a pistol over the bar, pointed at the two men fighting. "Take it outside, boys," the bartender drawled. "Kill yourselves for all I care, but not in here. Not tonight."

Glaring at the stranger, Eminem shrugged out of his grip and stalked away. As he passed JC, one foot lashed out and caught JC in the hip. "Fuck all you faggot boybands," he muttered, and then he was gone.

Slowly the people started to talk amongst themselves again, leaving a wide berth around JC and the stranger kind enough to step into his fight.

As the volume of the club rose to a level higher than before, if that was possible, JC felt strong hands grip under his arms and haul him to his feet. "You okay, man?" that soft voice asked again, and JC gasped for breath. Pointing at his chest, he tried to breathe, but he couldn't draw air into his lungs. He turned and staggered back against the bar as he recognized his savior. A wool ski hat was tugged down over his head, dark glasses hid his eyes, but that devilish goatee was everywhere right now, wasn't it? Every Burger King commercial, every bag, every cup ... "Are you okay?" AJ McLean asked again, concern turning his thin lips down into a tight frown.

"I can't breathe," JC gasped, and then AJ was leading him outside, away from the noise and the club, out into the night.

All I Ever Wanted
142. Catch Me
Part 2 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Outside the night air cooled JC's flushed face, and with AJ's hand warm and comforting on his shoulder, JC managed to gulp in an anxious breath. AJ steered him away from the club, leaving the crowds behind. He watched JC closely as JC stumbled to a stop and leaned against a nearby wall, the brick crumbly and cold beneath his hand. JC closed his eyes and rested his head against the wall, and he wished the world would stop spinning long enough for him to get off the ride. "JC, isn't it?" AJ asked in that damnably soft voice of his. JC dared to nod, swallowing the bile that rose in the back of his throat. Please, he prayed, please don't let me be sick again. Jesus Christ, I swear I'll never drink again just please. AJ held out the hand not supporting JC. "I'm AJ. From the Backstreet Boys. But I guess you already knew that."

JC shook the offered hand weakly, gripping onto it more for support than welcome. "Hey," he whispered. "Thanks for the help back there."

A wicked grin spread across AJ's face, flashing incredibly white teeth that reminded JC of the hyenas in *The Lion King*. "You have a death wish or something, man?" he asked, laughter curling the edge of his words like a flame curls paper. "Picking a fight with a guy like that? Do you even know who the hell that was?"

"Eminem," JC replied, nodding again. His voice was weak, breathless. "We met last night."

"And you still fucked with him?" AJ asked, impressed. Then he frowned, and JC saw his own pasty reflection in AJ's dark glasses. His skin was white, his eyes dark hollows in his head, his cheeks gaunt with high spots of color that looked like rouge. "You okay?" AJ asked.

JC shook his head. He wasn't okay. He felt like shit, his pants were wet, his whole body was cold and achy and everything hurt, everything, from his heart to his head to his lungs. Everything. "You with anyone?" AJ asked. JC shook his head again. "Where are your friends?"

"What friends?" JC countered, the bitterness rising in him again. He shrugged AJ's hand off of his shoulder and pushed away from the wall, but his knees buckled beneath him and AJ caught him easily.

Hauling him to his feet, AJ held his arm securely, the grip an iron band forcing JC to stand. "Don't give me that shit," AJ replied. "You've got friends. The rest of your group. Where are they?"

"I don't know," JC mumbled. He blinked away sudden tears and felt his mouth curve into an ignoble pout. "Fuck. Justin and Lance are out of town. Joey and Chris --" He ran a hand down his face. What was he babbling about, out here where anyone could overhear him? And to this man? He looked at AJ, wondering if the concern he saw on that devilishly

handsome face wasn't masking something else, something vile, something JC couldn't begin to comprehend. "They're at the house," he muttered, dropping his gaze to the concrete beneath their feet.

"You want me to give you a lift?" AJ asked gently.

JC shook his head. "I'm not going home," he said, sighing. "I can't."

"Why not?" When JC didn't answer, AJ shrugged and said, "Well, that's up to you, man. Whatever you want to do. You want me to drop you off someplace else? Where are you staying tonight?"

"Nowhere," JC admitted. "I don't know. I can sleep in my car." He pointed to his car across the street.

For a long moment AJ just stared at him. Then he asked quietly, "Are things that bad?"

JC felt his heart break at that incredibly soft voice. So what if this man was a member of a band the media touted as their rival? So what if his tattoos and pierced lip and thuggish appearance scared the shit out of JC? It was that voice, so gentle, so unassuming, that broke through everything that JC had walled up inside. He covered his eyes with his hands and sobbed into them, sinking down into a tight ball of pain and bitterness and angst. "Oh fuck," he whispered. "You just wouldn't know. You just wouldn't."

AJ squatted down beside him and ran an arm around JC's shoulders. "Try me," he said. "You might be surprised."

"I ... I can't," JC whispered. He felt hot tears sting his eyes, and he buried his face into the crook of his arm, away from AJ. Along his back AJ's hand rubbed softly, soothingly.

AJ sighed. "Well, if you're not going home," he ventured, "and you don't have any other plans, why don't you crash at my place for the night?" JC blinked rapidly, surprised, but didn't look at him. AJ continued. "At least it's warm, and the bed is more comfortable than the back seat of your car, I'm sure. As long as you don't mind dogs --"

"I don't," JC whispered. He wiped at his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket and sighed. Turning towards AJ, he asked, "You sure?"

"Sure I'm sure," AJ said, that grin back again. Something in that easy grin hinted at a wildness JC wanted to claim as his own, and even though he knew Joey would worry about him, he dried his eyes and let AJ help him to his feet.

As he followed AJ down the street, heading for the other musician's black Mercedes Benz, JC asked tentatively, "You don't mind leaving now?" When AJ glanced at him, JC felt his cheeks ignite, and he ducked his head to hide the blush. "I mean," he stammered, searching for the words, "you're not leaving someone behind? I don't want to ruin your evening."

AJ laughed, a haunting, reckless sound. "Don't worry," he said, unlocking the door on the passenger side of his car. He held the door open as JC climbed inside. Leaning on the door, AJ watched JC buckle the seatbelt and sighed. "My evening was already fucked way before you

showed up." He closed the door.

The warm, thick scent of cologne and smoke that permeated the air filled JC's senses, turning the inside of the car into a cocoon. JC felt the pounding in his head lessen as he leaned back against the headrest, and everything outside was distant, muted, so far away. JC watched AJ walk around the front of the car, glancing down the empty street before opening the driver's side door. Reaching into the back seat, AJ retrieved a worn flannel shirt and slipped it on, covering his tattooed arms. He flashed that grin at JC again as he slid into the driver's seat and started the car. JC smiled back and asked, "Rough night?"

AJ laughed again. Pulling out into the sparse traffic, he shook his head, still grinning. "When's the last time you remember being happy?" he asked, surprising JC. "Truly, genuinely happy. Can you remember it?"

Thinking back over the past few weeks, JC tried to remember the last time he felt good. Not upset, not alone, not bitter. Before the Video Music Awards, he was sure, but when, exactly? "I don't know," he whispered. "I don't think ... I just don't know."

"Me either," AJ admitted. He turned on the radio and low music filled the car around them. As he drove, he spoke softly, his voice weaving through the music like a faint backbeat. "We may have more in common than you might think, JC. At least you have the other guys in your group, you know? I don't really know much about them but I get the impression you're close." He paused, waiting for JC to comment.

JC sighed. "I thought we were," he said softly, "but with the way things are going now, I'm not so sure anymore."

"We're not like that," AJ said, the grin slipping away as a sadness seemed to settle over him. "You know where I was today?"

"No," JC whispered. "Where?"

"At home," AJ replied. "Alone." His voice took on a sour note JC recognized all too well. He wanted to ask AJ why he was alone, why his friends weren't around, but how could he do that? He barely knew this man. How would he ask? What would he say? Before he could figure it out, though, AJ continued. "I remember when we were first starting out. Everything was so fun, so new. The five of us ruled the world, and no one could keep us down, you know?"

JC nodded. He remembered that feeling oh so well. The exhilaration, the thrill, as if they were unstoppable, invincible, forever. And what had happened since then? JC still felt the rush of performing, he still thanked God for the music and the fans. But he stared out at the darkness of the night passing by them and sighed. "I know exactly what you mean," he replied. "It's still fun, but some days I wake up and wonder why bother?"

"I don't know," AJ murmured. They sat in silence for a few moments, each lost in their own thoughts, when AJ asked, "Can I ask you something?"

Shrugging, JC said, "Sure."

"How'd you end up at the club?" AJ turned to look at him, the street lights streaking across his dark glasses. "You don't strike me as the type to just hang out and get drunk."

"I'm not," JC admitted. He sighed and wondered how much he should say, how much he could say without revealing too much. "I ... Jeez, this is hard." Closing his eyes, he pinched the bridge of his nose and tried to gather his thoughts together. "Can I trust you?"

AJ pressed his lips into a thin line and frowned. "Do you want to?" he countered.

Yes, JC thought, his eyes filling with tears again. God, I just want someone to talk to right now. Justin is so far away, and Joey's not talking to me anymore, and I just need someone to tell me everything's going to work itself out, everything's going to be okay. Taking a deep breath, JC let it out slowly and said, "It's about the group. And it's not ... it's not something you can repeat. If it gets out --"

"Tell you what," AJ offered. "I have a feeling you really have something you need to say, just to get it off your chest. For some reason, you can't talk to your friends. So you tell me, and in return I'll tell you what's bothering me. That sound fair enough?"

JC bit his lip. "I kissed someone," he whispered, "a friend of mine, who is currently involved with ... another friend. And I was drunk, and I should've known better, but it was something I wanted to do for a long time and I just couldn't stop myself. I just couldn't. And this morning I just had to get out. I had to get away. I should've never done it, but it's over with and now everyone hates me because of it."

"Because of one kiss?" AJ asked. "Damn, you must be pretty good if a little smack on the lips does all that."

JC felt that blush creep into his cheeks again. "I should've never done it," he admitted, "but I'm not sorry I did. I wanted to, I had to."

"Do you love this friend?" AJ asked.

"I don't know," JC whispered. "I think I don't."

AJ laughed, startling JC. "You think you don't?" he asked, giggling. "Usually people think they're in love. They don't think they aren't."

JC shrugged. "I don't know," he said again. "I don't want to be. He's with --"

"He?" AJ asked, raising an eyebrow. JC turned away and stared at the night beyond his window, his lips clamped shut. Fuck, he thought. Fuck fuck fuck. "Can I guess who he is?"

"No," JC muttered. He had already said too much.

After a minute, AJ asked, "Can I tell you something?" When JC didn't reply, AJ said, "Howie's had this thing for Kevin since day one. He's never told anyone. Never. But we all know it." JC still didn't say anything. "I just don't want you to think that I can't keep a secret, you know. I'm not going to get all weirded out and shit just because you like guys --"

"I don't," JC said, his clipped tones discouraging further talk. He wished he had never agreed to stay the night at AJ's house. He wished he knew how to keep his damn mouth shut.

AJ frowned. "But you like this guy," he said cautiously.

"I don't know that," JC said, sighing. "I don't know much of anything right now, okay? I just know that I'm sick and tired of being alone all the time. I'm tired of seeing all of my friends with someone and me with no one. Do you even know what that's like, AJ? To have no one at all?"

"I know exactly what that's like," AJ replied, his voice so low, JC almost didn't hear the words over the radio. With a glance at JC, he asked, "Don't believe me? Try this on for size. My girlfriend left me. Again. Why? Because she can't deal with the pressure of dating me. What the hell is that supposed to mean? She said she'd call and we could talk things through but that was two weeks ago. Two fucking weeks. Brian just got hitched, so he's too busy to talk to me anymore. Kevin's become Mr. Honey-Do and doesn't return my calls. Howie -- I don't know where he's at right now, and I don't really care, either. And Nick --" His voice cracked, and as AJ wiped his mouth with his hand, JC wondered if maybe he wasn't the only one to say too much. "Nick is where he wants to be. With his family. And I went out tonight looking for someone or something to fill the void in my life. The emptiness inside. I jumped to your defense because I was so ready for that fight. So don't think you're the only one, JC Chasez. Don't think no one else knows what you're going through, because we've all been there. We've all been lost. Some of us just never find our way home."

All I Ever Wanted
142. Catch Me
Part 3 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

AJ unlocked the door to his large, sprawling house and held it open for JC. As JC entered the dimly lit foyer, a tiny ball of brown fur ran up to him, yipping and growling. "Jack!" AJ cried, scooping the tiny pup into his arms. He kicked the door closed and nuzzled the dog, who whimpered in delight at her master's touch. Looking at JC over the top of his dark glasses, he said in that soft voice of his, "You should call your friends."

"They're asleep by now," JC muttered.

"Probably not," AJ said. "I bet they're worried sick about you. Who wouldn't be?" He pointed at the phone at the end of the hall. "Call them. I'll get you something to drink."

"Thanks." JC picked up the receiver and waited until AJ went into the kitchen, cooing at the dog in his arms. Then he began to set the receiver back down, intent on not calling. But suddenly Joey's face flashed in his mind, those sad eyes, full of the pain JC had already caused him, and without thinking he dialed the number to the house. He listened to the phone ring once, twice, three times ... he started to hang up the receiver when a sleepy voice answered. "Hello?"

Shit, JC thought, closing his eyes. He steadied himself for what he knew would happen the minute he spoke. "Chris," he said, his voice devoid of emotion.

"Fuck," Chris muttered, and JC heard a low voice beside him. He had woken them up, and they must've patched things up between them already if Chris was back sleeping in Joey's bed.

"Nevermind," JC said. "Go back to sleep."

"No," Chris said, the sharpness in his voice like a slap in the face. "Where the hell are you?"

JC sighed. "I'm ..." He bit his lip, not really wanting to say. "I'm spending the night with ... a friend, Chris. I'll be back in the morning." With another sigh, he added, "I just didn't want you guys to worry. Just in case you cared."

Suddenly Joey was on the phone. "We do care, JC," he said, his sleepy voice surprisingly gentle, and JC felt the tears flood his eyes again. "We need to talk, all of us, tomorrow. Will you be back then?"

"I should be," JC whispered. He heard the phone drop to the bed, and wondered just how late it was anyway. "Joey --"

"This isn't Joe. This is Chris." The hard voice dared him to say something more.

JC blinked away the tears and said, "You hate me."

"I'm not going to get into it now," Chris replied. It wasn't an answer though, was it? "Not at this hour, and definitely not over the phone."

"Okay," JC agreed. AJ came up behind him, two mugs of something hot and steaming in his hands. His little terrier ran at his feet, its tiny nails clicking on the tiled floor, and JC fought the urge to squirm as the dog started sniffing his legs. "Thanks," he said, taking one of the mugs from AJ. He looked up as he sipped at the spicy apple cider gingerly, afraid of burning his tongue. It was cinnamony and tasted slightly of bourbon.

"Where are you?" Chris asked in his ear.

"I'll be home tomorrow," JC said in reply. "I don't want --" He blew on the mug, trying to cool off the cider. "I just wanted to let you guys know I'm okay."

"Fine," Chris said, and then he hung up. JC blinked in surprise and replaced the receiver. Tomorrow will be fun, he thought sourly. Maybe I can just sleep through it and wake up Monday, and hope everything will blow over. But he didn't believe that for a minute.

Beside him, AJ said, "They're still mad." JC nodded and took a large gulp of the hot drink, stinging his tongue and throat, but it felt so good as it trailed down to pool in his stomach. "Careful," AJ admonished. "I spiked it a bit. You looked like you might need it."

"I might need another one," JC replied. AJ laughed and nodded towards the living room. As he led the way, he tore off the woolen hat and tossed it aside. His red hair stuck up in a jumbled mess, and with one hand he smoothed it down absently. Then he took off the dark glasses, setting them on an end table before turning towards JC, who looked at that roguish grin and suddenly the room was too hot, the mug burning his hands, the cider inside of him threatening to combust. He cleared his throat, glancing around the room nervously, trying not to meet those intense eyes. His gaze settled on the grand piano in one corner. "Do you play?" he asked.

AJ licked cider off his lips and shrugged. "I know what to press," he said, watching JC openly, "to make it sing for me." JC felt his cheeks redden. "What about you?" AJ asked. "You play?"

"A little," JC said, shrugging. He could read the notes, he knew the keys, but he wasn't Mozart or anything. The only song he knew off the top of his head was "Chopsticks," and he'd be damned if he'd play that here, for AJ.

But AJ walked over to the piano and ran his fingers along the keys, and light, airy music trickled into the room. JC found himself drifting towards the piano, drawn by the sound like a moth to an open flame. The music danced into JC's head, wrapping around him, and he thought he recognized the tune. AJ looked over his shoulder as JC approached. Winking, he sang along with the music he played, his voice smoky and surprisingly higher than JC imagined it would be. "Every little thing I do never seems enough for you." JC smiled and sang along. "You don't want

to lose it again but I'm not like him."

JC laughed, and AJ sat down in front of the piano. "Would you believe I don't know how to play that one?" JC asked.

AJ smiled. "Have a seat," he suggested, patting the bench beside him. JC stepped over the bench and sat down. He cradled the warm mug in both hands and watched AJ's fingers glide over the piano, his nails polished black like the ebony keys, tickling out gentle notes and snippets of songs that formed a soothing medley. When JC caught chords he knew, he'd hum along, but then the music would change direction midstream, ephemeral and free, and he felt AJ's steady gaze on him. He let his eyes slip closed, his mind go blank, as he lost himself in the music and the moment. Very quietly, AJ asked, "Was it one of your band mates?"

"What?" JC asked sharply, startled.

"The friend you kissed," AJ prompted. "Something tells me you might still want to talk about it."

Taking another large swallow from his mug, JC shrugged. "I don't really feel comfortable --"

"That's okay," AJ said quickly, his hand flitting over the keys, eliciting an upbeat melody from the instrument. JC felt his heart quicken at the beat. "I'm just being nosy. You don't need to tell me. Who am I to you?"

Who, indeed? JC thought, frowning. "I just don't want to say anything that might, I don't know, get around." He looked at AJ, studying the wolfish grin, the thin lines of facial hair that gave him a devilish appearance, those glistening, laughing eyes. My, what big eyes you have, JC thought randomly, and he looked down into his mug, surprised to find it empty already.

"It's okay," AJ said again.

"He doesn't like me, though," JC offered, remembering Joey's words from earlier in the day. "Not like that."

"He with someone else?" AJ asked. Then he twisted his mouth into a dour smile. "Or doesn't he want it that way?"

"Someone else," JC whispered. He sighed. "Look, I want to thank you for letting me stay here tonight."

"Don't mention it," AJ replied. "Maybe I need the company as much as you do." He turned away, watching his own fingers pick out the tentative opening notes of "Für Elise." "Do you know this one?" he asked, setting his mug down to play the tune with both hands.

"Not offhand," JC said, "but I've always wanted to learn it."

The music faltered as AJ looked at him closely. Then he said, "Scoot over a little." JC slid further away, but AJ shook his head. "This way. Toward me." Placing his empty mug on the floor beside his foot, JC moved over, until his hip bumped against AJ's. AJ spread his right hand out over the keys between them. "Put your hand out like this."

JC did as instructed, the keys cool beneath his fingers. Slowly AJ placed his own hand over JC's, his palm warm against the back of JC's hand. With the gentlest of touches, he pressed his finger down, forcing JC's own finger to depress the key, and a frightened solo note escaped from the piano. AJ flashed him a quick lupine grin as he pressed down another finger, and another note joined the first to linger in the air between them. JC held his breath, listening to the note fade away.

Then together they played the opening strands of "Für Elise," AJ's fingers insistent on JC's, his soft touch a sharp contrast to the hard keys beneath JC's fingertips. With his other hand, AJ picked up the rest of the symphony, playing the classical music at a slow tempo as his fingers taught JC's the keys. "See?" he asked, grinning at JC. "It's not that hard."

"No, it's not," JC said, laughing. He looked at AJ and wondered how he had gotten this close all of a sudden. The music stopped, the last few stray notes drifting away, but AJ's hand still rested on JC's, and those dark brown eyes looked at him intently, taking in his hair, his nose, his lips, before meeting his own nervous gaze. AJ pressed his lips together tightly, and JC pulled his hand away. "It's getting late," he whispered.

AJ studied him a moment longer and then sighed. "You can stay in the guest room," he said softly. His leg brushed JC's arm as he stood up, and JC frowned at the piano. "Come on, Jack," AJ said, calling his little dog from its position on the leather sofa. JC rose and followed him out of the living room, suddenly very sleepy. AJ led him down a dark hallway, stopping before a partially open door. "Here you go," AJ said, pushing the door open wider. "Towels and soap in the bathroom, I think there's an extra toothbrush in the cabinet, if you dig through all Mandy's shit. It's not opened or anything -- I try to keep some on hand just in case one of the guys drops by for the night."

"Do they do that?" JC asked, stepping into the room. He had always assumed all bands were as close-knit as their group, and it surprised him a little to find out that AJ stayed in this large house alone.

AJ shook his head. "Kevin used to stop by now and then, but the missus says no, you know how that goes. I had asked Nick to stay this weekend but ..." JC turned and AJ shrugged, but not before JC saw the slump of his shoulders or the far-away look in his eyes. "He had other plans. So I guess I'll see you in the morning, right?"

"Right," JC said as AJ shut the door. He rinsed his mouth out and tossed cold water on his face, and then stripped down to his underwear and crawled into the huge bed. AJ was right -- it was a lot more comfortable than the back of his car would've been. JC worried that he might lie awake, thinking about Joey and Chris, but suprisingly, he felt drowsy the moment his head touched the pillow. He closed his eyes, his hand tingling where AJ's own had rested against it, and as he drifted off to sleep, he could've sworn he heard faint notes from the piano still echo throughout the house.

All I Ever Wanted
143. Trust, Who Do You?
by NSyncGrrl

Justin knew it was going to be one of those days when he woke up with a stuffy nose and the beginnings of a headache tugging behind his eyes. He had turned over in the bed, hoping to cuddle up next to Lance and fall back asleep, but instead he rolled over on that damn cat and ended up with a wicked scratch across the fleshy part of his palm, just below the thumb. Sure, it was only a kitten, but her claws were sharp as needles and even though the cut didn't bleed, it still ached something fierce. Blood beaded along its length, and Justin couldn't seem to wipe it away. Fuck this, he had thought bitterly, hugging Lance close to him. He closed his eyes and hoped to start the day all over again the next time he woke up.

He didn't have long to wait. Lance shook him awake in less than ten minutes and told him to hurry up, they were going to be late. "For what?" Justin wanted to know, but then he remembered the studio and that Michael guy and their flight shortly after noon, so he dragged himself out of bed and into the shower. And the soapy water stung his hand. And then Jonathan wanted him to call the airport and make arrangements for Poofu. He kept asking Justin, over and over again, while Justin was trying to shave, for goodness' sakes, and when Justin stepped back it was on the kitten's tail and she hissed and swiped at his leg. So he started the bleed, again. "Fuck," he muttered, and before Jonathan could admonish him for his foul language, he rinsed off his face and hurried into the bedroom, closing the door as he dialed the airport.

After a lot of sweet talk, haggling, demanding to speak with a supervisor, and finally an obscene amount of money for booking an animal to travel on such short notice, Justin sat on the edge of the bed, his mind completely blank, his shoulders slumped slightly. Lance came into the room and frowned. "Jon says you're being poopy today," he said by way of hello.

"Hmm," Justin said, his gaze glued to a spot along the baseboard, close to the floor.

"Justin?" Lance asked, concerned. "You okay, baby?"

Justin roused himself and shrugged. "Just sleepy," he said. And pissed, he added mentally. Damn cat always underfoot, scratching at me, about as bad as your mother. Fortunately he was too tired to say much of anything, because even though he was bitter right now, it wasn't at Lance, and he didn't want to make him angry with him for some careless remark. He wasn't in the mood to make up right now.

"Well, get dressed," Lance said, tousling Justin's hair. Justin grinned up at him. "We've got a long day ahead."

Justin sighed. "Don't remind me," he said, but he hauled himself to his feet. "Maybe we can come back here after a few days," he suggested,

tugging off the t-shirt he had slept in the night before. Something else that pissed me off, he thought, having to sleep with Lance fully dressed. Jonathan's not staying in our room again. He watched the way Lance moved as he dressed, his eyes drawn to the fullness of his lover's butt, and Justin stepped closer, his hands already reaching out for Lance. "Just the two of us," he said, one hand cupping Lance's ass, "no distractions, no one else. What do you think?"

Lance laughed. "We've got to start practicing for the tour," he pointed out. "We don't have much time before --" He pulled away from Justin abruptly. "What's that?"

"What's what?" Justin asked, confusion clouding his face.

"That," Lance said, pointing at Justin's hand. He caught Justin's wrist and turned his palm towards him. One finger traced the cat scratch, but the red line didn't smear beneath his gentle touch. "Justin?"

Justin sighed. "That cat," he pouted. Pointing at his leg, where a series of four scratches marred his skin just above the ankle, he pouted. "She hates me."

To his surprise, Lance laughed. Then he kissed Justin's cheek, and Justin thought maybe he should've pouted sooner, if it would've gotten Lance to kiss him. "You're cute," he said, touching the tip of Justin's nose before letting go of his hand and turning away.

That's it? Justin thought, hungry for more, but then Jonathan came into the room, Poofu already in her pet carrier, and the chance to pursue anything else was lost. Justin sighed and began to dress, sure that the day would only go downhill from here.

He was right. Lance drove to the studio, but the bright sunshine hurt Justin's head, and he hid his eyes behind tinted glasses that really didn't help all that much. His hair was an unruly mop -- have to get this shit cut, he thought sourly as he stared in the mirror, unable to do anything with it. So he pulled on a bandanna and hoped he didn't look as bad as he felt. He wore jeans and a large flannel shirt, only to find that it wasn't as chilly outside as he had thought, but he just wore a white tank top beneath the shirt and he wasn't about to prance around in that. In the car he unbuttoned the shirt about halfway, fanning himself with the collar, and stared sullenly out the window. Lance wore a very attractive brown suit with a black t-shirt underneath, and Justin felt so damn ghetto next to him. But this was Lance's business, he reminded himself -- Lance had an image to project. Still, Justin wished he looked just a little bummy, so that this Michael guy wouldn't see the way his pants hugged the curve of his buttocks, or the way his jacket bunched open when he leaned forward, revealing the smooth cut of his chest. "Cheer up, hon," Lance said as they pulled into the studio parking lot. He flashed Justin a winning smile, and in those tiny yellow glasses he favored, he looked simply divine.

Justin simply huffed and slammed the door as he got out of the car. He wasn't in a cheery mood today. Jonathan frowned at him as he held the door open for his little brother. "Poofu, too," Jonathan said, pointing to the cat carrier strapped into the seat beside him.

"We won't be long," Justin replied. "She can stay here."

"Justin!" Lance cried, unlocking the cat's door. "You don't leave animals in the car."

Justin sighed. He knew that. "I'm just not thinking today," he mumbled. At Jonathan's glare, Justin smiled weakly. "I'm sorry."

"Well, you better start," Jonathan threatened as he climbed out of the car. From the other side of the car, Lance laughed, the cat carrier in his arms, and Justin felt another pout pulling at his lips. He rubbed his forehead and just prayed this was all over quickly. Right now he wanted nothing more than to curl up in a warm, comfy bed -- beside Lance, of course, and without his brother or that stupid kitten of his -- and go back to sleep.

Inside the studio, Justin plopped into a plush leather sofa and glared around the lobby. Jonathan squeezed down beside him. "Scoot over, Justin," he complained as Lance set the cat carrier at his feet. A tiny squeak came from inside the carrier, and Jonathan leaned down to coo at the cat.

Justin sighed lustily and edged over just a little bit. Lance approached the receptionist, smiling sweetly. Justin listened as he asked about the session recording right now -- the guy's named Michael something or other, Justin thought grimly, closing his eyes. Resting his head back against the sofa, he tried to quell the jealousy rising within him. Lance is yours, he reminded himself. He sleeps with you. He loves you. You have nothing to worry about from this freak kid, or anyone else, for that matter. Hasn't Lance said it often enough? You need to start trusting him. He did trust Lance -- it was everyone else he was suspicious of. Still, he was just not in the mood today to play the role of the jealous boyfriend, but if that jerk so much as looked at Lance the wrong way ... well, Justin only hoped the kid got a good look, because it would be his last.

Coming back over to them, Lance sat on the arm of the sofa closest to Justin and smiled down at him. "Wake up, baby," he whispered, nudging Justin gently.

"I'm awake," Justin grumbled, placing a hand on Lance's knee.

"Justin," Lance warned. He covered Justin's hand with his own before removing it from his leg.

Sighing, Justin asked, "Have I told you this sucks yet?"

"Not yet," Lance admitted, "but I sort of clued into it. We just have to --"

"Be careful, I know," Justin interrupted. "Sometimes I hate this," he whispered.

"Justin, this isn't the place --" Lance began, his brow wrinkling as he frowned.

"I know," Justin said again. He picked at a seam in Lance's pants, smoothing the fabric down beneath his thumb. "I just wish everyone would disappear and leave us alone. I mean ..." He sighed. "I don't want to have to hide the way I feel. I just hate not being able to touch you."

Pouting, he added, "Or hug you, or even kiss you, or just hold your hand --"

"You can hold my hand," Jonathan offered, taking Justin's hand in his. "But if you kiss me, I'll have to hurt you."

That brought a smile to Justin's face. Squeezing Jonathan's hand, he leaned down and planted a wet, sloppy kiss on Jonathan's cheek. "Yuck!" Jonathan cried, wiping his cheek with the back of his hand as Lance laughed at them. Then he punched Justin in the arm, scowling at his brother. Justin giggled and leaned back again, letting his eyes slip closed.

He felt Lance's leg press against his as he leaned closer, and then Lance spoke quietly, his voice low and breathy in Justin's ear. "You know I love you, Justin."

"I know," Justin sighed, a pitiful sound that made Lance laugh again. Justin allowed himself a brief grin. "I love you, too." He opened his eyes as the studio door opened and watched a young man, a little older than himself, walk into the room. He had short hair hidden beneath a large tan cowboy hat, which he wore with his faded t-shirt and blue jeans. "This must be Michael," Justin grumbled, wanting to laugh. He was worried about this guy? Sheesh, he really had to give Lance more leeway here. The least he could do is just be jealous of sexy guys and not just anything with a dick. This is one dude that cowboy hat trick don't work for, Justin thought, trying not to laugh.

The guy made a beeline for their sofa. "Mr. Lance Bass," he gushed, his hand already extended. "I'm Michael. Michael Ericson. You just won't believe what an honor this is for me." When Lance took his hand, Michael pulled him into a quick embrace, and the flames within Justin flared to life again. But Lance stepped back quickly, a polite smile pasted onto his face, and Michael's chatter filled any awkwardness in the room. "You don't know how much this means to me. I know you'll love the album. It's my heart and soul, you know? I'm so glad you came by to give it a listen. Mr. Bass --"

"Lance," Lance said, that smile still on his face. "Mr. Bass is my father. I'm just Lance."

"Lance then," Michael said, smiling widely. He glanced at Justin and then took Lance's arm. Justin fought the urge to knock that presumptuous hand away. "Well, I just finished another song, we'll edit it in a minute, but they told me you were here. You want to come hear it?"

Gracefully, Lance extracted his arm from Michael's grip. "Michael," he said, turning towards the sofa, "I'd like you to meet Justin. Justin Timberlake. And his brother, Jonathan." He looked at Justin, his eyes pleading for his lover to stand up and be sociable.

Hauling himself to his feet, Justin nodded at Michael, his eyes hard. "Hey," he said softly, placing a hand on the small of Lance's back. Lance stepped into his arm and smiled at Jonathan, but Justin didn't drop his gaze from Michael's. He waited, gauging the musician. Finally Michael looked away, his gaze straying to Justin's arm behind Lance. Satisfied that his point was made, Justin let a slow grin spread across his face, and with his free hand, he picked up Michael's and shook it once. "My

pleasure."

"Jon," Lance said, and Jonathan stood up.

Michael turned towards him, the tension in his face dispelled as he grinned at the boy. "Hey, little man," he said.

Jonathan frowned. "Are you pretending you're Garth Brooks?" he asked. At the puzzled expression on Michael's face, Jonathan added, "It's not working. You look funny."

"Oh Jesus," Lance whispered, covering his mouth with his hand to hide the smile that he couldn't fight. He glanced at Justin, who chuckled.

"Kids," Justin said, shaking his head. "They'll say anything, won't they?" But he made a mental note to tell Jonathan how much he loved him when he got the chance.

Clearing his throat, Michael pointed at the cat carrier. "Who's this?" he asked.

"My cat," Jonathan replied.

"I love cats," Michael said. "Can I hold her?"

Jonathan glanced up at Lance, who shook his head. "Lance said I can't open the carrier. She might run away and then it would be all your fault."

"Oh-kay," Michael said, standing up. He raised his eyebrows at Lance, who shrugged, noncommittal. Smiling at Lance, he nodded back at the studio door and asked, "You want to hear that song now?"

"Sure," Lance said. He looked at Justin. "You want to come, too?"

Justin saw annoyance flit across Michael's smooth features. "It's country, isn't it?" he asked, and when Lance nodded, Justin scrunched up his face and shook his head. "You know I'm not into that."

"Okay," Lance said. Then, turning away from Michael, he studied Justin and asked softly, "Are you cool with this?"

Justin rubbed Lance's back gently and nodded. "Sure," he said, glancing at Michael. He frowned. "Maybe Jon wants to go, though, you know? I can just stay here."

"You don't mind?" Lance asked again, and Justin nodded. "Okay," he said, smiling sweetly. Justin wanted to kiss him, and he wondered what this Michael kid would think of that. At least it would put him in his place. Lance placed a hand on Justin's shoulder. "Try to rest a little, babe. We won't be long." Justin flashed Lance his prettiest smile. "Jon, you want to come into the studio with me?" Lance asked, turning towards Jonathan.

The boy's grin was all the reply needed. "But who will watch Poofu?" he asked.

"I will," Justin said. He sank down into the couch again and watched as Lance took Jonathan's hand in his and followed Michael into the studio. Looking at the cat carrier distastefully, Justin thought maybe he could

handle this kitty as long as it was locked up, its claws as far away from him as possible. He closed his eyes and tapped one foot on the floor, knowing Jonathan would keep an eye on that Michael character for him.

All I Ever Wanted
144. Waiting for You
by NSyncGrrl

Justin looked at his watch. Five minutes had passed since Lance and Jonathan entered the studio, leaving him behind with the cat, and already he was bored. How long will this take anyway? he wondered. The receptionist watched him out of the corner of her eye, but when he looked her way, she ducked her head and pretended to be busy writing something. He had a feeling he was making her uncomfortable, sitting on the couch with his knee shaking nervously and the damn kitten in the carrier mewling every couple of seconds. She sounded like she was in pain, but he suspected she just didn't like being cooped up in the carrier. He'd take her out if he thought she would sit quietly in his lap, but with the luck he'd had already, he thought maybe that would be asking for too much. Absently he fingered the scratch on his palm and hummed tunelessly, wishing he had gone with Lance just to keep from being so bored.

Poofu meowed again. Bending down, Justin looked through the slim bars of the carrier and meowed back. Poofu ran to the front of the carrier, her nose twitching, and Justin stuck a finger inside. When he wiggled it at her, though, she caught it between her paws and nipped at it. "Hey!" Justin cried as the razor sharp teeth closed over the tip of his finger. He jerked his hand away, and Poofu hissed. Justin hissed back.

Frowning, Justin laid down on the sofa, ignoring the receptionist's glare. What could she say? This place belonged to Lance's company, and he was Lance's boyfriend. He'd lie in the lobby and sulk if he wanted to. Rolling over onto his back, he stared at the tiled ceiling and wondered how much longer this would take. You should close your eyes, he told himself, get some rest. Maybe it'll pull you out of this shitty mood. He doubted it. And things would only get worse, wouldn't they? Another few hours and they'd be back in Florida, and then ... what? He didn't know. Joey and Chris and JC -- the triangle whirled in his mind and made him angry all over again. Joey had seen the way his careless kiss almost tore Justin and Lance apart. Why would he try it again? What did he have to gain, if he was the one with Chris? Justin just couldn't understand it.

Maybe Lance is right, his mind whispered. Maybe JC kissed Joey. Yeah, and maybe Macy Gray can sing. But I don't think so. He couldn't wait to talk to JC, ask him what the hell had happened and what he planned to do to patch things up. He'd have to get JC alone, just the two of them, so he could talk to him without any of the others butting in. Even Lance. Justin loved Lance fiercely, but he knew that there was a weakness in his heart when it came to Joey, for some reason Justin couldn't fathom, and he didn't want anything but the truth from JC. Did he even know that Joey was saying it was all his fault? What would he say to that?

Why don't I find out now? he thought, reaching for his cell phone, clipped to his jeans pocket. It would be a perfect time to talk to JC, just to get things out in the open, find out what was happening back at the house so he'd know what they would be walking into when they arrived.

Quickly Justin dialed the long distance number and waited as the phone rang hundreds of miles away. "Hello?" someone asked, answering the phone. It was Chris.

"Chris, hey!" Justin cried, sitting up slightly to see if the receptionist was still frowning at him. She was. Lying back down, Justin propped his feet up on the arm of the sofa and asked, "What's the lowdown, my man?"

Chris laughed. "Nothing but nothing, Justin." Then he cleared his throat, and his voice sobered up. "I'm guessing you heard the action packed weekend we've had down here."

"Lance said a little something something happened," Justin said evasively. "Is JC around?"

"Shit," Chris drawled, the anger clear in his voice. "He's gone. And he'll stay gone if he knows what's good for him."

That didn't sound good. "Where is he?" Justin asked.

"Look, Justin," Chris said, sighing. "I know he's your friend. Hell, he's my friend too. But right now? I'm not liking him all that much. And talking about him is the last thing I want to be doing. You can ask Joe, if you want, but I'm just not up for it, not this second, okay?"

Justin could understand that. "Okay," he said, frowning. He really wanted to know where JC was, but he didn't want to ask Joey. Hell, he thought it was all Joey's fault Chris was upset with JC in the first place. But if Joey knew where he could find JC ... "Put him on."

"Hold up," Chris said, and then the phone switched hands. Justin heard Chris say his name, and then Joey was on the line. "Hey," he said, sniffing slightly. Justin wondered if Joey suspected he thought the kiss was Joey's fault.

"Hey," Justin said quickly, not wanting to start something on the phone. "Where's JC?"

"We don't know," Joey sighed.

Justin felt his heart beat faster. "What do you mean, you don't know? Where did he go?"

Joey sighed again, and Justin could hear fear edging his voice. "I'm not sure," he admitted. "He said he was going to the studio yesterday. I went home and ... this was like ten or so, in the morning, and we didn't actually have nice things to say to each other, you know? So then I came back in the afternoon, and he was still gone. And he didn't come home for dinner."

"He still hasn't shown up?" Justin asked, worried. "Did you call his parents?"

"They haven't seen him," Joey replied. "He called late last night, really really late, and said he was staying at a friend's house. But Chris called around and no one knows where he's at. The caller ID came up unlisted, and star sixty-nine doesn't work, either. He's ..." Joey sighed. "I don't

know where he is," he whispered.

And is it all your fault? Justin wanted to ask, but he bit his lip and kept the words to himself. He couldn't say something like that over the phone. "Well," he said, "let me talk to Chris again."

Chris came back on the line. "What?" he asked.

"You and Joey cool now?" Justin asked.

Chris laughed. "He bought me a shitload of flowers and I just had to forgive him," he said. "Now we just need to get all these damn plants out of the house before my allergies decide to suffocate me in the night."

"Flowers?" Justin asked, grinning. "How many?"

"Oh hell," Chris replied in an offhand manner. Then he turned away from the phone and hollered, "Joe? How many flowers did you buy?" Justin heard the muffled reply, and then Chris said, "Like fifty or so. And balloons, the whole nine yards. The living room looks like a conservatory."

"Hmm," Justin said, trying to picture Joey buying all those flowers for Chris. He could see it in his mind, and he giggled. He'd have to remember that one. Flowers. Lance would love to be surprised with some flowers, he just knew it. "So you really pissed at JC?" he asked gently.

"Let's not go there, okay?" Chris asked. "I'm trying to think things through, Justin, really I am. I'm trying to remember that I haven't heard his side of things yet. But I'm ..." He sighed. "I'm hurt, okay? He knows we're together and he still pulls a stunt like this. I'm really just very upset about that. I was angry at Joe for lying to me, but I know why he did it. And now I just want to know why JC did what he did. I want to know why he'd kiss Joey as if it didn't matter what the fuck I felt about it, you know?"

Justin didn't know what to say. Lance said Chris had seen the whole thing, so was he saying this was JC's fault as well? That Joey wasn't to blame this time? Glancing at his watch, he noticed that it had now been ten minutes since Lance had disappeared into the studio, and he wondered what was taking so long.

Inside the sound booth, Lance stood to one side, watching as the producer mixed the tape of Michael's session. Michael stood beside him, rambling about something that Lance wasn't quite following -- some concert he went to, and who he met there, and how much he appreciated Lance believing in his music, had he said that already? Only about a dozen times, Lance thought, smiling at Michael and nodding in all the right places. He had one hand on Jonathan's shoulder and wished Justin had come in here with him, even though the room was small and cramped as it was. But Justin would've made it cozy, bad attitude and all, and Lance wanted to tell Michael he had to go to the bathroom just so he could slip back out into the lobby and see Justin's sparkling smile again. When Michael asked him something, he had an unnerving habit of touching Lance's arm with the tips of his fingers, and Lance kept edging away, trying to put some distance between himself and this overeager musician. He had never been hit on so blatantly before -- for the first time he wanted to see Justin's jealousy in full rage. But he's not in here, Lance

reminded himself, nodding as Michael kept up a steady stream of talk. He sighed and prayed this would be over quickly.

"Okay," the producer said, standing up from the panel. She pulled off her headphones and unplugged them from the jack. "You guys ready to hear it?"

"Sure," Lance said, shrugging.

"You're gonna love it," Michael said, grinning.

The producer offered Lance her seat. "I'll be right back," she said as he sat down. Michael leaned over the back of his chair, and Lance shifted uncomfortably. He wondered how he could ask him to move away without sounding bitchy.

But then Jonathan pushed beneath Michael's arm and hugged the back of Lance's chair, effectively opening some space between them as Michael had to step back. "What's this button do?" he asked innocently, pointing at the green button on the panel.

"Thank you," Lance whispered, and Jonathan winked at him. Raising his voice, Lance explained the buttons and switches on the instrument panel, and Jonathan absorbed everything with wide, unblinking eyes. Michael hovered behind them, but his presence wasn't overbearing now that he wasn't breathing down Lance's neck. Lance saw the irritation in Michael's face as he watched Jonathan lean against Lance's chair, and he had to remember to tell Justin he had been right about this one.

"Can I turn it on?" Jonathan asked, reaching for the switch to turn on the tape.

"You might mess it up," Michael cautioned, and Lance favored him with a harsh look that silenced him.

"He can't do that," Lance admonished. "Jon's not a baby, Mike."

"It's Michael," Michael replied softly. "I don't like Mike."

Mental note: call him Mike again, Lance thought, scooting over so Jonathan could have better access to the panel. As Jonathan flipped the switch, the sound booth filled with the twang of a western guitar, and the three of them listened to the song without talking. Lance thought it wasn't bad -- not the next Travis Tritt, but not bad. When the song played out, he nodded and said, "I like it."

"Thanks," Michael said, his slick grin back again. "That's my favorite song on the album. I just love the sappy ones, don't you?"

Lance laughed. "And they say romance is dead," he remarked, thinking of Justin.

"Hey," Michael said suddenly, "what are you doing for lunch? I know a great little café, not too far from here --"

"I don't like cafés," Jonathan said, pouting. Lance didn't think Jonathan knew what a café was, but he liked the boy's attitude. Been hanging around Justin for way too long, he thought, grinning. Mrs.

Harless will be so happy.

Michael frowned. "What about you, Lance? There's a deli nearby your friends could go to --"

"I don't like delis," Jonathan said. "Lance said we were going to eat at the airport, isn't that right, Lance?"

"That's right, Jon," Lance said, shrugging helplessly at Michael. "We have to be there by noon, Mike, and I just thought it would be easier to eat there, you know?"

"Michael," Michael corrected absently. "I was just hoping --"

"Well, don't," Jonathan said, bristling with anger. "Don't hope nothing and you won't be disappointed."

Lance snickered. Jeez, what had they taught this kid? "Jon, that's not very nice," he whispered.

"Well, he's being stupid," Jonathan replied, his voice loud in the small room. He spoke as if Michael wasn't even there, and Lance envied his audacity. What would it be like to be eight again, and not care what he said or did? "You're not going out with him, Lance. You can't. Do I need to beat him up for you now?"

"No, no," Lance said, grinning. He glanced up at Michael and sighed. "Mike -- Michael -- I'm sorry. Really. I appreciate the thought but ..." He shrugged again. "I can't. I'm sorry."

For a moment Lance thought Michael was too hurt to say anything. And then he bit his lip and asked, "It's like that, isn't it?" When Lance opened his mouth to ask what he meant, Michael added, "Justin. Isn't that his name? That's the way it is, eh?"

Lance raised his eyebrows and frowned, not saying anything, but the look on his face was all Michael needed to confirm what he already knew. "I'm sorry," Lance said again, but he wasn't, not really. Well, he was sorry that Michael had hoped ... whatever it was he hoped would happen between them, and he was sorry that now Michael felt bad, but he wasn't sorry he was with Justin instead of this Johnny-come-lately. Damn, he thought, trying to keep the grin from his face, if I didn't want Joey, why in the world would I want this boy? Justin is my everything, and that's all she wrote. "Michael --"

"No," Michael said, "it's okay. Thanks for listening to the song. It means a lot to me."

Lance sighed. Beside him Jonathan twisted a few knobs and flipped the switch again. This time the song played at a high speed, and Michael's voice filled the room, high-pitched and squeaky like the Chipmunks. "Jon, stop," Lance said, clicking the music off as his cell phone rang.

"You're ringing," Jonathan said, pointing at his waist.

Lance reached into the pocket of his blazer and answered the phone. "Hello?" he asked.

"Hey there, sexy." Justin's voice curled into his ear, and Lance could hear the smile in his voice. "You miss me yet?"

"You know I do," Lance replied, a goofy grin on his face. He glanced up at Michael and then turned away slightly. "You have nothing better to do than call me when you're only in the next room?" he asked coyly.

"I want you to come back out here," Justin said, pouting.

Lance laughed. "Are you in a better mood?"

"I can be," Justin offered. "If you kiss me."

"Kiss the grumps away?" Lance asked softly.

Jonathan leaned against him and whispered, "Is that Justin?" Lance nodded. "Hey Justin!" Jonathan cried into Lance's ear.

Justin laughed. "Is he keeping that boy off of you?" he asked.

"You taught him well," Lance replied. Turning to Jonathan, he whispered, "He said hi."

"I did not!" Justin said, laughing. Then he sighed. "Are you coming out here or do I have to bust up in there and rescue you?"

Lance liked that idea. "That sounds promising," he said, grinning.

Lowering his voice, Justin whispered, "Tell him you're finished. Send Jonathan out here to watch the cat and meet me in the bathroom in five minutes."

"What do you think we can do there?" Lance asked, but he was curious to find out.

"I just want some kisses," Justin pouted. "Little ones are okay. Something to hold me over until we get home."

"Five minutes?" Lance asked, glancing up at Michael again. "Give me three."

"I'm waiting for you," Justin replied.

As Lance turned off the phone, he stood up and extended his hand towards Michael. "It's been nice meeting you, Michael, but I've got to go now. Really. I like the sound, and I just know the album will be great. Good luck."

"Thanks," Michael murmured, his earlier energy gone. He shook Lance's hand curtly.

"What did Justin say?" Jonathan asked.

Lance opened the studio door. "He wants you to go watch Poofu," he said, steering Jonathan towards the lobby. "I've got to go to the bathroom. I'll be right there."

"Okay," Jonathan said.

Heading for the bathroom, Lance turned and called, "Hey, Jon."
Jonathan looked back at him. "Thanks, man. You're my hero."

Jonathan flexed his arms to show off muscles he didn't have.
"Anytime," he said, laughing.

Lance hurried into the restroom, eager to dish out those little kisses
Justin wanted so badly.

All I Ever Wanted
145. Change of Heart
by NSyncGrrl

After he got off the phone with Justin, Chris rounded up Busta and Korea, clipped leashes onto their collars, and headed out the front door. His thoughts were spinning in his head, a whirlwind of memories and faces and words, and he just had to get out of the house for a little bit. He hadn't wanted to talk to Justin about what had happened the past few days because he didn't even know how he was feeling about it yet himself. Without JC around, he hadn't given it much thought, simply because he didn't have to. He knew he was mad, yes, but he didn't know just how mad, or how forgiving he would be. "I'm going out," he called as he closed the door behind him.

He was halfway across the front yard when the door opened behind him. Turning around, Chris saw Joey step out onto the porch. "Where you going?" he asked, squinting in the late morning sun.

Chris looked at Joey, half-dressed only in white boxer briefs, an unbuttoned flannel shirt, and a pair of white socks. Grinning, Chris said, "Just gonna walk the dogs." He let his gaze drift down Joey's body, the bare chest peeking out from between the flaps of his open shirt, the strong, muscular legs, the bulge in the front of his boxers that Chris knew from experience wasn't an erection, not yet -- Joey just had a thick dick. Thinking about it made Chris want to turn around and go back inside, fuck thinking out his feelings, fuck JC, fuck everything, just cuddle up beside Joey and with those comforting arms around him, forget about all the shit bothering him right now.

As if reading his mind, Joey grinned and asked, "You sure you don't want to come back in here with me?"

Tempting. But Busta was eager for a walk, and Korea tugged on the leash, so Chris shrugged and let the dogs pull him out of the yard. "I'll be right back, Joe," he promised. Joey waved once before going back inside the house, leaving Chris alone with his dogs and his thoughts, which found their way back to Justin's phone call.

Chris hadn't expected Justin to call. As he followed his dogs down the quiet neighborhood streets, he thought about what had been said. Of course Justin knew what had happened -- Joey told Chris he had called Lance the next morning, looking for advice, and so Chris just assumed Lance told Justin as well. There was little or nothing kept secret between those two. But that had always been the way, even before the two of them hooked up, hadn't it? Lance and Justin were closer to each other than they were to any of the others, right from the start, and Chris always thought it had something to do with the similarities between them -- their tight-knit families, their religious backgrounds, their ages. They had a lot in common, and when the group started, Justin gravitated to Lance. Chris saw their relationship coming a long time ago, in all honesty. He noticed the way Lance looked at Justin, and figured it was only a matter of time before Justin looked back.

And as Justin grew more and more attached to Lance, his friendship with JC ... well, it didn't break apart, Chris reasoned, since they were all friends, but it faded a bit. At the beginning Justin turned to JC a lot, probably because they had known each other for so long, but JC wasn't the most open of people, and even Chris had a hard time warming up to him at first. JC kept a lot of things bottled up inside, hidden away from the world, so the early years of their friendships were strained because Chris was nothing if not open and forthright.

Maybe that's why me and Joey are so great together, he mused. Joey's fun-loving attitude, his constant zeal for life and sex and partying had attracted Chris to him in the first place, and they spent the whole European tour, after the release of their first album, scouring the clubs and picking up girls and just having a great time. Justin and Lance joined them a few times, but JC never went out of the hotel. He was always too tired, or too busy, or something, and if it didn't involve music or sleeping, then he wasn't interested. The few times he did come out with them stood out like pearls in Chris's mind, because they managed to catch glimpses into their friend's soul and truthfully? Chris liked what he saw there. He liked JC, and if there was one thing he wished for more than anything else right now, it was to turn back time and never take JC out to the club that night. Then JC would've never gotten drunk, he would've never kissed Joey, there would be no apologies to be made, and JC wouldn't be missing.

Where the fuck can he be? Chris wondered, his worry flashing through his anger like a comet. But part of him was glad that JC stayed away -- it gave him time to simmer down. If JC had come home last night, Chris would've laid into him from the start, without giving him a moment to get into the house. He played the scene out in his mind, over and over again, the cussing, the screaming, the yelling. His body hummed with the anger every time he thought about it.

And then JC called last night, way past midnight, and he wouldn't say where he was. The phone woke Chris up from a deep sleep, and he knew he must've sounded pissed because Joey took the phone away from him in a hurry, afraid there would be words said that would wedge between them in the morning's light. But Joey was tired, and when he laid back down, the phone fell from his hands. Picking it up, Chris heard JC say Joey's name, and the anger came flooding back again. After hanging up, he didn't think he'd fall back to sleep, that anger surging through him like electricity, keeping him awake.

But in the haven of Joey's arms, Chris managed to close his eyes, and when he woke in the morning, the anger was ... well, it wasn't gone, not exactly, but it was muted, like a bright banner hung out in the sun will fade after awhile. He was still pissed, he still wanted to know why JC did what he did, but now when he saw his friend, he wouldn't jump on him, not right away. He'd listen to what he had to say first. He'd hear his reasons, and then he'd decide if this was something they could get past, if he would forgive JC and move on. I can forgive him, Chris thought, leading the dogs back towards the house after the walk around the block. If he's sorry for what he did. If he promises not to pull that shit again, and if he just makes an effort to snap out of this funk he's gotten himself into lately.

Inside the house, Chris unleashed the dogs and rolled the leashes up in his hands as he headed for Joey's room. He pushed the half-closed door open gently, peeking into the room. Joey lay on the bed, stretched out with his back propped up against the pillows, the TV remote in one hand as he flicked through the channels. His shirt hung open, his legs were crossed at the ankles, and his hair stood up in all directions, and Chris's fingers itched to smooth it down. "I thought you'd be dressed by now," Chris said quietly, stepping into the room. He dropped the leashes on the floor and walked towards the bed.

Joey shrugged. Glancing up at Chris, he asked softly, "Is something bothering you, Christopher Robin?"

Chris felt a lump rise into his throat. He tried to swallow it away, but he couldn't. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he reached out and ran a hand down Joey's bare leg, the hair feathery beneath his touch. "I'm a little worried about JC," he admitted, watching his hand trail along Joey's skin.

Joey's hand caught his, and Chris raised his eyes to meet Joey's earnest gaze. "He's a big boy, Chris," Joey said gently. "He's fine, really."

"What if," Chris started, and then he sighed. When he didn't continue, Joey tugged on his hand, and Chris let himself be pulled into a strong embrace. Resting his head against Joey's bare chest, Chris picked at one of Joey's nipples.

"What if what?" Joey prompted.

Chris sighed again. "What if he's never coming back?" he whispered. He glanced up at Joey, his eyes wide and fearful. "If he's scared of what I'll say or do to him, and he's not coming back?"

"Don't be silly," Joey admonished. He ran one hand through Chris's hair as he kissed Chris's forehead. "He lives here, Chris. He'll be back."

Chris frowned. "I want you to know," he said softly, snuggling against Joey's chest, "that I never kissed Dani after you told me that you wanted me. I was never intimate with her after that. All I wanted was you."

He felt Joey's arms tighten around him, and he pulled his knees up to his chest, letting himself be held. "I know that," Joey replied. "I'm sorry this happened --"

"I'm not," Chris said, surprising both of them. Raising his head, he met Joey's troubled gaze and said, "I'm sorry he kissed you, yes. I'm sorry you felt you had to lie to hide it from me. But I think this was good for us, or it will be, in the long run. I mean ..." He floundered for the words to say what he wanted to say.

"I know what you mean," Joey said, kissing his lips tenderly. "I really do love you, Chris. Maybe it's not the same mushy gushy love that Lance and Justin share, but I love you. I love being with you."

Chris laid his head back down against Joey's chest and listened to his steady breath and the faint but regular heartbeat. Joey rubbed Chris's back and shoulders soothingly. "I think I'm in love with you, Joe," Chris whispered. Suddenly he felt frightened, as if a hole had opened beneath

him and he was falling, falling.

But Joey's strong arms held him tight. "Then don't worry about JC," Joey replied. "He'll be okay. He's just ..." Joey shrugged, hugging Chris closer, and the fresh scent of his deodorant filled Chris's senses, a clean, crisp smell that reminded him of football games and falling leaves. "He's lonely, Chris. I think he always has been. And it's just now starting to really get to him, you know?"

Chris nodded. It was always him and Joey together, going to the clubs or goofing off, and it was always Justin and Lance together, doing ... whatever it was they did when they were alone, away from the others. And where did that leave JC? By himself, in his room mostly, wrapped up in his music or sleeping. For as long as Chris had known him, it seemed as if JC was always sleeping. "I feel bad for him," Chris whispered. "I still want to hurt him for kissing you, but ... but I can see where maybe he would think it was the only thing left he could do."

Joey laughed softly, the sound rumbling inside of him beneath Chris's ear. "And everyone thinks you're the crazy one," he muttered. "Hell, Chris, sometimes when we're fooling around, I forget that you're so much older than me. And then you come up with something profound and so damn adult sounding like that, and it makes me want to be just like you when I grow up."

Chris grinned. "You are grown up, Joe," he said, shifting until his body pressed against Joey's crotch. Wiggling his butt, he felt Joey's cock hardened beneath him. He stuck out his tongue and licked Joey's erect nipple. "You're such a big boy."

Laughing again, Joey growled and rolled over on top of Chris, pinning him to the bed. With one knee between Chris's legs, Joey rubbed his groin along Chris's thigh. "You know what I meant," he said, kissing Chris's cheek. Chris laughed and tried to squirm away, but Joey held him tightly. "Where do you think you're going now, boyfriend?"

Chris stopped struggling. "I like the sound of that," he said.

Curling up behind him, their bodies pressed together, Joey hugged Chris, his head resting on Chris's shoulder. "Me too," he admitted. Chris ran his hands along Joey's arms and sighed, content in Joey's embrace. Kissing Chris's ear, Joey said, "Let's just lay here for a little while, okay? I like holding you."

"Okay," Chris said. "I like being held."

For long minutes they lay together, the only sound the low noise from the TV. Then Joey asked, "Are you going to really kick JC's ass when he comes home?"

"I don't know," Chris admitted. "I ... we'll just see what he has to say first."

All I Ever Wanted
146. Someone Who Understands
by NSyncGrrl

The first thing JC became aware of when he woke up was a warm pressure curled into the small of his back. Cautiously, he reached behind him. One of Chris's dogs, he thought blearily. He could hear faint, rapid breath, and then his fingers brushed against long, shaggy hair. What the fuck -- He twisted in the bed, rolling onto the dog behind him, who yelped as JC's sudden weight startled it awake. "Shit!" JC cursed, pulling away from the strange terrier lying on top of his covers. "Who the hell are you?"

The small terrier growled in reply. JC edged away from it and took a long look around the darkened room. This wasn't his room. Where the hell was he?

And then it all came back. Driving around town, getting drunk, stopping at that club, the run-in with Eminem. JC's hands started to shake at the memory of the hatred he saw in those ice chip eyes. And AJ. AJ. The piano, the cider, the way Chris sounded so pissed on the phone, Joey's sleepy voice, AJ.

JC ran a hand down his face and sighed. He was in AJ's house, he remembered it all now. And this dog beside him was ... what had AJ called it? Jack? Something like that. Glancing at the alarm clock beside the bed, JC groaned. 3:15. He'd slept almost twelve hours straight.

But as he climbed out of the bed gingerly, he was surprised to find that his head didn't hurt as much as he thought it would. He stood up carefully. A bolt of pain shot through his temple and was gone. As slowly as possible, to avoid aggravating a hangover like the one he had yesterday, JC made his way around the bed, heading for the bathroom. You're getting this down pat, he told himself, staring at his pasty reflection in the mirror above the sink. Drink your nights away and move through the days like a zombie. Wake up in strange houses with stranger bedfellows -- When he kicked the door closed, the terrier jumped off of his bed and pushed into the bathroom, yipping at JC. "Shut it, Jack," he muttered, stripping out of his underwear and stepping into the shower.

The hot water invigorated him, and after toweling dry, he was loathe to redress in the same clothes he wore the night before. As he pulled his shirt on over his head, he smelled stale beer and smoke and sighed. You reek, he thought bitterly, leaving the guest bedroom. Jack followed at his heels. "Where's AJ, girl?" JC asked, before realizing that any dog named Jack was hopefully male. Jack ran down the hall, nails clicking on the hardwood floor, and JC followed.

He found himself in the living room that he remembered vaguely from the night before. The grand piano took up most of the room, and JC found himself gravitating towards it like a star towards a black hole. He recalled the feel of AJ's hand on his, the flesh warm and touch comforting, and he rubbed the back of his hand unconsciously. I can't believe I told him I

didn't know that song, JC thought, sitting down at the piano. How long had he been playing? Since he was a baby, it seemed, but then AJ had asked if he knew "Für Elise" and JC said no. That was the first song he played at his sixth grade concert recital! But his touch was so gentle, JC thought, his fingers finding the keys on their own accord, and it felt so good to have someone want to be with me, to touch me. Want to teach me something, and it was intoxicating to have all that attention only on me. AJ didn't look the gentle type, but JC wondered if there was something behind those intense brown eyes and that devilish grin that might be more lamb than wolf.

Haltingly, JC played the opening strands of "Für Elise," his fingers tickling the ivories with a familiarity that excited him. Flawless notes trilled through the room, cascading around him, and JC let himself give into the music. He felt his heart swell as the music rose to a perfect pitch. JC loved a finely tuned piano, and this one seemed to have been kept in top shape. Closing his eyes, JC felt the music wash over him, wave after wave of notes as crystal and as clear as sparkling water. He played through the song easily, the music healing his soul, each crescendo wiping away the feelings inside, the bitterness, the anger, the desperation.

JC felt someone sit down beside him on the bench, and his fingers faltered. Turning, he found AJ staring at him intently, his thin, lupine body mere inches from JC. He was dressed in his trademark style, similar to what he wore the night before, complete with dark glasses slipped halfway down his nose. With a wicked grin, AJ winked at JC over the top of his glasses and said, "You're either a quick learner or you were just humoring me last night."

JC laughed, a faint blush heating his cheeks. "I was drunk," he said, as if telling AJ something he didn't already know. "I couldn't have played anything after the night I had."

"Tell me about it," AJ said, offering JC the hot mug of coffee in his hands.

Frowning, JC looked between AJ's eyes and the coffee. He took the mug carefully and sipped at the black java. It had a mellow flavor, a hint of mocha wrapped in its dark depths, and it was cool enough to drink. JC gulped down a large swallow, his eyes not leaving AJ's face. AJ waited. "You really want to know?" JC asked.

AJ shrugged. "I got the gist of it last night," he admitted. "What would it hurt to talk about it now? You'll get it off your chest, and maybe it'll make you feel a little better, too."

JC sighed. He wanted to feel better. He kept remembering the way Chris sounded on the phone, and even though he knew he had to go back to the house, back home, he didn't want to. He was scared of what Joey might have told Chris. You told him you weren't sorry, he reminded himself, and by now he's surely told Chris. And I'm still not sorry, not for the kiss, but will Chris let me even say I'm sorry for hurting him the way I did before he kicks the shit out of me? JC didn't know, and even though he wanted to talk about everything he kept hidden away inside, everything he couldn't share with the other guys, he didn't know if he could trust AJ. Everything about the man scared JC -- the way he looked

at JC so openly, the curve of his lips, the sinewy muscles of his arms, the fact that he was a member of a rival band. "I don't know," JC whispered, looking AJ over. His eyes were drawn to the cross around AJ's neck. "I don't know if it's such a good idea."

AJ laughed. "You don't know if you can trust me," he said. It wasn't a question, but JC nodded anyway. AJ pursed his lips and watched JC for a moment, debating on what he wanted to say. When he spoke next, his voice was that soft drawl he had that JC remembered most from the previous night. "I'm not a media whore, JC. I'm not asking you to talk just so I can hold a press conference to release the latest scoop on NSync. If you don't want to talk, that's fine. But I thought you might want ..." He shrugged. "I don't know, a friend, someone to listen to you. Everyone needs someone like that, now and then."

"Do you?" JC asked, and AJ nodded. Sighing, JC said, "I'm not good at trusting people. I ... I don't even talk to the guys about how I feel, not really."

"You keep everything inside," AJ offered.

"Yeah," JC admitted. "It's easier that way, you know? Then you don't allow others to get too close, and you don't have to worry about --"

"About getting hurt," AJ said. "I know, JC, trust me. I'm the same way."

JC grinned. "You don't strike me as the type who bottles up his emotions," he said, looking at the dyed hair, the tattoos, the pierced lip. "Everything about you seems pretty straight-forward and blatant to me."

Winking at him, AJ said, "I'm sure there are things about me that would surprise you, JC."

"Like what?" JC asked coyly. Suddenly he wanted to know what AJ kept hidden behind those dark shades.

AJ shrugged. "If you're not going to tell me what's bothering you," he said, "then why should I trust you with what's bothering me?"

JC didn't know. But what would it hurt, at this point? It would feel so good to just get it all out in the open, to talk through the way he felt right now. Taking a deep breath, he asked, "Have you ever liked someone just because you thought they might like you back?"

"And then they tell you they just want to be friends," AJ said softly, nodding again. "Or they don't like you that way. Or they love someone else. I know how that is, believe me."

JC looked down at the piano, picking at the keys thoughtfully. "My friend," he whispered, "the one I kissed, he kissed me before. And he was drunk, but I thought it might mean something, you know? I thought maybe it meant something to him."

"Did it mean something to you?" AJ asked gently.

JC nodded. "A kiss always means something to me," he said, thinking about the way Joey hadn't pulled away at first when JC kissed him Friday

night. "And it was the first time I'd ever been kissed like that --"

"By a guy?" AJ smirked, amused.

"By a guy," JC confirmed. "I ... I couldn't stop thinking about it. And then he kissed me again, and I was so sure that maybe it was more to him this time. I thought maybe I was wrong, thinking I could eat, sleep, and breathe my music without someone else."

"You have your friends," AJ pointed out. "You told me you guys were close. You want loneliness? Try being in a boyband that doesn't hang out together. We see each other at the studio, on stage, and during rehearsals. That's about it anymore."

JC blinked. "That's it?" he asked, incredulous. He couldn't imagine not being with the guys for too long -- already he was anxious to be getting back, eager for Justin and Lance to return, even if it meant everyone would be pissed at him. "You guys don't visit each other? Talk on the phone?" AJ shook his head. "E-mail?"

AJ laughed. "I last saw them all at Brian's wedding what, two weeks ago? I talked to Nick on the phone on Wednesday, and that was only for a few minutes. When's the last time you saw your guys?"

"Joey, yesterday morning," JC whispered, remembering their terse words in the kitchen. "Chris, the night before. Justin and Lance are in Mississippi but they should be home today." Home for them is Mississippi, he reminded himself. "I mean, they should return today. We'll all stay at the house until the tour starts up again."

"When's that?" AJ asked.

"About a month," JC said, sighing. "I hope this all blows over before then."

"So it was one of your band mates," AJ murmured. "Not the blondes, though, eh? They're out of town."

JC laughed at that. "Shit," he said, "you just don't know. If it was Lance, my ass wouldn't even be sitting here, talking to you now. Justin would've fucking killed me the minute I tried --" Oh fuck, he thought, his eyes going wide as he realized what he was saying. He stared at the smile on AJ's face and whispered, "I didn't say that. Oh fuck, I didn't just tell you --"

"It's okay," AJ said, placing a comforting hand on JC's arm. "You know, you say the word fuck a lot."

"Jesus." JC swallowed hard. He hadn't meant to let that slip. Now if anything happened, it would be all his fault. Like everything else, he thought sourly. One more brick in the wall. "AJ, please don't say anything. No one knows. Just ... please, I'd die if anything came out about them."

"My lips are sealed," AJ said. He placed his thumb and forefinger to his mouth and drew them across his lips in a zipper motion. Then he smiled at JC. "If it helps you any? I told you about Howie, didn't I?"

"Yeah, but that's not ..." JC shook his head. "That's nothing like what's

up between Justin and Lance. Trust me on this."

AJ frowned, thinking. Then he said, "I kissed one of the guys once." When JC looked at him sharply, AJ grinned. "Not one of your guys, one of mine. I've liked him forever, since we met, and we used to be inseparable. We did everything together. And then one day I got drunk and told him how I really felt about him, and I kissed him."

"What'd he do?" JC asked.

"He freaked." AJ's grin faded, replaced by a sadness that pulled the corners of his lips into a dour pout. "He doesn't like guys, he doesn't like me in that way, he just couldn't deal with it. That was at the end of our last tour. I've been trying to repair the damage ever since. I mean, I just want to be in his life, you know? I don't want to be with him sexually if that's not what he wants, too, but he can't see that. He thinks every time I talk to him, I'm hitting on him. Every time I smile at him, he turns away. What happened to the guy I was friends with? Where did that friendship go?"

JC sighed. "I don't want that to happen to me," he admitted. "Hell, I don't even know if it's Joey I like. I mean, I like the way he kisses, and I like the way it felt to have someone, even if it was just for a second, but I don't want to sacrifice the group for that. I won't. I just won't do it."

"There are other people in the world," AJ said softly, "people other than your own little group. You can find someone to take your mind off of him. That's what I've been doing, what I've been trying to do, but it's hard. No one seems to understand the way I feel anymore."

Reaching out, JC placed a hand on AJ's wrist. "I do," he whispered.

AJ studied him for a moment before covering JC's hand with his own. "You should get back to your friends," he said softly. "They're probably worried sick about you." JC nodded. "I'll drive you home, if you want."

"Can you drop me off at the club?" JC asked. At the frown on AJ's face, JC added, "I want to pick up my car."

"Sure," AJ said. He squeezed JC's hand gently before standing up. Stretching languidly, he held a hand out to JC. He helped JC to his feet but didn't let go of JC's hand, not right away. "I'll give you my number," he said. "I want you to call me. Whenever you want to talk, or when you need someone, for anything. Just ... give me a call, okay?"

"Okay," JC said, shaking AJ's hand. "Thanks again."

"Anytime." AJ winked at him and, releasing his hand, led the way to the door.

All I Ever Wanted
147. That Damn Cat
by NSyncGrrl

"Poofu wants to come out," Jonathan said from the back seat of the car.

Lance turned around in the passenger seat and looked at the cat carrier. He couldn't see the kitten inside, but he imagined after the flight, she was pretty shaken up. "She's just scared," he said, leaning over so he could see Jonathan. He flashed the little boy a bright smile and added, "When we get home, you can take her out, okay?"

In the driver's seat, Justin glanced back at Jonathan. "Leave her in the carrier," he said, frowning. "I don't want that cat running around this car while I'm trying to drive."

"I'll hold her," Jonathan said, but Justin shook his head emphatically.

"No," he replied.

Lance reached over and placed a hand on Justin's thigh. It had been a long day for all of them, and Justin had been moody since he woke up this morning. But Lance was proud of the way he handled himself in the studio, around that creepy Michael guy, and when he told Justin the way Jonathan kept Michael at bay, Justin's smile brightened his day. On the plane Justin managed to catch a quick nap, but he only woke up grumpier than before, and Lance couldn't wait to drop Jonathan off and get Justin back to himself again. He loved Jonathan's company -- the boy was priceless -- but he thought maybe a nice massage would ease the tension away from Justin's brow. And then small kisses all over his body, Lance thought, squeezing Justin's thigh gently. And we'll make love slowly all night long. "We're almost home," he said to Jonathan. "You can wait just a little while longer, can't you?"

Jonathan didn't say anything, and Lance stared out of the window as they drove. Beside him, Justin sighed. Glancing at his lover, Lance frowned. "You okay, baby?" he asked softly.

Justin nodded. "Fine," he replied, his voice terse. He covered Lance's hand with his own, curling his fingers into Lance's palm, and he forced a smile. Lance leaned over and kissed Justin's cheek quickly. Justin's smile widened, and he winked at Lance. "Thanks," he whispered.

Lance squeezed Justin's hand and turned back to the window. He watched the passing buildings, stores and homes and businesses, the streets and sidewalks mostly empty this late on a Sunday afternoon. I wonder if JC's returned yet, he thought. Justin said JC had spent the night with a friend, but Lance saw the worry in his lover's eyes and prayed that JC was back when they got there. A feeling of dread bubbled within him -- he didn't want to come back in the midst of this. He wanted everything to be over with, so that they wouldn't have to walk in and be forced to take sides. I'm not taking sides, Lance promised himself. I'll listen to whoever

wants to talk, but I'm not taking sides. Joey and JC are both my friends. Chris, too. They can be mad at each other all they want, but I'm not going to let that affect my relationships with any of them. Or with Justin. He just hoped Justin was mature enough to make the same decision. Lance wasn't going to argue with him because their friends were fighting. He just wouldn't.

Behind his seat, he heard a tiny meow. "Jon?" he asked, turning around.

Jonathan looked at him with wide eyes, Poofu in his arms. The door to the carrier swung open, and the kitten looked terrified. "She's scared," Jonathan said. "She wants me to hold her."

Lance sighed. Before he could say a word, though, Justin glanced back at his brother and scowled. "Jon!" he cried, upset. "I told you no. Put her back."

"But Justin --"

"No," Justin said again, his voice harder this time. "Right now. Put her back."

Jonathan pouted, his lower lip poking out in an eerie imitation of Justin's own pout, and Lance forced himself not to grin. When Jonathan turned those large, pleading eyes his way, he cleared his throat and said sternly, "You heard him, Jon."

"She's scared," Jonathan said again, his voice sad and childlike.

"Lance, don't you dare fall for that," Justin warned. He looked at Lance out of the corner of his eye and frowned. "We're just a few blocks from home, Jon. Put her in the carrier now."

Sighing dramatically, Jonathan put Poofu back into the carrier. Before he could close the door, however, the kitten darted through his hands and under Justin's seat. "Oh shit," Jonathan said softly.

Lance turned back to the window, not wanting Justin to see the grin spread across his face. "Watch your mouth," he admonished, hoping the brothers didn't hear the smile in his voice.

Justin watched Jonathan in the rearview mirror. "You put her in there yet?" he asked.

"Um," Jonathan replied, frowning, "she sort of ran away."

"Fuck," Justin growled. He swerved off the road, heading for the shoulder. "Where the hell is she?"

"Under your seat," Jonathan replied. He leaned down and reached beneath Justin's seat. "I've got her tail --"

"Jon, no," Lance said. He grabbed the steering wheel with one hand, trying to steady it. Beneath Justin's seat, Poofu mewled pitifully. "Let go of her tail, Jon. Justin, slow down."

Justin slammed on the brakes. "I told you not to let her out," he said,

pulling up the hand brake. He whirled around and glared at Jonathan.
"Now look what you've done."

"Justin, please," Lance said. He placed a hand on Justin's shoulder and sighed.

"It's not my fault!" Jonathan cried, kicking the back of Justin's seat. Poofu meowed again, louder.

"Jonathan!" Lance said sharply, and Jonathan threw himself back against the seat, his arms crossed in front of his chest. He stuck his tongue out at Justin, whose brow clouded with anger.

Pouting, Jonathan said, "I want Poofu. Now."

"Jon --" Justin started, but Lance had had enough. Of the fighting, of the attitudes, of everything. He kicked open his door and slammed it shut as he climbed out of the car. Then he took a deep breath, letting the still afternoon air fill his lungs and clear his mind. Inside the car, he heard Justin call his name, concerned.

Lance walked around to the driver's side of the car. Opening Justin's door, he said, "Get out."

"Lance," Justin said, a little worried, but he stepped out of the car. Placing a hand on Lance's arm, he asked, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Lance said, "just tired." He held up a hand, quieting Justin. "It's not you, baby, it's everything, okay? All this shit. Now let me get this damn cat out from under your seat so we can get Jonathan home and get back to the house, okay? Please?"

"Okay," Justin said, stepping aside. He watched as Lance hitched up the legs of his expensive pants to kneel on the ground. With sure hands, Lance reached beneath the driver's seat and felt soft fur. He heard Poofu mew quietly as he felt a small paw, tiny ears. Then he grabbed the scruff of the kitten's neck and hauled it out from under the seat. Claws like fingernails scraped along the floorboard, but Lance managed to get the cat out. Cradling her to his chest, he stood up and stumbled back, but Justin's hand was on his waist, steadying him. "I love you," Justin whispered, kissing Lance's lips tenderly. "You're my hero."

Lance grinned. "Just 'cause I can save a cat?" he asked. "Open the back door."

Justin complied. Lance set Poofu back into the cat carrier and frowned at Jonathan. "Don't open this again," he said.

"I won't," Jonathan replied. "Thanks, Lance. You're my hero, too."

Lance laughed and rubbed Jonathan's hair playfully. "We'll be home in a few minutes. Can you wait that long?"

"Yes," Jonathan said, nodding sagely. As Justin slid behind the wheel again, Jonathan said, "I'm sorry, Justin. I didn't want her to get loose."

"Just listen next time, will you?" Justin asked, but the anger was gone from his voice, replaced with a weariness Lance didn't like to hear. He

checked the door to the carrier to make sure it was shut tightly and closed the door.

When he got into the car again, Justin started the engine and pulled back onto the road. The air was tense in the car, Justin and Jonathan both brooding over the cat. To lighten the mood, Lance asked, "Did you have fun this weekend, Jon?"

"Yeah," Jonathan said. Leaning on the back of Lance's seat, he said, "Maybe I can go next time, too."

Justin rolled his eyes, but Lance shrugged. "Maybe," he said, glancing at Justin. "I don't know when that'll be, though, with the tour coming up. We'll be staying here for a while."

"Maybe you can stay with me," Jonathan suggested. "Like a sleepover. You and Justin. What do you think?"

Lance laughed. "I think we should wait and see what your mother thinks of Poofu first," he replied. "We might not be welcomed back after she sees the cat."

But Justin laughed. "He's spoiled, Lance," he replied, winking in the rearview mirror at Jonathan. "Isn't that right, Jon? Mom lets you do whatever you want."

"Yep," Jonathan replied, nodding. "I'm as spoiled as you are."

"I'm not spoiled," Justin pouted, but Lance laughed and nodded. Glancing at him, Justin cried, "I'm not!"

When they reached the Harless' house, Justin carried the cat carrier into the house for Jonathan. Setting it down in the foyer, he and Lance waited as Jonathan ran into the kitchen, calling for his mother. Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's waist and hugged him close. "I can't wait until we get a moment alone," he whispered into Lance's ear.

"We're alone now," Lance pointed out, running his hands over Justin's arms, but then Mrs. Harless walked into the room, wreathed in smiles, and the moment was gone. Lance pulled away from Justin and hugged his mother tightly. "Hello, Mrs. Harless," he said, kissing her cheek. "You look lovely, as usual."

Mrs. Harless laughed. "You and your southern charm, Lance," she said, turning to Justin. She frowned at the flannel shirt and jeans Justin wore, a direct contrast to Lance's suit, rumpled from their flight. "I wish you could teach my son here a thing or two about fashion. You look like a hoodlum, Justin."

Justin sighed. "Mom," he whined, obviously not in the mood for his mother's jokes.

But Lance laughed and kissed Justin on the edge of his mouth. "I like you like this," he whispered as Mrs. Harless noticed the cat carrier behind them.

"What's this?" she asked, reaching for it. As she picked it up, Poofu mewed inside. "Justin --"

"It's Poofu," Jonathan said, taking the carrier from her. He set it on the floor and opened the door. "Come on, Poofu," he cooed, trying to coax the cat out of the box. "We found her at Lance's place and he said I could keep her."

"I said you had to ask your mother first," Lance started, shaking his head. "I didn't say you could keep her. Mrs. Harless, believe me ..."

Poofu stuck her head out of the carrier, nose twitching as she tried to sniff everywhere at once. As she sniffed at Mrs. Harless' feet, her little scratchy tongue licked out and Justin's mother scooped the kitten up into her arms. "Aren't you the cutest thing I've ever seen?" she sighed, petting the cat. "Poofu, is it?"

"I told you," Justin whispered. One hand snaked around Lance's waist, and he pulled him closer. "He's spoiled. I knew he'd get to keep that damn cat."

All I Ever Wanted
148. Homecoming
by NSyncGrrl

Joey looked at the flowers filling the living room and frowned. "You want to get rid of them?" he asked Chris, incredulous. "But I bought them all for you."

"I know you did, Joe," Chris said, kissing his cheek, "but I can't breathe. I'm stopped up and you're not going to like me if my allergies get the best of me. I won't feel like fucking then."

"Can't you say having sex?" Joey asked, grinning. "It's not so crude."

"Sorry," Chris said, sniffing. "Joe, I love the flowers, really I do, but I just don't think it's a good idea to keep them around."

Joey sighed. He knew Chris didn't want JC to come home and see the flowers all over the place. Truth be told, Joey didn't want that either, though it would make JC see exactly how he felt for Chris, that his words weren't just empty, sterile words that rang like hollow bells. He loved Chris. He was so sure of it, more sure than he had ever been before in his life. He almost wished that JC didn't come home, just so he wouldn't have to hear the two of them fighting. Over me, Joey thought grimly. It wasn't something he ever wanted to see, two of his friends arguing over him as if he were some prize at a county fair. He prayed that Justin and Lance came back before JC, if only so he wouldn't be the only one caught in the middle of things. "What do you want to do with them?" he asked, talking about the flowers.

Chris picked up a long-stemmed sunflower and twirled it around between his fingers. "Maybe we can donate them somewhere," he suggested. "The cut ones. To a hospital or daycare or something? And plant the ones with roots. Like the mums."

"Which ones are mums?" Joey asked. He knew hardly anything about flowers, other than the fact that Chris liked getting them and he vowed to bring him more whenever he could.

"The ones in dirt," Chris said, pointing to a potted plant with bushy balls of petals as flowers. "They're chrysanthemums."

Joey laughed. "Chris-anthiums?" he asked, poking a finger into Chris's ribs.

Chris giggled and stepped out of reach. "Named after me," he said, throwing himself down on the couch. He stretched out along the cushions and looked at Joey invitingly. "Can I just tell you something?"

"What?" Joey asked, edging closer to the couch.

Chris grinned. "Can I just tell you that I loved having sex with you on this couch? Now every time I sit here, I'm going to think about it. About your hard, thick dick in me, my torn underwear, your flannel shirt --"

Joey sat on the edge of the couch. Slipping his hand beneath Chris's shirt, he caressed Chris's stomach, his throat dry with lust. "We can do it again, if you want," he said, winking. "I've got a condom in my wallet this time."

Chris laughed and tapped Joey's nose with the sunflower. "You're as horny as Justin," he admonished. "Jeez, Joe. Just talking about doing it gets you all worked up, eh?"

Grinning, Joey leaned down over Chris and kissed his lips hungrily. "I take back everything I ever said about Justin and his insatiable libido," Joey whispered. "Can we fuck now?"

Chris laughed again. "What if I don't feel like it?" he countered.

Kissing down the curve of Chris's throat, Joey said, "You always feel like it." He unbuttoned Chris's shirt, his lips trailing kisses as his hands exposed Chris's chest. Chris moaned and closed his eyes, leaning back into the couch as Joey licked one pink nipple until it hardened beneath his touch. Working his way down Chris's stomach, Joey fumbled with the button on his friend's jeans, tugging the zipper down quickly. "Let me show you what I've learned so far," he said, stroking Chris's hard erection through the thin fabric of his underwear.

Chris thrust into his hand and swallowed thickly but didn't say anything. He simply nodded, and that was all the encouragement Joey needed to ease the throbbing cock out of Chris's pants. Squeezing gently, he ran his hand up the warm length that stiffened beneath his tender ministrations. Releasing Chris's dick, he ran one finger along it, from base to tip, pressing lightly. Chris moaned again. Then Joey leaned down and licked the path his finger had traced. "Jesus, Joe," Chris sighed. "Just suck it already. Another minute and I'll shoot my eye out."

Joey laughed. "You'll shoot your eye out," he sang in a high voice. "I love that movie. Do you remember --"

"Joe!" Chris cried, frustrated. "Are we going to get into a film discussion now? Can't it wait until after I come?"

In reply, Joey closed his lips over the tip of Chris's penis, and Chris laid his head back on the arm of the couch, a loud moan escaping his parted lips. Joey swirled his tongue over the sensitive tip, watching Chris closely. When he sensed Chris relax beneath him, Joey let his dick slip from his mouth and said, "Remember the lamp shaped like a lady's leg? And the bunny suit? And the time that kid got his tongue stuck to the pole --"

"Joe, please!" Chris cried. His eyes were glazed over, and he struggled to focus on Joey's leering face. "Jesus Christ in highest heaven, what are you trying to do? I'm about to explode here, Joe!"

Joey took Chris's swollen cock in his hand and leaned over to kiss his lips, his hand kneading the hard shaft, sliding up and down its length easily. Chris forced his tongue into Joey's mouth, eager, and Joey considered pulling back to tease again. But Chris must have sensed it, because he grabbed fistfuls of Joey's hair and held him close as he thrust into Joey's palm. Joey's grip tightened as Chris moaned into his mouth,

his kisses becoming careless as he continued to thrust, harder, faster, on the verge of orgasm. Then Joey felt his hand grow slick as Chris came, and he let go of Joey's hair to fall back against the couch, spent. He panted slightly. Joey grinned down at him, and this time Chris grinned back. "And do you remember the dogs," Joey asked as if they were actually carrying on the conversation, "that devoured the turkey --"

The front door opened. "Oh shit," Chris muttered, tucking himself into his pants quickly. Joey looked at the white mess in his hand, contemplated where to wipe it off, and then turned to watch as Justin and Lance entered the house. He grinned easily and stood up, nonchalantly placing his hand slightly behind his back. Chris lay on the couch, struggling with his stubborn zipper. "Hey, you guys!" Joey called brightly. That was close, he thought, too close. Thank God it hadn't been JC.

"Hey, Joey," Lance said, smiling, and Justin looked around the living room, frowning. "You max out your credit card with these or what?"

"Chris wasn't kidding when he said you bought a shitload of flowers," Justin said in a low voice.

From his position on the couch, Chris called out, "See? I told you."

Justin frowned at Joey. "Where --?" he asked as Chris sat up, a goofy grin on his face.

"Hey, guys," he said, a little too brightly, and Justin's frown deepened.

Justin looked from Chris's flushed cheeks to the blush lurking beneath Joey's thin beard, and then he winked at Lance. "Looks like we walked in on something here, baby," he said, a slow smile tugging at his lips. "How's it feel when the tables are turned, Joey?"

Joey raised his hand to run it through his hair, and then remembered the sticky mess in his palm. He hid it behind his back again and shrugged. "We're quick," he replied. "Show's over, you missed it."

"Wham, bam, thank you, ma'am," Chris replied, standing. "You need to learn that one, Justin. Get all of your frustrations out in a few quick jerks." Grinning at Lance, he added, "Or you can suck them all out. That's just as fun."

Lance rolled his eyes. "After the day we've had," he said, tossing his bag down on the floor, "quick isn't going to cut it for me. I want something that's going to take all night and leave me sore and achy in the morning."

Joey laughed. "Those are good, too," he said, backing out of the living room. "If you guys don't mind? I have to wash up." As he headed for the bathroom, he grinned in the hallway, glad one of his prayers had been answered. Chris thinks Justin doesn't believe this whole shitty mess isn't my fault, he thought as he washed off his hands, but at least he's not yelling at me. It felt so good to be able to joke around with Justin again, like they used to before he fell in love with Lance and suddenly everything sexual was sacred.

Back in the living room, Chris was buttoning up his shirt as Joey

returned. "We're taking them to an orphanage," he said, looking up at Joey. "You guys wanna give us a hand?"

Justin laughed. "You don't need any help now that Joey's cleaned off both of his," he said, nudging Joey in the arm.

Joey punched Justin's shoulder playfully, but he pulled back before hitting too hard. "I thought we were taking them to a hospital," he said. "I don't think you know where you want to take them, Chris."

"I don't," Chris admitted. "Let's just load them up in a few cars and see where we end up."

Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's waist and kissed the back of his neck. "While you guys do that," he said, grinning, "Justin and I will pick up where you two left off." Joey was surprised to see a thin blush creep into Justin's cheeks, which he ducked his head to hide.

But in the end the flowers filled up three cars, so Lance decided he'd drive one of them. Justin leaned down into the car and kissed Lance tenderly, his lips lingering on Lance's. "That's incentive for you to hurry back," he whispered.

"You sure you don't want to come along for the ride?" Lance asked. "We can slip away afterwards, somewhere quiet, just the two of us --"

But Justin shook his head. It wasn't that he didn't want to take Lance up on his offer, but ... "I'm tired of being in the car," he said, "and on a plane -- I'm just tired of moving around. I want to prop my feet up in front of the TV and cuddle."

"Not on that couch, I hope," Lance said, a twinkle in his eye.

"We almost did it there too, remember?" Justin asked, and Lance nodded. "What is it about that sofa that just makes us horny?"

"We can find out when I get back," Lance said. "Kiss me again." Justin obliged. When he pulled away, Lance kept his eyes closed. "Again."

Grinning, Justin kissed him again. Behind them, a car horn blew loudly, and then Joey yelled, "Hello? Can we get a move on here?"

Lance laughed at the furrow creasing Justin's brow. "My fault," he said, touching Justin's hand. "Can't get enough of my sexy-assed boyfriend."

"Shit," Justin drawled, smiling. "Is it too late for me to change my mind and come along?" Lance shook his head, but then Justin sighed. "No, I better stay here. I'm ..." He shrugged, letting the sentence trail off.

"You're hoping JC gets back soon," Lance said, nodding. "I know. I hope so, too."

"But tonight," Justin promised, kissing Lance once more. Two car horns pierced the quiet afternoon in eerie harmony. Stepping away from the car, Justin waved his hand. "Go," he said, grinning. "So you can get back here as soon as possible. And that's an order."

"Sir, yes sir," Lance said, saluting him. Then he blew another kiss and backed the car out of the driveway. Justin watched the three cars until they turned out of view, and then he headed into the house, his brow creased in worry over JC.

All I Ever Wanted
149. More Lies
by NSyncGrrl

When JC pulled into the driveway, he noticed the others' cars were gone. He didn't know where Joey and Chris were off to, or why Justin and Lance weren't back yet, but he was thankful to have the house to himself. He didn't feel like fighting anyone, didn't feel like running anymore. He just wanted it all to be over with now, and if that meant apologizing to Chris, begging forgiveness for hurting him, then so be it. Just let me get a chance to say what I need to say, he prayed as he turned off the car. Just give me that much, please?

JC inserted his key into the lock on the front door and frowned when it turned easily in his hand. They must've forgotten to lock the door, he thought grimly. In too much of a hurry, I guess. He felt the familiar weariness settle onto his back again as he pushed the door open wide and entered the house. Shutting the door behind him, he shrugged out of his jacket and tossed it onto the coat hanger. The faint odor of flowers hung in the air, giving the place a sickly sweet smell, and JC noticed the few potted plants still scattered around the living room. Flowers, he thought bitterly, picking one of the pompom shaped mums off of a nearby plant. The stem snapped easily in his hand, and he sniffed at the bloom, wrinkling his nose at the pollen scent. He could imagine Joey apologizing with flowers. No one had ever given JC flowers before. He tossed the mum away, letting it fall to the floor, and he started for the kitchen, suddenly hungry. AJ had stopped by Burger King for lunch, but that seemed like days ago. He dropped JC off at his car, made him promise to call, and then drove off into the late afternoon like a hero on a white steed riding off into the sunset. JC spent the next hour or so driving around town, gathering up the courage to come home. But what had he been so worried about? No one was here to meet him, no one cared --

"Hey." JC whirled around at the voice and saw Justin sitting on the couch, staring at him. He hadn't known anyone else was in the house.

"Hey," JC said softly. He stepped into the living room and said, "I didn't see you there."

Justin shrugged. "I'm here," he said, as if it wasn't evident. "Where have you been?"

Shoving his hands into the front pockets of his jeans, JC shrugged. "Out," he said evasively. He didn't want to tell Justin that he had spent the night with AJ, didn't want to remember the club from the night before, or the fact that he had stayed away because he was fairly certain Chris was going to kick the shit out of him when he returned. "When did you get back?"

"About an hour ago," Justin replied. He looked at JC with those deep, unreadable eyes of his, a slight frown on his face.

"Where are the others?" JC asked. He glanced around the room as if

expecting them to appear as suddenly as Justin had, but they were alone. He didn't even hear Chris's damn dogs.

Justin sighed. "They took the flowers to the hospital," he said. Before JC could ask what flowers, Justin continued. "I stayed here in case you came back. I want to know what's going on with you, JC. You're my oldest friend. Can't you talk to me?"

"I don't feel like talking right now," JC replied, and it was the truth. He had talked to AJ, who seemed to understand exactly what he was going through -- the loneliness he felt in the midst of the group, the wanting for something he couldn't have, the anger and embarrassment at wanting someone who didn't want him. How could he ever hope to explain all those things to Justin? Justin, who was the one the media loved the most? Justin, who got everything his heart desired, because all he wanted was Lance? Justin, who loved and was loved fiercely by someone who desired to be with him every moment, day and night? He would never understand the hurt, the pain, the alienated feelings and desperation JC felt at the thought of going through the motions of singing and dancing and pretending to be happy when he wasn't, not really, because he was so damn alone. And he wasn't about to try to explain it all, not now, not again. "I'm sure you've heard what happened."

Justin nodded. "Joey called Lance," he said. Meeting JC's gaze steadily, Justin added, "He says you kissed him, JC. And I know that's not true." JC felt his throat close up. Justin watched him closely. "You told me you weren't going to let him kiss you again. Do you remember that, JC? You said you didn't like him like that, and you weren't going to kiss him again. You didn't want to. You said --"

"I lied, okay?" JC's voice was bitter, foreign to his own ears. "Fuck, Justin, I lied. I kissed him, I did. I'm not proud of it, but I'd do it again because I wanted it. I wanted him. Fuck Chris and the rest of the world, but that night I wanted Joey so badly, there was no way I couldn't kiss him and still live with myself. I just couldn't."

JC watched Justin's eyes harden. When he spoke, his voice held a sharp edge that frightened JC. "Lied?" he said softly, his voice dangerously low. "Lied? I believed you, JC. I defended you. I told Lance Joey was the one who was lying. I told Lance he was wrong." Justin rose to his feet slowly, anger and betrayal warring on his face. He clenched his jaw and stepped around the coffee table, and JC took an involuntary step back. "We argued because of it, JC, and all you can say is you lied?"

Taking another step back, JC searched Justin's eyes, looking for the friend he knew. But all he saw was a dull resentment that tore at his heart. "Justin, I'm sorry --" he whispered. "I didn't mean to ... I didn't know you two would be drawn into this. I'm sorry."

"Fuck you, JC." Justin scowled, his lower lip pouting out childishly. "How can I believe you're sorry when you lied to me about something like this? What else did you lie about?" He came closer, and JC bumped back against the wall. He edged away from Justin, trying to put more distance between them. "Fuck, JC," Justin growled, "have you ever told the truth? You're not lonely, and you lied about that. You don't like Joey, and you fucking lies about that. How the hell am I supposed to trust anything you say now?" When JC didn't answer, Justin yelled, "Tell me that, will you?"

Tell me!"

"I can't," JC whispered. He moved further along the wall and felt the maw of the hallway open at his back. "Justin, I ... maybe you can't trust me." Justin's head jerked back as if JC had slapped him, and his jeweled eyes grew red with tears. "Don't defend me anymore. I don't deserve it. I don't need it, okay? You can't ... you can't understand ..."

Before Justin could say another word, JC turned and stalked down the hall, tears stinging his own eyes. He didn't look back as he opened the door to his room. Inside the cool darkness greeted him, and he locked the door behind him as the first tears began to fall. "Fuck you, JC," Justin had said, and JC didn't blame him. Not one bit.

Wiping his eyes roughly, JC emptied his pockets onto the bedside table. His wallet, a few coins, car keys, a small piece of paper folded into a tiny square. JC opened the paper up and read the seven numbers printed neatly onto it in a blocky, black hand. Smoothing out the folds of the paper, JC stuck it into his wallet to flatten it out and keep it safe.

Then he threw himself down on his bed and sighed into the pillow. Now Justin hates me, too, he thought bitterly. Joey, Chris, Justin. Only Lance is left, until he talks to Justin. Then he'll join the club. How the fuck did it come to this? He didn't know, and he didn't think it would ever work itself out again.

All I Ever Wanted
150. Even Angels Fall
by NSyncGrrl

When Lance drove into the driveway, he saw JC's car in the garage. Chris and Joey had decided to stop somewhere to pick up dinner, and Lance felt a sense of dread fill his stomach as he turned off the car. Maybe we can eat before anything is said, he thought, but he doubted it.

As he walked up onto the porch, he heard a snuffle and turned to find Justin leaning against the railing, hidden from the driveway by the ornamental trees that surrounded the porch. He stood with his arms folded across his chest, his head down, but he looked up as Lance approached. Lance noticed the red eyes, the flushed cheeks, and he reached out to place a hand on Justin's arm. "Baby, are you alright?" he asked gently.

Justin sniffed again and rubbed his nose with the back of his hand. "I'm fine," he muttered, not meeting Lance's gaze. "Just ..." He sighed. "I'm sorry, Lance. I didn't trust you, I didn't trust Joey -- I just assumed this was all his fault, you know? I'm so sorry."

Lance rubbed Justin's arm in a comforting gesture. Twisting his mouth into a crooked half-smile, he shrugged and said, "You've known JC forever. Of course you'd think --"

"He lied to me, Lance," Justin said sullenly. "He told me he didn't like Joey, he said he didn't want to kiss him again, he said he wasn't lonely, and they were all lies. All of it. Lies."

Lance didn't know what to say, so he simply pulled Justin into his arms and held him close. Justin laid his head on Lance's shoulder and blinked away fresh tears that threatened to fall. Rubbing his lover's back, Lance whispered, "Justin, I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault," Justin muttered, but his arms slipped around Lance's waist in a tight embrace. "I thought I knew him. But he's changed, Lance. He's not who I thought he was anymore."

Lance sighed. "We've all changed, Justin. We're not who we were when this whole thing began."

Justin rubbed his eyes against Lance's shoulder, wiping them on his shirt. "I just want him back the way he was before," he whispered. "Is that too much to ask?"

"Maybe it is," Lance offered, hugging Justin tighter. "Did you talk to him? Ask him why he lied?"

Shaking his head, Justin admitted, "He didn't answer me. I got mad and he locked himself away in his room. He wouldn't even say where he was last night."

Frowning, Lance asked softly, "Do you want me to talk to him?" He

didn't know what good that would do -- JC and Justin went way back, and if JC didn't want to confide in Justin, then why should he want to talk to Lance? But it was worth a try. Justin raised his head and looked at him. Lance's lower lip trembled to see the tears in his lover's eyes. "Don't cry," he said, running a hand over Justin's bandanna to smooth it down. "Please, Justin. I'll talk to him for you. Just please don't cry."

"He's in his room," Justin replied, drying his eyes with the sleeve of his shirt.

Lance took Justin's hand in his and led him to the front door. "I'm not promising anything --" he warned.

Justin nodded. "I know," he said, squeezing Lance's hand. As Lance opened the door, Justin stopped and pulled him back. "Thanks," he whispered, kissing Lance with warm, salty lips. Inside he sat down on the couch and watched as Lance headed down the hall towards JC's room. He stopped outside of the closed door and listened, but he couldn't hear anything inside the room. Cautiously, he knocked on the door.

"Go away," came the muffled reply.

"JC," Lance called, leaning closer to the door. "JC, it's me. Lance. Can I come in?"

He waited for an answer. Then he heard the release of the lock but the door stayed shut. Finally JC said, "It's open."

Lance eased the door open and stepped inside. The room was dark, the curtains closed. The only light came from the LED display on JC's stereo, which was turned on low. Lance recognized the song, the words so soft he couldn't really distinguish them from the music: "No such thing as you've lost it all; God knows even angels fall." On the bed JC lay on his stomach, the pillow scrunched up in his arms, and Lance closed the door behind him gently. "Hey," he said, his voice quiet.

"Hey," JC replied. He didn't look up at Lance. "I guess you hate me, too."

"No one hates you," Lance said, though he wasn't too sure about that.

JC snorted. "Justin send you in here?" he asked.

"Yes," Lance said. No use trying to deny it. "He wants to know why you lied to him."

"I don't know," JC mumbled, and Lance took another step closer. "How can I tell him when I don't even know why I lied to myself?"

Lance sat down on the edge of the bed. "Do you want to talk?" he asked, studying JC in the near darkness.

"No." JC picked at the quilt on the bed and didn't look at Lance. "Is Chris back yet?"

"No." Lance frowned. "He stopped for dinner. He should be back soon."

JC sighed. "I'm dead," he whispered. "Lance, I know you wouldn't understand, but I'm not sorry I kissed Joey. I'm not."

You're right, Lance thought, I don't understand that. "So you wanted this to happen?" he asked, confused. "You wanted Chris to be mad at you?"

Shaking his head, JC said, "I'm sorry I hurt him. But I wanted that kiss. I wanted Joey that night. Part of me still does."

"Are you in love with him?" Lance asked.

JC shrugged. "I don't think so," he said, "but I wanted a chance to find out, you know?"

"Is that the truth?" Lance asked. "Or are you lying again?"

"It's the truth," JC replied. "I thought he might still be interested in me, Lance. So I kissed him. I wanted him to stay with me. I thought maybe if I could have just one night, I would know if it was for me. But he told me no. He said he loves Chris. What can I say to that?"

"Nothing," Lance said. "Joey may be your friend, JC, but if he doesn't love you, then there's nothing in the world you can do to change his mind. You can't hope to compete with Chris, not if Joey's already told you the way he feels."

JC laughed bitterly. "It's like that song we do," he said, "I Drive Myself Crazy. It sounds wonderful when Chris sings it, the fans love it. When I sing it, it's just okay. But it's not him. It'll never be him. I can't be him."

"You don't want to be," Lance said, and JC turned to look at him, his eyes shiny in the scant light. "Trust me, JC. Justin thinks you've changed and maybe you have, but I've known you for a long time now, and even though you keep to yourself a lot, you've never struck me as the type of person who wants to be someone else. You have your own voice, your own style, and that's who you are. You can't change the music inside of you. You just can't."

"I know," JC whispered. He turned away again, resting his chin on the pillow, and sighed. "Chris hates me."

"Maybe," Lance agreed, and JC looked at him sharply.

"You're supposed to say no he doesn't," he said, but a slight smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

Lance grinned. "I'm not going to lie to you, JC. He might hate you. But you're still his friend. He's not going to kill you. In fact, Joey said that Chris has been worried sick about you. All morning long he wondered where you were and if you were okay."

"Really?" JC asked, his eyes widening slightly.

Lance nodded. "Really," he said. "So I suggest you stop lying and be as upfront with him as you possibly can. Maybe then he won't beat the living crap out of you."

JC laughed. "Maybe," he whispered. "He's buying dinner?"

"Chinese," Lance replied, standing up. Chinese food was JC's favorite, and Lance suspected that had something to do with Chris's choice of meals. He headed for the door. "I'll call you when he gets here."

"Okay," JC said. As Lance opened the door, he added, "Thanks."

"No problem," Lance replied, locking the door as he left the room.

All I Ever Wanted
151. Confrontation
by NSyncGrrl

Chris felt his hands start to shake when he saw JC's car in the garage. Grabbing the bag of take-out food from the front seat of his own car, he hurried into the house. As he closed the front door behind him, he saw Joey leaning against the wall, arms crossed against his chest, worry lacing his features. Lance sat on the couch, twisted around to watch Chris carefully, and Chris suspected Justin sat beside him. Frowning, Chris let his gaze survey the room slowly, taking in every little detail. "Where is he?" he asked.

"In his room," Lance replied. Chris headed for the hall. As he passed Joey, an arm reached out to touch his.

Chris looked up at Joey's sad eyes and sighed. "Here," he said, handing the bag of food to Joey. "You guys start eating."

"Chris, don't --" Joey started, but Chris shrugged his hand off of his arm.

"I have to, Joe," he said softly. "I have to do this."

Joey sighed. "I know," he whispered. Glancing at the others on the couch, he leaned down and kissed Chris's cheek, letting his lips linger on Chris's smooth skin. "Just remember that he's your friend, okay? We have a tour coming up, we have to work together, live together -- just remember that, okay?"

Nodding, Chris pulled away. He glanced at Lance, who smiled slightly. Beside him Justin sat slumped on the couch, Lance's hand in his, his eyes wide as he stared at Chris. Taking a deep breath to steady himself, Chris headed down the hall. He stopped in front of JC's door and knocked. Inside he heard the lock disengage. "Dinner here yet?" JC asked, opening the door. He took one look at Chris and in a small voice said, "Oh. I guess it is."

"Can I come in?" Chris asked, trying to keep his voice neutral. He studied JC's tired eyes and pale skin, and reminded himself that this lonely, depressed boy had kissed his Joey.

For a moment he didn't think JC would answer. Then JC stepped aside and held the door open for Chris. "Why not?" he sighed.

Chris stepped inside the darkened room. Crossing his arms in front of his chest, he leaned against the wall and waited. JC closed the door and sighed again, watching Chris closely as he leaned back against the door. When it became obvious that JC wasn't going to initiate the conversation, Chris asked, "What the hell happened?"

JC frowned. "You mean last night?" he asked, stalling for time.

"That's a good place to start," Chris said, "though I mean Friday night."

When you kissed my boyfriend. What the hell was that all about?"

"So you're like that," JC whispered.

"Well, Jesus Christ, JC," Chris said, his anger returning. "I sleep with the guy. What do you think we are? He bought me flowers, he loves me. We're together. That sort of makes us boyfriends, don't you think?"

JC shrugged. "I never meant to hurt you," he mumbled.

Chris laughed bitterly. "So what, you thought I'd never know? You thought you could seduce him away from me and I'd just let him go without a fight? After all I've gone through to finally hook up with him?" He glared at JC, who shrank back against the door like a wilted flower. "What fucking dream world are you living in?"

JC's lower lip trembled and he looked down at the floor, his hands twisting together. I'm not falling for this, Chris thought, holding onto his anger. "Chris --" JC started, his voice breaking slightly.

"Don't pull this shit again," Chris growled. "I believed you the last time, and then you fucking kiss Joey." Without warning, Chris lunged at JC. His hands caught the front of JC's shirt before the other boy could move away. Fear leapt into JC's eyes, fueling Chris's anger, and he shook his friend roughly. Chris blinked away stinging tears as the world swam around him, his emotions clouding his mind. "Why?" he demanded. "Jesus fucking Christ, JC, why do my feelings mean shit to you anymore? Do you want Joey so badly that you'll step on anyone who gets in your way?"

"No!" JC cried, raising his hands between them. He pushed Chris back, trying to break away. "Chris, no, I don't want him, I don't --"

"Stop lying to me!" Chris yelled, and JC flinched. Chris shoved JC against the door and turned away. "I am not going to put up with this. You want to throw all this away for some stupid little kiss? The last five years, the tour, everything, because you can't find someone other than Joey to fuck with?"

"What are you saying?" JC whispered.

Chris whirled around, his eyes flashing. "I'm saying I ain't playing this game with you, JC. I'm not going to let you fuck up what I've got with Joey. Keep this shit up and that's it. It's over. I'm outta here."

"Oh, fuck," JC sobbed. He covered his mouth with the back of his hand, and Chris tried to ignore the tears that coursed down his friend's cheeks.

"It's your call," Chris whispered. "I'm not trying to be mean, but JC? He's mine. Mine. And I'm not going to give you a chance with him, so I suggest you find yourself someone else to fall for."

"Chris, I'm sorry," JC whispered. He wiped his eyes and sighed shakily. "I'm so sorry. I don't want this, I swear to you I don't ..." He trailed off, squeezing his eyes shut. "I'm sorry."

Yeah, right, Chris thought, crossing his arms again. He scowled at JC, his crumpled face hidden in his hands. Are these tears real? he wondered,

but suddenly the anger fell away, leaving him exhausted and weak. Please, JC, please don't let this shit tear us apart. Chris sighed. "I bought dinner," he said sullenly.

JC nodded. "Chris, I'm sorry --"

"So you said." Frowning, Chris added, "But I'm not going to believe you, JC, not yet. You have to prove it to me." He watched JC try to compose himself and sighed again. "Where were you last night?"

Biting his lower lip, JC glared balefully at Chris. "A friend's house," he whispered.

"Who?" Chris persisted. He didn't want to admit it, not now that JC was here and obviously safe, but he had worried about his friend. Big time worry, too -- he had called every single person he could think of that JC might have crashed with the night before, but no one knew where he was at. Chris didn't like not knowing.

"Do I have to tell you?" JC asked, his eyes pleading with Chris to not press the issue.

"No," Chris sighed. "Just let us know before you disappear again, okay? Wear your beeper or something."

JC nodded again. "Okay," he agreed. He shuffled his feet and waited. When Chris didn't say anything, JC looked up at him and frowned. "I'm sorry," he said again.

Chris sighed. "We'll see," he said softly. Pointing to the door, Chris asked, "You hungry?"

"Yeah," JC whispered. He glanced at the door and then looked back at Chris. "Chris --"

"There's nothing more to say," Chris said, but he held JC fast with his intense gaze. "I'm serious, JC. Don't fuck with me. I will not stand for it."

"I'm sorry," JC muttered again as Chris pushed past him, out of the room. "Chris?"

"I said there's nothing more to say," Chris repeated. "Come get your food before it gets cold."

JC frowned, but he wiped his eyes again and followed Chris out into the hall. He glanced up and found Joey leaning against the wall, watching them with hooded eyes. Lance stood beside him, Justin leaning against him, his head on Lance's back. When he looked up, JC looked away. "Is everything okay?" Joey asked quietly.

Chris shrugged. "I guess," he replied, not meeting Joey's intense gaze. "Where'd you put the food?"

"The kitchen," Joey replied. He caught Chris's arm, stopping him. Chris tried to shrug away, but Joey held onto him tightly, forcing him to look at him. "You okay?" he asked.

Chris nodded. "Fine," he said, pulling away. "Let's just eat, okay?"

Joey studied him a moment longer, then looked over at JC. "Sure," he said, leading the way into the kitchen. Chris followed, glancing at Lance and Justin as he passed. He didn't want to think about JC right now, or the way his tears seemed so real this time, so apologetic, or the way that some part of him, deep inside, didn't believe those crocodile tears for one minute.

All I Ever Wanted
152. Easier Said Than Done
by NSyncGrrl

No one spoke during dinner. Chris dug into his food with a vengeance while Joey watched him carefully. Lance kept sneaking bits of food from Justin's plate, bringing a grin to his lover's face, but JC could see the exhaustion in the slump of their shoulders, the gleam of their eyes, and he knew they would probably call it a night after they finished eating. As he slurped up the beef lo mein with the help of a chopstick, he tried not to think of what he'd do after dinner. He didn't want to be alone with Joey and Chris again. He didn't want to stay around to hear Joey ask Chris what had happened between them. He wanted to just leave, but he had nowhere to go.

Call AJ, his mind whispered, and as he finished his meal, he thought it was an excellent idea. Before he could lose the courage, he pushed away from the table and cleared his throat. The others looked up at him expectantly. "Thanks," he mumbled. Then he turned and headed back to his room.

Behind the safety of his closed door, he pulled out the slip of paper with AJ's number on it. The phone rang four times, and just as he was about to hang up, AJ answered. "Talk to me," he said, his voice soft in JC's ear.

Suddenly JC didn't know what he wanted to say. "Hey," he began, unsure. Please, he prayed, please remember me.

"Yo man, hey!" AJ cried, and JC grinned to hear the smile there. "How'd it go? They glad to see you or what?"

"Or what," JC admitted. He sighed and rubbed his forehead, not wanting to talk about it over the phone. There was only one line in the house -- he didn't want someone to pick up another extension and overhear anything he had to say.

"I'm sorry," AJ replied. "Hey, you looking to step out for a bit? Because the night is young, my man, and I am nothing if not available."

JC grinned. "Sure," he said, shrugging. Why not? He had nothing to lose, and it would be nice to have a friend, someone who would listen to him vent about the others, someone who wouldn't take sides against him. He agreed to meet AJ in the parking lot of a nearby grocery store, and then he changed into fresh clothes. He had forgotten he still wore the same outfit from the day before, and he toyed with the idea of a quick shower. Oh, fuck it, he thought, tugging a crisp shirt on and tucking it into his pants. AJ had already seen him at his worst the night before -- a shower wouldn't make any difference now. As he left his room, he ran into Justin and Lance in the hall, headed for their own room. Justin's hands were on Lance's waist, and when Justin looked up at him, JC saw sadness in his friend's tired eyes. "See you in the morning," he offered.

"Where you going?" Justin asked, pulling Lance closer to him.

"Out," JC replied, walking away before more questions were asked. He saw Chris in the kitchen, cleaning up the table. "I'm going out," he called as he headed for the front door.

"You gonna be back tonight?" Chris asked, following behind him.

JC shrugged. "Maybe," he said. He frowned at Chris. "I'll be fine."

"You have your beeper?" Chris asked, and JC nodded. "Fine. See ya."

JC waited, hoping for more, but Chris turned and went back into the kitchen, leaving him alone. Fine, JC thought, slamming the door as he left the house. See ya, too. Have fun tonight because I'm sure I won't.

But you might, a voice inside whispered as he slid behind the driver's seat of his car, because AJ looks like he can show you a good time, and if it's just the two of you, he'll focus that intense gaze onto you and only you, and you might surprise yourself, Josh. You might actually like his attentions.

At the parking lot, JC sat on the hood of his car and waited. He had parked away from the overhead lights, out in the darker recesses of the lot, away from the store and the customers, and he watched the one road leading into the lot, trying to tell himself he wasn't too anxious to see AJ again. With a glance at his watch, he wondered how long it would take AJ to drive over. What if he didn't show up at all?

And then JC saw the streetlights glisten wetly off the black Mercedes as it turned into the parking lot, tires spinning. The car zoomed towards him like a tiger, engine purring as it lapped up the tarmac. Unease flittered through JC, knotting his stomach, and he almost jumped off the hood of the car, so sure that AJ was headed right for him. He could see that devilish grin and dark sunglasses through the windshield, but at the last possible second the car swerved and slid to a stop, inches from JC's own vehicle. The passenger side door eased open, and AJ leaned across the seats. Looking at JC over the top of his shades, he grinned and asked, "Need a lift?"

JC found himself grinning back. Before he even closed the door behind him, AJ was off again, shifting the gears to get back up to speed. With his heart in his throat, JC cinched the seatbelt and leaned his head back against the headrest, intent on enjoying the hell-bent ride. "Where are we going?" he asked, pleased to hear that his voice wasn't the least bit shaky.

AJ shrugged. "Where do you want to go?" he replied, and JC didn't have an answer for that. Looking over at him, AJ asked softly, "So what happened?"

"Nothing," JC said, looking away. He didn't think he wanted to talk about it right now. "I just ..." He sighed. "I just want to get out, get away from everything, is that so bad? Just for a little while. Forget who I am and do something I've never done before. I want to be someone other than JC Chasez." He glanced over at AJ. "Does that make any sense?"

"Perfect sense," AJ said, nodding. "If you're not JC, then who are you going to be?"

JC laughed. "I didn't mean --"

"Yes, you did." JC turned to find AJ studying him intently. "You hide behind those initials and they aren't the real you. What do you call yourself? In your own mind, who are you?"

JC bit the inside of his cheek. "I'm not sure I understand what you're getting at," he said softly.

"I'm Alex," AJ said, offering his hand to JC as if they had never met before. The move surprised JC into shaking it. AJ's hand held his a moment too long, and then he let go. "Inside that's what I call myself. Alex. Everyone else calls me AJ. Well, almost everyone. My mom still calls me Alexander when I piss the shit out of her." JC smiled at that. "But you, I want you to call me Alex. It's who I am, who I really am. You know?"

"I know," JC said. "I'm ... in my mind I'm Josh. No one calls me that but Joey."

"The guy you kissed," AJ pointed out.

"Yes," JC replied.

AJ pursed his lips. "So you want me to call you Josh? Or no?"

"You can," JC said, nodding. He grinned at AJ. "Does Nick call you Alex?" he asked.

AJ chewed on his lip thoughtfully. "He used to," he whispered, and then shrugged. Turning to JC, he let the sunglasses slip a little further down his nose and he winked. "But he's not here. It's just you and me and the rest of the world can take a flying fuck at the moon tonight, what do you say?"

JC thought it was an excellent idea. They drove out of the city, down long, forgotten strips of highway, the radio playing loud and hard. AJ knew every song, and he sang along, making faces at some of the lyrics to get JC laughing. Finally they found an old bridge suspended above the interstate, and AJ parked the car. Above them the moon hung in the night sky among a smattering of stars. JC followed AJ's lead and got out of the car to sit on the hood. AJ leaned back against the windshield, his ankles crossed, his hands laced behind his head, and he looked up at the moon as JC climbed onto the hood beside him. "It looks like the Death Star up there," JC said, nodding at the silver orb. It wasn't quite a full moon, and wasn't quite a quarter moon, but the pocked surface brought to mind memories of Star Wars.

AJ laughed. "You a fan?" he asked, pushing the sunglasses up on his forehead so JC could see his eyes. They were deep and dark and endless in the night.

Shrugging, JC said, "I guess so. You?"

"I fucking love Star Wars," AJ replied. "And the newest one? Shit. Darth Maul kicks some serious ass. No way that Obi-Wan could've beaten

him in a fair fight."

"Well," JC said, leaning back against the windshield beside AJ, "he was pissed. Darth Maul just cut down his Jedi Master. Obi-Wan was livid."

AJ leaned over him, that wolfish leer on his face. "And he was this close --" he held his forefinger and thumb just inches apart to prove his point -- "to giving into the Dark Side. Now wouldn't that have been an interesting twist?" He looked at JC, waiting for an answer.

But JC couldn't take his eyes off of those thin lips, framed by the trim and even goatee. He wondered if AJ would taste like Joey did, sweet and spicy, or if there was another, darker flavor in that wicked mouth. "Josh?" AJ asked softly, and JC licked his lips before he met AJ's steady gaze. "Am I losing you here?"

"No," JC whispered. His voice cracked. He cleared his throat and tried again. "No, I'm ... yeah, it would've made the movie much more ... I mean ..." He looked at those lips again, pressed so tightly together, and shook his head. "What are we talking about again?"

To his surprise, AJ sat back and laughed. "Star Wars," he replied. "But I think your mind is elsewhere."

"It is," JC admitted, turning away as he felt his cheeks heat up.

"So tell me about your day," AJ suggested. "What happened when you got home?"

JC sighed. "Justin hates me," he started, remembering the look in his friend's eyes when JC told him not to come to his defense again. "I've known him forever and he hates me now."

"Because you kissed Joey?" AJ prompted.

"Because I lied to him," JC said. "I told him I didn't like Joey."

"And you told me you didn't, either," AJ said. "So was that a lie too?"

JC looked at AJ and shrugged. "I don't think so," he whispered. "But I told Justin I wouldn't let Joey kiss me again, and then I go and kiss him, you know?"

AJ nodded. "So what, there's five of you?" JC nodded. AJ held up one hand, fingers spread out. Turning his thumb down against his palm, he said, "You're one." Then he folded down his pinky finger. "Justin. Who else?"

"Lance is mad I lied to Justin," JC offered, and AJ's ring finger joined the others to rest in his palm. "Chris is pissed to all hell because Joey's his boyfriend." AJ's middle finger folded down. Only one finger remained. "And Joey ... he's just ..." JC sighed. "He's not mad, I don't think, but he doesn't like me like that. He loves Chris. But I think he just wants this whole thing to work itself out."

"You want that too, don't you?" AJ asked.

"Yeah," JC said, nodding. Then he laughed bitterly. "You know what?"

Chris threatened to leave the group if I didn't stay away from Joey. Like I'm going to chase after him now that he's told me point blank he doesn't want me. But he said if I don't shape up, he's leaving." Tears gathered in JC's eyes, and he blinked them away. "Fuck, Alex. What the fuck can I say to that?"

For a long moment, JC didn't think AJ would reply. Then he placed a comforting hand on JC's knee, and JC turned towards him. When had he moved so close? His thumb rubbed JC's knee gently, his touch warm and heavy through JC's jeans. "You need to find someone else," he said softly. "You can lie awake at night and ache for someone who will never want you in the same way you want them, or you can move on and find someone else. And you don't strike me as the pathetic type, Josh. There's strength in you, I can sense it."

JC sighed. "It's so easy for everyone to tell me to find someone else, isn't it?" he asked. "But it doesn't work that way. And we have the next leg of our tour coming up in a few weeks, and it's so hard for me to meet people --"

"You met me," AJ said, and JC looked at him sharply, suddenly very aware of the hand burning on his knee. "It's not as hard as you make it out to be, Josh. You're a very attractive man. You can sing, and you have great cheekbones, and amazing eyes ..." His voice trailed off as he stared into JC's eyes, searching for something more to say. JC held his breath and waited. He wanted to know what AJ saw in his eyes, but he didn't know how to ask.

But then AJ shook his head slightly, and he smirked as he turned away. Squeezing JC's knee, he pulled his hand back, and JC fought the urge to grab it in his own. "Alex," he said, and AJ glanced up at him, frowning. JC studied the black bandanna wrapped around AJ's head as if he were a biker, the black shades pushed up onto his forehead, the black tank top exposing the black inked tattoos that snaked up his arms. Reaching out, he traced the curves of one of the tattoos, his touch tentative, unsure. Beneath his finger, the skin was smooth and soft, the hair on the arm ticklish. JC didn't look up from the tattoo, intent on the image.

"It's getting late," AJ whispered.

JC nodded. "I want to thank you," he said softly. "For last night, and for tonight, and ..." He looked up at AJ, a smile already on his face. "Thanks."

"My pleasure," AJ said. JC let his fingers spread out along AJ's arm, and AJ covered JC's hand with his own. "You'll find someone, Josh. I know it."

"Maybe I already have," JC replied. AJ grinned and wrapped his fingers around JC's hand. As he leaned closer, he lifted JC's hand to his chest, holding it tightly. JC closed his eyes, waiting.

Soft lips touched his, warm and damp. Just a tiny kiss, a hint of smoke and coffee against his mouth, and then AJ pulled away. When JC opened his eyes, he found AJ watching him intently. "I should get you home," he whispered. "Unless you don't want to go?"

"I don't," JC replied. Right now, his hand in AJ's against his chest, JC couldn't imagine going back to his empty bed.

All I Ever Wanted
153. Cheer Up
by NSyncGrrl

Lance lay on his side of the bed and watched Justin undress, frowning at the anger on his lover's closed face. When he stood in just his boxers and t-shirt, Lance reached out and wrapped his arms around Justin's waist. Pulling him down onto the bed, he rested his chin on Justin's shoulder and sighed. "My poor little baby boy," he cooed, kissing Justin's ear. "You're in such a pooppy mood. Is there nothing I can say or do to cheer you up?" He nuzzled Justin's neck, nipping playfully.

Justin giggled and settled back into Lance's embrace. "Lance, I'm sorry," he sighed, running his hands along Lance's arms. Lance eased a bare leg on either side of Justin's thighs, pulling him closer against his naked body. Just holding Justin was enough to turn Lance on, and he kissed along the back of Justin's neck, his hands slipping down to cup Justin's cock through his thin boxer shorts.

"Don't be sorry," Lance murmured into Justin's skin. His fingers stroked Justin until he grew hard beneath his lover's touch, and Justin leaned his head back on Lance's shoulder. His hands trailed up Lance's bare thighs, his touch light on the smooth skin. "You're angry at JC, I know," Lance continued, squeezing Justin's erection with one hand while the other slipped inside of Justin's t-shirt, the fingers feeling their way up his chest to toy with Justin's nipples. "But maybe he needs someone right now. A friend, someone who will listen to him. He's known you forever -- doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"Yes," Justin moaned, but Lance thought maybe Justin wasn't really paying much attention to what he was saying right at this second. His hands slid between them, reaching for Lance's own erection pressed against the small of his back, and when Lance unsnapped the front of Justin's boxers, he moaned again. "Yes, Lance, please ..."

Lance laughed softly and tugged Justin's shirt off. Tossing it aside, he kissed Justin's shoulders, his hands massaging Justin's back gently. Justin leaned forward and sighed. "Lance, please," he said, pulling down his boxers. He kicked them off and started to turn in Lance's arms. "Lance --"

But Lance's hands on his shoulders kept him facing away, and Lance could just picture the pretty pout on Justin's lips at that moment. Leaning forward, Lance caught the tip of Justin's ear in his mouth and licked along the edge of Justin's hairline, just behind his ear. Justin shuddered beneath the touch. "Top drawer," Lance whispered, pointing to the bedside table. Without further prompting, Justin opened the drawer and grabbed the tube of K-Y Jelly inside. Thank God you didn't think to pack everything, Lance thought, smiling, as Justin handed him the tube.

"Lance, let me --" Justin began, but Lance shook his head.

"I'm cheering you up," Lance said. He opened the tube and squirted the lubrication out into his hand. Rubbing his palms together, he took his

hard dick in his hands and closed his eyes as he lathered himself with the lubricant.

Justin glanced back at him and laughed. "You're cheering yourself up," he said, swatting Lance's hands away from his cock. "Let me do that."

"Too late," Lance replied, wrapping his arms around Justin's waist again. His hands found Justin's hard erection, and they moved easily up and down the thick length. Justin moaned and leaned back against Lance, his hands on Lance's thighs as he thrust into Lance's hands. Sliding to the edge of the bed, Lance let his legs drape over the side of the bed and whispered, "Stand up, baby."

Justin obeyed. Lance admired his lover's strong back that tapered into a narrow waist, his shapely ass, his muscular legs. "You gonna stand there looking at me all night long?" Justin asked, pouting, "Or is this going to be fun for me, too?"

Leaning forward, Lance bit Justin's butt gently. "Hey!" Justin cried, laughing. He tried to dance away but Lance's hands around his waist held him tight. "No biting."

"It didn't hurt," Lance replied, kissing away the tiny red mark where his teeth had caught Justin's skin.

"No, it didn't," Justin admitted, reaching back to run his fingers through Lance's hair. "But don't do it again. You're teasing me."

Lance laughed. That was exactly what he was doing. "You like me teasing you," he pointed out.

"But right now I just want JesuseverlovingChrist --" Justin's words tumbled into a breathless moan when Lance eased one lubed finger inside of him. His knees buckled but Lance held onto his waist tightly, keeping him standing. He tried to fall back against Lance, but Lance wasn't ready yet.

"Lean forward a little, honey," he said, and Justin complied. Lance eased another finger into him, and Justin's hands squeezed Lance's knees, his breath quick and hard.

"Now," Justin pleaded. "Lance, now." Lance stroked Justin's swollen erection slowly as his fingers worked inside his lover, and Justin thrust into his hand, his muscles tightening around Lance's fingers. "Lance, please."

Lance eased Justin down onto his own thick cock, hard and aching for his lover. As he slipped inside, Justin held his breath until he sat down on Lance's lap, the full length of him deep inside. Spreading his legs to straddle Lance's, Justin leaned back against Lance's chest, pushing him down to the bed. Lance thrust into Justin with slow, even strokes that matched the rhythm of his hand on Justin's dick. Justin's hands ran down Lance's arms and he moaned as he tried to pick up the pace, squeezing the muscles in his butt to work Lance's dick faster, harder, wanting more. He moaned with each thrust of Lance's hips, and when Lance's teeth closed down over his shoulder gently, biting him, Justin groaned as his orgasm tore through him. Lance felt his hand grow slick with Justin's

juices, and he thrust harder, eager to come as well. Above him Justin shimmied his hips in that maddening way he had that drove Lance crazy when they danced, and a few thrusts later he came inside of his lover. Justin rolled off of Lance, his lips eagerly kissing Lance's face. "You all cheered up now?" Lance asked, breathless.

"Getting there," Justin replied. He pulled the blanket down from where it covered the pillows and wrapped it around himself. Then he held it open for Lance to crawl beneath, and Lance snuggled into the shelter of Justin's arms. Justin wrapped the blanket around the both of them and cuddled up behind Lance. His lips kissed along the back of Lance's neck, arousing him again. "I love you," he whispered. "I love you so much, Lance. I'm never letting you go."

"You better not," Lance growled, wiggling his butt into Justin's crotch. "I love you, too, Justin. I don't want you to ever forget that."

"I won't," Justin promised. Hugging Lance tight against him, he closed his eyes and sighed, content. Lance closed his own eyes, the tension in him draining away. He was just glad to see the day finally over with, and he hoped things would clear up between JC and everyone else before the tour started back up again. He wondered where JC had rushed off to earlier in such a hurry. Please let him be alright, Lance prayed as he drifted off to sleep.

All I Ever Wanted
154. Overheard
by NSyncGrrl

Joey came into his room to find Chris lying on the bed beneath the covers as if ready to go to sleep, but the bedroom light was still on and he could see Chris's eyes, open and staring at a spot near the closet, and a quick glance at the clock told him it was only ten in the evening -- too early for either of them to call it a night yet. He had hoped that JC's return would've sparked something between the two of them, a shouting match, a fight, something that would have ended with JC and Chris hugging each other and vowing never to argue again. But it didn't. Joey didn't know what went on behind that closed door, but now JC was gone again and Chris was moping around like a petulant child, and Joey was sick of it.

Jumping onto the bed, Joey laid down beside Chris, hugging him close through the covers. "Okay, that's enough," he said, burrowing his head between Chris's shoulder blades.

"Enough what?" Chris asked, rousing himself. As if he didn't know.

"Enough of all this shit," Joey replied, sitting up as Chris rolled over in his arms. He looked up at Joey with those dark eyes of his and frowned. With one finger, Joey touched the tip of Chris's nose, hoping to bring a smile to his face, but the attempt failed.

Chris's frown deepened. "Joe, I can't just turn off the way I feel," he said.

Joey sighed. This sadness that clung to Chris like silk was worse than the anger. Joey could deal with anger -- you screamed and shouted and threw things, and then it was gone. But sadness was something you tiptoed around, careful not to disturb it, afraid to set it off. "Tell me what's wrong," he said, kissing Chris's cheek.

Rolling his eyes, Chris replied, "You know what's wrong."

"I want to hear you say it," Joey said. He traced a hand down Chris's face and smiled at him. "Humor me."

"Fine," Chris said, sighing. He stared at a point on the ceiling and didn't meet Joey's gaze as he spoke. "I told him I was going to leave, okay? If things didn't shape up and he didn't move on, I was going to leave the group. I should have never said that."

Kissing down the hair on Chris's goatee, Joey murmured, "No, you shouldn't have."

"Thanks for your support, Joe," Chris growled, turning away.

Joey snuggled up against him again, wrapping his arms around Chris's smaller frame. "Well, for what it's worth, you're not going anywhere. I won't let you."

Chris sighed again. "I know that, Joe. I'm just sick --"

"And tired," Joey added, grinning.

"And tired," Chris agreed, the hint of a smile in his voice, "of his being alone. It makes me feel guilty for what we have together, you know?"

Joey laughed. "Take a lesson from Justin," he said. "It doesn't make him feel guilty. Unless being guilty makes him horny as hell." Kissing the back of Chris's neck, Joey added, "And then I really want you to take a lesson from him."

"Joey," Chris sighed, "you're not being serious."

"I am," Joey assured him, but the smile didn't fade from his face. Crawling over top of him, Joey leaned down and whispered into Chris's ear, "But I know something that you don't."

"What?" Chris asked, turning over as Joey rolled away. Joey smirked at him and tugged his shirt off. "What, Joe?" Winking, Joey pulled off his boxers and kicked his socks off, as well. Completely nude, he stretched his legs out and leaned back, his hard cock already standing up from the thick patch of dark hair at his crotch. "Joe, tell me what you're talking about."

Standing up, Joey pulled the blankets off of the bed, exposing Chris's naked chest and worn boxers. "Let's have sex," he said, tossing the blankets to the floor.

"Oh no," Chris said, shaking his head, but Joey turned away to root through the junk on top of his dresser -- coins and paper and bubble gum, things he had pulled out of his jeans when emptying the pockets earlier. "Joe, don't do this to me. I ain't getting fucked until you tell me what it is you know that I don't know."

"We ain't got time for all that," Joey said, finding the small condom package he wanted. "We'll both be old and gray by the time I finish telling you every single thing --"

"We're talking about JC," Chris reminded him. Joey tossed the condom at him and flopped down on the bed. Chris looked at the small package and frowned. "Hot Fudge Sundae?" he asked, turning the condom over in his hand. A slow smile spread across his face. "The perfect no calorie dessert? Where the fuck did you find this?"

"In the bathroom at the hospital," Joey said. "A dollar and a half for that thing. It better taste like chocolate, you know?"

As he fiddled with the package, Chris watched Joey carefully. To distract him, Joey began stroking his own erection with slow, sure strokes that made his cheeks flush pink and his eyes glisten with desire. Chris swallowed thickly and tried to ignore the way Joey was staring at him, with half-closed bedroom eyes and those perfect lips curved into a pretty grin. "You know you ain't getting this thing on until you tell me."

Sighing lustily, Joey said, "Fine." Rolling onto his stomach, his erection throbbing between his body and the bed, Joey put his head in his hands

and kissed Chris's knee. "After dinner I went to the bathroom, remember?" Chris nodded. "Then I decided to call Steven. I was trying to get out of doing the dishes." Chris smiled at that -- he must've figured that was what Joey had planned all along, because when he finally got off the phone, the dishes were waiting for him, stacked neatly in the sink. "So I picked up the phone in my room and I heard JC talking."

"To who?" Chris asked, frowning. His fingers worked the cellophane off of the condom, and he opened the box absently.

Joey shrugged. "Don't know. Some guy. He said they'd meet somewhere and then he hung up. Then I heard him leave the house."

"Great," Chris said, tossing the condom at Joey, "now you've got me even more worried."

"He's a big boy," Joey said, sitting up. He unrolled the condom down over his dick as Chris pulled off his boxers. "He can handle himself." As Chris climbed back into the bed, Joey reached for his already stiff member. "You've been holding out on me, Christopher Robin. You had this down your pants the whole time and didn't think to tell me?"

Chris laughed as he laid back against the pillows. "You honestly think I can sit here and watch you touch yourself and not get turned on?"

Pushing Chris down, Joey let his fingers drift to the soft skin of Chris's balls. Cupping them gently, he eased a finger inside of his friend, and Chris's hands clutched at Joey's chest at the sensation. "Fuck me, Joe," he whispered.

"Only if you promise me something," Joey replied, kissing the curve of Chris's throat.

Chris moaned. "Anything, Joe, anything. Just fuck me already."

Joey guided his dick into Chris, stopping halfway inside. Chris groaned and Joey began to pull back out, but Chris grabbed his butt in both hands and shoved him in completely. "You have to promise me that you'll snap out of this," Joey whispered, kissing along Chris's neck.

"Fine sure okay," Chris replied, wiggling his hips beneath Joey. "Whatever you say. Just please --"

Joey studied him for a moment, the glossy eyes, the parted lips, and then he thrust into Chris hard enough to knock the bed against the wall. Chris moaned and bucked beneath him, meeting each thrust with his own frenzied lust. After a few moments, Joey felt himself ready to come, so he grabbed Chris's hard cock and began stroking, squeezing, kneading the thick flesh. When Chris pulled Joey down to him, his lips hungry against Joey's own, Joey felt his hand grow damp and he gave into the orgasm that swelled within him. Chris moaned into his mouth, biting Joey's lower lip gently as he came, and then Joey collapsed on top of Chris, pinning him down to the bed, exhausted from the sex and the day they just had. For long moments neither spoke. "Joe?" Chris asked finally, his voice small and lost beneath Joey.

Pushing himself up on one elbow, Joey looked down at Chris and

whispered, "Yeah?" He brushed the spiked hair from Chris's brow and kissed his forehead.

"It didn't taste like chocolate to me." The familiar grin that Joey loved to see tugged at the corners of Chris's mouth.

"You didn't lick it," Joey pointed out.

"Well then," Chris said, trailing his hands down Joey's chest to pick at his nipples, "we have to go buy another one."

Joey giggled. "They're expensive! And we'd have to go back to the hospital to get it. What am I supposed to do, just waltz in and say sorry, need to use your bathroom, you're the only place around with hot fudge condoms?"

Chris laughed and closed his eyes. Just when Joey didn't think he'd say anything else, Chris asked, "You really heard JC talking to someone on the phone? You're not just making that up?"

"He's not here right now, is he?" Joey whispered, nuzzling Chris's neck. "Maybe he's finally found someone, too."

"I wish he'd tell us," Chris pouted.

Joey kissed the pout away. "You know he's the secretive type. He'll tell us soon enough." As he held Chris tightly, Joey thought about the voice he had heard on the other end of the phone, talking to JC. He hadn't recognized it, but it tugged at the edges of his memory like a half-forgotten dream. Why did it sound so damn familiar to him?

All I Ever Wanted
155. Howl at the Moon
by NSyncGrrl

AJ slid off the hood of the car and stretched. "I've got beer in the trunk," he said, winking at JC, "but I already know you're a lousy drunk." He didn't mention the kiss.

"I know," JC agreed, a thin blush heating his cheeks. AJ ambled over to the side of the bridge, hands shoved deep into his pockets. JC fingered his lips, still damp from AJ's own, and wondered what he could say to get AJ to kiss him again.

"You ever just want to scream at the world?" AJ asked abruptly. He glanced back at JC, that wolfish grin still on his face.

JC let his hand fall from his lips. "Sometimes," he said. Laughing, he added, "No one seems to realize how much all the bright lights and big names can wear you down."

"It gets lonely at times, doesn't it?" AJ asked softly, and JC nodded. Stepping up to the side of the bridge, AJ gripped the handrails that ran the length of the bridge. Above the handrails, metal fencing stretched away into the night. AJ leaned his head against the fencing and looked down at the interstate below, fairly busy despite the late hour. "Come over here," he said softly.

JC jumped off of the car and joined AJ, stepping close enough to brush his arm against AJ's. When AJ didn't pull away, JC dared to rest his hand beside AJ's on the handrail, the warm flesh a stark contrast to the cool metal beneath his palm. Kiss me again, JC thought, but he didn't want to be that blunt. His lips tingled from the memory of AJ's, and he hoped the night wouldn't end before a second kiss. Looking down at the cars zooming beneath them, JC whispered, "Sometimes I feel like I'm standing on the sidelines, watching my life pass me by. I feel like no one sees me standing there, wanting to join in, waiting to come alive." He glanced over at AJ and frowned. "Do you ever feel that way too?"

"All the time," AJ replied. "So I dye my hair another shade, I get another tattoo, I get my lip pierced --" He leaned close to JC, the silver stud in his bottom lip glistening wetly, and JC couldn't take his eyes off of those thin lips that he still felt on his own. "Anything to prove to myself that I exist when no one else seems to notice me." He laced his hands into the chinks of the fence and shook it slightly, testing it. "And sometimes I just get out and scream all of my frustrations back at the world. You ever try that?"

"No," JC admitted. Before he could say anything else, AJ leaped up onto the handrail, the steel soles of his shoes ringing against the metal like a bell in the night. Beneath JC's hands, the handrail vibrated and hummed. "What are you doing?" JC asked, incredulous. He stared up at AJ, who grinned down at him wickedly.

"You can't scream from the ground," he replied, his eyes sparkling like wine. "Come up here with me, Josh."

"No," JC said, shaking his head. He laughed as AJ leaned down and tugged on his arm. "Alex, no --"

"Come on," AJ said, and JC let himself be pulled up onto the handrail. He spread his feet to steady himself and gripped the fencing in front of him, the chinks sinking into his fingers as he tightened his grip. AJ's hand was strong and steady on JC's elbow. "See?" he asked, his voice gentle. "It's not that hard."

JC laughed again. A quick glance at the interstate below made his stomach lurch, and he closed his eyes, swallowing rapidly. "You do this often?" he asked in a small voice. He felt AJ's hand release his arm, and then the fencing shook as AJ climbed higher. "Alex, maybe you shouldn't --"

"I'm fine, Josh," AJ said. JC looked up as AJ wrapped his hands around the top of the fencing. His teeth gleamed brightly in the darkness as he grinned down at JC. "Trust me." Then he threw his head back and howled, an ear-splitting sound that stabbed the night and made JC's heart pound in his chest. JC laughed. "Come on, Josh," AJ said, shaking the fencing violently. "Let it all go."

"I can't --" JC stammered, blushing. There was no way he would climb up that thin metal fence, not in this lifetime, not tonight.

AJ scurried back down the fencing until he stood beside JC on the handrail once more. Turning towards him, AJ leaned his head against his arm and stared openly at JC. "You don't have to climb up there," AJ said, pointing up at the sky. "Just take a deep breath, close your eyes, and ...". He opened his mouth and howled again, a chilling sound that brought a silly smile to JC's face. The howl tapered off into giggles, and AJ placed a hand on JC's arm, his laughing eyes fixed on JC's face. Resting his chin on JC's shoulder, he breathed, "Come on, howl for me."

Something in his voice made JC's groin ache sweetly. He looked into those bottomless eyes and sighed. "Okay," he whispered, gathering his courage. "Do you know how stupid I feel doing this?"

"You don't look stupid to me," AJ replied, and that was all JC needed to hear. He closed his eyes and let out a loud yawp that echoed around them and rang in his ears. He watched AJ's smile widen, and he howled again, letting everything go -- the arguments, the kisses, Joey and Chris and Justin and Lance and everything, everything pressing in on him floated away on that soulful cry that disappeared into the night. Below them a few cars honked at them, long braying sounds that mingled with his voice, and then AJ started again, his high voice rising with JC's to escape into the night. Catching his breath, JC grinned at AJ and sighed again. "Feels good, doesn't it?" AJ asked.

JC nodded. "Do you know who you remind me of?" he asked, suddenly giddy from the night and the howling and the fact that AJ's mouth was just inches away from his again.

"Who?" AJ asked. His hand rubbed JC's arm before trailing down to

rest on the small of JC's back.

JC leaned his forehead against AJ's and whispered, "The big bad wolf in that Red Riding Hood story."

To his surprise, AJ laughed. "Do I look big and bad to you?" he asked, and JC shrugged, giggling at the idea. As he pulled back, AJ's lips brushed his cheek, startling him. "Even bad wolves can be good," he whispered, "and I've been told I'm one of the best."

"I can imagine," JC replied. Please, he thought, closing his eyes, please just kiss me again.

But AJ jumped down off of the handrail and, his hands around JC's waist, helped him down as well. "It's getting late," he said, opening the car door. Almost reluctantly, JC slipped into the passenger seat and watched AJ walk around the front of the car. They drove back to the parking lot in silence, the radio playing low in the air between them. AJ's hand rested on the gearshift and JC fought the urge to reach out and touch the black nails, the inky tattoos.

Street lights played off of the windshield, painting stripes of light across them as they moved through the silent city streets. In the parking lot, the overhead lights pushed the darkness back into shadowy corners, and suddenly JC didn't want to go home. He wanted to stay with AJ and feel those soft lips on his again. He wanted AJ to show him what it was that Justin found in the comfort of Lance's arms, what Joey loved so much about Chris. But he didn't know how to ask without sounding desperate and alone and needy, so when AJ pulled to a stop in front of JC's car, JC sighed and unbuckled his seatbelt. AJ caught his hand and set it on his thigh. JC looked up at him. "You know I'm going to call you tomorrow, right?" AJ asked softly.

JC smiled. "I was hoping you would say that."

Tugging JC's hand gently, AJ leaned forward. JC closed his eyes as AJ's lips touched his, and then he felt a warm, wet tongue lick his lips. He opened his mouth as AJ's tongue delved inside, touching his teeth tentatively. JC leaned forward, his tongue brushing against AJ's, and AJ's thumb rubbed his cheek. When AJ broke the kiss, his lips lingering on JC's, JC opened his eyes and found AJ staring at him, so close, oh so close. A slight grin pulled at one corner of his mouth, and he ran his thumb across JC's lips. "Tomorrow, then," he whispered. "Goodnight, Josh."

"Goodnight, Alex," JC said. He kissed AJ again, quickly, and said, "I'll be waiting." AJ held onto JC's hand as he climbed out of the car. JC squeezed AJ's quickly and then pulled away. "Call me," he said, bending down to look into the car at AJ.

AJ nodded. "You know I will." At that, JC closed the door and headed to his own car. Sliding behind the wheel, he started the engine and thought maybe he was feeling better than he had in a long time. He couldn't wait for AJ to call him again.

All I Ever Wanted
156. In the Morning
by NSyncGrrl

Lance found Justin standing in front of the kitchen sink, already dressed in jeans and one of Lance's flannel shirts. His hair stood up from his head in a wild jumble of golden curls, and for a moment Lance stood in the doorway and watched his lover empty the contents of a large McDonald's bag onto the counter. Then he stepped into the kitchen, his bare feet moving silently across the cold tile floor, his gaze never leaving Justin's back. Slipping his arms around Justin's waist, Lance rested his head between Justin's shoulder blades and kissed the exposed flesh of his lover's neck. "Morning, glory," he whispered, squeezing Justin in a tight hug.

Justin's hands rubbed over Lance's. "I made you breakfast," he said, turning to smile at Lance.

Glancing at the McDonald's sandwiches sitting on the counter, Lance asked, "Since when did you learn how to cook egg McMuffins?"

Justin grinned. "Well, I bought them for you, honey."

"I know," Lance said, planting a kiss on Justin's cheek. Justin turned in Lance's arms and kissed him tenderly, his lips lingering over Lance's. "I don't like waking up without you there beside me."

"I don't like leaving you in bed alone," Justin whispered. He wrapped his arms around Lance's shoulders and nuzzled Lance's neck. "Let's take the food back into bed, what do you say?"

"I say you two need to stay out of bed once in a while." Lance turned as Joey came into the kitchen, scratching his head and yawning sleepily. He winked at Lance as he walked past them, opening the fridge.

Justin frowned at him and kissed Lance's forehead, watching as Joey sniffed at a carton of leftover Chinese food. "Maybe you just don't know how good it can be," Justin said, pouting. Lance tightened his hold around his lover's waist and hoped they didn't get into it right now, not this early in the morning.

But Joey laughed as he opened the takeout container. "Oh, I know how good it can be," he said, picking out a cold lo mein noodle and sticking it into his mouth. "Believe me, Justin. I didn't want to drag my ass out of bed this morning either."

"I bought breakfast," Justin replied, nodding at the sandwiches beside him on the counter. "It's a little cold, but better than that shit, I'm sure."

Joey glanced over at them. "You bought something for me?"

"For everyone," Justin said. He tossed Joey a sandwich wrapped in golden paper. "They're having a dollar special."

"Thanks, man," Joey said softly. He unwrapped the sandwich and bit into it. "You got those hash brown thingies?"

Laughing, Lance said, "You're lucky he bought you something at all."

"I know, right?" Joey grinned and leaned against the fridge as JC stumbled into the room. "Hey, Josh."

"Hey," JC mumbled. He sat down at the kitchen table and rubbed his eyes. "Anyone make any coffee?"

"I'll put a pot on now," Joey said, busying himself with the task.

JC looked at them, his gaze lingering on Justin and Lance. "Thanks," he muttered.

"You okay?" Lance asked. He took in JC's disheveled hair and bloodshot eyes and wondered how late it was when he dragged himself back home from wherever he had been.

"Fine," JC replied, holding his head in his hands.

Releasing Lance, Justin handed JC a sandwich. "Long night?" he asked quietly.

JC shrugged but didn't look up at Justin as he took the offered sandwich. "I got in late," he replied, evasive.

"How late?" Justin pressed, but Joey pushed past him, a steaming mug of black coffee in his hands, and JC sipped at the java instead of answering. Justin glanced back at Lance, a frown on his face. Lance touched his fingertips to his lips and blew him a kiss. "JC --"

"Just drop it, okay?" JC asked, his voice hard, and Justin sighed.

"I'm just --"

"Nosy," JC said, cutting him off. "You're too damn nosy, Justin."

"He's concerned," Lance said, his low voice cutting through the tension between the two friends. "We all are, JC."

JC sighed and unwrapped his sandwich but didn't reply. Justin came back to the sink, his hand slipping around Lance's stomach as he rested his head on Lance's shoulder. Joey frowned at JC, and when he looked over at Lance, Lance shrugged. Reaching for his own sandwich, he unwrapped it and said softly, "Thanks for breakfast, baby."

"No problem," Justin sniffed.

The phone rang. As Joey pushed away from the fridge, JC stood up from the table and said, "I'll get it." Lance strolled across the kitchen and leaned against the door jamb as he ate his sandwich. He heard JC answer the phone, his voice quiet. "Hello?"

"I wish he'd talk to us," Joey said softly.

"Shh," Lance said, frowning. He nodded towards the foyer, where JC's voice lowered as he said, "Hey there, Alex." He mouthed the name to

Justin, who whispered it to Joey.

"Alex who?" Joey wanted to know. Lance hushed him again and turned back to listen.

He saw Chris coming down the hall, running his hands through his spiked hair, and when Chris saw him, Lance glanced into the foyer at JC, standing with his back towards the kitchen as he spoke into the phone. "I'm fine," he was saying, the smile in his voice evident. "What about you? What's up?"

Nonchalantly, Chris leaned against the wall and looked at JC. JC glanced up at him, and Chris smiled brightly, motioning with his hand for JC to continue as if he weren't there. "Dammit, Chris," Lance muttered. At least he was pretending not to eavesdrop on their friend -- Chris's actions left no question as to his own motives. Now JC wouldn't say anything revealing with Chris hovering over him like that.

Joey brushed past Lance. In the foyer he flashed JC a winning smile as he bent down and scooped Chris up into his arms. "Hey!" Chris cried, but Joey lifted him up easily and carried him into the kitchen like a groom carrying a bride. "What the hell? Joe, put me down. Joe!" Kissing Chris's nose quickly, Joey complied.

Justin smacked the back of Chris's head as Joey set him on his feet. "Idiot!" he hissed. "We're trying to be indiscreet."

"I know you guys are listening," JC called from the foyer.

"See?" Justin said, exasperated. He threw the last sandwich at Chris and glared at him. "Sit down, shut up, and eat."

Chris sulked as he sank into JC's chair. "Jesus Christ --" he started, but Lance and Joey both shushed him. "Just ask him already," Chris muttered. Then, raising his voice, he asked, "Who you talking to, JC?"

"A friend," came the quick reply. In a lower voice, JC said, "Around six, maybe? Where do you want to go?"

"He's going out tonight," Lance whispered to the others.

Justin came to stand by his side. "Where?" he asked, slipping his hand into Lance's, but Lance simply shrugged.

"Okay," JC said into the phone. "I'll see you then." A few seconds later he whispered, "I can't wait to see you again."

As he hung up the phone, Lance leaned back against the kitchen wall, trying to act casual. He turned Justin's face towards him and whispered, "Act natural."

Justin leaned into Lance's touch and kissed his fingers, but he glanced up as JC entered the kitchen again. "You're in my seat," JC said, pointing at Chris's chair.

"Who was that?" Chris asked, standing up.

JC slid into the chair and shrugged. "Just some guy I know," he

replied.

"You two going out tonight?" Chris persisted.

JC shrugged again. "You should know," he said, finishing his sandwich. "You were hanging onto every word I said."

"JC --" Joey started, but JC held up a hand and frowned.

"He's just concerned," he said sarcastically. "You all are, I know. But I'm not a child. Don't treat me like one."

For a long moment, no one said anything. Then Lance asked, "Is he a boyfriend, JC?"

A slight smile crossed JC's face. "Not yet," he admitted.

"Can we meet him?" Justin wanted to know.

"Not yet," JC said again. "I don't even know ... just not yet, okay? Please? Just let me have this to myself for now, alright?"

"Sure," Joey said, looking around at the others. "We'll leave you alone about it, won't we, guys?" When no one answered, Joey frowned and asked, "Chris? Lance? Won't we?"

"Yeah," Lance replied, and Justin and Chris murmured their assent. But he had to admit that even though he was glad JC had found someone, he was dying to know who it was.

All I Ever Wanted
157. You Say He's Just a Friend
by NSyncGrrl

Justin was curled up on the couch in the living room, his head in Lance's lap, as they watched the latest episode of TRL on MTV. Lance's hand smoothed down Justin's wiry hair, newly cropped into a mess of short curls. His other hand rested on Justin's waist, and Justin held it in both of his hands. As they watched TV, Justin spun Lance's ring around his finger lazily. "Lance?" he asked, his voice quiet.

"Hmm?" Lance massaged Justin's scalp gently. The pleasant sensation made Justin cuddle closer to his lover.

Justin rolled onto his back and looked up at Lance. "Let's do something," he said. Suddenly he was tired of watching snippets of videos and listening to Carson Daly's stupid jokes. Joey and Chris were holed up in Joey's room, playing a video game, and laughter drifted out into the hall through their open door. JC was in his own room, getting ready to go out, and Justin was bored. Poking at the zipper on Lance's jeans, he pouted and suggested, "Let's get out of here, do something fun."

Lance laughed. "You mean, let's have sex."

"Well, that's fun," Justin said, grinning.

Lance leaned down and kissed Justin's nose. "Where do you want to go?"

Closing his eyes, Justin tried to think. "I don't know," he admitted. "Where do you want to go?"

"I don't want to go anywhere," Lance replied. "This was your idea, remember?" Tracing the curve of Justin's cheek with his hand, he added, "I'm fine right here with you."

"But the others will see us if we do anything here," Justin pointed out. Just thinking about holding Lance's naked body against his own again was enough to make him hard. He pressed against Lance's own slight erection and frowned. "I don't think they'd like that."

Lance laughed again. "Probably not." Lowering his voice, he said, "We can go to the beach. Or the backyard. Off in the woods somewhere --"

"Outside?" Justin asked, the thought of the cool air on their hot bodies turning him on even more. Sitting up, he shrugged and said, "Come on."

He took Lance's hand and started to lead him into the kitchen, but as they passed the hall, JC's door opened and their friend stepped out of his room. With a quick glance back at Joey's room, JC turned towards them and smiled, a strained expression that suggested he still thought everyone was mad at him. "Hey," he said carefully. "You guys busy?"

"Kind of --" Justin started, but Lance slapped his butt playfully. "Hey!"

he cried, pulling away.

Lance pulled him back, wrapping his arms around Justin's waist. "Be good," he admonished. Turning to JC, he asked, "What's up, JC?"

A thin blush pinked JC's cheeks. "This is kind of stupid, really," he admitted, turning away. "If you're doing something else --"

"Nothing that can't wait," Justin said, sighing. He winked at Lance. "It's not like we won't do it later anyway. What do you need?"

JC cleared his throat. "Well, I kind of wanted your opinion ..." His voice trailed off, and he glanced back down the hall again. "I don't want -- can you just come in here for a minute?" He led the way into his room. Lance followed Justin, closing the door behind them.

The room was a mess. Clothes lay stretched out on the bed, tossed on the back of the chair, draped over the computer and stereo. Shoes were scattered around the floor, and JC sighed lustily. "I need some help," he admitted.

"I ain't helping you clean up this shit," Justin said, glaring around the room. "This place is a pigsty. Whatever happened to JC the neat freak?"

"He's trying to find something to wear," JC said, sighing. Sweeping his arm around the room, he said, "You'd think there would be one complete outfit in all of this, you know?"

Lance laughed. "Is this for your date?" he asked, stepping further into the room. He picked up a pair of red leather pants and held them out to Justin.

"Oh yes," Justin said, nodding. "Nothing says boytoy like these. Lance, you need a pair."

"I don't think so," Lance said, grimacing.

JC took the pants from Lance and tossed them in the corner. "If you're just going to laugh at me, you can leave."

"Sorry, JC," Justin said, chastised. He threw himself down on JC's bed and stretched out on top of the clothes. "Where are you guys going?"

"Justin, you're wrinkling everything," JC said, exasperated. He tugged the clothes out from under Justin and sighed. "You're not really helping here --"

"Tell us where you're going," Lance said, pushing aside a pile of clothing before sitting on the bed beside Justin, "and we'll help you find something appropriate to wear."

Holding up a pair of camouflage pants, JC shrugged. "He didn't say. Just that we're going out to eat, casual dress. With him, it could be anywhere."

Justin frowned as JC folded the pants up and stuck them into an open dresser drawer. "I thought you said you don't like guys," he pointed out.

But JC turned away. "Color me curious," he replied softly.

"What's this Alex like?" Lance asked. He picked at the seam in Justin's jeans and watched as JC started putting away his clothes.

"He's a lot like me," JC replied evasively. "He likes music, he understands where I'm coming from, he's been in the same situation before --"

"He's kissed Joey too?" Justin asked, a grin tugging at his lips.

JC balled up the shirt in his hands and threw it at him. "Shut up," he growled, "and get out of my room."

Slapping Justin's hip, Lance said, "He's just kidding, JC. Aren't you?"

"Yeah," Justin admitted. "I'm just kidding. I'm sorry." Thinking for a minute, he asked, "Is he gay?"

"I think he likes guys," JC said, picking a pile of white t-shirts off of the computer keyboard. "I mean, he kissed me --"

"Woohoo!" Justin whooped, causing Lance to collapse in a fit of giggles. JC's cheeks grew bright red. "Damn, JC. You've been holding out on us!"

"Keep it down," JC admonished, a silly grin on his face. He folded up a pair of gray jeans. "It was just a little kiss --"

"That's usually how it starts," Lance said. Lying down beside Justin, he ran a hand through Justin's hair and said, "I remember the first time you ever kissed me, baby. At the hotel, remember? After that stupid game we were playing ..."

"I remember," Justin said, smiling at the memory. He wanted to get Lance alone and whisper to him over and over again how much he loved him. Glancing at JC, he wondered if it would be really rude of them to leave now. "You still need our help?"

"Yes," JC replied, glancing at them. "You two can screw around once I leave."

"I wasn't --" Justin started.

Kissing Justin quickly, Lance laughed and said, "He knows you all too well."

Justin pouted. Hoping to change the subject back to JC, he asked, "So what's this Alex guy do for a living? You said he likes music --"

"He does," JC replied. He held up a t-shirt that read Rock Star in tiny rhinestones across the front. Raising an eyebrow, he looked at Lance, who shook his head. JC rolled the shirt up and stuck it in the drawer with the others.

"Is he in a band?" Justin persisted. When JC simply shrugged, he asked, "A local band? Or one like ours? JC?" JC didn't respond, and Justin started to laugh. "Oh God, JC. It's not someone famous, is it? Is he in a

boyband? Jesus! Let me guess. 98 Degrees? Take 5? Backstreet Boys?" JC's cheeks reddened again, and Justin squealed with laughter.

"Shut up," JC muttered darkly. Justin hid his face in Lance's chest, trying to smother his giggles. "Justin --"

"What's so funny?" Joey asked from the doorway. He glanced in at them and grinned. "Hey Chris!" he called. "Party over here!"

Chris came up behind him as Joey stepped into the room. "This place looks like my room," Chris said, kicking clothes out of his way. "We must've taken the same interior decorating correspondence course. That one with Sally Struthers, right?"

"We're helping him pick out an outfit for tonight," Lance said, rubbing Justin's back. Justin's shoulders shook slightly as he tried to stop laughing.

Joey frowned at them. "I can tell. You guys are a big help. What's so funny?"

Lance grinned at JC. "Justin was asking about JC's new boyfriend --"

"He's just a friend," JC interrupted.

"His new friend," Lance corrected, "and asked if he was in a band. When JC didn't answer, Justin started naming bands he might be in. You should've seen JC blush when he said --"

"Shut up," JC said again, his voice hard. "Just shut up, all of you. I don't need your help. Get the fuck out of my room."

Chris frowned. "Isn't there an Alex in O-Town? Or is that Ashley?"

"Shut up," Joey growled, punching Chris's arm.

"Joe," Chris pouted, "that hurt."

Joey draped an arm around Chris's shoulders and pulled him into a quick embrace. "It did not," he said, but he kissed Chris's cheek and hugged him close. "You guys leave JC alone. If he doesn't want to tell us, that's fine. We'll find out soon enough."

"But it's killing me not to know," Justin said, rolling away from Lance.

"I'll kill you in a minute," JC warned, "if you don't stop picking on me."

"Fine," Justin replied, pouting. He picked at the buttons on Lance's shirt, running his fingers beneath the gaps in material to tickle Lance's bare skin beneath. "Where did you guys meet?"

JC picked up a pair of black leather pants. "What about these?" he asked. Lance nodded, and JC undid the jeans he wore, slipping out of them easily. Tugging on the black leather pants, he zipped them up and said, "I met him at a club."

Joey whistled low. "You're joking," he said. "Josh, tell me you're kidding. It's not --"

"Who?" Justin asked, sitting up. "Joey, you know who it is?" Joey shrugged. "You guys went to the club together, right? So you know who this guy is?"

"The only guy JC met at the club while I was there --" Joey began.

"Was Eminem," Chris finished. He watched JC run his hands down his thighs, trying to smooth out the leather pants. "Fuck, JC, you're playing with fire there."

"It's not Eminem," JC replied, sighing. "His real name is Marshall, not Alex."

Lance laughed. "And how do you know that?"

JC shrugged. "He told me."

"Fuck," Justin whispered. "You guys run into Eminem at a club and JC hits it off with him, and no one thinks to tell me? Hell-lo?"

"We didn't hit it off --" JC started.

Joey grinned. "You kidding? I find them outside and they're best of friends."

"Well, it's not Eminem," JC said again. He shrugged out of his shirt and pulled on a long-sleeved white t-shirt. "We're not friends, either. He tried to kick my ass when I went back to the club --"

"You went back?" Joey asked. "When?"

"What do you guys think?" JC asked, holding his arms out at his sides to show off his outfit.

Lance shrugged. "You need a vest," he said. "A black leather vest. Then you'll look great."

"And a cowboy hat," Justin added, smirking. "Lance says a cowboy hat works for everyone."

"You dissing the hat?" Lance asked, hurt. He pinched Justin's nipple gently through his shirt, and Justin laughed again.

JC frowned. Turning to Chris, he asked, "You think I should wear a hat?"

Chris shook his head. "Don't listen to them," he said. "But a vest might be nice. You have one?"

"Maybe," JC said, digging through his clothes and studiously ignoring Joey's question. Finally he pulled out a thin leather vest and tugged it on. "Well?"

"Better," Joey said. "You went back to the club?"

"Saturday," JC replied. "I got drunk and got in a fight --"

"With Eminem," Chris pointed out. "Damn, you must've been standing down, falling up drunk."

JC nodded. Running a brush through his hair, he said, "I was. And then Alex stepped in and got me out of there."

"He must be a badass to take on Eminem," Lance said. He rubbed a hand along Justin's chest, smoothing down his shirt.

JC shrugged. "I don't know about that. You guys think I look okay?"

"You look fine," Joey replied. "Just don't wear that jacket you wore to the VMAs. You don't want to scare him away."

"Hey!" JC cried. "I liked that jacket."

"You were the only one," Chris said, grinning.

JC sighed. "Britney liked it --"

"She just said that to be nice," Lance said. "No one liked that jacket."

JC frowned. "I think Alex might. He strikes me as the type who would."

"What type is that?" Justin asked. "The type with no taste?"

JC tossed his hairbrush at him. It bounced on the pillows above Justin's head, and Justin laughed. "I have taste, thank you."

"Strange taste," Lance whispered loudly, and Chris laughed. "Can't wait to see this new boyfriend of yours."

"He's just a friend," JC said, rolling his eyes.

"If he's just a friend," Joey pointed out, "then you wouldn't be so anxious over what to wear tonight."

"Alright, that's it," JC said. He tugged at Justin's leg, pulling him off the bed. "You guys have had your fun. Now get out. I'm leaving now. Come on, get up, get out."

Lance stood up and helped Justin to his feet. "Have fun on your date, JC."

JC sighed. "It's not a date --"

"You need some condoms?" Chris asked. Digging into the pocket of his jeans, he pulled out a handful of colorful condom packets. "Pick your poison. We've got rainbow colors, and these glow in the dark, and these --"

"Damn!" Justin said, laughing. He reached for Chris's hand. "Can I have one?"

Lance pulled Justin's hand away. "What do you need one for?" he asked.

"Just for fun," Justin said, twisting out of Lance's grip. He picked up a zebra striped condom and held it out to JC. "Here's one for you."

JC slapped his hand away, the blush creeping back into his cheeks.

"Stop it," he said, ushering them out of his room. In the hall, he pulled his door closed behind them and frowned. "Don't wait up, guys. Please."

"You bringing him home?" Joey asked. He smiled at JC, his eyes twinkling. "Do we get to meet this mystery man of yours?"

"No," JC replied. "You guys would embarrass me too much."

Lance took the condom out of Justin's hand and handed it back to Chris. "That's mine," Justin said, taking it back.

"We don't use those," Lance said softly.

"I know," Justin replied, "but I like the stripes."

Winking at Lance, Chris said, "It's lubricated. You never know when that might come in handy."

"Oh, we just use spit," Justin said in an off-hand manner that made everyone laugh. "What?"

"This is why he's not coming over here," JC said, pointing at the handful of condoms Chris held out to him. "You guys have fun. I'm going out."

"You have fun," Chris replied. As JC started to walk away, Chris caught his back pocket and stuck a condom in it. "Here's to a good time."

JC slapped Chris's hand away, but he left the condom in his pocket and grinned as he left. Justin studied the condom he held in his own hand and smiled. At least things are returning to normal between us, he thought, glad that JC was finally pulling himself out of the foul mood he had been in lately. Turning to Lance, Justin winked and asked, "Wasn't there something we were going to do?"

"Outside," Lance replied. "Without that --" He took the condom from Justin's hand and slipped it into the back pocket of Justin's jeans. His hand cupped Justin's butt through the thick denim, turning Justin on again. With a backward glance at Joey and Chris, Lance said, "We'll see you guys later."

Then he followed Justin to the kitchen and out into the backyard, where they had been headed in the first place.

All I Ever Wanted
158. Something Just For Me
Part 1 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

JC met AJ at the parking lot again, not eager to let the others see who it was he was going out with. Dating, he admitted, if only to himself. You guys are going out on a date. He's already kissed you and you want him to kiss you again. So 'fess up, Josh, and stop lying. It's a date.

AJ pulled up in his Mercedes that gleamed like ink, and before the car even came to a complete stop, he hopped out and leaned over the roof. "Hey there, sexy," he said, pushing his sunglasses up on his forehead. JC blushed as AJ winked at him. "Ready to rumble?"

JC laughed and jumped into the car. As he buckled his seatbelt, AJ whispered, "Would it be too forward of me to kiss you now?"

"No," JC said, laughing again. He closed his eyes as AJ's lips brushed against his, tasting like coffee. As AJ started the car, JC laughed. "You won't believe how much your phone call set off the guys this morning."

AJ laughed easily. "You mean they want to know who I am?" JC nodded. "What did you say?"

"My knight in shimmering armor," JC replied, laughing at himself. God, he was getting giddy, but there was a promise in AJ's kiss that made his heart flutter. "Ever seen that Gilbert Grape movie?"

"Ooh, Johnny Depp," AJ said, licking his lips. "That man is fine." He popped in a tape and soft jazz filled the car, a solo saxophone whaling low. Then his hand settled on JC's knee, and JC had to admit he liked the feel of it. "You tell them who I am?"

"No," JC said. "Let them guess." Remembering Justin's comments earlier, he added, "They're getting pretty close, too."

"What do you think they'll say when they find out?" AJ asked softly. He concentrated on the traffic, but JC could tell that he was waiting for an answer.

JC sighed. "I don't know," he whispered. He didn't. Joey would be cool with it, he was sure. Chris -- he might be a little upset, since he could get possessive about the group and Backstreet Boys were touted as their mortal enemies by the media. Justin would be pissy, JC already could see that one coming. Lance would be like Joey -- whatever was good for JC, Lance would be there for him. And maybe he could keep Justin in check. "I just don't know," he said again. Hoping to change the subject, he asked, "Where are we going?"

"A little bar I know," AJ said. Winking at JC, he added, "You'll love it. The place looks like hell but the food is out of this world."

When they pulled into the parking lot, JC thought AJ was right -- the

place was a dive. It was a small hole in the wall with a neon sign in the window that flickered unevenly. Dishman's, the sign read, and the place looked more like a tattoo parlor than a bar. AJ held the car door open for JC, taking his arm as he stepped out. "Don't worry," AJ said, patting his back. "It just gets worse."

JC laughed and followed AJ inside, where battered license plates graced the walls of the tiny, ill-lit room. A long bar ran the length of the room, bottles glistening wetly behind the tired bartender, torn bar stools already filled with tattooed bikers dripping in leather and chains. "I don't think this is really the place for me --" JC started, but AJ held onto his arm tightly, leading him to one of the narrow booths on the wall opposite the bar.

"Don't worry," AJ said again. He helped JC into the booth and then slid in the seat across from him. "Anyone hits on you, I'll kick his ass."

Looking at the unsavory crowd around them, JC didn't think he'd have to worry about anyone in there hitting on him. "This isn't exactly a gay bar ..." he said, raising his voice in a questioning manner.

AJ grinned at him. "You think all gay men are pretty like you?"

JC blushed. "I'm not gay --"

"Neither am I," AJ replied, taking JC's hand in his. "I just like guys and girls. And right now I like you. Are you okay with that?"

As a bored waitress approached their booth, JC met AJ's steady gaze and whispered, "I like you, too."

AJ squeezed his hand and smiled up at the waitress. "Hey, Alice," he said, winking at her.

The waitress sighed. "It's Jo," she said in a bored voice. "Don't fuck with me, McLean. Whaddya want tonight?"

AJ looked at JC. His thumb rubbed along JC's wrist gently. "What do you feel like eating tonight, Josh?"

Shrugging, JC mumbled, "I don't know." He didn't really. He just liked the feel of AJ's hand on his and the way AJ's knee kept brushing against his under the table, and his lips still tingled from AJ's brief kiss. "I'll have whatever you order."

"Two burgers," AJ said, turning back to the waitress, "fully loaded. Fries with that cheese shit you guys put on them, and two beers. Coronas, don't forget the lime." As the waitress turned to go, AJ reached out to smack her ample butt.

She grabbed his wrist in one quick hand and pinched him ruthlessly, her fingers turning white from the strain. AJ kept grinning at her, and then he winked at JC. "You watch it, McLean," she growled, releasing his hand. "Keep your hands to yourself."

"I got someone else to hold onto tonight," AJ pointed out, kissing the back of JC's hand. JC felt his cheeks heat up and he ducked his head, hoping no one else in the place overheard them.

"Alex," JC started, but AJ just laughed.

"Am I embarrassing you?" He looked around as JC nodded.

"Just a little," JC said. AJ let go of his hand and slipped his hands beneath the table.

"I'll tone it down a bit," he promised, but then JC felt AJ's hand on his knee and he blushed again. "So Josh," AJ said as the waitress brought their drinks, "tell me about yourself."

"What do you want to know?" JC asked, pushing the lime stuck in the neck of his Corona down into the bottle.

AJ took a long swig of his beer and grinned. "Something the public doesn't know," he said, his eyes sparkling like dew. "Something just for me."

JC tried to think. His life was pretty much an open book anymore, what with the success of their second album, and his friends knew everything about him. Everything but Alex, he thought, smiling. "I'm really bad at general questions like that," he admitted. "I don't know what to say. I'm a boring person, really."

"You don't look boring to me," AJ purred. Leaning over the table, he whispered, "You look like you want to be something more than you are. You look like a wild rose bud, waiting to unfold." JC rolled his eyes, but the words excited him. "Tell me something you save that no one else knows you keep."

JC laughed. "You know those little slips of paper in Chinese fortune cookies?" AJ nodded. "I keep every damn one of those things. I have a box full of them."

"You like Chinese food?" AJ asked. JC nodded. "How many fortunes do you have?"

"I don't know," JC admitted. He sipped at his beer experimentally. It was sour and he grimaced but took another sip. "I've been saving them for years. One time? I bought a box of the cookies and opened every single one just to put the fortunes in my collection."

"What's your favorite one?" AJ asked. JC frowned. "Off the top of your head. The one you remember first."

"What you left behind is more mellow than wine," JC said softly.

AJ laughed. "What the fuck does that mean?"

JC grinned and stared into the amber liquid in his bottle. "I don't know," he said, "but it always makes me sad."

Beneath the table, AJ squeezed JC's knee gently. "It sounds sad."

"What about you?" JC asked. "Do you collect anything like that?"

"Pop tops," AJ said. When JC looked quizzically at him, AJ shrugged. "You know, those little things on cans? You pop them up to open the

can?" JC nodded. "I pull them off and string them together. I have like a billion of them hanging in the back of my closet. I don't know whatever possessed me to start saving them but now I can't stop." He winked at JC. "When I was younger, we used to call them kiss tabs."

"Why?" JC asked, laughing. He liked the sound of that.

"Because you popped one off and gave it to the girl you wanted to kiss." AJ shrugged again as the waitress came back with their food. "Just a stupid thing kids do. But I've got so many now, I can get all the kisses I want. I just have to find someone to give them to."

"Give them to me," JC said suddenly, his head buzzing pleasantly from the beer.

AJ laughed. "Maybe I will," he said, diving into his burger. "Eat up, Josh. This'll be the best burger you ever had. I promise."

All I Ever Wanted
158. Something Just For Me
Part 2 of 2
by NSyncGrrl

After they left Dishman's, AJ drove to a small pond set back off of the interstate, just outside the city. JC hugged himself against the chill of the night as AJ pulled out a cooler and a few blankets from the trunk of his car. "You cold?" he asked, setting the cooler down on the ground.

"A little," JC admitted. He watched the starlight sparkle off of the pond and thought it was a beautiful place to wind up their evening.

"Here." JC turned to find AJ offering him a dark leather jacket, bulky and dripping with silver chains. He had never worn one of these before, but he always assumed they were thin, ill-made coats, yet when he slipped it on, he felt the warmth of the lining envelope him. AJ's dizzying cologne wafted up from the leather, mingled with the slight scent of cigarettes and that smell only associated with the interior of a new car. Inhaling deeply, JC wrapped the jacket around himself, savoring the warmth.

"Thanks," JC murmured. He looked at AJ's bare arms -- once again AJ wore a white tank top, this time beneath a black vest like JC's own, and an odd black hat graced his head. Even out here in the night, he wore dark shades. "What about you?"

"I'm hot blooded," AJ joked, grinning devilishly at him as he closed the trunk of the car. "I don't get cold."

JC laughed. "Ever?" he asked, picking up the cooler at AJ's feet. He followed AJ down to the pond, where AJ began to spread out one of the blankets so they could sit on the ground without getting wet from the damp grass.

AJ shrugged. "Not really. Maybe one day I'll spontaneously combust or something, my body runs so hot all the time, but for now I'll just enjoy it. Sit down."

JC sat cross-legged on the blanket. Lowering himself down beside him, AJ leaned close to him, his hand resting on the blanket behind JC. His chin brushed JC's shoulder, and JC sighed, content. "This is a pretty place," he said, turning to AJ.

AJ had taken off the sunglasses, and his eyes were large and intense as he stared at JC, his face so close. Running a finger down JC's cheek, he whispered, "I don't want to talk right now, Josh. Is that okay with you?" JC nodded numbly. When he looked into those commanding eyes, he didn't want to talk anymore either. Leaning closer, AJ's mouth closed over JC's, and JC closed his eyes, giving into the kiss. He let AJ part his lips with his warm tongue that licked into JC's mouth softly. When AJ pushed him back to the blanket, JC let his hands rub along AJ's chest, feeling the hard planes of the male body above him. So this is what it feels like, he

thought as his fingers drifted over AJ's nipples, hard beneath the thin tank top he wore. He moaned slightly as AJ's hand caressed his hair, the other hand tickling over his stomach to toy with the waistband of his pants.

When AJ unbuttoned his pants, though, JC caught his hand in both of his own and pulled away. "No," he whispered, suddenly unsure. He looked at AJ with fear-filled eyes.

"Okay," AJ agreed, shrugging. He pushed open the coat JC wore, rubbing along JC's chest, his touch sending shivers through JC. "I won't go below the waist, I promise. Relax, Josh. Please."

JC frowned slightly, but he let AJ push him back to the blanket, and soon the frown was kissed away. JC felt his cheeks flush with the heat of AJ's kisses, and when AJ looked at him as if nothing else existed, JC watched his swollen lips and licked his own, wanting more. "Alex," he whispered, reaching out to wrap his arms around AJ's neck.

"Have you ever had sex before?" AJ asked softly, kissing along JC's neck.

JC closed his eyes at the sensation. "Yeah," he moaned. He had been with girls before -- none in a long time, and he wasn't one to sleep with every girl he dated, but he had slept with his last girlfriend. It wasn't like he didn't know what to do. But the feeling of someone who was kissing him like this, who was trying to please him as if his were the only feelings that mattered -- Bobbee had never been one for foreplay. She liked to cuddle but only wanted to make out just before having sex. JC could never understand that. And then it had been his job to get her aroused -- she wanted him to kiss her and hug her and suck on her neck, and all he got was a few strokes before she was ready to have sex and get the whole thing over with. Holding AJ in his arms was intoxicating, the warm tongue licking along his throat, the damp lips sucking on his, the eager hands rubbing along his chest, pinching his nipples playfully. He hadn't known that a man's nipples could be so damn sensitive, and yet here he was, hard and straining against the front of his pants, and AJ hadn't even touched him there yet.

"Never with a guy?" AJ breathed against JC's neck.

JC shook his head, unable to speak as AJ's lips closed wetly over one of his nipples, licking through the thin fabric of his shirt. This time when AJ's hand trailed to the waistband of JC's pants, he didn't pull away. AJ traced the outline of JC's erection through the leather, causing JC to arch his back, thrusting his cock into AJ's hand. "Alex," he sighed. He didn't want to do this, not tonight, but damn if it didn't feel good.

AJ pulled his hand away. "It's okay," he said, kissing JC's lips before sitting up. "I'm not the type to go all the way on the first date. But you're sexy, Josh. Damn. I can see why the girls all want you."

JC stared up at the stars and tried to catch his breath. His body was humming with pleasure and delight, and almost reluctantly he pushed himself up into a sitting position. "Shit," he breathed, taking the beer AJ handed him from the cooler. He popped the can open and guzzled half of it to steady himself.

AJ laughed. "That good, eh?" he asked. Blushing, JC toyed with the pop top on the can, working it back and forth as he tried not to look at AJ. Suddenly he felt cool fingers on his neck, pulling him closer, and AJ rested his forehead against JC's. "I think it's cute when you blush, but don't be embarrassed about it. I like being the first to touch you."

Clearing his throat, JC admitted, "I like you touching me." AJ kissed JC's cheek softly.

"Do you like poetry?" AJ asked, sitting back. He stared out at the pond and downed the rest of his beer. JC noticed that AJ pulled the tab off of the can and stuck it into his back pocket before reaching for another beer.

JC shrugged. "I don't really read much," he admitted.

"But you like music," AJ pointed out. He glanced at JC, who nodded. "A song is just poetry set to music. Do you write a lot of songs?"

"Some," JC said. He thought maybe tonight, once he got home, he was going to fill his notebook with a million songs.

"Then you're writing poetry," AJ said. He laid back on the blanket and stared up at the night sky before shifting his gaze onto JC. "Will you let me read your poems?"

JC blushed again. "Maybe," he said, and AJ's hand snaked beneath the leather coat to rub along JC's back. Working its way under JC's shirt and vest, his hand was cool from the beer can, chilly on JC's warm skin. "You know what?" JC asked, taking another sip of his beer. He glanced down at AJ as if waiting for him to answer. When AJ shook his head slightly, JC sighed. "Our tour starts up again soon. Like next month."

"I have to go to New York in a few weeks," AJ said. "They're releasing the first single from our new album." His hand slipped around JC's waist and he pulled JC towards him. JC laid down along AJ's body and wrapped his arms around AJ's waist, resting his head on AJ's chest. "Josh, I really like you," AJ admitted, his voice soft. "Since we've met, I can't stop thinking about you."

"Really?" JC asked. He had been leery of admitting the same thing, but since the night he woke up in AJ's house, he hadn't been able to free his mind of his new friend. And now his body tingled from AJ's touch, and he didn't know how he was going to fall asleep tonight. If it felt like this every time they touched each other, no wonder Justin and Lance couldn't keep their hands to themselves.

AJ rubbed JC's back soothingly. "I know this will be hard," AJ said, his voice still soft. His tank top had pulled free from his jeans, exposing dusky skin, the bright waistband of white briefs, and the dark outline of an inky tattoo encircling his belly button. JC frowned as he traced the tattoo, his touch feathery and light. "But Josh? I want to see you again. I do."

"Me too," JC whispered. He dared to touch the waistband of AJ's underwear, and then, before he could stop himself, he let his finger trail down the bulge in AJ's jeans, feeling the hard erection beneath the thick denim. AJ moaned at the touch, and JC felt his blood flare up at the sound. "Alex?" he asked as he started to pull his hand away. AJ caught it

and held it against his crotch. JC turned to look at AJ, his eyes closed, his lips parted slightly. Smiling, JC ventured to squeeze his erection gently, watching those thin lips open wider. Then JC scooted up a little and leaned over AJ, running a hand through his short cropped hair. Kissing AJ hungrily, JC suggested, "Maybe tomorrow night?"

"Sure," AJ sighed, his hands cradling JC's face as they kissed again.

All I Ever Wanted
159. For the Fans
by NSyncGrrl

Joey hung up the phone as Chris entered the room they shared. "Steve's on his way," Joey said carefully. Chris caught the trepidation in his voice and sat down on the edge of Joey's bed, watching him closely.

"Coming here?" Chris asked. Joey nodded. "Why?"

Standing up, Joey pulled off his t-shirt and stretched. Chris reached out and ran a hand down Joey's back, tugging at the waistband of Joey's boxer shorts. "He's bringing the new merchandise for us to check out," Joey said, catching Chris's hand in his. He kissed the inside of Chris's wrist, his thin beard tickling Chris's skin.

"What's that mean?" Chris asked, brushing his fingers along the underside of Joey's chin.

Joey grinned. "It means we get to see all the cool shit they'll be selling in the lobby at our shows."

"No, I mean --" Chris sighed, shaking his head. "Steven doesn't know about ... about us."

Joey frowned. "No, he doesn't," he said softly, sitting down beside Chris on the bed. He held Chris's hand tightly in his lap, his brown eyes watching Chris with a softness that made Chris's heart flutter. "Chris --" he started, chewing on his lower lip as he decided what to say.

"It's okay, Joe," Chris murmured. He knew it would be hard for Joey to tell his family they were together, especially Steven, who had partied with them many times in the past. Who was used to leading Joey's latest female conquest out the service entrance of the hotel in the early morning light. Who was going to be touring with them again in the coming months, and who was sure to notice before long that Chris and Joey shared a bed. They weren't as open around the others as Justin and Lance were, since Chris wasn't the type to get too close in public, but if they traveled with Steven for any length of time, he was going to notice the way Chris felt for Joey. There was no way he could miss it. Rubbing Joey's thigh, the downy hairs standing up at his touch, he sighed and said, "I understand if you don't want to tell him."

"I do," Joey said earnestly, pulling Chris closer to him. Chris let himself be pulled into Joey's lap and rested his head against Joey's bare chest. "It's just ... it's going to be hard, you know?" Joey whispered, rubbing Chris's shoulder. Chris picked at the gap in the crotch of Joey's boxers, his fingers slipping inside the fabric to entwine in dark kinky hair. "I don't know how Steve's going to handle Justin and Lance once we're on the road and he has to face the way they feel and act towards each other day in and day out, you know? That's going to take some getting used to on his part. I want to see how that goes over first before I tell him ..." He sighed and ran a hand through Chris's spiky hair. "I want to make sure

he'll be cool with it when I tell him I love you."

Chris closed his eyes and listened to Joey's steady breath. "I feel so safe like this," he whispered. "Joe, we don't have to tell anyone if you don't want to."

"I want to," Joey said again, "just not right now."

"Okay," Chris agreed. Joey kissed his forehead with damp lips, and Chris sighed. As long as I have you, he thought, wrapping his arms around Joey's waist, I don't care if we never tell anyone else at all.

"I love you, Christopher Robin," Joey whispered, trailing his fingers along Chris's chin. His touch was feathery on Chris's short goatee. "Just let me do this in my own time. Please."

Chris nodded. "I love you too, Joe," he replied. He remembered how hard it had been for him when he was Joey's age, telling his sisters that the boy he brought home from college was more than just a friend. He hadn't wanted to tell them, but when Molly caught them kissing, he had no choice. She walked into the living room and found the two of them making out on the couch, and to this day Chris could still remember the look of disbelief on his sister's face. He hadn't known anyone else was home. Fortunately his sisters were very supportive of him, in anything he did. He couldn't imagine how he would have dealt with any other reaction from them. He hoped Joey's family could be as understanding -- he didn't need Mama Fatone to pull a Diane Bass on him just because her baby Joey liked the comfort of Chris's arms.

So he would keep things quiet for now. He made sure to ask Lance not to mention his relationship with Joey while Steven was over, and Lance promised not to say a word. He even told Justin to keep quiet about it, as well, but Justin didn't understand why. "If he loves you like he says he does," Justin asked as they watched Steven park the car in front of the house, "then why can't he just tell his brother? Steve's old enough not to freak about it. Hell, Jon's only eight and he understands."

Chris sighed wearily. "You know, Justin," he said quietly as he followed the younger boy out onto the porch, where Lance waited for Joey to help Steven unpack the car, "not everyone is as lucky as you. Some people don't like the thought of their brother or son being gay. Look at Lance's mom."

"I know," Justin whispered sadly. He slipped his arms around Lance's waist, kissing the back of his lover's neck as they watched Steven climb out of the car.

"Hey babe," Lance said, leaning back into Justin's embrace. At the curb Joey helped Steven wrestle a large cardboard box out of the back seat of the car. "Where's JC?"

"Still in bed," Chris replied, shielding his eyes from the afternoon sun as he watched the two brothers carry the box up the sidewalk. "Must've been one hell of a date."

"Who the fuck is he seeing?" Justin wondered aloud. He had asked the question in one form or another ever since JC left the night before, and

Chris was beginning to wonder how often Lance could hear it before he snapped. Chris himself was ready to tell Justin to mind his own goddamn business and leave it at that.

But Lance laughed before he could get the words out, dispelling the tension between them. "Hey Steve," he called as the Fatones approached the house.

Steve grinned up at them, his gaze lingering on Justin's hands around Lance's waist before he cleared his throat and said, "Hey guys. Brought you some goodies from Johnny."

"Woohoo!" Justin cried, reaching for the box the brothers held between them as they stepped onto the porch. He managed to get the top flap open, grabbing a handful of bright blue material, before Chris slapped his hand away. Justin pulled the material out of the box and held it open in his hands -- it was a shirt with Joey's face emblazoned across it. "What the hell?" Justin asked, laughing.

"That's the worst picture --" Joey started. Steven laughed.

"Here," Justin said, tossing the shirt to Chris. "You take this one." Following the brothers into the house, he asked, "You got one of Lance in there?"

Lance groaned and followed Justin inside. Chris held the t-shirt open and smiled at the image of Joey looking back at him. Not bad, he thought, rolling the shirt up and sticking it under his arm before heading into the house behind the others.

Joey set the box down on the floor in the living room and stepped aside as Justin dug into it. "Justin," Lance warned, but Justin started pulling out shirts from the box, tossing aside the ones he didn't want. Lance picked them up as he threw them down, gathering them in his arms. He had to admit the one of Justin was damn sexy.

"Here it is," Justin said, pulling out a bright green t-shirt. Before Lance could get a good look at it, Justin tugged his own shirt off over his head and pulled on the t-shirt. Turning around, he smoothed the shirt down over his chest and winked at Lance. "What do you think?" he asked.

Lance looked at the image of himself plastered across Justin's chest and rolled his eyes. "Justin," he sighed, giggling when Justin pulled the shirt out to look at it. "It's cute."

"I like it," Justin declared. "I'm going to wear it all the time. It's my new favorite shirt."

Joey laughed. "You're going to get sick of these two by the time the tour is over," he said to his brother. Steven just grinned and shook his head as Justin dug into the box again.

"Oooh!" he cried, pulling out a stack of eight by ten glossy photographs. Shuffling through them, he found one of Lance alone, posing prettily for the camera. Sighing lustily, Justin dropped the rest of the photos back into the box and held up the one of Lance. "Look, baby. This will look great hanging in my room. What do you think?"

"I think that you're getting a little carried away ..." Lance tried to take the photo from Justin, his cheeks burning as Steven watched them. Justin caught Lance's hand and pulled him into a quick embrace, his lips warm on Lance's neck.

"Are we done here?" Justin whispered. "I got what I wanted."

Lance laughed. "Justin, we've got an audience here --" He flashed a quick grin at Steven as Justin's hands wrapped around his waist.

Joey covered Steven's eyes with his hand. "You've seen enough," he said, laughing. "You two want to get a room or something?"

Taking Lance's hand, Justin started to lead him from the living room, the picture of his lover hugged tightly to his chest. As they passed the box, Lance glanced down and saw a glossy photograph of Justin in his "No Strings Attached" outfit, complete with studded bandanna. "Can I have this one?" he asked, scooping up the picture.

Steven twisted away from Joey and laughed. "Sure," he said. As Lance followed Justin from the room, he called out, "You keeping the shirt too?"

Lance remembered the shirt with Justin's face on it, tucked beneath his arm. "You want me to pay for this stuff?" he asked sheepishly. Justin ran a hand around his waist and kissed his throat, urging him on.

"Johnny said you guys could have it," Steve said, shaking his head. "Enjoy it."

Whispering in his ear, Justin purred, "I'm going to wear this shirt when I make love to you."

"You are not," Lance replied, laughing as Justin led him to their bedroom.

All I Ever Wanted
160. The Mall
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sat in front of the television, toying with the necklace he wore around his neck as he watched Jeopardy! and waited for Justin to return from the kitchen, where he was making Chex mix for him. Lance had been a little apprehensive at the idea of Justin and the oven working together, and he tried to talk Justin out of making his own Chex mix, but he had made the mistake of saying he was in the mood for some and once Justin got it in his head that he was going to make it for Lance, there was no dissuading him. "Fuck!" Justin cried from the kitchen, and Lance suppressed a smile.

"You okay, baby?" he called out as he heard a pan clatter into the sink.

"I burned my finger," Justin said, and Lance could hear the pout in his voice. Pushing himself up from the couch, he went into the kitchen to see what he could do to salvage what cereal they had left before Justin burned the whole house down. JC was out with his mystery friend, Chris and Joey out at a club with Steven, and Lance didn't want to have to explain why the place was incinerated when they all returned later that evening.

In the kitchen he found Justin with an oven mitt on one hand, another mitt shoved under his arm, and his finger in his mouth, a scowl on his face. He glanced up as Lance entered, and Lance could've sworn Justin pouted harder when he saw him. "Let me see," Lance said, taking Justin's finger from his mouth and studying it carefully.

"It hurts," Justin said softly. "Kiss it and make it better."

Grinning, Lance kissed the offered finger. Then, watching Justin from the corner of his eye, he stuck the finger in his own mouth, sucking on it gently. Justin's eyes widened slightly, and then he kissed Lance's cheek. "I love you," he sighed.

"I love you, too," Lance said, letting Justin's finger ease out of his mouth. "Why don't we pretend the Chex mix came out alright and just cuddle on the couch already, okay?"

Justin sighed again. "Okay," he said, dropping the oven mitts on the burnt cookie pan already in the sink. He reached over and clicked off the oven as Lance stepped back, his fingers entwining in his necklace again as he waited for Justin to finish cleaning up.

Suddenly he felt the thin metal snap in his fingers, and he looked down in surprise to find the large silver cross his mother had bought him lying in his palm. "Oh shit," he murmured.

"What?" Justin asked, frowning. He looked at the cross in Lance's hand and then met Lance's eyes. "Oh shit." Stepping closer, he picked up the necklace around Lance's neck, his fingers picking off the broken link that

had held the cross on. "That's just great. How the hell are we supposed to fix this?"

"I don't know," Lance admitted. Because he couldn't think of anything else to say, he said, "Oh shit" again.

Justin bit his lip thoughtfully. "I know," he said, his eyes glistening. "Let's take it to one of those jewelry places in the mall. They can fix it."

Lance thought it was a brilliant idea. He kissed Justin tenderly and followed him to the car, the cross resting safely in the pocket of his jean jacket. At the mall they found a jeweler who looked at the broken link and said she could fix it in an hour, if they wanted to walk around for a bit and come back once she was finished. Taking Lance's hand in his, Justin led the way to the food court, hungry for ice cream after his mishap in the kitchen earlier. As they sat by the fountain in the middle of the mall, eating ice cream cones and watching people walk by, Lance rubbed Justin's lower back and said, "That's why I love you, Justin."

"Why's that?" Justin asked, swirling his tongue around his ice cream cone as he looked at Lance.

"Because I do," Lance said simply. Justin laughed at that and kissed his nose, leaving behind a cold, sticky imprint of his lips that Lance wiped away with the back of his sleeve. "How much longer you think we have until she finishes with my necklace?"

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "I didn't look at the time when we left." Pointing across the mall at a neon sign that read Record Town, he suggested, "Why don't we look in there for a bit? Then we'll come back and see if it's ready."

"Okay," Lance agreed, following Justin to the music store. They finished their cones before entering the shop, Lance walking in front of Justin, Justin's hands on Lance's hips possessively. Inside the store, music blared loudly around them, and teenagers jostled down the narrow aisles, looking at CDs and yelling at each other over the din from the speakers. Leaning back, Lance put his lips against Justin's ear and asked, "Looking for anything in particular?"

Justin shrugged. They were in the pop section, the titles all bleeding together as they made their way down the aisle. Lance reached the end of the aisle and turned, ready to look at the country CDs, when Justin caught his belt loop and pulled him back. "Look at this," Justin said, holding up a Backstreet Boys CD. He grinned at Lance. "Do you really think JC's seeing one of these guys?"

Lance laughed. "I think we should leave him alone about it, baby," he said, leaning against Justin, his arms crossed on Justin's shoulder. "He'll tell us when he's ready."

"I want to know now," Justin pouted. He looked at the front of the CD. "Do you know which one's which?"

The CD was an imported single, and each of the members of the band was pictured on the cover, their images in blocks across the front of the CD in a manner similar to NSync's own first American album. Each

member was a different color, and from what he remembered of the Burger King commercials, the pictures looked as if they were a few years old. Pointing at the blue square, Lance said, "I think this is Nick."

"That's the only one you know?" Justin asked, frowning at the CD in his hands.

Lance shrugged. "This is an old CD. I don't remember all of their names."

Pointing at the orange square, Justin asked, "Isn't this Brian?"

"You might be right," Lance agreed. Glancing around, he noticed a girl a few feet away, shuffling CDs in an effort to look busy as she watched them from the corner of her eye. Noticing the nametag on her shirt, Lance called out, "Excuse me."

The girl looked up -- she was a few years older than he was, and her nametag read Shawna. "Can I help you?" she asked brightly, coming closer to them.

Justin smiled at her. "I hope so," he said. Holding the CD out to her, he asked, "Do you know anything about the Backstreet Boys?"

"A little," she said, shrugging. "That's an import CD, before you ask. That's why it's so expensive. And yes, I know it's just a single. But imports cost more."

Lance laughed. "You get asked that a lot?" he asked.

Shawna nodded and rolled her eyes. "You wouldn't believe the people who think imports should be the same price as regular singles."

Pointing at the CD in his hand, Justin asked, "Do you know who is who on this thing?"

Frowning over the CD, Shawna said, "I'm not sure. This is Nick --" She pointed to the blue square.

"Told you," Lance said, running his arms around Justin's waist and hugging him tightly.

Shawna grinned and pointed to the green square. "This is Kevin. He's that one that the BK dude hits on in that commercial -- you seen that?" When Justin nodded, she pointed to the red square. "I think his name is Howie. My best friend has a Pinto she calls Howie, after her boyfriend's ... well, you know ..." She cleared her throat. "Anyway, this one here is Brian," she said, pointing to the orange square. "And this last one is AJ." Her finger rested on the purple square, and Lance studied the dark glasses and soulful eyes staring back at him.

"What's that stand for, do you know?" Justin asked.

Shawna shrugged. "I'm not sure. I think the J is for James. That's my best friend's name. Oh, not the one with the Pinto," she amended quickly.

Justin glanced at Lance, a bemused expression on his face. Lance could just imagine what he was thinking of this talkative girl who would

rather waste her time chatting with the customers than working. "What's the A for?" Lance asked, resting his chin on Justin's shoulder.

"I want to say Alexander?" Shawna asked, frowning. "I'm not sure. Hold on, let me check."

As she jogged over to the counter, where another employee was ringing up customers, Justin laughed. "Honey, you don't think this is Alex, do you?" he asked, his finger resting over the purple image on the CD cover.

Lance shrugged. "You saw the way he blushed when you asked --" He looked up as Shawna approached again.

"Yep," she said, a little breathless, "it's Alexander James McLean. Karen would know -- she's a big BSB fan."

Justin laughed again. Turning the CD over in his hand, he read the track listing -- some Christmas song, that "Quit Playing Games" song that still got too much air time on the radio, and some song he had never heard of before. "Let's buy one of these for JC," he said, his eyes twinkling at the idea. He giggled as he looked at Lance. "This will be classic. We so need to get him a CD of theirs."

"That's a good one," Shawna pointed out. "And I'm not just saying that cause it costs more, because I don't work on commission." She flashed them a quick smile. "But if your friend is an AJ fan, there's a song on there that wasn't released in the US that AJ sings the lead on. That's what Karen said, anyway. It's called Lay Down Beside Me, or something like that."

Looking at the CD again, Justin sighed happily, and Lance grinned to see the mirth in his lover's face. "Oh, I don't know if he's an AJ fan," Justin said, winking at her as if she was in on the joke, "but I have a sneaky feeling he may be."

All I Ever Wanted
161. Friends Again
by NSyncGrrl

Justin found JC out on the back porch, that journal notebook thing he kept all his songs in open on his lap as he stared out at the yard, tapping a pen against his lips. He looked up as Justin let the screen door slam shut behind him. "Hey," he said cautiously.

"Hey," Justin replied. He pointed at the porch swing beside JC's chair. "Can I sit down here?"

"Sure," JC said. He watched as Justin took a seat. Noticing the small plastic bag in his friend's hands, JC asked, "What's that?"

A sly grin spread across Justin's face. "I bought you something last night," he said, toying with the noisy bag absently. "Lance and I went to the mall and I just thought ..." He shrugged and held the bag out to JC. "Here."

"What is it?" JC asked, taking the offered bag with a wary look on his face. He was probably remembering Justin's outburst the last time they talked, and Justin bit his lip as JC stuck his hand into the bag as if expecting something inside to attack him.

Justin grinned. "Just don't hate me when you see what it is."

JC pulled out a CD jewel case, still in the protective shrink wrap. With a slight frown on his face, he turned the CD over in his hands. "Oh fuck," he whispered, his cheeks turning a bright red.

Laughing, Justin said, "Your boy sings a solo on there." He watched JC study the CD carefully.

"He's not my boy," JC said quickly, but the way he smiled suggested otherwise. Justin pushed the swing back with his foot, kicking at the leg of JC's chair each time the swing brought him close to his friend. When Justin didn't say anything, JC ventured to add, "It's not what you think."

"You don't know what I think," Justin said softly. Right this second? His thoughts were on Lance, and the way he looked in the early morning light when Justin woke up and found his lover still asleep beside him. He could watch Lance for hours, his long lashes fluttering against his cheeks, his lips slightly parted, his breath soft and gentle along Justin's neck. At those moments nothing else mattered in the whole world -- his life was complete, and perfect, and never-ending. Everyone should have that, the sense of bliss, the peacefulness, the love he felt burn so strongly inside that he knew it was consuming him and as long as he had Lance, he didn't even care. He wondered if JC would be able to find that with his Alex. That's what he was thinking right now, but he couldn't find the words to say it out loud.

JC looked at the CD for a long moment before turning his inscrutable gaze on Justin. His eyes sparkled. "What are you thinking?" he asked.

Justin shrugged. "How long have we known each other?" he asked.

"A long time," JC admitted. "Shit, Justin. I remember when you were so freaked out the first time you ever got kissed. Who was it? Britney?"

"Christina," Justin said, blushing. "Seven minutes in heaven -- what kind of fucked up game is that, anyway?"

JC laughed. "I don't know," he admitted. "When you two came out of the closet I asked you how it went. Do you remember what you said?"

Now Justin laughed as well. "I said it was sloppy," he said, remembering. The closet had been stuffy and dark and hot, and he had been so damn nervous he hit his forehead against Christina's when he leaned down to kiss her. Their lips had brushed for the merest of seconds, and then she pushed him away. "Yuck," she whispered, and he sat down at the far end of the closet, waiting until someone counted down their minutes and opened the door again. "I said I didn't like kissing," Justin added. He hadn't, not at the time.

"And look at you now," JC pointed out. "You can't keep your hands off of Lance. Justin, you two are inseparable."

"I love him," Justin said simply. There was nothing else to say about it. "JC, have you ever been in love? Like really in love?"

"No," JC whispered. "Not like you and Lance. I've never had something like that."

"You should," Justin said, his voice gentle. When JC looked at him, he smiled sadly. "You're a wonderful guy, JC. You deserve to be happy. I don't think Joey's going to do it for you. You need someone who loves you the way Lance loves me. Everyone needs someone like that."

JC sighed. "Justin --"

"Is he nice?" Justin asked suddenly. He watched JC's face closely. He saw the way bright spots of color appeared high on his friend's cheeks, the way his eyes sparkled wetly, and he thought maybe AJ was something JC needed right now. Someone different, something new, exciting.

"Very nice," JC whispered, fingering the CD.

"Is that him?" Justin asked, nodding at the CD. JC shrugged noncommittally. Biting his lip again, Justin studied his friend's clenched jaw and whispered, "I'm sorry about ..." He sighed. "I'm sorry about everything, JC. I'm sorry you felt you had to lie to me, to all of us. I just want us to be happy, you know? I'm happy with Lance, and Joey's happy with Chris, and I want you to be happy too. Is he going to make you happy?"

JC shrugged again. "Maybe," he said. Picking at the cellophane the CD was wrapped in, he added, "I'd like to find out, at any rate."

Justin nodded. "Did you use that condom Chris gave you yet?"

"Justin!" JC cried, the blush back in his cheeks again. "No, I didn't use

it."

Laughing, Justin asked, "Are you going to?"

"Stop it," JC said. "Just stop it, okay? Please?"

"Lighten up, JC," Justin said, kicking the leg of JC's chair again.

From the doorway behind them came a soft chuckle. Justin turned to find Joey standing at the screen door, watching them. "Look who's talking," he said, grinning.

"How long have you been standing there?" JC asked as Joey came out onto the porch. The door slammed shut behind him and he pushed Justin over to make room for himself on the swing.

Nodding at the CD in JC's hands, Joey said, "Long enough to wonder what the hell he bought you that keeps making you blush like a schoolgirl." He leaned over and read the CD cover. "You turning on us, man? The Backstreet Boys? You're kidding me, right?"

JC shrugged. "It's just a CD --"

"Oh shit!" Joey started to giggle, looking at them with laughing half-moon eyes that made Justin grin. "Your new friend -- this Alex ... JC, don't tell me --"

"Then don't ask," JC growled, trying to glare at Joey, but his heart wasn't in it. He ran his hand over the CD cover and sighed.

"Is he all that, Josh?" Joey asked, nudging Justin playfully.

"I'll find out," JC said, grinning. "Thanks for the CD, Justin."

Justin laughed. "No problem. You should see the poster they have of him at that store --"

"Oh God," JC groaned, covering his hand with his eyes. "Don't you dare buy that for me."

Joey winked at Justin. "I bet you bought a Lance poster though, right?"

Pouting, Justin said, "They didn't have one. But look --" He unbuttoned his shirt and pulled it open to reveal Lance's face on the concert t-shirt he wore as an undershirt. He sighed. "Doesn't this rock?"

"Josh," Joey said, shaking his head, "promise me you won't get like this. If you even think of buying a BSB shirt, I'm going to tie you up and lock you in the closet."

"Don't worry," JC replied, rolling his eyes. "Button up, Justin."

As he did, Justin asked, "You going out with him tonight?"

"You're nosy," JC said.

"He is that," Joey agreed. "So you going or what?"

"You guys," JC whined, standing up from the chair. He stretched and headed inside the house. "It's not like that."

Joey and Justin laughed in unison. "Yeah right!" Joey called, winking at Justin. Lowering his voice, he asked, "You really think it's AJ?"

Justin shrugged. "Why not?" he asked. "His name is Alexander. Did you know that?"

Joey raised an eyebrow and didn't say anything, but the look on his face told Justin that he wasn't the only one thinking about it anymore.

All I Ever Wanted
162. Brunch
by NSyncGrrl

JC let his car roll to a stop in front of AJ's large house. The others wanted to spend the day at Universal Studios, and JC begged off because AJ had asked if he wanted to come over for a late brunch. With just a few weeks left before he began touring again, JC wanted to spend as much time with his new friend as possible. Because you like the way he looks at you, he told himself, climbing out of the car and heading up the steps to knock on the front door. You like the promises you see in those dark eyes, and the taste of his warm tongue, and damn but you're horny, Josh.

It was true. A week ago, he could barely stand to be in the same room with his friends when Justin looked at Lance with those bedroom eyes of his, or when Chris said something sweet to Joey in that "fuck me" tone he had, and now here he was, nervously waiting to see AJ again, aching for those lips and those hands on his body again. He raised his hand to knock a second time, but then he heard a dog yipping inside the house and steady footsteps on the other side of the door, and then AJ was there, smiling at him with that wolfish grin of his, his eyes hidden behind dark, wire-frame glasses, his hair a shock on his head. "Josh," he said softly, stepping aside to let JC in. He let his gaze run down JC's tight blue t-shirt tucked into a pair of slim jeans, and he met JC's eyes over the top of his glasses. "You look great."

JC felt his cheeks heat up slightly. "Thanks," he murmured as AJ's terrier Jack pounced on his ankles. "You too." AJ wore a black tank top and black jeans that accentuated his lanky legs. His arms were dark with his black tattoos, and as he closed the door behind JC, he leaned down and kissed JC gently, a brief touch of lips that hinted at more.

"Brunch is almost ready," he purred, turning to lead the way into the kitchen.

JC caught AJ's hand in his own and pulled him back. His arms slipped around AJ's neck as he pressed his lips against AJ's own, hungry for a deeper kiss. AJ's arms encircled JC's waist and his tongue licked into JC's mouth. AJ tasted like coffee and cigarettes and something exotic that enflamed JC's senses. He felt AJ's hands slide down his back to cup his buttocks, the touch arousing him, and then AJ pulled JC's hips into his, and the hardness in AJ's pants crushed against his own budding erection made JC's head swim dizzily. When AJ's lips left his, JC tightened his grip around AJ's neck -- he wasn't hungry for brunch, that could wait. He wanted this, the warm body in his arms, the damp lips on his, the promise hidden in AJ's jeans. Kissing JC's jaw, AJ whispered, "Did you bring me your poems?"

"I forgot," JC sighed. He had remembered the notebook sitting on his bed as he sat at a stoplight a few miles from AJ's house, but he didn't want to turn around and go back for it then. The lure of AJ's gleaming eyes and lupine grin was too great. "I'll bring it next time."

"You promise?" AJ asked, his tongue licking behind JC's ear. He thrust his hips into JC's, eliciting a slight moan from JC, who could only nod numbly in reply. Kissing JC once more, AJ pulled away, but he held onto JC's hand with a tight grip as if afraid to let him go completely. "Let's eat, Josh. Then we can fool around."

JC laughed. "I want to fool around now, Alex," he pouted, and AJ laughed.

Leading JC into the kitchen, AJ said, "You're a breath of fresh air, Josh. It'll be a quick meal, I guarantee." With a glance back at him, AJ added, "I want to fool around too. Damn but you're intoxicating."

Intoxicating. JC liked the sound of that. He let AJ pull him into the kitchen, where the sound of sizzling eggs and the heavenly scent of frying bacon filled the air. JC's stomach growled, and he covered it with one hand sheepishly. He hadn't eaten anything since he woke up, which was unusual for him, but before he fell asleep last night AJ had called and told him he would cook the best breakfast he ever had, and JC believed him now that he saw the pots on the stove. They were full of bacon and sausages and scrambled eggs full of cheese, tomatoes, ham, onions, peppers ... sticking a fork into the eggs, AJ scooped out a small mouthful. "Open up."

JC complied. AJ stuck the fork into his mouth and JC closed his lips over the warm metal as AJ pulled it slowly between his lips. Closing his eyes, JC savored the spicy eggs. "Hmm," he moaned, smiling at the slight grin on AJ's face. "Damn you can cook. What's in those?"

"Everything but the kitchen sink," AJ replied. Stirring the eggs, he added, "The secret is the salsa. You mix it with the eggs and it really gives them a little kick, you know?" JC laughed as AJ's arm snaked around his waist, pulling him close. Placing a quick kiss on JC's temple, he said, "There's juice in the fridge. Want to set the table for me?"

"Sure," JC replied, slipping out of AJ's embrace. As he placed napkins out on the table beside blue stoneware plates, the phone rang.

AJ glanced up from the stove, a slight frown on his face. "Can you get that for me?" he asked. JC nodded and reached for the phone as AJ laughed. "It's probably my mother. She loves to call when I'm just about to sit down and eat. It's like a mutant power or something, off-kilter timing."

Laughing, JC placed the phone to his ear. "Hello?" he asked, smiling at AJ. He'd have to remember to tell him that his own mother had the same uncanny ability.

Silence filled the line, and JC frowned. As he was about to speak again, someone asked, "Who are you?" The voice was loud in his ear, impossibly young and decidedly male.

Watching AJ at the stove, JC asked again, "Hello? You called me. Who are you?"

That silence again. And then the voice took on a hard edge. "Where's AJ?"

"Alex is busy right now," JC said, a little spiteful. "We're about to eat. Can I take a message?"

"Let me talk to him now. Tell him it's Nick." JC felt his stomach flutter. Nick. "He ain't too busy to talk to me."

AJ glanced over his shoulder at JC. "My mom?" he asked.

JC shook his head. "Nick," he said, holding the phone out to AJ. "He wants to talk to you."

Looking at the receiver distastefully, AJ frowned. "Tell him I'm busy," he said, and JC knew Nick could hear every word they said. Raising his voice, AJ called out, "I'm busy, Nick. I'll call you later."

Placing the phone to his ear again, JC said, "You heard him. He'll call you later."

"Who the hell are you?" Nick asked, his voice bitter. "Tell him I have to talk to him now. It's about the TRL appearance next month. Tell him I won't be home later."

"Well --" JC started, and then AJ was there, taking the phone from his hand.

JC frowned and tried to step away, but AJ slipped an arm around JC's waist and rolled his eyes before speaking into the phone. "Nick," he said, his voice curt. "I said I was busy." JC watched the cut of AJ's jaw, the muscles beneath the skin bunching tightly, and then he said, "His name is Josh, and he's none of your damn business, Nick. Now what do you want that can't wait until later?" JC could hear Nick's loud voice through the phone. It sounded tinny and distant and whiny. As he listened to his bandmate, AJ rested his lips against JC's forehead, and the touch was cool and damp. JC dared to wrap his arms around AJ's waist, hugging him close. One bony hip leaned into JC's, and JC let his fingers entwine in the belt loops of AJ's jeans.

Behind them the sizzle of grease in the pan spat from the stove. Turning, AJ said, "Hate to cut you off, Nick, really, but we're about to eat. I'll call you later." He laughed at something Nick said. "No, not when I'm done eating. When Josh leaves." Winking at JC, he added, "I don't know when that'll be. Not anytime soon. I'll talk to you before we have to catch the flight, though. Later." He hung up the phone and sighed.

"That was Nick," JC said softly. AJ nodded. "He doesn't like me," JC said.

AJ laughed at that. "He doesn't like most people. And I think it pissed him off when you answered the phone. He didn't expect that." Frowning, AJ released JC and went back to the stove. JC watched him for a moment, unsure of what to say, and then AJ spoke softly, a tinge of bitterness in his voice. "Fuck him. What, he thinks I'm going to spend the rest of my life moping around, wanting him? Shit. He said he wasn't interested, fine. Just don't pull this bullshit crap now, you know?" AJ looked over at JC, who nodded. AJ grinned. "I'm sorry, Josh. Didn't mean to dump that on you."

"That's what I'm here for," JC replied as AJ dished out the eggs onto their plates. JC reached out and ran a hand down AJ's bare arm, his finger twirling around the black tattoos. He was thinking of Joey's unrequited feelings towards Lance, and how he had thought he couldn't love someone who loved another, and how he lost his chance with Joey because of it. "You think, I don't know, you think he might like you now?"

AJ shrugged. "His loss," he replied offhandedly. "Last week, had he called, I might've put up with his shit. I wanted someone to like me. I won't lie to you, Josh. You know how I felt for him. I'd liked him for a long time, and there were moments I thought he might like me back. There were things he said or did, the way he reacted to my advances -- I wasn't blatant but he knew, and he flirted because he thought it was a joke, maybe. Or he thought I wouldn't push it. But I don't fuck with my emotions like that. I can't play others, and I sure as hell ain't gonna play myself." He scraped the rest of the eggs onto JC's plate and set the pan in the sink. It clattered against the stainless steel nosily. "Let's eat."

JC caught AJ's arm before he could sit down. "Alex," he said gently, his thumb rubbing AJ's wrist softly. He frowned. "Is it too early to tell you that I like you?" He didn't know if it was more than that, but he thought it could be, and he didn't want to let it pass him by if it was. He looked at AJ fearfully, watching those thin lips, those bright eyes, waiting for an answer.

"No," AJ whispered, leaning closer. His breath fanned JC's cheek, and then his lips closed over JC's own, sucking gently. "I liked you the moment I saw you," he said, "in the club. Don't worry about Nick, okay?" He grinned as he kissed JC again. "Why do you think I came to your rescue in the first place?"

JC laughed. "Because you're just a lamb in wolf's clothing," he said, picking at the front of AJ's tank top. His hand spread out along the dark material, and he felt one hard nipple beneath his palm. "You're a little rough around the edges but I think there's more to you than that. I want to find out what it is that sparkles inside of you, Alex. I see it in your eyes. I want to know what it is that lies behind those dark glasses you always wear."

Raising JC's hand to his lips, AJ kissed his knuckles, his lips soft and pink like rose petals. "You keep talking like that," AJ promised, his gaze sharp on JC's face, "weaving your pretty words into such poetry for me, and I'm going to fall for you. Hard. Just a warning."

JC laughed again. "Maybe that's what I want," he said, raising his eyebrows suggestively.

"Well let's eat first," AJ said, grinning at him. "The eggs are getting cold." As they sat down at the table, he added, "And keep talking. I love the sound of your voice."

All I Ever Wanted
163. Little Things
by NSyncGrrl

Joey sat on the couch in front of the TV, his feet propped up on the coffee table in front of him, the remote in one hand as he idly flipped through the channels. "Can you pick a show and stick with it, Joey?" Justin asked. He sat on the end of the couch, his feet curled up underneath him, waiting for Lance to return from the bathroom.

On the other side of Joey, Chris rested his head against Joey's shoulder. "We're waiting for your boyfriend to get his ass back from the can," he said, entwining his fingers with Joey's. Joey squeezed Chris's hand gently, raising it to his lips to kiss the skinned knuckles. Chris had torn his hand up earlier that day trying to get Korea out of the lint vent of the clothes dryer, where she had cuddled to get warm and then got stuck. His knuckles were red and scraped raw, and Joey's lips just barely touched them with the kiss.

Justin looked up as he heard footsteps approach from the hall. Beaming at Lance, he patted the seat on the couch beside him and said, "Come back here, baby." They were in the middle of watching Young Guns, which Justin had never seen and couldn't really get into right now. The best part of the afternoon so far was Lance sitting in his lap, and every so often he'd shift just so, pressing against Justin's cock with a sweet ache that made Justin bite his lower lip as he hugged Lance closer. He wanted Lance in his arms again, and he wanted Joey to stop clicking through the channels as they waited for Lance to get back so they could unpause the tape.

But Lance shook his head and pointed into the kitchen. "I'm a little thirsty. Anyone want something to drink?"

"Get me a beer," Joey said, his gaze flicking from the TV to Lance and then back again.

"It's too early to drink," Chris said softly. He looked up at Joey and frowned. "You okay?"

"Fine," Joey sighed. "Just want a beer, that's all."

For a long moment Chris studied Joey wordlessly. "Me too, then," he said finally, turning his frown onto Lance. "Two beers. Justin? You want one?"

"No," Justin said, scowling. He didn't need to get drunk to enjoy the movie and a quiet afternoon with his friends. He was already drunk enough on Lance. Beer would just dull his senses and right now he was vibrating and alive with the feelings Lance arose in him. He didn't want to dull that.

"You want something to drink, hon?" Lance asked, looking at Justin.

Justin met his green gaze and shook his head. "I want you to come

back here," he pouted, and Lance laughed. When he disappeared into the kitchen, Justin heard him rummage through the fridge, and then he came into the living room with two longneck bottles in one hand, a can of Sprite in the other. Justin opened his legs so Lance could sit down between them, and Lance handed the beers to Joey. Justin watched as Lance popped open the soda, taking a long sip of it before handing it to his lover. Grinning, Justin took a drink from the can and waited for Lance to sit down.

In the hall, the phone rang. "I'll get it," Lance said, heading back out of the living room as Joey thumbed the play button on the remote. Emilio Estevez appeared on the screen, a shit-eating grin on his face, and Joey paused it before he could say anything. Justin turned and watched Lance's back as he answered the ringing phone. "Hello?" he asked. Probably JC, Justin thought. JC was spending more and more time with his Alex friend. Justin hoped he was having fun. "What's wrong?"

Justin frowned at the concern in Lance's voice, and he glanced at Joey, who was watching Lance with a guarded expression on his face. "Calm down, Jon," Lance said, and Justin vaulted over the arm of the couch. Jon? he wondered, and Lance looked up at him as he approached, his eyes wide and pale in the unlit hallway. "He's right here, Jon. Hold on, okay? Just calm down." Passing the phone to Justin, Lance whispered, "It's that cat. I'm not sure what he's saying, but he's really upset."

"Okay," Justin said, nodding. He kissed Lance quickly and placed the phone to his ear. "Jon? What's wrong?"

He heard his brother's breath hitch on the other end of the line. "Justin," Jonathan said, his voice tight, "Poofu's sick. He's sick."

"Where's Mom?" Justin asked, frowning.

Jonathan sighed shakily. "She went to the store. He keeps throwing up, Justin. Everywhere. He won't stop." He started to cry softly, a sound that tore Justin's heart in two. "Please make him stop, Justin. Please."

"Jesus," Justin breathed. He knew nothing about cats. There had been the one they had when he was a kid, years ago, and all he remembered was it had been a white cat with black paws and a black patch of fur over half of its face, and Justin thought it looked so much like the Phantom of the Opera that he named it Phantom, but he was just a little boy and called it Phanny for short. He didn't think Phanny had ever been really sick, though one time it had gotten out overnight and to keep warm crawled into the engine of his father's car. The next morning when his dad started the car, the cat was caught in the fan blade and Justin found it hiding beneath the porch, the fur stripped from its belly and side, the skin livid, torn and bleeding. Justin remembered crying lustily as they drove to the vet's, the cat lying in his arms and purring so loud it drowned out every other sound in the car. Somehow Phanny had lived through the ordeal, though Justin's dad used to joke that it used seven of its nine lives that day.

And now that damn cat they found in Mississippi was sick. Justin could only imagine how terrified his little brother was right now. "Jon," he said, trying to keep his voice steady. He wished his mother was there -- she would know what to do. Mothers always knew what to do. "Just calm

down, Jon. Stop crying. Where's Poofu right now?"

"In, in the kit-kit-kitchen," Jonathan said, his breath hitching again as he tried to control his tears. "He's puking everywhere, Justin. Make him stop."

Justin sighed. "I'll be right there. Jon? You watch Poofu, and clean up after him. But don't give him anything to eat. You hear me?"

"Yes," Jonathan whispered. "You coming over now?"

"I'll be there in a few minutes," Justin promised, even though it took an hour to drive to his mother's house on a good day. As he hung up the phone, he turned to find Lance already holding the front door open, car keys in hand, shoes already on his feet.

He held Justin's shoes beneath his arm and smiled when Justin met his troubled gaze. "Is everything okay?" Joey asked from the couch. Chris looked at them over the back of the sofa, frowning.

"We'll be right back," Lance said as Justin stepped outside. "Jon's cat is sick and he's home alone."

"Be careful," Chris said, and Lance closed the door behind them. Justin ran down the steps of the porch and across the yard, heading for the car. The dry grass tickled his ankles, hot against the bottoms of his bare feet, and at the car door he turned to Lance, who threw him the car keys. Justin unlocked the door and slid into the passenger seat, catching his sneakers deftly as Lance tossed them his way. As Lance climbed into the driver's seat, Justin pulled on his shoes, the frown still creasing his brow. Just hang on a little while longer, Jon, he thought as Lance snapped the seatbelt around Justin's waist. Shit, we should've never let him keep that damn cat.

They reached the Harless residence in a little over half an hour, Lance's foot heavy on the gas, his hand comforting on Justin's thigh. Justin stared out the window and willed the traffic to disappear, the stop lights to change, the car to move faster. He wrapped his fingers around Lance's hand and held it his own tightly. "He'll be fine," Lance whispered as he pulled into the driveway to Justin's mother's house. Leaning over, he kissed Justin's clenched jaw tenderly.

Justin frowned. His mother's car wasn't there, which meant that Jonathan was still alone inside. He hurried up to the house, Lance right behind him. Without knocking, he opened the door. "Jon?" he called out, worried.

"In here," came the muffled reply. Lance caught Justin's hand in his as they went into the kitchen. Jonathan looked up at them from where he sat on the floor, his eyes large watery pools in his pale face. Poofu hunched on all fours at his knees, hacking fiercely. "Justin," he whispered, "he stopped throwing up but now he's just not right."

Justin knelt down beside his brother. "Oh fuck, Lance," he said softly, placing his hands around the small kitten's heaving sides. He glanced up at his lover, his eyes as wide and scared as Jonathan's. What the fuck was he supposed to do now that he was here?

"Does Poofu have a doctor, Jon?" Lance asked gently. Jonathan nodded. "Well, do you know where the doctor's office is?"

Jonathan sniffled loudly. "We took him to the vet by the mall," he said, wiping his nose with the back of his hand. "To get his neuters knocked off."

Lance smiled. "How about we take him back there now, okay?" He reached out and stroked the kitten's quivering back, his hand brushing against Justin's. "You think you can hold Poofu in the car? Hold him tight so he doesn't get away?"

Jonathan nodded again. When Justin scooped the kitten up and put it in his brother's arms, Poofu shivered against Jonathan, and Justin slipped his arm around his brother's shoulders, following him as they followed Lance to the car. Lance drove as Justin sat in the backseat with Jonathan, the kitten on Jonathan's lap. On the boulevard, he spotted an animal hospital, and without thinking he swerved across the oncoming lanes of traffic and into the half-filled parking lot. "This isn't it," Jonathan said as Lance cut off the car.

"This is closer," Justin replied. He held the cat while Jonathan climbed out of the car, and then the three of them tramped into the clinic. Only a few people sat in the waiting room, and the only animal was an old Airdale who lifted its head as they entered before lying back down on the floor. At the counter Justin smiled his most charming grin at the young receptionist and said simply, "My brother's cat is sick."

Jonathan held onto Poofu tightly as Justin filled out a few forms, and Lance sat in one of the waiting room chairs, his hand on his forehead. "Do you think Poofu will be alright?" Jonathan asked quietly. Out of the corner of his eye Justin saw Lance nod.

"He's going to be fine," Lance said softly, his deep voice soothing in the sterile office that smelled of dog shampoo and flea collars. Justin's heart swelled at the words -- he'd have to tell Lance he loved him a million times tonight, just for those comforting words alone. Jonathan sighed and sat down beside Lance, waiting.

When the paperwork was finished, Justin squatted on the ground in front of Lance and touched the shaking kitten's head gently. "He'll be okay, Jon," he whispered, resting his arm on Lance's knee.

"I know," Jonathan replied. "Lance said so."

Looking up at Lance, Justin smiled sadly and said, "I love you. You know that, right?"

Lance's hand strayed to Justin's shoulder, and his touch was warm through Justin's shirt. "I love you, too," he whispered, his eyes full of the emotion.

Beside him Jonathan said, "You love me, too."

Justin laughed. "Yes, we love you, too," he said, tousling his brother's hair.

"Do you love Poofu?" Jonathan asked, snuggling closer to the cat.

"Of course we do," Lance replied. "And he's going to be okay as soon as he sees the doctor."

"Okay," Jonathan said, nodding. Against the cat's fur, he murmured, "You hear that, Poof? You're going to be okay. Just hang in there, baby cat."

A door opened, and a young teenager stuck his head out into the waiting room. "Poofu?" he called.

"That's you," Lance said, standing. His hand was strong on Justin's arm as he helped his lover to his feet, and they followed Jonathan through the door. The teenager showed them a room and Jonathan set Poofu down on the counter. The kitten had stopped shivering, and once Jonathan let it go, it began to sniff around the counter top experimentally, its eyes bright and curious. "See?" Lance asked. "He's looking better already."

Justin opened a jar of large Q-tips. "Justin," Lance warned, taking the only seat in the room. "Those aren't for you to play with."

But Justin merely smiled at Lance and trailed the Q-tip down his lover's nose playfully. "Not me," he said. "Poofu." Then he traced the design on the tiled counter with the Q-tip. The kitten saw the movement and pounced, its tail flicking wildly. Jonathan laughed as the kitten batted at the Q-tip.

The door opened again, and Justin hid the Q-tip behind his back, a guilty look on his face as he looked up at the burly man who entered the room. "I'm Doctor Heath," the man said in a deep, rumbling voice like thunder. "Is this Poofu?"

"Yes," Jonathan replied. "He's sick."

"What seems to be the problem?" Dr. Heath asked, looking down at the clipboard in his hands. Lance took the Q-tip from Justin and tossed it in the trashcan. Turning, Justin winked at him before sitting down on Lance's knee. Dr. Heath looked at them expectantly, but Jonathan was the one who answered his question.

"He keeps throwing up," Jonathan said, running a hand down his kitten's back. Poofu was watching Justin's hands carefully, as if looking for the Q-tip. "He wouldn't stop. I fed him some cat food this morning and then he just started puking and puking and puking and --"

"Did he throw up any blood?" Dr. Heath asked, cutting him off.

Jonathan shook his head. "He threw up all his cat food, not even chewed. And then some grass and I don't know where he got that, since he don't go outside. Then he kept making this noise ..." Jonathan started to choke in an eerie imitation of the cat's dry heaves earlier. Curious, Poofu looked up at Jonathan, its nose twitching. The kitten sat up on its hind legs and reached out to touch Jonathan's chest with one small paw, the other paw stretching for Jonathan's nose. "And then he just wouldn't stop."

Lance's hand rested on the small of Justin's back as they watched Dr. Heath's large hands cradle Poofu carefully. His thick fingers felt along the small kitten's ribcage, gentle touches that elicited plaintive mewlings from the cat. Everything the veterinarian did, Jonathan watched with shiny, staring eyes. "What's that for?" he asked, his voice filled with awe, as he watched Dr. Heath shake down a thermometer.

"I'm taking your kitty's temperature," the vet explained in his deep baritone voice. "What's his name again?"

"Poofu," Jonathan said proudly. "It was my brother's idea."

"A stupid idea," Lance growled. Justin grinned as the vet glanced over at them.

"It's a great name," Jonathan said earnestly. "Poofu likes it. Do you think he's going to be okay?"

"I think your kitty's going to be fine," Dr. Heath said, looking at Poofu's tiny teeth. Then he placed the stethoscope around his neck against the kitten's ribs. "You want to hear his heartbeat?"

"Can I?" Jonathan asked, and Dr. Heath stuck the earpads of the stethoscope in Jonathan's ears. Justin grinned at the smile on his brother's face. "Justin, listen!" Jonathan cried, laughing.

Lance laughed. "What's wrong with the cat?" Justin asked.

Dr. Heath shrugged, his shoulders rolling like boulders. "I think he just had a bout of hairballs, that's it. I'll give you some pills that should clean him out and get him back to his normal frisky self. Do you know how to give a cat a pill?" he asked Jonathan.

Jonathan shook his head. "Very carefully," Justin offered. "Wearing one of those rubber biohazard suits with the face masks, if possible."

Dr. Heath grinned. "You've had a cat before then, I take it."

"A long time ago," Justin said, nodding.

"Is it really that hard?" Jonathan asked, his eyes serious as he handed back the stethoscope.

Dr. Heath shook his head. Holding Poofu's jaw in his hand, he deftly opened the kitten's mouth and popped a pill inside. "It's only as hard as you make it. Just do it quickly and you'll have no problems at all, I promise."

"Okay," Jonathan said, nodding sagely. As he carried Poofu out into the waiting room, the kitten purring in his arms, he declared, "I'm going to be a vet when I grow up."

Lance ruffled his hair. "I thought you wanted to be a singer," he said.

"Nah, Justin's already a singer," Jonathan said as his brother paid the bill. "I don't want to be famous like him."

"Well, maybe you can be a famous vet," Lance suggested. Justin

winked at him as he led the way outside of the hospital. "Maybe you can be known the world over for the way you help animals."

"Maybe," Jonathan replied, nodding. "But you know what? I really want to make people feel good. Like that doctor did today. He made me feel better because he made Poofu feel better. Does that make any sense?"

Justin laughed. Slipping an arm around Lance's waist, he hugged his lover briefly before unlocking the car door. "Perfect sense, Jon," he said. Planting a kiss on Lance's cheek, he said softly, "Thanks for being here, baby."

"Where else would I be?" Lance replied, a thin blush creeping into his cheeks.

"I know where else I'd like to be," Justin said suggestively, raising his eyebrows.

Jonathan slapped Justin's stomach. "You can wait until later," he admonished. "You're so horny anymore. Like a toad. A horny toad."

Lance burst out laughing as he slid into the passenger seat of the car. "He called you a toad," he said, winking at Justin.

Crawling into the driver's seat, Justin kissed Lance, his lips lingering over Lance's own for a second. "Hey!" Jonathan cried, kicking the back of Justin's seat. "Knock it off."

Lance smiled beneath Justin's mouth. "We've been chastised," he said softly.

"Later, then," Justin promised, kissing Lance once more before he started the car and headed home.

All I Ever Wanted
164. Kiss Me Quick
by NSyncGrrl

Steve's laughter filled the living room, seeping into the kitchen where Chris stood at the microwave. "Yo, Chris!" Steve called. "Hurry it up with the popcorn, will you?"

"Fuck you," Chris growled beneath his breath as Joey laughed at his brother. This was not his idea of a fun afternoon. JC was out of the house, Justin and Lance left in a hurry, and that left Joey and the whole place all to himself. He picked at the torn skin on his knuckles and frowned. He wanted to spend some time with Joey, just the two of them, cuddle on the couch and maybe get a little freaky-deaky in the living room again. But then Steve showed up, just boom!, and now he couldn't even touch Joey because his brother was here. All he wanted was a little time with his boy. Was that too much to ask?

The microwave beeped. Opening it, Chris took out the hot bag and shook it angrily. He looked around for a bowl but the counter was cleaned off and the only thing he could see was Justin's cereal bowl in the sink. He considered dumping the popcorn into it but it was filled with soapy water. Fuck this, he thought gloomily. I ain't playing maid to Steve and Joey, not when I'm not getting anything out of it. I can't even get Joey to look at me now, like he's afraid Steve might think there's something more than the legendary Fatone flirt going on.

Stomping into the living room, Chris glared at Steve and threw the unopened bag at him. "Here's your damn popcorn," he said, plopping down on the sofa beside Joey. He was careful not to touch his boyfriend as he crossed his arms in front of his chest and pouted at the TV.

Steve laughed again as he opened the bag, spilling popcorn all over his lap. "This isn't the butter kind," he complained, brushing the popcorn onto the floor. "Didn't I say --"

"I don't give a flying fuck what you said," Chris muttered, not looking at him.

Beside him Joey frowned. "What's your problem?" he asked.

Chris glanced at Joey from the corner of his eye, the pout still pulling at his lips. Like you don't know, he thought bitterly. Then he glanced at Steve, busy picking popcorn off of his crotch. "Nothing," he muttered.

Joey looked at his brother and then at Chris. Looking back at his brother, he asked, "Steve? What the fuck are you doing?"

"Cleaning up this shit," Steve replied, tossing a handful of popcorn at Joey. It bounced off of Joey's chest and Joey brushed the kernels away. For a moment no one said anything. Each piece of popcorn Steve picked up, he dropped on the floor. Joey tossed a few kernels at Chris, who shook them away. Sighing, Joey picked them up from the sofa cushions and stuck them into his mouth. "Hey Chris," Steve asked, turning to the

TV. "You're in an evil mood today. How's Dani doing? Not putting out for you enough?"

"Fuck you," Chris growled. Joey laughed but didn't say anything. Sighing, Chris hauled himself to his feet and stalked out of the room. How's Dani doing? he wondered, angry. Fuck if I know. You want to know how much I'm getting, Steve? From your brother, too. Do you really want to know? He knew Joey didn't want him to say anything about it but there was no way he would put up with Steve's macho shit. In the half hour Steve had been there already, Chris had heard about the girl he was dating, the cute girlband opening for them when the tour started up, the way that chick on the soaps looked like a slut in the lycra bodysuit she wore, and how big Britney Spears' boobs looked at the VMAs. Chris wondered how surprised Steve would be to know that he didn't give a fuck about any of that crap. Joey had laughed at his brother's crude humor, making a few comments of his own, but Chris knew it was just a ruse. Hell, Joey was with him. He wanted Chris. Didn't he?

Chris stormed into the bedroom he shared with Joey and threw himself down on the bed. From her place on Chris's pillow, Korea yipped softly, woken from a lazy nap. Chris scooped her up in his arms and snuggled his face into her short, coarse hair, cool against his heated skin. "Fuck this shit," he muttered, and Korea whimpered her approval.

A floor board creaked behind him. "Go away, Joe," Chris sighed. He didn't have to turn around to know that Joey was standing in the doorway of the room, watching him.

Closing the door, Joey came into the room and sat on the edge of the bed. "Chris," he said, reaching out to touch Chris's shoulder. Chris pulled away.

"Leave me alone, Joe," he said softly. "Go entertain your brother."

"Christopher Robin," Joey huffed, reaching out again. His hand trailed down Chris's back, the touch as gentle as liquid fire. "What's wrong with you today?"

"Guess," Chris said, pouting. Before Joey could answer, he said, "JC is out, Justin and Lance are out, and it's just you and me and we're all alone but before we get a chance to do anything, he shows up. There goes anything I wanted to do."

Joey sighed. "Chris, he's my brother," he started, but Chris cut him off.

"I know, Joe," he said, exasperated. "I know he's your brother, okay? But you know what? I can't help it that I want to touch you. I can't help the way you make me feel. And I hate hate hate that Justin and Lance can get all lovey dovey in front of us and you don't even want to look at me the wrong way when Steve's here." Chris buried his face in Korea's warm belly. "I know you don't want him to know, but don't fucking ignore me, okay?"

"I'm sorry," Joey whispered. He rolled onto his stomach and laid down beside Chris. His large hands slipped around Chris's waist, pulling him close, and his hot lips nipped at the back of Chris's neck. "Whatever can I

do to make it up to you?" he breathed into Chris's ear.

Chris shuddered beneath the gentle touches, his anger melting away as Joey's hands rubbed his stomach, the thick bulge in his jeans pressing against Chris's buttocks. "Joe," Chris cautioned, but Joey's hand slipped down to cup the budding erection at Chris's crotch and all coherent thought disappeared. "Joe," Chris moaned softly, thrusting into Joey's hand.

Joey rubbed his dick through his jeans, squeezing just enough to send shivers of pleasure through Chris's body. "You said you understood the way I felt about this," Joey whispered along the back of Chris's neck.

"I do," Chris said, shivering in Joey's arms. He did, really he did. What were they talking about again?

Joey unzipped Chris's jeans slowly, thumbing open the button of his fly. His fingers stroked Chris's hard erection through the thin fabric of his underwear, and Chris closed his eyes, savoring the touch. "Then can't you wait a little longer?" Joey asked sweetly. "Steve just wants to hang out here for a few hours. When he leaves, I'll make it up to you, I promise."

Chris sighed as Joey's fingers slipped into the crotch of his underwear and entangled in the kinky hair around Chris's dick. "How, Joe?" he asked as Joey's fingers circled his thick shaft.

Catching Chris's earlobe in his teeth, Joey nibbled Chris's ear gently. "I'll find a way," Joey promised. He kissed along Chris's neck, his tongue licking Chris's skin. Chris turned in Joey's arms as Joey rose up on one elbow to lean over him. He cradled Joey's warm cheeks in his hands as he guided Joey's mouth to his, hungry for the kisses and the sweet tongue, those pink lips. Beneath Joey's insistent hands, Chris grew hard, his dick aching with desire. As he thrust into Joey's palm, Joey's fingers slid beneath his balls to trace small patterns into the sensitive skin below. Chris spread his legs apart, gasping into Joey's mouth as Joey's fingertips brushed along his skin before easing inside of him. Chris moaned loudly as Joey pushed deep into him, and Joey kissed him quiet. "Keep it down," Joey hissed against Chris's lips. "Steve thinks I went to the bathroom."

"Fuck me now, Joe," Chris whispered. He wiggled his hips, trying to work his jeans down a little more. "Right now. You can be quick, can't you?"

Joey laughed softly. "You want a quickie?" he asked, kissing along the curve of Chris's chin.

"Jesus Christ," Chris moaned. "Just fuck me already." He pushed down his jeans and tugged at Joey's zipper eagerly. "How fast can you do it?"

Joey laughed again and pushed his fingers farther into Chris. "You want me that badly?" he asked.

"You have no idea," Chris whispered, moving beneath Joey. He rubbed at Joey's own erection, easing down the waistband of his boyfriend's boxer briefs and taking the thick shaft in his hands. He stroked it between his palms until Joey grew solid and hard. Kissing along Chris's throat, Joey moaned unintelligibly, rolling onto Chris, pressing him into the mattress.

"Now, Joe," Chris sighed, guiding Joey to where his fingers held Chris open. "Come on already."

"What about the condom?" Joey asked, but he was already in the mood, his fingers working inside of Chris, widening him.

"I don't think I have to worry about getting pregnant," Chris said, rolling his eyes. He cupped Joey's chin in his hands, letting his forefinger and thumb slip between Joey's warm lips and into the hot darkness of his mouth. As he sucked on Chris's fingers, Joey let the tip of his penis brush against Chris, his hand rubbing Chris's erection until Chris closed his eyes and moaned loudly.

"Sshhh," Joey sighed. Chris encircled Joey's dick with his fingers, wet from Joey's own saliva, and then Joey slid into him, a little rough in his eagerness. A look of discomfort flickered across Chris's face, which Joey promptly kissed away. "It's okay," Joey murmured as he found a fast, steady rhythm and pushed into Chris over and over again. "It's okay, Chris. Oh my God, you feel so tight, so wonderful and tight. I love you, Chris. I love you." He moved in Chris again and again, his arms on either side of Chris's body, suspending him over his lover. Chris's arms encircled Joey's waist, guiding the thrusting hips, the clenching buttocks. He held onto the waistband of Joey's pants desperately, his own erection crushed between them. Every time Joey shifted above him, driving deeper inside, his belly rubbed against Chris's dick, until Chris thought he would cry out in desire and want. When he came, he bit his lip to keep quiet, but a soft whimpering filled his ears and he knew it was him and not the dog this time, whimpering for Joey and wanting more, pulling Joey towards him, wanting more ... Joey breathed Chris's name as he came, pushing him into the mattress from the force of his orgasm.

With tiny kisses, Joey's lips covered Chris's face and neck, the touches fluttery, barely there. "I love you, Joe," Chris whispered, moving his hips beneath Joey's weight to arouse himself again. His hands slid beneath Joey's chest and he pushed gently. "Now get off me and go entertain your brother. And then come back and play again when he leaves."

Joey laughed. His cheeks were flushed the color of roses, his forehead slick with sweat, his eyes large and drugged and bright. "Okay," he said, kissing Chris once more before pulling out of him. "I'll be back."

"Okay," Chris said, pulling up his own jeans.

Joey stood and tucked himself back into his pants, his eyes glazed as he looked down at Chris. "You coming back into the living room?" he asked gently.

Chris laughed. "You don't think Steve won't notice we both just got laid?" he asked. "At least if he asks you can say you jerked off in the john."

"True," Joey said. He frowned slightly. "So what're you going to do?"

Leaning over the side of the bed, Chris clicked on his Playstation. "I'm going to beat this damn game," he said. "Turn on the TV for me, will you?"

As he turned on the television, Joey said, "You ain't playing this when I come back, you know that, right?"

"Move over, Joe," Chris said, already intent on the prospect of winning. He held the controller in both hands and grinned up at Joey as he crossed his legs, sitting up on the bed. "I can't see through you, babe. So move it." From the living room, Steve hollered Joey's name. "You're being paged," Chris pointed out.

"So I hear," Joey replied. He ruffled Chris's hair playfully.

"Hey!" Chris cried, pulling away.

Joey laughed. "You're as bad as Justin with that damn hair. You're hair's so damn spiky, I think I cut myself." He studied his hand critically.

"You did not," Chris said, eyeing Joey as he pouted. When Joey didn't look up from his hand, Chris ventured, "Did you really?"

"No, not really," Joey said, laughing again. He leaned down and kissed Chris's forehead. "Play your game. I'll be back later, babycakes."

"That's a big ten-four," Chris said, saluting Joey before turning back to his game. As Joey left the room, closing the door gently behind him, Chris felt a silly grin pull at his lips. At least he got a little bit of his boy, even if Steven was there.

All I Ever Wanted
165. Car Wash
by NSyncGrrl

"I'm gone," JC called as he ran from the house. He managed to get behind the wheel of his car before anyone followed him, but as he started the engine he saw Joey heading his way. Not now, please, he thought, watching Joey approach the car. He had planned to go over to AJ's house again today, and he was already running late as it was. Glancing in the rearview mirror, he ran a hand through his spiked hair and sighed.

Joey tapped on the glass, and JC rolled down the window. "Where you heading?" Joey asked, grinning at him.

"Out," JC replied, revving the engine in the hopes that Joey would get the point.

Instead, Joey leaned down on the car door, his chin in his hand, as if he wasn't planning on moving any time soon. "Where to?" he asked. His dark eyes sparkled merrily, and JC frowned. He was glad Joey was enjoying this.

"Joey, I'm running a little behind," JC said, putting the car into reverse. Joey still didn't move. Sighing, JC admitted, "I'm going to see Alex, okay? Can I leave now?"

For a long moment Joey studied him, and JC felt a thin blush creep into his cheeks. Before he could say anything else, though, Joey nodded and asked, "When are we going to be able to meet him?"

JC chewed on his lower lip. He didn't really want to bring AJ over, not yet. There was still so much to learn about him, so much to discover, and for now JC enjoyed being the sole object of AJ's attention. He didn't want the others to ruin that. Not that he thought they would, but he really wanted to learn about AJ on his own, at least at first. And even though Justin and Joey might know who he was, JC thought maybe things might become a little strained when they found out beyond a shadow of a doubt that the man JC was keeping company with nowadays was none other than AJ McLean from the Backstreet Boys. He'd really have to ease into that one. So he looked at Joey and shook his head and, smiling slightly, said, "I'm not sure, Joey. One of these days. Maybe." He eased his foot off the clutch, and the car began to slide backwards.

"Before the tour?" Joey persisted, walking sideways to keep up with the car.

"I don't know," JC said. "Step back, Joey. I've got to go."

Joey moved away from the car. "Be careful, Josh," he said, and JC nodded as he backed out of the driveway. Careful? he wondered as he drove away. Why were they always telling him to be careful anymore?

He reached AJ's house in record time, cutting off the car as he rolled to a stop in the driveway. The car jerked forward when he tugged the

hand brake up, and before the sounds of the engine had even faded away, he was out of the car, running up to the house. Ringing the doorbell, he waited nervously, shifting from foot to foot. His mind whirled with Joey's warning. "Be careful." Of what? He had to ask next time someone said that to him. He had to know what they thought he was getting himself into, because all he could see was the way he felt with AJ, the way AJ looked at him, at only him, and after such a dry period in his life, those glances and smiles AJ saved for him were as refreshing as spring rains. They drenched his soul. He couldn't imagine being too careful -- he wanted to dance in that rain. He wanted to laugh and scream and cry, and feel the waters soothe everything away. Watch it, Josh, his mind warned as he rang the doorbell again. You're falling for Alex, aren't you? You're falling hard.

Well, he reasoned, so what? Suddenly AJ's dog Jack came running around the side of the house, yelping maniacally. "Hey there, whiskey pup," JC said, squatting to pet the small terrier. "Where's Alex?" Like he's going to answer you, he thought wryly.

"Is that you, Josh?" AJ called, his voice carrying around the side of the house. Jack ran back the way he came, JC following him. He found AJ standing by his black Mercedes, a garden hose in one hand as he filled up a bucket at his feet. The sound of running water was loud in the clear afternoon air. JC could see thick suds rise in the bucket, and AJ wore only a pair of baggy skater shorts, his ropy arms and narrow chest covered with dark tattoos. Looking up as JC came closer, AJ grinned wolfishly. "Hey, Josh."

"Hey, Alex." JC shoved his hands into the pockets of his jeans, trying not to stare, but his eyes were drawn to the ink etched into AJ's skin, and he wanted to touch the intricate patterns. His hands curl into fists in the safety of his pockets.

"Come here," AJ said, releasing the nozzle of the hose as he dropped it into the soapy water in the bucket. When JC came within reach, AJ snaked an arm around his waist, pulling him closer. His lips pressed against JC's hungrily, and JC raised one hand, tentatively touching AJ's chest. AJ's other hand wrapped around JC's wrist, and his lips parted JC's own, his tongue slipping inside JC's mouth with a possessive air that made JC's knees weak. As he broke the kiss, AJ whispered, "I've been waiting for that all day. I was afraid you weren't going to come."

"I was running a little behind," JC said softly. He studied AJ's warm eyes and smiled. "And then Joey wouldn't let me leave. He wanted to know where I was going."

AJ grinned. "What did you tell him?" he asked, hugging JC tight until their hips bumped against each other.

JC looked at AJ's thin lips and wondered if it would be too forward of him to ask for another kiss. "I told him I was going to see you," he replied, and then he leaned closer and kissed AJ gently. "What are you up to?"

"Washing the car," AJ said, closing his eyes to savor the feel of JC's lips on his. "It won't take but a few minutes. Then we can go out."

"Out where?" JC asked as AJ released his hold on him and turned back to the bucket.

Digging into the sudsy water, AJ pulled out a sponge and shrugged. "Anywhere you want to go," he said, winking at JC. "Have a seat. I'll be right with you."

Taking off his denim jacket, JC asked, "Can I help?" He watched AJ stretch across the hood of the car, the muscles in his arms moving rhythmically as he scrubbed the sponge across the shiny black metal, and JC didn't think he could just sit there and watch that for long, not without wanting to touch AJ again.

AJ watched as JC stripped off his t-shirt, his gaze lingering over the pale bare skin, and he reached out again, his fingers trailing down the slight indentation between JC's pectoral muscles. "You are poetry, Josh," he said, his finger wet and cold on JC's skin. JC shivered beneath the touch. "Pure, physical poetry."

JC blushed lightly. "Alex," he said, brushing AJ's hand away, but AJ just grinned again.

"I like it when you blush," AJ said, turning back to the car. "It's so damn cute."

JC didn't know what to say to that, so he didn't say anything at all. Instead he watched AJ for a moment before asking, "Do you have another sponge?"

"In the bucket," AJ said. JC reached into the cold water and pulled out a sponge, sopping wet and dripping with soap. Wringing it out, he began to wipe down the side of the car. Within a few minutes they had the entire vehicle covered in bubbles, and from the other side of the car, AJ said, "Can you get the hose, Josh?" He bent down to soap up the hubcaps, disappearing from view.

JC picked up the hose, pulling it out of the bucket. The nozzle was cold in his hands, and as he toyed with it, his fingers slipped on the wet metal. He tightened his grip, fumbling as he accidentally squeezed the trigger. As he watched, a spray of water erupted from the nozzle, splattering on the hood with sudden ferocity. "Hey!" AJ cried as the water pushed the soap over the side of the car and onto him.

JC laughed as AJ stood up, his shoulders and hair covered with a thin film of suds. "I'm sorry," he said through his giggles. "I didn't mean --" He doubled over, laughing, pulling the nozzle again. Another jet of water shot across the car, this time striking AJ in the crotch. His light colored shorts turned a dark black instantly. "Alex, oh man, Alex ..." JC couldn't catch his breath enough to say anything else as he dropped the hose at his feet.

A wicked grin spread across AJ's face. "You are so dead," he said, humor lacing his words. As JC tried to stop laughing, AJ slid across the hood of the car, the wet metal leaving a dark smear along his butt, and then he snatched up the hose. Turning it onto JC, he pulled the nozzle, grinning as the cold water hit JC in the chest.

"Hey!" JC cried, laughing. He danced away, the water drenching his jeans. They hung against his legs like heavy cloth, bogging him down as he ran around the side of the car, trying to get out of range. AJ raised the hose and water rained down around him, soaking his hair and chest, and JC laughed defiantly as he stepped back into the yard. The water fell just short of where he stood, and he leaned over, hands on his knees, as he watched AJ aim the hose at him, but he was out of reach. Laughter still bubbled inside of him, and he took deep breaths to steady himself. "I said I was sorry!"

"That's not good enough!" AJ said, laughing. He turned the hose onto the car, watching JC warily as he washed away the soap. JC paced at the edge of the grass like a lion in a cage, watching AJ as if gauging when it would be safe for him to come back. When AJ came around the side of the car, still washing the soap away, he flicked the hose at JC and caught him by surprise. Cold water splashed his chest and JC turned away, laughing again. "Gotcha," AJ said, grinning.

"You're incorrigible," JC said, stepping back again. AJ winked at him as he finished hosing the car down. Several minutes went by and AJ's attention seemed to be focused on the car -- he leaned over to wash the undercarriage, and JC dared a few steps closer. "Alex?" he asked.

With whiplike speed, AJ leapt to his feet and spun around, catching JC by surprise. JC backed up and slipped on the wet grass, falling hard to the ground, and AJ fell on top of him, all wet skin and warm lips and eager hands, and the heady scent of clean car soap hung thick in the air between them. AJ's lips found JC's, and he pressed JC back into the damp grass, his hips grinding the hardness at his crotch into JC's own erection. "You're such a tease, Josh," AJ whispered, his hands cradling JC's jaw as his tongue licked into him. His knees slid to either side of JC's legs, and JC gripped AJ's arms, holding onto him as the kiss rendered them both breathless.

JC dared to thrust his hips into AJ, relishing the crush of wet, cold denim against the throbbing at his crotch. AJ moaned above him, shifting until JC thought his mind would explode from the sweet ache. "Are we done with the car?" JC asked, his breath short as AJ kissed the words from his lips.

AJ mumbled something that might have been an affirmative answer, his tongue licking along JC's chin before delving into his mouth again. "As done as we're going to be," AJ replied, his thumbs rubbing JC's cheeks softly as they kissed.

At his waist, JC felt a sudden vibration. "Shit," he murmured, reaching for his beeper. He turned and looked at the number displayed on the small pager, AJ's lips sucking at his jaw, his breath hot and whispery in JC's ear. The LED display shone with the number for the house, and he sighed. "Fuck."

"Who is it?" AJ breathed. He laid down on top of JC, his hard nipples brushing against JC's own, the weight of his body arousing him further. His hand caressed JC's temple, brushing the hair back from JC's face.

"The guys," JC said, sighing. He held AJ with one arm as he hooked his beeper back onto the waistband of his jeans. "I told Joey I was coming

over here. I wonder what they want?"

AJ kissed him again. "They think I'm stealing you away," he suggested. JC ran his hand along AJ's side and moaned as he shifted again, sending a shower of pleasure through JC's body. "They think you're going to convert to the Dark Side, become a Backstreet boy."

JC laughed at that. "You want to hear something funny?" AJ hummed as his kiss-swollen lips tugged at the corners of JC's mouth. "Justin bought me one of your singles the other day. I think he knows."

"Knows what?" AJ asked innocently. "Knows that you make me freak?"

Smiling, JC said, "You can say that, yeah."

"What did he say?" AJ began to kiss JC's neck, his lips trailing down JC's throat.

"Just told me to be careful," JC admitted. He frowned as AJ kissed the hollow of his throat, his hands running through AJ's short hair. "I have to ask them what they mean by that."

"They don't want me to devour you," AJ said, thrusting his hips into JC. "They think I'm just a big, bad wolf, out to eat you up."

"Aren't you?" JC asked coyly as AJ's lips closed over one erect nipple. "Oh, sweet Jesus," JC moaned, shivering beneath the swirl of AJ's tongue.

"I told you even bad wolves can be good," AJ reminded him, and JC could feel the grin against his skin. "But I am going to eat you up, JC. I'm going to consume you whole, swallow you up, wolf you down. You do wicked things to me. You're so damn edible."

JC felt himself redden at the words. "I'm not," he protested, but AJ's kisses cut off his words. When his beeper vibrated again, JC ignored it.

All I Ever Wanted
166. Boy Talk
by NSyncGrrl

Joey sat on the sofa between Chris and Justin, his brother Steve in the recliner on the other side of the living room. It was almost midnight, and JC was still out with that Alex friend of his -- Joey couldn't wrap his mind around the mental image he had of JC and AJ from the Backstreet Boys together. How many other guys in Orlando were named Alex? There had to be quite a few. Maybe Justin was simply jumping to conclusions. Joey couldn't see JC with someone like BSB's token wild man. JC, who was quiet and introspective and slept all the time. Who wrote songs in that notebook of his that he never showed anyone. Who had tasted like peppermints and pop rocks the times they had kissed. Who had told him to not let Chris slip away, and had only managed to hurt himself in the process. Joey just couldn't see how that image of his friend could mesh with the crass public persona he knew of AJ McLean. He'd have to pin JC down the next time they spoke, find out exactly who he was spending his time with, because truth be told, Joey wanted to know.

"So Chris," Steve started, popping open another can of beer. Joey glanced at Chris's closed countenance, the pout on his face as he watched the TV balefully, and he prayed his brother wouldn't say anything else. Please, Steve, he thought, trying to concentrate on the television, just shut the fuck up and go home already. Leave Chris alone. But he knew his brother too well, and he knew what was coming. "How's Dani doing? You never answered me that."

Chris shrugged beside Joey. "Call her up and ask her yourself. Her number is --"

"Don't you think it's getting late, you guys?" Joey interjected, stretching languidly. He draped his arms along the back of the couch, one of them slipping behind Chris's shoulders, the other reaching across to where Justin sat curled against the arm of the chair. He watched the movie with an intensity that scared Joey -- it was only Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, a movie all of them had seen a million times, but he could tell Justin wasn't paying it any mind. Before Steve or Chris could start in on each other again, Joey asked, "Justin? You okay?"

"Fine," Justin said, sighing. Joey frowned. Lance was in the bedroom, talking to his mother on the phone, and he had been in there for quite some time now. Joey could only imagine what was being said, and from the look on Justin's face, he knew his friend was hearing the same mental conversations between Mrs. Bass and her son that were running through Joey's own mind.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Joey asked quietly, but Justin shook his head.

"We're watching a movie," he pointed out, as if Joey wasn't aware of that fact. His gaze flicked to Steve and then back to the TV, and Joey wondered if Justin would be more open if Steve wasn't there.

"Hey, Steve," Joey said, leaning back into the sofa, "it's getting kinda late, don't you think?"

Steve shrugged. "You trying to tell me to go home, Joe Blow?"

"Something like that," Joey said, grinning, "yeah. Go home."

A wicked grin crossed Steve's face. "Well, I ain't leaving. I want to see those Oompa-loompa dudes again. And that girl when she falls down that shoot. You know that's my favorite part."

Beside Joey, Chris snickered. "Steve --" Joey cautioned when his brother glared at Chris, but the front door opened and shut quietly, and he turned around to see JC peek into the living room. "Josh!" he cried, happy for a diversion, any diversion, at this point. "How you doing?"

"Fine," JC said, kicking off his shoes. He glanced at the TV and grinned. "You guys watching this again?"

"Hey," Joey said, "don't knock Wonka. He's the man."

JC came around the front of the couch and knocked Justin's legs off of the cushions. "How's Alex?" Justin asked, a slight grin on his face.

"Alex who?" Steve asked, curious.

JC squeezed between Justin and Joey on the sofa and sighed. "Alex No-Name," he said, rolling his eyes. "You guys talk to much. Did I hear you say you're leaving, Steve?"

"No," Steve replied, taking another swig of his beer. "I'm staying here tonight."

Joey laughed. "Where are you gonna sleep?" he asked.

"In your room," Steve said, grinning. Chris huffed beside Joey, crossing his arms angrily. Please God no, Joey thought, letting his hand rest on Chris's shoulder in what he hoped was an unnoticed but comforting gesture.

"You ain't sleeping with me," Joey said. "You snore."

"I do not," Steve countered.

"You guys shut up," Justin growled. "I'm trying to watch this damn movie."

"Well, shit," Steve drawled, drinking down his beer. "You're just in a crappy mood because your boytoy ain't here."

Without warning, Justin launched himself from the sofa and punched Steve's arm, the pop of his fist against Steve's bicep loud between them. Joey stood up and reached for Justin, grabbing his other arm before he could strike again. "You fucking prick," Justin cried, trying to twist out of Joey's grip, but Joey managed to catch his other arm and held him back. "You asshole." Justin lashed out and kicked Steve's thigh, hard, as he shrugged out of Joey's hands.

"Jesus Christ, Steve," Joey muttered, pushing Justin from the room. In a lower voice, he said, "Just keep walking, Justin. Just ignore him."

Justin turned and glared at Joey's brother, leveling his finger at him. "You think this is funny, Steve? I'll fucking kill you for that. Say it again and you die."

"Just keep walking," Joey pleaded. In the hallway Justin stopped, and Joey could feel the anger shaking through his friend, his arms humming with the emotion beneath Joey's hands. "Justin, I'm sorry. He's just, he doesn't understand, you know?"

"I'm going to hurt him, Joey," Justin promised, his jaw clenching. "Fuck. I don't need his lame comments, you know? I don't. If Lance overhears --"

"He won't," Joey promised. "I'll talk to him about it. I swear."

Justin narrowed his eyes and didn't look convinced. "Fuck," he said again, his voice softer this time. "It's not like that between us, Joey. It's not --"

"I know," Joey said, nodding. "He's just, I don't know, he's just not used to it. He doesn't understand."

For a moment Justin didn't say anything. Then he sighed and said, "Fuck this." Before Joey could stop him, he turned and walked away, heading for the room he shared with Lance.

Joey sighed. Dammit, Steve, he cursed silently. This was not going to be fun, he could already see that. Back at his parents' house, Steve had seemed curious about Justin and Lance's relationship, but now it seemed he'd had time to think on it more and decided the easiest way to deal with it would be to degrade and belittle it through jokes. It was the way Steve dealt with things he didn't understand -- he poked fun at them. And Joey knew from experience that Justin did not find anything funny about his love for Lance.

When he returned to the living room, Joey smacked the back of his brother's head. "You ass," he said, taking his seat between JC and Chris again.

"What?" Steve asked, rubbing his arm where Justin had punched him. Already he had forgotten what it was he said that crushed the mood of the room. "What'd I do?"

Joey sighed. "Go home, Steve. Stop drinking the beers and just call it a night, okay?"

Steve pouted. "No," he said. "I'm staying here. I told you that already."

"Fuck," Chris muttered, his gaze meeting Joey's briefly before returning to the TV.

"Fine," Joey said, sighing. He pushed himself up off the couch again. "You stay here, Steve. Sleep in my room. I don't fucking care. I'll stay with Chris."

"I don't snore that loud," Steve countered, laughing.

Joey stretched. "You do too," he said, "and I ain't staying in the same room with you. I don't want Justin to slit my throat by mistake when he comes to kill you in the night."

A frown tugged at the corners of Steve's lips. "You think I pissed him off that bad?" he asked, his voice doubtful.

JC laughed. "You don't know the half of it," he said, stretching his legs out along the couch. He crossed his legs and leaned against the arm of the sofa. "Joey, can you move it, man? I can't see the TV."

Joey left the living room. At the entrance to the dark hall, he looked back and found Chris watching him. He winked, bringing the hint of a smile to Chris's face, and then started down the hall, intent on Chris's room. As he passed Justin's closed door, he stopped. I should apologize for Steve again, he thought, knocking lightly on the door. From inside he heard a muffled response. "Come in." Joey pushed the door open slowly.

Lance lay on his back on the bed, staring at the ceiling. "Where's Justin?" Joey asked quietly as he closed the door behind him.

"In the shower," Lance replied. Crossing his hands behind his head, he looked at Joey and smiled. "Steve pissed the hell out of him. I told him to take a cold shower to cool off."

Joey laughed at that. "And he listened?" he asked, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"What did Steve say?" Lance asked.

Stretching out beside his friend on the bed, Joey hugged Justin's pillow close to his chest and sighed. "Justin didn't tell you?"

"No," Lance said. "He just said it made him mad, and that he loved me fiercely, but I know him. I can tell he's upset."

"Steve made some stupid comment, not thinking," Joey said. He stared at Lance's pale arm, so close to his face, noticing a small scrape on his elbow that had healed into a criss-cross pattern of maroon lines. "What happened here?" he asked, touching the wounded skin.

Lance sat up and tried to see the cut. "I don't know," he said. "Probably scratched it on something. Is it healing?"

"Yeah," Joey replied, sinking back into Justin's pillow. "Did Justin tell you he punched Steve?" At Lance's sharp look, Joey nodded. "In the arm. And kicked him for good measure. Steve called you Justin's boytoy."

Lance sighed. "This is going to be fun," he muttered. "If it's not my mother, it's your brother. Why can't they just understand the way it is between us? Why can't they see?"

"I'm afraid to tell him about Chris," Joey whispered. His heart began to pound in his chest -- he had not meant to say that. He told Chris he was waiting for the perfect time, and that was true, but was he really afraid?

He hadn't even admitted it to himself yet, but now that the words were spoken, he knew that was the whole reason he didn't want to tell Steve. He was afraid of his brother's reaction. He was terrified of what Steve would say or do or think ... "I told Chris I'd tell him and I can't, Lance. I just can't."

Lance looked at him, his large green eyes filled with compassion. "I understand," he whispered. "Believe me, Joey, I do. But what are you going to say when Steve realizes you two share a room? What do you think he's going to think?"

"I don't know," Joey mumbled. He didn't really want to think about it. "How's your mom taking things?" he asked suddenly.

Lance sighed. "Slow," he admitted. "Very slow. But I think it helped for her to see Jonathan and Justin together. She saw how accepting his family is, and I think that got her thinking. At least we didn't argue tonight. And she asked how he was doing. That means a lot to me." For a long moment they listened to the noises of the house around them -- the hum of water in the pipes, Steve's faint laughter from the living room, muted through the closed door. Finally Lance asked, "What's Chris say about Steve?"

"He's pissed," Joey said. "I don't blame him. With the tour starting up again, Steve's always around anymore, and I'm afraid to do or say anything that might get him thinking, you know?"

Lance laughed quietly. "Steve's not the thinking type," he said, his eyes twinkling with mirth.

That brought a smile to Joey's face. "Yeah," he said, "it's not one of his strong suits, is it? Janine got the brains in the Fatone family."

"You got your fair share," Lance pointed out. Turning back to the subject at hand, he asked, "So how's Chris dealing with it?"

Joey sighed. "I don't know," he whispered. "He's the type that hides behind his crude jokes and lewd remarks. He's miffed, yeah, but I'm not sure exactly how much it's bothering him because he glosses over it. Though he's not too thrilled that Steve is spending the night --"

"Tonight?" Lance asked. When Joey nodded, he said, "How's that going to work out?"

"I don't know," Joey admitted. "I'm staying in Chris's room, though. Fuck that. I'm not going to sleep alone just because my brother's here." The sound of water rushing through the pipes cut off, filling the room between them with a sudden silence. "I know you probably don't believe me, but I love Chris. I really do."

"I believe you," Lance replied. "You're a very passionate person, Joey. It comes out in the way you touch people. For you, the line between friendship and love is so thin that sometimes it's not even there."

"It's not like that, though," Joey said. He pulled his knees up to his chest and sighed. "I love being with him. He makes me laugh. He makes me feel invincible and strong, like I'm Superman and he's the yellow sun

that gives me my superhuman powers. I can fly with him, because I know he's there for me. I feel so alive when we're together."

Lance smiled sweetly. "Then you know how I feel when I'm with Justin," he said. "God, Joey, I felt so awful when you told me how much you cared for me over the summer. Because I knew I couldn't make you feel the way you needed to feel. I had hoped you could see that one day, you could move on and find someone who makes you feel the way I do with Justin."

"How's that?" Joey asked quietly.

Sighing happily, Lance said, "Like the world stands still and we are the only ones who exist. We're all that matters. When he holds me, the stars collide and the world stops turning and I never want to let go of him." The door opened and Joey glanced up as Justin entered the room, wearing nothing but a towel around his waist. His chest glistened wetly, and his curls were plastered to his head. He frowned slightly and closed the door behind him. "Damn," Lance murmured, his smile brightening. "What a heavenly sight."

Justin laughed. "What are you doing in my bed, Joey?" he asked, running a hand through his damp hair.

"Talking to your boy," Joey replied, "about my boy. And my dumbass brother."

Justin laughed again. "Well, get out," he said, slapping Joey's butt as he sat down on the edge of the bed. "Go get your boy and find your own bed."

Joey grinned as he crawled off of the bed. "Thanks," he said as Justin curled up beside Lance, hugging him close.

"You're wet, Justin," Lance said, laughing, as Justin kissed his neck hungrily.

"I'll dry off soon enough," Justin replied, snuggling against him. He wrapped his arms around Lance's waist and pulled him into a tight embrace, his head resting on Lance's shoulder. He watched Joey with serious dark eyes and asked, "You and Chris okay?"

"Yeah," Joey said, nodding. "I'll leave you guys alone. And thanks again, Lance."

"No problem," Lance replied. Joey winked at them as he left the room, closing the door behind him. He felt a little better as he headed down the hall to Chris's room.

All I Ever Wanted
167. Breakfast for You
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stood at the kitchen sink, pouring milk into Justin's cereal bowl, when Steve came up behind him and leaned on the counter. He wore just the boxers he slept in, and his hair was disheveled and oily. "You gonna use all the milk?" he asked, yawning sleepily.

Lance nodded. "There's not much left," he said. "Just enough for a bowl of cereal and that's about it." He emptied the carton and tossed it into the sink. "You want more, you gotta buy it yourself. Sorry."

"Can I have some of that, then?" Steve asked, pointing at the huge bowl. "You can't eat all that yourself."

Lance laughed. "I'm not going to eat any of it," he said, dumping half the box of Oreo O's into the milk. "This is for Justin."

"Oh." Steve watched the cereal spill into the milk, the white liquid splashing out of the bowl, and frowned. "You didn't save any for yourself?" he asked.

"No," Lance replied. "It's for Justin."

"So you said." Steve picked a round black piece of cereal out of the bowl and popped it into his mouth. When Lance didn't say anything, he reached for another one. This time Lance slapped his hand away. "What?" Steve asked, pouting.

"Stop it," Lance said. "Keep your hands to yourself or I'll have to hurt you."

"Damn," Steve muttered. "You and Justin and your petty threats. I thought gay men were supposed to be pansies."

"What the hell does that mean?" Lance asked, narrowing his eyes suspiciously.

Steve shrugged. "You know what I mean. Aren't all gay men hairdressers and queens and stuff?"

"Go back to bed," Lance said sourly. "Maybe you'll wake up in a better mood."

"Oh I'm in a great mood," Steve said, grinning at him. "Tell me, Lance. What's it like to fuck a guy?"

Lance frowned and didn't reply as he tried to calm the anger swirling inside of him. This is how Joey made Justin feel, he mused, feeling the emotions bounce around in his head and heart and soul like rampant ping-pong balls. He closed his eyes and willed his voice to stay even as he said, "I'm not going to talk about this with you."

"Why not?" Steve asked, reaching for another piece of Justin's cereal. This time Lance pulled the bowl away and glared at him. "What?"

"Just shut up," Lance said bitterly. "Jesus, Steve. Don't you think before you open that big mouth of yours?"

Steve shrugged again. "What did I say?" he asked. "I'm just curious, that's all."

"I don't ask you how it feels to fuck a girl," Lance pointed out, trying to match Steve's crudeness with his own. "I don't want you prying into our relationship, Steve. Let's just leave it at that, okay?"

"Damn, you're touchy," Steve said, laughing easily. Lance frowned. Leaning back against the counter, Steve asked, "Should I go put on a shirt or something? I mean, this doesn't turn you on or anything, does it?"

Lance rolled his eyes. "Steve, nothing about you turns me on." He looked at Steve's tanned chest and slight paunch and shook his head slightly. "Trust me on that."

Steve grinned. "You mean to tell me you don't get all hot and bothered by a half-naked guy?"

"It's not like that," Lance said, setting Justin's cereal bowl on the table. "I don't like every single guy I see. I like Justin. I love Justin. End of discussion."

"How about that Ryan Phillippe guy?" Steve persisted. "He looks a lot like Justin." Lance looked up from the table as Justin shuffled into the room, scratching his wild curls. "Does he turn you on?"

Justin froze in the doorway, his gaze flickering between Steve and Lance. "Does who turn who on?" he asked in a low voice.

"Steve's just being a pest --" Lance started, but Steve laughed and cut him off.

"Ryan Phillippe," he said, nodding at Lance. "He looks like you. I just wondered if he made Lance's little soldier stand up and salute the way you do."

"Justin --" Lance warned, but it was too late.

In three steps Justin had crossed the kitchen and shoved Steve back against the counter. Steve's hand hit the coffee pot, knocking it to the floor, where it shattered with a hollow sound that rang loudly in the still morning air. "You think that's cute?" Justin growled, his fist catching Steve in the stomach. "You think you're a fucking riot?"

Steve doubled over in front of Justin, clutching his abdomen. "No," he wheezed, his breath knocked from him. "I was just --"

"Listen, fuckhead," Justin said angrily, pushing Steve back into the counter again. "You listen good, because I'm only going to say it once. Don't you ever talk to him again, you hear me? I'll fucking kill you. Don't say one more word to him, and don't get him alone, and don't ever let me

catch you so much as looking at him, comprende?" When Steve nodded, his fear-filled eyes trained on Justin's livid visage, Justin yelled, "Do you fucking understand?"

"Yes," Steve whispered. He looked past Justin at Lance, and then at the doorway as the others ran into the room.

Joey took one look at them and closed his eyes painfully. "Fuck, Steve," he murmured. When Chris tried to step by him, he held his arm out, keeping him back. "Watch the glass, Chris."

"What's going on here?" JC asked blearily, blinking from Lance to Joey to Steve and back again. "Justin?"

"Nothing," Justin muttered, turning away from Steve.

"Watch it, babe," Lance said, pointing at the glass on the floor. Justin stepped over the shards of the broken coffee pot and stalked from the room, catching Lance's arm as he passed. Lance gathered up the cereal bowl and spoon he had set out on the table and followed Justin, smiling ruefully at Joey.

Behind him he heard Joey's quiet voice. "Steven, leave. Now."

"But --" came the stammered reply.

"Now."

Back in their bedroom, Justin flopped down on the bed, his face red as he buried it in the unkempt covers. "How long had he been talking like that?" he asked, his voice still hard.

"Not very long," Lance replied. He sat on the edge of the bed and rubbed Justin's bare back tenderly. "Eat your cereal, hon."

"I'm not hungry," Justin pouted, but he sat up and took the offered bowl from Lance's hands. Shoveling a spoonful of cereal and milk into his mouth, he chewed thoughtfully and stared into the milky depths of the bowl. "Fuck him."

Lance laid back on the bed, his hand tracing delicate patterns into Justin's skin. Sighing lightly, he said, "Justin, my hero. You know I love it when you come to my rescue."

Justin snorted. "Yeah, right," he said, but Lance's hand slipped down along his narrow waist, toying with the waistband of his boxers, and he glanced over his shoulder at his lover. "Really?"

In response, Lance pulled his t-shirt off over his head. Then as Justin watched, he unsnapped the front of his boxers slowly, one snap at a time. Justin's eyes widened at the hint of skin and hair, and Lance trailed his fingers down the thin line of hair that ran down his lower belly into the boxers. He closed his eyes at the sensation of his own fingers on his skin, massaging gently. Slipping his hand further into his shorts, he cupped his budding erection and squeezed, eliciting a slight sound from his lips. "Justin," he moaned.

"Oh damn," Justin said softly. Lance watched with hooded eyes as

Justin's jaw chewed slower and slower, and then he swallowed thickly. "You don't want me to eat this morning, do you?"

Lance laughed. "Finish your cereal," he said. "I'll wait."

As his fingers brushed along the sensitive skin at his crotch, Lance licked his lips and breathed Justin's name again. "I don't think I'll be able to wait, though," Justin replied.

"Well then," Lance said, sitting up, "I'll stop."

"No!" Justin cried, smiling sweetly. "Please Lance, please don't stop." He began to shovel the cereal into his mouth, swallowing before he could even get a chance to chew it. "I'll hurry up. God, just please don't stop touching yourself. You don't know what that does to me."

"Let me find out," Lance replied, sliding off of the bed to kneel on the floor before Justin. His hands ran up Justin's thighs, the skin fuzzy beneath his touch, and his fingers slipped beneath the hem of Justin's boxers. Justin choked as one of Lance's hands brushed against his stiffening cock, and Lance said, "Don't get all choked up over it, honey."

Justin laughed and set the bowl on the floor. Kissing Lance with milky lips, he said, "I'm finished. Come on."

Lance pushed Justin back to the bed, straddling his hips. Running a hand down Justin's smooth chest, he watched Justin's eager eyes as his hands opened the waistband of Lance's shorts, exposing more skin, more hair. Lance started at Justin's navel, kissing the smooth skin and downy hair as he made his way down to Justin's shorts. Through the thin fabric, Justin's erection was already hard, and Lance licked it playfully, the cottony taste of the shorts dry on his tongue. He saw the reddened flesh beneath the material, straining to be released, and Justin gasped as his tongue licked out again, tracing around the tip of his lover's penis. The damp boxers clung to Justin's skin, and when Lance's breath cooled along the wet fabric, Justin moaned his lover's name aloud. "Oh God please Lance," he whispered, delving his hands into Lance's thick short hair.

With his mouth, Lance unsnapped the front of Justin's boxers, his tongue darting between the flaps of material to lick at the skin hidden beneath. When the shorts were undone, he propped himself up over Justin and took the full length of his lover's throbbing erection into his mouth, causing Justin to arch his back as he thrust into Lance. "Sweet Jesus Christ," Justin moaned, his hips bucking as Lance's tongue danced along his hard length. "Oh my God, Lance, oh my God --"

Lance sucked greedily at Justin's thick shaft, his tongue and lips working to bring him release. Justin thrust into Lance again and again, and when Lance began to hum softly, the low sound filling the room, Justin spread his legs further and collapsed back to the bed, pushing his hips up into Lance's mouth. His lover's hands cupped his buttocks, rising him off of the bed, and Justin closed his eyes as wordless sounds tumbled from his overeager lips, half-mumbled promises and words of love and all the pleasure inside of him, trying to escape. When he came, an explosion that shook through him like a supernova, he felt Lance's tongue lap up his juices as he drank them down.

And then Lance was above him, kissing him, his own lips milky now. "I love you, Lance," Justin murmured, hugging his lover close. Lance's hands roamed his chest and face as his body pressed Justin to the bed. "I love you and I'm never going to let anyone hurt you. No one. No one."

Lance kissed Justin's ear and rubbed his own hard erection against Justin's naked abdomen. "I love you, too," he whispered, kissing away the pout and the anger and the horrible feelings Steve Fatone had left behind in Justin's mind.

All I Ever Wanted
168. I Want to Come Over
by NSyncGrrl

The phone rang shrilly in the darkness, and JC rolled over in his bed, snagging the receiver. He fumbled with it, the sheets tangled around his legs and his head still filled with flimsy remnants of gossamer dreams. On the bedside table the clock read 8:45, and JC groaned. He hated taking a nap so late in the evening. Now he'd be up all night long. Placing the receiver against his ear, he shifted onto his back in the wide bed and mumbled, "Hello?"

"Josh?" AJ's soft, sexy voice curled into JC's ear, awakening his slumbering body. "You sleeping, man?"

"I'm just taking a nap," JC said, yawning. He stretched languidly, kicking the covers down to his ankles.

AJ laughed. "At quarter to nine at night? You have strange ideas of sleep."

"I do," JC admitted. He listened to the rush of air over the open line and wondered why AJ was calling him from his cell phone. "What are you up to?"

"Just coming home from the studio," AJ said, sighing.

JC grinned. AJ had told him the next few days would be busy for him and his group, working on the new single in the studio. JC spent his waking hours in rehearsal himself, trying to get back into the swing of their performance for the upcoming tour, and they hadn't been able to catch up with each other much lately. JC missed those dark eyes and soft hands, and the wolfish leer that made his stomach flutter nervously. "How did that go?" he asked.

AJ laughed again. "Fuck, Josh, let's just not talk about it, okay? I'm only going like ninety miles an hour trying to put it all behind me."

"That good, eh?" JC asked sympathetically.

"I want to come over," AJ said, switching the subject suddenly. "Right now. I'm only a few minutes away." When JC didn't answer immediately, AJ asked, "Is that okay?"

"Sure," JC said, sitting up in his bed. He didn't know where the others were but right this minute he didn't care. AJ wanted to see him -- that's all that mattered. Besides, he thought, pushing the blankets off of his legs, Justin and Joey already suspect. And if Justin knows, then Lance knows. And Chris probably knows. So what the fuck? Why not?

AJ sighed, relieved. "Cool," he said. "You hungry? I'm going to pick up some take-out."

Grinning, JC said, "I'm always hungry for Chinese. Let me get dressed

and --"

"Fuck that," AJ said, laughing. "You nap in the nude?"

JC felt a hot blush heat his cheeks. "No," he said, glancing down at the boxer shorts and old t-shirt he wore. "I'm not exactly naked --"

"Then what's the big deal?" AJ asked. "I'm just coming over. I ain't the president or the Pope, you know."

JC laughed. "I know. Just get here already, okay?"

"I gotta get the food first," AJ said. "Then I'm there. See you in a few."

"Okay." JC hung up the phone and hurriedly pulled the blankets up to the pillows, making the bed quickly. Leaving his room, he found Busta sleeping in the hall, Korea on the couch in the living room, and a note on the kitchen table from Justin that told him they had gone to Justin's mother's house for the night. The note was signed simply J & L, and JC smiled at the signature. God, he wanted something like what Justin and Lance had one day. He wanted a love like that, something so deep, so pure, so true that it surpassed everything else and eclipsed the world around them.

Another note on the fridge said that Joey had gone out clubbing with Steve and if JC needed him, he could try calling his cell. Chris was at a friend's, the note continued, and wouldn't be home before midnight, and if JC could please let the dogs out when he got up, Joey would worship the ground he walked on forever and ever. JC laughed at that. Rounding up the dogs, he let them out in the backyard and waited in the doorway for AJ to arrive.

He heard the squeal of tires in the driveway and grinned. When the doorbell rang, he was already halfway down the foyer. Flinging the door open wide, he smiled at AJ standing there, dressed in a dark t-shirt whose sleeves had been torn off, slim jeans that hung low on his narrow hips, a black ski cap pulled over his hair, and those dark glasses that he hid behind. Lowering the glasses, he winked at JC in his boxers and t-shirt and held up a paper bag in one hand. "I hope you like pepper steak?"

"Damn," JC said, grinning. He stepped aside and let AJ into the house. "You know I'm starving now, right?"

AJ's arm eased around JC's waist and he was pulled into a quick embrace, AJ's thin lips finding JC's own. He tasted wild like the night, cold and damp and sobering. "I hope it's not just for Chinese," he whispered, his hand slipping beneath JC's thin t-shirt to rub against JC's bare skin.

"It's not," JC confirmed, raising a hand to trail down AJ's chest before letting his fingers rest on the waistband of AJ's jeans. "The guys aren't here."

"I was hoping they wouldn't be," AJ admitted, kissing JC again.

JC led AJ to his bedroom. Sitting cross-legged on the bed, he dug into the paper bag, pulling out tiny take-out cartons of Chinese food. AJ kicked off his shoes and climbed onto the bed beside him, one knee raised

behind JC, the other stretched out in front of him. Inside the cartons were pepper steak and lo mein and orange peel chicken, and enough white rice to fill JC up forever. As they ate, JC was aware of AJ's intent gaze on him, watching him closely. "So," JC said, finishing up his meal, "what do you want to do tonight?"

AJ shrugged. Rooting in one of the carton with the chopsticks, he said, "Whatever. Something to make me forget this afternoon."

"You want to go somewhere?" JC asked. He was wide awake now, but the thought of getting dressed and leaving the house this late in the evening didn't appeal to him.

"We don't have to," AJ said, finishing his meal.

As he packed up the empty containers of food, JC asked, "Do you want to talk about it?" He meant the studio -- he knew how trying it could be when five friends were crammed into a recording booth since the crack of dawn. How many times had he himself left the studio in disgust after a long day behind the mike?

AJ sighed and stretched out on JC's bed. Crossing his long legs, he propped his head up on his hands and watched JC shove the containers into the paper bag. "You know, Nick is an ass," AJ said softly. JC laughed. Continuing, AJ added, "All day long he made comments about you, and he doesn't even fucking know who you are."

"What kind of comments?" JC asked. Before AJ could answer, he said, "Hold that thought." Quickly he ran into the kitchen, tossing the paper bag away in the trash can. He grabbed two beers from the fridge and came back to his room. As he shut the door behind him, AJ stood up and stripped off his own jeans, kicking them aside. His boxers were black with yellow smiley faces all over them, and JC laughed as he handed AJ a beer. "Do those glow in the dark?" he asked.

AJ winked at him and laid back down on the bed. Lying on his side, he patted the bed beside him and watched JC closely. "Turn out the light and we'll see," he replied.

JC laughed at the suggestion but sat down beside him on the bed. "Tell me about Nick first," he said coyly. "What did he say?"

Shrugging, AJ took a long swig of his beer and said, "It was just little things, trying to get to me. Just stupid comments, mostly just ..." AJ sighed. "Stupid shit, really. You're so busy anymore, Alex. Wonder who you've been keeping company with. Every time I call, someone new answers the phone."

JC smiled sadly. "I'm sorry," he said.

"It's not your fault," AJ replied. He ran a hand down JC's bare thigh, his touch cool from the beer can. "Let's just forget it, okay?"

"Okay," JC said, enjoying the feel of AJ's palm on his knee. Reaching out, JC traced the pattern of AJ's tattoo on his arm, marveling at the inky design. There was something so intimate, so primal and raw and sexy, about the images etched into his skin.

AJ grinned. "You have any tattoos?" he asked suddenly.

JC shook his head. "Shit," he drawled, grinning. "You don't understand. Needles and me don't mix well at all."

Laughing, AJ squeezed JC's knee and asked, "Needles? Come on, it's not that bad."

"Oh yes it is," JC replied, nodding sagely.

AJ reached up and fingered JC's earlobe, where long ago he had had the courage to have it pierced, but over time the hole had closed into a tiny dimple, and he didn't want it reopened. "They scare you that much?" AJ asked gently.

JC nodded again. "You just wouldn't know," he said, closing his eyes as AJ's fingers trailed down his neck and rested on his shoulder.

"I bought you something," AJ said, and JC turned to look at him sharply. AJ shrugged. "At the Chinese restaurant. I thought it'd be fun."

"What is it?" JC asked. AJ crawled over him and grabbed his jeans from the floor. Digging into the back pocket, he pulled out a small pamphlet. "What's that?"

"Tattoos," AJ replied, winking at JC. He dropped the jeans to the floor and sat back, showing the pamphlet to JC. It was a thin book, no more than a few pages stapled together, of temporary tattoos. Dragons and yin-yang and Chinese symbols graced the cover of the pamphlet.

JC laughed. "They sold that there?" he asked, laughing.

"Yeah," AJ replied. "They had a ton of them, all different designs." He handed the pamphlet to JC. "Look at it."

Opening the cover, JC found a large, black Chinese symbol staring back at him. Beneath it in English was the word Music. "Music?" he asked. "That's what this stands for?"

AJ shrugged. "Supposedly. Who knows? Maybe they just threw a few lines together for Americans. I thought you'd like it, though."

"I do," JC said. "If I were to get a tattoo, it would probably have something to do with music."

"That's what I figured," AJ said. Taking the pamphlet from JC's hands, he asked, "You want me to put it on for you? No needles."

"Sure," JC said, aroused at the thought of AJ's hands touching him. He laid back on the bed and pulled down one side of his boxers, exposing a smooth, pale stretch of his hip. When AJ's eyes widened slightly, JC suppressed another smile. "Right here," he said, pointing to a spot along his hip, just above the jut of bone.

"Damn," AJ said, a lupine grin pulling at his mouth. "You know how to make someone go to full throttle hard-on in a heartbeat, don't you, Josh?"

JC winked at him. "You going to put that thing on me or what?" he

asked.

"You aren't getting up when I'm done," AJ replied. JC watched as AJ tore the page out of the pamphlet, and then he pulled off the film covering the image. With gentle hands, he pressed the tattoo onto JC's hip, his fingers tugging JC's boxers down a little further.

"Hey," JC warned, but his own erection was beginning to tent beneath the thin material and he knew AJ could see it quite plainly.

AJ smiled. "Don't worry, Josh," he purred, rubbing the paper against JC's skin until it lay flat and even. "I'll only go as far as you want. I can control myself, trust me."

"I do," JC replied. He looked at the paper on his skin and asked, "How long does it take?"

"A few minutes," AJ replied. Raising his eyes, he met JC's wide-eyed gaze and added, "After you wet it."

"What --" JC started, but then AJ leaned down over his hip and his tongue licked out from between those thin lips to lick at the paper. JC felt a dampness flood his flesh as AJ's tongue wet the paper, and when it brushed onto JC's skin, JC moaned. One of AJ's hands strayed to JC's crotch where it cupped JC's budding erection, squeezing gently as the soft touch of lips and tongue and hot feathery breath burned along JC's hip. "Oh, Jesus," JC moaned, glancing down. The white paper was now translucent -- he could see the inky image through it, and his pale skin, ruddy from AJ's tongue and breath. "Fuck, Alex --"

AJ sat up and giggled. "You like that?" he asked softly, his fingers closing over JC's erection again through the boxer shorts. JC laid back into the pillows and gasped in pleasure. Lying down beside JC, AJ let his hand drift up over the waistband of JC's boxers, his fingers easing beneath JC's t-shirt to tickle along his stomach. A trail of fire raged along the wake of the gentle touch, and JC's groin throbbed sweetly with the memory of AJ's hand cupping his cock. Picking at the paper on JC's hip, AJ said, "Let's see what this looks like, shall we?"

JC nodded, a little breathless, afraid to speak because he knew his voice would be unsteady and hoarse. He wanted AJ to touch him again, to touch him there, but he didn't know how to ask without sounding like he wanted more. At this point, he didn't even know what more he wanted. The only thing he knew was that the firm hands and soft touch was almost unbearable, and he never wanted it to end. Pushing himself up on his elbows, he looked at the glistening black tattoo now painted onto his skin and grinned. "I like it," he said.

"Me too," AJ said, rubbing his thumb over the image. "And no needles."

JC laughed and let AJ push him back to the bed, his hand on JC's chest. Beneath his t-shirt, AJ's fingers ran over JC's nipples, teasing them erect. Leaning down over JC, AJ studied him intently. When JC couldn't stand it any longer, he whispered, "Just kiss me already, Alex."

A smile crossed those thin lips, and JC closed his eyes as AJ's mouth

closed over his, capturing him in a damp, soft, warm kiss. His tongue slipped between JC's lips eagerly, tasting of soy sauce and a spicy tingle that excited JC. He grabbed AJ's arms in his hands and squeezed the ropy muscles tightly, pulling him down. As AJ climbed onto JC, straddling him, their erections rubbed together, sending a pleasant thrill through their bodies. Thrusting his hips into JC's, AJ breathed, "Do you know how intoxicating you are, Josh?"

A sharp knock interrupted them. Sitting up, JC pushed AJ back and they both looked over at the bedroom door as it swung open slowly. "JC --" Chris started, stepping into the room. He took one look at AJ sitting on JC's legs and said, "Hey, man, I'm sorry --"

"That's okay," JC said, pulling his legs out from under AJ. Gingerly he rolled his boxers back up over the dark tattoo on his hip, careful not to smudge it. "Chris, this is AJ --"

"Hey," AJ said, nodding at Chris. Turning to JC, he added, "It's getting late. Maybe I should get going."

"No, stay," JC said, looking between Chris and AJ. "Alex, please --"

"It's cool," Chris said, backing out into the hall. "You guys have fun. I just wanted to let you know I was home."

Clearing his throat, JC asked, "Where's Joey?"

Chris shrugged. "Still out with Steve, I guess," he said, a wry grin twisting his features. "They'll be out all night, I'm sure. Justin and Lance are at his mom's, and ..." Chris sighed. "I'm here. You're here. AJ's here --" He winked at them. "You guys have fun," he said again.

AJ laughed. "We will," he said, pushing JC back to the bed as Chris closed the door behind him. He kissed JC hungrily, wrapping him into his arms as their bodies pressed together into the mattress.

All I Ever Wanted
169. Read Between the Lines
by NSyncGrrl

Justin rolled onto his back as Lance walked into the room. They were at the Harless' house, having stayed the night after celebrating Jonathan's birthday, and they were up early for rehearsal. Well, Lance was, anyway. Justin was still in bed, trying desperately to ignore the ache in his groin as he watched the towel fall from Lance's waist. Sitting on the bed, his back to Justin, Lance dried off his chest with the towel and asked, "You awake yet, hon?"

Grinning, Justin cuddled into the covers and said, "Get back in bed with me."

Lance laughed. "We'll be late for rehearsal," he said, ruffling his hair with the towel to dry it. He glanced back at Justin's petulant pout and added, "You're so damn cute when you want something."

"I want you," Justin growled, reaching for Lance. His arms wrapped around the cool damp skin of Lance's waist, and he pulled his lover back against him. Trailing tiny kisses along Lance's hip, he said, "I want you to get back in bed, back into my arms, where you belong."

"And what about the guys?" Lance countered. He ran one hand through Justin's curls, his thumb soothing Justin's brow.

Justin's mouth worked around his hip, heading for the thick hair at his crotch, where an erection already ached for his touch. "What about the guys?" Justin asked softly, his breath tickling Lance's skin as his lips found Lance's hardening member. When his tongue licked out and twirled around the swollen tip, Lance closed his eyes and leaned back against him, moaning Justin's name. "I'm not thinking about the guys right now," Justin said, watching Lance's face as he kissed along the length of his lover's cock. "Are you?"

Lance shook his head slightly. "No," he whispered. His hands delved into Justin's hair, grabbing fists full of curls, and Justin grinned as he eased Lance into his mouth, his hand cradling Lance's soft balls as he sucked and licked Lance's dick slowly. His movements were antagonizingly gentle, and Lance slipped further back onto the bed, his legs spreading as Justin worked on him, his mouth sliding up and down the thick shaft easily. Lance moaned again, louder, and his hips thrust into Justin, pressing his length further inside of him. With his hand Justin massaged Lance's balls, squeezed the base of his cock, bringing him to the edge of orgasm with his tongue and his lips and his fingers. Finally Lance breathed his name and came in him, his sweet taste filling Justin's mouth. Justin swallowed quickly and laid back into the pillows, his fingers still caressing Lance's softening member, entwining in the kinky hair. Lance curled up beside him on the bed, pressing against Justin's body, only the comforter Justin lay under separating them. "I could stay here forever," Lance murmured as Justin hugged him close.

"You're going to," Justin replied, rubbing Lance's arms before enveloping him in a tight embrace and snuggling up against his back. "Forever and ever. I'm never letting you go."

Lance laughed. "What about rehearsal?" he reminded him.

Justin shrugged. "Fuck it," he said, grinning. "We don't need to go."

"Justin --" Lance started, smiling.

"They can practice without us," Justin continued, sighing. "They know where we're supposed to be. Just pretend we're there."

Lance laughed again. "I don't think that'll go over well," he said, sitting up. Justin let him ease out of his arms, his hand trailing down the curve of Lance's spine. "Come on, baby, get out of bed."

"No," Justin pouted. He watched as Lance dressed. "I've got to run to the mall for something first."

Tugging on his jeans, Lance buttoned them up over the swell of his crotch and asked, "You want me to come too?"

Smiling suggestively, Justin winked and said, "I want you to come back here."

"Justin --" Lance warned, unable to keep his own smile from his face. Pulling his shirt on over his neck, he asked, "You want me to come with you to the mall? What do you need to get?"

"Something," Justin said, a little coquettish. "I'll meet you at rehearsal, okay?"

Lance frowned at him thoughtfully. "Is it something for me?" he asked.

"Maybe," Justin replied, rolling onto his back to stare at the ceiling. He didn't want Lance to see his intentions in his eyes -- he didn't want Lance to even guess what he was going to look for at the mall. Please, baby, he thought as Lance finished getting ready, please trust me. Please don't insist on coming with me. I want this to be a surprise --

"Okay," Lance said, and when he leaned down for a kiss, Justin kissed him hungrily, trying to thank him with his mouth and his lips and his tongue. "You want me to tell the guys you're on your way?"

"Sure," Justin replied. "I love you."

"I love you, too," Lance said, kissing Justin again before he gathered up his bag and left the room. At the doorway he looked back at Justin and said, "But if you aren't there in an hour, I'm coming back to get your ass out of bed."

"I'll be there," Justin promised. When Lance left, he jumped out of bed and rushed to dress, stuffing his clothes into his overnight bag and running down the stairs to his mother's car. It would only take a half hour, tops, at the mall -- he knew exactly what he wanted, had even called his favorite jewelry store to make sure they had what he wanted,

and basically all he had to do was stop by and pick it up.

He was right -- it didn't take long. As he left the mall, he stuffed the small bag into the glove compartment, securing it between the driver's manual for the car and a stack of McDonald's napkins. For extra measure, he locked the glove compartment, and was backing out of the parking lot when his cell phone rang. "Hello?" he asked as he flipped on the phone.

"Hey, baby boy." It was Lance -- Justin grinned at the sound of his lover's voice.

"I'm on my way," Justin said. Glancing at the clock, he said, "I've still got what, fifteen minutes?"

Lance laughed. "I know. I'm just calling because I need my coat and I left it back at the house."

"My mom's?" Justin asked. He turned at the stoplight and merged with the flow of traffic, unusually heavy for this time of the day.

"No," Lance said, "the house. It's in our room. If you don't mind, maybe you can run by there and get it? Please?"

Justin laughed. "Anything for you," he replied, and after sweet goodbyes, Justin concentrated on the road, thoughts of Lance and their morning spent in bed vivid in his mind.

The traffic was horrible, the house empty when Justin arrived. Chris had even taken the dogs to the hall where they were scheduled to rehearse. In their bedroom, Justin grabbed Lance's jacket off of the bed and ran back the way he had come. Damn, he thought, racing down the hall. His sneakers skidded on the hardwood floor as he rounded the corner into the foyer. He was going to be late.

He reached the front door as the telephone rang behind him. "Shit," he muttered, intent on not answering it, but when the machine picked up and Mrs. Bass' soft southern voice came over the line, Justin nearly tripped to pick up the receiver. "Mrs. Bass," he said, breathless. "This is Justin." As if she doesn't know, he thought sourly.

"Justin," Mrs. Bass said carefully. "Are you alright?"

Gulping in a deep breath of air, Justin replied, "I'm fine, really. Just a little rushed." Before she could ask, he said, "Lance is at rehearsal. You want me to tell him you called?"

"Actually," she said, her voice low in his ear, "I was hoping to speak with you."

Dread settled into the pit of his stomach like a stone tossed into a stream. Cautiously, Justin sat down in the chair beside the phone, folding Lance's jacket up into his lap. "Me?" he asked, surprised.

"Is that alright?" Mrs. Bass asked in return.

"Sure," Justin stammered. His heart began to pound in his chest as his mind whirled with what she might say next. "What's up?"

Mrs. Bass took a long, shuddery breath. "Justin," she said, and he nodded as if she could see him, "what are your plans for the holidays?"

"I don't know," he admitted. He hadn't really thought about anything past the tour, and the only thing Lance had said was that he wasn't spending the holidays without Justin by his side. He remembered holding Lance in his arms late one night and whispering that he didn't want to sleep alone at Christmas, and Lance promised him he wouldn't have to. That was all that had been said on the matter, but Justin knew things would have to be worked out. He just didn't know how yet. "We haven't really talked about it much, I guess."

He could almost hear the thoughts going through her mind, his use of the word *we* so freely, the implication that Lance might bring him along to the Bass' family gatherings. When she didn't say anything right away, Justin resisted the urge to open his mouth and let his own words tumble out to fill the uneasy silence between them. He felt as if he needed to apologize, but for what, he didn't know. That he loved Lance? He couldn't apologize for that. He just couldn't. Finally Mrs. Bass said slowly, "I just want you to know that ..." She sighed. "You're welcome at our house. Anytime."

Tears pricked his eyes, and Justin had to blink rapidly to clear his vision. "Thank you," he whispered, his voice suddenly thick. Relief rolled within him, and he sighed shakily. "I'll talk to Lance, see what he wants to do. I can have him call you tonight, if you want?"

"Please do," Mrs. Bass said. Justin waited, thinking she'd say something more, but she just added, "Goodbye."

"Goodbye," he said, hanging up the phone. For a long moment he just sat there, letting her words sink in. "You're welcome at our house. Anytime." He thought about the trip he made to the mall earlier, the small box resting in the glove compartment of his car, and a slow smile spread across his face. With a glance at the clock on the wall, he hurried from the house, Lance's jacket tucked beneath one arm. Already in his mind's eye he could see Lance's bright green eyes; he could feel Lance's lips on his, Lance's hands on his body, and he couldn't wait to see his lover again.

All I Ever Wanted
170. The End
Part 1 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

THE END. The words flashed across the TV screen as Chris whooped in delight. "Fuck, yeah!" he cried, letting the Playstation controller fall into his lap. He raised his hands above his head triumphantly and grinned at Korea, lying beside him on Joey's bed. "I fucking beat the game! I am the man!"

How long had he been playing this damn game? Too long -- he couldn't remember anything before it, and for a while it seemed as if Chrono Cross had eclipsed his life. About halfway into the game, he started sleeping in Joey's room. Then before the final boss monster, he broke up with Dani. And now ... now he was finished. Finito. The end. He felt drained and exhausted and unsure of what he would do now, what would occupy his every waking thought, but none of that cut through the elation he felt because he saw it through to the end. Jesus, Chris, he told himself as he watched the ending credits play out. This is just a game, not a fucking epic adventure or something.

Still, he couldn't wipe the silly grin from his face until the door opened and he looked up to find Steve staring back at him. "What 'cha doing in Joey's room?" Steve asked suspiciously.

Chris didn't let Steve's pissy mood get him down. "I could ask the same of you," he replied, cutting off the Playstation.

As he turned off the TV, Steve said, "I'm his brother. What's your excuse?"

I'm his boyfriend, Chris thought bitterly, but kept his mouth shut. Looking at Steve, he tried to keep the smile on his face as he remembered he just won the game. Steve couldn't change that. What I wouldn't give to see the look on your face, Steve, if I told you I slept here every night in Joey's arms. What I wouldn't do to watch you choke on your own hateful words. Instead he said, "My Playstation is in here. I just beat Chrono Cross. If you aren't happy for me, at least pretend you are."

Sarcastically, Steve said, "Yay." Behind him, Joey stepped into the doorway and frowned at Chris. Unaware of his brother's presence, Steve asked, "What's your Playstation doing in Joey's room?"

Before Chris could answer, Joey pushed his way into the room and glared at Steve. "Because I want it in here," he said. "What's it to you?"

Chris resisted the urge to stick his tongue out childishly at Steve, settling for the look of discomfort that flittered across the older Fatone's face before he shrugged and said, "Whatever."

"What are you doing here?" Joey asked. He stood in front of Chris protectively, blocking him from Steve's view.

"Um, hello?" Steve said, sighing. "We leave in the morning. All my shit's packed. I'm just making sure everything's done and we're going to leave here at six tomorrow --"

"We will," Joey said. Chris suppressed a laugh, because he knew neither of them were packed yet for the tour. They had to be in Charlotte, North Carolina, tomorrow evening, and Chris hadn't even washed half the clothes he needed to take. He had been so bent on Chrono Cross that he didn't even think of the time. And now he noticed it was after ten and damn, but he better get a move on or he'd get no sleep tonight. Standing up from the bed, he stretched languidly, his hand brushing along Joey's back as he did so. Joey turned and frowned at him. "You packed yet?" he asked softly.

Not meeting Joey's gaze, Chris said, "I've got a load of laundry to do first." He pushed past the brothers and headed down the hall.

Steve's voice followed him. "What the hell's up with him? He's always in here anymore."

Chris stopped in midstep and waited for Joey's reply. When it came, it was low and resigned. "He's my best friend. What, he can't hang out in here anymore? Lighten the hell up, Steve."

"It's just --" Steve started, and Chris grinned to hear him flustered.

"Mind your own fucking business," Joey growled, and Chris hurried to the laundry room before Joey came out into the hall and found him eavesdropping. As Chris was sorting the piles of his clothing into light and dark loads in front of the washer, he heard someone enter the room behind him and close the door. Looking up, he found Joey standing there, that frown on his face again. "Chris, I'm sorry," Joey started, but Chris just shrugged.

"It's not your fault he's an ass," Chris said. When the clothes at his feet were in appropriate piles, he noticed that the light pile was very small -- most of the clothes he owned were black. Grabbing a handful of clothes from the dark pile, he tossed it into the washer, and then scooped up the light clothing, throwing that in as well. Fuck it. They all needed to be washed. He'd just run the load on a cold cycle to keep the colors from bleeding onto his whites.

Joey sighed. "I know," he said softly, and when Chris looked up, he saw Joey struggling to keep his emotions inside of him, pinching his nose and blinking back tears. "I just ... I can't tell him, Chris. I just can't."

Chris closed the lid of the washer and studied Joey. He looked at the dark hair, the dark eyes, the boyish grin and the strong arms, the large hands, the sturdy chest and thick waist and long legs that he loved so much. Fuck, he thought. On tour they'd be around Steve twenty-four seven, he'd live, eat, and breathe with them, there was no way he wouldn't clue into the fact that Joey and Chris shared a bed. And Joey couldn't tell him? Chris couldn't even begin to fathom why not. Gently he asked, "Do you love me, Joe?"

"God, yes," Joey replied earnestly, meeting Chris's steady gaze. "Chris, I know it. I just do. I've never felt this way about anyone, ever."

And I know that I want you to sleep with me at night, and I want to wake up beside you and kiss you and hold you and fuck you --"

Chris grinned. Right now that was a good idea, actually, and he wondered how far they could get it on before someone walked in on them. The laundry room door had no lock. "But you don't want to tell Steve about me," he said.

"I can't," Joey replied. "It's not that I don't want to, I just can't. He'd never understand. If I told him the way I felt for you, he'd never speak to me again." A look of pure anguish crossed Joey's features, and Chris felt his heart twist in his chest to see his boyfriend, his lover, in such pain. "You think he's mean to you now? Fuck, Chris, can you imagine how insufferable he'd be if he knew the way I felt for you?"

Sighing, Chris tried to think around the war of emotions roaring within his brain. He wanted Joey to tell his family -- he knew his own sisters and mother would understand. They'd seen him with a guy before. His mom wasn't crazy about the idea but she lived with it, and his sisters were there for him. They always stood up for him on stuff like that. Part of him wanted to give Joey an ultimatum, tell him to confess everything to Steve and Janine and his parents before the tour, before Chris slept with him again, or they were through.

But fuck. Who would that hurt more? Joey, who stood in front of him now, barely holding himself together at the mere idea of telling Steve he was in love with another man? Or Chris himself, who could live with the secretive touches, the knowing glances, the comfort of Joey's arms and body and mind in the darkness of hotel rooms throughout the tour but who didn't relish another night alone? True, he was strong. True, he had been alone before, and would probably be alone again before his time on Earth was through, but did he really need to hurry that along? "Fine," he said, opening the lid to dump a handful of laundry detergent into the washer. When he closed the lid, it kicked into cycle.

"You're mad," Joey said, pouting.

Chris sighed. "I'm not mad," he said, trying to figure out what exactly he was feeling himself. "I'm a little upset, but I can see how it is for you, Joe. I'd be lying if I said I didn't understand, because I do. I do."

Joey stepped closer and ran a hand down Chris's arm. "I don't want to lose you," he whispered.

Looking up into Joey's warm, fear-filled eyes, Chris smiled warmly. "You won't, Joe-bear. I promise. We've kept it quiet before. We can do it again."

Wrapping his arms around Chris, Joey hugged him tightly and said, "I love you, Christopher Robin. I do. Oh God, I love you."

Chris snaked his arms around Joey's waist and rested his head against Joey's shoulder. "I love you, too," he replied. "But you better talk to Steve about his whole damn attitude, or Justin won't be the only one you have to worry about. I'll strangle him by the end of the tour, I swear it."

Joey laughed. "You?" he asked. "Fuck, I'm about ready to kill him

myself." Sighing, he added, "You gotta love big brothers, don't you?"

"Why?" Chris asked, looking up at Joey distrustfully. "Is that a law I didn't know about?"

Joey laughed again. "You beat the game?" he asked, changing the subject.

"Hell, yeah," Chris replied, grinning. He caught Joey in a quick kiss that brought a smile to both of their lips. "I fucking won. Yay me."

"Yay you," Joey said, grinning down at him. "You rock."

Rolling his eye, Chris replied loftily, "I know." They both laughed at that, and Chris thought, Fuck you, Steve. I won.

All I Ever Wanted
170. The End
Part 2 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

This is it, JC thought sadly. God, I don't want this to be the end. He pulled to a stop in front of AJ's house and sat in the car for a minute, looking up at the large home, the engine idling. With a sigh, he turned off the car and climbed out. It was late -- a few hours before midnight -- and he should be back at the house, sleeping. Tomorrow they had to leave at the crack of dawn to live the next two months in the back of a tour bus, nights in anonymous hotel rooms, days practicing onstage or traveling between venues. He loved touring, he really did, but suddenly he thought he could trade it all for just another kiss, another smoldering look, another moment in AJ's arms. I take back everything I ever thought or said to you, Justin, he thought as he climbed the steps leading to AJ's house, everything about Lance and your relationship and how damn obsessive I thought you two were. I understand it now. And it hurts to see this end for me.

When he rang the bell, he heard the far off bark of Jack, somewhere inside the house. He had hoped to spend the day with AJ, but the Backstreet Boys were still in the studio and AJ hadn't been able to get out of another day recording, and JC tried to understand. Fuck, he did understand. He understood all too well that they couldn't be together like Justin and Lance, or even like Chris and Joey, but that didn't keep him from wanting more. And now it's too late, he thought bitterly. He wasn't one to sleep around but he already knew he'd ache for AJ's touch on the tour bus, when the nights grew long and stretched out like taffy between one city to the next.

He was about to knock when the door opened and AJ leaned in the doorway, a look of exhaustion in his eyes. For once he didn't have his signature sunglasses on, and his hair stood up from his head in a shock of dark color -- he'd dyed it back to the natural color again. "You look great," JC said, sighing. God, he didn't want to cry.

"You like it?" AJ asked, running a hand through his hair. Before JC could step inside, AJ pulled him into a tight embrace and kissed him hungrily. JC closed his eyes and let AJ's tongue slip between his lips with a familiarity he never believed could be so arousing. "I'm going to miss you," AJ whispered, his breath hot along JC's cheek. "Fuck, Josh, I'm going to miss you something fierce."

JC ran his arms around AJ's narrow waist and hugged him close. "Alex," he sighed, and then AJ stepped back, pushing the front door shut with his foot. He pressed JC against the door, his mouth eager on JC's own, kissing his lips, his chin, his cheeks, his hands warm and strong on JC's waist. "There's so much I want to tell you, Alex. So much I wanted to show you, to learn from you ..." His voice trailed off with a sob.

"This isn't goodbye," AJ whispered, kissing JC's neck greedily. "Just because you're going away for a little while doesn't mean I'm going to

stop feeling this way. I'll still think of you, Josh. When it's late at night and I just want to scream at the world, I'll think of you. When I play the piano or cook brunch or wash the car or eat Chinese -- fuck, Josh, when I get another tattoo, I'll be thinking of you. How can I not? Tell me that. How can I ever forget?"

"I don't know," JC admitted. He let the warmth of AJ's touch and his kisses soothe the ache in his chest. He didn't want to think about leaving tomorrow. He didn't want to think about leaving tonight, even, he just wanted to stay here, and only here, forever here. "Alex --"

"I won't let you forget me," AJ continued. His voice was a sexy breath that curled in the hollow of JC's throat. "I don't want you to forget --"

"I don't want to, either," JC admitted. Catching AJ's face in both of his hands, he looked into AJ's dark, glistening eyes and whispered, "I'm not going to let you. I'm going to call you all the damn time. You're going to get so sick of me --"

AJ laughed and kissed JC's lips quickly. "I could never get sick of you," he said. Shrugging, he added, "Now the guys might get a little tired of me having the phone glued to my ear ..."

"Fuck them," JC growled, and AJ laughed again. The sound brought a smile to JC's lips.

"What did your friends say about me?" AJ wanted to know. Taking JC's hand, he led him into the living room. AJ plopped down on the sofa and laid back against the leather cushions. He pulled JC down onto his lap and sighed as JC settled along his body, his arms encircling AJ's waist, his head resting on AJ's chest.

Closing his eyes, JC sighed. "Nothing," he said, remembering the night Chris walked into his room to find AJ leaning down over him. He could still see the slight smile on Chris's face as he backed out of the room. AJ left late that night -- sometime after Joey stumbled home from the club but before dawn. The next morning JC slept until after noon, and when he finally made it to the kitchen for something to eat, Chris was there, eating a quick lunch. He hadn't said a word, just met JC's gaze and winked before turning back to his sandwich, but that smile was on his lips again and JC couldn't help but smile back. He didn't ask if Chris said anything to the others, but a part of him thought Chris hadn't.

"Not a word?" AJ asked. His hand rubbed intricate patterns into the small of JC's back.

"Nope," JC said. "I guess they're cool with it. I think they're just glad I've found someone, you know?"

"Yeah," AJ said softly. For a long moment neither of them spoke. JC listened to the steady rhythm of AJ's heart beat beneath him, the gentle swell of his chest with each breath as comforting as a promise. Finally, AJ said, "You're going to call me." It wasn't a question.

"Every night," JC replied. "And when we get down here again, you're going to stay with me until we leave. I'll lock you in my hotel room if I have to."

AJ laughed. "You won't," he said. "I want you to know that I'm ..." JC looked up as AJ shrugged. He met JC's troubled gaze and sighed. "I'm glad we met. Damn, that sounds like something from a soap opera, doesn't it? Cheesy as a large pizza. But it's the truth. You just don't know --"

"I do," JC whispered. "God, Alex, I do know. If it wasn't for you, I don't know how I could've made it through the past month. I was so lost and alone and afraid -- you were just what I needed. What I still need. I don't want to let you go."

"Then don't," AJ said, hugging JC tightly. JC raised himself up and kissed AJ, their lips pressing together with a need neither of them could voice. Hands caressed exposed flesh, smoothed down wrinkled clothes. Lips roamed damp mouths, covered flushed cheeks with desperate kisses. Tongues tattooed memories into eager skin, etching promises of future kisses. When JC finally pulled away, AJ laid on the couch and watched with a hooded expression as JC stood up to leave. He held JC's hand in his own as if he didn't want to get him go. "Josh," he whispered, and JC squeezed his hand encouragingly. "I want a chance to find out if I love you. Will you give me that?"

"I want to," JC said, pulling AJ to his feet. Another kiss and JC sighed in AJ's embrace. "God, Alex, I want to find out the same thing. But I think I already know the answer."

Grinning, AJ walked JC to the door. "Then tell me next time," he said. When JC opened his mouth to say something, AJ shook his head. "This isn't goodbye. You'll be back. And I'll be here waiting. This is --" He thought for a minute and then said, "This is so long for now. This is I'll see you again soon."

"Soon," JC promised. "I'll call you."

"I'll be waiting," AJ replied.

JC kissed AJ one last time before heading back for his car, his body heated from AJ's hands, his lips tingling from AJ's own, his head already on thoughts of all he had to say when they saw each other again.

All I Ever Wanted
170. The End
Part 3 of 3
by NSyncGrrl

Lance stared at the ceiling of Justin's bedroom and sighed. It had been a long day -- too long, actually. It seemed as if they spent the whole day packing, and it brought back memories of the last month, packing every single thing Justin owned into large cardboard boxes and carting them up to the house in Mississippi. To his house -- to their house. Their house. If only they didn't have to leave in the morning for the next leg of their tour ... there was still so much they needed to do back at the house. Unpacking and moving in and settling down. He wanted the boxes emptied and tossed away. He wanted Justin's books on his shelves, Justin's clothes in his closets, Justin's razor next to his on the bathroom sink. He wanted Justin to finish unpacking so that they would never have to move again. He wanted this to be the end of the aloneness he had always felt because he was so ready to start living with Justin, to start thinking and breathing as a couple outside of the group.

He couldn't believe it when Justin told him about the phone call from his mother. When he called her himself later that night, she had said that he was right -- it was his life, and if he wanted to live it with Justin, then so be it. His father told her that Justin was moving in with him, and finally she somehow resigned herself to the fact that her only son was never going to be the father she wanted him to be, the husband she thought he should be -- her dreams weren't for him. Finally she realized that the only way he was happy was if it was with Justin, and she told him as much over the phone. He had cried in relief when she told him Justin was welcome at their house for Thanksgiving, and for Christmas, and for every holiday to come. That night he held Justin so tightly in the bed they shared, trying to tell him how much he loved him without saying the words out loud. He said the words anyway, and somehow they weren't quite enough. How could he ever put into three little words his entire life, his soul, all he ever wanted? Every time he said I love you he wanted Justin to know that he meant forever. Not just storybook forever -- eternity, without end, beyond time and space and the universe, forever.

Now he wasn't really looking forward to the tour -- now he wanted to take Justin back to Mississippi, to bring him back home, to love him in every room of their house, their house, and to whisper to him words of eternity and forever every day and night. He wanted to be greedy now, and hide him from the world, because he belonged to him. He didn't want to share, not now, not when they had every day for the rest of their lives and somehow it wasn't enough, it would never be enough, he could tell Justin how much he loved him every second of every day and night and he'd just barely scratch the surface of the way he felt inside. He wanted to be selfish and wake up tomorrow and say fuck it all, Justin, let's just hop in the car and drive away until it was just the two of them and forever and the rest of the world could be damned.

But he couldn't do that. They had responsibilities -- to the fans, to the group, to each other. They couldn't throw all that away. But one day, he

promised himself as he lay on his back in the bed he shared with Justin at the house in Orlando, one day we'll do just that. And it'll just be you and me and forever. That's what I want to promise you Justin. Forever.

The door to their bedroom opened and Lance glanced down at Justin as he entered. "Hey, baby," Justin said, closing the door behind him. He looked as exhausted as Lance felt. The daily rehearsals were getting to them all. Standing at the foot of the bed, Justin ran his gaze down Lance's stretched out body and sighed. "What's on your mind?" he asked softly.

"Nothing," Lance said. Grinning, he added, "Just you and me and forever."

Justin laughed. "What a happy thought," he said, crawling onto the bed. He laid down beside Lance and stared down into his face, those deep blue eyes sparkling like sapphires. "A little fairy dust and you could fly away with such a happy thought."

"I'd like to," Lance admitted. He reached out and touched the soft velvet of Justin's lips with his thumb. "I'd like to fly away to Never Never Land, just you and me, and live there until we grow old."

"You can't grow old in Never Never Land," Justin pointed out. He kissed Lance's thumb, his hand catching Lance's wrist in a gentle grip.

Smiling, Lance said, "That's the point. We'd never grow up, we'd never grow old, we'd never die. And we could live forever together. Second star to the right and straight on til morning."

Justin smiled at the thought. "Now you're making me think happy thoughts," he said, kissing down Lance's thumb until his lips rested in the palm of Lance's hand. "Have I told you yet that I love you?"

"Tell me again," Lance said. "Tell me over and over and over again, until that's the first thing I hear in the morning and the last thing I hear at night. Tell me until that's all I hear, Justin, all I ever hear. Because that's all I ever wanted."

"And you're all I ever needed," Justin sang softly, his voice trailing off. A comfortable silence enveloped them -- it was late in the evening, and few sounds penetrated the stillness of the house around them. The creak of a floor board somewhere, water running in the pipes, one of the damn dogs yapping in the kitchen, the muted sounds of the television, a faint hum of the lamp beside the bed. Justin studied Lance with a dreamy look in his eyes, and Lance wanted to capture that expression, so angelic, so innocent, so beautiful -- capture it and keep it locked inside of him like a photograph. Whenever he felt alone or sad or afraid, whenever he felt unloved and unwanted, all he had to do was take out the snapshot in his heart and look at Justin and remember that this boy loved him, and that was all that mattered. This boy, in his arms. This boy.

"I love you," Lance whispered. It felt so inadequate, but it was all he could say. The only words he knew that could even begin to describe what he felt inside.

For a long moment Justin stared at him thoughtfully. Then he whispered, "I love you too, Lance. God, I love you." Sitting up suddenly,

he climbed off of the bed and opened one of the drawers on his dresser. With his back to Lance, he pulled out something from beneath the piles of socks and underwear tumbled into the drawer. "Lance," he said, his voice hesitant, unsure. He looked at Lance over his shoulder, a pretty pout tugging his lips down, his eyes blazing like icy fire. "I have something for you."

Lance pushed himself into a sitting position. "For me?" he asked, and his heart skipped a beat as he looked at the curl of Justin's fist, hiding something from his view. "What is it?"

"Come here," Justin said, motioning to the edge of the bed. Lance scooted over until his legs hung off the side of the bed, his eyes never leaving Justin's. Before he could stand up, Justin said, "Right there," and Lance stopped, waiting.

When Justin didn't speak right away, Lance prompted, "Justin? Is everything okay?"

Justin nodded. "Lance, I love you." He met Lance's steady gaze and dared a small smile that lit up his eyes. "I want to be with you. Only you. I want --" He took a deep breath and sighed shakily. Covering his eyes with one hand, he whispered, "This isn't going the way I wanted it to."

Lance reached out and took Justin's closed fist in both of his hands. "It's okay, baby," he said softly, pulling Justin towards him. Justin sat on his lap and looked at Lance with tortured eyes. "It's okay," he said again, rubbing Justin's back in a comforting gesture. "I love you too. I want to be with only you, forever. That's why I asked you to move in with me. That's why --"

Justin silenced him with a kiss. Then he took Lance's hand in his and uncurled his fist. Lance felt something warm and metallic fall into his palm. "Promise me forever," Justin whispered, pulling his hand away. "Please, Lance. Promise me that you'll love me, and stay with me, forever."

In his palm lay a shiny golden band. An intricate design wove through the gold, shimmering with tiny diamonds. Lance looked at the ring and his breath caught in his throat, his mind stopped, his heart ceased to beat. He forgot the words he wanted to say. Forever. He held forever in the palm of his hand. "Justin," he choked, finally able to speak. He looked up into Justin's fear-filled eyes and his vision blurred with sudden tears. "Yes," he said simply. Justin smiled at him, relief flooding those eyes, as deep as the ocean. Lance wanted to drown in that gaze. "God, Justin, yes."

Their lips crushed together in a promise, and Lance slipped the ring onto his finger. This is forever, Lance thought, the smooth gold cool against his skin. It felt so right there, and he kissed Justin again, over and over again, until they drowned in kisses and hands and lips, and all that existed was the two of them, forever.

All I Ever Wanted
171. Christmas Fun
by NSyncGrrl

Lance sat cross-legged on the floor of Jonathan's bedroom and frowned at the pieces of silver chrome tubing scattered around him. They were parts of the scooter Justin bought his younger brother for Christmas, and Jonathan insisted that Lance put it together for him. The boy watched Lance intently with large, unblinking eyes, grinning when the screwdriver slipped and Lance cursed under his breath. Glancing at Justin, stretched across Jonathan's narrow bed and watching them with a smile on his face, Lance asked, "Tell me again why you didn't buy one already assembled?"

Justin laughed. "It's more fun this way," he replied, winking at Jonathan. "I offered to put it together ..."

"You'd break it," Jonathan said, laughing. "Lance is doing a good job."

"Lance can't understand the directions," Lance interjected, frowning at the crumpled paper he had smoothed over one knee. "I'm going to put it together backwards, I just know it."

Jonathan laughed again. "Then I'll ride it backwards and it'll work just fine." He clapped as Lance finally managed to get the handlebar screwed into the base of the scooter. "See? You rock."

"I told you that last night," Justin said, grinning. He reached out and ruffled Lance's hair with one hand. "Remember? I believe I said --"

"Justin," Lance warned, glancing up at Jonathan quickly, but the boy just laughed at them. "Not now."

The comforter rustled as Justin slid off of the bed, and then Lance felt his lover's hands slip around his waist and Justin leaned his head against Lance's back. "Why not now?" he whispered, kissing the back of Lance's neck. His hands rubbed Lance's stomach in slow, lazy circles.

"Not now," Jonathan repeated, glaring at Justin. When Justin propped his chin on Lance's shoulder and grinned at his brother, Jonathan sighed lustily. "He's busy, Justin. He's helping me. You can have him when he's finished."

"He's mine," Justin said playfully, hugging Lance tighter.

Jonathan raised himself up on his knees and pushed Justin's forehead, trying to push him away. "Right now he's mine," Jonathan said. "I didn't get to see him all last night because you wouldn't let me. So stop being so horny and step off, yo."

Lance laughed. "You two stop it," he replied, smiling at Justin's protective hug. "I'm almost done. Just have to put the wheels on and then you can have it, Jon."

"Yay!" Jonathan cried. As Lance tightened the last axle onto the

scooter's base, Jonathan jumped up on his bed and grabbed fists full of his brother's curls. Pulling Justin back, he laughed into his brother's face. "He's helping me," Jonathan bragged. "Keep your hands to yourself for two more minutes, Justin. Then you can have him back."

Justin reached up and caught Jonathan's ears in his hands. "He's mine," Justin said, laughing, and then Jonathan tumbled off of the bed and Justin attacked him, fingers digging into his brother's stomach, eliciting peals of laughter and shrieks of joy from the younger boy. "Mine mine mine mine mine," Justin chanted, tickling Jonathan breathless.

Jonathan struggled to get away but Justin was stronger, holding him down as he tickled him. Twisting away, Jonathan kicked at Justin, his foot catching Lance in the ribs. "Hey!" Lance cried, pulling away from them. "Watch it, you guys. Some of us are trying to work here."

"Sorry," Justin said, grabbing Jonathan's legs away from Lance. "You okay, baby?"

"I'm fine," Lance replied, concentrating as he placed the decals on the scooter to match the example on the box. "Just give me like three more minutes, okay? I'm almost done."

Jonathan sat up and slapped Justin's hands off of him. "Sorry, Lance," he said. "It's all his fault."

"Is not," Justin pouted, leaning his back against Lance's. The warm pressure was enough to get Lance smiling again. "Don't listen to him, Lance," Justin was saying. "He's just jealous because he knows you're mine."

Childishly, Jonathan stuck his tongue out at Justin, who tried to grab it between his fingers, but Jonathan laughed and rolled away. When Justin lunged for him, Jonathan laughed. "Lance!" he cried as Justin tackled him to the floor. "Help me!"

"I'm busy," Lance reminded them, but he laughed when Jonathan pinched Justin's nose between his thumb and forefinger. "Jon, don't hurt my boy."

"I won't," Jonathan said. Extracting himself from beneath Justin, Jonathan crawled over to the scooter as Lance wiped his fingerprints off of the glistening chrome with the end of his t-shirt. "Thanks, Lance. This rocks."

"Hey!" Justin cried. "I bought it."

"And I put it together," Lance said smugly. Jonathan took the scooter from his hands and began riding it around the small stretch of carpet between his bed and the door.

Suddenly Justin's arms were around Lance's waist again, and Justin kissed his cheek. "I know," he whispered. "You rock." One hand turned Lance's face towards him as Justin's lips found his, closing over them in a familiar crush that still left Lance breathless and aching for more.

A shadow fell over them, and Lance looked up as Jonathan cleared his throat. "You guys do that in your own room," he said, hands on his hips.

Lance laughed as Justin helped him to his feet. "Let's see if this thing works first," he said, motioning at the scooter. Justin held Lance's hand in his as they followed Jonathan out of the room and down the stairs, the scooter's wheels bumping against the wooden steps with a steady thump thump thump that Lance just knew would leave marks. "Did you get everything you wanted for Christmas, Jon?" Lance asked as they headed outside.

"Yeah," Jonathan said, hopping on the scooter. "I got this, and the Pokémon games you got me, and then Santa gave me a Playstation 2 --"

Justin laughed. "Santa gave you that?" he asked, but Lance squeezed his hand and frowned. Jonathan was only eight and smart for his age, but he still believed in Santa Claus, and Lance didn't want Justin to ruin that. Chagrined, Justin asked, "You think the elves made it for you, Jon?"

Jonathan rolled his eyes as he pushed the scooter down the driveway. "Puh-leaze, Justin," he said. "He doesn't have elves anymore. There are labor laws, you know."

Lance giggled. "Labor laws?" he asked as Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's shoulders and hugged him close. Running his hands along Justin's arms, Lance asked, "How do you know about those?"

"History class," Jonathan replied, as if Lance should've guessed. Balancing the scooter on one wheel, he spun around and made his way back up the driveway. "So what did you get for Christmas, Lance?"

Lance held out his wrist so Jonathan could see the watch Justin bought him. It was a thick leather band with an antique-gold face and a dusting of diamonds across the roman numerals. Very masculine, very different from what he would've picked out for himself -- hell, different from what Justin normally went for in jewelry -- but it was beautiful. And on the back their initials were inscribed, entwined together in a tiny etching that Lance had stared at for hours when Justin first gave it to him. He loved the watch. It was simply wonderful. "Justin bought me this," he said as Jonathan took his wrist in both hands to get a better look at the watch.

"I like it," Jonathan said. "Justin picked this out?"

"All by myself," Justin said proudly.

Jonathan laughed. "I'm surprised," he said. Noticing the ring on Lance's finger, he asked, "Did he give you this too?"

Lance smiled. "Yeah," he said, holding it out for Jonathan to admire. "A few months ago, actually. Before the tour."

Jonathan looked at Justin's hands, clasped across Lance's chest, and frowned to see a similar ring on Justin's own hand. Lance had bought Justin the matching ring after Justin proposed to him. During the past few months the tour had been such a whirlwind success, snagging all of their time and energy that they simply forgot to mention their engagement to anyone. He was sure the guys had noticed the rings, but no one said a word. Perhaps they were waiting for Lance to say something, or for Justin to announce it. Lance's mother had seen the ring the moment Lance walked in the door for Thanksgiving dinner, but despite her disapproving

frown, she kept silent about it. And now Jonathan noticed. Quietly, the young boy asked, "Are you two getting married?"

Turning, Lance looked at Justin, who bit the inside of his lip in thought. "Well," Justin said carefully, "we're still young, but ..." He sighed. "We've promised each other forever, Jon. Do you understand what that means?" Before Jonathan could reply, Justin kissed Lance's shoulder and said, "I love Lance, you know that. He loves me. So we're going to be together forever. These rings mean that to us."

"So you're getting married," Jonathan said again. It wasn't a question this time. He looked up at Lance as a slow grin spread across his face. "Can I be the best man? Can I? Please?"

Lance laughed. "We don't even know if there will be a ceremony --" he started, but Jonathan turned to Justin with puppy dog eyes and said, "Justin? Let me be the best man, please?"

"One of them, sure," Justin said. Winking at Lance, he added, "Just don't say anything to Mom yet, okay? Let me tell her myself, what do you say?"

"Okay," Jonathan said, rolling away on the scooter. "Just remember you said I could be the best man."

"I will," Justin called out. He kissed Lance's ear quickly and sighed. "Merry Christmas," he whispered.

"Merry Christmas," Lance replied. Grinning, he added, "You know they're all going to want to be best men, don't you?" Justin simply laughed and kissed him again.

All I Ever Wanted
172. Kiss Me At Midnight
by NSyncGrrl

Lance leaned against the buffet table, a glass of spiked punch in one hand, and watched the room with wide eyes. He was tired -- what the hell possessed him to host a New Year's Eve bash in the first place? He didn't remember, but Justin had said it was a good idea and it'd be fun and now here they were, in the midst of a crowded room unable to even touch each other because the press was there, reporters from MTV and cameramen everywhere, fans lining the mezzanine and he could barely see Justin, making the rounds with Britney on his arm, perfect and pretty as a Barbie doll. Taking a long sip of the punch, Lance cursed his stupid decision to host this thing. He was rapidly getting drunk, and hornier than he'd been in a long time, and the way Justin's pants clung to his butt and hips did little to help matters. Lance wondered if he was the only one here counting down not to midnight but to when the party would be over. Then he could finally get Justin alone to himself for the rest of the night. "Hey Lance," Joey called, weaving through the crowd to stand beside him, his own glass half empty. "Great party."

Lance laughed. "You think so?" he asked, watching Justin across the room as he laughed at something Britney said.

"Is everything okay?" Joey asked, concern written across his face. His blonde hair stood up in a shock from his forehead, and from the sated look in his eyes Lance wondered where he had been. Come to think of it, Lance hadn't seen Chris in a while, either. Perhaps they had managed to sneak away from everything for a brief tryst in a closet somewhere. Why had he hosted this again? If he even tried to duck out early, Justin close behind him, everyone would notice. Everyone. "Lance?"

Suddenly from across the room, Justin looked up and caught Lance's eye. He raised his hand briefly and winked, and even from this distance the gesture set Lance's heart pounding. "Great," Lance replied, sipping his drink, because now it was great, that little look of Justin's making his entire evening. "You having fun, Joey?"

Joey laughed, his eyes crinkling into those funny half-moons like they did when he thought something was just too funny for words. "I'm having a blast," he whispered dramatically. "There's this little room off the hall, just big enough for two people." Nudging Lance with his elbow, he added, "Maybe you and Justin should go check it out."

My thoughts exactly, Lance thought bitterly. "In case you haven't noticed," he said, pouting slightly, "I'm hosting a party, Joe. They'll see me leave."

"Then maybe what you need is a distraction," Joey suggested. "Something to make everyone look the other way while you slip out for a few minutes with your boy." He looked at Lance closely. "You do want a few minutes alone with him, don't you?"

"You just don't know," Lance said, sighing, and Joey laughed again.

Pointing at Lance's finger, Joey asked, "So when's the date?"

Frowning, Lance asked innocently, "For what?"

Joey rolled his eyes. "C'mon, Lance. We all know." Lance saw Justin look over at them, a slight frown on his face, and then he turned to Britney, whispering something before heading their way. "You two getting hitched this year or what?"

"We're still young --" Lance started, and then Justin was there, his hands touching Lance's waist in a possessive manner that set Lance's blood aflame. "There you are, baby," Justin purred, leaning closer. "What are you two up to?"

Joey smiled broadly. "Get a room already," he said. "I told you where you can find one."

"Joey," Lance started, sighing again. He couldn't just leave.

"You need a distraction, right," Joey said, setting his glass down. "Just look for my opening." Before Lance could stop him, Joey stepped into the crowd and was gone, heading for the stage along the far wall of the ballroom. A brass band played now, an interlude between performers, and Lance felt his stomach flutter nervously. What's he got in mind? he wondered.

"What's he doing?" Justin asked, laughing.

Lance shrugged. "He thinks we need to get alone --"

Justin kissed Lance's ear quickly. "He's right."

Suddenly Joey jumped up on stage, the band clattering to an inharmonious halt. Taking the microphone in hand, Joey laughed, the infectious sound reverberating through the crowded room like wildfire. "Hey everybody!" he slurred, pretending to be more drunk than he really was. It was a part he played well. "Anyone up for a little karaoke?" Laughter erupted around the room, and Joey's eyes twinkled as he held out his hand. "Britney?"

"God," Lance groaned, downing the rest of his punch in one gulp. "What the hell is he doing?"

As Britney joined Joey on the stage, giggling nervously, Justin grinned and said, "I have no idea, but come on." He slipped his hand into Lance's and tugged gently. "Where's that room you two were talking about?"

Together they found a small storage room off of a dimly lit hall. It was dark inside, but Lance didn't care when Justin leaned back against the closed door and pulled him into his arms. Kissing his lover hungrily, Lance whispered, "I've been waiting for this moment all night long."

Justin's hands slipped beneath Lance's sweater to rub against the smooth skin of his back. His lips were warm and soft on Lance's own, and he moaned slightly when Lance pressed into him, raising his knee into the bulge at Justin's crotch. "Next year it'll be just us," Justin promised, his

tongue licking down the curve of Lance's neck. "No parties, no friends, no family. Just you and me and a log cabin in the woods, snow for miles around, a crackling fire and the Christmas tree still up, lights blinking, hot mugs of steaming cider in our hands --"

"A bearskin rug," Lance added, running his arms around Justin's neck. His hands bunched in Justin's curls as he pulled him close for another kiss. "In front of the fireplace. We'll wrap ourselves up in nothing but thick fluffy blankets and make love all night long on the furry carpet. I'll cover you with kisses to claim you as my own, Justin. I'll make you scream my name when you come."

Easing his hands into the back pockets of Lance's jeans, Justin whispered, "I'll make you breakfast in bed, every morning. And we'll go outside and chop wood for the fire and make snow angels and spend all day in bed."

"Hmm," Lance murmured, kissing behind Justin's ear. Justin gasped as Lance's lips closed over one bare earlobe, his hands reflexively clutching Lance's buttocks through the denim of his jeans. "How are we going to do that if we're outside chopping wood and making snow angels?"

Justin moaned again, a breathless sound, as Lance's tongue licked behind his ear. "I don't know," he sighed, hugging Lance tightly. "I don't know, Lance, I don't know just please don't stop that ... please don't stop ..."

Chuckling softly, Lance purred, "You like that?" Justin's wordless nod was answer enough, and Lance pushed him against the door, his hands roaming down Justin's chest. With nimble fingers he unbuttoned Justin's shirt, pushing back the fabric to expose his lover's smooth, muscled chest. Leaning down, Lance licked at Justin's nipples, first one, then the other, his tongue trailing between them as he nipped them erect. "I've been drinking tonight," Lance breathed, his breath cooling his own hot saliva on Justin's hard nipples. "You know what that does to me. You know how much I want you right now, Justin, don't you? Can I just tell you what I want to do to you when this party is over?"

"Please," Justin breathed, his hands grabbing thick handfuls of Lance's hair, pressing him against his chest. "Please Lance, oh God please --"

Undoing another button, Lance whispered, "I'm going to undress you, Justin, slowly, oh so slowly, until you're hard and throbbing and aching for me. Then I'm going to kiss you, like this --" To demonstrate, Lance kissed Justin's nipple, his lips closing over the tender bud, his teeth biting at it gently, his tongue tickling it before pulling away. Then, moving just a fraction of an inch, Lance took another small bite of Justin's skin between his teeth, licking it in the same way. And another. And another, until Justin's moans grew louder, threatening to be heard on the other side of the closed door. "And then," Lance breathed, his lips finding Justin's again, hovering just inches above them as he stared into Justin's lust-filled eyes, "then I'm going to touch you here --" He grabbed the thick hardness in Justin's pants and squeezed it until Justin's eyes slipped closed and his mouth opened in a delicious oval of desire. "And I'm going to take you into me, Justin, and I'm never going to let you go."

"No," Justin whispered as he thrust into Lance's hand. His hands

cradled Lance's cheeks and pulled him in closer for a kiss. "Never let go, please. Take me in and let me get lost in you, Lance, please never let go."

Lance grinned. "I won't," he promised.

Justin sighed. "You know I won't be able to wait until this damn party is over now, right?"

Laughing, Lance whispered, his lips brushing against the curve of Justin's ear, "I want to kiss you at midnight, baby boy. I don't care who sees it. I don't care who knows anymore. I love you."

"I love you, too," Justin breathed. He checked his watch, the pale blue Indiglo face lighting up in the small room, and held his wrist out for Lance to see.

Lance looked down at the analog watch face and sighed. It was only -- "Eleven o'clock," he said dejectedly. "Another hour until next year. And then what, another two, three hours until the party's over? Damn."

Quickly Justin reset his watch until the hands both pointed at twelve. "It's midnight somewhere in the world," he said. "Like right here. So kiss me already."

Lance laughed again. "Justin --"

"Kiss me, Lance," Justin said, pouting slightly, and Lance couldn't possibly hope to say no to that, could he? "Happy New Year, baby."

Lance silenced him with another kiss.

All I Ever Wanted
173. The Haircut, Part 2
by NSyncGrrl

Lance was at the kitchen sink making iced tea when he heard the front door open. Justin's back, he thought, turning off the faucet as the door closed gently in the other room. "Lance?" he heard his lover call out, consternation in his voice, and in his mind's eye Lance could already see the pout pulling at Justin's lips. He couldn't wait to kiss that pout away.

"In here," Lance replied, stirring the tea in the pitcher. He heard Justin's shoes on the hardwood floor of the foyer, and he turned with a smile on his face as Justin entered the kitchen.

He froze, smile plastered in place, the tea still swirling around the wooden spoon in the pitcher. Was this Justin? His lover stood in the doorway, frowning slightly, dressed in the t-shirt and jeans he had worn when he left the house earlier that day. But his hair ... the dark curls were gone, sheared off like sheepskin to leave behind a buzz cut that made Justin look like a cadet in the Marines. His curls, Lance thought, his mind racing for something to say, but he couldn't take his gaze away from that stubble of hair on Justin's head. His curls -- "Well?" Justin asked fearfully. "What do you think?"

"I don't know," Lance whispered. He didn't know what to think. He loved Justin's curls, even if his lover did not. He loved burying his nose into them as they lay in each others' arms. He loved the way Justin's shampoo clung to them, making him smell clean and fresh. He loved the feel of them in his hands, his fingers entwined with the cottony soft ringlets when Justin kissed him. He loved the way the sun shone off of them, the way Justin smashed them under baseball caps, the way Justin pushed his hands through them roughly when he was mad. "You cut your hair." It was the only thing Lance could think of to say.

Justin sighed, and there was that pout Lance knew he heard earlier. "You don't like it," he said, crossing his arms in front of his chest.

No, I don't, Lance thought, but he wasn't going to say that out loud. "I didn't say that," he answered carefully. He turned back to the sink and frowned as he put the lid on the pitcher of tea. "It's different."

"You hate it," Justin said, and because he couldn't lie to him, Lance just sighed wearily.

He heard Justin storm out of the kitchen. "Justin," he called, but there was no reply. From the living room he heard Justin plop down on the sofa, and Jesus but it was going to be one of those days, wasn't it? One of those times when Justin was in a pissy mood and it seemed like it would be Lance's job to pick him up again. And Lance didn't mind that at all -- he loved Justin, he loved telling Justin how much he loved him, because after he made Justin feel better they usually made love, and that made Lance feel better. But his HAIR, a part of him cried. He so loved Justin's hair.

He found Justin lying facedown on the sofa in the living room, his head in his arms. As Lance sat on the edge of the couch, he rubbed a hand along Justin's back and asked softly, "Baby, what's wrong?"

"You hate my hair," Justin replied, his voice muffled.

"I don't hate it," Lance said, and he didn't, not really. This close he could see the short length of it, the ends already wanting to curl, and when he ran his hand over the back of Justin's head, the hair tickled his fingers. It felt impossibly soft, like the downy fuzz on the skin of a peach, and when he leaned down to kiss the base of Justin's neck, the hair pricked at his nose, making him grin. "Despite what you think, Justin," he whispered into his lover's ear, "I don't love you for your hair alone."

Justin laughed, a sad sound but it was laughter nonetheless, it was the response Lance wanted, and he rolled over onto his side, watching Lance with large, watery eyes. "Not this hair at least, eh?" he asked, sniffing.

Reaching out, Lance tweaked the tip of Justin's nose playfully. "You shave anywhere else and you're in trouble," he warned, and Justin laughed again. Lying down alongside him, Lance looked up at his lover and rubbed his hand over the barely there hair. Justin leaned down to let Lance's hand explore, nuzzling into Lance's neck and wrapping an arm around him protectively as Lance stroked his scalp. "What on earth were you thinking?" Lance whispered, kissing Justin on the forehead.

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he admitted. "I just thought what the hell, you know?" His breath fanned Lance's neck. "It's only hair. It'll grow back."

"Thank God," Lance muttered. When Justin tried to pull away from him, he held on tight and giggled. "Justin, it's cute, really." He looked into his lover's troubled eyes and sighed. "Really. It's cute. I just have to get used to it."

Lying his head on Lance's shoulder, Justin admitted, "Me too." They laid in each others' arms for a few moments, Lance's hand caressing the back of Justin's head, his fingers smoothing over the short-cropped hair, and Justin's breath grew steady and even. Just when Lance thought maybe his lover had fallen asleep, Justin sighed shakily and asked, "Are you used to it yet?"

Lance laughed. "It's going to take a little longer than that," he said. Studying the tiny bristles of hair, he asked, "What am I going to clutch now when we fuck?"

Justin jerked his head up and stared at Lance, mouth open in surprise. "You didn't just say ..." He saw Lance's grin and smiled slyly. "Lance! God, how crude was that?"

"I'm just being honest," Lance replied, smirking at the rise he got out of his lover. Where Justin's body pressed against his, a sudden hardness bulged at his crotch, and Lance couldn't suppress a laugh. "Did the word fuck turn you on?"

Justin grinned foolishly, his cheeks coloring just a little, just enough to tell Lance that yes, the word had turned him on, because it wasn't

something Lance normally said. It was always let's make love or are you in the mood? or even come on, baby boy, I know you want to love me. But fuck? It wasn't in Lance's vocabulary, not since every time Joey used it, Justin got pissed. Fuck and sex were animal acts, they didn't do that.

But maybe sometimes we should, Lance mused, shifting his leg to press into Justin's groin a little bit harder. Justin closed his eyes and moaned, just the reaction Lance was looking for. In a low voice Lance breathed, "What about when you give me a blowjob? What will I grab onto then?"

Justin ducked his head against Lance's chest, his face reddening, and laughed. Then he kissed Lance's nipple through his thin t-shirt, his tongue warm through the fabric, his lips damp and his teeth hard as they nipped at Lance gently. When he pulled away, he left a wet circle imprinted onto the material that cooled instantly, making Lance's nipple perk up. "You're bad," Justin giggled, resting his head on Lance's chest. His short hair rubbed along the underside of Lance's chin, tickling him.

"Only some of the time," Lance replied. He let one hand trail down Justin's back to slip into the waistband of his lover's jeans, feeling the smooth skin hidden from view. His fingers curled around one of Justin's buttocks, squeezing gently, and he asked, "Do you like it?"

Justin laughed and hugged Lance tighter. "I love it," he growled.

Lance grinned. "I meant your hair, silly."

Justin's smile disappear, and with a little sigh he said, "Well, it'll grow back."

"That means no." Lance couldn't keep the smirk from his face. Justin snuggled closer to him, and Lance wrapped his arms around his lover. Kissing the prickly top of Justin's head, he added, "When it grows back, it'll be so curly and soft, I won't be able to keep my hands out of it."

Raising his head, Justin rested his chin on Lance's chest and frowned at him, his blue eyes dark and wide. "Do you think I could get it to grow back any quicker?" he asked. "Maybe use Rogaine or something?"

Lance laughed. "I don't think so," he whispered, kissing the tip of Justin's nose. "It's cute, baby. It'll grow back soon enough."

"I miss your hands in it," Justin admitted. "I feel naked and cold now. And I look like a soldier ..."

Kissing Justin tenderly, Lance whispered against his lips, "My little soldier boy." He'd get used to the hair -- it was endearing, sort of, and he did like the way it felt rubbing against his hands. He could imagine the bristly hair tickling along his stomach and chest, and his fingers stroked behind Justin's ears, making his lover moan into his mouth. "Now I can play with your ears," he sighed, his lips brushing along Justin's cheek until they closed over one of Justin's earlobes. Justin moaned his name, a breathy rush against his neck, and his lips sucked greedily at the hollow of Lance's throat. Lance nipped at the top of Justin's ear, his teeth closing over the thin skin gently. "I know you like that."

"I love it," Justin growled again, a throaty reply that made Lance harden in response. Justin's fingers fumbled with the buttons on their jeans, pressing against Lance's erection as he did. "Let's see what you can hold onto, what do you say?" he asked, grinning wickedly. "I'm sure you'll find something."

Lance giggled into Justin's ear. "I'm sure," he replied. "I love you."

Justin sighed happily. "I love you, too, Lance." His hand worked between them, stroking their erections through their jeans. "Don't worry, it'll grow back."

"I think you hate it more than I do," Lance said, laughing. At Justin's frown, he amended quickly, "Not that I hate it. I don't, it's cute." He kissed the frown away. "But you're right, it will grow back." It better, he thought, running his hands over Justin's stubbled hair. It better.

All I Ever Wanted
174. It Wasn't Me
by NSyncGrrl

When the alarm went off, Lance considered just hitting the snooze button and going back to sleep. They didn't really need him at the studio anyway, did they? It was just a monthly budget meeting, nothing more. But I told them I'd be there, he reminded himself. I'm in town for the week and I do own the company, so I could at least show up in the office now and then. He looked at Justin, curled beside him and pretending to still be asleep, and he thought about calling in sick. The sun played across his lover's face, casting faint shadows along the short growth of hair at his chin, making the fuzz look like flocking pasted onto his dusky skin. Lance ran his finger down the curve of Justin's jaw, smiling when Justin moaned in his sleep and snuggled closer to him, his arms tightening around Lance's waist. "Stay here," Justin whispered, kissing Lance's palm. When he stared at Lance with those dark oceanic eyes, it was so damn tempting to just forget what time it was. The office didn't exist, the world beyond this bed wasn't real -- nothing mattered but Justin and his kisses and his arms.

But I said I'd come in today, Lance remembered, and he sighed. "I have to get to work," he replied, kissing Justin tenderly before extracting himself from the covers. Justin pouted and watched as Lance slipped into the pair of boxers lying discarded on the floor beside the bed. "I said I'd sit in on the meeting."

"Call in sick," Justin said, and Lance laughed because wasn't that what he had been thinking himself? Justin stretched languidly, crossing his arms behind his head, the covers falling down his chest and damn but Lance wanted to crawl back into the warmth of the bed, the safety of those arms. "Tell them something suddenly came up, Lance." With a nod at the budding bulge at his lover's crotch, Justin remarked, "That's the truth, isn't it? Something suddenly came up."

"Stop it, baby." Lance grinned as he pulled out some clothes to wear -- a brown sports jacket, a pair of crisp blue jeans, a clean white t-shirt. Some cowboy boots would complete the outfit, and he just had to take a shower and the sooner he got to the office, the sooner he could come home and get back into bed with his boy. "I should be home by one," he said, laying the clothes he planned to wear out on top of the covers. Justin kicked his legs beneath the sheets playfully, but when Lance frowned at him, he stopped. "Are you still going to be in bed? Or do you want to meet me someplace for lunch?"

"I don't want you to go anywhere," Justin pouted. "I want you to stay here."

Lance sighed. "Justin, I can't. I promised --"

"I know, I know," Justin replied, cutting him off. "You said you'd go in for the meeting. Fine."

Lance frowned. "Are you mad?" he asked carefully.

Justin shrugged. "I just wanted to spend this week together, you know? Just the two of us -- no one else. And now you're leaving."

"I'm coming back," Lance pointed out. "Justin --"

"I know," Justin said again. He caught Lance's hand and pulled him down for a quick kiss. "I understand, really I do," he whispered against Lance's lips, his hand straying to squeeze Lance's slight erection gently. "Just hurry back, okay?"

Grinning, Lance said, "Okay." He'd shower and then go to the studio, and he'd be home by noon, not one. He'd bring home something good for lunch -- maybe Chinese, or Italian, something sloppy that they could feed to each other in bed. In the shower he washed his hair quickly, and at one point he thought he heard Justin come into the bathroom. "Justin?" he called out, but there was no answer. It's the house settling, he mused, though he was surprised he could hear anything over the rush of the shower. When he turned off the water, he reached out for the towel he had set on the toilet seat, but his hand closed over empty air. "Justin?" he called out again. Pushing aside the shower curtain, he looked around the small bathroom, but there were no towels anywhere -- the washcloths by the sink, the hand towels, the bath towel he had put on the toilet to dry off with after his shower. They were all gone. Raising his voice, he asked, "Hey, Justin? Baby?"

From the bedroom he heard Justin laugh. "Yes?" he asked.

Lance sighed. This isn't funny, he thought. "Did you take my towel?" he asked. Why would he do that? Lance couldn't imagine.

"It wasn't me," Justin replied. Like hell it wasn't, Lance thought, rubbing his hands over his hair to shake off the excess water. Droplets ran down his back and into his eyes, and if those towels were on the bed when he got into that room, no amount of pouting would smooth over his irritation. Justin knew he needed to get going, and now he was going to be late. His nude body dripping with water, Lance hurried down the hall and into the bedroom, where Justin still lay in bed, his eyes widening as he took in Lance's nakedness, the water running down his skin. "Jesus," Justin whispered. Grinning, he asked, "Can you spare ten minutes, honey?"

"No," Lance replied, trying to hold onto his anger because it was Justin's fault he stood here naked and wet now, Justin had taken his towel, he didn't know where it was because it wasn't on the bed but it had to be Justin's idea of a joke, and it wasn't funny. But the lust he saw in his lover's eyes was enough to get him hard, and he turned away before Justin could see what that hungry look was doing to him. Grabbing a towel out of the closet, Lance began to dry himself off vigorously and he said, "I've got to get going."

"Please?" Justin pleaded, and Lance didn't have to look at him to hear the pout in his voice. "Ten minutes, baby. Just a quick one, please?"

"No," Lance said again. "You have your hand for that. I've got to get to work. I'm late as it is."

Justin sighed lustily. "Fine," he said, and Lance pulled on a pair boxer briefs, ignoring Justin's whistle when he bent over to step into the underwear. "Come here, sexy," Justin growled. Lance heard the bed squeak, and then Justin's hands were on his waist, pulling him close.

Lance laughed and danced out of reach. "I said no," he reminded him. "Justin --"

"Fine," Justin replied, plopping back on the bed. "Go to work, I don't care."

"Yes, you do," Lance said, grinning as he turned around to wink at his lover. "A few hours from now, I'll be home and we can do whatever you want, okay?" When Justin didn't reply, Lance prompted, "Okay, baby boy?"

"Okay," Justin said, pouting because he knew what that did to Lance, he had to know how badly it turned him on. Lance wanted to kiss that pout away but I have to get to work, he thought, tugging on the jeans he had set aside. As he buttoned them up, he looked at the sports jacket on the bed and wondered ... "Honey," he asked, moving the jacket aside, "where's my shirt?"

Justin shrugged. "I don't know," he replied. "Maybe you didn't take it out."

"I know I did," Lance said, frowning. He caught his lover's slight smile out of the corner of his eye, but when he faced Justin all he saw was that pretty pout. "Justin," he sighed, "what did you do with it?"

"Nothing!" Justin cried, managing to look indignant enough that Lance felt bad for accusing him. Maybe he had forgotten to take out a shirt, but he could've sworn ... nevermind, he told himself, pulling another t-shirt out of his drawer. "Lance, I promise you, it wasn't me."

"Hmm." Lance glanced sideways at Justin and there, there was that hint of a smile again, that barely there grin that made him think that he had taken out the shirt, just like he had taken out the towel, and Justin was determined that he wasn't going into work today. Pulling the sports jacket on over his t-shirt, Lance said, "I'll bring home something for lunch. What do you feel like having today?"

Justin pulled the covers up to his chin, snuggling down into them until all Lance could see was his face, framed by the pillows and the blankets. "Can I have anything I want?" Justin asked in a childlike voice. When Lance nodded, he said, "Then I want you. Stay here with me."

Lance sighed, exasperated. "Justin, I can't," he said. "I have to get to work." Leaning down, he kissed Justin's forehead and whispered, "I'll think of you every second I'm gone. And I'll be back in no time, you'll see." At Justin's pout, Lance promised, "I'll be back, baby. I promise."

"Okay," Justin breathed. "Kiss me again." Lance obliged, and when he pulled away Justin said, "Again." He kissed him again, but as he tried to stand up, Justin commanded, "One more time."

"Justin!" Lance cried, laughing. He kissed Justin once more before he

said, "That's it. I'll be back. Love you."

"Love you, too," Justin replied. He watched as Lance left the room, trotting down the stairs two at a time. Downstairs he grabbed his wallet from the table in the hall, sweeping up the handful of change and shoving the wallet into his back pocket, but ... "Justin?" he called out, frowning. "Honey, where are my keys?"

From upstairs he heard Justin laugh. "I don't know," came the reply, and why didn't he believe that? "I'm still in bed, remember?"

"Yeah, right," Lance muttered. But his keys weren't on the table, and they weren't by the phone, or in the kitchen, or the living room -- he even got down on his hands and knees but they weren't under the table, either. "Fuck," he sighed, sitting back on his ankles. "Where the hell are they then?" Raising his voice, he called out, "Justin! What did you do with them?"

"It wasn't me!" Justin yelled down, and Lance sighed again. Yeah, right, he thought. God, I'm already late as it is, and now I can't find the damn keys, and I'm not up for this game of his, I'm just not going to play this, because I have to get to work, I NEED to get going or I shouldn't even bother to go in at all -- he heard Justin moving around upstairs, and then he heard footsteps on the stairs. Finally, he thought, waiting for Justin to come downstairs. He's figured out this isn't fun anymore and he's bringing me the keys, and maybe I won't be TOO late ... "Justin, please," he started, looking up --

Only to see Justin standing at the foot of the steps, naked and hard and smiling, damn he was grinning wickedly, a Cheshire grin that lit up his eyes as he leaned against the wall, his erection thick and red and throbbing for him, Lance could almost taste that hardness in him, his mouth watered for it, his hands twitched nervelessly and damn but how could Justin do that to him, just turn him on with that sexy look and those bedroom eyes and all thoughts of the office were gone, the meeting didn't exist, there was nothing but Justin and him and their bodies aching for each other ...

And in one hand Justin dangled Lance's keys. "You looking for these?" he asked, his voice low and husky, the smoldering look in his eyes daring Lance to answer him. But there were no words, his voice was gone, dried up from the lust and desire tightening his throat, and Lance just nodded numbly. Jiggling the keys slightly, Justin purred, "If you want them, come and get them."

"I'm coming," Lance replied, rising to his feet, "but not for those keys." He matched Justin's grin and lunged at him. Justin tossed the keys to the floor and ran up the stairs, giggling madly, Lance right behind him.

At the top of the stairs Lance tackled his legs, knocking them both to the ground. Justin turned beneath him and wrapped his arms around Lance's waist, hugging him close. Kissing him until they were both trembling and breathless, Lance whispered, "And you said it wasn't you."

"It wasn't," Justin said. Tugging at Lance's jacket, he added, "Now get out of these clothes and get back into bed, babycakes. I'll call the office for you. You're not going in."

"No," Lance agreed, "I'm not."

All I Ever Wanted
175. The Reasons Why
by NSyncGrrl

It had been a long day, and when Lance pulled into the driveway the only thing he wanted was a tall glass of cold iced tea and enough aspirin to knock out the headache that had started in his shoulders and worked its way up to his temples. The night before he and Justin stayed up late with Jonathan, who flew in for the week, and he knew he should've turned out the lights before four in the morning, particularly when he had to get up three hours later to get to the studio by eight, but they had so much fun laughing and watching movies and carrying on that he simply lost track of time. When the alarm buzzed at seven, Justin cuddled closer to him and mumbled something about how he should stay home, but Lance had a job and he had to at least show up some of the time, didn't he? It was his company. As it was he had the rest of the week off for Jonathan's visit, and the only thing getting him through the day was the thought of his bed and curling back between the sheets and taking a much needed nap before dinner. Which Justin said he'd make, Lance thought as he pulled into the garage. When he climbed out of the car, he heard laughter from the back yard and grinned despite his foul mood. He better remember that he said he'd cook tonight.

He walked around the side of the house and laughed when he saw Justin and Jonathan lying in the grass. They both wore nothing but swimming trunks and pointed at clouds overhead, giggling at what they thought they saw in the sky. In one corner of the yard the sprinkler was on, oscillating as it tossed water against the side of the shed. Apparently they had been playing with it and discarded the sprinkler once they were through, but they forgot to turn the hose off. Wonder how long that's been running, Lance thought. He'd have to remind Justin to pay attention to stuff like that.

Lance's pants grew damp as he walked through the wet grass, and he ducked as the sprinkler turned onto him, dousing his silk suit with a healthy dose of cold water before he could twist the faucet off. As the sprinkler died, Justin sat up and smiled brightly when he saw him. "Hey baby," he said, pushing up from the ground. His legs and hands were green with cut grass that he wiped ineffectually onto his shorts. Coming closer, he kissed Lance hungrily, his arms slipping around Lance's neck for a tight hug. "How was work?"

"Fine," Lance replied, taking Justin's arms in his hands as he eased out of the embrace. First water, now grass stains, he thought, brushing the clippings off of his suit. He should just throw the damn thing away now.

Justin frowned at him. "You okay?" he asked, concern lacing his voice.

Lance sighed. "Yeah," he said. Water seeped into his shoes from the damp ground and he pointed at the sprinkler. "Can you turn this thing off when you guys are finished with it? We're not watering the whole neighborhood."

"Sure," Justin said quickly. He took Lance's hand in his and led him over to where Jonathan sat in the grass. "We missed you."

"Yeah," Jonathan said, leaping to his feet. He hugged Lance's waist quickly before sticking his hands into the pockets of Lance's pants, looking for ... well, Lance couldn't imagine what the boy was looking for. "We missed you, Lance. What did you bring us?"

Lance laughed. "Bring you?" he asked. Winking at Justin, he added, "What do you guys deserve?"

"Lots of stuff," Jonathan said sagely. "Like candy and toys and stuff like that."

Lance laughed again. "I didn't bring you anything today. I'm sorry," he said, ruffling Jonathan's hair. Justin sat down cross-legged in the grass and tugged on Lance's hand until he sat down in his lap. "Justin, you're wet," Lance started, pulling away, but Justin wrapped his arms around Lance's waist and held him close. "Justin --"

"It's only water," Justin said, nuzzling his nose into Lance's neck. "I missed you," he whispered, kissing the tender spot below Lance's ear. His hands rubbed across Lance's stomach and thigh, and Lance draped one arm around Justin's shoulders, grinning at the small kisses his lover trailed behind his ear. "I thought you'd never get home."

"You guys stop it," Jonathan said suddenly. He stood over them, arms crossed, and frowned down at them. "You're doing it again."

"Go away," Justin growled. "This is my boy and I'm hungry for him."

"You need to be hungry for dinner," Jonathan said. "You have to make it --"

Lance frowned at Justin. "You haven't started it yet?" he asked.

Justin shrugged. "I will," he said, but when he tried to kiss Lance again, his lover pulled back. "Lance, I said I will ..." He trailed off and glared at Jonathan. "Go away, Jon. Just for a few minutes, please?"

With a lofty sigh, Jonathan said, "Fine." He stomped away, pouting, but then he noticed his bicycle propped against the side of the porch and he whooped as he raced to it. Jumping onto the seat, he pedaled past them towards the woods, laughing when he veered dangerously close to Justin, who swatted him away.

"God," Justin muttered, hugging Lance tight. "That boy --"

"You didn't start dinner yet?" Lance asked again. Was it too much to ask? He spent the last eight hours at work and what had Justin done all day? He couldn't begin to imagine. Goofed off with Jonathan, most likely. Ran through the sprinkler and chased each other around the back yard and must be nice, he thought bitterly. Must be damn lovely to do absolutely nothing. "Justin --"

"I'll start it in a few minutes," Justin said defensively. "Jesus, Lance, can't I just hold you for a second? I haven't seen you all day --"

"You could've started it before I got home," Lance pointed out. "Justin --"

"Hush," Justin admonished, and before Lance could say another word, he covered Lance's mouth with his own, effectively silencing him. "No fighting," he whispered against Lance's lips. "Did you have a poopy day?"

Lance giggled at that. "Yeah," he sighed. Resting his head on Justin's shoulder, he traced the slight growth of hair along his lover's chin and whispered, "I have a headache and I'm tired and I'm hungry --"

Justin grinned. "Then we have to fix you up."

Lance kissed the curve of Justin's jaw. "How do you plan to do that?" he breathed. Justin's wicked leer made him smile.

Suddenly Jonathan rode by them again, skidding to a stop in the wet grass. "Look!" he cried, holding his hand out as he bent down to show them the caterpillar crawling across his palm. It was large and dark and fuzzy, and Lance laughed at the way it sniffed along Jonathan's skin. "Isn't it cute? Can I keep it?"

"No," Justin said abruptly. He hugged Lance tighter and tried to back away. "Jon, put that shit down."

"Watch your mouth," Jonathan said automatically. When he saw the way Justin grimaced at the caterpillar, he shoved his hand closer to his brother's face. "You want to hold it? It tickles."

"No," Justin said. Lance fell out of his lap as he scurried backwards. "Jon, don't you dare put that thing on me." Jonathan laughed and lowered his hand to Justin's leg, but Justin slapped it away. "Jon, don't make me hurt you. I said --"

"It's just a caterpillar," Jonathan said, giggling. "You want to hold it, Lance?"

Lance shook his head. "I don't think so," he said, shuddering. A caterpillar was the last thing he needed right now. "Thanks anyway, Jon. Really."

Jonathan sighed. "You guys are no fun," he pouted. He turned away and Justin sat up again, reaching for Lance, when his brother whirled around and dumped the caterpillar into his lap unceremoniously. "There you go," he said, beaming proudly. "See, Justin? It's not so bad."

"Fuck!" Justin cried, scrambling to his feet. He shook his shorts roughly but the caterpillar was already gone, lost somewhere in the grass. "Jon, you asked for it. I'm gonna --"

"Justin, stop it," Lance said wearily as he stood. When it looked as if Justin would yank his shorts off just to make sure the caterpillar was gone, he grabbed his lover's hands and said, "It's not on you anymore. It's gone."

Justin lunged for Jonathan, who slipped easily out of reach. But Justin tackled his brother, dragging him to the ground as he tried to smother his face in the thick grass. "I told you I didn't want to fucking hold it," he

muttered savagely.

Beneath him Jonathan twisted until he grabbed Justin's ear and tugged on it hard enough to make Justin roar in anger. "I was just teasing," Jonathan replied, kicking out at his brother. Lance saw one small bare foot strike the inside of Justin's thigh, and when Jonathan kicked again, it was higher, closer to Justin's crotch. God, give me the strength, he prayed.

Deftly he caught Jonathan's foot when it swung out again. "You two stop it," he said, shoving Justin off of his brother. "Justin, grow up --"

"Lance," Justin started, grabbing a fist full of Jonathan's hair. His brother yelped and twisted out of his grip. "I told him --"

"Justin, stop it. Now." I'm not in the mood for this, Lance thought, squeezing Justin's wrist until he let go of Jonathan. "How old are you? Get up, both of you. This is fucking ridiculous."

The two brothers stopped struggling and stared wide-eyed at him. "You said --" Jonathan whispered, but Lance dropped his foot to the ground.

"I know what I said," Lance replied, stepping over the both of them as he headed for the house. Inside the kitchen was a mess -- dishes piled in the sink, something that looked like eggs congealing on one of the stove's burners, paper spilling out of the trashcan and dinner wasn't even started yet. I'm not cleaning this up, Lance thought. He wasn't.

Outside Justin rolled onto his back and sighed. "Fuck," he muttered. Lance never lost his cool around Jonathan, never. He said he had a bad day and I told him I'd cook and I forgot, I just forgot, and now he's mad at me and just ... fuck. That was the only thing he could think of to describe everything right now. Fuck.

Beside him Jonathan said quietly, "He's pissed."

"I know," Justin admitted. He didn't need an eight year old to tell him that.

"Go tell him you're sorry," Jonathan suggested.

Justin laughed bitterly. "For what?" he asked. It wasn't his fault Lance had had a bad day.

"For being an ass," Jonathan replied. When Justin shot him a withering glare, he shrugged. "You're his boyfriend. If he's still mad at you tonight, you ain't sleeping in my room. It's the couch for you, kiddo."

Anger flared through him briefly but Jonathan was right, wasn't he? And even though he wasn't at fault, not really, the thought of sleeping alone made him swallow any pride he might have. Rising to his feet, he kicked at Jonathan playfully. "Give me a few minutes," he said. "I'll go talk to him, but I don't want you coming in just yet."

"Do it in your room, if you guys do it at all," Jonathan said, grimacing.

"Jon!" Justin cried. This time his brother rolled away, giggling, and

Justin smiled as he hurried into the house. God, he thought, stepping into the kitchen, the audacity of that boy. "Lance?" he called out cautiously.

Lance leaned on the sink, his jaw clenched in anger. "There's no tea," he said quietly.

"I forgot to make some," Justin admitted. He trailed a finger down his lover's bunched arm and frowned. "Baby --"

"This place is a mess," Lance said, his voice dangerously low. "Look around you, Justin. What the fuck did you do all day? Do you expect me to come home and clean up your shit? Make dinner and make the tea and do the dishes and take out the trash --"

Justin frowned. "No," he said. "Lance, no, I don't expect that at all. I'll do it --"

"When?" Lance wanted to know. Justin rubbed his arm but he pulled away. "When are you going to clean this place up, Justin? Or make something to eat? Or --"

"Okay, stop right there," Justin warned. He told himself that Lance had a rough day, he wasn't himself, he had a headache and that was why he was mad, he was just upset and tired and this wasn't him at all -- Justin had to keep that in mind. "I know you had a shitty day, Lance, but don't take it out on me."

Lance sighed. "What did you do all day, Justin?" he wanted to know. "If you didn't do any of the things I asked, what exactly did you do? Can you tell me that?"

"I made you something," Justin whispered. Lance looked up at him sharply, his face a confusion of emotions. "You didn't come in the front door?" When Lance shook his head, Justin said, "If you had, you would've seen it."

"What is it?" Lance asked. This time when Justin ran a hand down his arm, Lance didn't move away.

"Go see," Justin said, trying to suppress a grin. Lance started through the kitchen, but Justin caught his arm and instructed, "You have to come in the front door." Lance sighed, but Justin pouted and asked, "Please? Just go around the house and come in the front, you'll see it."

"Fine," Lance sighed. He hoped this was worth it. You know it will be, his mind whispered, and he struggled to hold onto his sour mood. He couldn't imagine what Justin had made for him but the thought that his lover spent the day working on something for him, for him, made his heart leap and his headache fade. Outside Jonathan watched him as he hurried around the side of the house, and when he climbed onto the front porch, he noticed the piece of paper taped to the front door. It was at eye level, and in Justin's block script was written, The Reasons Why I Love YOU. He grinned as he pulled the paper off of the door. There's more than one? he thought, unfolding the note.

Inside was written 1. Your smile. Lance laughed at that. Which is hiding right now, he thought, though the note did bring a smile to his

face, didn't it? Unlocking the door, he stepped into the foyer. "Justin?" he called. There was no answer.

But now he noticed another piece of paper, just a small scrap folded in half, a large number 2 written on it. It lay at his feet in the hallway, and when he bent down to pick it up, he saw another one by the steps. And another, and another ... a trail of paper led the way upstairs, each piece labeled with a number. Lance picked up the second one and opened it. Your hands, it read. Inside the third one was written Your laugh. In the fourth, Your eyes.

Lance couldn't pick the papers up fast enough. The way you wink at me, one read, and halfway up the stairs, The way you smell when you first get out of the shower. When you hold me close. When you call me your baby boy. When you kiss me awake. Each piece of paper had something different written on it, and Lance hurried up the stairs, reading each one as quickly as he could before he bent to pick up the next. At the top of the steps his hands were full of paper, and the trail continued down the hall and through the open door of his room. Our room, he reminded himself, and now his headache was gone completely, he was grinning like a fool, and he didn't know where Justin was but he planned on kissing him silly once he saw him again. "Justin?" he called out, but there was still no reply.

He followed the trail into their room. 50. The way you look when you're asleep in my arms -- Jesus, Lance thought, scooping up the last piece of paper. He came up with fifty reasons why he loves me? Fifty? No wonder he didn't have time for anything else all day. My God --

And then he looked up and saw the bed, covered in the tiny pieces of paper, each one numbered, each one containing another reason why Justin loved him, and Lance dropped the papers in his hands to scoop up a handful of the ones on the bed. How would he ever read them all? He saw some numbered into the hundreds ... "Justin," he breathed. God, he loved that boy. His boy.

Behind him the door creaked and he turned to find Justin waiting behind the door. He looked at Lance warily, as if unsure how he would react. "Justin," he sighed. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to jump on you, I'm so sorry ..."

"Are we cool now?" Justin asked, pushing the door closed.

Lance laughed. "We're cool. Come here."

Justin crossed the room in two steps and Lance wrapped his arms around Justin's waist, ignoring the damp shorts and the grass stains and the suntan lotion smeared along Justin's chest -- he wanted his boy, and he wanted him now, and fuck the suit. He could always buy another one. "I love you," he whispered, kissing Justin hungrily.

"I love you, too," Justin replied as he eased Lance down to the bed. The papers crinkled beneath them.

"I know you do," Lance replied. "I have your reasons, don't I? All three hundred of them."

"Three hundred and sixty-five," Justin corrected. "One for each day of the year."

Lance laughed as Justin kissed his neck. "You're joking."

"I'm not," Justin breathed against his throat. "Ask Jon. He watched me write every single one." As his hands began to unbutton Lance's shirt, he said, "We have a few minutes now. He said we could do it if we stay in here."

Lance laughed again. "He said that?" he asked, incredulous.

Justin nodded. "I tell you, he's quick. Are you still in a pooppy mood?"

"Not anymore." He closed his eyes as Justin's tongue trailed down his chest.

Licking one nipple, Justin blew on the tender bud until it stood hard beneath his breath. "Then let me show you how much I love you," he whispered. Lance thought that was a wonderful idea.

All I Ever Wanted
176. Despite the Distance
by NSyncGrrl

God, Lance thought, unlocking the door to his hotel room. He clicked on the light and frowned at the empty bed, the blank TV screen, the closed curtains that hid the city skyline from view. After the day he'd had on the set, he wanted nothing more than to come back to his room and collapse ... but I wish Justin was here. He kicked off his shoes as he closed the door behind him. Sure, he would talk to Justin on the phone but that wasn't the same, was it? He'd still fall asleep aching for his lover's touch, and right now he was so disgusted with the movie he and Joey were working on that he needed that touch -- talking to Justin wouldn't be enough. He wanted to see him and feel him and taste him. He wanted to lose himself in his boy, and he couldn't because Justin was in Orlando still, miles away, and Lance still had four more weeks of shooting before the film went to print. Four weeks that stretched away into forever, and how could he ever wait that long?

With a sigh, Lance shrugged out of his shirt and shucked off his jeans. Dressed in only his boxers and socks, he clicked on his laptop and frowned at his reflection in the computer monitor. He'd check his e-mail and then call Justin, just to say goodnight, because he was too tired for much else tonight. Then he'd brush his teeth and maybe watch infomercials until he fell asleep, and if he was lucky he'd dream of Justin's strong hands and soft lips. And then hate myself in the morning, he mused, logging onto the Internet, when I wake up alone again.

Two messages waited in his inbox. The first was from his mother, just a quick hi honey, I love you thing that brought a smile to his face. The second was sent from his sister's e-mail account, but when he opened the message and read the first few lines, he knew it wasn't from her. "Hey there, sexy boy. I miss you something horrible, baby. Can't you tell them you have to go home for a few days? Just to come back and see me? Please??"

Lance smiled at Justin's message. "I wish," he said softly as he read the rest of the message. "Stacy bought a digital camera and said I could use it to send you a movie. I love your sister, Lance. Too bad for her I'm already taken. *wink*" Lance laughed at that -- he could see that wink in his mind, Justin's smile brightening his entire face and God, I miss you, he thought, scrolling through the rest of the message. "I wanted to do a strip show for you but she said I couldn't. Her camera, her rules. She's so mean to me. *pouts*" "Good thing," Lance murmured, but he wanted to see that pretty pout so badly, to kiss it away and make Justin smile again. He could only imagine what would happen if Justin did send him a video of himself, easing out of his clothes slowly, watching the camera as he took off his shirt, and then his pants, and then his boxers ... Lance thought maybe the movie would never get finished, if he ever got that video. He'd drop everything and fly back to Orlando on the next southbound plane.

"So here's all she'd let me record," the message continued. "I hope

you get it before you call. I love you. Love, Me." I do love you, Lance thought as he clicked on the attached file. He turned the sound up on his laptop and grinned as the movie opened in the middle of his screen. When it began to play, he turned the volume up again, until the hiss of air filled the room, but the video stayed black.

Then Justin's voice rang out from the computer. "Is this thing on?" he asked, and Lance laughed at the consternation he heard in his lover's voice. "Stacy, I can't see anything. Are you sure this works?"

"Take the lens cap off, honey," Lance whispered. God, he loved that boy.

Suddenly the blackness twisted away, and there was his sister, staring at him from the middle of his computer screen. "You had the cap on, silly," she said, and Lance laughed as she rolled her eyes. Tapping the side of her head with one hand, Stacy added, "Lance, your boyfriend's not all there."

"Sometimes he's not," Lance conceded. He glanced around guiltily but he was alone -- this was his room, of course he was alone. But he still felt foolish talking back to the computer. It's just so real, he thought. He could hear the traffic from the street outside Stacy's house, the faint mewling of her cats, the rustle of Justin's jeans as he walked around the camera, and Lance wanted nothing more than to be there right now, in his sister's house with his boyfriend, holding him close.

Then Stacy moved out of the way and Justin's legs came into view. Lance caught his breath at the sudden rush of emotion that flooded his system, love and desire and damn, he thought as Justin sat down and smiled into the camera. He's so beautiful. He's mine. All mine and I want him now. He's gorgeous. Justin's hair was still buzzed short but it made him look thinner, older, sexier somehow. Even through the jumpy video Lance could clearly see his lover's crooked smile and sparkling eyes, and for a moment he just stared into that gaze as if he'd never look away. He felt like one of their fans, staring at a picture of Justin Timberlake before falling to sleep but he couldn't help it. He loved him.

"Hey honey," Justin breathed, the words a soft rush, and then he glanced up behind the camera and frowned. There was that pout Lance loved so much, that furrow in his brow that made him want to smooth the skin out beneath his hands until Justin was happy again. "Stace?" he asked, and Lance laughed at the frustration that flickered across his lover's face. "Some privacy here? Please?"

Off camera Stacy sighed dramatically. "Oh please, Justin," she said, and Lance could imagine her rolling her eyes again. "I've heard it all, trust me. I love you, Lance. You rock my world, Lance. You're all I ever wanted, Lance. Hello? I've hung out with you guys before."

Lance laughed at Justin's expression. Looking into the camera, directly at him, Justin sighed. "See what I have to put up with when you aren't here?"

"Make it quick," Stacy said, her voice drifting through the computer as she moved away from the camera. "You only have like two minutes left. Talk fast."

Pouting, Justin stared at the camera for a moment and then admitted, "I don't know what to say. I love you, baby. I miss you. I want you to come home now, okay? Please? Just tell them you miss me too and that's got to be good enough for them. Just one day even. Just a weekend?"

"You'd never let him go back," Stacy said.

Glaring up at her, Justin warned, "You're messing up my video."

"It's my camera," Stacy reminded him.

"Alright, you two," Lance said softly, as if they would hear him. Watching them argue made him jealous because he wanted to be there, he wanted to hear this bickering and he wanted to laugh with them. He wanted to know what they did after Justin sent the video -- had they eaten lunch? Maybe watched a movie? Did Justin go back to the house and take a nap? I'm missing this, Lance thought. I'm missing him. This is time we should be together, not a million miles apart.

"Fine," Justin sighed. "Lance? I love you. Call me when you get this. I want to hear you talk dirty to me --"

"Justin!" Stacy exclaimed. "I didn't need to hear that."

Justin grinned. "Call me. Love you." He blew a kiss at the camera and then the screen went blank.

"Love you too," Lance whispered.

Call me ... he clicked off the computer and dialed the number to his house in Mississippi. The phone didn't even finish its first ring before Justin picked it up. "Lance?" he asked, breathless.

"How did you know it was me?" Lance asked. He laid down on his bed and stretched out across its length. He wished it wasn't so empty.

"If it wasn't, I'd be mad," Justin replied. Lance could hear the smile in his voice. "Did you get my e-mail?"

"I did," Lance said, nodding even though Justin couldn't see the gesture. "I love you, too. I'm going to play that thing every morning before I have to go to the set."

Justin sighed. "I miss you," he said. Before Lance could reply, he added, "I saw your hair. I like it dark. It's sexy."

Lance ran a hand through his dyed hair. "It's just temporary," he explained. "For the movie. I try to get the girl to notice me so I dye it --"

"I don't like this movie," Justin announced.

Lance laughed. "Why not?" he asked. "You haven't even seen it yet."

"Because I just don't," Justin replied. "You meet this girl on a train and fall in love with her? What kind of movie is that? I don't like it."

"Well," Lance drawled, amused, "what kind of movie would you want me to make?"

Justin laughed. "How about one where you play this businessman who meets a cute boy at the coffee shop you like to go to, and you fall in love with him?"

"And I assume you'd play the cute boy," Lance said. He liked that idea. "You'd be perfect for the role."

"If I didn't, I'd have to hurt someone," Justin growled. With a sigh, he said, "Or you can be this volunteer at a youth shelter, and I'll play this street smart kid who needs someone to love him, and you don't think you should get involved with me but you can't help it. I manage to convince you that I'm worth it."

"You are worth it," Lance told him. He picked at the comforter and laughed. "Where do you get these ideas from?"

"Or," Justin continued as if he hadn't spoken, "you can play this guy whose car needs fixing, and I'll be the mechanic to fix it. Or we can be soldiers, maybe in Vietnam or at Pearl Harbor. A war movie would be cool. Or you can be a guy who works at this computer place, like in tech support? And I'll be in the office and need your help. Or I can be a plumber. I'll come to fix your sink, or maybe --"

Lance laughed. "Justin!" he cried, rolling over onto his back to stare at the ceiling. "Why don't you work one of these ideas into your book, hmm? I don't like that story very much. An all-star basketball player in love with ... what's her name? Shaniqua?"

With a sigh, Justin asked, "Are you picking on me?"

"I'm trying to," Lance replied. "Write a book about an all-star jock who falls in love with his best friend, who happens to be me. How's that sound?"

Justin moaned softly. "Tell me what happens in that story."

Lance closed his eyes and listened to Justin's soft breath. He knew his lover was touching himself now, he could hear it in the short moans when Justin spoke. The thought of Justin rubbing himself hard as they talked made Lance's hand trail down his stomach until he cupped his own budding erection through his boxers. Squeezing gently, he gasped Justin's name. "There's this scene," he said, his deep voice low and quiet, "one day after school, when we go back to your house and your parents are gone. I tell you I love you because I do, I've always loved you, and I start kissing you slowly."

"Where are we?" Justin asked, his own voice hushed.

"In the living room," Lance replied. He could see the setting in his mind -- the TV turned to the after-school cartoons, snacks and glasses of tea on the coffee table, Justin dressed in a school basketball uniform and smiling at him. He'd lean down and kiss those pink lips, his hand finding the bulge at Justin's crotch, his fingers working the thick shaft harder, like they were now, on his own cock. "I'd undress you slowly and cover you with kisses, until you begged me to make love to you."

"That wouldn't take long," Justin whispered. "I want you to do that

now, baby, and you aren't even here."

"I wish I was," Lance said, thrusting into his hand.

Justin sighed. "Stop making that movie and come back here, dammit!" he cried in mock anger, and then he laughed. "I'm so tired of being alone, Lance. I want you."

"Why don't you come here?" Lance asked coyly. "If you want me so bad --"

"Can I?" Justin asked. A sudden urgency filled his voice. "Can I, Lance? I mean, if I won't be in the way ..."

Lance's hand froze as he considered it. Why couldn't he come up to visit? Because he was in the studio with JC, Lance reminded himself, working on the new album, but Chris is coming to visit Joey for the weekend so why can't Justin come up to see me? "Are you guys finished with the album?"

"Mostly," Justin replied, which Lance knew meant no but now that the idea was out in the open, there was no way Justin wouldn't visit. He wouldn't let anything stand in his way. "I'll be a good boy, Lance, really I will. I won't get mad when you have to do the kissing scenes, I promise. And I'll stay off the set if you want. I can hide away at the hotel and wait for you to come in at the end of the day. Aren't you tired of sleeping by yourself?"

"God yes," Lance said, and Justin laughed at that. "When do you think you could be here?"

"I'm on my way," Justin said. "How long does it take to fly up there? A few hours?"

"Justin," Lance warned, "you can't just hop on a plane." But he knew Justin all too well, and he knew he'd be in his lover's arms before morning. How long would it take for him to get there? Lance couldn't wait to find out.

"Why not?" Justin wanted to know. "Let me call the airport and I'll call you right back. Will you meet me when I get in?"

Lance grinned. "I'm already there," he replied.

All I Ever Wanted
177. Along Came a Spider
by NSyncGrrl

Justin stood beneath the hot shower and let the cascading water wash away the soap filming over his body. We should go clubbing tonight, he thought, wiping along his buzzed hair to rinse the shampoo out. A nice dinner, or a movie, or something. I'm sick of staying in. Lance said he was welcome to visit the set, but he didn't want to do that. I want to get my boy alone and show him a good time, he mused. Out in the main room he heard the door open, and he knew Lance was finished shooting for the day. He's so damn tired every evening that all he does is collapse in the bed and let me kiss him and I want to take him out, is that too much to ask? "Lance?" he called.

"I'm home," came the reply, muffled through the bathroom door.

Justin wiped water from his eyes. "Do you want to go out?" he asked.

He heard Lance sigh over the sound of the shower. "Justin," he started, and then he pushed open the bathroom door. A cool draft swirled around Justin's wet body, even through the closed shower curtain. "Not tonight, baby," Lance replied, and Justin felt an ignoble pout tug at his lips. "I'm exhausted."

"You're always exhausted," Justin told him.

The door eased shut. "Don't start." Don't start what? Justin wondered. Shit, we don't get anything started anymore. I want this damn movie over with already so I can have you back. He reached for the wash cloth, already thinking of ways he could plead and beg and wheedle until he got his way, but then Lance would be in a bad mood and he wouldn't get any loving tonight --

"Holy fuck!" he cried, pulling his hand away from the wash cloth. A black spider sat on the soap, and there was no fucking way in hell he was touching the wash cloth now, not with that thing practically crawling all over it ... he leaned closer to get a better look and the spider moved, and that was it, shower was over, check please, he thought, scrambling out of the tub. In his haste he left the water running, but he wasn't going back to turn it off, someone else could do it. "Lance!"

Another sigh from the room, and then Lance stood on the other side of the door, weariness in his voice. "What is it, Justin?"

"Come in here a minute, please," Justin said, managing a small, little boy voice that he knew Lance wouldn't ignore. He stood against the sink, the cold porcelain biting into his lower back with a sharpness like ice, and he crossed his arms in front of his chest to ward off the chill from the partially open door. He was dripping wet and shivering, and a few more minutes he'd start to sneeze, but ... "Please?"

Lance pushed the door open and frowned as he entered the small bathroom. "What --" He took one look at Justin, naked and damp, water

beading along his body and clinging to his eyelashes and the thick patch of hair at his groin, and his tired eyes lit up as he grinned. "You're beautiful, you know that?" he asked, stepping closer to kiss Justin tenderly.

Justin wiped the water from his eyes and pouted. "Lance," he sighed, and when Lance kissed him again he let his hands pull his lover closer. He was so warm, so dry, and Justin clutched at his t-shirt, dampening it as they kissed. "There's a spider in the shower," he whispered. When Lance laughed, he pouted. "Kill it for me, please? Just kill it and then take me out."

"I'm tired, Justin," Lance said, pulling away. "A spider?" Without a word, Justin nodded. "You left the shower on."

"I'm not sticking my hand back in there," Justin said, glaring at the shower curtain. The spider was on the other side, waiting for him, he just knew it. "I ain't going back in that shower til the spider's dead."

"You're such a baby," Lance said, but he winked at Justin and trailed a hand down his lover's arm, and when Justin looked at him, his hand moved lower, tangling in the kinked hair at Justin's crotch. "My little baby boy," he murmured, kissing Justin again as his hand slipped around Justin's hip to squeeze his ass. "What am I going to do with you?"

"Kill the spider," Justin suggested. "Then we'll think of something, I'm sure."

With a dramatic sigh, Lance pulled the shower curtain aside, stepping back as water splashed out at him. He saw the spider, crawling up the tiled wall, and sighed again. From the way Justin was carrying on, he had thought it was a tarantula or something like that big ass thing they ran into when they stayed at the cabin over the summer. "It's only a little thing," he said, glancing over his shoulder at Justin. "You're scared of that?"

"Just kill it," Justin replied. Lance smiled at his lover, holding himself tightly and unashamed of his nude body. Which is gorgeous, Lance thought, letting his gaze linger on the hard planes of Justin's stomach and thighs. Suddenly I'm not so tired anymore. He had had a hard day on the set, hot and long and exhausting, and when he came back to the hotel he wanted nothing more than to lie on his bed and sleep the rest of the night away, but Justin's sultry pout and wounded eyes gave his body other ideas. "Lance --"

"I'm going to kill it, hold on," Lance told him. He leaned into the tub and cut off the water, then considered trying to wash the thing down the drain but he didn't think that would suffice with Justin. Kill it, he kept saying, and because Lance loved him, he would. Jesus, he thought, slipping off one of his shoes. It's nothing poisonous. Big bad Justin scared of an itty bitsy spider. He found the thought quite cute, actually, and he laughed as he smushed the arachnid with the heel of his shoe.

"You're laughing at me," Justin pouted.

Lance kicked off his other shoe. "I am," he agreed. "You're cute."

When he leaned over to kiss Justin, though, his lover turned his face away, twisting his mouth into a horrible grimace. "It's on your shoe," he said.

Sighing, Lance opened the bathroom door and tossed his shoes out into the hotel room. "Better?" he asked, easing his arms around Justin's waist. Justin pouted harder, if that were possible, but he sighed softly and Lance knew he was just holding out. "Come on, baby," he whispered, nuzzling Justin's neck as he pressed his body against Justin's own. His lover was still wet from the shower, and Lance's t-shirt grew damp beneath his bare chest. "You're not being pissy, are you?" Lance breathed, cupping Justin's ass in both hands and pulling him closer. He felt Justin's body respond against his, a hardening at his crotch that poked sweetly into Lance's own budding erection, and this time when his lips sought Justin's, his lover didn't turn away. "Did that spider scare you?"

"No," Justin whispered, but he unfolded his arms and trailed his hands down Lance's chest to pick at the hem of his shirt. Nimbly his fingers found their way beneath the damp material, and he eased the shirt up as Lance leaned into him, the skin of their stomachs pressing together. Kissing along the curve of Lance's throat, Justin sighed. "I wasn't scared --"

"You were," Lance said, nipping Justin's earlobe, and his lover giggled in his arms. "But that's what I'm here for, isn't it? To kill the spiders and keep you safe."

"Yes," Justin agreed. Tugging at Lance's shirt, he pouted. "And to love me."

"Oh yes," Lance replied, nodding sagely. "Can't forget that, can we?"

Justin shook his head. "No. Love me now."

Laughing, Lance eased his fingers between Justin's buttocks and slid his hands lower until they brushed the sensitive skin between his lover's legs. "You're quite demanding today, aren't you?" he asked softly, sinking to his knees. He looked up at Justin as his hands spread his lover's legs apart, and Justin leaned back onto the sink, his eyes slipping closed. "Kill the spider. Love me. Do this, do that."

"Don't stop," Justin moaned as Lance's fingers caressed the tender skin behind his balls. His erection rose from the mound of hair at his crotch, and when Lance's lips closed over the weeping tip, Justin thrust into him, arching away from the sink. His hands gripped the porcelain fiercely. "Oh God, Lance," he gasped. Lance held his legs apart as he licked down the thick length of his cock, and then he took his balls into his mouth, humming low in the back of his throat. "Don't stop, please don't stop, don't don't don't." The word became a litany when Lance's tongue danced lower, flicking like a candle flame beneath his balls and ... "Jesus Christ," Justin cried with a sharp intake of breath when Lance licked skin he'd never known felt so damn good. Releasing his death grip on the sink, he grabbed handfuls of Lance's shirt, fisting the fabric at his shoulders and leaning heavily onto him. "Lance, my God don't stop that, please."

Lance unzipped his own pants and licked Justin's length again. Kissing

his way up Justin's stomach and chest, he stood and stroked his own erection, sliding it out of his pants while working it hard with his hand. "I want some, too," he whispered, and Justin trembled as one of Lance's fingers eased inside of him. "Can I?"

"Please," Justin sighed, letting Lance turn him around in his arms. Once again gripping the sides of the sink, Justin leaned over and spread his legs, sticking his butt out invitingly. With gentle hands Lance guided his erection into his lover, their moans mingling together in the cramped bathroom. When he filled Justin completely, Lance held his hips and thrust into him, pressing him against the sink. They found a quick, steady rhythm, and Justin watched himself in the vanity mirror, his eyes hooded, his cheeks flushed, his lips pink and his mouth open as he gasped with each thrust. Behind him Lance had his eyes closed and he pressed his cheek against Justin's shoulder, moaning into his lover's neck. When his arms wrapped around Justin's waist, his hands rubbed his stomach and lower, until he held Justin's erection between his palms. He stroked in time with their rhythm, and when he came, Justin's cock spasmed in his hand, squirting the sink with his juices.

For a moment Lance clung to him as his breath evened out, and Justin pressed back into his tight embrace, satiated. Tiny kisses fluttered across his shoulders and neck, and then Lance eased out of him, turning him around and kissing his cheeks, his chin, his lips. "I love you," he breathed softly.

"I know," Justin replied, giggling when Lance's teeth closed over his lower lip playfully. "Don't bite."

"You're being demanding again," Lance told him. He pulled a towel off the rack behind the door and wrapped Justin up in it. "But that's okay, because I love you."

"I love you, too." Justin wiped at his face with the towel, his skin damp from sweat and water. He looked like a little boy, hugging the towel around himself tightly, and Lance kissed the tip of his nose before pulling away.

Tucking himself back into his jeans, he said, "Get dressed, baby boy. I'm taking you out. Anywhere you want to go."

"Yay!" Justin cried, and Lance laughed. "I've been waiting all day for you to come home." When Lance started to walk away, Justin pulled him back for another kiss. "If you're going to love me like that every time you kill a spider, I'm going to go out of my way to find those things."

"Somehow I seriously doubt that," Lance whispered against Justin's lips as they kissed again.

All I Ever Wanted
178. Seven Minutes in Heaven
by NSyncGrrl

JC danced down the hall, still singing the lines from "Pop" under his breath. "If you ever wonder why," he breathed, and stopped in the doorway to his dressing room to tear out a few chords on an air guitar. "This music gets you high, blah blah blah."

Behind him Joey gave him a light shove. "Get changed, spazz," he said playfully as he passed, on his way to his own dressing room. "The performance is over."

JC laughed. "I could sing that song all night," he declared, dancing around in a tight circle in front of his room. Backstage at the VMAs -- at the Met! He still couldn't get over that one. The Met. Dayum. Raising his voice, he sang, "If you ever wonder why --"

He stumbled as he tried to twirl and didn't quite make it in the narrow doorway, but he felt strong hands on his arms, catching him. "Easy, boy," Chris said with a grin. "It's time for your medicine, isn't it? Justin? You got JC's pills?"

"Hey," JC said, hurt. He shrugged Chris's hands away. "I'm not --"

Justin laughed from the doorway of his own dressing room. "You need some Prozac, JC," he called as he entered the room, tugging Lance in after him. "Calm your ass down some." Lowering his voice, he pleaded, "Come on, Lance. We only have seven minutes before we have to get back to our seats."

Chris crossed the hall and got behind Lance, pushed him into the room. "Seven minutes, Lance," he said. "Let's see how fast you boys can work it. Uh uh uh, Justin please, fuck me now, Justin --"

Justin slapped Chris's hands away as he wrapped a protective arm around Lance's shoulders. "Get out," he growled.

"You heard him," Joey said, grabbing the back of Chris's jacket. He pulled him towards his own dressing room. "Leave them alone, Chris. Let's see how much you can do in seven minutes, old man."

"Hey!" Chris cried, indignant. "I ain't old."

With a wink at JC, Joey said, "Older men make better lovers. They know all the tricks."

"I'm not old," Chris told him. He crossed his arms and stopped in the middle of the hall. Grabbing him around the waist, Joey lifted Chris up and dragged him towards the dressing room. "Joe!" Chris tried to hold onto the door jamb but Joey was stronger than he was and pried his fingers loose. "This isn't funny! Put me down."

JC laughed as the door shut on his friends. "Hey, guys," he started,

turning to say something to Justin, but that door was closed, too -- suddenly he was the only one in the hall. Alone again, he thought, remembering the microphone still hooked onto him. As he pulled it off, he began humming "Pop" once more, just under his breath. It was a catchy tune, even if he couldn't seem to get the words out in the right order just now. He was still high from the performance -- let the others rag on him all they wanted, he loved getting onstage and that bit with Michael Jackson was just the shit, how cool was that? I mean, really, JC mused, closing the door to his dressing room. He tossed the microphone onto the short sofa that lined one wall and tried to mimic the dance Michael had done onstage. Who gets to perform with someone like that? I mean, DAMN. He remembered when he was a kid, dancing to "Billy Jean" and "Thriller" and Jesus, he thought, pointing his arm in Michael's signature move as he heard the crowd go wild in his head. If someone had told me when this gig started that I'd be on the same stage with him? I would've called them crazy. You can't get any higher than this, can you?

He didn't know, but he sure was willing to give it a try and see just how far they could get. Already they had three successful albums under their belt, sold out tours, a European leg coming up -- what more could someone ask for? What more could he possibly want?

When he started to pull his shirt off, someone knocked on his door. "Seven minutes, I know," he called out, sure it was one of the guys. Weren't they all getting it on already? He knew Justin probably had Lance on the floor by now, naked, the two of them rutting like animals in the short time they had out of the public eye. And he didn't even want to think about Joey and Chris and whatever they did together, with their day-glo condoms and scented oils and all kinds of crap he found in the bathroom back at the house. He didn't even want to know what half that shit was for.

Another knock. JC threw his shirt aside and, flinging the door open, cried, "I said --"

AJ McLean stood in the hall, a wolfish grin on his face. "Alex," JC sighed, relieved to see his lover standing in front of him. "Damn, I thought you were Chris."

"Do you want me to be?" AJ asked, his voice soft. He lowered his glasses and let his gaze trail down JC's naked chest. "Hmm. Right now I'll be anyone you want. Just pick a name."

JC laughed at that. Holding the door open, he said, "Get in here." As AJ entered the room, JC glanced out in the hall, saw Nick Carter standing a few feet away. "Your friend waiting for you?" he asked.

"I told him I'd be fine," AJ said, leaning out into the hall. "Hey, Nick!" Nick turned, frowning at them. He saw JC behind AJ and his frown deepened. "Go on, man. I'll be right there."

For a minute Nick hesitated. "If you're sure --"

"Sure, I'm sure," AJ told him. He reached a hand out behind him, his fingers tickling at JC's bare stomach, and then JC caught the hand in his own, squeezed it briefly. "Just give me a few minutes here, will you?"

Nick glared at JC. "He hates me," JC muttered through his smile.

"He doesn't know you," AJ replied, keeping his voice low. "He hates anything he thinks threatens the band. Come on, Josh." He pushed into the room, pulling JC in with him. "Close the door. He'll get the message."

JC shut the door and held onto AJ's hand. When he started for the sofa, JC pulled him back. "Come here, you," he murmured, easing his arms around AJ's waist as he kissed him tenderly. He tasted bittersweet, like smoke and butterscotch, an intoxicating mix that stirred JC's groin. How long had it been since he held this man in his arms? Too long, too damn long because they were both on the road now, they both had their own shows in separate cities, they never found time to hook up anymore ... "Why don't you quit your group?" JC whispered, opening AJ's denim shirt. It was an old joke of theirs, each asking the other to leave their group and tour with them. He slid off AJ's shirt, exposing the white tank top beneath it, and smoothed his hands across his lover's chest. Already AJ's nipples stood out in his palms, straining the fabric of his tank top. "Join our crew. What do you say? I'm so damn horny after we perform. You just wouldn't know ..."

With a sexy smile, AJ slipped his hand into the front of JC's pants, stroking at the beginnings of an erection. "I see that," he said as JC moaned. His eyes slipped closed and he thrust into his lover's hand, gasping as AJ nipped at his chin. "If I knew you were this bad after every show, I'd have taken you up on that offer long ago."

"Damn," JC sighed, clutching at AJ's waist. "I've only got seven minutes --"

AJ laughed. "Then we better get busy, boyfriend." His hand slid free from JC's pants. "Seven minutes? That's it?"

"Hush up already," JC told him, fumbling with the buttons on AJ's jeans as he kissed him hungrily. He pushed his lover back in his eagerness and AJ bumped against the arm of the sofa, sat down, lowered himself out onto its length as JC tugged his jeans off. "Think we can do it in seven minutes?"

"If you stop talking about it," AJ told him, pulling off his briefs to expose his own hard cock, "and just do it already. Come here, babe."

JC unzipped his own pants, pushed his briefs down over his dick, his hand already working at his erection, stroking it, making it harder, seven minutes wasn't much but they could do it, if Justin could do it then hell, he could do it, too. He clambered over the arm of the sofa, brushing the microphone onto the floor as he knelt over AJ, and then he pushed his lover into the cushions, kissing his cheeks, his neck, his ears. One of AJ's hands found JC's dick, began to rub down the length, his other hand caressing JC's smooth stomach. "How many more minutes?" he breathed as JC sucked at the hollow of his throat.

"Any second," JC sighed. He held AJ's chin with one hand, ran his thumb across AJ's thin lips. His lover's tongue snaked out, swirled around his thumb, took it into his mouth and began to suck on it as JC thrust into his hand. He could feel AJ's hard dick beneath his, and every so often his brushed against it and sent shivers of delight scattering through him.

"Alex --"

Letting JC's thumb slip from his mouth, AJ grinned and kissed his lover, pulled him close, squeezed his dick playfully. "What are you waiting for?" he asked. "An invitation?"

With a laugh, JC eased his hand between them, trailed down AJ's flat stomach, over his narrow hips, across his thick erection and lower, below his soft balls, lower, lower. He slid his wet thumb into his lover, pushed inside, kissed away the slight discomfort that flittered across AJ's face. How long had it been since they'd made love? Forever, it seemed. Months, at least, since before PopOdessey and God, that was just too long. He'd almost forgotten the feel of his lover's arms, the piercing gaze, the spicy scent and thrilling taste of the man beneath him. "It's okay," he murmured as AJ guided him in. JC pushed, grimacing at the brief flare of sweet pain, the unfamiliar clench of tight flesh around his cock, and then he was inside and AJ moaned his name. "It's okay," JC sighed as he found a steady rhythm. "I love you, Alex, it's okay."

Beneath him AJ moaned and rose to meet each thrust, their hips bumping in a delicious grind. His hands slipped into JC's back pockets, pushing his ass as he thrust deeper into him, pulling him closer, pulling him further in. JC picked up the rhythm, held himself over his lover with trembling arms as he drove into him, harder, deeper, more, he wanted more, he wanted so much more and he wanted it now, he wanted it from this man, he wanted it all and he only had a few more minutes, if that, he had barely any time at all and someone would be knocking on his door any minute now, one of the guys and they'd interrupt this, he didn't want to lose it, not now, not now -- "Alex," he moaned, coming in a hot rush that he felt as he pulled out of his lover. Covering his face with tiny, hungry kisses, JC sighed, "Sweet God thank you for being here tonight. Jesus. I've missed you so damn much."

AJ thrust up at him, still hard. "Josh," he whispered between kisses. "You really think I could tour with you?"

JC laughed at that. "Sure," he said. "The guys would love it. I'd love it." He crawled to the end of the couch and took AJ's throbbing cock in his mouth, swirled his tongue down the hard length. AJ grabbed fists full of JC's hair and pushed him down into his crotch, thrust up into him, gasping as JC worked at him, his tongue kneading hard flesh, the roof of his mouth moist against the tip of his dick. Then he came, gasping JC's name and JC kissed him tenderly, the soft skin of his balls, the wilting flesh of his dick. "You're hurting me," he said, shaking his head to loosen AJ's hands.

"Sorry," AJ sighed, relaxing his grip. "Get up here, Josh. Let me kiss you again." JC laid down above him, their dicks brushing together with a soft crush that made their erections flare to life. Hugging him tight, AJ chuckled, a deep sound that rumbled through them both. "I've got you now," he whispered, kissing JC's chin. He licked the thin trail of hair that JC liked to grow beneath his lower lip, and then he caught JC's lip in his teeth, tugged at it gently. "I'm not letting you go."

"I gotta get back," JC told him. He sucked along AJ's bicep, tracing the outlines of his tattoos with his tongue. "They'll be looking for me."

"Let them," AJ said. "I'll tell them to step off. You're mine."

JC laughed. "You sound like Justin. Step off."

A knock on his door interrupted them. "What are you doing in there, JC?" Chris called out. "Put your clothes on and get out here already."

AJ sighed. "I guess I don't get to keep you tonight," he whispered.

JC kissed him, a greedy press that made them both eager for more. "Where are you staying?" he asked. "I can probably break away after the show."

"Come crawl into my bed?" AJ asked with a grin. When a thin blush rose into JC's cheeks, he laughed. "You're like this after every show? Damn."

"I get back to the hotel," JC whispered, kissing down the curve of AJ's throat. "And I get in the shower ..." He kissed along AJ's collarbone. "And I think of you ..." He trailed tiny kisses up his lover's neck. "And I scream your name when I come ..." He took AJ's earlobe into his mouth, sucked hungrily at it. "And then I call you up and you don't even want to know where I touch myself when I'm on the phone with you."

"You'll have to show me tonight," AJ told him.

Chris knocked on the door again. "JC? Dude, what are you doing in there by yourself?"

"I'm not by myself," JC called out. He kissed the tip of AJ's nose. "Tonight, Alex. Where are you staying?"

As AJ told him, they heard Chris whoop loudly out in the hall. "You guys! Hey, you guys! JC's getting some ass!" The door rattled as Chris leaned against it. "I think I hear them in there. Hey AJ! How you doing?"

"Fine!" AJ called out with a laugh as JC sat up. "Your friends are a trip."

JC rolled his eyes. "They're incorrigible," he said, hurrying to get dressed. Already he was counting down the minutes until the show was over and he would have his man all to himself again. He could hardly wait.