

The Second Confession

A Hawaii Five-O Original Series (1968) Fanfic

by Lady Oscar

Author's Note

I'm currently watching the TV series for the first time, and am on season 5 as of writing "The Second Confession". So, I apologize if anything happens later in the series that contradicts something I've written.

I used to live in Hawaii, but it was more than a decade after Five-O ended. I've tried to do research when I am mentioning something that I think might have been different then, but I'm sure I've screwed some stuff up.

I am accepting the TV show's claim (in "Death is a Company Policy") that McGarrett was born in 1927, and taking Danno's age to be the same as his actor's (born in 1937). So, at the beginning of the story Danny is 31 and Steve is 41.

This story takes place during the first season of the TV series, so "King of the Hill" and "The Box" are approximately where they should be. Generally this fic series will follow the timeline of the TV series, but I've monkeyed with things here and there. Most notably, "Beautiful Screamer", the episode with Danny's disposable fiancée, takes place much earlier in my world.

You might recognize Danny's temporary partner as being borrowed from [a different TV series](#). I didn't want to worry too much about making the character faithful, so I anagrammed his name.

My apologies to Rex Stout for borrowing the title of [one of his Nero Wolfe novels](#), which this story does not in any other respect resemble (most particularly in terms of quality of writing, I'm afraid).

If anyone out there reads this story I'd like to know what you thought of it, good or bad. I'd also love to chat with any other Hawaii Five-O TOS slashfic writers. You can email me at ladyoscar@trekfiveo.com or [sign my guestbook](#).

Aloha.

Chapter 1 – The First Confession

Steve McGarrett looked up at the clock. Eleven o'clock on a Friday night. *Nothing more I can do here today. Might as well knock off and go home,* he thought.

The telephone rang.

“McGarrett.”

“Steve...Chin here.” Chin Ho Kelly sounded hesitant. “I just got a call from Yuki down at Mama’s Bar. She says Danny’s there, and he’s pretty out of it. She doesn’t want him driving home like that, but I’ve got two kids sick with the flu, and my wife is exhausted from staying up with them last night...”

“You stay with your kids. I’ll take him home,” McGarrett assured Chin.

“Go easy on him, boss...he was really broken up about what happened today.”

“He’s going to have to grow a thicker skin if he wants to be a cop,” McGarrett snapped, then in a gentler voice said, “Don’t worry, Chin, I won’t chew him out.”

At Mama’s Bar, a dive favored by law enforcement, McGarrett found Danny at one end of the bar, slumped over and mumbling, a half-empty glass of beer and an empty shot glass in front of him. Yuki, the establishment’s regular waitress, hurried over.

“Boilermakers, Yuki?” McGarrett asked, raising his eyebrows. “You know you’re not supposed to serve an intoxicated customer.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. McGarrett, but he seemed OK until the last one. He kept going on about some girl, and I felt sorry for him.”

McGarrett settled Danny’s tab, then said, “Come on, Danny, let’s go,” draping Danny’s arm over his shoulders and pulling him to his feet. “Yuki, help me with the door, will you?”

“Steve?” Danny asked, his voice slurred. “...’m sorry, Steve, I blew it. Looked right in my eyes...” he trailed off.

“I know, Danny,” McGarrett said gently, steering him towards the door. “It wasn’t your fault.”

“Detective Williams’ car can stay here until he comes to pick it up,” Yuki told McGarrett. “He seemed so unhappy. You’ll take care of him, won’t you?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll take him home and tuck him into bed,” he reassured her.

He propped Danny against the side of his car while he got the door open, then lowered him into the passenger seat and fastened his seatbelt.

“...right in my eyes...couldn’t reach her hand...” Danny was saying. “...she *screamed*...couldn’t help her...couldn’t...”

“Easy, Danny, easy,” McGarrett said, putting his hand on Danny’s shoulder. “I’m going to take you home now.”

Behind the wheel, he realized that he didn’t actually know the address, and he was pretty sure that Danny in his current state would be no help. He sighed, leaned over, and slid his hand into Danny’s jacket to extract his wallet. Getting the address from his Five-O ID, McGarrett drove through the night-time streets of Honolulu to an attractive small high-rise building.

“OK, Danny, you’re home,” McGarrett said, opening the passenger door.

“Home?” Danny looked up blearily.

McGarrett supported him up to the glass doors of the building, locked at this late hour. “Keys, Danny?” he asked. Danny was leaning against McGarrett’s shoulder, apparently dead to the world. “No, huh?”

Taking a deep breath, McGarrett patted him down until he located a bunch of keys, then reached into his pants pocket and fished them out. Supporting Danny with one arm, he tried keys until one opened the door.

Up in front of the door to Danny’s apartment, located from the building directory in the lobby, McGarrett repeated the process. “Danny, you should really get a girlfriend for this sort of thing,” McGarrett grumbled. “Although I suppose she wouldn’t be able to lift you.”

“...girlfriend...Steve....” Danny mumbled disconnectedly as McGarrett attempted to get them both through the door, extracting the keys in the process.

Inside, he leaned against the closed door and held Danny against himself with one arm while he tried to remove his jacket with the other. He unfastened Danny’s shoulder holster from his pants and leaned over to hang holster and gun from the coat rack by the door. While he was in the middle of this process Danny put his arms around McGarrett’s neck and kissed him full on the mouth. Steve was so startled that for a minute he kissed him back.

Recalling himself, he pushed Danny gently away from him, having to catch him as he swayed. “Hey! Danny! I don’t know where you think you are, but it’s me, Steve!”

“Yes, it’s you, Steve,” Danny said, clutching McGarrett’s shoulder. “Always been you, Steve...I...I take girls out, I try, but I never...never feel anything...not like with you....”

He continued, “...always you, Steve, I don’t...I don’t know why...tried to ignore it....” Danny was leaning against McGarrett now, his head on his shoulder, supported by McGarrett’s left arm.

“Oh, Danny....” McGarrett said, his voice a mixture of pain and resignation. He closed his eyes and put a hand over his face for a minute. He took a deep breath. “Come on, let’s get you to bed,” he said, as briskly as he could manage.

“...bed...yes, Steve....” Danny said indistinctly against McGarrett’s jacket front.

McGarrett managed to steer him through the living room and into the bedroom. Danny’s apartment was furnished in warm browns and tans, with tall shelves of books, quite tidy for a bachelor apartment. He noticed the model sailing ship he’d given Danny for Christmas last year on prominent display in the living room. Once in the bedroom, he guided Danny to the bed, pulled back the covers, and sat him on the edge. “Wait here, I’m going to get you a glass of water,” McGarrett told him.

He filled a glass in the kitchen, somewhat surprised to see Danny still upright when he returned. He put the glass in Danny’s unresisting hand, steadying and guiding him while he drank from it. Setting the empty glass on the nightstand, McGarrett took another deep breath. “I’ve come this far, might as well finish the job,” he said to himself.

He knelt to remove Danny’s shoes and socks, then unbuttoned his shirt and slid it off, revealing Danny’s muscular shoulders and chest. *I guess he actually uses those weights in the corner*, Steve thought irrelevantly.

“OK, Danny, stand up,” McGarrett said, half lifting him from the bed. He unfastened Danny’s pants and pulled them down with one hand, leaving him wearing only a pair of tight, black briefs. Danny had his arms around McGarrett’s neck again,

and when he overbalanced onto the bed, he pulled McGarrett down with him so that he found himself lying sprawled full-length on top of an unclothed Danny.

“Steve....” Danny said, smiling dreamily up at McGarrett. Then his eyelids fluttered closed and he went limp.

McGarrett gently removed Danny’s arms from around his neck and pulled the bedcovers up to tuck him in. He sighed, patted Danny on the shoulder, and went out, leaving Danny’s clothing neatly folded and his keys and wallet on the kitchen counter with a note, “Your car is at Mama’s Bar. –McGarrett”.

Danny woke up the next morning in bed with a pounding headache. He mentally retraced the steps of the previous day. *That girl...oh, God, that scream, but then...went to Mama’s Bar...wanted to do anything to forget that scream...Steve was there...took me home...Oh, God, Oh, GOD, what did I say, what did I do, I...No, no, no, no, no! Oh, please, let that be another dream, please don’t let me have told Steve how I feel, don’t let me have actually kissed him, oh, GOD!* Danny’s thought processes caught up to the point where he had passed out in his bed. Under the combined weight of alcohol and memory, Danny staggered to the bathroom and threw up.

He spent the weekend in agony. *Is there anything else I don’t remember? What does Steve think? He didn’t say anything, but he must be disgusted if he actually believes that I’m a...a....and in love with him....Can he forget it, assume I was just drunk? Oh, God, what have I DONE?*

On Monday morning McGarrett sat in his office going through the motions. He felt like he hadn’t slept all weekend, ever since Danny’s confession. Instead he had lain awake wrestling with his conscience, trying to come to the decision he knew he must. He finally buzzed his receptionist and said, “May, tell Danny I want to see him.”

Danny came in looking as though he were going to face a firing squad. He stood in front of McGarrett’s desk, looking down at his feet. “Steve, I’m really sorry. What I said...and...and did Friday night was inexcusable. I...I hope you can forget it happened.”

“I’m sorry, Danny, I can’t.”

“Steve....” Danny looked up pleadingly. McGarrett found he couldn’t meet that gaze, and looked down at his desk blotter.

“I’m afraid we can’t be partners any longer. I’m reassigning you as Five-O’s liaison to HPD. You’ll work with a new partner there and also stay on top of all their cases. Take today off, then report tomorrow to Chief Dann.”

“I’ll...go clean out my desk, then.” Danny was clearly making an effort to keep his voice steady, but wasn’t quite succeeding.

“You’re still part of Five-O. You’ll keep your office. Report to Chin Ho on the major cases HPD is working.” *Why did I tell him to keep his office? The whole point was to arrange it so I wouldn’t have to see him every day,* Steve thought.

Tuesday morning. Chin Ho came into Steve’s office. Steve was sitting with his elbows propped on the desk and his face in his hands, looking over the tips of his fingers.

“Steve...did something happen with Danny yesterday?” Chin asked hesitantly.

“I’ve reassigned him as liaison to HPD. He’ll report to you on their cases.” McGarrett said tersely.

“Danny isn’t your partner anymore?”

“That’s what I said,” McGarrett snapped. “What about the lab report on the latest service station robbery?”

“Not ready, yet, Boss,” Chin said.

“Go tell Che Fong to put a move on it! Sooner or later those guys are going to shoot someone.”

“Steve...whatever Danny said or did, can’t you let it go? He’s a good cop.”

“*Who said he wasn’t?*” McGarrett stood up, leaning forward with his hands on his desk. “I am not discussing my personnel decisions. Now go get me that lab report!”

“Yes, Boss,” Chin said impassively, and turned and strode from the office.

Steve sat down and put a hand over his eyes. *I had no choice. I’m only human. But no one will understand and I can never explain it to them. So, what’s new with this ‘stinking job’? That’s what Danny called it. Danny...I’m sorry, Danny. No choice at all.*

Kono came into McGarrett’s office holding a folder. “Here’s the lab report on the robbery, Boss. Is it true that you had a fight with Danny?”

“Give me that report,” McGarrett snapped.

Chin came in. “Anything new in the lab report?” he asked.

He was followed by May and Jenny. “Mr. McGarrett, I just had a request from HPD for Danny’s personnel files. They said you reassigned him there?” Jenny sounded confused.

“Is that why Danny looked so upset when he left yesterday?” May asked.

“Well, it looks like everyone’s here now....” McGarrett began.

“Except Danny,” Kono said under his breath.

“...so I might as well announce that I’ve reassigned Danny as liaison to HPD. He’ll report to Five-O on HPD’s investigations and ensure that we work together smoothly,” McGarrett said.

“Danny isn’t your partner anymore?” May asked. “Is that what this column means?” she said, holding out a folded newspaper.

McGarrett glanced at the line in Eddie Sherman’s gossip column, “Danny Williams no longer McGarrett’s fair-haired boy?” He flung the newspaper into the trash can beside his desk.

“I want to know what he did wrong that you kicked him out,” Kono said.

“Will Five-O be getting a new member to replace him?” Jenny inquired.

“It’s not going to be easy for Danny over at HPD,” Chin said. “I know there was a lot of resentment that you picked someone so junior as your second in command.”

“Danny’s a good cop!” Kono exclaimed indignantly. “Just because he got in an argument with you while he was drunk....you know how bad he felt about that girl!”

“He looked so broken up when he came out of your office,” May said. “I wanted to give him a hug.”

“Everyone, *shut up!*” McGarrett stood behind his desk facing the semicircle of his staff. “Danny has been temporarily reassigned. He has not been shot, he has not been exiled to Alaska, and *I will not discuss this any further.* Now,” he scanned the lab report quickly, “Let’s work this case! Danno, I want you to....” McGarrett stopped dead.

“Danny isn’t here,” Kono said quietly, with an edge of resentment.

McGarrett turned a steely blue gaze on Kono as Chin edged in front of him and made calming gestures.

“That’s right, he isn’t,” McGarrett said in a low, carefully controlled tone. “So you’re going to have to step up and do some detective work. The robbers must keep their getaway car parked nearby, or have a third man waiting in it. That station is in a business district. I want you to see if any of the shops were still open and if anyone saw anything. Chin, go over the lab reports from all three robberies and see if there’s anything we missed. Now, everyone, get out of my office and get to work!”

The telephone rang.

“McGarrett!”

“Steve, my secretary talked to Jenny and she said you were reassigning Danny away from Five-O?”

“Yes, Governor, I’ve arranged for him to be our liaison to HPD.”

“Steve, Five-O’s personnel matters are your responsibility...”

“Thanks. I appreciate that,” McGarrett said drily.

“...but I’m concerned about who will take over as Five-O’s second in command now. Williams has shown he can handle the job. Are you sure this is best?”

“As you said, Governor, Five-O’s personnel matters are my responsibility,” McGarrett said between his teeth.

“Yes, of course, but I just wanted to express my concern....”

“Thank you for your input, Governor. Aloha.” He put the phone down.

Steve turned to lean against the lanai door behind his desk, looking across at Honolulu Hale. *So far today I’ve become Captain Bligh, the Governor is second-guessing me, and I feel like I’ve cut off my right arm.*

“Boss....”

Steve turned, realizing that Chin hadn’t left with the others. He slumped into his chair, leaning back. “Don’t say it, Chin. Everyone’s fond of Danny, and I can’t expect you to just accept that he’s gone, but I can’t explain.”

“I know. I understand. I’m sorry, Steve, we’re not making this any easier on you.” Chin said.

“Let’s just try to get through the day,” McGarrett said, rubbing his eyes.

Chin left, and McGarrett got up and walked out onto the lanai. *What did he mean, I know? He can’t, can he?* Steve wondered briefly. He looked out at the trees tossing in the gentle breeze. *I’m going to miss standing out here with Danny, discussing a case, or just life, drinking coffee in the light of dawn approached from the wrong side. Danno...I’m going to miss you.*

Great, now I’m doing it, he thought in disgust. *He’s not dead. I’ll find another partner. Life goes on.*

Danny took a left turn. He glanced over at his new partner, in the passenger seat of his car. It had been a week, and he still wasn’t used to seeing someone other than Steve beside him. A tall, thin haole with receding, sandy hair, Gerald Claybairn was probably ten years Danny’s senior but had only recently been promoted to detective. He had a markedly nervous air and a tendency to stammer.

As though reading Danny’s mind, Claybairn said, “So, I’ve been wanting to ask. What did you do to get assigned partner to the screw-up? The current theory going

around is that you got drunk and punched Steve McGarrett, but I assume that's an exaggeration."

"Why do you call yourself a screw-up?" Danny asked mildly. *So that's what they're saying, huh? I suppose it could be worse.*

"My last partner refused to work with me any more after I tripped and accidentally shot him in the foot. The reason you have to drive is that I totaled two cars. One of them I put into the Ala Wai. Che Fong won't let me into the lab after the time I knocked over some chemical bottles and they had to evacuate the whole floor. And the time I broke his favorite microscope. I'm not allowed to cook in the staff room because once I left my soup on the stove and went to a case and the fire department had to come and the whole kitchen was ruined by the water."

"Well, try not to shoot me, and I'm sure we'll get along fine," Danny told him. "And no, I didn't punch Steve. How did you make detective?"

"Well, I think they hadn't fired me because I got the highest score on the proficiency exam, the written part, of course, and it would make their hiring practices look bad. I made detective because I found the evidence that cracked the First Hawaiian Bank robbery."

"That was you?" Danny asked. "Nice work! We wouldn't have been able to catch them if you hadn't noticed those misplaced papers."

Claybairn beamed.

"I'm sure if you just had more confidence in yourself, you wouldn't make so many mistakes," Danny encouraged him.

"It's easy for you to say," Claybairn said resentfully. "You're the sort of person everyone likes. Charming, handsome, promoted to Five-O practically right out of the police academy. 'Steve McGarrett's fair-haired boy.'"

"Well, not any more," Danny said grimly. "Don't you read the paper? And no one at HPD seems to like me much, although I don't know what I ever did to them."

"They were envious, and now they see a chance to kick you when you're down."

Danny sighed. "Well, let's go investigate this purse snatching." *At least Five-O isn't likely to be there, too. I wonder how long I can go before I have to face Steve again? That day in his office he couldn't even stand to look at me.*

Chapter 2 – King of the Hill

McGarrett stood on his office lanai, looking over the city. Saturday afternoon. He had caught up on his correspondence and paperwork in the morning, and now the afternoon stretched on without appeal. It had been a rough two weeks. He hadn't found a replacement for Danny yet, hadn't even looked, if he were honest with himself, so they were all overworked. Kono was still angry, May was frostily correct, the gas station robberies were still unsolved, and McGarrett's temper was constantly frayed. It didn't help that Chin had talked to his friends at HPD and reported that the detectives there were giving Danny a bad time, that they figured he'd messed up somehow and so it was safe for them to get some of their own back for his quick promotion. No one wanted to work with him, so he'd been assigned to a detective who had actually *shot* his last partner. Steve had wanted to go over and yell at someone, but Chin convinced him that it would only make things worse for Danny.

Steve sighed. *Danny offered me affection, and in return I sent him away. If it had been a female detective, would I have done the same? Maybe not, but I'm only human. I had no choice. Yeah, keep telling yourself that.* He went back into the office. It seemed emptier than usual.

The telephone rang.

"McGarrett."

"Mr. McGarrett, it's Lieutenant Kealoha, HPD. I'm at Castle Memorial Hospital. Detective Williams has been shot, and there's a hostage situation."

"I'll be right there." He flung the phone receiver into its cradle and bolted from the room.

Steve drove to the hospital with his siren screaming and his foot to the floor. *If Danny dies....*

He arrived on the third floor in record time. Kealoha met him in front of the elevator.

"Is Danny still alive?" Steve demanded.

"I don't know." Kealoha told him.

"Where are they?"

"Around the corner."

Danny lay on the floor, clutching his bleeding side. *How on earth did things end up this bad so quickly?* he thought. One minute he and Claybairn had stopped to watch practice for the kids' baseball team Five-O sponsored, the next this big marine guy helping out, John Auston, had been accidentally knocked unconscious with a bat and they'd brought him here to the hospital. When he woke up, he'd freaked out, grabbed Claybairn's gun, shot him and Danny, and was now holding the room against a legion of imaginary Viet Cong.

I hope Claybairn is OK. I think he was hit in the leg. I'm glad the doctor got him out of there, but I wish someone would get me out, too. I wonder if Steve will come? Surely someone will call Five-O. Steve....

Steve looked down the hall at Auston's barricade in the large mirror HPD had set up. "Danny? Danno? Are you alright?" he called.

There was no answer. "Danno! Danno, can you hear me? Danno, answer me!" Steve implored.

"Steve...Steve?" came Danny's voice, weak but recognizable.

"At least he's still alive," said Kealoha.

"Yeah, for how long?" asked Steve. "Why haven't you gone down there and get him?" he demanded.

"In the face of that gun, it would just be suicide!" Kealoha protested.

Steve stood up, stripping off his jacket and tie. "Cover me."

"Steve, you just can't go in there!"

Grabbing Kealoha by the collar, Steve shoved him aside. "Out of the way," he growled, seizing one of the metal riot shields waiting in the hall entrance and advancing behind its dubious protection.

Auston opened fire down the hall.

Kealoha grabbed Steve's arm and dragged him back to safety.

Steve angrily shoved him off. "Leave me alone!" *Danny, hang on, I'm coming, just hang on....*

Steve strode furiously down the hall, returning from being paged to talk to Dr. Cutter, the doctor in the room when the shooting started, and Detective Claybairn, lying in a hospital bed recovering from his leg wound.

So, this doctor was actually in the room when Danny got shot, but he can't tell me anything about how bad he's hurt. All he knows is that he was hit in the abdomen. He thinks. He wants a medal for getting that idiot partner of Danny's out of there when if it weren't for him the marine wouldn't have gotten the weapon in the first place, and Kealoha feels I should be just be glad that one man was saved. Even Chin's telling me to calm down, as though we should all just forget about Danny and be glad the situation isn't somehow worse!

Steve knew he wasn't being entirely fair, but he was past being fair to anyone. *Danny, Danny, I should never have sent you away. This is my fault. My fault, and if...if you don't make it...I'll never even get a chance to explain....I'm going down there to get you before you bleed to death, whether anyone else likes it or not.*

However, when he again tried to mount a rescue, he was stopped by both Kealoha and the hospital's chief of staff.

"There are patients in critical condition in those rooms! Any shock could kill them! Don't you care about their lives?" Dr. Hanson demanded.

Why does everyone but me seem to think that Danny's life is the least important one here? Steve screamed in his head, but he agreed, no frontal assault, no tear gas. He demanded to know the specifics on the precious patients.

"Take it easy, Steve," Kealoha said, putting a hand on his shoulder.

How can I take it easy when Danny is lying in there, in pain, bleeding to death, and the last thing I told him was that I didn't want him as my partner anymore?

McGarrett did his best to work the problem, talking to a psychiatrist about what might have made Auston flip out and making arrangements to get a crane to reach the

windows of the patients' rooms. The marines were demanding that they not shoot Auston. *Great, another person whose life is apparently more important than Danny's.*

Danny lay on the floor of the examining room. *I don't know how much more blood I can stand to lose. Everything's getting kind of fuzzy. It was good to hear Steve's voice a little while ago, even if it made Auston grab me again. It hurts like hell to move...I never really realized how much it hurts to be shot....*

He heard a woman's hysterical shrieking in the hall, and, with a supreme effort, pulled himself up on the overturned stretcher. To his horror, he saw that Auston was shooting at this girl and Steve, who was dragging her back into a patient's room. Danny grabbed Auston's arm to stop him, before slumping to the floor again after the effort.

God, that hurts...can't get up any more...Steve...please be safe....

Steve sat in the small surgery waiting room. It was all over now, at least as far as the hostage situation went. They'd been ready to go straight in, but after talking to a buddy of Auston's McGarrett had been lowered in the window from a chopper in the uniform of a corpsman, and it had worked, after some tense moments in that room.

Now it was up to the doctors performing surgery to remove the bullet from Danny and stop the bleeding. *He looked so still lying there on the floor. I was afraid he really was dead, as I told Auston...Danny, you can't die now...not before I have a chance to talk to you....*

Steve paced the room. *If Chin had picked him up that night. If I hadn't reassigned him. If the accident had never happened. If his partner had been more careful with his gun. If I had gotten him out of there sooner. A chain of 'ifs', and Danny's life hangs on the end. All day balancing Danny's life against my duty to everyone else. Claybairn, the patients, Auston...have to be responsible for everyone, no matter what I want. No matter that, to me, Danny's life is most important. He's a member of Five-O. And...he's Danny. Whether we can be partners or not, it doesn't matter. He'll always be most important. I wish I knew the right thing to do....*

"Steve, Danny will be OK," Chin tried to reassure him.

"If he isn't, it's my fault," Steve said grimly.

"It was an accident. No one's fault."

"I wish I knew what to do," Steve said, looking into the dark mirror of the window. "I tried to do the right thing, and I ended up making Danny miserable and then getting him shot. Now I don't know what the right thing is, any more...."

"Steve...I know you always try to do what's best for Five-O, but sometimes, maybe what's right for Five-O doesn't have to be what makes everyone unhappy. Danny's a fine young cop. It would be a shame for Five-O to lose him."

"Chin...." Steve looked piercingly at him.

"Steve," Chin said, patting him on the shoulder. "I understand why you reassigned Danny."

"Danny doesn't understand," Steve said grimly. *Does Chin really know? Could he have guessed?* he wondered.

"Maybe you should explain to him," Chin told him.

Steve was back to pacing. Chin had gone to call his wife and kids.

Gerald Claybairn came into the waiting room, awkward on crutches. “They told me you were here. Is Danny out of surgery yet?” he asked anxiously.

“No,” Steve said flatly.

“I’m so sorry about what happened. It’s my fault. If I hadn’t let Auston get my gun, none of this would have happened. Danny saved my life. If he hadn’t shoved me out of the way, it would have been me lying on that floor instead of him. He’s the best partner I’ve ever had, the only one who’s ever been nice to me, who’s ever treated me with respect. I’ll never forgive myself if he isn’t OK.” Claybairn was leaning on the crutches, nervously clasping his hands.

I’ll never forgive either of us, Steve thought savagely. “If he’s so important to you, you should have been more careful with your weapon,” he snapped.

“Well, if he’s so important to *you*, you shouldn’t have let him go as your partner in the first place!” Claybairn said with nervous defiance. “He wouldn’t tell me why it happened, he didn’t complain, but I know he was upset about it. While we were on cases, all he talked about was *you*, what a great cop you are, all the things you taught him, and you sent him off to be partners with the screw-up! Well, maybe you didn’t deserve him as your partner!”

Steve turned on him furiously, then took a deep breath. “Maybe I didn’t, at that...” he said quietly, turning away.

“M...Mr. McGarrett, I...I’m sorry, I know it’s none of my business,” stammered Claybairn, looking horrified at his outburst.

“Go back to your room and rest your leg. I’ll see that they call you when Danny comes out of surgery,” Steve told him.

“Th-thank you,” Claybairn said, limping off.

Kono came in carrying a shopping bag. “Any word yet, Boss?”

Steve shook his head.

“Here, I brought coffee and sandwiches from my mom,” Kono said, handing paper cups to Steve and Chin Ho and filling them from a thermos.

“Thanks, Kono,” Steve said.

Another half hour passed. Steve had drunk two cups of coffee and abstractedly eaten a sandwich whose filling he couldn’t have named. *How long can surgery take? Is there some complication?* he wondered.

The surgeon came into the room, looking around. “Are you...?” he began.

“The family,” Kono said firmly, making Steve smile.

“Well. We were able to remove the bullet and stop the bleeding. It was a bit tricky, since he’d already lost a lot of blood, but he’s stable, and, as long as there’s no peritonitis, he should make a full recovery. We’ve started him on antibiotics.”

“When can we see him?” Kono asked.

“We’re transferring him to the ICU. You can see him there when he wakes up, but it won’t be for a while, and we have to limit things to one visitor.”

“I’ll stay with him,” Steve said. “You two go home and get some rest. I’ll call you if there’s any change.”

Chapter 3 – The Second Confession

Danny opened his eyes. It took him a minute to remember where he was. *Was there a helicopter?* Now he was in bed in a dimly-lit hospital room. He realized to his surprise that Steve was asleep sitting up in a chair next to the bed. His head was thrown back against the wall and his mouth was open a little. Danny found his disheveled state rather endearing. *Was he sitting up with me? I suppose he was probably just waiting to question me about the shooting.* Danny tried to sit up, letting out an involuntary groan and bringing Steve up out of his chair.

“Danny, you’re finally awake,” Steve said, giving him a smile that made him forget the pain. “Don’t try to get up.”

“Steve...how bad is it?” Danny asked.

“The doctors got the bullet out and patched you up. You lost a lot of blood, but they say you’re going to be fine.”

“Thank you for rescuing me. I was afraid I wasn’t going to make it out of that room.”

Steve stood up abruptly, turning away from the bed. “I’ll tell the doctors you’re awake,” he said, his voice sounding a bit odd. “I have to go to the office, but I’ll be by later.” He left the room.

What was that about? Is there something he’s not telling me? Am I dying? Am I in trouble? Danny wondered.

Danny spent most of the day drifting in and out of sleep. The doctors had given him morphine for the pain, and it was mostly working, but it made it hard to focus. Chin and Kono came in with a huge bunch of flowers and a card from everyone at Five-O. “As soon as they say you can eat real food my mom is going to make you her special get-well soup,” Kono told him.

Claybairn limped down on crutches to thank him. “It’s my fault you got shot. You saved my life.”

“It wasn’t your fault,” Danny told him.

“I shouldn’t have let him grab my gun.”

“It could have happened to anyone. He wasn’t a suspect, you had no reason to believe he’d do anything like that, and you were helping move him.”

“Danny...you’re the only person at HPD who’s ever really been nice to me. I won’t forget that.”

“You’re a good detective. You just need more confidence,” Danny assured him. “Now go put your leg up. I’m sure you shouldn’t be walking around.”

When darkness had long since fallen outside the window, Steve returned. Danny heard him talking to a nurse outside. “I’m sorry, it’s after visiting hours.”

“I have to talk to Williams on urgent police business.”

“Very well, but not too long.”

“Can you see that we’re not disturbed for a while?”

“Yes, Mr. McGarrett.”

Steve came into the room. *He looks really uncomfortable. Urgent police business--is he here to grill me about the shooting? I should have been able to stop*

Auston from getting Claybairn's gun, Danny thought. Or is it that he just doesn't want to have to talk to me at all?

Steve carried an orchid plant, which seemed incongruous with his expression. He set it beside the flowers from Five-O. "How are you feeling, Danny?"

"Better," Danny said, looking at Steve warily. He had convinced the nurse to prop the head of the bed up for him earlier, so at least he felt more prepared to face the music than if he were flat on his back.

Steve sat down beside the bed, his hands resting half-clenched on his thighs. *If it didn't seem so unlikely for Steve, I'd say he looked nervous*, Danny thought.

"Danny...." Steve began, then trailed off.

"Steve, just say it," Danny told him. "Are you here to question me about what happened this afternoon? Am I under investigation?"

"What? No, of course not," said Steve, looking up in surprise. "There was nothing you could have done to prevent what happened, and by your actions you almost certainly saved the lives of Claybairn and Doctor Cutter at the risk of your own. I intend to recommend you for a commendation."

"Then why are you looking so grim?"

"Am I?" Steve smiled ruefully. "I suppose it's because what I have to say is difficult for me. Danny, I owe you an explanation for my decision to reassign you."

"Steve, I understand why you did it. I could hardly expect anything else after what I said." Danny looked away.

"No, you don't understand." Steve took a deep breath and stared down at his hands. "When I was younger...at the Academy...I had to come to terms with some things about myself. Danny, I'm...a homosexual."

"Steve? You? But...but...then...." Danny sounded stunned.

"When you came to work for me, of course I couldn't help but notice that you're a handsome man, and you've become a very good cop. I suppose that's why I fell for you," Steve said, finally looking up at Danny with a smile.

Danny could feel himself blushing.

"As long as I knew that anything between us was impossible, I could ignore those feelings. But when you told me you felt...the same way....In the Navy, things were different. It wasn't easy, but people were generally willing to turn a blind eye. When I took the job with Five-O, I knew I could no longer...indulge myself. However discreet I might be, the risk of being found out and ruined wasn't worth it. So, I've been alone since then."

"Steve...if I came back to Five-O, couldn't we both just ignore our feelings?" Danny pleaded.

"No. I'm flesh and blood, not a saint," Steve said. He leaned forward and took Danny's hand. "When you get out of here, and we're partners again, I want us to see where our feelings lead." He gave Danny a look that made him blush again.

I can't believe this. "Steve...level with me. Is it worse than they said? Am I dying?"

"Danny! No, you're going to be fine." Steve was holding Danny's hand between both of his own.

"The last two weeks felt like a nightmare," Danny said, "but this *has* to be a dream."

“No dream,” Steve assured him. “Now, I’d better leave and let you get some rest. I’ll come back to see you in the morning. We’ll...take it slow.” He gave a look up at the window in the door, then said, “Just this once,” and leaned over to give Danny a quick kiss on the mouth before leaving.

Steve... Danny thought, still half stunned by Steve’s revelations and fogged by the morphine. *If that was a dream, it was certainly a good one.*

The next morning Steve stopped by before work. “Good morning, Danny,” he said with a smile.

“Good morning, Steve,” Danny said, uncertainly. *Could I have dreamed that? With the painkillers and everything?* he wondered.

Steve stepped to the side of the bed, reached down, and gave Danny’s hand a gentle squeeze.

Not a dream, then. Danny smiled up at him.

“I brought you a newspaper,” Steve told him. “We made it above the fold, and they broke out your college graduation photo for the human interest story inside. You look very cute in your mortarboard,” he added.

Danny was in the hospital for a week. Steve stopped by every morning and evening to visit. On the last day he borrowed Danny’s keys and brought him an overnight bag with a change of clothes.

“If you like, I was thinking of coming to stay with you for a few days to help out until you’re feeling better,” Steve said.

“But, Steve...surely you have better things to do,” Danny protested.

“Nope. Also, I thought this way we could start to get to know each other’s off-duty selves.”

“Steve, I don’t believe you *have* an ‘off-duty self,’” Danny said with a grin.

“I guess you’ll see...”

Danny leaned over to try to pull on his pants and couldn’t stifle a groan. “Let me help you,” Steve offered. “You don’t have to be self-conscious...I’ve already undressed you once.”

“Don’t remind me...”

Steve drove Danny home. Although he guided the big car as carefully as he could through the bumps and turns, he could see that Danny’s jaw was set and the sweat stood out on his face.

Steve parked straight across the front of the doors to Danny’s building with his usual disregard for marked curbs. He helped Danny out of the car. “Easy, Danny. Lean on me all you want.”

Danny was concentrating too hard on not crying out in pain out to say anything, but he put his arm around Steve and accepted his support as they walked through the unlocked glass doors and rode the elevator to his floor.

At Danny’s apartment, Steve unlocked the door. *By now I know which key it is,* he thought. “You look like you could stand to lie down,” he said, helping Danny to the bedroom, pulling back the bedcovers, and settling him on the bed.

“Thanks, Steve,” Danny said, breathing hard.

Steve fetched a glass of water and set it on the nightstand next to Danny's pain medication.

"You'll be more comfortable in your pajamas," Steve said.

"Third drawer from the top."

Steve fetched a dark blue pair.

"Do you want help changing?"

"I think I can handle it this time."

Steve sat in the living room flipping through the budget report he had brought with him without seeing it. *Am I doing the right thing, or just being self-indulgent? Is Chin right, that what makes me and Danny happy could also good for Five-O? Can I possibly make Danny happy? He's never had a relationship with a man before. He's probably never thought through the implications, the problems. Hiding, lying, secrets, shame...for a few moments of stolen happiness.*

Steve tossed aside the report and paced to the lanai doors, looking out at the view of white buildings and green mountains. In the distance, a rainbow arched over the Manoa Valley. He sighed, and went into the bedroom to check on Danny.

Danny was asleep, lying on his right side half curled up. He'd managed the pajamas, but the bedcovers still lay at his bare feet, and he looked absurdly young and vulnerable. Steve felt a pang as he pulled the covers up and tucked them around Danny's shoulders. *Ten years between us, and a bigger gulf in the things I've seen and done. But he's a cop, and a good one. He's tougher than he looks.*

Steve went back into the living room and stepped out onto the lanai. *If it's not making Danny unhappy. If it takes nothing from Five-O. Maybe it's OK to be self-indulgent for once....*

For the next week Steve spent his off-duty time at Danny's place. He fixed Danny soup, ran errands, changed his dressing, and matter-of-factly helped him with whatever he needed. He insisted on sleeping on the sofa in the living room.

"But, Steve, it's not even long enough for you. I have a double bed, there's plenty of room. Why don't you just sleep here?"

"I'm no good at resisting temptation." Steve gave a half-smile.

"If that's true, then that night you took me home and I was coming on to you, why didn't you take me up on it? I seem to remember being in bed with you after you undressed me."

"I couldn't resist kissing you back, if you recall, but I was determined then that it was impossible for us to have anything. Besides, in the state you were in, I would have been taking advantage. Even so, if you hadn't passed out in the end, I might not have made it out of here."

"Steve...."

"Wait until you're feeling better," Steve promised.

Chin Ho came into McGarrett's office with a lab report. As McGarrett perused it, Chin asked, "How's Danny doing?"

"Better. He should be able to come back next week."

"You told him how you feel about him?"

Steve looked up sharply. "Yeah. Chin, how did you *know*?"

“I’ve been a detective for more than twenty years, Boss. I observe people, and I can’t stop doing it just because the people are my friends.”

“Did you know how Danny felt?”

“Yes.”

“I never realized,” Steve said, chagrined.

“You were too close to the problem. Steve, I’m sorry about that night you had to go pick Danny up. I knew it wasn’t a good idea, but someone had to, and my kids....”

“Let’s hope it was all for the best in the end,” Steve said with a smile.

Chapter 4 – First Date

Danny looked around the Five-O office. May had hung a banner reading “Welcome back, Danny” on one wall, and the table in the center of the office was laden with food. Standing around it were Five-O, Che Fong and his lab crew, Lt. Kealoha and Gerald Claybairn from HPD, and even the Governor. Danny was happy to be back at work and able to eat real food again, and, even more, was looking forward to that night. Steve had asked him out to dinner, as an actual date.

McGarrett came in from his office and called for everyone’s attention. “Since it looks like the entire Danny Williams fan club is here, and this time also Danny himself,” he said, with a pointed glance at Kono, who looked abashed, “this is a good time to announce that Danny is returning to his duties at Five-O as my partner and second-in-command.” There was general applause and calls of “Danny! Speech!”

Danny said, “First, I’m gratified to know that there’s a ‘Danny Williams Fan Club’” he said, giving Steve a smile. “I want to thank all of you for your support. I hope you haven’t been giving Steve too hard a time, since I also want to thank Steve, for saving my life the other day...and...and for giving me a second chance.” Danny found himself suddenly emotional, and took refuge in drinking from his paper cup of juice.

He accepted congratulations on his recovery from everyone, and hugs from May and Kono. “What did Steve mean by ‘and this time also Danny himself?’” Danny asked him.

“I have no idea, bruddah,” Kono said with an innocent look.

“Sure, sure. Thanks, Kono.” Danny clapped him on the shoulder.

Fortunately, no one seemed to be asking exactly what had happened to cause Danny’s reassignment in the first place. The general assumption seemed to be that he and Steve had argued about something.

Chin Ho said, “Welcome back, Danny.”

“Thanks, Chin.”

“Be good to Steve. This wasn’t easy for him, either. I’m afraid everyone gave him a hard time.”

“The ‘Danny Williams Fan Club’?”

“Yes. It got pretty tense around here. But then when you got shot...Steve can be a hothead sometimes, but I’ve never seen him like that. If it weren’t for Lt. Kealoha holding him back, he would have just run straight down the hall into that gunfire to try and rescue you.”

“Chin...thanks.”

Claybairn told him, “Danny, I’m so happy for you. But I’ll miss you. You were the best partner I’ve ever had.”

“Hang in there, Claybairn. And stay in touch. I look forward to working with you at our crime scenes,” Danny said.

“Lt. Kealoha,” Danny said. “Thank you for helping get me out of that room. And I hear from Chin that you stopped Steve from getting shot on my behalf, so thanks for that, too.”

“He was really upset. I guess he felt guilty about reassigning you. It must be nice to have a boss who cares so much.”

“Yeah,” Danny said with a secret smile.

The governor came to shake Danny's hand. "I'm so glad to see you back," he said. "I told Steve it would be a huge loss to Five-O if he gave up someone who had acquitted himself as well as second-in-command as you have."

"I appreciate that, Governor," Danny told him. *Poor Steve. He was just trying to do the right thing, and he couldn't explain it to anyone, even me,* Danny thought. He drifted over to where Steve was, oddly enough, talking to Claybairn.

Claybairn was saying, "Danny and I worked the fourth robbery, and I didn't think anything of it at the time, but while I was in the hospital I was wondering...no one ever found any leads to the getaway car, did they?"

"No. No one saw anything at any of the scenes."

"So, I was thinking, maybe no one saw them leave in a car because they didn't have a car, maybe they didn't even leave!" Claybairn said excitedly. "Danny showed me the reports on the other robberies, and everyone said the robbers were shorter than average."

"Yes, we wondered if they could be women under those masks," Danny said, joining the conversation.

"But what if they aren't women, what if they're boys?" Claybairn said. "With bicycles, not cars!"

"Steve, he may be onto something!" Danny said. "At that scene, there were a couple of boys on bikes. I talked to one, maybe 14 or 15, he said he hadn't seen anything. I thought it was a bit late for kids to be out on a school night, but, you know, busy parents...but where would kids get guns? And those service stations were pretty far apart for a bicycle ride."

McGarrett said, "They could have been toy guns—none of the attendants knew anything much about firearms. But the distance...what if they're working with an adult? He could have dropped them off from a van some distance away. This could be it. Danny, do you have the name and address of that kid you talked to?"

"Yeah, in my office." Danny went to get his notebook.

When he returned, McGarrett looked around at the party and said, "I'm sorry, Danny," with a rueful smile.

"It's OK, Steve." Danny smiled.

McGarrett announced, "I'm sorry, everyone, but I have to borrow the guest of honor. Please stay and enjoy yourselves. Danno, Claybairn, you're with me." They left amid an indignant outcry.

The address they pulled up to in the late afternoon light was a small, run-down two-story apartment building. McGarrett knocked.

"Mrs. Kanapali?" he asked the thin, tired-looking woman in a flowered dress who answered the door.

"Yes?"

"McGarrett, Five-O. We'd like to ask your son Henry a few questions."

Unexpectedly, she burst into tears. "He's a good kid! He's only 14, he didn't want to do it, but he was scared! Last night he told me was happening, he wanted to stop, but the man threatened him!"

"Where is Henry now?" McGarrett asked gently.

"He went off with that man, that ice cream man. I couldn't stop him!"

“Ice cream man?”

“He drives an ice cream truck around the neighborhood. Henry said he asked him and his friend Doug if they wanted to make some easy money, that it would be fun, like cops and robbers on TV.”

“Mrs. Kanapali, did Henry say where they were going tonight?” McGarrett asked.

“No. The man doesn’t tell them. But it can’t be too far, since he said he’d be home by seven.”

“Can you describe the truck?”

Back in the car McGarrett called central dispatch and put out an APB for the ice cream truck, warning that there were minors inside.

“Let’s take a drive around the service stations in the area,” McGarrett said. They cruised through the city streets in the big, black car, looking out for the truck, until they heard a report on the radio that it had been sighted. They screeched towards the scene, siren blaring. When they reached the pursuit, McGarrett angled his car across the road, trapping the truck between it and the oncoming blue-and-whites. He and Danny jumped out, pointing their guns at the driver and approaching the truck.

McGarrett pulled the driver out, ordering Claybairn around to the back to look for the kids. “Book him, Danno!” McGarrett snapped.

Nice to hear that again, Danny thought.

Claybairn reappeared with Henry Kanapali and another boy of the same age, just as a car pulled up and Chin and Kono got out.

“Detective Claybairn, I leave all this to you,” McGarrett said. “It’s thanks to your observations that we cracked the case.”

“Way to go, Gerald!” Danny congratulated him.

“Chin, can you and Kono handle the Five-O end of things?” Steve asked him quietly, looking at his watch.

“Sure, Steve. You and Danny enjoy your dinner,” Chin told him.

“How do you do it?” Steve asked.

“Twenty years a detective, Boss!”

“Come on, Danny, if we step on it we can still make our reservation,” Steve said.

In the car on the way to Waikiki Steve glanced over at Danny. *He looks a bit self-conscious. I suppose it is our first date.* In honor of the party Steve had put on his good navy blue suit. Danny was wearing a slightly shiny brown with a subtle pinstripe. *It suits him,* Steve thought. Danny glanced up, and Steve quickly looked away. *This is silly. How many times have we ridden together in this car? For that matter, how many meals have we shared? But it’s not the same this time.*

They were in Duke’s Canoe Club, seated at a table overlooking the beach, with the gentle surge of the ocean providing a pleasant background rhythm. Casting around for a topic of conversation, Steve said, “Your partner...ex-partner,” with a smile, “Detective Claybairn certainly came through. Maybe you rubbed off on him.”

“He’s a good detective. He just needs more confidence in himself. And possibly some more gun safety training.”

“He seemed to have plenty of confidence when he came up to me in the hospital and chewed me out for not appreciating you,” Steve said ruefully. “A lot of nerve coming from someone who got you shot.”

“It wasn’t his fault. It could have happened to anyone,” Danny said.

Steve raised his eyebrows.

“Well, it was probably more *likely* to happen to him. But he truly is a good detective. Steve...everyone really gave you a hard time about reassigning me, didn’t they?”

“You don’t know the half of it.”

“I’m sorry. It wasn’t your fault. You were just trying to do what was best for Five-O.”

“Yes. I tried to do the right thing, and it got you shot.” Steve speared a bite of fish and looked down at his plate. “And there was something Chin said...that maybe what was best for Five-O could also be what made people happy. That it would be worse for Five-O to lose you.”

“How did Chin *know*?” Danny asked. “I never knew....”

“He just says that after more than twenty years as a detective, he’s good at observing how people behave, and he can’t stop even when the people are his friends.”

The waitress came to clear their plates. “Excuse me, but you’re Danny Williams, aren’t you? And you’re Steve McGarrett?”

“Guilty as charged,” Danny answered with a smile.

“I thought so! I saw your pictures in the newspaper. You’re heroes!”

“No, really....” Danny denied.

“Dessert is on me tonight,” she said, distributing a flirtatious glance impartially on the two of them.

Danny looked over at Steve and shrugged.

It’s hard to believe Danny isn’t interested in women, he charms them so effortlessly. I suppose it’s those innocent blue eyes. I mean, I always assumed...but I guess I never saw him with a steady girlfriend, except for the whirlwind thing with that poor girl who got killed, Steve thought.

“I should warn you, Danny, I’m the jealous type,” Steve said quietly, leaning across the table with a smile.

“She was looking at you. Besides, she’s not my type,” Danny assured him, smiling back.

“And what is your type?” Steve blinked flirtatiously at him.

“About six-two, dark hair, deep blue eyes....” he turned the innocent look on Steve.

The waitress interrupted with ice cream.

The check arrived. Danny reached for it, but Steve said, “No, I asked you out, it’s on me. And we’re celebrating your recovery.”

They walked out into the warm night. “Care to take a walk down the beach?” Steve asked.

“Sure, why not.”

They strolled along the water line, watching the waves break under the light of a half moon.

“So, Danny, what do you like to do on your days off?”

“Besides catching up on the housework, I go surfing with Kono sometimes...I’m not very good, though. Or kayaking, snorkeling...I guess I just like the water. Sometimes I catch a ball game or a movie. What about you, Steve?”

“Sailing, horseback riding...not that I get around to doing anything like that very often these days. The occasional game of golf with the governor....”

“I golfed when I was at UH, but I haven’t kept up with it.”

“Maybe you should take it up again. Golf, fishing, bowling, and watching sports are the things two guys can do together without anyone wondering,” Steve said drily.

“I hadn’t thought of that,” Danny admitted.

“I’m afraid that being with another man, the best you can have is a sort of half-life. Most of your friends don’t know you’re a couple. Vacations, travel, even dinner out you have to be careful not to do too often. No holding hands on the beach. No kiss goodbye at the airport. Always being on your guard. You’ll have to decide for yourself whether it’s worth it,” Steve said seriously, stopping to look at Danny. “The last thing I want to do is scare you away, but I want you to go into this thing with your eyes open.”

“It’s better than the alternative. Going out with women because you feel you’re supposed to...poor Jane, I guess I jumped at the chance to marry someone I liked, at least. I...I hoped that would be enough, but now I don’t think it would have been. She deserved better.” Danny looked down at his feet.

“What happened to her wasn’t your fault, Danny,” Steve said gently, putting his hand on Danny’s shoulder.

“So, is that alright, then?” Danny asked, looking at Steve’s hand.

Steve dropped his hand.

“Steve...I didn’t mean...”

“No, you’re right. We should have...ground rules.”

“Like what?”

“We don’t do anything that would look...unusual...unless we’re in my place or yours with the curtains closed. No talking about anything we wouldn’t want overheard at the office—no telling if May ever listens in. We have to be careful what we do together in our time off. As we saw tonight, we’re recognizable to the public.”

“It sounds complicated.”

“Yeah. Is it worth it to you?” Steve asked, looking squarely at Danny, eyebrow raised and jaw slightly outthrust.

“Yes.” Danny said simply, looking squarely back.

God, I wish I could kiss him right now. I guess I should listen to my own lecture, Steve thought ruefully. “Shall we head back?” he asked.

Steve pulled his car into a space in front of Danny’s building.

“Want to come up for some coffee?” Danny asked.

“Sounds good.”

Danny made coffee in the kitchen while Steve read the spines of the books in his living room.

“Here. I’m afraid it’s instant, but the milk is fresh.”

“Thanks, Danny. Greek Lit, huh?”

“Yeah...I thought of minoring in it, but I figured psych was more useful to a cop.”

“I don’t know if I’d say that...lots of examples of human behavior in these stories.” *Lots of men who love other men, too...did he ever think about that, or was it subconscious?*

Steve finished his coffee and stood up.

“Thank you for dinner,” Danny said, also standing. “I had a really good time.”

They stood together in front of the door. Danny looked up at Steve. “Kiss me goodnight?” he said lightly, but with a vulnerable look in his eyes.

Steve put his hands on Danny’s shoulders, then leaned down and kissed him gently. He straightened, looking down. Seeing that Danny wasn’t pulling back, he leaned down and kissed him again. He felt Danny open his mouth under his and slipped his tongue in to meet Danny’s. Danny’s arms went around his neck, and Steve moved his hands down to pull him close, kissing him with increasing passion. *Cool it, Steve, you told him you’d ‘go slow’,* Steve thought, fighting for control.

He stepped back. Danny was looking up him with parted lips and a slightly dazed expression that made Steve want to kiss him again, and much more.

“Steve....” Danny began, stopped to clear his throat, then continued, “Steve, if we don’t have a case come up tomorrow, and you don’t have any other plans...perhaps we could...go fishing?”

“Sounds like fun.” Steve smiled. “I’ll call you in the morning.” He couldn’t resist giving Danny one last quick kiss on the mouth, then went out.

Danny stood leaning against the door after Steve had left. *Wow. Kissing someone has never felt so...amazing...before. It was a bit weird at first, kissing a man. The smell of cologne and Steve instead of perfume, the feeling of his crisp shirt collar and short hair under my hands instead of a woman’s soft neck...but the strength of his arms, and the feeling of his mouth on mine were just...wow. I wonder if he enjoyed it as much as I did? It seemed like it, but then he stopped...I guess he said we’d go slow, but...I don’t know if I want to.*

The stuff Steve said on the beach...I suppose I never really thought deeply about what it meant to love Steve, since I figured it was a hopeless fantasy. That it meant I was in love with a man. That I was...a homosexual. That decent people would be horrified if they knew. It was easier for the Greeks, he thought. I wonder if that’s why I like Greek literature? My subconscious trying to tell me something? I always knew none of the women I met did it for me, but I never made that final logical step until I met Steve. Is love enough against all the obstacles? Well, it had better be, because having found it, I can’t bear to give it up.

Chapter 5 – The Box

The next day, McGarrett ate breakfast, scanned the paper, then called HPD to see if there was anything urgent happening, finding that there wasn't.

I meant to wait before seeing Danny again, Steve thought. To take it slow. But honestly, I can't.

He picked up the phone and called Danny.

"Steve?" Danny said, sounding pleased.

"Hi, Danny. We don't seem to have anything pressing on the books. So, what kind of fishing did you have in mind?"

"I was thinking maybe we could go to the North Shore and rent kayaks, take a lunch out to Goat Island."

"Sounds good. Shall I pick you up?"

"Sure, Steve."

At Malekahana on the North Shore, Steve and Danny unloaded the kayaks from the trunk. "Good thing you have such a big car. Have you used these before?" Danny asked Steve.

"No, this will be the first time."

"Once you get the hang of it, it should be no problem," Danny assured him. Besides, the water's warm," he said with a smirk.

They slid one of the kayaks into the water. Danny said, "Here, I'll hold the end steady while you get in. It may take a couple of tries."

Steve waded out, then lifted himself into the kayak with his arms. It gave a sideways lurch, but remained upright.

"Steve, are you just naturally good at *everything*?" Danny protested, handing him the paddle.

"I was in the Navy, you know. I have a fair amount of experience with boats," Steve said mildly.

Danny launched his own kayak, balanced the picnic basket on it, then vaulted in. "Remember, you have to paddle, not row," he reminded Steve.

They paddled out though the flat, calm sea, looking down at the little fish that swam among the rocks and weed, zig-zagging towards whatever looked interesting.

"Honu!" Steve pointed to where the head of a sea turtle could just be seen bobbing above the surface of the water. They circled to watch it from a polite distance.

"Shall we land on the island and have a swim before lunch?" Danny asked.

"Why not?"

They pulled the kayaks a safe distance up onto the shore of the flat, rocky islet. Danny extracted a blanket from the basket and spread it out. Steve looked over at him appreciatively. Danny was wearing a very small, tight red bathing suit, and an unbuttoned aloha shirt. *He looks good enough to eat, Steve thought. I'm glad this beach is deserted. If there were any girls here, they'd be all over him.* Steve himself was wearing navy blue trunks and a sweatshirt, feeling strangely self-conscious about Danny seeing him without a shirt for the first time. *I'm ten years older than him, after all, and he's used to looking at girls, not hairy-chested men.*

Danny took off his shirt, revealing the muscular shoulders and arms Steve had admired that night in his apartment. "Can you put some sun cream on my back?" he asked, holding the tube out to Steve.

Steve put some in his hands, then slid them over Danny's shoulders, enjoying the feel of smooth, sun-warmed skin over hard muscle. He moved to Danny's shoulder blades, then down his spine, unconsciously turning his touch into a caress. He slid his hands outward over Danny's ribs, feeling the planes of muscle and sliding his hands around to Danny's sides, smoothing them upwards under his arms. Returning to Danny's shoulders, this time he worked his hands downward, his fingers curving around Danny's upper arms.

"Steve...that...that's fine," Danny said, his voice sounding a bit odd.

Did being touched that way by a man freak him out? Is he not ready for this? Steve worried, then noticed that Danny had "casually" dropped his shirt in his lap. *Did I actually turn him on just by doing that?* He smiled inwardly.

"Shall I put some on you?" Danny asked with a half-smile, his bright blue eyes challenging.

Well, I suppose I have to take off my shirt sooner or later, unless I want to swim in it, Steve thought, pulling it off over his head and trying to make his expression unconcerned.

"You know, I don't think I've ever seen you without a shirt before," Danny said.

"And?" Steve raised an eyebrow.

"You should go without one more often," Danny gave him a frankly admiring smile.

Steve relaxed, not realizing he'd been tense. Danny sat behind him and started smoothing sun cream over his back. His touch was unsure at first, but as he gained confidence he was obviously enjoying exploring the feel of Steve's muscular back.

Mm, strong hands, Steve thought. *I wonder how they'd feel on my...*

"Shall we go in?" Danny asked.

They waded into the cool water, enjoying the pleasant contrast to the warmth of the sun. Both strong swimmers, they went out beyond the island a bit where the waves were rougher, and swam along the coast until they decided it was time to return for lunch.

"I'm afraid it's only sandwiches," Danny said. "Ham or chicken?" he asked.

"Chicken sounds good."

Danny handed Steve a sandwich and a banana, and they sat on the beach eating and looking across at the shore with its pale sand and tall, dark evergreens.

Steve looked over at Danny, who was eating an apple. *In that little red bathing suit with the sun sparkling off the drops of water on his skin and a dusting of sand across his shoulders he looks like the poster boy for temptation,* Steve thought. He imagined licking the water droplets off Danny's taut stomach, tasting the salt of sea and sweat, running his hands over Danny's chest to feel the sprinkling of crisp blond hair...*I wonder if he's blond everywhere...I didn't have the nerve to look that time in his apartment, I could never have resisted taking advantage of the situation...better stop this line of thought or I'm going to have to borrow Danny's shirt...*

Danny glanced over at him, apparently unconscious of the effect he was having on Steve. He stretched his arms over his head, the muscles rippling, then lay down on his

side facing Steve, propped on one elbow and him giving an innocent blue-eyed smile before taking a bite of apple.

I swear he did that on purpose because I was gaping at him. Well, only fair.... Steve peeled the banana, and, looking directly at Danny, deliberately lowered his mouth over the fruit's pale shaft, gave Danny a bat of his eyelashes, and took a large bite. He was rewarded by seeing Danny blush under his tan and roll onto his stomach, resting his head on his arms. *Mm, that bathing suit looks good from this angle, too,* Steve thought.

"Steve...." Danny said, turning his head to look over to where Steve had stretched out next to him. "This beach looks pretty deserted. But I suppose we can't...."

"No, we can't. All we'd need is someone with binoculars or a telephoto lens." *You have no idea how hard it was to say that.*

"Yeah, I guess so." Danny sighed, then said, "C'mon, let's go back in the water."

They swam again, diving down to more closely examine the life under the sea. Returning to the island, they repacked the basket and carried the kayaks down to the water. "I suppose this doesn't actually count as fishing," Danny said.

"There are plenty of perfectly good fish at the market."

As they paddled back towards shore two kayaks came into view from around the edge of the coastline. They were being propelled by two young women who seemed to be having a tough time figuring out the paddles. They were aimed roughly at the island, but the send of the tide angled them towards Danny and Steve. As they approached they waved enthusiastically and steered to meet them. "Hi! We're on vacation!" called the blond, in the lead. They were both young, pretty, and wearing very small bikinis.

"Amazing! No one ever comes to Hawaii for that," Danny said with a tolerant smile.

They giggled.

"Hey, watch it!" Danny attempted to fend off the lead kayak with his paddle.

"Sorry, I don't seem to have the hang of this!" the blond said. She made a huge stab at the water with one end of her paddle, forgetting the other end, which swung in an arc to smack into Danny's hastily upraised arm just as the second kayak knocked into the end of his, overbalancing it and sending Danny, the picnic basket, the paddle, the blond, and her kayak into a thrashing tangle in the water.

"Eek! I'm so sorry!" cried the brunette of the second kayak, clearly at a loss as to what to do.

Steve, floating nearby at a safe distance, dove smoothly into the water and swam to the scene of confusion. By this time Danny had surfaced and was holding onto his overturned kayak looking slightly dazed and the blond was thrashing around crying "Help! I can't swim!"

Steve dodged her flailing arms and propelled her to the second overturned kayak. "You don't seem to be drowning to me," he told her. "Hang onto this."

"Danny, are you OK?" he asked in some concern.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Our stuff is full fathom five, though. I suppose we need to do something about her," he said, looking over at the blond.

They transferred her to cling to Danny's kayak, and righted hers, then tried to steady it in the water as she climbed back in. After three failed attempts and Steve narrowly avoiding being brained by the end of the kayak, they got her in.

“Thank you so much!” she cried. “After you saved us like that, now you boys have to let us buy you a drink tonight. We’re staying at the Waikikian.”

“I’m terribly sorry, but I’m afraid we’re otherwise engaged,” Steve told her.

“Aww, no fair! See you around?” She waved again and they floundered off in the general direction of the island.

Danny fetched their floating property together by degrees, while Steve dived successfully for the luncheon-basket.

“I can only find one of my flip-flops,” Danny said sadly. “I think the other is probably on its way to Kaua’i.”

Reassembled, if in a damper state, they paddled back to shore and reloaded the kayaks, Danny occasionally discovering one of the spiky evergreen cones under his bare foot. He attempted to wring out his shirt. “I’m sorry, Steve, I don’t want to drip on your upholstery. I guess we should have left some spare towels in the car.”

“Don’t worry, a little water won’t hurt it.”

They dropped off the kayaks and drove back across the island to Honolulu through the usual late-afternoon rain shower.

As they pulled up in front of Danny’s building, Danny asked diffidently, “Steve...are you doing anything for dinner? I know you said we can’t go out to eat too often, but maybe I could pick up some take-out....”

Take it slow...oh, to Hell with it.

“Sure, why not? Why don’t you come by my place around 7?”

“Is Chinese OK? I could something get from Chin’s uncle’s restaurant.”

“Sounds good.”

Danny turned up at Steve’s door at the appointed time carrying a stack of fragrant boxes. He had showered and changed into slacks and a green sports shirt.

How could I have even considered sending him away and losing the way I feel every time I see him? Steve thought, answering the door in slacks and shirtsleeves. *Careful, Steve, take it slow. This is all new to Danny, and you don’t want to scare him away, because you know perfectly well you’re already in over your head.*

They put the food on the coffee table and ate off plates balanced in their laps, talking comfortably with each other as usual, but with an added spark that made Danny occasionally catch himself noticing the way Steve’s dark hair curled over his forehead, or Steve find he was imagining Danny’s mouth on something other than his chopsticks.

After dinner they stacked the few dishes and carried them to the kitchen.

“Let me help,” Danny offered.

“Here, I’ll wash, you rinse.”

They stood side-by-side at the sink, their elbows touching in the confined space.

As Danny slotted the last plate into the drying rack, Steve dried his hands on a dishtowel and turned towards him.

Danny looked over, and the expression in Steve’s deep blue eyes stopped what he had been going to say on his lips.

Steve put his hands on Danny’s shoulders, leaned down, and kissed him.

Danny responded, his mouth opening to let Steve’s probing tongue in, his arms reaching around Steve’s neck to pull them closer together. Steve kissed him deeply, his hands roaming over Danny’s back. He raised his head briefly to look down into Danny’s

blue eyes, then gently kissed his way to Danny's ear, tracing with his tongue, then taking the lobe into his mouth and teasing it with his teeth. He unbuttoned the top of Danny's shirt, wishing he were wearing something that opened all the way down, and kissed down Danny's neck to the hollow of his throat, caressing it with his tongue.

Danny moaned softly, pressing his body against Steve. Steve's arms tensed as he struggled for control. He devoured Danny's mouth urgently, one hand moving down to caress Danny's tight ass, pulling their hips together. He could feel Danny's erection against him through the fabric of their slacks and when their stiff cocks made contact Steve groaned, pressing Danny back against the refrigerator, and Danny gasped, "Steve!"

Steve abruptly broke away, turning to face the wall. He leaned on it, breathing hard, his forehead against the cool surface, his fingertips pressed hard against the paint. *Whatever happened to 'take it slow'?* he asked himself sarcastically. *Sure, it's been quite a while, and watching Danny look incredibly sexy in that bathing suit all day didn't help, but get a grip! This is, what, the third time he's even kissed a guy, and you're going to suddenly whip your cock out and show it to him?*

"Steve?" Danny's voice sounded bewildered, and a bit hurt.

Steve turned. Danny still stood near him in the small space between the kitchen table and the refrigerator. He, too, was breathing hard, the top of his shirt still unbuttoned and his lips slightly reddened by Steve's kisses.

Steve clenched his fists against the wall behind his back.

"Danny...we should...go slow. This is all new for you, and I don't want to get carried away and do anything you're not ready for."

"And who decides what I'm ready for?" Danny asked, stepping forward with an obstinate glint in his eye.

"Danny, please, this is hard enough as it is," Steve said, turning away again.

Danny took a deep breath. "OK, Steve, I'll see you on Monday," he said flatly, turning and walking out of the kitchen, buttoning his shirt.

Steve closed his eyes in frustration.

"Danny, wait." He strode across the living room to stop Danny before he went out the door. "I'm sorry. I just...don't want to take a chance on ruining things between us." He reached out to caress Danny's cheek.

"It's just, when I'm with you...." Danny looked down.

"I feel the same way," Steve admitted. "But you're too important to me to screw this up by rushing things. Thank you for today. I can't remember when I last had such an enjoyable day off," Steve said. He leaned forward and kissed Danny gently on the mouth. "Goodnight, Danny."

"Goodnight, Steve."

Over the next few days Danny quickly settled back into the routine of working at Steve's side at Five-O, although he found himself from time to time looking at Steve and smiling for no reason, and he occasionally caught Steve looking at him in a way that made his heart beat faster.

Friday morning McGarrett sat in his office reading over the budget report.

The telephone rang.

"McGarrett."

“Steve, this is the Governor. There’s been an incident at Oahu State Prison. You remember Charlie Swanson, of course?”

“Yeah, I put him there.”

“He’s got a gun and he’s taken hostages. He’s threatening to start killing them if the gates aren’t opened.”

“I’ll be right there.”

Danny stood behind a wall of crates watching Steve walk across the prison yard to give himself up as a hostage. *They’re going to kill him. Not only Swanson, but Big Chicken, Tommy...Steve put half those guys away, and they hate him. Steve knows Swanson won’t keep his deal, but he’s going in anyway because he’d rather offer up his own life than stand back and watch while one of the hostages is killed. I guess that’s why I admire him so much, but if he gets himself killed I’ll never forgive him. To lose him so soon...I can’t bear it. Oh, Steve, I wish at least we’d finished what we started Saturday night.*

Swanson refused to send out the hostages.

Danny strode into the office of Captain Wade, the prison warden, who was on the phone. “Anything?” he asked anxiously.

“No. No further word from the shower room area.” Wade told him.

“Steve could be dead in there right now,” Danny said. *I have to face it.*

“No,” Chin tried to reassure him. “Charlie Swanson’s smart enough not to blow his last chance of getting out of there alive.”

“Maybe he figures it’s already blown and there’s nothing left to do but start sending out the dead bodies,” Danny said harshly.

“He knows what’ll happen then,” Wade said.

“That won’t stop him unless he can figure another way!”

“That’s why Steve went in. To show him another way,” Chin said.

“If he can find one,” Danny said angrily, rounding on Wade and Chin.

“There’s nothing we can do about that, Danny. That’s up to Steve. Now, we’ve got our own work to do,” Wade told him.

“Yeah.” Danny took a deep breath. *I have to concentrate on doing whatever I can from out here. Little as that is.* “Where do we stand?”

They discussed logistics, and Danny sent Chin off to help Kono with the communications setup.

Captain Wade promised Danny that he’d get word to him in the press room if anything happened.

“Captain, one favor. If something goes wrong out there, let somebody else handle the press. I want some time with Charlie Swanson.” *If he kills Steve, I don’t care what happens to me. I’ll take out Swanson if it’s the last thing I do.*

McGarrett stood in the shower room, trying to convince Swanson that he could use the situation to make people listen to his complaints about the problems at the prison. His midsection still ached from the attentions of Big Chicken’s fists. *So many ways this could go wrong. Danny...I wish we’d finished what we started on Saturday night.*

Danny walked across the prison yard. He could see Steve standing behind the two bound guards Swanson had arranged across the shower room entrance. "Steve, are you OK?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm OK, Danno."

McGarrett stretched out his arm, and Danny reached forward to take the notebook pages with Swanson's demands from his hand. *It hurts to be so close and not even be able to touch his hand. Steve, please, please stay safe....* Danny forced himself to turn away and walk back across the yard.

Danny rushed up to where Wade and Chin waited behind the stack of crates. "I've got the newspaper with Swanson's demands!" *Please, this has to work....*

Danny tossed the paper in to Steve. A couple of minutes passed, and then, just like that, it was over, the hostages released, the prisoners retaken, and McGarrett emerging with the injured Swanson.

Back at Five-O, McGarrett leaned back in his desk chair. Now that the adrenaline had worn off, he felt bone weary. He flexed his right hand experimentally. He'd settled the score with Chicken, but possibly he should have been a little more careful.

Danny came into the office with his report. "Steve, you look beat."

Steve gave him a tired smile.

"We've pretty much wrapped things up here. Why don't I come by your place with some take-out?" Danny suggested.

"Thanks, Danny. And good work today."

They sat in the living room with their feet up eating noodles and shrimp fried rice. "I can see it hurts every time you move, Steve...are you sure you don't need an X-ray?" Danny asked, concerned.

"Nothing a warm bath and good night's sleep won't fix," Steve assured him.

Danny insisted on clearing up and doing the dishes, while Steve lay back on the sofa. *It's amazing how good it feels to come home and be looked after, to know that someone cares,* he thought.

Danny came back into the room. "I'll let you get some rest," he said, going to the door to put on his jacket.

Steve joined him there. "Thanks, Danny, for everything."

"Steve...I'm so glad you're OK," Danny said. "I...I was terrified I'd never see you alive again." He looked down to hide his feelings.

"Danny." Steve put his arms around him, and they stood holding each other close, banishing the horror of the day with physical contact. Steve leaned down and kissed him tenderly. "Now, you'd better go, because holding you like this is making me want to do things I'm in no condition for," Steve told him with a smile. "Come over for dinner on Sunday? I should be feeling more like myself then."

"It's a date. Should I bring take-out?"

"No, I'll cook," Steve told him.

"I didn't know you could cook," Danny said, sounding surprised.

"Well, I guess Sunday you'll find out if I can," Steve said with a smile. "Good night, Danny."

“Good night, Steve.”

Chapter 6 – First Time

Sunday evening, Danny pulled up to Steve's building at 7. He parked a block away, on the off-chance someone might recognize his car and wonder why it spent so much time at Steve's. *'Always being on your guard'*, he thought. *To be with Steve, it's worth it.*

Steve answered the door with his sleeves rolled up, a spatula in his hand. "Come in and make yourself at home. This will just be a few more minutes," he said, hurrying back into the kitchen.

Danny removed his jacket and tie, and strolled into the kitchen, where Steve was turning pieces of fish in a skillet. "Mm, it smells good. Is there anything I can do to help?" he asked.

"I think it's all under control here," Steve said, testing the fish. "This is done." He deftly slid a filet each onto two plates. "Sautéed snapper with apricot-ginger salsa," he said, topping the fish with the apricot mixture, garnishing it with thin strips of red bell pepper, and putting the plates on the table, already set with cutlery and bowls containing rice and green salad.

"Wow, Steve, this is really good!" Danny exclaimed, eating.

"When I realized I wasn't going to be getting married and having a wife to cook for me, I decided I had better learn how to cook for myself," Steve explained. "Not that I often find the time these days."

After dinner they washed the dishes standing at the sink together. Danny was acutely aware of Steve's nearness and the memory of what had happened the last time they stood together at this sink, but as they finished Steve merely said, "Shall we take our coffee into the living room?"

He poured two cups from the percolator, adding milk to Danny's.

"Thanks, Steve." Danny seated himself on the sofa, where he was joined by Steve.

Danny sipped his coffee, feeling absurdly nervous. He took a sidelong glance at Steve, who was looking as relaxed as Steve ever did, leaning back on the sofa with one arm along the back behind Danny's shoulders and his feet up on the coffee table, looking back at him with the little smile that Danny found irresistible. *I wish I had the nerve to just turn and kiss him*, he thought.

"Steve...." Danny began tentatively, turning to him.

As though this were a signal he had been waiting for, Steve abruptly swung his feet off the table, set his cup down, and took Danny's half-empty cup from his unresisting fingers. He rested his hands lightly on Danny's shoulders and looked down into his eyes. "Danny?" he asked softly, with a half-smile.

"Yes," Danny said, swallowing hard. *Yes, Steve, to whatever it is you want to do. And this time, please don't stop.*

Steve leaned forward to kiss him. Although he had looked relaxed, Danny could feel the tension in his arms, the pent-up passion as his hot mouth pressed against Danny's, his tongue probing, caressing. He felt Steve unbuttoning his shirt, then sliding his hands underneath, his strong fingers surprisingly delicate. As he brushed them over one taut nipple Danny groaned, his body jerking involuntarily.

Steve made an answering sound in his throat, lifting his mouth from Danny's and laying him back on the couch so he could kiss his way down Danny's throat, then lower, his tongue replacing his fingers, teasing Danny's nipples.

"Steve!" Danny moaned. He reached forward to fumble with the buttons of Steve's shirt, wanting to feel Steve's skin against his own.

"Here, let me," Steve said, his voice unsteady. He quickly undid the buttons and tossed his shirt aside, then leaned forward to reclaim Danny's mouth, lying half on top of him on the narrow sofa.

Danny ran his hands over Steve's strong back, then slid them around to his chest. *It should seem weird to touch a man this way, to feel the hair curling under my fingers, the hard muscles, but oh, God, it feels good.* Danny could feel his erection straining uncomfortably at his tight pants.

As though responding to his thoughts, Steve slid one hand down over Danny's taut abdomen to the bulge in his pants. He raised his head for a moment to look questioningly at Danny.

"Yes, Steve, please!" Danny moaned, moving his hips under Steve's hand.

Steve unfastened Danny's pants and pulled the zipper down, then slid his hand inside Danny's briefs to close over him.

"Ah!" Danny cried, struggling for control as Steve stroked his rock-hard shaft. *Steve looking down at me with those midnight blue eyes as he does that...I don't know how long I can take this. Why is it so different when it's him?*

"Danny, wait," Steve said hoarsely, sitting up and withdrawing his hand.

"Steve! Please, I don't want to stop this time," Danny begged, sitting up and fixing Steve with a direct gaze as he took his hand and guided it back to his crotch. *I don't care about my pride, or anything else. I need him now.*

"God, Danny, when you look at me like that, while..." Steve closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "I don't want to stop, either. But I'm not about to make love on a sofa when there's a perfectly good king-sized bed in the next room. Come on." He took Danny's hand and led him to the bedroom.

They stood beside the bed in the warm glow of lamplight. Danny unbuttoned the cuffs of his shirt and took it off, then slipped off his pants. He felt suddenly shy about going further. *What will he think? How do I...compare? I've never had to consider that with a lover before. A lover...I don't know if I've ever really had a lover before, not someone I felt like this about.* Danny looked uncertainly at Steve, and found Steve giving him a frankly appreciative look up and down.

"Danny, you look like a recruiting poster for 'The All-American'," Steve said, his voice husky. "I've wanted you for so long..." He put his hands on Danny's shoulders, and bent to kiss him, then stepped back and looked down at Danny's black bikini briefs, barely containing his erection. "I lost my nerve that day I took you home," he said ruefully.

Danny took a deep breath, then slipped off his briefs, his thick cock springing free. He looked up at Steve.

"Mm," Steve said with an appreciative smile, "I guess you *are* blond everywhere."

Danny blushed. "OK, Steve," he said. "I showed you mine, now...."

Steve was wearing the pants to the blue suit that Danny liked him best in. He unfastened them and took them off, revealing lean, muscular legs thickly sprinkled with dark hair, and his own black briefs, slightly more modest than Danny's. Steve raised his eyebrows, then slid them off.

Danny couldn't help a startled intake of breath. His own cock was thick and far from short, but Steve's was....*The only word for it is 'magnificent'*, Danny thought.

Steve was watching him, looking slightly worried about his reaction. "Danny...if you don't want to...."

"God, Steve, these past few months I've kept having dreams about you, but even in my dreams you never looked this good," Danny said, putting his arms around Steve's neck and kissing him.

"Danny...." Steve groaned, pulling Danny against him. They stood, naked, their bodies pressed together. Steve slid one hand down to Danny's firm buttocks, caressing, squeezing, as Danny's hands roamed over his back. Steve closed his hand over Danny's cock, eliciting a moan from Danny.

"Steve...please...." *Wanted him so much...the feel of his body against mine, his hand...I can't take much more of this....*

Steve leaned over to pull back the bed covers. They climbed in, still kissing, touching. Steve leaned over to take a small tube from the nightstand drawer. He poured some lubricant into his hand, slicking it over his own cock and then Danny's.

"Ah!" Danny gasped. He stroked Steve's shaft in rhythm with Steve's hand on his own, their mouths joined, Danny with his free hand caressing Steve's chest, sliding upward to bury his fingers in Steve's dark hair. The idea that after fantasizing for so long he was free to touch Steve wherever he wanted was driving him wild.

Steve slid his other hand down over Danny's hard abdomen, enjoying the contrast of hard muscle and crisp hair, then lower, as they moved together in a building rhythm, to stroke Danny's testicles. The sensation pushed Danny over the brink. "Steve! Ah!" he groaned as he came, spurting thick, hot liquid over Steve's hand and both their stomachs.

The feeling was too much for Steve. "God, Danny!" he cried as he, too, spent himself onto their entwined bodies.

They lay together, breathing in gasps. Steve held Danny tightly in his arms, kissing him tenderly.

"Steve...mmm...." Danny said, smiling sleepily and arranging himself comfortably against Steve's body.

Steve woke a little later and fetched a wet washcloth for them to clean up a bit. Afterward, Danny lay against Steve with his head on his shoulder as though it were the most natural place in the world for him to be. *I guess it is, at that. I've gotten used to having him by my side all day...all night is even better*, was Steve's last conscious thought.

Chapter 7 – The Course of True Love (Never Did Run Smooth)

When Danny woke the next morning he had a moment of disorientation before the memories of the night before came filtering back. *I'm at Steve's place. In Steve's bed.* He turned his head to find that Steve was awake and watching him. His hair uncharacteristically disheveled and there was a dark shadow of beard on his strong jaw, and Danny thought he looked absurdly attractive.

“Good morning, Danny.” Steve was looking at him with the sweet smile few people got to see.

“Good morning, Steve,” Danny said, smiling back.

Steve leaned forward and kissed him tenderly on the mouth.

“Mm. Steve, what time is it?” Danny asked.

“Time to go to work, unfortunately.”

“Crap, I'm going to have to go home and change,” Danny said, climbing out of bed. He felt a little self-conscious about Steve seeing him naked in the light of day. He looked over at Steve. *He's just as gorgeous as I remember....*

“I should have woken up earlier,” Steve said, bending to kiss Danny again. “Want breakfast before you go?”

“Sure.” *Honestly, I just want to put off the moment we have to return to the outside world.*

Steve put on a dressing gown, loaning a spare to Danny, who had to roll the sleeves up a bit.

“What do you usually have for breakfast?” Steve asked.

“I generally just grab a cup of coffee.”

In the end they had coffee, guava juice, and a ripe mango Steve had peeled and sliced.

“Mm, this is good,” Danny said with his mouth full. “Maybe there's something to this breakfast thing, after all.” *Certainly if I get to look across the table at Steve while I'm eating it....*

Afterwards Danny dressed in his clothing from the day before, somewhat amused that Steve had collected it from the floor and neatly folded it when he got up during the night. *Must be a habit from his Navy days.* He tried to make himself look sufficiently presentable to give the impression that he was stopping by to report on a case rather than doing the walk of shame. *Not that I feel ashamed, or anything else but ridiculously happy. Steve....*

He finished tying his tie. “OK, Steve, I'll see you at Five-O,” he called.

Steve stopped him at the door to give him a lingering kiss goodbye. “See you at the office,” he said with a smile.

Steve sat behind his desk, swiveled to look out the lanai door at the beautiful day outside. He couldn't remember when he had last felt so happy. *Last night...Danny....* If he were honest with himself, he'd wanted Danny since he'd come to work for Five-O, though he'd tried to dismiss those thoughts...except every once in a while when he was alone, late at night....The reality, however, was far better than his fantasies. *Danny's inexperienced with men, but he didn't seem reluctant or freaked out. In fact, he seemed quite...enthusiastic.* Steve thought of the pleasure he could look forward to, teaching

Danny new ways to make love, and the joy of waking up in the morning to his sleepy, blue-eyed smile, and found himself grinning like an idiot.

The telephone rang.

Danny breezed into Five-O office a few minutes later than usual, due to having had to drive home before showering and changing. “Good morning, May!” he called cheerfully. “It’s a beautiful day.”

“That’s what Mr. McGarrett said, too,” May told him. “Oh, and he wants you in his office—they’re meeting about some new case.”

Danny opened the door of Steve’s office. “Good morning,” he said, trying to make his face look normal, but finding it hard not to grin.

McGarrett didn’t look up from the report he was reading. “You’re late, Danno. Take a seat,” he snapped.

Danny opened his mouth to protest, then closed it again and sat down. *Steve, that’s not fair! You know perfectly well why I’m late!*

Chin and Kono were already in the office, as well as two men in army uniforms.

McGarrett tossed the report across the desk. “Danny, get up to speed.”

He won’t even look at me. Did being back in the office, reminded of his duty, make him regret what happened last night? Does he regret...us? Danny tried to concentrate on the report, rather than the awful feeling growing in the pit of his stomach. Someone had murdered two women, both bar hostesses. “Why is this a case for Five-O?” Danny asked.

“Drugs,” said one of the uniformed men succinctly. “We had an undercover operative pretending to be a GI just back on leave, looking to score. He had identified both those women as pushers for a major drug kingpin, and was working on them to get the name, but we think he got made and they rubbed out the girls to cover the trail. What we hope they didn’t know is that he’d just found the name of a third woman. She should be pretty scared right now and looking for a friendly face, but we’re afraid to send another of ours in case there was a leak in the operation.”

“Danny, you’ll go undercover as a GI,” McGarrett told him. “Find this woman, take her out, get friendly with her, and get the name. And do it fast—we think they don’t know about her, but we can’t guarantee it.”

“But, Steve...tonight...” Danny protested before he could stop himself. *Tonight I wanted to spend with you.*

“You had other plans? I’m afraid that in this job your personal life has to take a back seat to your work!” McGarrett snapped angrily. “I want you in uniform and on the job by the time the bars open!”

“Chin, question the women’s friends and associates. See if they know anything that could lead us to who they were working for. Kono, go over their apartments with a fine-toothed comb. Any sign of who their contact was.”

Danny sat in the bar, still sparsely populated at this early evening hour, nursing his beer. He hadn’t spoken to Steve since leaving his office that morning.

A girl in a blue and green mini-dress came in, taking a seat at the bar. She had long dark hair, pale skin, deep brown eyes and a nervous, hunted manner.

Yvonne. Pretty girl. So, Steve wants me to get friendly with her. I'll show him friendly....

The next morning Danny sat in McGarrett's office in a black mood, trying to focus through a pounding headache. He thought of how he'd felt when he came to work the day before. *What a difference a day makes*, he thought bitterly.

McGarrett was pacing beside his desk. "Let's take it from the top. We know the contact is Steve Bonano, and we have a good guess who he's working for. We have the girl Yvonne stashed in protective custody, and she's willing to testify about the drugs. Now we need to tie Bonano to the murders."

"Che Fong found his prints at both girls' apartments," Kono offered.

"Corroborative, but not good enough. There's no reason he shouldn't admit to knowing them."

"What about the murder weapon?" Chin suggested. "We could get a warrant to look for the gun."

"We'll give it a try, but these guys are pros. Did you get anything from the friends?" McGarrett asked.

"Just that both the dead women were mixed up in something that paid well. No names," Chin told him.

McGarrett started snapping his fingers.

Danny winced.

McGarrett rounded on him. "Mr. Williams, if you can manage to focus on work despite your hangover," he said with heavy sarcasm, "I want you back in uniform to go interview the friends. You can tell them you're Yvonne's new boyfriend."

"I got the hangover in the line of duty," Danny complained.

"I told you to find out information from the girl, not get drunk with her," McGarrett snapped.

"You told me to get friendly with her. She's a bar hostess. How else was I supposed to do it?" Danny protested.

"You were supposed to remember to stay professional! Now, go talk to the friends, and this time see if you can manage to keep it in your pants!"

Danny recoiled as though he had been slapped. "Steve...." he began, unable to keep the hurt out of his voice. He abruptly stood up. "I'll get to work, then," he said angrily, slamming the door on his way out.

Chin and Kono were eying Steve, Chin carefully impassive, Kono looking apprehensive.

"Kono, go over the lab report again with Che! Look for something that could ID the killer—fibers, shoeprints, anything. Then you and Chin search Bonano's place for either the weapon, or anything that matches the lab results," McGarrett snapped.

"Yes, Boss!" Kono said, hurrying out.

Chin lingered. "Steve," he said. "I talked to that girl Yvonne when she came in this morning. Danny's date didn't exactly turn out how you're worrying."

"What do you mean?" Steve demanded.

"Talk to Danny...." Chin said, exiting the office.

The next morning McGarrett sat in his office reporting to the governor on the phone.

“...with the hair and blood from the second victim in Bonano’s trunk he knew we had him dead to rights and he flipped on his boss. The Coast Guard picked him up an hour ago with the drugs in his possession. As a bonus, one of the dead girl’s friends pointed us at an accomplice of Bonano’s, who will testify against him.”

“Nice work Steve. Tell the rest of Five-O I said so, too.”

“Thank you Governor, I’ll pass that on. Aloha.” *Well, at least the case went well,* Steve thought. He wished he weren’t so tired. He’d spent the last two nights uselessly imagining Danny with Yvonne. *What the hell did Chin mean? I guess I’ll have to ask Danny, but I’m not looking forward to that conversation. How did everything go wrong so quickly?*

McGarrett buzzed his receptionist. “May, have everyone come into my office.”

McGarrett addressed his men. “Thanks to all of your hard work, the Coast Guard picked up the big supplier with the drugs on him, and we have Bonano for the murder of the girls. The Governor sends his congratulations.

Now, Chin, Kono, I want you to talk to the Coast Guard and wrap up the paperwork. Danno, you’re with me.

Steve pulled the big car into the Tantalus overlook. It being a weekday morning, they had the parking lot to themselves. The deep green forest at their backs, through the windshield they could see Honolulu spread out before them.

“Steve, why are we here?” Danny asked.

“To talk,” Steve said. “Now, what is it you wanted to say to me in the office yesterday?”

“I went and did what you asked, found out the information we needed,” Danny said resentfully, “and I come back and you’re mad at me!”

“You didn’t have to get carried away with your role,” Steve snapped, feeling his grip on his temper slipping already.

“What, were you jealous?”

“And what was that on Monday? When I give you an order, I need you to follow it without complaining!” Steve’s voice was raised.

“How could you just order me out of *your* bed and into *hers*?” Danny said angrily.

“*I told you to take her to dinner, not to fuck her!*” Steve yelled.

“You *are* jealous!”

“You bet I am!”

“Well, you don’t have anything to worry about! I...” Danny shouted, then abruptly caught himself and looked down.

“Chin talked to Yvonne when she came by Five-O to make her statement. He said something like your date ‘didn’t go how I was worrying’. What did he mean by that?” Steve demanded.

“*She told Chin?*” Danny looked horrified. “She’s been with HPD for the protective custody, too, hasn’t she? Who else did she tell? The DA’s office? Oh, *God.*” He bolted from the car and stood leaning on the overlook railing.

Steve joined him. "Danny," he said gently. "What happened?"

"Well, I suppose if everyone else knows, you might as well know, too, to make my humiliation complete," Danny said, looking over the city without seeing it.

"You know I've dated women, taken some of them to bed, and I wasn't always that interested, but it wasn't a *problem*, I could always...perform. But...well, I guess I was hurt that you didn't mind sending me to make time with someone else after we...for the first time...and I suppose I wanted to make you jealous, so when she seemed willing to sleep with me I went back to her place with her. And...and anyone would say she was a beautiful woman, so it should have been easy, but...I kept seeing your face in front of me, and I...I...couldn't do it."

Danny turned to face Steve. "So, now you and everyone else knows. Danny Williams couldn't get it up with a girl," he said bitterly.

"Danny," Steve said, his face full of compassion.

"She laughed at me. Asked me what kind of man I was. I don't know anymore." Danny turned back to look at the city. "And don't give me the old 'it happens to lots of guys' speech. It's never happened to *you*, has it?"

"Danny." Steve put his hand gently on Danny's shoulder. "It has happened to me. With a girl. That's...one reason I knew I was how I am."

"*You*, Steve? I can't imagine that." Danny looked at him.

"It was humiliating. She was understanding, but I'd been desperately trying to convince myself I wasn't attracted to men, that I could have a normal life, and I was crushed. But after that, I finally thought things through and came to a decision, so when I met...a guy...I was able to...try things out." Steve looked up at Danny. "Danny, I'm sorry you had to go through that."

"I suppose it was my own fault. It just hurt, after...after that night, that you didn't seem to care," Danny said, looking down.

"I'm sorry, Danny. I was angry at myself, and I took it out on you."

"Angry at yourself? Why?" Danny looked at Steve in surprise.

"When I decided to tell you how I felt, I made a promise to myself that we could only do this if it took nothing from Five-O. I *have* to be able to send you undercover to do whatever is necessary. But that morning...I really didn't want to," he admitted. "I was mad at myself for my weakness, so I was harsh on you. It wasn't fair, I should have explained."

"It certainly wasn't fair chewing me out for being late!"

Steve looked down. "No, it wasn't. I was afraid if I looked up at you I was going to give you some sort of big, goofy grin and make everyone in the room wonder. So, I just said the first thing that came into my head. I'm not proud of that."

"I thought you regretted what we did."

"Never, Danny. It was the best night of my life." Steve gave Danny the grin he had missed on Monday.

"I feel the same way," Danny smiled back. "But..." Something suddenly occurred to him. "How did you know I didn't just go home after I reported in?"

Steve looked embarrassed. "I called your place a couple of times. I had thought of dropping by..."

"After what happened, I went and had a couple of drinks...more than a couple, I guess, then went for a long walk on the beach to try to get my head straight. From now

on, if I have to go undercover, why don't we just arrange to meet afterwards?" Danny suggested.

"It's a deal," Steve said. "Danny...can you forgive me for being a jealous idiot?"

"If you can forgive me for trying to sleep with someone else because I was mad at you."

"Come over for dinner tonight?"

"I'd love to."

"And this time, bring an overnight bag...." Steve gave him a suggestive smile.

Back at Five-O Danny found Chin Ho. "Chin, that girl, what she told you...do you know if she told anyone else?" Danny asked him worriedly.

"She told a detective at HPD, but I planted the idea that she was just trying to get back at you because you turned her down. 'Hell hath no fury,' after all."

"Do you think they bought it?"

"I just heard it back from Kono, picked up from one of his buddies there. They seem to think you're nuts to be so uptight about staying strictly business, but they believe it."

"Thanks, Chin. I owe you."

"Are you and Steve OK now?"

"Yeah, I think so."

"I'm glad. Because Steve gets really scary when he's not happy," Chin said with a smile, clapping Danny on the shoulder.

Chapter 8 – Someone To Come Home To

Later that day, McGarrett returned to Five-O headquarters from a meeting with the Governor. Danny stopped him in the outer office with a report.

“I’ve got the Takahashi file completed. You wanna check it with me?” Danny asked.

“Yeah, come on in, Danno,” McGarrett said, ushering Danny towards his office. He was stopped by May, with a slip of paper and a worried expression. “Boss...” He read the message. “When did the call come through?”

“About a half hour ago. You want me to get her?”

“No, I’ll put it through myself. Give me a couple of minutes, Danno.”

“Sure.” Danny looked after Steve as he closed his office door.

“His sister?” he asked May.

“Yes.”

It’s been a couple of months since Steve went to Los Angeles to try to get his sister away from that faith healer who promised to cure her son’s cancer. I’m afraid this means the worst has happened. I wish there were something I could do to help...

Danny knocked on Steve’s office door. Night had fallen, and everyone else had gone home. *No answer.*

He knocked again.

“Come in,” Steve called, his voice hoarse.

Danny opened the door. The lights were off, the room lit only by a wash of moonlight from the windows. Steve sat with his back to the door, looking out at the night.

“Long two minutes,” Danny said.

“Yeah.”

Danny stood inside the door. *I feel so helpless.*

“The baby went into a deep coma this morning. Three months, to the day. Doctor said it was a matter of months, maybe two-three at the most.” Steve took a deep breath. “How right can you be, Danno?” His voice was raw.

“Is there anything I can do to help, Steve?”

Steve shook his head, unable to speak. He was sobbing, shoulders heaving, his clasped hands pressed to his mouth, trying to suppress his grief.

It’s shocking to see Steve break down. He’s always so strong, whatever happens. I can’t bear to see him like this, Danny thought.

“She cried so hard...she choked on her own tears.” He let out a strangled sob. “She said...she said she’d gone to Dr. Fremont. That there was still time. The good doctor promised her...promised her that she’d heal Tommy if I’d stop persecuting her. If I’d stop...if I promised I wouldn’t go to the trial next week...wouldn’t testify.”

I can’t take this any more, Danny thought. *If I can’t help, at least I can show him he’s not alone. Ground rules or not.* He locked the door behind himself, then stood beside Steve’s chair and reached to put his arms around him.

Steve buried his face in Danny’s shirt front, holding him desperately, despite the awkwardness of the chair arm between them, as he sobbed.

“She begged, Danno. My own sister begged.”

Danny found himself crying, too. *The anguish in his voice....* “Steve...”

They clung together, giving and seeking comfort in human contact.

Finally, Steve took a deep breath and stood up, suddenly angry. "I have had it. I have had it, right up to here! Who the hell made me big daddy to the world? What do I care if the great snowed American public want to blow a billion dollars a year on phony quacks and cures?" he demanded bitterly.

You know the answer to that. Because you're Steve McGarrett, and you'll always do the right thing, no matter the cost. I wish I could take that burden from you, but if you weren't this way, you wouldn't be the man I fell for, Danny thought.

"And what's the big deal, anyway? Why should we get so steamed up when all I can prosecute on is one lousy count, interstate sale of mislabeled or misrepresented merchandise?" he demanded. "Maximum penalty one thousand dollar fine or one year in jail or both."

"For this one it oughta be murder! On a hundred counts." Steve said, turning away to look outside.

When he had his emotions back under control he turned back to Danny, putting his hands on his shoulders. "Thanks, Danno," he said, his voice still rough.

Danny reached up to wipe a tear from Steve's face. "Steve...I wish there were something I could do."

"Mind the store while I'm gone. And take a rain check on dinner." Steve tried to smile. "Here." He turned to open a desk drawer and take out a pair of keys on a ring. "I want you to have keys to my place. So you can...come over and water my plants while I'm gone."

"Steve, you don't have any plants," Danny said, giving him a half smile.

"I suppose I should get some."

"Like fishing?" Danny asked.

"Same principle. Since you can't see me off at the airport...." He leaned down and gave Danny a quick kiss goodbye. "Just this once."

Danny sidled carefully through the narrow aisles of the small nursery. *A potted palm for the lanai, that's easy. And this rubber tree would look nice in the living room. But I'd like to get him something else....*

He passed shelves of showy orchids, coral-colored begonias, and bright geraniums. *I'm glad the orchid Steve gave me in the hospital is still alive. How very Steve of him to just set it down without a word. None of these is quite what I'm looking for, though.*

He paused in front of a row of small plants with deep purple flowers and thick, furry leaves. The girl running the shop came over. "African violets? They seem shy, but if you give them lots of loving care they'll really bloom for you." She gently stroked one of the leaves with her finger. "A present for someone special?"

"Yeah," Danny said, smiling.

Steve's flight was half an hour late. He drove home through a steady rain. The prosecution of Dr. Fremont had succeeded, and his sister had forgiven him, but he felt drained and weary. Arriving home, he unlocked his door and was startled to find the lights on. An odd smell hung in the air, and there were noises coming from the kitchen. Someone seemed to be cursing.

“Danny?”

Danny emerged from the kitchen wearing an apron. His face was flushed and he looked flustered.

“Welcome back, Steve. I’m sorry about dinner.”

“That sounds bad,” Steve said, unable to repress a grin. He wiped a smudge of flour from Danny’s cheek and leaned over to kiss him.

Steve walked into the kitchen. The table had been carefully set. There were even candles. On the stove, however, there was a pot containing a sort of chunky dark brown sludge with flakes of black material mixed in.

“I wanted to make beef stroganoff, but the meat sort of stuck and burned, and then I think I cooked it too long...”

Steve dipped a spoon into the pot.

“Steve, don’t eat that!” Danny tried to grab his arm.

“Hmm, I think I had something like this when I was in the Navy. After they served it, the crew mutinied.”

“I’m really sorry. I’ll go fetch some take-out.”

“Wait, let’s see what we’ve got,” Steve said, poking around. “The noodles are ready to go in, and you’ve made a salad—now what’s in the fridge?”

A short time later, Steve set two plates on the table. “Voilà! Noodles alla carbonara.” He lit the candles and turned off the kitchen light.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to make you cook when you must be tired,” Danny said.

“I’ll leave the dishes for you.” Steve smiled at him. *You have no idea how good it feels to come home to a burnt dinner instead of an empty house.*

“I see you got me some plants.” He reached to touch the African violet sitting in the center of the table.

“The girl at the shop said it requires a lot of care, so you definitely need someone to have your keys,” Danny said with a smile.

Steve reached across the table and took Danny’s hand. “Thanks, Danny. For everything.”

“For what, burning dinner in your kitchen?” Danny said lightly.

“For giving me something to come home to.”

After dinner Danny did the dishes as promised, somewhat hampered by Steve’s arms around him.

Steve leaned down to lick Danny’s ear, nipping at the lobe with his teeth.

“Steve!” Danny exclaimed. “Stop that, you’re going to make me drop something.”

“I’ve never really liked those plates, anyway.” Steve started unbuttoning Danny’s shirt.

Danny tried to concentrate on washing silverware as Steve slipped his hands inside his shirt.

“Ah!” He dropped a fork into the sink with a clatter as Steve’s strong fingers found one of his nipples and started playing with it.

“Mm, Danny.” Steve said, kissing the side of his neck down to his shoulder.

“Did you wear this suit on purpose because you know I like it?” Steve slid one hand

down to Danny's pants, enjoying the feel of his firm buttock through the smooth greenish brown material.

"I...I didn't know that," Danny said, trying to remember what he was supposed to be doing with the spatula in his hands.

"The color suits you, but what I really like is that these pants don't leave much to the imagination." He slid his hand around to the front and ran his fingers lightly over Danny's rapidly swelling bulge.

"Ah!" Danny bit his lip. *Just the pot to wash now. I hope that stuff isn't burned on, because I can't take much more of this.*

Steve continued to stroke Danny through his clothing, his cock straining against the tight material.

"Crap, this isn't coming off," Danny said, scrubbing.

"Put your back into it," Steve said laughingly, pulling Danny's zipper down and slipping a hand into his briefs.

"Steve!" Danny cried, as the hand closed over his throbbing shaft. He could feel Steve's own arousal pressing stiffly against his buttocks.

"Leave the pan to soak," Steve ordered, turning Danny to face him. He pressed him back against the sink, kissing him with passionate urgency.

Steve stepped back for a second, breathing hard. "Hmm, what would be easiest on my knees?" he said to himself, glancing around. Steve relocated the African violet from the table to the kitchen window ledge.

"Steve?" Danny asked, trying to gather his thoughts.

Steve covered Danny's mouth with his own again, turning them so that Danny leaned against the table edge. He worked Danny's pants and briefs off, his thick cock springing free. "Here, sit on the edge of the table," he said into Danny's ear.

"Steve...what..." Danny asked, doing as instructed.

Steve stood in front of him, between his parted knees, leaning forward to kiss him. Danny took the opportunity to unbutton Steve's shirt, slipping it off him, and clutching his broad shoulders as Steve moved his mouth down, separating the sides of Danny's shirt and running his tongue over his muscular chest, then lower, over his taut stomach. He gently kissed the scar left by Auston's bullet, then delved his tongue into Danny's navel, eliciting a noise of pleasure.

Steve pulled a chair in front of Danny, sitting in it to face him.

Wait...is he really going to... Danny thought.

Steve had leaned forward, and was gently licking Danny's cock. Danny groaned, then cried out as Steve's mouth closed over him.

Steve moved up and down Danny's shaft, pleasuring him with his mouth, hand, and tongue.

God, that feels good! I've had blowjobs before, of course, but it was never so...just the idea of Steve doing this to me...I hardly dared make him do it in my fantasies.... He looked down at Steve's dark head positioned over his crotch, and had to look away to keep from losing control so soon. He leaned back with his hands propped against the table, biting his lip.

Steve reached his free hand down to cradle Danny's testicles, stroking them.

"Steve!" Danny gasped. "Steve, I can't...I'm going to..."

Steve stood up, kissing Danny's mouth, his tongue probing, his hand moving on Danny's shaft.

Danny clung to Steve's shoulders, lost in his building climax, until he came over Steve's hand in hot, sticky spurts. Afterwards he collapsed, gasping, with his head resting against Steve's shoulder.

"You OK, there, Danny?" Steve asked, smiling.

"Steve...that was...." he managed.

Steve kissed him gently, then turned to the sink to wash his hands. He cleaned Danny up with a wet dishcloth, then said, "C'mon, let's go to bed. We still have to do something about this," he said, gesturing to the erection straining painfully at the pants he still wore. He helped Danny, a bit unsteady on his feet, down off the table.

In the bedroom, Steve slid Danny's shirt off while Danny undid Steve's pants and pushed them and his underwear down.

"My turn," Danny said, guiding Steve to sit on the edge of the bed. "But I've never done this before, so I'm afraid I won't be very good at it."

"Don't worry, I'll teach you everything you need to know," Steve promised with a smile.

Danny knelt in front of the bed. *Before I met Steve this would have been unthinkable, but I've imagined doing this to him often enough in the past few months. Usually under his desk....*

Danny reached for Steve's cock. He leaned down, pressing his lips against the head, flicking out his tongue to taste the moisture there.

Steve made a noise in his throat somewhere between pleasure and pain.

Danny looked up to see Steve watching him, the deep blue eyes piercing. He lowered his head to take the end of Steve's penis into his mouth, stroking it with his tongue. Steve groaned.

He closed his hand over Steve's shaft, then lowered his mouth over it, adjusting to the feeling. He started to move up and down, awkwardly at first, trying not to scrape Steve with his teeth.

"You're doing great," Steve said, breathing hard, his hands clenched into fists at his sides.

Danny tried to take Steve's whole length in his mouth, but ended up gagging.

"Easy, Danny, just do what's comfortable for now until you get used to it."

He went back to using his hand and mouth together, his saliva lubricating Steve's shaft as he established a rhythm.

I'm sucking Steve's cock, he thought. Probably not very well, but, God, just thinking about it is making me hard again.

"Ah, that's good," Steve groaned.

Danny moistened his hand with saliva, and reached down to stroke his own shaft in unison with his motions on Steve's. He moved faster, occasionally knocking himself in the mouth with his hand or pinching his lip against his teeth, but mainly managing a steady rhythm.

Being connected to Steve this way...feeling him react when I touch him with my tongue, or change the position of my hand...it's amazing. I hope he's enjoying it as much as I am....

Danny took a quick look up at Steve. He had his eyes closed, his lashes dark fans against his tanned cheeks. His teeth were set in his lower lip. Danny moved more vigorously, sliding his hand from the nest of dark curls at the base of Steve's cock nearly to the tip, then plunging back down, his mouth following in its wake.

"Come here," Steve said, his voice uneven, as he pulled Danny to his feet, kissing him and reaching to stroke his cock as Danny continued the motions of his hand on Steve's.

Steve only managed to hold out for a few more strokes before he came, shooting jets of sticky liquid over both of them. Danny soon followed, and they held each other tightly as they slowly returned to earth.

In bed, after cleaning up, they lay together, Danny's head pillowed on Steve's shoulder. "Steve...that was amazing," Danny said.. "Was it...was it OK for you, too?" he asked, tilting his head up to look at Steve.

"Much more than OK," Steve said with a grin. "I wasn't sure if you'd want to do this."

"I enjoyed it," Danny admitted, blushing.

"It's the best welcome home I've ever had," Steve said, holding him close.

Danny, I didn't realize I was lonely until you came along and filled the empty space in my life with your warmth. Now I'm in trouble, because I can't bear to ever let you go....