

Nudge

by Wrestlr

[M/M, MC]

Synopsis: Gary is not satisfied with his marriage, and his friend suggests a solution. All Gary needs is a little nudge.

Disclaimer: The naked hypnotist strides confidently into your room. His lips curl in what might be a smile as he dangles his shiny crystal pendulum before your eyes and announces, "Listen and obey. If you are not of legal age, or if you offended by sexual situations, you will leave this place immediately. From here on, no matter how realistic it may appear, everything will seem like fiction to you, a pleasant dream where scientific possibilities and laws may change according to my suggestion. Now, if you are willing, sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride."

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1.

Around the time the early summer sun outside stood noon-high over the city and washed the buildings and streets with clear, warm light, Gary announced to himself, "Lunch," as he disconnected from the data feed. He left his office and, when he reached the street, turned left onto the broad sidewalk leading toward the park.

Gary was twenty-four, mature and sure of himself, with a thick lock of dark hair that tumbled down his forehead, giving him an almost carefree appearance. His features were strong, dominated by wide hazel eyes and a full-lipped mouth; and the muscled curves and hollows beneath his well-fitting uniform shirt and trousers showed his nicely formed male body. Gary kept up his State-directed gym hours, three days a week, and sometimes even exceeded them, to maintain his muscles and he was justifiably proud of his physique.

He carried his brown-bagged lunch. Linda had complained at first about his taking his lunch to work, just like she complained about almost everything these days, but he enjoyed cutting out to the park after a morning of

boring work, to sit in the park in the peaceful quiet and munch a sandwich, to watch people play basketball or tennis on the courts, before returning to the office for an afternoon of double-checking the computer's financial work for nonexistent errors. Gary worked for the State, just another office drone, really, but the government was one of the last employers clinging to the ancient notion that work was best done in a central office, so every workday morning he stepped onto the public transit vehicle at their neighborhood station, under the poster of the kindly looking older man who served as the avatar representing the all-providing State this year, and made the trip downtown, and every workday if the weather was fair he ate his lunch in the park.

He turned onto the main path into the park, and as he lifted his left hand to brush that persistent lock of hair away from his forehead, he caught the sunlight-sparkle from the wide, plain gold bonding ring on his finger.

"Also, we're saving money if I don't buy my lunch," Gary murmured, repeating what he had told his State-assigned mate so often. "I'm making pretty good dough, but it seems to go faster than it comes."

Linda had packed his lunch for him for a while, but lately, she always wanted to sleep late in the mornings, since her work-shift started later than his and she could fulfill her hours from their home, so now Gary had been making his own breakfast and sandwiches.

He eased onto a side branch from the park's main pedestrian paths, then onto a rutted work route marked *Maintenance Only*. He had found this access path months before, and he hike-stepped up the sudden-steep hill automatically, through the trees and heavy undergrowth. At the top was a small clearing, and he came to a stop beside a bench, probably forgotten by everyone but himself, that overlooked the lush park laid out below the low cliff.

Gary liked coming up here for his lunch break--the quiet, the breeze-shifting trees, the isolation, the occasional basketball or tennis players on the courts below. Ever since he had discovered this secret clearing and its bench, he had been drawn back here.

He sucked in a deep breath of fresh air and relaxed, unfastening the top buttons on his State-issued uniform shirt, and his fingers grazed the soft chest hair fluffed at the base of his neck. Then he reached into the bag and dug out a wrapped sandwich. Slouching back, he began to eat, and his gaze wandered over the broad play area.

The tennis courts were empty, but two youths were playing one-on-one basketball. Hard to guess their ages from up here but probably in their last days of pre-citizenship, Gary guessed, judging by their casual clothes. Probably skipping school, too. Both were stripped to the waist, their T-shirts tossed carelessly on the grass beside the court, and one was a white guy, tall and blond with rangy shoulders and a long, lean torso, while his companion was olive-swarthy and black-haired, shorter and more maturely muscled. They took turns with the ball, dodging and weaving and trying impossible shots.

Gary watched steadily while he finished his sandwich and brushed crumbs from his fingers, and he remembered when he'd been a growing-up pre-citizen, horsing around with his pals from his crèche and playing basketball or some other game, not giving a shit who won or lost.

The blond took the ball, faked, then charged beneath the basket for a one-armed lay-up. His feet left the ground, and for an instant, he seemed to hang in the air, his arm stretched, lean torso taut, sinewy muscles etched beneath sleek, sun-gold skin, shorts slumped low on the slim waist.

Gary stared, and an unexpected, sensual warmth rose in his guts and loins.

The basketball dropped through the net, and the dark-haired teenager grabbed it on the rebound, dribbled back, took careful aim and shot. The ball hit the backboard too hard, wrong angle, and bounced off, bobbing down the court, and the two young athletes howled and laughed and pursued it toward the sidelines.

As they reached the grass, they grappled and wrestled each other down playfully, and then they stretched out on their backs, shoulders touching, catching their breath, and then grinning and joking to each other.

"Talking sex, probably," Gary murmured to himself. "That's all we talked about when I was that age. Yeah, just talk--always gave me a hard-on!"

As if to confirm Gary's thoughts, the blond twisted his head conspiratorially toward his friend, rubbing one palm across the slick, firm plates of his own chest and working downward to finger the unmistakable columned fullness at his shorts-crotch. His swarthy companion watched for a moment, then reached over to stroke the blond's taut belly and suddenly shove his fingers inside the youth's waistband.

Grinning, the blond cupped the front of the shorter, darker youth's shorts in return, and they traded a few words. Abruptly, they swung to their feet and hustled into the thick shrubbery surrounding the basketball courts.

"Horny kids!" Gary chuckled, tugging at the growing hardness in his crotch unconsciously. "Sneak into the bushes ... mess around ... jerk off, get some relief for their cocks!" He shook his head, remembering how always-horny he had felt back then, just a few years ago, before he graduated into full adult citizenship, got selected for two years of compulsory service, and then at the end of that had been assigned his job and Linda as his bond-mate. Yeah, the first two years of being bonded to Linda--and her loving the sex just as much as he did, both of them always ready for more--had been great. Linda had been a perfect match for him, and having a bond-mate to keep his hot rod cooled down and his balls drained was great. The State sure thought of everything!

Closing his eyes, Gary settled back and spread his legs, and his fingers found and lowered the zipper on his fly. No one else in the park could see him up here through the trees. Perfect. Almost lazily, Gary reached inside and through the opening in his uniform pants, and his now-rigid cock fit familiarly into his grasp. He drew it out into the open, the potent shaft locked in his grip, the solid, deep-crimson crown bulging above his clenched fingers, and he began pumping, remembering when he had been a horny, carefree kid like the two he had been watching.

Yeah, before citizenship, he had been one of those guys in school, assigned to the sports team too, horsing around in the locker room, playing The Game. The Game: that was when two guys squared off, fully dressed, each protecting his own crotch and groping for the other's, trying to ferret out his opponent's balls and squeeze enough to make him give up, or maybe feel him start to throw a rod ... Ed had been one of Gary's buddies, from a different crèche, but practically as close as a brother, and Gary and Ed dug playing The Game at every opportunity ... That late afternoon in the deserted back hall of the gym when they had grappled together ... And Ed had yanked at the waistband Gary's gym shorts and thrust his hand inside ... Palm-cupping the already-swelling mass inside, then probing along the rod ... Ed's fingers gripping Gary's stiffening, needy dick and dragging it out in the open ... Gary did the same, pushing his hand into Ed's shorts and copying what his pal had done ... The hot, gut-churning excitement of feeling a blood-pulsing prick in his hand ... The sure, eager stroking of Ed's fist, Gary's inexperienced effort to match stroke-for-stroke ... The two of them leaning together, hoarse-breathing and jerking each other ... The searing pleasure in Gary's groin, rising fast, erupting in fountaining cum, Ed's free hand covering the belching cock-head to protect their clothes by catching each spurt ... Ed's ram convulsing the same way, and Gary's palm ready to catch the spewing foam ... The instants of ecstasy and totality, seeming both eternal and too short ... The slow drift back to reality ... The way Ed sighed "*Man, that felt great!*" ... Then the two of them laughing and joking about who had won The Game while they wiped their hands and righted their clothes ...

Gary sat on the bench, eyes closed, playing back that nearly forgotten memory from so long ago, and pumped his throbbing cock.

Ed. He had been a couple of months older and bigger than Gary--and one hell of a lot wiser about sexual things! They had both been plenty horny, dropping their pants in the shadows any time they found a few moments of privacy from their crèche-masters or the observation cameras, rigid pricks standing upright side by side as they locked together, each youth's hands sliding beneath the other's shirt to push it up and expose his body, exploring the maturing hills and valleys of the other's bare torso--the sensuous smoothness of his bare skin, the arcs of his chest, the sensitive pebble-tipped nipples--and, ultimately, the writhing, bursting satisfaction. Then, sometimes when they were sure they had that rare combination of privacy and more time, both of them would strip all the way and wrestle together, matching bodies and strength and masculinity, dropping their loads a couple of times before Ed murmured his usual *"That felt great!"*

Finally, a day they managed to avoid the security monitors and slip away from school, a day they spent together at the beach, behind some boulders and rocks beyond where most people went and hidden from the surveillance cameras. They had wrestled bare-ass on the sand for a while, then faced each other naked and prick-hot, and Gary reached for Ed's rod, but Ed stopped him, saying, *"Lemme show ya somethin' even better."* Then Ed knelt to lick and suction Gary's urgent erection: the wet tongue-laps over the bulging crown, the lips gulping hungrily on the shaft, the taunting mouth-warmth engulfing it. Gary gasped--had almost cum too quickly--but managed to pull out of Ed's mouth just in time. Then Gary had tried sucking Ed's rod without hesitation and found himself gulping down foaming, spurting cum as Ed climaxed almost immediately. And they had taken turns and sucked each other at the same time--*sixty-nine*, Ed had called it--returning the favor to each other again and again. *"That felt great!"*

Lost in remembering his pre-citizen experiences, Gary worked on his hard dick, urgent, nearing climax. His free hand fumbled his large, tight-sacked testicles, and all his attention was swallowed by the sensations centered in his groin, aching-tense and aroused. An instant later, his pent-up sperm can pouring out, and he felt himself overwhelmed by the pleasure, unable to prevent his usual long groan of ecstasy.

At last, he floated back to reality, slumped on the forgotten park bench, and when he opened his eyes, he saw his thick, heavy-headed cock lathered with cum and softening in his grasp.

"Crap!" he muttered, amused. "I haven't needed to whip off a load that bad since I was a damn kid!" He reached into his lunch bag and brought out a napkin, and he wiped his fingers and genitals clean. Then he relaxed with a sigh, enjoying the lingering afterglow that made every thought, every sensation such as the warm sunshine dappling his face or the slight breeze on his skin, feel like tiny ripples on the surface of a large, placid lake.

A few moments later, his gaze focused on the basketball court in the park below where he sat. The two teenagers came from the bushes, the tall, lean blond leading the way, the short, dark youth tromping behind him and still pulling his shorts waistband back into place. They picked up their T-shirts, and as they skinned them on, the chunky youngster said something to the blond. They broke out laughing and sauntered off, side-by-side, each with his arm across the other's shoulder.

Gary remembered when he and Ed been that age, and walked that way, horsing around and getting their rocks off together and never thinking about what would happen once they graduated into citizenship and joined the grown-up world. The State would provide, and that was all they needed to know.

"That felt great," Gary whispered to himself, repeating Ed's nearly forgotten words, and Gary pressed his exposed genitals back into his uniform pants and zipped up his fly. "Yeah, feeling great ... gettin' some relief ... That's the reason kids jerk each other ... and all that crap." And he wondered what had ever become of Ed.

He had not even thought about Ed for so long, not until now.

Ed had graduated into citizenship three months before Gary, and they had not kept in touch after that. They

had jerked and even sucked each other for months, but they had not kept in touch.

What the hell--that was just part of growing up, right?

Gary had be tracked for mandatory public service, like about a third of the new citizens, so when he graduated, he gave his two years of service to the State. After that ended, he had been assigned to his job checking financial records, and he and Linda had been assigned as bond-mates and gone through the bonding ceremony, and soon mortgaged everything to move into the house in the Happiness Estates division, and he began the climb up the ladder of employment success and was doing damn well!

He refastened the buttons on his uniform shirt, and he double-checked the schedule he had carefully prepared on his digital assistant the day before. After lunch: *Call w/ district office (bullshit the rank-and-file!) ... Meeting with the audit agency (push taking over all of Section 7) ... Conference call with Home Office ... Eve: get to bed early--fishing trip w/ Dirk tomorrow.*

Sure, he had scheduled his day, just as the State had scheduled his life.

But he had not scheduled watching the two pre-citizens horse around ... becoming aroused ... remembering Ed and their experiences ... beating his meat ... shooting his hot cum into his fist ...

"Shit!" Gary grumbled to himself with a casual shrug. "There's nothing wrong with a guy getting his rocks off when he's horny!"

He pushed his cum-stained napkin into the recyclable bag and headed back to work.

2.

Twilight shadows slanted across the sidewalk as Gary stepped off the public transport, just in front of the garish real estate billboard proclaiming *Happiness Estates--luxury living at a modest price.*

"Modest, hell!" Gary grumbled. "Our budget looks like the national debt!"

Gary no longer recognized his life. The State had always provided, so where had everything gone awry? Almost as soon as they were married, Linda had started bitching about their assigned apartment in the city and how they should move to "*a little place of our own*" in the suburbs. Gary had tried to convince her of the problems of jumping ahead of the State's plans for them, taking on so much debt, the long commute he would have to make to his job in the city, the uncertainty of moving from the social life they were both so used to, but--

Well, when she had fallen in love with Happiness Estates, he had given in.

Linda had wanted their own home so damn badly. Gary had wanted to make her happy because they were still newly bonded. And Happiness Estates looked better than most of the claptrap developments the State made available to new career-types like them.

But a house so early in their careers?--Crap! The State made apartments available in the city at a subsidized price for everyone who wanted one. He and Linda sure as hell did not need to pay for a big place like theirs!

Gary relaxed as he walked down Avalon Avenue, the central street of Happiness Estates, and he could not help admitting that he really liked living there. The "instant trees" planted along the sidewalks to impress would-be buyers had taken root, and the lookalike houses had been changed outwardly by their owners' personalities, thanks to coats of paint in new colors and changes to the landscaping. Happiness Estates had

stopped being a "luxury" development and was becoming a neighborhood, a place where the people were glad and proud that they lived there.

Gary turned onto Wellness Way, and he waved and nodded to the few people he saw along the street. He knew almost everyone in Happiness Estates, but his closest neighbors were more likely to be real friends--like Dirk and Kent whose home was behind his and Linda's, back yards abutted.

As he pulled into the wide driveway leading to his house, he could not help grinning at the handsome, two-story building, the trimmed lawn and shrubs, the well-kept appearance. It was expensive and a hell of a lot of work but, damn it, the place did look good!

Relaxed and at ease, he ambled toward the front door and went inside. Inside, the entry was cool and sparkling, and he dropped his keycard on the small table in the corner.

"Linda? Honey?"

He heard a tinkle of feminine laughter, and then Linda appeared from the living room. Instead of her State-issued work uniform, she was wearing the swirling dinner dress Gary had bought her for their last anniversary, low-cut both front and back, and her full, fresh-scrubbed features glowed with unusual brightness.

"Ah, hi, lover!" she giggled and threw her arms about his neck.

Gary blinked with surprise at her eagerness, and then Linda's body was molded to his, pressing passionately. He embraced her automatically, and her lips found his, then her tongue. Her mouth tasted of gin and vermouth.

"Hey, baby," he murmured, inhaling the perfumed scent of her hair. "What's going on?"

"I thought we'd have dinner--something special--just the two of us." She arched back, her belly still clamped against his, and her polished fingertips opened the first two buttons of his uniform tunic and brushed at the chest hairs showing at the gap. "A couple of drinks ... dinner ... then a little playtime ... like when we were first bonded ... Remember?"

"Yeah, I remember." Gary indeed remembered the excitement of those first couple of years, the pleasure, the satisfaction, knowing the State had picked them out as perfect sexual and romantic bond-mates for each other. Had that only been three years back?--It seemed so damned long ago! "Honey, I've got to get to sleep early tonight. I have that fishing trip with Dirk tomorrow. I put it on the calendar."

"I--I forgot." Linda's voice was suddenly hushed and troubled, and she wet her lips, leaving them lush and gleaming. "Maybe, if we had a drink ... You know ... Maybe just a quickie ..."

"Sure." He held her, his fingers locked in the small of her back, and he knew they had come too far since they had been newly bonded. "How about fixing me a drink while I check my mail? I'll take a quick shower, and we can have that dinner."

"All right." She laid the side of her face against his shoulder, still clinging to him. "I love you so much, Gary."

Gary continued to hold her, and he felt that she was more like a fragile doll than a bond-mate. Their relationship had always run smoothly as long as things went well in the bedroom; but lately the sexual part seemed the most broken art of all. She had not come to him this way in a long time, so willing and desirous, and he wondered if they might find the total sexual pleasure they had shared when first bonded. "I won't be

long," he mock-growled. "You're going to have a tiger on your hands when I get back!"

"Devil!" Linda laughed, and she pulled away, dancing toward the dining room. "I'll make a drink for my devil-tiger!"

Gary smiled; maybe this time Linda's mood would last. Crap, some real, old-school lovemaking again would be great!

He logged on to his personal email account, and a troubled frown creased his forehead. "More damn bill notices!" he grumbled. Dammit, their debt was out of control, their demand of material goods from the State far outstripping the value their work-services provided. He raised his voice: "Hey, honey, I thought you were going to close our account at that store."

"I'll do it this month," Linda called. "There was something on sale--and it was Kent's birthday, so I ordered one for him."

"One what?"

"I don't remember." Unconcerned, she appeared in the doorway, Gary's short bourbon in one hand, her own oversize martini glass, filled, in the other. "I guess we'll find out when he thanks us for it."

"Okay," Gary agreed, unsure whether to find Linda's usual "logic" amusing or annoying this time, and he took his drink. "But let's close that account this month. We've got to cut back."

"I know." She watched him taste his drink, her eyes sparkling. "Want me to wash your back while you shower?"

"It's been a long time since we showered together," he mused knowingly, then snorted. "Climb in with me, and I may not wait until after dinner to fuck you!"

"That a promise or a threat?"

"Threat," Gary admitted, heading for the stairway at the back of the entry hall. "I've got to get to bed early so I can get up in time for that trip!"

Glass in hand, he hustled up the steps to the short passage on the upper floor, the master bedroom suite to the left, the three other, unused rooms to his right, and he felt a depressing weight on his shoulders. Linda had been this way before, suddenly all-woman and ready-for-play when he arrived home, and then she would change in a moment, losing interest and slumping into a personality he could not understand--and could not make himself make love to.

But, maybe, tonight would be different.

Gary sauntered into the large master bedroom, took a long swallow from his drink, and set the glass on the bureau; he kicked off his shoes and socks and began to undress.

As he peeled off his shirt, the strong, well-conditioned muscles rippled over his shoulders and arms, the solid curves of his high-arched chest dusted with soft, sun-bleached hair. His stomach was flat and hard, and his skin glowed with an even, golden tan, all thanks to the gym-time he kept up. Casually, he stripped off his work-trousers and underwear at the same time, and his heavy, mature genitals swung loosely between his powerful thighs. He stretched, enjoying his nakedness, and then he doubled forward, straight-kneed, touching his palms flat to the floor.

Ever since he was a kid in the State-run crèche, Gary had worked hard and played hard, and he still liked keeping in shape. Jogging, three work-out sessions a week at the State gym, tennis on weekends with some of the neighborhood couples--yeah, he felt better when he was in shape.

Whistling softly, he strutted into the gleaming bathroom, flipped on the taps in the super-sized shower; the shower automatically adjusted the water to his preferred temperature, and Gary stepped beneath the warm spray, drenching himself.

He turned and twisted for a moment, then grabbed the bar of soap from the wall holder, and he lathered his arms and shoulders and chest lazily. As his hands worked lower over his torso, he closed his eyes and grinned, thinking about sharing the shower with Linda's sleek, feminine nakedness ... Thinking about scrubbing down in the school gym when he had been a kid like those two pre-citizens he had watched in the park ... Horsing around with the guys ... Ed ...

Half-opening his eyes, he stared at the thick foam drizzling into his crotch, and he remembered his cum-glistening prick after he had whipped off his load at lunchtime. Yeah, something about watching those two bare-chested studs mess around, and thinking about what they were doing together when they snuck into the bushes, had excited him ...

He slid one hand beneath his dangling testicles, and grasped his cock with the other, stretching the thick, loose shaft and washing the bulging crown, and he tried to recall the sensuous pressure of Ed's fingers jerking him off ... The throbbing strength of his pal's hard-on when Ed had fisted it ... The excitement of their male, maturing bodies stripped and locked together ... Ed's mouth on his throbbing dick ... Ed's virile erection plunging into his throat and spewing cum ...

Crap, that was just part of growing up, right?

Sure, most pre-citizens fool around like that when they're horny. Mutual masturbation. Circle-jerking. Experimenting. And Gary had been so damn horny today at lunchtime!

Shit!

Suddenly guilty, he dropped his genitals and bent over to scrub his muscled thighs and legs. He sure as hell was not a mixed-up pre-citizen anymore! And he did not have to jerk off to get his kicks. He had not thought about male-sex in years, not with Linda there. Bond-mates. They had been assigned as bond-mates for a reason. And he damn-well wasn't one of those weirdos who prowl around public places looking for quick partners on the side to "play games" with.

Shit, no!

He straightened and adjusted the temperature setting so that an icy blast pelted down on him while he rinsed off, wincing and twisting, teeth clenched. Cooled, he turned off the spray, palm-wiped himself quickly, threw open the shower door and grabbed the towel from the silver hook outside, and he pawed it over himself as he stepped out onto the bathroom floor tiles.

The first time Gary had seen this master-bath in the display model at Happiness Estates, he had laughed to Linda that "*Some mirror-loving nut must've designed all this,*" and now, his own reflection came back on him from the panels overhead and full-on and angled from the sides. For a moment he gazed at his strong features, his athletic body, his mature, masculine genitals, and then he shivered and finished drying off quickly.

He blinked. In the back of his mind gnawed that name: *Linda*. But why had the thought of his bond-mate started making him feel such revulsion lately?

Gary hustled into the bedroom, gulped down the last of his drink, and pulled on a pair of casual shorts and a loose-hanging sport shirt.

"Honey?" he called as he started barefoot down the stairs. "Dinner ready?"

"Yours is on the table," Linda replied from the living room. "I'm finishing my martini. I'll eat later."

Gary wandered into the dining room. The table was set for an intimate dinner--flowers, unlit candles--and a plate was steaming at his place.

"Crap!" he muttered. He picked up the plate and silverware, and he headed toward the living room. "I might as well eat with you, baby."

"All right." Linda was slouched back on the couch, shoes off, her bare feet on the glass-topped coffee table, her refilled martini glass in one hand. A rosy glow tinted her high cheekbones, and her eyes shone, focusing on Gary as he sat in the chair opposite and began eating.

"Hey, this is great!" he praised her around a mouthful. Linda was always looking up some new recipe to program into their auto-cook for dinner, seemed to make made a hobby of it. "Want some?"

"Later." She drank thirstily. "I should've remembered the fishing trip."

"It's a long weekend, but I'll skip it if you want me to."

"No, go ahead." She wet her lips. "I'm going to ask for a job reassignment. Maybe something in the city. I could ride in with you, and I could meet people and--and--and get away from being here all the time."

"Okay." He had heard Linda talk about changing jobs before, usually after a few drinks, but she had never done anything about it. "I thought you kept pretty busy around here."

"I'm so tired of these same walls." Linda's thoughts flicked and changed subject without warning. "Kent--he doesn't have to work at all."

Kent, who Gary always thought of as half of *Dirk and Kent*, was their neighbor and Dirk's bond-mate--and they always seemed to have plenty of money, so their jobs with the State must have paid pretty damn well, and Gary would soon be leaving with Dirk for a long fishing weekend, and--

"You want to quit working now?" Gary asked. "We're pretty deep in debt, and you still have a while to go on your employment contract with the State. I think we better wait, like we planned."

"I hate ..." She swallowed the rest of her martini and got to her feet. "I'll bring you a refill, darling."

"Swell."

Gary finished his dinner, and when he looked up, Linda was coming through the doorway, a fresh drink for him in one hand, and another for herself in the other. For the first time, he noticed the heaviness in her face beneath her makeup and the increasing tightness of her once-loose dress.

"What are you staring at, Gary?"

"You," he admitted, then lied, "You're a sexy woman."

"You're damn sexy, too." She passed his drink to him and settled on the couch. "You've got a sexy butt."

"Jesus! That's a new one!"

"Lots of girls dig the look of a guy's ass," she giggled as she fumbled on the table, found a drink coaster, and landed her glass on it. "You really want to go fishing with Dirk?"

"Yeah." Gary sipped his drink, then tilted his head toward her. "Why?"

"Dirk's got a cute butt. I bet Kent grabs onto it like crazy when they screw." She seemed to have trouble focusing on her glass, and she was beginning to slur her words. "Kent wants me to join that neighborhood thing he belongs to."

"I thought he asked you to join last month."

"Maybe it was last month. Kent belongs to a whole shitload of clubs and things." Linda slurped her drink, and a dribble ran down from the corner of her mouth. "Kent's a fucking animal. I bet he plugs Dirk's ass like a damn son of a bitch."

Gary snickered. "I'm pretty sure it's the other way around."

"Oh," Linda said, sounding surprised, as if the idea that Dirk was the one plugging Kent's ass had never occurred to her.

Gary wondered for a moment why Linda seemed so interested in what their male bond-mate neighbors did in bed together. But he had seen Linda get drunk before, knew how her mind fixated on odd topics when she was intoxicated. When they had first been bonded, she would nurse a single martini and relax and make love to match his hungry passion, but lately, she seemed to prefer belting down drink after drink, then suddenly start cursing, or talking about some neighbors' sex-lives, or both. Hell, Gary was no prude, and he had sure done his share of drinking and cussing. But lately Linda had been getting drunk a little too often.

"Hey, baby," Gary suggested, finishing his bourbon, "how about having something to eat?"

"Yeah ... sure ... soon as I kill this martini."

"I've got to get my shit packed, so I can get to bed early and Dirk and me can get on the road early," Gary said. Linda nodded, and he wondered if he was getting through to her, and he stood up. "I'm going upstairs to pack. After you eat something, come on up and show you how much I love you. I promise. Okay?"

"Sexy devil!"

"Damn right!" He started toward the kitchen with his used plate, chuckling. "We'll have a ball, huh?"

Linda didn't answer, and when Gary looked back, she was looking at him with mascara-smearing eyes, almost woeful. "I love you," she murmured, childlike. "No matter what ... I need you ... I love you, Gary."

"Hell, I know that." He sucked in a deep breath, hurting for her and, at the same time, annoyed by her drunken helplessness. "Baby, I've got to get to my shit packed for this trip," he tried to explain. "Otherwise, we could've had the dinner you planned, and--"

He knew she was not hearing him as she concentrated on balancing herself upright while she mouthed her martini, and he turned and, instead of heading toward the stairway that led up to the master bedroom, he walked back into the kitchen, to the door that led out into the back yard and the night air.

The ground was covered with carefully patterned brick, and well-tended plants and bushes lined the walls.

Gary was not eager for gardening but, damn it, he had put in a lot of effort and made the place look pretty good!

Dirk and his bond-mate Kent lived on the next street over, their back yard backed up against Gary and Linda's. Gary headed for the small gate in the fence that separated their properties. Gary and Dirk had put in that gate between their yards one weekend because, shit, Gary and Linda were visiting Dirk and Kent all the time, or vice versa, and walking all the way around the block to visit your best friends was a major nuisance.

Dirk and Kent had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the life of Happiness Estates. They had worked like hell at landscaping and making clever changes in the exterior of the house, which gave it a uniqueness the others lacked. Inside, they had torn out walls, repainted, and recarpeted until it was unlike any other home in Happiness Estates, and totally theirs. Also, Dirk had gotten permission from the State to build a swimming pool instead of paving his backyard with brick.

Gary sauntered through the gate and saw Dirk working the long-poled skimmer over the pool surface in the gathering gloom, and Gary paused, watching the man in silence. Dirk was a couple of years older than Gary, not quite thirty, and he had short-clipped, black hair and harsh, almost brutally masculine features. He wore a tucked-in T-shirt and khaki trousers, and his wide shoulders were etched with bulging muscles, his thick biceps knotting as he worked. His physique narrowed sharply from his massive, barreled chest to his sudden-slim waist and hips, and when he half-turned away, Gary couldn't help grinning; Linda had been right--Dirk did have a nicely shaped ass.

"Hi, Dirk. Ready for our trip?"

"Just about. Kent's got me cleanin' the fuckin' pool before he'll let me go. He wants to spend most of the fuckin' weekend swimmin', I guess." Dirk's voice was quiet and touched with a drawl, and he seldom reached the end of a sentence without an obscenity. "Hell, I should make you clean it--*you're* the one who's always bitchin' about bugs floatin' in it."

"Hell, the only reason Linda and I are friends with you and Kent is so we could come over here and swim."

"That's what I figured." A grin curled Dirk's lips, and he propped the skimmer against the side of the house.

"How's it been going, Dirk?"

"Same old shit. Processin' the new Civil Service conscriptees ain't as excitin' as bein' a big-shot executive like you are."

"Crap. I ain't a big-shot. You're probably making better money than I am." Gary was never quite sure what processing entailed, and Dirk was always a little evasive about the details. Probably just some boring clerical stuff as the computers did most of the work of processing whatever needed to be processed. Still, Dirk's job sounded more important than Gary's, and it obviously paid enough to fund the house renovations and to pay for a small cabin by some obscure lake where they would be going on their fishing trip. "At least you and Kent aren't eyeball-deep in debt like Linda and me."

"You just gotta learn to live with what the State provides like we do, wise-ass." Dirk dropped a solid paw onto Gary's shoulder, his usual greeting. At the firm-pressured grip, Gary suddenly remembered the two pre-citizen youths he had watched in the park. He wondered if one of them would be showing up in front of Dirk soon as part of a fresh back of conscriptees being in-processed for their mandatory Civil Service term. And Gary wondered what things would have been like if he and Dirk had been pre-citizens together ... Maybe Dirk had been like Gary and Ed when he was in his last years at the crèche, enjoying the final carefree days before he graduated into full citizenship ... Buddies ... Horsing around with the guys ... Trading growing-up talk ... Playing The Game the way Gary and Ed had done ... Getting horny ... Sneaking off somewhere to take

care of each other, like Gary and Ed had done ... Experimenting and learning ... Stripping down and sharing the pleasure and excitement of their maleness ... Letting his prick stiffen full-hard in a pal's hand ... Getting a blow-job when he was so damn horny ... Yeah, Dirk had plenty of meat between his legs; Gary and Dirk had been to the gym together, showered together afterward, and men notice things like that about each other when they are stripped down in the showers. Nothing wrong about that; just looking wasn't a break of his commitment to Linda. Gary remembered Dirk's long, thick-shafted prick bobbing over his loose-sacked balls, his barreled chest slicked with flat-lying hair, his dark nipples, his male sureness, and--

Crap!

Gary wondered why he was standing in his neighbor's yard and thinking about having male-sex with him! He was bonded to Linda, for crap's sake. What he had done with Ed--well, that was because they were crèche-mates, no girls around, so of course they learned using each other. But now Gary had Linda, and he was supposed to have outgrown that experimenting stuff.

He shoved the thoughts out of his mind. He needed to change the subject. "It'll be good to get outta town for a while."

"Yeah." Dirk shrugged. "Long weekend will be great. I used to camp out in the mountains all the time when I was a pre-citizen. My crèche was in a town in the foothills, and we was always going camping there on weekends. It ain't as easy to get away now."

"I know what you mean." Gary smiled to himself, remembering what he'd thought about earlier. "What were you like as a pre-citizen, Dirk?"

"Just another wise-ass punk," his friend answered easily. "Horsin' around with the guys in my crèche ... Sneakin' off every chance we got ... Always getting' in some kind of trouble. Same as you, probably."

"I wonder if you and I would've been pals."

"Probably not. You was one of them smart bastards earmarked for an office job, and all I wanted to do was graduate and let the State figure out what to do with me. Turns out, I'm really good at orderin' conscriptees around, tellin' them where to go and what to do." His fingers tightened slightly on Gary's shoulder. "But stop wonderin' about the past. As it is, aside from Kent, you're the best buddy I've ever had."

Dirk's voice was direct and honest, and Gary felt an embarrassing, almost sexual warmth fill him. "Yeah--me, too."

They stood in silence, and Gary was surprised when Dirk asked, "Want to take a swim?"

"Some other time," Gary murmured, remembering his promise to Linda that he would be back soon. "I still have to pack my stuff for tomorrow."

"Hell, I always skinny-dip after dark." Dirk grinned at Gary. "Kent won't be back for an hour or so yet, if that worries you."

"Some other time," he repeated reluctantly. Crap, swimming bare-ass sounded good ... Just the two of them in the darkness ... Splashing each other and horsing around ... Cock-swinging under the water, man-to-man ... Not giving a damn about ... "You still want to leave at five o'clock?"

"Sure." Dirk was already peeling off his shirt, and the first light of the rising moon glistened on the slick black hair spread over the broad arches of his chest. "And those damn fish better be bitin'!"

Gary turned and sauntered toward the gate in the back fence, and as he reached his patio, he heard the solid splash as Dirk dove naked into the pool. For a moment, Gary thought about going back and swimming with the burly neighbor, and then he remembered the lights blazing in his house.

Closing the gate firmly behind him, he trudged across the patio and through the kitchen door. "Linda?"

He heard no answer, and as he walked slowly toward the living room, he saw everything in the kitchen seemed untouched, Linda's pristine dinner plate still carefully placed on the table, the living room lights burning, melted ice cubes in Linda's glass.

"Crap! She must've really gotten wasted this time!"

Patently, Gary cleared away the wreckage, knowing that his bond-mate would not remember what had happened the next morning. This had happened before, and Linda never remembered.

Turning out the lights, Gary trudged up the stairs, and the master bedroom was dark except for a filter of moonlight outlining Linda's sprawled figure on the bed and her tangled dress on the floor. He heard her rough breathing, picked up her dress, and tossed it into the bag to go to the cleaners, then he went into the bathroom to piss and strip and pull on his pajama pants automatically.

He had never worn pajamas before his bond ceremony with Linda, but she had insisted--the pants, at least.

He caught his reflection in the mirrors walling the room, and he studied himself: the muscular male build, the young stud whose bond-mate had been so hot for a night of love-making earlier ...

Hell, he had screwed her when she was drunk before.

The last time, he had to pump his dick by hand before it had gotten hard enough--and she had not remembered the next morning.

He gripped the crotch of his pants and tried to stir his cock to hardness. Crap. No reaction. Fuck it!--What was the use of trying?

Gary shrugged and walked into the bedroom. Linda had twisted onto her side, facing away toward the far wall, and he slid into bed, trying not to disturb her. It was like sharing the bed with a stranger, not a bond-mate.

He lay back, his arms folded behind his head, and he tried to recall what life with Linda had been like at first. They met the day before their bond-ceremony. He had just been released a few hours early from his two years of civil service. She was a beautiful, sexy girl a long way from her home crèche somewhere else. His nuts were working overtime from the moment they met, especially during their mandatory one-week honeymoon that they had laughed and loved and fucked morning-noon-and-night through, and even after they started their State-assigned jobs the following Monday. He had still been balls-hot for her through the first gnawing worries about their mounting debts, her determination to move to the suburbs of Happiness Estates, and Linda had seemed almost completely satisfied with her bond-mate and her new home--but something had gone wrong since then.

Linda's interest had lessened. And so had Gary's.

Crap, she was hot to get screwed when he had a lousy day at work; or he had come home horny to find her intent on spending the whole night bitching about her own job; or he had something scheduled, a meeting or a workout at the gym; or she had too much to drink.

Gary focused on the rippling light patterns on the ceiling quizzically, then grinned as he realized they were moonlight-reflections from the neighbors' swimming pool where Dirk was skinny-dipping in the darkness.

Yeah, Dirk was sure a good friend ... Rugged and rough-talking ... Direct and honest and all-male ... Not giving a damn about things other people took so seriously ... Probably screwing Kent any time he wanted to ... Built solid ... Big, muscular chest with all that masculine hair ... Prick and balls flopping loosely ... Playing sports and maybe some equivalent of The Game when he had been a pre-citizen ... Would have been a good buddy, if they had known each other then ...

Eyes closed, Gary pulled one arm from behind his head and fingered the soft hair tangled over his chest, and he remembered the youths he had watched in the park during his lunch-break ... Not the sleek, lean blond, but the chunky, black-haired youth with him ... Yeah, Dirk must have been like that kid ... Messing around with a pal ... Both of them sprawling on the grass beside the basketball court and talking sex-talk ... The olive-skinned guy making the first move, knowing his friend was just as horny, and rubbing his hand over the blond's taut belly and slipping it inside his pants ... Knowing his friend would let him ... Exploring the pubic hair and probing lower to stroke the male-strong cock and balls ...

Sleepily, Gary slid his hand inside his pajama trousers the same way and fingered his partially swollen prick, remembering the pressure of Ed's fist around it when they had jerked each other ... He had not thought of Ed in a while, but now all those memories came back ... The sensuous pleasure of wrestling naked together ... The liquid warmth of Ed's mouth suctioning Gary's rigid dick ... The masculine taste of Ed's hard-on and cum ...

He wondered if those kids in the park had gone down on each other ... Or if Dirk ...

Gary woke the next morning in the pre-dawn hours when his alarm chirped, with a vague recollection of a crazy, satisfying sex-dream and crusted white stains on his pajama pants.

Just a wet dream, maybe--but, crap, he felt good!

3.

"Those damn fish!" Dirk grumbled as he swung to his feet. "It's a good thing I brung along steaks for chow!"

"Crap!" Gary rolled on his back in front of the fireplace and watched his bare-chested friend stretch and flex his muscles. "You wouldn't know what to do if a fish was dumb enough to climb on your hook!"

"You're probably right." Dirk grinned. "But as I recall, I was the one who taught *you* how to fish." He reached down to scoop up Gary's empty beer can. "Ready for another round?"

"Sure. Thanks."

Dirk crossed the main area of the archaic two-room cabin and pulled two fresh beer cans out of the small refrigerator in the kitchen alcove. "Y'know, the best part of a fishin' trip is just gettin' away from home and screwin' around all day with a buddy."

"Yeah" Gary murmured as he scratched the day-old stubble on his cheek. Linda preferred him clean-shaven, but he had not shaved that morning before leaving--running late and no time, plus he planned for this little vacation from Linda also to be a vacation from all the things she demanded of him, like shaving. Gary thought about the long, pleasant day: talking and laughing during the morning's hours-long ride up into the mountains while the auto-driver in Dirk's personal vehicle--another luxury Gary could not afford--did all the work, then the chores of opening up the cabin, tromping off with Dirk to the lake in search of fish, sprawling

on the water bank and talking and drinking and not caring if the fish refused to bite, coming back at sundown, digging into the steak dinner, lying stripped to the waist in front of the fire and having a couple more beers-- and he felt so damn relaxed and at ease, mostly because Dirk was such a great guy. "If we get up at sunrise tomorrow, we can probably catch plenty of fish for breakfast."

Dirk shook his head. "You can get up at sunrise. Me, I'm gonna sleep in. I brought eggs and bacon for breakfast, and the fish'll taste just as good for lunch."

"To hell with the fish," Gary chuckled. He watched Dirk bring the fresh beers, pass one, then settle facing the glowing embers in the fireplace, and Gary's expression furrowed with sudden seriousness. "I'm sorry we didn't get an earlier start this morning," he apologized again. "We could've gotten in some good fishing, but-- Well, Linda and I, we don't seem to talk out things much ... And she woke up before I could leave, and we started arguing ... You know."

"No sweat." Dirk drank and stared into the dying fire. "Sorry to hear you and the bond-mate are havin' troubles, buddy. You goin' to ask for a reassignment?"

Gary would have been outraged--such a thing was outrageous, a confession of failure and practically a slap in the face of the all-providing State that had assigned them as each other's perfect bond-mate--but Dirk had asked that question a couple of times before and the shock-value had worn off. Still, Gary refused to concede defeat. "I dunno. It's just the same old problems ... Spending more than we're making. Like the liquor bill for the party we threw last month--I didn't know we bought that much booze. And the household expenses; she always seems to need to spend more money than we have for something or other."

"She don't leave the house much anymore; that's what Kent says. She don't even come over to swim in the afternoons or go to the gym for her hours." Dirk was picking his words carefully. "Could be she ain't as happy with Happiness Estates as she expected ... Or somethin' like that."

"Crap, maybe it's me," Gary admitted. "She always seems to need something I don't know how to give her. We used to fuck all the time, and it was great--for both of us. Lately she's more interested in getting to the bottom of a liquor bottle than in having sex, most of the time. When she's had too much to drink--Damn it, it takes two to make a bond work!" He gulped down half of his beer, then grimaced at the taste. "That ever happen to you and Kent?"

"Not really. Just the usual little arguments now and then, like any bonded couple has."

"Lucky you." Gary stayed silent for a moment, then: "Ever think about what it was like before you got bonded, Dirk?"

"Yeah, sometimes, I guess."

"I keep thinking about it. About growing up, and my pals in the crèche and in school ... Messing around ... All the crap we pulled--or tried to pull. You know."

Both men fell silent, Dirk studying the sparking embers, and Gary beside him studying Dirk and the flickering firelight on the ceiling,

Gary said, "Linda wants to sleep with Kent, maybe mate-swap for a while. She's always talking about his looks, what an animal he must be in bed, shit like that."

Dirk snickered. "Don't know if Kent'll go for that. He's pretty much all-male, don't go for sex with women."

"Yeah, but Linda ..." Gary let his voice trail off, unsure of what he had planned to say. *But Linda ...* what?

"Gary," Dirk drawled softly at last, "I ain't as smart as you, but it seems like--sometimes--two fellers like us kinda understand each other better'n our bond-mates understand us." Another pause, then: "Wait here. I got somethin' in the vehicle that might help."

Gary stayed where he was on the floor as Dirk stood up, left the cabin. A few minutes later, Dirk was back, with a cubical metal case, about eighteen inches high, wide, and deep. Dirk sat cross-legged, facing Gary, settling the case beside him. Gary asked the obvious question: "What you got there?"

"My wiper, from work." He reached into the case and pulled out what looked to be helmet, jet-black all over, that resembled the archaic military helmets Gary had seen in old movies, from back when local governments had militaries, before the State took over everything. Bigger than a military helmet, though, and with a technological look to it.

"I'm not supposed to take it home with me," Dirk continued, "but my boss understands. Sometimes Kent needs a little adjustment to keep him in line."

"What are you talking about?"

"We use 'em on the Civil Service conscriptiontees, to wipe their minds clean before we give 'em their standardized conscription personas. Makes managing them a hell of a lot easier. I mean, a big mind-wipe thing run by a computer does the bulk of the work. We use these little ones"--he patted the helmet--"whenever we need to smooth away some of the rough spots. Like fine-tunin' them."

"You wipe their minds?"

"Yeah."

"With this?"

"Sure. But something like this little one is really more for makin' adjustments."

Gary shook his head. "You're lying. Nothing like that happened to me for my Civil Service duty."

"Sure it did. You just don't remember is all. You're not allowed to remember. We wipe that part too, when your service is over and we put your original personality back."

"Huh? No--No way."

"How much do you remember about your conscription? Where you went? What you wore? What you did?"

"Not much," Gary admitted. "But that's just the way it is. No one ever remembers much--anybody can tell you that. But it's not because I got my mind wiped."

"But you did. By now you've had something like that done to you at least three times. Remember your citizenship day? When you reported to your conscription center for your service?"

"Yeah?"

"Everybody else got their citizenship papers and got hustled off to get their adult job and residence assignments, while you and the others who were tracked for Civil Service got hustled into the transports and hauled to the conscription center, right?"

"Yeah."

"They got you checked in, made you strip down balls-naked, and had you line up for a buncha medical exams to double-check your fitness. Remember that part?"

"Sure."

"And then they hustled you into a big room where ... I bet that's where what you remember cuts out, right?"

"I guess so," Gary admitted with a frown. "I don't remember any big room, just the exams ..."

"Well, that room's where they did the first wipe, a bulk-wipe to take the 'Gary' part of you go offline and impose the standardized conscription personality that's completely obedient and ready to follow instructions."

Gary frowned harder but said nothing.

"And the second time you got wiped was at the end of your service period. That one erased the memories of what happened durin' your conscription and put the 'Gary' part of you back in charge and dumped in everything you needed to know for the job assignment they gave you, with a few adjustments that you probably wrote off as 'havin' matured' or something. I bet the next thing you remember is wakin' up and havin' somebody thank you for your service and tell you your two years were up, right?"

"Uh ... Yeah?"

"And they gave you your job assignment, and when you showed up for work that first day you already knew how to do it, no trainin' needed, right? Didn't you ever wonder about that?"

"I just thought I was using stuff they taught me in school, or--"

"And the third time? That was just a little adjustment, when you and Linda said 'I do' in front of your bondin' officiant, to make you one hundred percent head-over-heels certain you loved each other and were sex-hot for each other. Didn't you think it was odd how you was all of a sudden so obsessed with someone you never saw before?"

"Yeah, but the State matched us up because ..."

"The State's algorithms match you for compatibility to about the eighty percent level. But that other twenty percent?--That's all thanks to a quick zap from a wiper like this one." Dirk patted the helmet. "Take Kent and me, for example. Sure, he's hot, but sometimes he gets on my nerves like hell. If I let him, sometimes he'd just sit on his ass all day and not get anythin' done, or he'd sneak into the city to pick up some un-bonded guy to sleep around with. So, y'see, sometimes Kent needs a touch-up ..." Dirk lifted the helmet and slid it over his head. "After that," Dirk continued as he fastened the strap under his chin, "Kent's back to being my devoted bond-mate who's willin' to do whatever I say."

Dirk looked at Gary as a couple of tiny white indicator lights over the helmet brow began to glow, faintly, growing brighter. "The brain's a funny thing. Sometimes it just needs a little nudge and then it fills in the blanks on its own, makes the change seem natural, like things was always that way. Like if you like tomatoes and I made you think you like broccoli instead. Maybe you'd get a hankerin' for broccoli and you'd go out and get some and love it; or maybe nothing happens until the next time you happen to have broccoli and you think it's the best stuff ever. This little baby gives ya a nudge, and your brain fills in the details." He paused for a moment, considering. "Sometimes all a guy like Kent needs is a little nudge here, a little tweak there. Linda maybe needs one too, make her lay off the booze, go back to keepin' up her gym hours; make her think she sure feels better when she stays sober and works out instead. Maybe you'd like a little tune-up too? Just a little one?"

Gary blinked, blinked again. "What? No! Put that thing away! Even if that bullshit you're saying is true, I don't want a tune-up."

Dirk shrugged. "Okay. The offer stands, any time you change your mind." He unsnapped the chin strap. The tiny lights faded as he lifted the helmet from his head and eased it back into the case.

"Dirk--"

"We'd better call it a day, pal."

"Okay." Gary emptied the last of his beer and worked his way to his feet, feeling a little woozy. "Yeah, I'm getting sort of drunk ... and talking too much."

"There's nothin' wrong with talkin' with a buddy, is there? I've been thinkin' ... about what you asked me a while back ... about growin' up, before I graduated and got bonded with Kent ... about shit like that." Dirk pulled in an audible breath in the darkness. "The guys and me--we kinda took care of each other, if that's what you meant. And I think you need me to take care of you too. I'll fuck your ass, if you want, like you and Ed did with each other."

Gary shuddered. "Ed and me never did it up the ass. Just hand-jobs and some blow-jobs. I don't go for nothing touching my ass, especially not a cock."

"Bullshit. If you was conscripted, you sure as hell fucked a lot of ass and took dicks up yours plenty too. You just don't remember it. Part of the standardized persona is a real intense bond with your fellow conscripts--you'll take care of any buddy who is hard-up and needs relief, or let him take care of you when you get that way--no inhibitions, no holdin' back. Hell, you'd be eager for it. I've seen the conscriptees' dorms; sometimes it's a flat-out orgy in there, and everybody's all over everybody else, suckin' and fuckin' and takin' it up the butt. That's part of what helps keep the conscriptees in line--and just another part of what they made you forget."

"Bullshit," Gary repeated, then to change the subject he mumbled, "Sort of drunk," then grinned. "I gotta take a piss."

"You know where the outhouse is."

Gary tried to walk steadily out the cabin door. The outhouse was behind the cabin, but he did not feel like walking that far in the unfamiliar dark. Instead, he stood on the far end of the porch, enjoying the slight breeze on his balls as he took a spread-legged stance and aimed his thick, unsubtle cock out into the night air. The flesh-column felt warm and eager in his hand, and he let it sway loosely as the piss-stream sluiced from it.

Finished, he swaggered back into the cabin. The fire was nearly out, just final embers, glowing quietly. Where was Dirk? Gary called out, "Hey, who's sleeping where?" The small cabin only had one bedroom and one bed. Somebody could sleep on the couch in the main room, or maybe on the floor if a sleeping bag was available.

Dirk's voice came from the other room, the bedroom. "You can take the couch. Or the bed's big enough to share."

Nightglow filtered through the window to light the wide, white-sheeted bed, Dirk beside it, and Gary stood in the doorway carelessly. He considered for a moment. "Shit, I don't mind sharin' the bed. We shared it last time I came up, too."

"Cool," Dirk said. Then, "But before you say everythin' I told you before is a lie, ask yourself one question."

"Yeah? What?"

"Where are your clothes?"

"Huh? Well, I'm wearing th--" Except he was not. Gary realized he was standing in the doorway completely naked. He had taken off his shirt earlier, on the lake-bank, but his shoes and pants and the rest ... "What the fuck, Dirk!"

"Just a little suggestion I gave you. You took to it real easy too. Kind of surprised me."

"Crap!" Gary declared. After a pause, he asked, "Okay, so where *are* my clothes?"

"Over by the fireplace, where you was sittin'."

Gary could make out a pile of something over there in the darkness. Yeah, probably his discarded duds, just like Dirk said. But if Dirk had made him strip down, did that mean--?

"All that shit you said's real?"

"Yeah."

"Crap!" Gary declared, for lack of anything else to say.

Another long pause.

Then Dirk said, "You're not mad at me? You can get dressed, if you want."

Gary pondered this. If he got dressed, would that mean he was admitting Dirk had successfully embarrassed him? Or should he stay naked as a sort of *fuck you* to Dirk's joke? *Stay naked*, he decided, *and if Dirk don't like it, then the joke's on him*.

Yeah, Gary decided, he wanted to sleep bare-ass, like Linda would not understand, and now he had an excuse not to stay in his underwear while he sacked out next to Dirk. Gary tugged at the male-fullness of his genitals, and he slid beneath the crisp sheet covering the bed.

Damn, he was drunk, all right!

Lying on his back and staring up at the beamed ceiling, he ran his palms over his full-curved chest and heard Dirk shuffling about, stepping outside to take a leak, coming back and closing up the cabin for the night, coming into the bedroom.

Gary turned his head and focused on the shadowy figure, and Dirk's solid-muscled torso shone in the darkness, his barreled chest slick-coated with black silk, his stomach taut and hard, half-turning away as he peeled down his Levi's, no shorts beneath, tight untanned ass cheeks gleaming ...

Gary closed his eyes and felt Dirk ease onto the bed beside him, body-warm and not quite touching, and he felt the movement as his brawny pal scratched himself--burly chest, stomach, crotch, then relaxed, then lay still.

Silence.

"Gary?"

Gary roused. He said nothing. He had been half-asleep and did not want to wake up. He continued to lay on his back in the darkness, keeping his eyes closed, his breathing slumber-slow and deep, as if he were still asleep.

"Yeah, you really need it."

Gary did not answer, lying still, with his eyes tight-shut. After a moment, he felt the burly man turn toward him, and a rough hand came to rest on his shoulder. "Don't worry," came Dirk's quiet voice. "All I did was drop your inhibitions a little, make you accept it easier, so I can take care of you."

Gary thought of the thousands of times Dirk had gripped him like that, the two of them walking side-by-side or bullshitting by the swimming pool; but this time--Hell, they were both pretty drunk ...

Dick's fingers eased downward to Gary's chest, grazing over the soft, curly hair and marking first one firm-tipped nipple, then the other, and stroking lower. Sure, Gary knew he should tell Dirk to knock it off; only then the hand was touching his pubes, and what Dirk said about lowering Gary's inhibitions must have been true, because Gary could not speak or move to stop the fingers from stretching lower to find the swelling hardness of his dick ... like Ed had done when he and Gary were horny pre-citizens who had snuck away from school ...

Dirk eased back the sheet covering them and drawled softly, "Good thing I made you sleep naked. Saves me the trouble of undressing ya. Okay, buddy, looks like you really need this."

Gary shifted his hips, hoping Dirk thought he was still asleep, maybe having a sex-dream, and Gary's rigid prick rolled against his belly as Dirk pushed the sheet downward to his knees. Then the strong hands were working upward over Gary's thighs ... Moving without hesitation into his crotch ... One palm cupping his churning testicles ... Fingers dosing about his throbbing rod, holding it, then stroking out to the glass-slick head and back to the base. Once more, Gary remembered his youthful excitement and pleasure when Ed had played with his pulsing hard-on, but now it was Dirk ... Rough-and-tough buddy ... Both of them full-grown men, not inexperienced pre-citizens experimenting and learning ... Alone together in the darkness of the cabin bedroom ... Naked and aroused and drunk ... Yeah, they were awful drunk ...

He felt Dirk shift to kneel between his spread legs, then the unmistakable lip-pressure against the crown of his fist-held cock. Gary clenched his hands into fists at his sides, straining to hold back the hoarse cry of ecstasy rising in his throat, and a moment later, the man's tongue was lapping, soft as a caress, over the super-sensitive knob.

Christ, Dirk was--was--doing it ... Going down on him!

"Dirk!" he hissed, abandoning his pretense. "Awww--" He tried to move his hands and grip the man's head and wrench it away from his sex-hot prick ... And he could not! "Buddy!"

Numb and dazed, Gary opened his eyes and raised his head and gazed down at himself--his heaving chest, his muscle-quivering abdomen, the naked male crouched over his groin, tongue-licking his cock-head and nursing it into his mouth--

Dirk!

Sucking his cock!

Gary tried again to move his hands, maybe push Dirk away, but he could not release his grip on the mattress beneath him. The sensuous pressure worked down Gary's shaft slowly, tongue-swirling, spit-washing, and then the taunting suction began, traveling repeatedly to the tip of the column and back. He felt Dirk's palms

on his thighs, rubbing up over his hips and belly and rising to his chest, exploring and examining and raising his excitement, then retreating to his crotch to finger his tight-drawn testicles and trace the hardened ridge back toward his ass.

"Dirk!" he groaned, and then the churning, amazingly strong sex-hunger overwhelmed him. Gary managed to get his hands on the other man's short-clipped hair and muscular shoulders, but he was not thinking at all about pushing him away any longer, and Gary surrendered to the total maleness of the act. "Awww, crap! ... Dirk!"

Dirk locked his arms about Gary's hips and jammed his hands beneath his butt, cupping his ass-cheeks and jerking him upward, and Gary's torso spilled back on his shoulders, writhing and gripping the mattress again for support, gasping, racing toward the climactic summit.

So I can take care of you ...

"Dirk ... Gonna--!"

The ultimate moment broke loose inside him, and for an instant, his masculinity was centered on the express-train explosion hurtling the convulsing length of his cock, then smashing free. He howled and thrashed, lost in the searing ecstasy, locked to Dirk, his cum gushing into the man's throat, drunk and horny and--

"Ahhh ... Crap!"

Gary slumped back on the bed, and Dirk lowered him with unspoken gentleness, still face-pressed to Gary slow-weakening rod.

For a long, silent time, neither man moved, and Gary floated in a pleasure-filled world of numbness and exhaustion and virile satisfaction ... Like when he had first pumped off a load as a kid and felt proud about the mystic man-cum he had spurted ... His pre-citizen pal Ed, who had played The Game and traded hand-jobs, and then made it even better by getting them stripped down, naked and balls-hot, sucking each other off ... Horsing around ... Blow-jobs ... And just the other day, whipping off a load like a horny kid when he watched those two pre-citizens in the park ...

As if in a dream, Gary was aware of Dirk's movements--the lips releasing his fading hard-on, the brush of fingertips over his nakedness, the male body stretching out warm and close on the bed beside him, the hand on his shoulder--and he was lying naked against Dirk, the man's arms embracing him and keeping him close.

How long and dazed sensations lasted, Gary never knew, but he drifted back to reality lying on his side, with Dirk pressed heavily behind him, spooning, a solid-muscled arm thrown possessively across Gary. He pressed himself back against Dirk's barreled, hair-slicked chest, feeling very aware that both of them were naked, aware of Dirk's male-strong erection pressing into him as Dirk slept.

Gary opened his eyes. He had fallen asleep again and now woke to find himself rolled over, facing Dirk. Gary focused on his own hand resting on the man's shoulder, and he watched his fingers stretch and drift downward to stroke the black silk washed over the arched chest-curves.

Dirk was awake too, and his palms rubbed over Gary's back from his shoulders to his ass lazily, surely, sensuously, confident in his destination. Dirk had a morning hard-on, the solid and potent flesh-shaft throbbing against Gary's belly. Gary inhaled the masculine scent of Dirk's skin and let his fingertips find his friend's nipple, and then his lips were nuzzling that hard-tipped circle, so different from Linda's fleshier paps, tongue-lapping to the opposite side, sliding downward ...

Back in school, Gary had messed around with Ed, both of them horny, growing-up pre-citizens, jerking each

other off, then sucking--but they had never paid attention to each other's nipples.

Gary followed the fuzzy trailing down the muscle-plated stomach to the broad tangle of pubic wire around the thick, soaring cock and tight-sacked balls. He had never seen Dirk erect before, and knowing he was the one who had made Dirk this hard and horny filled Gary with an odd sort of pride. Dirk's hands pressed on the back of his neck, urging but not forcing. Gary breathed the musky scent of maleness, the taste of heat-swollen prick-head, the bulging crown, the sharp-cut collar, the vein-ridged shaft, all of it Dirk.

Gary opened his lips and felt the virile wood pulse into his mouth and throat, almost too deep and too fast, but he managed not to gag, and he heard Dirk's murmured pleasure as he pressed his lips into the crisp wire at the base. Gary sprawled flat between the man's powerful thighs, his hands rising to caress and excite the tensed, masculine torso, and he began sucking the male organ. Dirk's legs locked about him as if holding him even closer.

What Gary and Ed had done was always accomplished quickly, a rush to pop their rocks off in fleeting privacy; they had almost never had a chance to stretch out, make the experience last, take their time. With Dirk he could. Gary felt as he had plunged into a special, secret world, a world of total masculinity in which only he and Dirk existed, sharing more than physical oneness.

Gary sensed the man's mounting sex-hunger, and he was filled with a taunting desire to push Dirk into the wrenching fury of climax, to drink his foaming cum, to share the ultimate oneness with him. And then, too soon, it was happening! With a hoarse cry, Dirk gripped Gary's shoulders and jerked his hips upward, driving his quivering prick hilt-deep into Gary's mouth and throat, and an instant later, the first burst of thick, body-hot cum smashed free.

Dirk hollered in a way Ed never did, like Linda had not done in many months: "Ahhh! Cummin'!"

Gary swallowed the spermy liquid and struggled to control Dirk's convulsing hard-on, the flow of cum continuing in potent explosions. Gary was sucking cock ... Gulping down a man's inflamed tool ... Making him shoot his load ... Drinking it down ... And it was so damned good, because the man was Dirk!

"Yeah ... Gary ..."

Sure, they were both morning-horny, maybe still a little drunk from last night ... Taking each other off, that's all ... But it felt so fucking special!

Gary felt Dirk shake with the final aftershocks of his climax, and he licked the last bubbling droplets from the glazed cock-head before he released the slow-softening column. Dirk's hands slipped into Gary's armpits, urging him upward, and Gary let himself be settled against the brawny man again, his head pillowed on the muscle-thick shoulder, the strong arms embracing him, their naked bodies matched and held together, chest and belly and crotch, with the lush, musky taste of Dirk's cum lingering in Gary's mouth, the shared satisfaction, the warm, masculine sense of oneness ...

Gary drifted half-awake some time later, still morning but no longer as early. He had rolled away from Dirk, and he was aware of the man's soft, sleep-filled breathing, his naked body so close, his taunting masculinity. Gary shifted back to touch his naked friend, embrace him, finger-stroke his strong, mature torso, then palm-cup his heavy, relaxed genitals ...

"... Hey ... Hey, Gary ... Wake up, buddy ..."

A voice from far away. When Gary roused again, sunlight patterns were playing across the beamed ceiling overhead. He watched them for a minute, then sat up and stretched and yawned.

The bed beside him was empty, and Gary hopped to his feet. "Dirk?" He was cock-swinging naked, and his clothes were nowhere to be seen. "Dirk?"

"In here. Makin' coffee," Dirk's easy drawl came from the other room. "Want some, pal?"

"Yeah. Just a minute."

He hustled into the other room and out the door, to the edge of the porch. As he stood, legs spread in front of the world to empty his urgently full bladder, he remembered Dirk's mouth on his heavy-dangling cock ... Blow-job! ... Cock-sucking! ... And the taste of Dirk's rigid prick ... Cum ... First time since he was a pre-citizen kid ... Drunk! ... And the mind-wiper? What Dirk has said about his time as a conscriptee, about fine-tuning him to make him happy again? Had what happened? Surely not. A dream? All of it?

"Shit!" Gary muttered to himself, shaking the last piss drops from his dick and heading for the door. "Yeah, we must've got too damn drunk!"

He shuffled back into the cabin. Across the main room, in the kitchen alcove, his back to Gary, stood Dirk, still naked and cracking eggs for scrambling. "Sleep okay?" Dirk asked without turning around.

"Yeah. I think I'm still a little drunk."

Gary found himself staring at Dirk's butt. He remembered what Linda had said about women liking men's asses. He and Ed had never done anything with each other's ass. Gary wondered what Dirk's ass would feel like--soft and smooth like a woman's or solid and hard like a statue's? And the hole, how tightly would it squeeze around his cock? Gary felt his dick, still slightly morning-hard, start to stir and stiffen.

Dirk called over his shoulder without turning. "Coffee' about ready. There's hangover pills in my pack if you need 'em."

"Cool."

On the floor over by the fireplace was a familiar metal case. Gary tiptoed to it, knelt, opened it. The wiper helmet. So, not a dream after all? Gary wondered, as he lifted it out of the case, whether the crap Dirk had told him was real. The wiper seemed to be physical proof. He settled the helmet on his head, and fastened the chin strap. Gary remembered Dirk's hands caressing his nakedness, remembered Dirk's nakedness beneath his hands and lips, as he felt the helmet begin to hum softly.

The virtual user interface appeared, as if he was seeing the words hovering in the air in front of him.

New user detected. Start in Assisted Novice mode?

Gary blinked to accept.

One subject in range. Select subject?

Gary understood: the interface meant Dirk. He blinked to accept.

Enter instructions ...

Gary whispered, "I want him to do whatever I say."

The words appeared in the air in front of him: *I want him to do whatever I say*, followed by *Searching ...*, then: *Similar standard instruction package found: Total Obedience. Use standard package?*

Gary blinked to accept.

Confirm to proceed: Yes/No.

Dirk, turning toward him: "You're awful quiet this morning. What are you--?" He froze.

4.

"Ever been fucked, Dirk? Does Kent ever fuck your ass?"

"Yes ... sometimes ..." His naked friend was bent over the couch, ass offered, his eyes glazed, voice sluggish and quiet from whatever spell the helmet worked on his mind. Dirk had said earlier that the mind filled in the details around how to follow the nudge, so this must be what *total obedience* meant to Dirk. Gary decided he liked these details just fine.

"I'll use plenty of grease." Gary uncapped the tube of lubricant he had taken from Dirk's pack and smeared the shining ointment on his eager, rigid dick. Crap, Dirk was a big stud--big all over--and he looked so sexy with his ass aimed at Gary, the cheeks spread and hole exposed, willing to follow whatever instruction Gary gave him and ready to get fucked--and so horny--and so damn--

Gary grinned slightly, a warm sense of strength and sureness filling him. Confidence. He liked being in charge. He moved closer to Dick, moved in behind him, spoon-fashion, palm-stroked his buddy's shoulders and back and exposed butt. Dirk was bent forward, fingers gripping his ass cheeks and spreading them, so that Gary's massive, greasy prick-head could ease into the narrow cleft and poke at Dirk's puckered hole, and press gently forward, sensuously, then more firmly, pushing inward against the resistance of the tight hole.

Dirk made a low, involuntary moan but did not snap out of the helmet-trance.

The initial resistance gave way, and Gary felt his flesh-column inch into Dirk's ass, deeper, another inch, deeper, then a hard, stead press and he was in all the way! He had never fucked a man before, and now Dirk's throbbing ass was filled with his cock. He loved the way his cock in Dirk's ass united them, and he breathed the man's name: "Oh, yeah, Dirk! Fuck, yeah!"

Gary's body seemed to take over, and his rod pumped into Dirk. He wrapped his arms around his friend and held him, the masculine body clenched against his, and Gary's hands moved over Dirk's chest and stomach and into his crotch. Gary's fingers closed about Dirk's thick hard-on, his hand stroked in time with his hip thrusts, and it all felt so damn special!

Dirk's body knew how to get fucked, pushing back to meet Gary's lunges. Gary's body thrust and pulled back, thrust, pulled back, on and on, leaving him gasping for breath and clutching at Dirk and groaning in escalating pleasure, and too soon Gary felt his balls lock tight, preparing to shoot his load--"Ah, gonna cum, Dirk! Gonna--!"

And he was spurting his load up Dirk's ass when he felt Dirk's cum geyser through his fingers--

Crap, Gary thought, it was so fucking special, soaring at the same time as Dirk, cumming and skyrocketing into orgasm and getting their rocks off, both of them, together!

And afterward, lying there across the couch, drifting down from the summit, still locked together ...

"That was damn weird, Dirk," Gary said. He has told the helmet to wake Dirk up from the mind-nudge gradually, after giving an instruction that prevented his friend from being mad that Gary had used the wiper.

"It was like you were you and not you at the same time. Like fucking a life-sized puppet of you."

"That's what I was thinkin'."

"And you don't remember anything?"

"Nope. That's what the wiper does; it gets into the thinking part of your brain and just shuts down for a while." Dirk sighed. "You pissed off I used the wiper on you last night?"

"Not exactly," Gary admitted, "especially since I used it to get revenge on your ass." He had to admit to himself that he had enjoyed the night, sleeping bare-ass with a stud like Dirk, locking up to his all-male body, sharing their sexual hunger, and he tried to shrug it off. "Shit, I haven't done anything like that since I was a damn pre-citizen in school."

"From the way you creamed last night, I thought maybe you hadn't got your rocks off since school," Dirk observed, his expression solemn except for the amused twinkle in his dark eyes. "You sure popped a double-size load, buddy."

"And you damn-near drowned me when I sucked you off!" Gary blurted out, then realized that he was almost joking about what they had done. "Hell, let's forget it."

""If you really want to forget it, I can use the wiper to--"

"Not what I meant, Dirk. I want to remember everything we did together. It was kind of special."

"Listen, Gary, I ain't no good at feelin's and love-makin' and shit like that. I'm good at down and dirty fuckin', and I'm usually the one that does the fuckin'. Maybe we should just get cleaned up? Have some breakfast, head down to the lake? See if the fish are hungry."

"Not yet, Dirk." Gary cupped the man's cum-sticky genitals in his hand. "My dick makes Linda scream, but I'm not too good at making love, either--not to another man, that's for sure!"

"Shit!" Dirk kept Gary in his embrace, lips to ear, and his voice softened with honesty. "I ain't pushin' nothin'. We're both grown-ups--and bonded to other people ... But I'm puttin' you on notice: you owe me a shot at your pretty little ass too, and I aim to collect before the weekend's up."

"You're welcome to try, buddy, but I won't make it easy for you. And no fair using the wiper--if it happens, you have to let me remember it."

Gary wondered what getting fucked would feel like. Dirk had sure creamed when Gary's cock had been up his butt, so it must have felt good. But this felt good too, in a different way, just being bare-ass with a buddy, ball-scratching, and talking without bullshitting. "Doesn't Kent give you a hard time about using that wiper on him?"

"Hell, no!" Dirk grunted. "He don't never remember a bit of it. When he starts tryin' to tell me what to do all the time, or actin' like a spoiled asshole, I pull it out and--"

"Crap!" Gary interrupted with a snort. "I bet you can make him do whatever you want, huh?" He wondered what that would be like, fixing Linda's excesses every time she started getting out of line.

"Yeah, I guess so." Dirk stretched. "But it's different. All I gave you was a couple of light suggestions: to forget about wearin' clothes this weekend, and to maybe let down your inhibitions a little so you'd be willin' to get off with me like you used to with your school-chum Ed. Usin' the wiper to lower your inhibitions about

goin' bare-butt around here, you making me get fucked--hell, that's just for fun, though maybe it'll do you some good too. That ain't like Kent and me. The fine-tunin' I do to him is a little deeper, for the good of our bondin'."

The two men fell silent, and Gary felt warm and relaxed. There they were, naked and hiding nothing, talking and drinking coffee. And last night, they had sucked each other like a couple of horny pre-civilians, and this morning, not half an hour ago, he had fucked Dirk's ass right here in this couch, and they had both enjoyed it and climaxed hard.

Trying not to stare at Dirk, Gary remembered the intense sensations ... Their nude bodies pressed to each other ... Dirk's powerful arms embracing him last night ... And the feel of his own arms around Dirk's torso this morning ... The slickness of the black hair on the barreled chest ... The firmness in the hard-tipped nipples ... The muscle-taut stomach ... The crotch-scent of maleness ... The now-dangling prick when it was at full-mast, vein-etched and glistening with heat ... The hoarse cries of satisfaction and the lush spurts of Dirk's cum ...

"C'mon," Gary said abruptly, setting down his coffee cup, and he jumped to his feet, keenly aware of the threatening sex-heat rising in his groin and exposed genitals. "Let's get dressed and go after those fish."

"Sure thing, pal."

Gary started toward the bedroom, and he felt Dirk move in behind him, clapping him on the shoulder. For a moment, he wanted to stop, to feel the brawny man press against his back, to have the strong arms lock about him, to let the rough hands and fingers stroke over his bare torso, to match hard-on with hard-on, and tumble into that secret, all-male world he had shared with Dirk the night before.. But as they entered the smaller room, he broke away and reached into his pack and grabbed that pair of jeans he had cut into shorts last year. When he turned back Dirk was watching him and grinning.

Dirk said, "You ain't goin' to wear those damn shorts of yours today, Gary," and Gary realized this was not a question.

Gary thought about his shorts. Somehow he could not remember how to put them on. Where did he put his feet in them? And then how did--? "Shit," he muttered and tossed the shorts on the floor. "You did something to me yesterday when you zapped me with the wiper, didn't you?" This must have been how his mind interpreted Dirk's *forget about wearing clothes* instruction: Gary simply could not decipher how to put his clothing on. He shrugged, scratching at his ball-sack with his thumb. He could not think of a way to fight the instruction. So, make the best of the situation instead? "Hell, I guess it feels better, hanging loose. Well, if I gotta go bare-ass, you do too. That's only fair. Right?"

"Fuckin'-A right!" Dirk chuckled and clamped one hand on Gary's shoulder again. "Okay, let's go find out where those fish're hidin', buddy."

They did not find any fish, and Gary did not give a damn. They tromped along the path to the lake, bare-chested and bare-assed and relaxed. They tossed baited lines into the water and lay back on the grassy bank, talking and bitching and joking. The warm sunlight filtered through the trees, moving overhead and then curving toward the distant horizon, and Gary felt so good, not giving a damn if they caught any fish.

He closed his eyes and was half-asleep when he heard Dirk drawl softly. "About last night, Gary--that was damn special. I guess it wasn't the first time for either of us, but--shit, it seems like two guys ought to know each other that way if they're really pals ... even if they're grown up and bonded to someone else and all." He exhaled audibly. "Maybe I was wrong for startin' it--gettin' you stripped an' hard-up an' all--but I ain't sorry. Like I said, I guess I've had more experience than you--bein' bonded to Kent and all--gettin' my rocks off

with guys--" Pause ... Sigh. "It was so fuckin' special last night ... you and me ... But it ain't goin' to happen again ... Not unless you want it."

Gary kept his eyes shut, pretending to be asleep, picturing the burly, half-naked man lying back beside him, remembering that oneness they had shared in bed last night, and the feeling of Dirk's ass locked tightly around Gary's cock this morning, wanting it to happen again ... and fearing it. He was bonded to someone else--they both were. That made it doubly bad. But Dirk's rugged maleness ... Big rough-and-tough bastard ... "*So fuckin' special*" ... "*Really pals*" ... Yeah, pairing up with another bonded man was wrong, against the bond-rules, would hurt Linda and Kent, but Gary really wanted Dirk.

5.

Gary floated back into wakefulness, and the sun was a sliver of red-gold through the trees to the west. Monday, sundown on their last day. They would have to leave for home soon.

Gary blinked and rubbed his eyes and yawned, and he focused on Dirk by the creek, water-drenched and turned away and head-shaking the lake from his hair.

"Hey, buddy," Gary yawned, sitting up. "What've you been doing?"

"Skinny-dippin'." Dirk's thick back muscles ridged beneath his swarthy skin, and the olive-pale cheeks of his ass flexed into tight curves as he straightened. "You was sacked out, snorin' like a damn baby, so I went swimmin'."

"Hell, you should've woken me. I wouldn't minded a dip in the lake bare-ass."

"You didn't catch a single damn fish," Dirk growled, changing the subject abruptly. "I checked your line. You was snorin' so loud, you scared them away."

"I don't snore, asshole. And anyway, just how many did you catch?"

"Fifty or sixty," Dirk lied openly. "I threw them all back 'cause they was too big to get into the vehicle." He turned to meet Gary's gaze, and his expression shifted to veiled coldness. "We'd better pack up and head for home."

"Yeah."

Gary knew what Dirk meant: the sun was going down, their long weekend at the cabin was almost over, what had happened between them ... Well, shit, maybe this whole weekend would be just one of those things that happened and they would never speak about again. Forget it!

Yeah, Kent was waiting at home for Dirk, and Linda would be at their house when Gary walked in, maybe liquored up and confused and momentarily hot to have sex because that's what a bond-mate's for.

They packed up their fishing gear and walked back to the cabin, squared everything away, pulled on their shirts and pants and shoes, locked up the place, and got into Dirk's vehicle for the long drive back to Happiness Estates.

As the auto-driver navigated the roads, Dirk slumped back on the seat beside Gary, closing his eyes, napping.

Gary did not say a word, jaw clenched, keeping his eyes on the road ahead and the passing scenery outside his window, and not wanting to whisper to Dirk that everything had been *so damn special* about that

weekend.

The sky was night-dark, the streets bright with artificial light, when the vehicle pulled off the main road and onto the suburban streets, turned at Avalon Avenue, rolled past Wellness Way and slowed as it approached Dirk's street.

"Wake up, Dirk. We're coming to your place."

"I'm awake," Dirk answered quietly. "I've been awake all the way, just in case."

Gary considered whether this had been true. Dirk had surely seemed asleep. "In case of what?"

"In case you wanted to--" Dirk looked away, frowning. "Never mind."

The auto-driver braked the car to a stop in Dirk's driveway, and Gary stared at the darkened house ahead, a light burning in one window, the upstairs bedroom. "Kent's inside waiting for you," he murmured at last.

"Yeah." Dirk wet his lips, matching Gary's gaze. "I still gotta give him his fine-tunin' too. You wanna come in and watch?"

"I better not. Linda's probably waiting."

Dirk nodded. "It seems like some guys--like you and me, Gary--it just sorta happens that ..."

"Shut up," Gary whispered tensely. "I'm bonded to Linda."

After a long silence, Dirk was climbing out, getting his gear from the trunk. Gary stepped out too, and reached for his pack.

"If you're havin' second thoughts about what we did this weekend, I can give you a tunin' too? You could forget all about--"

"Linda's waiting for me at home," Gary interrupted, turning away. "So long, buddy."

Without looking back, he cut through Dirk and Kent's back yard, through the gate in the fence, and crossed his own yard. He wanted Linda, and she was there in the living room, meeting him with an unfocused smile and a martini-wet kiss.

"Hmm ... Gary! Didn't you shave the whole time you were gone? You're all scruffy. I missed you so, Gary."

"How about it, honey? Playtime, huh?"

"Yesss!"

Gary's prick itched in his pants, and he took Linda upstairs and into the dark bedroom. He knew she was stripping while he yanked off his shirt and jeans; and when he climbed onto the bed, she was lying back, naked and legs spread and waiting.

Cock-hard, he fell on her, pawing her nakedness ... Sucking her tits ... Teasing her with his rigid dick snapping toward her cunt ... Proving his manhood--

"Want it, Linda?" he growled like a pre-citizen in heat. "Want my meat in your pussy?"

"Fuck me! C'mon. Like when we were honeymooning. Gimme that big dick. Screw me ..."

"Yeah!" Gary found himself hunched up on his knees, straddling Linda's chest and shoving his head-gleaming dick toward her face. "Suck! Get it wet!" He forced the cock-crown against her lips, and he remembered Dirk's man-to-man sex. "Take it!"

Linda nuzzled the inflamed flesh-column, tasted it, then wrenched back. "Gary!" She stared up at him, wide-eyed. "That's dirty! You pervert!"

He slid down and fucked her, ramming his prick into her welcoming flesh-pit, hot and moist. He liked her gasps of pleasure, liked screwing her, getting his rocks off, proving he was a man and a good bond-mate--the best! He thought about Dirk and Kent, about the fine-tuning that Dirk was probably giving Kent right that second, steering Kent back toward being the kind of bond-mate Dirk wanted and deserved ... Yeah, Kent was probably sitting there blank-eyed and slack-jawed, like Dirk had looked when Gary used the wiper on him that morning ... And Dirk was probably telling him--And Kent was just accepting what Dirk told him ... And he would not remember it afterward--And--

Gary came inside Linda, surprised by the suddenness and intensity of his orgasm, came hard ...

Afterward, he felt--Well, he'd done his duty. "That was great, baby," he lied. Sure, he had enjoyed her pliant flesh, and his orgasm, but not the rest of it ... Linda had still been drinking too much, probably drinking all night, maybe all weekend ... And they were still deep in debt, and their problems were still there.

"You're wonderful," she mumbled, finger-stroking his sweat-damp shoulders. "Always feels so good ... Need to get screwed ... Not in the mouth, though ... Where'd you learn that? ... Perverted! ... Prick feels so good in me ... Let's have a drink and do it again, lover ..."

Gary wondered how many drinks she had had, how close she was to passing out tonight, and he withdrew his fading cock wearily. "I'd better wash up. Want a towel?"

"Gimme more dick ... It's not that late yet ... Fuck and drink all we want ..."

He did not pay attention to her muttering, and he stumbled into the bathroom, starting the shower without turning on the light.

The water was cool and refreshing against his nakedness, and he thought about washing up in the stream that fed into the lake that morning ... Having coffee bare-ass with Dirk ... Rugged, all-male buddy ... Trading blow-jobs that first night ... Experiencing all the pleasure and intensity with Dirk that he had missed in screwing Linda ... *"It seems like some guys--like you and me, Gary--it just sorta happens that--"* ... And fucking Dirk's ass that first morning ... And the way the wiper made Dirk act like a puppet, eager to do whatever Gary said, even take Gary's cock up his butt ... And not remember it afterward ... And Dirk had used the wiper on him too, the first night, and it was all a blank ... Did Dirk use it more than that once? ... What else might Dirk have done? The fucker!

And Gary almost laughed when he realized that he had tried to get Linda to go down on him, even though he knew she did not like to do that. And she had called him a pervert! Well, Dirk sure didn't seem to mind blowing him.

"Dirk's a pervert ... I'm a pervert too ... Aw, fuck it!"

He finished his shower and dried off, and he muttered "Fuck it" again when he almost automatically reached for those damn pajama pants he had to wear to bed because Linda disliked him sleeping naked. Fuck it! If he wanted to sleep bare-ass in his own home, he would sleep bare-ass!

Naked, he sauntered into the dim-lit bedroom, and Linda was curled up on the far side of the bed, fast asleep,

or maybe passed out--same thing. With a shrug he started down the stairs to turn out the lights. Yeah, being naked felt damn good, his cock and balls swinging loosely between his thighs ... Reaching down to play with them ... Scratching the soft hair on his chest ... Not hiding his masculinity ... And he remembered what Dirk had said about going around bare-butt at home. Over there, just two backyards away, Dirk was probably sitting in his own house, buck-naked--or naked except for that wiper helmet, and Kent was probably sitting there blank-eyed, getting nudged in the right direction and fine-tuned ... Was Kent naked too? Probably. Yeah. Naked and hard-cocked and getting tuned--

Damn it, his cock was starting to harden. Better think of something else before he had to beat off before bed!

Gary strutted into the living room to turn out the single light burning there, and he noticed Linda's computer-tablet on the coffee table, her empty martini glass sitting on it ... The screen showed a paused porn video, the sort of thing the State sometimes tried to erase from the online world but never quite seemed to make go away ... This one showed a good-looking male ... He did not know Linda searched out stuff like that online.

Intrigued, he settled on the couch, and picked up the tablet. In the paused video image, a burly, dark-haired man posed naked ... Sausage-hung ... Like Dirk, kind of. And there was a damp circle where spillage around the base of Linda's martini glass had left a damp circle on the screen, making a halo that passed over the man's genitals.

"Damn it, Linda!" Gary snickered to himself. "That's a lousy thing to do--putting your glass down on some poor stud's dick!"

And for some reason, that Gary was admiring the same male-naked image his bond-mate had viewed seemed even funnier.

He dismissed the video, and the online page in the background showed more images of the guy, and a series of several starring a different one, a nude surfer, and suddenly these images were not funny anymore.

The surfer was blond like Kent, and lean and tanned ... Like that pre-citizen Gary had watched playing basketball with a pal in the park ... A little older, maybe, definitely citizen-aged ... Smooth-bodied and athletic ... Slick-curved chest and sharp-tipped nipples ... Trim, tapering physique ... Proudly showing his long, ivory-columned erection ... Body pressed to his upright surfboard, the sudden-pale cheeks of his ass squeezed in as if he were fucking the board ...

Gary flicked off the lamp beside the couch, and a shaft of moonlight beamed through the window and fell across the tablet images of the surfer.

The youth at the park had been blond and lean-bodied, and Gary had watched him horse around with his husky buddy and go into the bushes together ... And Gary had remembered being a pre-citizen getting his rocks off with his pal Ed ... And Gary had gotten so damn turned-on that he pulled out his cock and jerked off right there on the park bench ...

Crap, that had felt good!

And he had felt good that morning when he and Dirk had sucked each other off! And the night before, and--

Gary pressed the shutdown command on the tablet.

Upstairs, his bond-mate was passed out and sleeping off another drunk ... Maybe he would not have been attracted to the carefree pre-citizen in the park if Linda--

No, if he was dissatisfied, it wasn't Linda's fault.

Shit, maybe he did need a tuning, like Dirk had offered. Maybe Gary should have taken Dirk up on his offer to nudge Linda back in line too. What was wrong with her? With Gary himself? Why were they so unhappy with each other lately? They were bond-mates. The State had chosen them to be together, each other's perfect mate. He could ask for reassignment, or maybe Linda was planning to, but that could get them both ostracized--the State had offered them the perfect relationship, and they had failed--fucked it all up.

But, crap!--What was so wrong with Linda--or Gary--admiring a good-looking, well-built youth like that blond in the park! Neither he nor Linda had snuck off to the city to fuck with some anonymous someone unbonded the way Dirk said Kent did, right? Well, Gary had not been sneaking off to fuck other people; he had no idea whether Linda did or not, had never thought to ask until now, and she was upstairs passed out.

No, wait--Gary had just had sex with Dirk, repeatedly, all weekend. He had to admit that was the same.

Gary had always worked out everything logically, and he knew he could handle this confusion ... Sure, he was bonded ... Up to his ass in debt ... Horny all the time ... Sex ... Dirk ... Too big a house in Happiness Estates ... Good job and lots of potential ... Risk versus loss ... Get the facts before making the decision ...

Damn it, that blond pre-citizen and his buddy in the park were so casual--like Gary and Ed had been, before graduating into citizenship--and then they had not stayed in touch ...

Dirk. Kent. Linda.

Make up your mind, Gary. Get the facts, weigh the alternatives, and make up your mind ... And do it fast! Indecision is going to screw up everyone's life, and that's a really dirty trick!

Gary sucked in a deep breath, slouched naked on the couch, remembering the surfer's nude image ... And Dirk's casual nakedness this weekend ... And the idea of Kent fucking around behind Dirk's back, like Dirk and Gary had just spent the weekend doing behind Kent's, and Linda's ... And Ed, dropping his pants quickly so he and Gary could sixty-nine before they got caught ... And sixty-nining with Dirk ... Dirk's thick erection, hard and pulsing in Gary's mouth ... And the way Dirk looked, slack-faced, when the wiper had him willing to do whatever Gary said, even bending forward and taking Gary's prick up his ass ... Tight ass ... The way it gripped and snapped around Gary's cock ...

Gary snapped out of his fantasy to find his hard cock in his hand, needing relief, and he began to stroke it. "Yeah," he muttered to himself, feeling his pleasure build, "gotta get myself squared away first, before I can square away anything else."

6.

The following week at work was rough for Gary, a real bull-buster, and he kept thinking to himself that the State was sure getting its investment's worth from him! His job kept him busy from the moment he walked into his office and connected to the data feed until well past his usual sign-off time. He barely had enough free time to keep up his mandated hours at the State-run gym. Maybe, he decided, that was a good thing because he did not have a chance to spend any time with Dirk.

On the other hand, he could not resist cutting out to the park during his lunch hour, hoping to see the blond pre-citizen and his buddy again. No luck--they must have skipped school only that one day; or maybe their graduation dates had arrived and they had transitioned to full citizen-hood? Had one of them been required to report for Civil Service conscription, maybe passed through Dirk's processing area? Maybe the lean blond?--Or his stockier dark-haired buddy? Or both?

No matter how busy Gary was, he could not forget those two bare-chested youths ... or the memories of his

own sex-play in high school with Ed ... or those days and nights at the cabin with Dirk ...

Oddly, Linda seemed to change abruptly. When Gary arrived home late and exhausted, she was bright, sober, gentle, and laughing. She had resumed going to the gym too, and she seemed much happier than Gary could remember in a while. He would walk in the door, and she would greet him with a smile and a kiss. He would shower, then they would have dinner, and finally head to bed, where she gave no complaint about him sleeping bare-ass naked, and she made no effort to pressure him into sex herself but participated enthusiastically the two times he initiated a fuck. Maybe she had reformed, Gary wondered, or maybe it was just a truce in the warfare their marriage had become. Or maybe--

"Honey," he asked her one night as they were preparing for bed, "has Dirk been by lately?"

"No, dear, I haven't seen him since before your fishing trip," she replied brightly, the same old Linda he had come to love so much.

Except that he had not come to love her, not really. If Dirk had been telling the truth, their love was manufactured, created by a mind-wiper during their bonding ceremony. Linda was someone he was bonded to, and slept with in the same bed every night, and had fucked enthusiastically during those first couple of years, but in fact barely knew.

That damned Dirk! Why had he told Gary these things? Now Gary could not stop questioning everything about his life with Linda.

No, he had to believe she was still his loving bond-mate, and he her loving mate. His love for her may have faded since the early days, but it still felt genuine to him. Yeah, after three years together, he had come to know her and come to love her. Maybe they had just gone through a rough patch. Hell, things were looking up again. Gary even put in an application to start working from home, like Linda did. He could connect to the data feed just as well from here, and without his commute he would have even more time to spend with her.

Gary was up early Sunday morning, pulling on his jock-strap, gym shorts, T-shirt, and running shoes, and jogging for about an hour before heading back toward his house. He found himself jogging by Dirk and Kent's place and decided to stop. He missed Dirk. They had been good friends, before Dirk had told him all those things; that Gary had not been ready to hear them was not Dirk's fault. And anyway, Gary knew his bond with Linda was real; maybe the State had created it, but it was real now. Nothing Dirk could do or say would shake that.

But Gary needed to know.

He stretched and cooled down a bit in the street out front of Dirk and Kent's house before he approached the front door and rang their bell. Kent answered the door. "Hi, Kent."

"Gary! Where've you been, asshole?" he bellowed, false-glowering at Gary. "Been a while. How you been? How's that beautiful bond-mate of yours?"

"Good--Linda's good--everything's good. How're you and Dirk?"

"We're good too. Come in, come in. Dirk said you two had fun on your fishing trip." The brawny, bare-chested neighbor wore faded, crotch-bulging shorts, and his swarthy skin shone with a glaze of sweat, droplets flashing on the muscles of his arms and torso, and he was grinning as he wait for Gary to come inside.

Gary stepped through the entryway. "Yeah, we did--a lot of fun," he said carefully, hoping smiling Kent did not ask what type of fun. Gary viewed the spacious room, the photo display showing a slideshow of Dirk and

Kent in suits, smiling and hugging after their bonding ceremony, and the expensive furnishings; and he thought of the cheerful little State-assigned apartment he and Linda had shared in the city when they had first gotten bonded ... And house next door in Happiness Estates she had wanted so badly ... And the mountain of debts and payments and bills ... And the troubles they had been having in the bedroom until recently ... And the sex he had with Dirk at the cabin ... Dirk ... "Where is that ugly asshole mate of yours today, anyway?"

Kent snickered at Gary's joke, holding a beer, seemed sober. "He's gone off somewhere. You just missed him. Said something about submitting some applications. You know how getting things done with the State can be--tons of forms ..."

Gary, not listening, used Kent's talking as an excuse to look him over. He appeared to be in his late twenties, Dirk's age, a few years older than Gary, fresh-scrubbed and cheerful, and he had a lean, wide-shouldered build. When he moved, something swung in his loose shorts, and Gary understood Kent wore no underwear--and was hung big, just as Linda had suspected.

As if mesmerized, Gary stared at the outline of the male shaft under the fabric for a long moment, and then he forced himself to concentrate Kent's face. He was handsome, hair a little longer than Gary's but a similar color. Gary thought maybe Kent looked like him too, a little. Did Dirk think ever about Gary when he was in bed with Kent--his bond-mate--sucking, and getting sucked, fucking a guy who looked enough like Gary to be his cousin, or brother maybe.

Gary felt a gnawing hunger in his groin, and he wondered what Kent looked like fully stripped and hard ... How he was hung ... What had Linda said about Kent? ... "*Sexy devil*" ... "*I bet he fucks like a damn animal*" ... What his prick would be like swollen and hard and--

"Drink?"

"Huh?" Gary gulped.

"Want a drink?" Kent turned over his shoulder. "Hey, Eight!--Bring my buddy Gary a beer."

From somewhere in the house, a cornsilk-haired stud walked past the kitchen doorway with an easy, secure gait.

"Who's that?" Gary asked Kent.

The youth, smiling slightly and wearing a Civil Service conscriptee's snug beige coveralls, smudged with dust and what looked like paint, walked toward Gary, holding out a beer.

"Gary, this is Eight. His assigned name's a long string of numbers, but I just call him Eight. Eight, this is our friend Gary."

Eight said calmly, "Hello, Citizen Gary."

Gary took the beer, said, "Hi," and, "Thanks," and as Eight nodded and walked away, Gary had to turn away to keep from staring at his pert ass framed in those coveralls. Gary turned toward Kent for an explanation.

"One of Dirk's conscriptees. He got a couple of them assigned to help out around here. We're remodeling the guest bathroom ... and maybe the bedroom too. We can write it off as a Civil Service assignment."

"Free labor? Must be nice." Yeah, the conscriptee looked like a horny twenty-year-old ... Like Ed had been--like Gary himself had been ... That conscriptee's ass--Did Kent fuck it? Did Dirk? What other "services" were these conscriptees called on to provide? Did Kent or Dirk mess around with them? Like that blond youth in

the park and his buddy, just messing around, like getting an itch out of their systems ... Cheating on a bond-mate was wrong, very wrong, but Dirk said Kent did it when he was acting up ... And Dirk had sure played around with Gary that weekend at the cabin, and vice versa ... Dirk had said a lot about--

And why could Gary not remember a damn thing about his own two years of Civil Service as a conscriptee?

Gary sipped his beer ... And saw movement in the hall entrance ... And looked up ... Saw the blond youth, lean and trim, and another conscriptee, bright-eyed and smiling, carrying something into the bathroom ...

Yeah, he wanted to get those conscriptees stripped down and mess around ... Maybe Kent too ... Like he had done with Ed back in school ... Matching hard-ons ... Jerking ... Sucking ... And then when Dirk came home ...

Too much!

"Listen, Kent," Gary announced suddenly, shifting nervously to hide the boner growing in his shorts, hoping his jock-strap hid it. "I, uh, just stopped by to say hi. I better get home to Linda ... And I need a shower. Thanks for the beer. See you later. Tell Dirk I came by." And he hustled back out the front door and disappeared back to his place.

7.

Days passed. Gary's overseers approved his application, saying they recognized what a good job he had been doing, saw his potential, and thus he began to work from home. Linda liked having him around at first, especially when he used his lunch breaks for quick sex that left her moaning and sweat-drenched. She even allowed him to push his cock into her mouth for a suck-job, though she did not deliver enthusiastically and left him disappointed and feeling an odd mix of horniness, frustration, and anger. But after a week she seemed to grow tired of his presence, tired of having him thrusting against her, as if wishing she had the place to herself again during work-hours.

Saturday, his day off, after his jog, Gary hustled into the house. "Linda?"

"The athlete returns!" Linda came from the living room, smiling tightly. "Phew! You need a shower!"

"Yeah, I sure worked up a sweat." Damn it, he wished she was in a better mood. Maybe then he could pull her down onto the couch ... Kiss and rub her to get her excited ... Impromptu ... Get their rocks off ... Like he and Ed used to do back when ... No that was kid's stuff, and he was an adult now with a bond-mate ...

"Dirk and Kent have a couple of conscriptees working on their yard. I saw them from the window." She turned away. "One of them's a blond kid who's going to be a real lady-killer when his service is up."

"Dirk takes his job with the service real seriously," replied Gary, stretching his chest and then fumbling out of his sweaty T-shirt. "So what if he brings in a few conscripts to help out with work on the house or yard sometimes?"

"Don't you think it brings the value of the neighborhood down? I mean, they're conscripts ..."

Gary knew some citizens looked down on the Civil Service. He chose his words carefully. "Conscriptees doing their service is a good thing. Keeps our society healthy; instills a good sense of duty and community pride. They're not just for digging ditches, and paving roads, and hauling trash, and stuff. So what if Dirk's bringing home a couple of conscripts for free labor? Think of how good their house is going to look and how that'll improve the property values. Hell, those conscripts are probably happy to do it--compared to the jobs

they normally get assigned, they probably think doing carpentry on the house or some yard work is practically a day off."

"Were you like that, Gary?" Linda's voice had a hesitant questioning, as if she were treading on unexplored territory. "Were you like Bobby and Tommy?"

"Who are Bobby and Tommy?"

She chuckled. "Oh, that's what I call them--the conscripts working on Dirk and Kent's yard. I don't know their names--I just thought they looked like a Bobby and a Tommy. Being in the service must be hard work. Did they work you hard in the service, Gary?"

He could not remember his two years, of course--no one ever seemed to, and the two conscriptees working on Dirk and Kent's house sure as hell would not either, when their time was up and they got released. Gary remembered what Dirk has said about the State and mind-wipes--

No, stop thinking about that!

He said carefully as he used his balled-up T-shirt to wipe sweat from his forehead, "Physical labor builds character--and I know for a fact I was in the best shape of my life when I got released from my service time."

Linda seemed satisfied with his answer, or at least was done talking. "You clean up, and I'll have the auto-cook make lunch."

"Yeah ... Thanks."

Gary grinned to himself as he went upstairs, wondering where the hell Linda had come up with *Bobby* and *Tommy* as nicknames for the two conscriptees. "Bobby and Tommy?--Crap!"

Chuckling, he stripped and showered, and his freshly exercised body felt strong and masculine and great. As he got ready to dress, he thought about skipping his skivvies--yeah, going bare-ass under his pants, the way Dirk did, probably would feel good--and he felt pissed off to find himself thinking about the rugged, what-the-hell guy who lived beyond the back fence.

Gary had not seem Dirk since they had gotten back from the fishing trip to the cabin. How long ago?--Two weeks?--Three?

He dug in the dresser, on top of which sat a small, expensively framed photo display running images of Linda and him smiling and hugging moments after their bonding ceremony, when he had felt like the luckiest man alive. He pulled out a pair of shorts--no underwear, not this time, freeballing like Dirk had been when he stripped at the cabin--then a fresh T-shirt, pulled them on, and when he went downstairs, Linda gave him an approving smile. Gary smiled back, feeling like a mischievous pre-citizen getting something over on his crèche-masters, since he knew Linda would not approve of him going underwear-free.

But she seemed not to notice the faint lines of his cock in his shorts. "Damn it, you're a good-looking man!" she announced, then dashed for the stairs. "Your lunch is on the table, honey."

Gary laughed as he sauntered into the dining room--Linda sure had changed this week; she was more like when they had first been married ...

Yeah, and maybe he had changed, too ... Staying away from Dirk ... Too busy to think about fine-tuning, or blow-jobs from his buddy ... Or that blond pre-citizen and his pal, playing basketball in the park, lying on the grass, sneaking into the bushes ... Yeah, Gary was getting along just fine without Dirk. Fuck him!

Gary found a neatly made plate of food at his place on the table, Linda's already emptied plate opposite, and he sat down and dug in, suddenly hungry.

Sure, what had happened with Dirk at the cabin, that was because they were drunk and horny ... Gary had been having trouble with Linda and had gotten turned-on from watching that blond youth and his friend in the park and remembering the schooldays sex with Ed, and then Dirk was just a convenient outlet. Shit, that was just stuff that happened, and none of it meant he needed or wanted to have his mind tuned-up with a wiper!

And he wondered why he kept thinking about it, especially if it were not true.

Surely it was not true?

He finished eating and cleared the table and went to the liquor shelf to get out the bottles--gin for Linda, bourbon for himself--and almost unconsciously he checked the stock. No, Linda cut back on the booze during the past week. Gary stared through the window, across the fence, at the bushes and sunlit patches that were Dirk and Kent's back yard. He saw a flash of beige, probably the uniformed arm of a conscriptee trimming the bushes or finishing up the lawn-mowing, and then nothing. He recalled the blond conscriptee Kent had called "Eight"--was he Linda's "Bobby" or was he "Tommy"? He recalled the blond's blandly pleasant expression and half-smile, and his good-looking features and his tightly rounded ass in those coveralls ... How firm would that ass be? What was touching it be like? Pulling down those coveralls to reveal it, touch it, taste it ... And fuck it! ... From there his fantasy turned to his sexual excitement at watching that bare-chested blond youth in the park ... Dirk and the taunting memory of their shared ecstasy and satisfaction at the cabin ... And Linda, who was everything a man could want--when she was sober!

Crap, he had always let the State make his choices for him, like he was supposed to. All the way along, he had automatically trusted the State to put him on the right track ... The right courses in school ... Civil Service conscription ... The job assignment with the agency where he had plenty of career opportunities ... His bond with Linda ... Happiness Estates ... Mountains of debt ... Her drinking ... Shit, he had been thinking one hell of a lot about sex outside of his bond lately! ... Could not stop thinking about it, in fact ... Ed ... What had happened with Dirk up at the cabin ... Watching that blond kid and his pal in the park and jerking off ...

And now, at just at the wrong time, Dirk had wanted Gary to make a decision that would have been so fucking simple a few weeks ago! ... Just let him use the mind-wiper ... Just a little nudge, and then Linda would be set right. Just an adjustment, a tweak, a tune-up, and then Gary would be happy! ... Damn that bastard Dirk! Why was Gary unable to stop thinking about this?

What would make him happy?

Or if happiness was out of reach, what would at least make him feel satisfied?

Crap!

He squared away the kitchen and walked upstairs to the bedroom, and Linda was there, pretty damn sexy in spite of the hint of heaviness under her clothes. She had been going to the gym again, but those extra pounds would take time to shed. Still--

"Hey!" He meant it. "You look great!" And he froze when he saw the bottle she held in her hand. She may have cut back, but obviously she had been hiding her drinking with a secret stash.

She laughed easily, secreting the bottle behind her as if pretending he had not caught her. "Just trying to look good for my mate. You're a sexy-looking devil."

On the dresser where he had left it earlier, Gary's phone pinged, announcing a message. By habit, he picked it

up and glanced.

Then read the message again with a growl of frustration and anger.

Linda asked, "What is it?"

Gary glared at her in fury. "You applied for a bond-mate reassignment? Fuck, Linda! When were you going to tell me?"

"Oh, that," and she giggled uncomfortably. "I sent that in weeks ago. We were having some trouble, you know, and I was talking to Kent, and he encouraged me to do it. I guess I was really mad that day, and I ... Kent said he'd have Dirk tell you when you two were off on your little fishing trip ... Dirk was supposed to take care of everything--"

"So that's why you've been in such a good mood lately? Damn it, Linda! Are you going to withdraw the request? Says here the order gets reviewed in two days and--"

The betrayal fueled his anger, threatened to erupt in violence, and Linda responded with rage too. They yelled. She threw things, some of the expensive things she had spent their hard-earned money on and driven them into debt buying. He pushed her away, and she fell on the bed. He wanted to punch something, or throw it, or smash it. "Damn it, I fucking can't talk to you right now!" He was turning around to leave when the photo display of their bonding ceremony flew by his head and smashed against the door frame. "Damn it, Linda!"

He stomped downstairs, out the back door, and across the yard ... Through the gate ... Muttering about, "Rip those meddling assholes a new hole!" ... Around the pool ... Banging on Dirk and Kent's back door. Yeah, they were the ones who encouraged her!--They were the ones he needed to punch! He felt angry--and strong enough to punch them into next week.

The door opened, and the blond conscriptee stood there, his beige coveralls showing sweat and dust. Gary shoved him aside and tromped inside. "Dirk! Kent! Get your asses in here now!" No answer. Gary spun toward the blond. "Where the fuck are those assholes?"

No sign of Dirk or Kent, just the blond conscriptee staring at Gary. In the hallway opposite stood the dark-haired one, looking confused; he was bare-chested, the top of his coveralls bunched around his waist, a nail-gun in his hands.

"They aren't here, Citizen," the blond said pleasantly. "They've gone away for the weekend."

"Fuck! I--" Gary broke off, tight-clenching his fists, needing to rage against something, someone, but--

"Pardon me, Gary," spoke the blond, addressing Gary with a familiarity that breached the required protocol, "but you're upset. How may we help?"

Gary gasped for air. "I--I--Linda ..."

The blond--Eight, Kent had called him--dared to put his hand on Gary's arm, and Gary pulled away with a snarl. Where would his fury go if he could not--

Eight tried again, gripping more strongly, and pulled Gary into an awkward hug. Gary wanted to push away, maybe shove the conscriptee through a wall, but his anger broke, sharp pieces like pain and sadness, and he found himself letting Eight hold him. From behind, Gary felt the shorter dark-haired conscriptee's arms going around him, felt the youth's body pressed to his back. Gary found himself easing his own arms around Eight,

sobbing, and he pressed his face into Eight's shoulder so his tears would not be seen.

Eight said quietly, "The conscript-master said you were a brother-conscript once. Whatever you need, we're here. You're one of us."

Gary accepted the quiet comfort of the two's bodies, warm and male-strong, against his. He muttered into Eight's shoulder, "Fucking Dirk ... Supposed to take care of everything? Crap!"

How long had they stood like this, Gary crying and them comforting? Gary became aware of something against the back of his thigh, where his skin was bare below the leg-opening of his shorts: the rough feel of the coveralls and an odd stiff something. Was the dark-haired one pressing a hard-on into Gary? What had Dirk said about conscriptees getting off together, taking care of each other? And he himself had heard rumors of people who used conscriptees for sex. The thought made Gary's cock twitch and begin to swell.

Gary sniffed, and found his tears had stopped. He raised his head, found Eight regarding him with the standard placid conscriptee's smile. Gary's hands slid lower on the blond's body, and he watched Eight's expression carefully as his touch reached the small of the blond's back. A slight uptick in the smile, an almost imperceptible nod. From behind Gary, the dark-haired youth pressed in firmer--definitely a hard-on--and Gary knew the other conscriptee understood. The sex-pressure heated Gary's crotch. Yeah, he wanted to get Eight and his buddy stripped down, and mess around with them ... Like with Ed back in high school ... Each matching his hard-ons against the others' ... Jerking ... Sucking ... Like with Dirk at the cabin--

Crap! Fucking Dirk!

Eight would be eighteen or nineteen, almost as tall as Gary, with the clean regulation haircut all conscriptees wore, handsome features and a strong, maturing physique outlined beneath his coveralls. His shoulders were wide and solid, and his torso narrowed sleekly to his slim waist and hips. The blond's body slipped down against Gary's, kneeling, and Gary closed his eyes, letting the dark one hold him from behind, as he felt the blond's fingers sliding his shorts down, freeing Gary's stiff dick. A brief lick, another longer, and the preliminaries were over; Gary felt the blond's lips encircle his eager cock-head and start their journey down the shaft. The blond moaned, appreciating Gary's length and girth in his mouth. The blond had a job to do, and he was going to do it well.

The dark-haired one tugged upward on Gary's shirt, and Gary cooperated by lifting his arms, let the conscriptee lift off his shirt, baring his torso. The youth stepped back, and Gary almost staggered as that supporting body-pressure suddenly released him. Dark stripped his coveralls the rest of the way down his body and tugged off his boots and socks, and stepped out of the last of his clothing, naked, and his frame was even more athletically developed than Eight's. Gary found he was coming to appreciate how sexy a guy's butt could be. Linda had talked that time about how "cute" Dirk's tail was ... Dark's looked like Dirk's, that weekend at the cabin, when they had---Dirk bent forward--*total obedience*--

No, best not to think about that.

Dark's wide shoulders blended into the slick, flat-curved arcs of his chest, his small nipples cleanly marked at each side, and ridges of taut muscle striating his trim stomach and belly. His bronze-tanned physique gleamed in the soft afternoon light. His chest showed a dusting of hair, and a trickle of fuzz drizzled downward past his cratered navel to spread into his pubes. Unconsciously, Gary glanced down at Dark's long, slim cock tumbling between his sturdy thighs and half-covering his loose-swinging testicles, the arrowhead crown cleanly exposed--and when Gary looked up, Dark was looking back at him evenly with the standard blank half-smile all the conscriptees wore. Gary wondered whether he had borne the same expression during his own two years in the service. Yeah, probably.

Hell, Gary decided, might as well fuck them. In a couple of years when their service is over, they won't remember a thing, just like I don't. And at the cabin, Dirk had said something about how conscriptees fucked each other all the time. Damn that fucking Dirk--

Gary hesitated, then dropped his hand on Dark's bare shoulder, and an electric shock of excitement tingled through him. The youth's skin was velvet-smooth, and Gary watched his fingertips glide down to trace the youth's firm muscle-plates and hard-tipped nipples.

"Mmm," Dark moaned murmured, and Gary moaned too as Eight ran his fingers up Gary's thigh to cup under his balls. Eight's mouth sank to the root of Gary's surging cock.

Almost lazily, the dark-haired youth moved closer, and Gary felt his breath catch in his throat. Dark's prick stick up stiffly from his hips, his balls pulled up tight at the base of the shaft. "You're built like a swimmer," Gary mumbled, thinking aloud. "My buddy back in school--Ed--we used to go skinny-dipping sometimes, when we could get away with it." He reached for Dark's rod, closed his fingers around it. "Ed and I did a hell of a lot more than just swim together."

"You've got a plenty big dick, Citizen Gary," Dark said. "Conscriptee Alpha-2-4-4-Sigma-7-1-8 likes big dicks."

That string of digits must have been Eight's conscriptee designation. No wonder Kent had nicknamed him Eight. "I don't know your name," Gary said, then, "Oh, fuck!" as Eight's tongue did something that felt especially great along the underside of Gary's cock-head.

"I am Conscriptee Alpha-2-4-3-Xray-2-7-2," Dark replied, speaking in the same calm manner as Eight.

"Don't you use your real name?"

"We are Conscripts. We have Conscript names."

"You don't remember anything about before?--Before you graduated and started Civil Service?"

"No. The State provides for us while we are in its service."

Gary remembered what Dirk said about mind-wipes and the implanted standard Conscriptee persona. And if they had the same persona in their heads, did that mean--

Best not to think about that, not if he wanted to keep his hard-on.

"But Citizen Kent calls me Two, if you prefer to call me that."

Two? Gary stared at the cock in his hand. Obviously Kent named them by their last digit, not by their cock sizes, because Two's was a good seven inches long and almost too thick for Gary to get his fingers around. He wondered what Eight's erection would look like.

Eight grinned up from the thick, potent flesh-column that had just left his mouth, as he wrapped his hand around it and stroked it tauntingly. "We should get undressed. Follow me."

Gary's legs were hobbled by his shorts bunched at his calves. When Eight pulled back farther, Gary stripped off his shoes and shorts, and he watched with direct sex-hunger as the blond shrugged out of his beige coveralls. Prick-bobbing, Gary followed Eight into a bedroom, more simply furnished than the rest of the house. Eight guided Gary onto the basic mattress and sheets, then moved closer and clamped against him--like Ed had done when they were horny and found some privacy, just messing around, back in school--

"Yeah!" Gary barked, letting the naked youth locked against him, and Gary embraced him back, hungrily.
"Let's go."

They writhed together, hard-on matching hard-on ... Eight was a sleek, satin-skinned blond youth ... Like that stud Gary had seen in the park ... Ed ... Dirk--

No, Dirk was full-grown and bonded and--

Dirk had gotten Gary drunk at the cabin--maybe that was it--drunk enough to trade blow-jobs!

Eight rolled Gary back and lip-nibbled his chest hairs and nipples ... and squirmed downward ... Lean, blond youth licking and sucking expertly, not a beginner like Gary had been at that age, fumbling around and experimenting and following Ed's lead! ... And Gary pawed Eight's body roughly, because Eight was Dirk's charge, in Dirk's house, and Eight seemed to understand Gary needed to release his anger ...

"Agh!" Gary yelped as he felt Eight's warm, moist tongue lap into his groin, and he shuddered as the erotic sensations swirled over him. "Keee-rap!" He raised up on his elbows and stared down at the blond-headed body sprawled between his spread legs--wide shoulders, muscle-etched back, tapering torso, narrowed hips, tight ass cheeks stuck up in the air, lips and tongue working over Gary's wrinkle-sacked testicles, sucking his balls, licking up his full-hard dick, and gulping down on it! Gary watched Eight take his meat-sword all the way to the hilt, suction it with sureness, then pull free and look up to meet his gaze. "Gary, want to stick your cock up my butt?"

"He likes it," Two, nearly forgotten, said from beside the bed. "Here," and he passed a tube of lubricant to Gary.

"Yeah!" Gary only fucked one guy in the ass before, and that was Dirk at the cabin, but--shit, why not?
"Okay, pal!"

Gary twisted open the lubricant, applied a thick coating to his rigid cock, and when he turned back, Eight was already on his hands and knees, his trim butt offered. Gary moved into position behind the youth, and he watched his palms stroke over the granite-slick ass cheeks.

"Let me get it started for you, Citizen" Two whispered huskily, and he reached in to aim the glistening crimson head of Gary's prick toward Eight's shadowed crack, steering the tip into the warm, hairless cleft.
"He likes big dicks. We all do."

Eight said over his shoulder, "Take it easy ... I'll need a minute to get used to all that meat."

Gary shivered as he felt his sensitive cock-crown poke against the hidden pucker, and for an instant it was almost funny! The damn conscriptees knew so much more about this kind of sex than Gary did!

"Sure, buddy." Gary pressed slightly, remembering how he had forced himself to go slowly when he had first pushed his big dick into Linda's cunt, and fucked Dirk's ass, and he did not want to injure the youth, not badly anyway. "I'll take it easy ... Slip it into you easy."

"Hell, I can take it, Citizen!" Eight's voice lost its youthful tone, and he squirmed his asshole back against Gary's hard-on. "Gimme that big dick!"

"Yeah!"

Gary shoved harder ... And felt the flesh-ring spread ... Eight knew how to get fucked--knew how to relax his ring and open himself. Gary felt the ass-lips slithering over his greased cock-head ... Felt them clamping

securely about the collar of his rod ...

"Agh--Gary! ... More! ... Slow ... All the way!"

"Damn right!" Gary clenched his eyes shut and grit his teeth, and he did not give a shit about anything except plugging his horny rod deeper and deeper into the welcoming body-warmth.

"Yeah, give it to me, Citizen!"

They were no longer man and youth, or Citizen and Conscriptee. Eight was groaning and cursing like he could not get enough of Gary's cock, and Gary was inching the last length of his hard-on all the way into the blond stud's guts.

"Take it, Eight!"

"Son of a bitch!" The conscriptee gasped. "Sorry, Citizen Gary--I didn't mean to offend. Just--It's a lot to take!"

"Want me to quit?"

"Hell, no!" Eight jammed his tail back into Gary's crotch. "Fuck me, damn it! Just not so rough."

Gary hip-pumped automatically, partially withdrawing his powerful rod, then driving it into the clenching flesh-warmth again--and again--and again. Unconsciously, he ran his hands up over the youth's muscle-ridged back, gripped his shoulders, and piston-hammered into his butt, wishing it was Dirk's ass he was punishing instead.

Eight cursed and groaned--and pushed his ass back to meet each thrust.

Gary felt something probe his own asshole: Two's finger, finger-fucking Gary as Gary cock-fucked Eight. Same standard Conscriptee persona?--If Eight liked being fucked, then--

"C'mere!" Gary barked, wrapping his arms about Two and dragging him onto the bed as Gary settled on his haunches. "Sit on my damn dick, punk!"

Two obediently straddled Gary and lowered himself. Gary felt the hole center itself on his cock-head--Two knew how to get fucked too--and Gary felt the hole begin to spread, give way, as Two's body descended slowly. Two clenched his hands, gasped, "Ah--Aghhh!" He let his head fall back as Gary's lubed cock sank into his ass. "Yeah, Citizen ... Fuck! Let me have it! Screw the hell out of me, Citizen!"

Gary's fingers raked over the youth's slick, heaving chest ... Pulled at the hairs on his pecs ... Pinched and rolled the tight-tipped nipples ... Explored downward as the body bobbed up and down on his cock ... Found Two's stiff-swollen cock and tensed balls ...

"How often do you fuck with your buddies, Two?" Gary mumbled, lost in the mounting fury of the act and remembering when he had been a horny stud in school. "They keep you in a barracks? Slip off for some privacy, maybe ... Strip down ... Beat each other's meat ... Get your rocks off ... Damn good ... Mess around ... Get some relief ... Suck cock--"

"Easy," the youth groaned in ecstasy. "Going to pop my load, Citizen!"

"Yeah!"

Gary pushed Two off his cock, turned him, slammed him face-down on the bed, and sprawled on top of him,

reinserting his cock and ramming Two's butt furiously, with Eight jacking off beside them. Two spread his arms and squirmed beneath the man's pounding weight, and his fingers clawed at the white-sheeted mattress.

"Citizen! Gonna shoot! Gonna--Ahhh!"

Gary felt Two's body shudder under him, knew he was cumming onto the sheets. With each new explosion, the youth's asshole pulsed tightly around Gary's invading ram. "Take it, punk!" Gary barked, the sex-pleasure churning stronger in his groin, and he hammered his iron cock into the writhing conscriptee ruthlessly.

"You're gonna take it! Take it all!"

Gary quickly pulled his cock out of Two's still-spasming ass, just in time to fist-pump the straining flesh-column, feel it convulse in his grip, then his climax wrenched through him and the hot stickiness gushed from his cock. His load erupted across the youth's back as Gary soared into the total physical release. From far away he heard Eight's cry of pleasure too, and felt drops of the blond's cum hitting his arm.

At last, Gary drifted down from the sexual summit and returned to reality. His body had fallen forward and flattened itself to Two's nakedness, his still-firm cock pressed against the warm, relaxed ass. Maybe he had dozed off briefly, the way he did sometimes after a really good climax, because when he opened his eyes again, Two had pulled himself from under Gary and was sprawled face-up beside him on the bed, naked, eyes closed in sleep, and Eight was on the other side of him, blond and trim and maturing, slick chest-plates rising and falling with his relaxed breathing, ivory-smooth cock falling loosely over dangling testicles.

Gary rolled away from them. "I better get cleaned up and head out." He climbed off the bed, his legs still unsteadied by his orgasm, and he stalked into the room where he had discarded his clothing.

"Shit!" he grumbled aloud, sorting his shorts and preparing to step into them, thinking, *It's not like I'm a kid, horsing around with Ed, experimenting the way pre-citizens do. Eight and Two--they're just conscriptees--they almost don't count. But breaking my mate-bond fucking around with that asshole Dirk--and Linda and me, we got so much debt, and now her reallocation application--I'll have to face the consequences.*

Gary turned at a small sound. Two stood, still naked, at the end of the hallway, with taller Eight behind him.

"Are you feeling better, conscript-brother? Have we served you well?"

Gary pulled up his shorts. "Call me Gary, Two, like Eight does." He thought about his anger. Sure, the sex had redirected it, dissipated it, but now what? He could not go home and face Linda, especially not knowing that he had broken his bond with these two conscriptees just a few minutes before. Sure, they were only conscriptees, but still, cheating was cheating. Like he had cheated with Dirk--

Crap! Fucking Dirk!

Gary looked around. He was standing half-naked in Dirk's house, the same floor plan as Gary's but filled with Dirk's life, as two of the man's conscriptees looked on. Gary could simply walk out, away from this, back to his house and his bond-mate, who was furious with him and had applied for a bond release, the hearing two days away. Gary sighed, not liking the prospect of another fight with Linda. Breaking his bond would be tantamount to admitting to the State that he had fucked up everything it had provided for him. What would he have then? And more immediately, where could he go to avoid that bitch Linda? Today was Saturday, and his hearing was on Monday.

Dirk and Kent would not be back until tomorrow, likely. And Linda would never think to look for him here. He still wanted to hit something, but maybe he should redirect that anger to something constructive. What had the conscriptees been doing earlier, before he stormed in, before the three of them fucked? Gary picked up the nail-gun Two had carried earlier. A physical tool for physical labor.

He looked at the conscriptees and said, "Give me something to do."

8.

The hard work felt great. Stretching his muscles, pushing himself with physical labor, was the familiar release Gary needed, a more constructive release for his energy than arguing or swinging his fists. That he was working to construct something in Dirk and Kent's house when he had come here bent on destruction was an irony that he acknowledged with a tight-lipped smile.

He had no experience with carpentry or installing crown molding, but the conscriptees showed him the basics, and he picked up quickly, as if he had done similar work before and had simply forgotten. Or been made to forget, he thought bitterly, remembering what Dirk had said about the mind-wipes. When he asked Eight and Two how long they had been doing such master carpentry work, they said only a few days, since the State had put the experience into their heads. Mulling this silently, Gary was forced to accept that what Dirk had told him was true--and that left him shaken.

The way Eight and Two worked together, sharing only what conversation was needed, they were almost like one person in two bodies--Gary really could believe what Dirk had said about all conscriptees being imprinted with a standardized persona.

For the next hours, Gary concentrated on using his muscles and forgetting his other problems. He had always enjoyed the strain and competition, and part of what he liked about the gym was how good he felt when he sweated and mock-brawled and exercised with the guys.

They finished installing the molding in one bedroom and moved to the next. Working and sweating in just his shorts and shoes, moving in the small room where rubbing against the two conscriptees, their coveralls uniforms peeled to their waists and bare torso exposed and available, kept Gary buzzing with a low physical excitement, like what he remembered with Ed--and Dirk. He would look for excuses to move past Eight or Two, his hands on their shoulders, semi-stiff cock rubbing against their coveralled asses, and they seemed to return the attention, reaching back to grope quickly at his passing semi in his shorts.

And sometimes, exchanging a glance, as if in unspoken agreement, Eight or Two would stop what he was doing and sink to his knees, mouth Gary's cock through the cloth, or peel his shorts down enough to free his dick for a few hand-strokes, before promising release soon, standing and returning to the work as if nothing had happened. Their taunting diverted Gary from brooding on darker thoughts, and he surged forward through the afternoon in a delirious haze of lust and sexual frustration. Being so horny kept him distracted, kept him charged with energy he needed to vent.

Finally, by some shared cue, Eight and Two put down their tools. Gary was in no hurry to quit but understood the labor was over for the day. By now, according to the darkness outside, night had fallen, and Gary was hungry--for food and sex, and he did not care which he got first.

Coveralls were discarded into a hamper. Eight and Two headed for the bathroom. Eight, the cornsilk-haired stud, walked without shyness, an easy gait, and Gary could not stop staring at the prominent male-meat swinging between his legs. Two followed, walking with the same step, the same body language, no slouch in cock-swinging himself. Gary shucked his shorts, leaving them where he could find them easily, and followed.

The remodel of the bathroom had already been completed, and Gary admitted the conscriptees' work looked great. The shower itself was a masterpiece, and Gary wondered how much that enhanced the value of the house. Definitely Dirk and Kent were not hurting for money, certainly not deeply in debt like he and Linda, and the State probably appreciated the way Dirk was looking after the house that had been assigned to him.

The shower had been built large enough for two, and the three of them fit into the space with only minor crowding, naked and direct, face-to-face, dick-and-nuts nude. Gary's dick was hard from the moment he slipped off his shorts in the other room, and now--with the water raining down upon it and the slide of bodies moving around--his cock was enthusiastic about everything.

The conscriptees seemed to take for granted that they would wash up together, trading time under the spraying water and jostling around. Two lathered his own solid shoulders and broad chest with a fist-full of body wash from the built-in wall dispenser, and his gaze said he was thinking the same thing Gary was. The thick foam ran downward over his taut stomach and into his groin, bubbling around his heavy cock and balls like fresh cum, and Gary shivered at the sudden sex-hunger flaring in his crotch. Crap, why was he acting like a hot-rocks pre-citizen getting horny at the first thought of sex?

Gary ducked under the spray, drenched himself, and cooled off ... Automatically accepted Eight's soap-covered hands lathering his chest, understanding that of course they would bathe each other ... Spread soap on Eight's chest and worked it into suds and let them continue to lather his own body ... And kind of stared ... Hell, guys always check each other out in the showers! Sure, Eight and Two were openly looking at him too, with no shyness or shame, just their standard faint smiles. Gary felt the cool water swamping over him and lapping at his loosened prick and balls ... Enjoyed their arms and hands working against the flowing wetness surrounding him ... Legs nudging his ... Gulping for air when the spray ran over his face ... Closed his eyes ... Felt them stroking surely on his body and cock ... Lost track of which hands were Eight's and which were Two's ... Floated lazily ... Lost in thinking about getting his rocks off with another horny male ...

Lips against his cheek made Gary open his eyes, and Eight offered his mouth for a kiss, but Gary fumble-pushed him face-first against the tile wall. Gary was hungry for more than a hand on his cock. He reached for a fist-full of body wash from the wall dispenser--not an ideal lube, but it would work well enough. He slathered his fingers and, digging between Eight's ass cheeks for his hole, Gary growled, "Okay, conscriptees, now you're both gonna serve me good, got it?"

"Yes, Citizen!" Eight and Two responded.

Gary felt the hungry desire flame inside him, and then he was moving his heavy rod into position behind Eight ... Shifted his weight, spreading his legs wider apart ... Hand reinforcing his cock as he pushed forward, the head breaching Eight's ready ass ... Pressing himself to Eight's back ... Feeling the pulsing strength as his cock pushed another inch into Eight's body-warm hole ...

Gary's iron cock rammed up Eight's ass ... That ass clenched his flesh-column hungrily ... Bodies locked together ... Prick-hot, horny, and getting closer to the point of no return ... Soon--

Two's hand on Gary's shoulder. Gary turned away, eased his cock out of Eight's ass, and understood: He was being selfish, and conscript-brothers needed to get off together.

Gary's fingers stroked over Two's hair-washed chest ... Firm-tipped nipples ... Flattened stomach ... Crisp pubic wire at his groin ... His swelling cock and ready-to-churn nuts ... Two's hands on Gary's shoulders, pressing down, a gentle but firm urging. Gary slid down onto his knees on the tiled floor and watched Two's potent dick aim toward him ... Bent his mouth toward it ... Ran his lips over the swollen head and deeply indented collar ... Barely heard Two's murmured pleasure over the water spray ... Inhaled the heady scent of freshly body-washed maleness ... Drew the taut cock-tip into his mouth ... Licked and washed the masculine column ... Suctioned slowly ... Inch by inch, all the way to the pubes ... Held it throat-deep ... Gary looked up at the man's nakedness above--and he remembered the sensuous excitement that had shaken him when a pre-citizen buddy named Ed had first sucked his nuts and his cock. Crap, he wanted this to last, and he wanted to give Two a blow-job this stud would remember in spite of the mind-wiper!

Eventually they dried and moved to the bedroom, a plainly furnished guest room where the conscriptees were billeted while working on the house. None of the three had cum yet; in the shower they had always paused and changed position whenever orgasm approached. Now, with the overhead lights flicked off so that bodies could not be told apart in the darkness, lying on the simple white sheets, they pressed together, and Gary shivered with the fierce, demanding sensations surging through him. His naked cock was steel-hard, and he held the two conscriptees tightly, working their strong, nude bodies together, and then he pressed someone's shoulders, urging him onto his knees.

That someone pressed his face to Gary's crotch as if worshipping his genitals ... Tongue-washed his soaring prick ... Lapped at his balls ... Returned to his taut rod and suctioned it hungrily. The anger of the day and the sex-fury of the night consumed Gary, made him feel oddly numb except for the need to cum. Gary's hands found someone else's waist, and he shoved the man down on his back and crouched his head over the man, finding his hard-on with hungry lips. The conscriptee slapped his cock back and forth over Gary's cheeks. Gary felt the other conscriptee, between his legs, send grasping hands up to roam over his nakedness ... Gary rammed his dick back into that mouth, heard him choke ... Arched his back and happily mouth-pulled on the other conscriptee's cock ...

Gary held still for a long moment during which everything inside him was frozen and quiet, shut out by his need to cum, and he exhaled and let go of the last of the fury that had engulfed him earlier. He let everything go, and his body relaxed except for what was needed to keep sucking the cock in his mouth, and the three of them moved together. Almost before he realized what was happening, Gary reached the point of no return, his orgasm starting so quietly it caught him by surprise, building suddenly, swelling, overwhelming him--cumming!

As Gary ejaculated, he heard a gasp and tasted a conscriptee's sperm that flooded his mouth. The body between Gary's legs, receiving his cum, shivered as it spent its own load somewhere in the darkness. Yeah, Gary thought, all three of them were getting their rocks off together!

When the fire-and-fury-and-ecstasy was ended, they lay together, relaxed, floating back from the physical experience and release. A few minutes earlier, they had been locked together, naked and male-hot, sucking cock and shooting their loads and getting their relief; and now they were just three bodies, not quite pals but at ease together and maybe sharing an unspoken understanding. Nothing more.

Gary closed his eyes and let sleep take him.

9.

Gary sent Sunday hiding out in Dirk and Kent's house, working hard with Eight and Two, trying regain the masculine good feeling he always enjoyed during physical effort, like working in his yard or exercising at the gym.

Sometimes, he would stop and look out the window at glimpses of his own house, where Linda was maybe drinking from her hidden stash, stumbling around in the rooms they had gone so deeply into debt to furnish to her taste. Crap, this was crazy! Gary knew he should feel anger--indignation--hurt--a hundred things, but he did not feel anything. Not yet. Too soon. And what would he say at the bond-release hearing tomorrow? Part of him still loved Linda, but part of him just wanted to make the whole experience end, even if that mean breaking up his home and mate-bonding--Screw the State and everyone if they did not like that! His emotions seemed to cancel each other, as though Gary had lost the ability to feel a damn thing!

During a break to piss, he studied his reflection in the bathroom mirrors. He wore nothing but his shorts, and his hair and chest were coated with sweat and dust. He watched the reflection of his fingers working over his

athletic physique and his heavy-hanging balls and dangling cock in his shorts. "Shit!" Gary exhaled slowly. "A couple of weeks ago, I figured I had the world by the tail--great bond-mate, nice home, good job--and now it's all fucked-up." Strange, he thought, how his whole life had changed in the past few hours but he still looked the same.

He remembered the passionate satisfaction of screwing Linda when they had first been bonded ... Watching those youths play basketball in the park and remembering how he had experimented with sex with Ed back in school ... The sense of oneness as he and Dirk had traded blow-jobs and ass-fucks at the cabin ... The wrenching pleasure and sexual release of fucking the conscriptees, blond Eight and dark-haired Two ...

Crap, he had to get his life squared away with Linda, and soon!

But instead Gary worked his butt off with the conscriptees, working on the remodel of Dirk and Kent's house--and tried to forget about sex with Linda, and her drinking, and the hearing, and all that crap ...

Night began to fall. Eight and Two were maddedly unspecific about Dirk and Kent's plans, but if they were way for the weekend, then they would be home soon, and Gary did not want to be there when they returned. He would rather face Linda than Dirk. And he needed to get some nice clothes laid out and ready for tomorrow's release hearing where, felt like, the rest of his life would be determined.

"What the fuck are you doing here," Linda yelled from the foot of the stairs when he crept in his back door. "You're supposed to be in the city, putting in your gym hours. It's on the calendar."

"Screw the calendar, Linda. Let's--"

"Shit!" she exploded. "You're always bitching because I don't check your fucking calendar, and when I do--you bastard!" As before, her personality had changed in an instant. "I don't care where you've been. Go to your gym session! You don't care about me! Yeah, mess around with Dirk or some other animal! I should've put in for release years ago, instead of staying bonded to an asshole like you!"

"Awww, baby--"

"Shit!" Linda repeated, swaying up the stairway toward their bedroom. She was not yet drunk but was well on her way. "Shit! Shit! Shit!"

Gary let her go.

Hell, what was the use?

He glanced at the clock and saw that he still had time to get to the gym ... A little late maybe, but he could still make most of his time slot. Yeah, that might be good: spend a couple of hours exercising, sweating, and man-talking with his gym-friends and horsing around--and forget about Linda for a while longer.

Hell, he had just spent the last day and a half doing exactly that, working with the conscriptees, having sex with them ...

Yeah, he would to go upstairs, get his nice uniform for the release hearing, and his work-tablet, so he could send a message to his bosses that he needed to take some time off, in hopes that they would forgive the short notice. Then, maybe he would go into the city, work out at the gym, maybe spend the night at a hotel--screw the expense and the additional debt. Yeah, that plan sounded good. He would take care of those details and go, without telling Linda he was leaving or where he was going.

The doorbell chimed, announcing a visitor.

After a growl of frustration, Gary tromped to the front door, threw it open, he suddenly found himself facing--

"Oh ... Hey, Dirk. What're you doing at the front door? You usually come in the back door." Gary pointedly did not move aside, did not give Dirk physical space to enter his house.

"Hi, pal," the rugged-built neighbor drawled quietly, pretending not to notice that Gary did not invite him inside. Dirk wore faded, crotch-bulging shorts and a T-shirt that outlined his physique, and his skin shone in the late light; a snatch of black chest hair showed at the neckline. And he almost seemed to have been waiting to see Gary come in. Dirk's expression was carefully neutral, his gaze steady, almost challenging. "Where you been hidin'? Somethin' wrong?"

"Hell, no. Everything's great. Why?"

"I ain't seen you in a while, not since that weekend at the cabin."

"I've been busy--working like hell."

"I figured maybe somethin' was wrong when I didn't see you for so long and you didn't show up for your usual gym time."

"You've been keeping up with my gym schedule? I guess I'll have to try to make it this week, since you're keeping tabs on me and all." Gary refused to take his eyes from Dirk's, and he shivered, remembering the strength and warmth and maleness of the man's naked body clasped to his. "Did Kent come with you? I haven't seen him in a while, either."

"Yeah, he's at home with the boys. They're puttin' up the crown molding in the master bedroom that he's always wanted and doing some remodeling."

"I know. I went by your place yesterday, and the conscriptees told me. They said you been away all weekend. Oh, and I stayed at your place yesterday, just so you know--I hope that's okay."

Dirk wet his lips hesitantly, then shrugged his powerful shoulders. "You and Linda still having problems?"

"Not too bad," Gary lied with a nod. "She's still a drunk, but she cut back some on her drinking. I guess you did that? Did you use the wiper long-distance from your place?--Or did you drop by one day while I was gone?"

"I just gave her a little nudge, buddy. Maybe I should have given her a bigger one, huh?" Dirk was staring pointedly. "Especially after she put in that bond-mate release application. Did you know she talked to Kent and me about that?"

Gary narrowed his eyes. "She might have mentioned it yesterday. When did she talk to you?"

Dirk shrugged. "Few weeks ago, before we went fishin'. She told us you weren't taken the responsibilities of being a bond-mate very seriously--too much time at work, too much time at the gym. She feels left-out, so she started drinking--"

"Crap! That's shit psychology. Only reason I work so much is because she spends and drinks so much!"

"--So she asked me to help. I was supposed to take care of things, give you a little adjustment while we were up at the cabin, but ... Anyway, the release hearing's coming up soon, right?"

"Tomorrow."

Dirk nodded.

Gary felt his anger rising again. His voice was tight: "What were you planning to take care of while we were at the cabin, Dirk?" He wanted to punch something, someone, Dirk. "I want," Gary said quietly, "to talk to you ... about what happened at the cabin ... about everything, but I can't right now."

Dirk faced Gary with honest directness. "We don't have much time left to get things squared away, pal. Why don't you come over to my place and we'll talk."

Gary shook his head. "Dirk, I'm gonna punch you if I try to talk to you right now."

"You've changed, pal. You know I only want what's best for you. Did you know Kent put in a release application too, right?"

"Huh? Crap!" Gary muttered. "Shit, I didn't know, Dirk. That sucks. I've been so wound up in my own problems that I never thought you and Kent were having troubles too, pal."

"Hell, it's been comin' on for a long time. He's been lookin' for side-pieces, sneakin' off to the city to fuck pretty much anything that moves. He and Linda have been encouragin' each other to break their bondings. I guess he's been gettin' tired of me for a while, and the little tune-up nudges ain't been workin' as well anymore." He snorted, amused. "So I guess we're both gonna have our mates released."

"Sorry to hear that, Dirk. I really am."

"So, yeah, I said I'd take care of all this mess, and I really fucked up, didn't I? You want to come over to my place and have a beer?"

Gary thought for a second. A beer sounded good, and knowing Dirk was in a similar situation ... "Hell, okay-- why not."

Knowing Dirk was in a similar situation--deteriorating relationship with his bond-mate--gave Gary a sense of comfort or brotherhood. His friend surely must understand what Gary was feeling. Crap, Kent had always tended toward being unfaithful, and somehow Dirk put up with it as long as Kent did not flaunt his search for outside sex too openly. Maybe Dirk and Kent were just naturally more open about outside sex than he and Linda. Dirk never seemed as concerned with following the rules of the State as closely as Gary, and sometimes Dirk seemed actually bend them further than Gary thought he should, but then his neighbor was not one step away from the State foreclosing on his debts the way Gary was!

Back at Dirk's place, entering through the back yard that separated their houses, his buddy tromped through the door and Gary followed. "Have a seat," Dirk announced, pointing at the couch. "I'll get us taken care of." He disappeared through the door to the kitchen.

Gary sat on one end of the seat cushions. Eight and Two walked into the room, wearing their beige conscriptee coveralls and smiling their enigmatic smiles. "Hello, Citizen," Two said as he and Eight nodded to Gary.

"Hey, guys," Gary replied to the conscriptees, wondering why they had greeted him formally, as if the three of them had not spent most of the weekend working and sweating together, stripping down, wrestling together, man-virile, making each other cum, over and over. Maybe this was just the way they were around Dirk. What had they called him, their conscript-master? Made sense, though Gary had never been nosy enough to pressure Dirk for details on his role within the Civil Service administration and what managing

conscriptees involved, or why Dirk had access to a mind-wiper. Crap, those questions could wait, because Dirk was in the same boat, faced with a mate wanting to get break the bond, like the State made a mistake or something!--Unthinkable!

Gary could not help remembering what their bodies had looked like when the coveralls came off and they stripped down: Two's chest hair and dense muscles, Eight's leaner build, like Ed's, the contrast between swarthy Two and blond Eight, like those pre-citizens Gary had spied on in the park.

"I promised," came Dirk's voice from the kitchen, "that I'd take care of this."

Gary turned his head just in time to see Dirk step through the doorway.

With the mind-wiper on his head.

"Oh, hell, no!" Gary hollered, leaping off the couch. "Get that thing away from me!" He bolted for the back door.

Two and Eight intercepted him, and Gary collided with their bodies. They grappled, Gary trying to push his way free, and the conscriptees pulling him back toward the center of the room. Crap, they were strong! Gary snarled, "Lemme go, dammit," as they secured his arms and turned him to face Dirk.

The white diodes on the wiper were still brightening. "I know you're upset," Dirk said, blinking, and Gary knew his neighbor was sifting through the user interface options. "I think the best thing is for you to go to sleep for a while, just 'til I get this all sorted."

"No, Dirk!" Gary yelled, knowing he had only seconds and jerking hard at the conscriptees' grips, nearly freeing one arm from Eight. "Don't--"

10.

Gary jerked upright. Where was he? Sitting. On a bed. He recognized these walls: one of Dirk and Kent's guest bedrooms.

The last thing he remembered--being held--the wiper--that fucking Dirk! Dirk had made him sleep, but for how long?

Sunlight outside the window. The sky had been dark when Dirk had forced him to sleep, so morning, obviously. Which direction did this window face? Just past sunrise? Later?

Gary swung his legs off the side of the mattress. Bare feet. Bare chest. Shorts on. Okay, so he was not naked. He faintly remembered being helped to stand up, stagger to the toilet, piss--once?--twice?--before passing out again. Beyond that, he remembered nothing.

His bladder felt urgent, full. He needed to piss again, and soon!

He wobbled to his feet, feeling woozy, dizzy, not fully awake yet. Dirk must have hit him hard with the wiper. Gary needed to shake off this groggy feeling, but full wakefulness evaded him. He needed to get moving, so this feeling would pass on its own.

Gary found his T-shirt folded on a chair, his shoes on the floor in front of it. He managed to struggle into his shirt, get his shoes on his feet.

Crap! His job! His release hearing!

He needed to contact his boss, let them know he needed time off today, urgently, and he needed to get the time and details for the hearing. No way could he miss it!

Dirk and Kent's house was nearly silent as Gary tiptoed to the back door. He saw a bit of beige as he sneaked past the kitchen door: one of the conscriptees was moving about, maybe taking care of breakfast and coffee. Okay, so the hour was still early--that was good, real good.

Gary eased out the back door, careful to make as close to no sound as possible. His arms and legs still felt too clumsy, his head too foggy, but he slowly seemed to be feeling more like himself.

No one pursued him as he staggered his way back to the house he shared with Linda--That bitch!--This was all her fault. Why did she have to spend so much money, drink so much, and why did she have to get Dirk and Kent involved in their private matters? Gary knew he should consider himself at least equally to blame--Had he overlooked some some way to be a better bond-mate? But right then anger felt like the right thing to feel. Anger made him push forward through this hazy grogginess in his head.

In the back door, and to the spare bedroom he had been using as an office since he started connecting to his job from home. He activated the connection to his department's server and entered his log-in credentials.

Account Disabled ...

Crap!--Now what? Was the connection down, or had his password expired? He tried again.

Account Disabled ...

Dammit, he needed to log on and send his boss a message asking for time off. If the server was inaccessible, he would have to use email or a direct message.

Okay, where had he left his phone? He had last seen it ... in the bedroom? Right, when he got the message about the release hearing, immediately before Linda and he had that fight.

And where was Linda? The house was strangely still. She may have been still asleep, sleeping off last night's booze. Crap, Gary had to get things squared away between them before the release hearing!

But as he neared the bedroom doorway, he heard familiar sounds. Linda's voice, gasping and moaning the way she did when they had been newly bonded and never got enough of each other, fucking almost nonstop--

And there in the bed was Linda, on her back, naked. Kent, equally naked, lay on top of her, pumping away at her pussy with his cock. Linda spread her legs wider and hollered, "Yeah, fuck me, you animal! Fuck my pussy, you filthy animal!"

Gary stood in the doorway and stared, too surprised to say anything. Stared as if in a nightmare at Kent's hair-washed chest ... his firm-tipped nipples ... his flattened stomach ... the crisp pubic wire at his groin ... his swollen cock, long, slim, a sleek missile of flesh ... and sudden-churning nuts. Neither Kent nor Linda had seen Gary, and he watched as Kent pulled his cock out of Linda's snatch and deftly picked her up, turned her onto her hands and knees, and entered her again, roughly, from behind, the way Linda never liked; but this time she squalled in need and arousal. "Fuck me, you fucking animal! Sexy devil! Plug my pussy, you damn son of a bitch!"

Linda had never yelled like that for Gary. Sure, she had been hot for his dick, never seemed to get enough, especially in the early days when they were newly bonded, but she never hollered like she was doing with

Kent.

Gary took a step back, as if in shock, feeling his anger skyrocket. He caught sight of the photo display Linda had thrown, now back on the dresser; the display was cracked but still functional, cycling through photos.

Not photos of Gary and Linda, but of Linda and Kent, smiling and kissing and hugging, looking ecstatically happy, as if the photos had been taken following a bonding ceremony where Linda got hitched to Kent instead of Gary.

Gary blinked. What had just happened? His anger ... was nearly gone, fading quickly. Shock. Yeah, that must be it. He was in shock, Gary decided. This was all too much for him. He needed to get out of there. He needed to ... what? Walk downstairs. Right. He needed to walk down stairs.

Dirk, wearing the mind-wiper, waited for him at the foot of the stairs. *That explains why I ...*, Gary began, only to find the thought drifted away. Numb. He felt an overwhelming emotional numbness. Shock, Gary decided; yeah, he must be numb from shock.

Dirk's voice was firm: "Come on, Gary. Let's go back and leave the love-birds alone."

Gary followed, silently, unresistingly, back to Dirk's house.

"Have a seat," Dirk said, and as Gary obediently sat on the couch, Dirk picked up a computer tablet and swiped through screens. "You probably have some questions."

"My release hearing ... It's coming up soon ... I ..." Gary lost his line of thought again.

"That was yesterday."

"Yesterday?" Gary echoed. "But it's set for Monday ... I should call in, take the day off ... That's ..."

"Yesterday," Dirk repeated firmly. "Today's Tuesday. I thought you'd better sleep through it until I fixed everything, like I told you I would. Had you send a message to your bosses too, telling them you was quitting."

"My job? ... But ... debts ..." Something he had seen nagged at him too, for a reason he could not quite grasp. "Linda ... Kent ..."

Dirk did not reply. Instead, as he found what he was looking for on the tablet, he held it out to Gary. "Here. Sign and seal."

Gary took the device. The screen showed a signature field. Gary signed his name in the field, like Dirk had told him, and pressed his thumbprint to the field as proof of his identity. The field blinked and turned green: Signature and seal accepted.

Dirk took the tablet back, swiped a couple of times, then held it out to Gary again. "And this one too. Sign and seal."

Gary repeated the signature process for this new document without bothering to read it. He handed the tablet back to Dirk.

Keeping his thoughts together was so hard. Gary could not hold an idea long enough to follow it, but this seemed important: "What did ... I sign ...?"

"The first one was your acknowledgement of the bond-breakin'. Just a formality, really, since them judges

already pronounced you and Linda un-bonded yesterday. You gave her the house and all the stuff she bought, and you took on all the debt. That was your bonding-gift to them. Linda and Kent--they're bonded now, all nice and legal."

"But ..." No job? All those debts? What would Gary do? The State would come after him ... Maybe he could call his bosses ... Explain he had not meant to resign ... Ask for his job back?

"The second one was your papers of voluntary debtor's conscription. You signed yourself over to the Civil Service and agreed to conscription until your debt to the State is paid off."

"But ..." How much debt did Gary carry? "That's ... long time?"

"About five years, yeah." Dirk nodded. "Tomorrow morning you're to report for conscription intake. You will be stripped and examined, like the first time, and then your mind will be wiped, replaced with the conscript persona. After that, you'll be assigned to me for the duration."

Gary blinked. Had something just--?

His hands traveled down to his feet, and his shoes came off. His head felt clearer now--still distracted as if all this were happening to someone else, but he knew what to do. He stood up, lifted his T-shirt up and off, and dropped it onto the floor. He bent forward, and his shorts slid down his legs, and he stepped out of them. Gary had stripped easily, without shyness. Hell, he and Dirk had faced each other bare-ass plenty of times--done more than that, damn it! Gary was naked now, and Dirk was eyeing him, appraising his offered nakedness, and he felt a diffused sense of pride that Dirk considered his body worthy of inspecting. Gary saw Eight and Two in the doorway, perhaps blocking it to prevent escape, perhaps just curious about their soon-to-be conscript-brother, eyeing him with their standardized faint smiles. As if sharing a silent understanding or heeding a signal Gary had missed, Eight and Two began unfastening their beige coveralls, began the process of stripping themselves.

Gary no longer minded being naked or being watched, appraised; he understood that tomorrow, after he became a conscriptee again, like Eight, like Two, he would no longer mind anything. He would be stripped, examined, processed, remade, and assigned to Dirk, whatever that meant, and he would do whatever his conscript-master instructed him to do, without hesitation and to the best of his ability. And in five years his debt to the State would be paid off. And then what? Would he stay with Dirk and be his bond-mate, like Kent had? Or ...

No, don't get lost in conjecture, Gary scolded himself. Stay focused; complete the task. Everything seemed so simple when he broke it down into small, easy steps--no more worries, no more debt, no more Linda-drama. He should have recognized her helplessness sooner, and his own, but soon he would forget about her, about everything. The State would wipe his mind and make sure that he forgot everything. He needed to be guided, told what to do. Soon he would be a conscriptee again, and the State would give him the regimentation he needed; Dirk would give him that, would be a firm conscript-master telling him what to do. Gary wanted that, wanted it badly, wished Dirk would take him to the conscription center today instead of tomorrow.

Gary had a little less than twenty-four hours to be himself before he became someone better, someone the State in its wisdom wanted him to be. Yes, Dirk had done what he said; he had taken care of everything. The State knew best and would take care of the rest. All Gary needed to do now was to stay focused on his task. He needed to show his ... what? Gratitude? Obedience? Acceptance? Payment of his debts had already begun.

He crossed the two steps to where Dirk stood, and Gary knelt and reached for the man's pants, to free the male-hard ridge of cock trapped inside.
