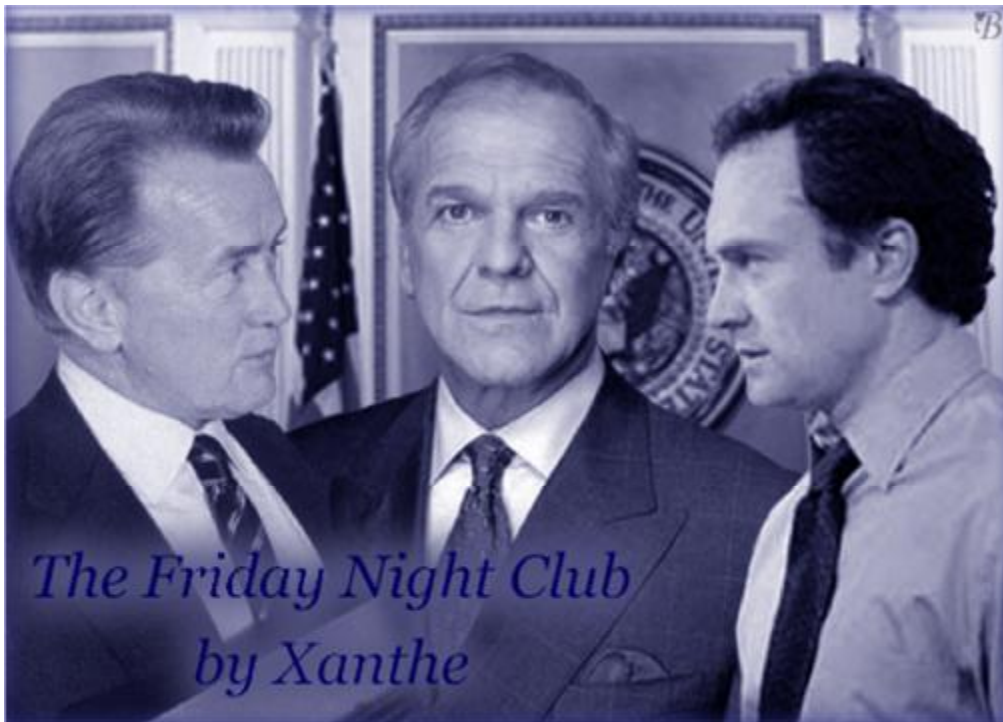


The Friday Night Club by Xanthe



<http://www.xanthe.org/the-friday-night-club/>

Story Notes:

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This is my first proper fanfic set completely outside The X Files so be gentle with me

Pic courtesy of Bluespirit

This is a bit of a departure for me because it's not an X Files story at all but a West Wing fic. My only excuse for this fic is that I had a dream!!! I dreamed the gym sequence (well, not in this detail, but the gist of it!) in this story and just had to write it. The dream inspired me to develop the rest of the story. This story is in three parts. The first one is from Jed Bartlet's POV, the second one from Leo's point of view and the third from Josh's point of view. There is only spanking and some kisses in this part but there will be more explicit BDSM sex in later parts.

1. Part One - Jed by Xanthe

2. PartTwo-Leo by Xanthe

3. Part Three - Josh by Xanthe

Part One - Jed by Xanthe

It had been a bad week – not in the sense that there had been a huge crisis but just that there had been a drip, drip, drip of minor disasters that had left all the West Wing staff feeling wrung out and demoralised – not least Josh, who had presided over three of the disasters in question and had ended up barricaded in Leo's room for most of Friday afternoon doing a moratorium on what had gone wrong and why.

Jed Bartlet didn't begrudge Josh his time with Leo – he knew that Leo was blessed with a gift for restoring badly dented confidence that few others possessed. Not that his Chief of Staff didn't ask some hard questions first, and make sure you knew exactly what kind of mistakes you'd made along the way – but in the final analysis he was always there for you, and he never, ever, withdrew the support that made you feel that even if you had screwed up badly, at least you still had him on your side. Somehow he gave you hope that the sun would shine another day, even if it didn't feel like it at that precise moment in time.

So Bartlet understood why Leo and Josh needed to spend a few hours together reviewing Josh's performance – but that didn't make it any easier when he wanted to spend a few redeeming moments with Leo himself. Bartlet sighed and took a sip of water, casting a reproachful glance at the closed door to Leo's office. He knew he could interrupt, but he also knew that unless it was an emergency, any interruption would be met with the full force of one of Leo's baleful glares and that wasn't worth the risk. No, he just had to wait this one out and hope that he'd get a few minutes of Leo's time when he had finished with Josh because he did need those minutes – very badly. Bartlet rolled his shoulders experimentally, feeling the ache in them. Damn but it had been a difficult week. He closed his eyes for a moment and leaned back in his chair. At least today was Friday and this evening...he let a small smile play on his lips. This evening he'd get the release and redemption he always craved at the end of yet another hectic week in the Oval Office. Not that he stopped being President at the weekends, but there was a different, more relaxed, less formal atmosphere then, and his Friday night activities helped ease him into that change, as well as giving him a chance to step down from the pace of the week, and find a different, more restful kind of energy. Friday nights were when he recharged his batteries and touched base with himself...which was why he badly wanted a few words with Leo before this evening. He needed to get all the day's business out of the way before Leo joined him in the Residence later – because Leo had made it a strict rule that they never talked shop on their Friday evening get-togethers, a rule which Bartlet heartily approved of; not that it would have made much difference if he didn't because he'd come to learn that he flouted Leo's strict rules at his own peril – on Friday nights at least.

The sound of a door closing jolted him out of his reverie; the next-door meeting was – finally – over. He was about to get up and knock on Leo's door when Charlie appeared in the doorway.

"Sir – Josh would like to see you."

Bartlet sighed and waved his hand – his few words with Leo would have to wait. Josh would undoubtedly need a few words of his own. He knew he was right about that the second Josh walked into the room. His face was pale, there were dark shadows under his eyes and his wavy hair was even more unruly than ever as if he'd spent the entire afternoon running his hands through it in despair, which, Bartlet judged, probably wasn't far off the mark. Still, his shoulders weren't slumped in depression as they had been before his meeting with Leo - and there was just a little light in his eyes; Leo had worked his usual magic.

"Come in, Josh, sit down..." he began, but Josh, caught up in his own emotions, interrupted him before he got any further.

"Sir, I just wanted to apologise," the younger man said, sweeping his hand through his hair again and making it even more untidy. "I know you must be really disappointed in me. I feel like everything I touched this week just fell apart." He gave a despondent sigh.

"Josh – it's okay. We all have weeks like that. Weeks where we feel like we're walking through molasses," Bartlet told him, gazing at his Deputy Chief of Staff sympathetically.

"I'm sorry if I caused you and Leo any extra headaches because of my actions," Josh said, as if he hadn't heard, or maybe because he wasn't yet ready to accept any absolution for what he saw as his sins.

"Well, y'know, sometimes I've caused you a few extra headaches because of my actions and Leo's done the same." Bartlet smiled and sat down, hoping this would encourage Josh to do the same. It didn't.

"I guess." Josh stopped pacing and stood, forlornly, on the carpet, looking utterly lost. Bartlet's heart went out to him – he knew what it was like to be in that place, where you knew you'd made mistakes and you knew that everyone else knew, and you wondered what you could safely touch without breaking it.

"Josh, yes, you screwed up. You know that, I know that, Leo knows that," Bartlet said, his soft tone belying the hard words. Josh's shoulders stiffened, preparing to take the full weight of his President's censure but Bartlet had no intention of heaping any more guilt on Josh's shoulders – he knew Josh was capable of beating himself up far more effectively than anyone else could. "All I'd say is, don't let this make you timid," Bartlet told him, watching the younger man keenly. "It'll be understandable after the kind of week you've had if you just withdraw into yourself, play it safe, not take any risks – but that's not what we pay you for, Josh. We need you to be your usual bright, inquiring self - not cowed because you've lost confidence in your own abilities."

Josh's shoulders relaxed a fraction, and he gave a faint ghost of a smile.

"Right now I'm not sure my abilities amount to a great deal but thanks for the vote of confidence, sir. Funnily enough, Leo said pretty much the same thing."

It was Bartlet's turn to smile now – he had been on the receiving end of one of those lectures from Leo himself, and while they were always couched in the sternest tones, the underlying warmth and affection of the man always shone through; sometimes Bartlet thought he'd walk a mile over hot coals in his bare feet just to be on the receiving end of one of those pep talks from Leo. They never failed to lift him when he was down, and restore some of his battered pride and self-esteem.

"Well, he's right," Bartlet said, nodding. "Now, you look a mess, Josh. Why don't you go home, take some time out, and put this week behind you."

"I think...I feel kind of cramped," Josh replied, starting to pace again. "If I sit at home feeling like this I'll go nuts but you're right, I need some time out. I think I'll hit the gym, maybe wear myself out enough that I actually sleep tonight." He gave a self-deprecating grin.

"See that you do – and that's an order," Bartlet said, with what he hoped was a twinkle in his eye. Josh looked a little reassured. He gave another faint smile, and, with a nod to his President, turned on his heel and left the room. Bartlet watched him go with a sigh. Josh reminded him of himself many, many years ago. Too smart for his own good, and too worried about letting himself and everyone around him down. Josh Lyman was a fine man, with a lot of promise - if he could just believe in himself. Bartlet, of all people, knew that was easier said than done...which reminded him. He got up, crossed the room, knocked on the door to Leo's office, and was half way through the door before he realised that he hadn't waited for Leo to invite him in. His Chief of Staff glanced up from where he was stuffing various files into his briefcase.

"You spoke to Josh?"

"Yeah." Bartlet put his hands in his pockets and sank back on his heels. "He'll be okay."

"He might." Leo shrugged. "This week was tough for him."

"He made a lot of mistakes," Bartlet pointed out.

"I know. He knows that too. I told him but he already knew. You know Josh – he hates making mistakes. He thinks he isn't as smart as the rest of us so has to work twice as hard to keep up – and when he makes mistakes that just makes him doubt himself even more." Leo fastened his briefcase, and reached for his coat.

"You're going?" Bartlet asked, alarmed.

"Yes, I'm going." Leo pulled on his coat, straightened up, and looked him in the eye. "I'm already running late – I have 45 minutes to make the flight."

"Flight?" Bartlet asked, bemused. Leo sighed.

"I told you about this. It's the thing. I told you I have to go to the thing in Florida. I'll be back

on Monday."

"But it's Friday!" Bartlet protested, his eyes full of meaning.

"I know." Leo raised a warning eyebrow. "But this was arranged months ago and I said I'd attend. There are several Fridays when this happens, sir. With the jobs we do it's hardly surprising." Leo picked up his briefcase and walked towards the door. Bartlet gazed after him, forlornly. Leo reached the door, sighed again, and turned back. "I did tell you about this, sir. If it's any consolation I won't be enjoying myself anywhere near as much as I would if I was here this evening. I'll be stuck on an airplane going through these files, and when I get there I have two days of meetings, lectures and events to sit through, so trust me, I would rather be here with you tonight."

"I forgot," Bartlet said, in what he knew was a childishly small voice but he couldn't help himself. "Damn it, Leo! It's been such a difficult week. I need to talk to you. I need to see you this evening as usual."

"Well, I'm sorry. I can't do anything about that." Leo raised his hands, his eyes fixed firmly on the President. "I didn't know that this would turn out to be such a difficult week then this conference was arranged. Trust me, I could do without it too – we're both tense and we both need to unwind – I need that just as much as you."

Bartlet thrust his hands even further into his pockets and traced a pattern on the carpet with his shoe.

"I am not cancelling, sir," Leo said in a firm, stern voice. "Not for this reason. We promised that what we do on Friday nights would not get in the way of our work. Friday nights are supposed to make it easier for us to do our jobs, not harder. The moment they start getting in the way is the moment we have to stop and ask ourselves what the hell we're doing," he added. The President sighed, and, finally, nodded.

"You're right. I know you're right...I'm just disappointed."

"So am I." Leo's voice was sympathetic.

"I really needed this tonight. I have so much..." Bartlet balled both his hands into fists and stood there, helplessly. The frustrations of the week had built up to the point where he needed release and the idea that he'd have to wait another seven days for it was just too depressing.

"I know exactly how you feel, and yes, there were a lot of problems this week, but most of them weren't about you," Leo said softly. Bartlet glanced up, sharply.

"What do you mean?" He asked.

"I mean that usually you need this for a different reason...but this week it was Josh who had a lousy time and who is really feeling it. You didn't have anywhere near as bad a week as he

did."

"It was his own fault," Bartlet growled. Leo frowned.

"And those times when you've felt like Josh is feeling now, did it make it any better that sometimes that was your own fault too? No – it makes it worse. You know that."

Bartlet gazed at Leo, trying to resist the urge that was welling up inside him to have a full blown tantrum. Leo was right – Josh had been to hell and back this week, but that didn't change the fact that both he and Leo had had to deal with the fallout from that which had meant extra work for them too.

"So what are you suggesting? I go and ask Josh to take your place tonight?" Bartlet asked, knowing his tone was verging on the petulant but unable to stop himself. Leo gave him that stern look again, the warning look, the one he always gave him when he was going too far, President or not.

"No, I'm not suggesting that," Leo said patiently. "But...you could take my place with him," he said softly, so softly that Bartlet wasn't even sure he'd heard him properly.

"What?" He frowned.

"You remember that thing you asked me a few months ago? And a few more times after just because you like pushing although I always refuse." Leo waited patiently.

"Thing...?" Bartlet frowned, and then coloured. "Oh, that thing," he muttered.

"I said no. I'll always say no," Leo said firmly. "It's just never going to happen that way between us. It's not something I could do or enjoy and it's not something I want and also, I don't think it would be good for you to have that kind of experience with me for various reasons which I've already explained to you. However...if you still feel you want it – then I think you could do worse than approach Josh right now. As a matter of fact, I think he's in exactly the right kind of mood to appreciate it."

"You can't be serious!" Bartlet protested. "I can't just go up to Josh and suggest..." He shook his head, appalled by the very idea of it. Leo shrugged, and put his hand on the door.

"Well, then you spend tonight going through your papers and possess your soul in patience until next Friday," he said.

"Wait," Bartlet stopped his best friend as he stepped through the door. Leo turned, one eyebrow raised, waiting for Bartlet to continue. "This is madness, Leo," Bartlet said. "I've known you for years, we have an...understanding. I couldn't just go up to Josh and..." He shook his head again. "Josh might view it as harassment and rightly so."

"He wouldn't," Leo said softly.

Bartlet glanced at him sharply. "You've spoken to him?" He asked.

"Not exactly." Leo smiled. "I've just seen the same look in his eyes that I've often seen in your eyes - and today that look was particularly beseeching. When he was in here earlier..." He shook his head, glanced around absently, and then shrugged. "He wanted from me what you've often wanted from me only that wasn't something he could ever put into words, obviously. Now, I think he'd take that just as happily from you as from me - in fact, it might even be better coming from you."

"Why?" Bartlet couldn't believe he was really talking about this.

"Because you're the President of the United States." Leo grinned, and patted the President on the arm.

"Why would that make a difference?" Bartlet asked. Leo sighed.

"For a smart man you can be very dense at times," he commented. "It makes a difference, sir, because you're pretty much the ultimate authority figure. If anyone can grant the kind of absolution he's looking for then it's you."

"And you think Josh would be happy to take that 'absolution' from me?" Bartlet asked.

"I think he'd like that very much. In fact, I'd go so far as to bet on it. Now, I really do have to go. Do what you like, sir - there can either be two lonely, frustrated, upset men in this building tonight or two men who can help each other feel a whole lot better. It's up to you." So saying, he turned on his heel and walked out before Bartlet could call him back.

"If this goes wrong it'll be your fault, Leo McGarry!" Bartlet called after him. Leo waved a nonchalant hand in reply and then was gone. Bartlet remained, looking after him, for several minutes, still thinking about their extraordinary conversation. He couldn't - could he? No...no...he couldn't. It was absurd! What was Leo thinking?

Bartlet returned to the Oval Office and began sifting through the usual mounds of papers that were spread out on his desk, but his mind kept drifting. He thought of Josh, with his unruly hair and his pathological pacing, the guilty expression on his face, the sense of weariness permeating his every movement, the need for atonement shining out of his eyes. Bartlet knew that feeling all too well - the feeling of having the whole world on your shoulders and having failed it somehow. It didn't help that both he and Josh were perfectionists.

"Oh dear god," Bartlet sighed, casting aside any pretence that he was seriously going to study his papers this evening. Could Leo be right? His Chief of Staff was innately cautious so he could hardly imagine that Leo would direct him into such a foolhardy course of action if he wasn't sure of his facts. But even so...it was still risky. Bartlet would go to the ends of the earth not to hurt Josh Lyman, a young man he viewed as being among his closet comrades. Between them, he and Leo had mentored Josh, helped him, nurtured his talent...he loved the younger man - not in the way he loved Leo, as old friends, warhorses, who'd done battle

side by side for many years, but in the way you love a bright young colt, full of promise, who you've watched grow to maturity. Bartlet felt a heat rise inside him. When he'd asked Leo, a few months ago, whether they could swap their usual Friday night roles, his old friend had been adamant that it wasn't going to happen – it wasn't ever going to happen. Now, he was telling him that Josh might be willing – no – that Josh might want this and need it, the way Bartlet himself had so often needed it from Leo.

Bartlet thought of Josh's pale face and darkly shadowed eyes, full of unexpressed need, and got up. He remembered himself, going to Leo with a similar expression in his eyes on many, many occasions – he'd needed what Leo was able to give with him, and he was just so lucky that he had someone in his life who was prepared to do that for him, to be there in a way that few people would understand. Poor Josh – if he felt the same way and didn't have anyone to help him through that then he really had to be suffering right now and Bartlet could empathise with that all too well. Could he do that for Josh though? Could he be there for him the way Leo was there for him? Leo was a natural at it – anyone could see that. Bartlet wasn't so sure about his own abilities in this area. He'd never done anything like this before – had never wanted to – but his Friday night sessions with Leo had awakened his curiosity, made him look outside himself and question himself and a few months ago he'd – extremely tentatively – asked Leo whether they might play around with the roles they'd assigned themselves. Leo had adamantly refused, but, as always, he hadn't forgotten Jed's request or the thoughts and feelings behind it – and now he had offered Bartlet a way to have that experience he'd asked about – and, in typical Leo fashion, had tacitly given his permission and approval as well. But with Josh... Bartlet had never even considered bringing anyone else into the close relationship he shared with Leo – he hadn't wanted to, and neither did Leo. Yet, if Bartlet was honest with himself, he knew that if there was anyone else it would be Josh. He knew that both he and Leo felt the same way about Josh – they'd mentored him together, and were closer to him than they were to any of the other West Wing staff. He remembered sitting side by side with Leo, neither of them speaking, while they waited for news about whether Josh would live or die. He'd realised then, without either of them saying it, that they both felt the same way about Josh. The shooting had just brought it home to them. Then, later, when Josh had suffered from PTSD, they had both watch him almost disintegrate before their eyes. Bartlet could still remember every single word that Josh had said to him during that meeting where he had fallen apart. There had been an out of control look in Josh's eyes, and he'd waved his hands and paced the carpet, and, finally, shouted at the President. "You've got to listen to me!" he'd pleaded – it had been a desperate cry for help and the fact that he'd directed it at Bartlet revealed just how much, on a subconscious level at least, he trusted, admired and liked the President.

Bartlet took a sharp intake of breath; maybe Leo was right. He wasn't entirely sure what he was going to do but it couldn't hurt to at least go and find out...

He told Charlie to go home, dismissed his security staff, and wandered down to the White House gym. He frowned as he got close and saw that the place was in darkness; it was Friday night though - and most people had better things to do than spend their Friday nights sweating in the gym. Even so, he was disappointed. Josh had said he'd go to the gym but maybe he belonged to another gym somewhere else... Bartlet was about to turn and go when he heard a noise; a slight thump, and the sound of someone's breathing coming in

hard gasps. He turned back and quietly pushed open the door to the gym. He stood on the threshold for a moment, blinking, and then made out the single, lone figure sitting at a weight stack at the far end of the gym.

Josh.

Bartlet frowned – why was his Deputy Chief of Staff working out in the dark? Then he sighed in realisation – Josh couldn't face himself right now. He needed to be alone with his mistakes, alone in the dark, punishing his body until he felt he'd atoned for what had gone wrong this week. Bartlet felt a strange sense of confidence sweeping through him – Leo might well be right – the question was, what to do about it? This didn't just affect one Friday evening – it could have far reaching consequences. Maybe Leo had known that; Bartlet had the feeling that he had been well and truly Leo'd tonight.

Bartlet stood, watching Josh work at the weights – he was pushing himself too hard, that much as obvious. He was sweating profusely and his eyes were glazed, fixed straight ahead. Bartlet took a deep breath, wondering if he could do this as well as Leo did it, because this wasn't all or even mostly about him. He knew that. This was about Josh and what he needed as much as it was about himself – but there was no reason why their two needs couldn't be compatible on this occasion. Bartlet spent a long time thinking about how Leo always treated him during their Friday night sessions – the other man seemed to know unerringly what he needed and had always given it to him but he wasn't sure he possessed such an empathetic soul himself. He was all too well aware that if he did this he had to do it properly and he had to get it right – he cared about Josh too much to get it wrong. He smiled, softly, at that thought, the heat sweeping through him more strongly now. Oh yes, he cared about Josh. He cared about all his staff but he saved a special place in his heart for Leo and Josh. Leo he loved more than his own life, but Josh...he realised, without surprise, that he loved Josh in an utterly different and yet at the same time very similar way. Yes, Leo had been right. He was certain of it now. Bartlet turned and locked the door behind him, ensuring their total privacy, and then, slowly, quietly, acting purely on instinct, Bartlet walked over to where Josh was struggling to lift the weights. Bartlet didn't say anything, just leaned, almost casually, on the bars of the weight stack next to the one Josh was using. Josh saw him, faltered, tried to push the weights again, and then gave up, his breath coming in exhausted pants. The weights crashed back down with a reverberating clang, and Josh sat there, hanging his head, the weight of his own self-loathing far heavier than the weights he had just been trying to lift.

"Can't even do that right," Josh commented, still not looking at the President.

"You're being too hard on yourself," Bartlet told him in low, purring tones that took him by surprise. They clearly had the same effect on Josh because he looked up, startled. It was dark in the gym, but not so dark that Bartlet couldn't make out the desperate, hopeless light in the other man's eyes, and the lines of his body. Josh had a good body – nicely toned but not too muscled. Bartlet was aware that his eyes were sweeping over it, assessingly. He wondered whether Josh would say anything but then he noticed the younger man pull his stomach in and sit a little straighter. Bartlet gave an inner smile – oh yes, Leo had definitely been right. "Are you punishing yourself, Josh?" He asked, in that same deadly, purring tone.

Josh swallowed hard, and finally dared to look straight into the President's eyes.

"Yes, sir, I guess I am," he whispered.

Bartlet's heart went out to the young man in front of him. He could help. This was definitely something he could help with. He moved slowly and gracefully to stand behind his Deputy Chief of Staff, and put a hand on each of Josh's shoulders.

"Would you like me to take care of that?" he whispered. He felt Josh stiffen beneath his hands.

"I'm sorry, sir?" Josh faltered.

"Would you like me to take care of punishing you? Would you trust me to do that?" Bartlet whispered in Josh's ear. "If you do it, you'll take it too far and it'll never be enough to satisfy you. Trust me, I know," he added in a wistful, heartfelt tone. "If I do it, you have to agree that you'll accept that I control how long and how hard and how much – and when I'm done then you have to accept that it's over; you mustn't brood on it any more after that. You have to put it behind you. Learn from it, yes, but dwell on it – no. If I take charge of your punishment, you have to agree to that, or it won't work."

Josh took a harsh, shaky breath.

"Punish me, sir?" He asked. "How?" The word was almost voiceless, barely audible. Bartlet smiled.

"That's my decision but I think you know the answer to that," he whispered in Josh's ear. "That's what you really want, don't you, Josh?" He felt the young man shudder beneath him. Then, unexpectedly, Josh put his head back until it rested on Bartlet's thigh. His eyes were closed as if in prayer, seeking guidance. Bartlet looked down on this young man leaning on him so trustingly and felt a wave of exhilaration pass through him. This was what both he and Josh needed – there was no question of it. "Understand this – it's your choice. There are no consequences to you saying no," Bartlet added, his tone more serious, much closer to President Bartlet than the purring, deadly tones he had just been using. "If you don't want this I'll turn around and walk out of here and we'll both forget it happened. I just thought you could use my help right now. It's your call, Josh."

There was silence in the room. Bartlet was acutely aware of the sound of Josh's breathing, his chest rising and falling too fast.

"Hush." Bartlet slowly slid his hand down Josh's body until it came to rest on the young man's heaving chest. "Breathe more slowly. Breathe with me." He took a deep breath and was almost surprised when Josh struggled to do the same, mirroring him. Oh god this felt good! Suddenly he knew why Leo was so addicted to this particular role. He hadn't known that it could feel like this. They breathed in time for several minutes, Josh's back warming Bartlet's thighs and groin.

"All right – I'm going to want an answer from you in a minute," Bartlet said softly, almost lost in the sensation of them both breathing together in the dark room, warming each other, at one with each other. He heard Josh swallow – the sound was audible in the quiet gym.

"Okay..." Bartlet slid his hands away from Josh's chest reluctantly. "What's your answer, Josh? Remember that it's your choice."

"I know that." Josh's voice sounded strained, full of need. "My answer is yes. Please." He tipped his head back and looked up at the President, his face upside down, his dark eyes glowing. "Please," he whispered again. Bartlet placed his hands on either side of Josh's face and caressed him lovingly. Josh closed his eyes with a heartfelt sigh, his lips slightly parted, moist and inviting. Bartlet dropped his head and bestowed the smallest of kisses on Josh's slightly opened mouth. Josh opened up a little underneath him and it took all Bartlet's strength not to plunge straight in there – but this, as he had to continually remind himself, wasn't just about him. Josh needed him to think of his needs as well as his own. He dragged himself away reluctantly, and Josh remained in exactly the same position, his lips still parted, his eyes still closed – his whole body held in a state of rapt attention. He gave a sweet, shuddering little sigh, as if, by kissing him, the President had just fulfilled a long held, deeply felt fantasy – and Bartlet realised, with some surprise, that that was exactly what had happened.

"All right, Josh. There will be more of that after – but first we must deal with how you're feeling right now. Do you understand me?"

Josh seemed to come to, and, roused from his statue-like state, he opened his eyes and nodded. Bartlet stood in front of him, so that Josh could see his every move, and his hands went, slowly and deliberately, to his belt. He paused there for a moment, waiting for Josh's reaction. The younger man swallowed, and even in the semi-darkness, Bartlet could see the flush on his skin and the dilation of his pupils but he made no move. Instead he seemed to drink in the sight of the President's hands, lingering on his belt. Finally, Josh tore his eyes away from the belt, and looked into the President's eyes. Bartlet found the acceptance he wanted there and gave a little nod, then, still very slowly, he began to unbuckle the belt. His hands were surprisingly steady as he drew the belt through the loops of his pants. Josh followed the movement without alarm, his eyes calm. Bartlet hung the belt from the handles of the weight bar and moved on to his tie. Josh continued to sit there, a peculiarly serene expression on his face. Bartlet reached out and stroked his hair gently anyway, needing to give the reassurance that he felt was required. Just because Josh showed himself no mercy, didn't mean that Bartlet had to do the same. Then Bartlet began undoing his tie.

"I'm going to tie you to the weight stack with my tie," he said in that same low, deadly voice. "I'll whip you with my belt – but how hard and for how long is for me to decide. Do you understand that? It still isn't too late to say no."

"I don't want to say no," Josh whispered, but his eyes were wide and alarmed. Bartlet knew why – he understood many of the emotions the young man in front of him was experiencing, had lived through them himself and knew how powerful they were.

"I don't have to tie you but I think it would help you if I did," he explained. "I know you're not scared of the belt but being tied will make it easier for you. I can't explain how, just that I know it's true." He gave a small smile, because this was something he had learned from his own experiences with Leo. Leo often tied him, and, while he always fought it at first, it was easier submitting to one of Leo's spankings when he was tied than if he wasn't. When Leo didn't tie him it took all his own courage to stay in position and take what he badly wanted to take – what he needed. A little voice in his head always whispered to him, telling him he could get up, that he didn't need to stay here, that he could go – and that voice was absolutely right. He could do all those things – but if he did, then he didn't get the absolution and sense of release that he needed and sometimes he needed it very badly indeed.

"I'll be tied. That's fine," Josh told him, but his eyes were still so bright with anxiety that Bartlet stopped what he was doing, and pulled the younger man to him. He held Josh's face against his chest for a long time, stroking that wild hair, soothing the tightly strung body. Josh was stiff, and resisted him for several long seconds, and then gave in, and wrapped his arms around the President's body, holding on tightly. He allowed himself to be soothed for a long time, and finally his tense body began to relax. That was Bartlet's cue.

"It's time now. In a moment, I want you to stand up and prepare yourself for your punishment," Bartlet whispered. He felt Josh's nod against his stomach, waited for a beat, and then stepped back. Josh swallowed hard and then got to his feet. Bartlet felt himself moving up a gear, getting deeper into role – if this was going to happen then it had to count, or Josh would be left feeling even worse than before. He needed to feel that he was in safe hands, that someone was taking care of him, but at the same time, he needed to know, also, that Bartlet was in charge, and had all the control in this situation. Josh needed his punishment and he needed to know that it was being delivered by someone with unimpeachable authority over him – someone with his own best interests at heart, but someone strong, firm and unyielding. Bartlet drew himself up to his full height and began to slowly roll up his shirtsleeves. He knew that Josh was watching, transfixed by the sight, and could guess the countless emotions that were surging through the young man's body. He knew the moment before a spanking was the absolute worst, and yet also, the time when he felt most alive. Even Leo, never a showy man, understood the need to make this moment count and give it maximum dramatic impact. Bartlet finished with his shirt-sleeves and then glanced at the hapless man standing beside him, looking as if his knees might buckle at any moment.

"Take off your shirt, Josh," he ordered. Josh swallowed hard again, but nodded, and, with visibly trembling hands, pulled the tee shirt he was wearing over his head. He held it, stupidly, for a moment, and then slung it over the weights behind him before turning back to the President. Bartlet looked the young man over, taking his time. He didn't touch – he just looked. He took in the pale, well-toned chest, covered with liberal amounts of wiry hair. Josh stood up to the scrutiny well – and Bartlet knew that this was about more than just punishment. This could be, if everything went well here tonight, about so much more; Josh had a yearning in his soul that was tangible and it was something that Bartlet felt himself responding to in a way he hadn't expected. Maybe this was how Leo had felt that first time,

maybe that's what had led them on to the places they had subsequently decided to go with each other and the many different facets of their self-imposed roles that they had explored.

"All right. You've done very well so far, Josh. I'm proud of you. Now, just relax. This is where it gets really tough." Bartlet pulled his tie out from under his collar and stepped forward. "Hold your hands out, wrists together...that's good." He tied Josh's hands tightly, but not harshly, and then, unexpectedly, pulled Josh forward sharply. The younger man came towards him with a gasp of surprise, which he swiftly bit back. Bartlet had to turn his face away to hide his smile. Josh was a revelation – a beautiful revelation but a complete revelation none the less. He was so willing, so eager to please – it was hard not to love him when he was like this. Bartlet used the two loose ends of the tie to fasten Josh's hands to the overhead bar of a pec dec, taking his time, making sure that the young man was comfortable, but immobile. Finally he finished, and took a step back.

"That's good," he commented. "Are you still with me, Josh?"

He stroked the back of the other man's head and Josh gave a low moan, clearly beyond coherent speech. Bartlet smiled to himself – that never happened with him. Even when he was having his hide royally tanned, he still managed to argue vehemently with Leo – a fact that his good natured, implacable Chief of Staff endured with his usual fortitude, although Bartlet was of the opinion that his punishments might well end sooner and be far less painful if he was only able to hold his tongue. He never was of course – not until he had reached the place where he needed to be, and Leo seemed, instinctively, to know that. Josh was clearly a very different proposition. He hadn't wheedled or resisted or put up any kind of struggle at all, as Bartlet often did with Leo. His responses were entirely different.

"Okay, Josh. Punishment always takes place on the bare, so I'm going to get you ready." He looped his fingers into Josh's shorts, and lowered them down to the young man's ankles. Josh gave another low moan, but he wasn't in distress – in fact, when Bartlet looked at the young man he saw that Josh was on a different zone completely. His face was flushed and almost feverish with anticipation, and there was a slight film of sweat on his upper lip. He looked – beautiful. It was a strange word to use, Bartlet thought, but it was true. Josh looked beautiful like this, arms tied above his head, fixed to the gym apparatus, his lean body stretched out, awaiting punishment, his pale buttocks curved enticingly, clenching and unclenching furiously under Bartlet's scrutiny, anticipating what would soon happen to them.

"Relax." Bartlet ran a gentle hand over the twin globes of flesh, soothing his Deputy Chief of Staff. Josh made a little noise in the back of his throat as he was touched in that intimate area but Bartlet wasn't about to start in until Josh was ready. He had too many memories of the bad physical chastisement he had experienced at his father's hands to want to inflict that on anyone else. And he'd had enough good experiences at Leo's hands to know how it should be done. "All right, Josh, I'm going to punish you. Would you like to tell me why you're being punished?" Bartlet asked in low, firm tones.

"Because I screwed up in that meeting with Hoynes, because I didn't keep the lid on that story about the new acquisitions bill, because I dumped you and Leo up to your necks in shit

with the Crossley fiasco," Josh said quickly.

"Okay – it's true you made some errors of judgement in all three of those areas, Josh," Bartlet said. "But my guess is that Leo's already raked you over the coals in a professional capacity about them. I'm not going to use corporal punishment on you for anything you might do professionally. Not now, not ever – there are other ways of dealing with that. I'm going to punish you because you need me to and because you've given me permission to. Do you understand that?"

Josh blinked – this clearly wasn't what he had expected. "I'm not sure, sir," he said honestly.

Bartlet knew how difficult it could be to understand anything while standing butt naked, tied, waiting for a whipping, but all the same, he felt this point was important. He decided to try a different tack – something that he thought might work with the young man standing in front of him.

"When you've made mistakes in the past, have you fantasised about something like this happening, Josh?" He asked softly. Josh hesitated, and then, as if it was something shameful, he nodded.

"I thought so – it isn't anything to be ashamed of," Bartlet told him firmly. He went to stand in front of Josh and looked the other man in the eyes. "Who do you see punishing you like this, Josh?" He asked carefully. Josh hesitated, dropping his eyes to the floor. Bartlet took hold of his chin and made him look up. "Answer me please, Josh," he said implacably. Josh swallowed hard.

"When I was younger – my father, sir," Josh whispered. "It was just a fantasy though, sir – maybe because I hated those sorrowful looks he'd give me whenever I screwed up. I would have done anything, endured anything not to have him look at me like that. I wanted him to spank me rather than look like I was a cross he had to bear. He never did though! He never laid a finger on me. He was a very good father, sir."

"I know that, Josh," Bartlet said gently. "My own father was a small-minded, petty tyrant who used his fists to prove his points and not his arguments. I'm telling you this so you know that I would never punish you in anger or for getting anything wrong – I know how that feels and trust me, it feels lousy. I'm punishing you because you want me to and because I believe it'll help you. Am I right?"

Josh gazed at him blearily and then nodded.

"Good. Now tell me, when you got older – who else did you fantasise about punishing you?" He asked. Josh flushed.

"Leo, sir," he whispered. Bartlet gave a little grunt of amusement.

"Yeah, you and me both," he said. "Hell, I don't suppose we're the only people who work with Leo who occasionally have those thoughts. Anyone else?"

Josh bit on his lip and nodded. "You, sir," he admitted.

"I thought so. All right then, Josh, I'm going to do that for you. I'm going to punish you the way you've fantasised about me punishing you – but I want you to remember that your consent is important to me. I can be firm, Josh. I can be strict – and I will punish you as hard as you need me to, but what I will not do is punish you for your mistakes or because you've failed me or disappointed me. You haven't. You just got some stuff wrong, and you get plenty very right – so I figure it all evens itself out in the end. Are you listening to me, Josh?"

"Yes, sir." Josh nodded. "I understand, sir."

"Good. Then I think it's time we began. You don't have any control over this, Josh. I'm taking that control."

Josh gave a deep, heartfelt sigh, and a lot of the tension went from his arms. Bartlet smiled – he knew that feeling so well. It sometimes took a hell of a lot of persuading on Leo's part to make him give up control. One of the things about running the country was that you sometimes found it hard to step back and let someone else be in charge for a change. Leo's 'persuasion' could sometimes be very severe before Bartlet would relinquish the degree of control his old friend required of him. Josh, on the other hand, seemed all too eager to give it up – perhaps because he already viewed Bartlet with the deference you gave to the President.

Bartlet took a step back, but he wasn't ready to use the belt yet – he knew from his many experiences at his father's hands that being whipped hard on bare skin without a warm up hurt like hell, and while he knew Josh wanted to be punished and expected to be whipped hard with his belt, Bartlet wasn't prepared to give him the kind of punishment he had endured so often at his father's hands. His experience with Leo had taught him that there was another way; when he had first thrown himself on Leo's tender mercies in this way he had been astonished by the time and care his old friend had taken. He had gone to Leo needing punishment, just as Josh needed punishment right now, but Leo had given him something else entirely. At first Bartlet had rebelled against it, but, hours later, when Leo held him in his arms and allowed him to cry his eyes out, he had to admit that his friend had known exactly what he was doing.

Bartlet put a hand on Josh's bottom and held it there gently for a moment. Josh took a choking intake of breath. Bartlet gave the white globe of flesh a sharp tap and Josh tensed and then gave a shaky little laugh.

"You were expecting that to hurt?" Bartlet grunted. "Not yet, Josh. I told you, I'm in charge of this. We'll go at my pace."

Josh nodded and lowered his head in acceptance. Bartlet smiled – oh, this boy was so much more amenable and obedient than he ever was. He was a terrible sub – opinionated, difficult, mouthy – luckily he had the most patient, firm and even tempered top in the world because he didn't think that anyone else would put up with him. Josh was sweetly eager to

please though, thoroughly prepared to abandon himself to Bartlet's will in a way that was beautiful to behold. Bartlet began to spank the younger man's backside more firmly now, alternating sharp slaps with softer, gentle, almost caressing taps. Josh's bottom soon began to glow a lovely rosy colour in tone but he made no sound. He did start to shuffle his feet a little bit though, to move out of the way of the steady slaps that were raining down on his unprotected flesh. Bartlet decided that this was something that could not be allowed to continue; he put one arm around Josh's waist, and, holding the young man firmly in place, began to pepper down harder slaps on his butt cheeks. Now he could feel Josh squirming and could hear little mewling sounds emerging from the back of his throat. He knew he never made noises like that – he hollered like a banshee when Leo was punishing him, maybe because he could – because when his father had whipped him he'd always tried to keep quiet, so as not to give the man the pleasure of knowing he'd really hurt him. With Leo it was different – with Leo he had been able to let it all out, and finally find the voice that had been denied him all those years ago.

"You can scream if you like, Josh. The gym is a long way from anywhere else and I doubt anyone would hear you," he said. Josh nodded but he still stayed pretty quiet. Bartlet decided this was just the way he preferred it, and continued about his task, stepping up the pace even more until he knew that Josh had to be smarting badly. His bottom was glowing a bright red, and he was squirming against Bartlet's arm – not seriously enough to imply that he couldn't take much more but enough to let Bartlet know that the spanking was doing the work it was supposed to. He continued for several more minutes until he heard a muffled whimper emerge from Josh's throat. He stopped immediately, and stepped away from the young man's body. Josh slumped a little in his bonds, still making the little whimpering noise in the back of his throat. Bartlet touched his shoulder gently, and went to stand in front of him.

"Okay, Josh?" He asked gently, taking Josh's face in his hands. Josh focused on him with some difficulty, and then nodded – his face was bright but he didn't look in any distress – in fact he looked almost exhilarated, lost in the moment.

"I'm going to use my belt now. Not many – just a few strokes to make you realise you've been fully punished," Bartlet told him. Josh straightened and nodded, his eyes following Bartlet's every move, eager and full of emotion. Bartlet took the belt from the bar where it had been hanging and doubled it over slowly in his hands. He hated it when Leo did this to him, slowing everything down just as it got to the really painful part, but now he found himself doing the exact same thing. Josh reacted differently though – instead of being impatient, headstrong and rebellious, he was transfixed by everything Bartlet did, his eyes patient and accepting, full almost of a kind of rapture. "You're doing very well, Josh. I'm proud of you," Bartlet said, finding that it was the truth. He wasn't just saying it – he did feel a wave of almost absurd pride in the young man standing in front of him, his hands tied above his head, his ass glowing bright red from the spanking he'd just received. "I don't want you to think I'm short-changing you though," Bartlet told him firmly. "This will be a hard punishment. I want you to take it and afterwards you'll need to forgive yourself. Okay?"

Josh nodded, his eyes looking a little uncertain. Bartlet grabbed his face again, and held it so

that Josh couldn't move. "I mean it, Josh. This is your punishment. You don't punish yourself any more when I'm through. I'm in charge of you right now and I say when you've been punished enough. Okay?"

Josh seemed happier with that and his eyes cleared. He nodded more firmly.

"Good boy. Now take your punishment, Josh."

Bartlet slapped the belt on his hand a couple of times to get the feel of it, remembering how Leo usually did exactly the same thing and wondering if he wasn't just copying all his best moves from his old friend. He went to stand behind Josh, and raised his hand. He had never done this before and he wanted to do it right so he studied the waiting ass in front of him for a long moment before bringing the belt down with a firm thwap – not too hard, but on the already sensitised flesh he guessed it hurt enough. Josh gave a little start and another of those mewling sounds emerged from his throat. Bartlet decided that this had to be done fast now – fast and hard to take Josh over the final hurdle he needed to clear. He brought the doubled up belt down over and over again, six times in quick succession, painting several broad, red stripes on Josh's backside. Josh twisted and the mewling had now turned into a semi-sob but Bartlet thought that was probably the right reaction in the circumstances. After six strokes he stopped, replaced the belt on his pants and moved in close once more. He cupped Josh's red buttocks with his hands, feeling the heat – Leo often did this to him, and although it chafed to feel anything against the newly whipped flesh, he also took comfort in the human contact. Josh seemed to react the same way because he pressed back against Bartlet's body in a way that was desperate, even needy.

"All right, boy. You did fine. You did very well in fact," Bartlet told him, stroking Josh's body gently. He hadn't intended for it to get this far – he had meant to keep his distance, not wanting to intrude on Josh in a way the other man might be unable to protest about in his zoned out state, but somehow it felt wrong not to go in close and give the kind of comfort that Leo always gave. He kissed the back of Josh's head tenderly, held him for a second, and then stepped back and pulled Josh's shorts up before going to stand in front of him again. "That's it – it's all over now. I'm going to untie you and then you can get dressed. Your punishment is over." Josh gazed at him from under those heavily lidded eyes of his, and Bartlet couldn't stop himself stroking the side of Josh's face. "Did you hear me?" He asked. "You did really well, Josh. It's over."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," Josh whispered, and Bartlet was surprised to see a look of utmost reverence in his eyes. He carefully untied the other man and Josh slumped momentarily, then pulled himself together and reached for his tee shirt. He never took his eyes off Bartlet as he pulled the tee shirt on. Bartlet leaned on the gym equipment, returning the look – something profound had just happened here between them and he suddenly realised it would be impossible for them to just leave as if nothing had happened. Had Leo known that when he'd made his suggestion earlier this evening, Bartlet wondered? Yes, probably he had – Leo didn't do or say anything without first considering it down to the last implication and possible consequence.

"Josh, I don't want you to have any concerns that this will change things between us

professionally," he said. "This was just between us – it doesn't have to happen again unless you want it to, and I won't refer to it again if you ask me not to."

Josh looked as if the bottom had dropped out of his world and Bartlet realised, too late, that he was interpreting his words the wrong way. Still lost in the sensations of what had just happened, he thought Bartlet was extricating himself from the situation and that wasn't what he'd meant at all. Now he could see that Josh was embarrassed - and scared that he had let himself down or revealed too much to a man he quite clearly adored.

"Okay, sir. Thank you, sir. I appreciate what you did here for me tonight. I'll just go and..." Josh began walking, unsteadily, towards the door. Bartlet shook his head, realising that this was definitely going wrong. He wondered, briefly, what Leo would do in the circumstances, but didn't have time to ponder that for too long as Josh stumbled into the wall and stood there for a moment, holding on breathlessly, before heading for the door once more.

"Hold it right there, Josh," he said, his voice ringing out loudly in the quiet gym. Josh stopped dead in his tracks, responding to the tone of total command in the voice. "I haven't given you permission to leave yet," Bartlet said, playing the role on instinct alone. Josh pulled himself up straight, and turned. His eyes were confused, as if he wasn't sure what was happening now.

"I didn't realise I needed your permission, sir," he whispered.

"Normally you don't – but I just whipped your ass, Josh, so I don't think we're in a normal situation any more. I think you need some taking care of for the next hour or two, and I intend to do just that. Come with me, please."

He strode towards the gym door and unlocked it, then held it open for Josh to walk through. The young man responded immediately, surrendering himself up once more to the firm authority of the man who had just taken such consummate charge of him for the past half hour. He followed Bartlet out of the West Wing and up to the Residence, without either of them saying a word. Somewhere along the way the President attracted his usual complement of secret service guards, and he wondered what the hell they thought of him accompanying a silent, almost zombieified Josh, walking awkwardly, still clad in his gym clothes. When they reached the Residence he gave them strict orders that he was not to be disturbed and took Josh with him to the bedroom he and Leo used for their Friday night sessions. He opened the door, ushered Josh inside, and closed it again behind them, locking it as he did so. Josh stood there, clearly unsure what to do next. He was also shivering – the cold air affecting him as it came into contact with his body, which was still warm from the spanking he'd received.

"Lie down on the bed, Josh. I'm going to cover you with a blanket," Bartlet ordered. Josh did as he was told, and Bartlet laid the blanket over him, and then, to Josh's evident surprise, crawled in beside him and held him.

"Sir, you don't need to do this. I'm fine. I can go home," Josh said, sounding embarrassed.

"Strange that you'll let me whip your ass but you're embarrassed by a hug," Bartlet commented. "It's okay, Josh, I used to be the same – it's easier to accept punishment than affection sometimes. That's just the way we are."

"We, sir?" Josh asked. He turned his head and looked Bartlet in the eye.

"We, Josh," Bartlet said firmly. "We're very similar in many ways – although I'm older than you so you've got a lot more to learn." It wasn't quite a tongue in cheek comment and Josh managed a faded smile in recognition of that fact. "The way I see it we're both perfectionists, we both beat ourselves up when we get something wrong...and we both need the occasional application of a firm hand in order to jolt ourselves out of it."

Josh's eyes widened in surprise. "Who would do that to you, sir?" He asked, but his meaning was clearly – who would dare? "Ab...I mean Dr. Bartlet?"

Bartlet laughed out loud. "No, Josh, not Abbey. This isn't her kind of thing at all."

Josh's eyes widened even further. "Leo," he whispered. "You let Leo..." He let the words trail off, looking amazed. Bartlet chuckled and squeezed the young man comfortingly. "Oh shit. Sorry, sir but I mean...oh shit," he whispered. "I can't believe... I mean, I can't imagine..." He trailed off again. "Oh shit," he said once more. Then his expression turned to one of alarm. "Does Abbey know?" He asked.

"Of course," Bartlet replied sharply. "Do you think I'd deceive Abbey? In fact, it was she who suggested Leo. It wasn't something she felt she could do herself, and I clearly needed it."

"Was Leo surprised?"

Bartlet considered that for a moment. "I'm not sure anything surprises Leo. No, he wasn't surprised. He took it all in his stride. To be honest, I think he enjoys having the chance to shut me up and put me in my place when at the office it's 'yes sir, no sir' all the time."

Josh gave a delighted little laugh.

"One thing Leo did impress upon me was the need for a wind down period afterwards – which is what we're doing here, Josh. I didn't want you just walking out of there without making sure that you're okay with this, and talking about where we go from here."

"Me? I'm fine." Josh gave a dreamy smile. "I feel great, sir...a bit light headed but..."

"That's normal enough. Did it work for you? Will you stop beating yourself up about what happened this week?" He asked. Josh thought about it for a moment, and then nodded.

"It did hurt, sir, but it felt like a good hurt – you know?" He gave a lazy, hazy smile as if this conclusion had come as a total revelation to him.

"Oh yes, I know." Bartlet smiled a conspiratorial smile in return. They were silent for a long time, and then Josh shifted against him restlessly. "Go ahead, ask away. I know you're dying to," Bartlet said.

"Do you...I mean, that is...oh hell, do you ever...to Leo?" Josh asked nonsensically. Bartlet grinned.

"Joshua Lyman, can you imagine anyone ever spanking Leo McGarry?" He asked with a snort. Josh started to laugh.

"No, sir – but then again before this evening I couldn't imagine anyone ever spanking you either," he added.

"Ah well, I need it – Leo doesn't. And you need it too, Josh, judging by what happened tonight."

"Sir – you said something about what would happen next..." Josh began.

"That's right – I want you to know first of all that this doesn't have to happen again unless you need it to, and..."

"How did you know?" Josh said, interrupting him in turn and turning to face him. "How did you know I needed this tonight, sir?"

"Leo told me." Bartlet sat up, and looked down on the young man next to him.

"Leo knew?" Josh tried to get up and went back down again with a yelp as his sore ass made painful contact with the bed. "Oh shit," he hissed.

"I'll get you something to ease that in a moment," Bartlet said. "For now – I think you need to feel the sting. As for Leo knowing – he suggested to me that you might need this tonight. I wouldn't have come to find you otherwise. You see..." He hesitated, but he realised that he'd already crossed a line and there was nothing to be lost and everything to be gained by telling Josh the rest of it. "Leo and I have an arrangement, Josh – every Friday night we get together in this room, and, for a few hours every week – our schedules permitting of course – he's in charge. Tonight I was a little bit...put out that Leo had to go to a conference in Florida, I'll admit." Bartlet made a face. "But he suggested that your need was greater than mine tonight anyway and that I could do for you what he usually does for me."

"Every Friday night?" Josh looked astounded. "I mean, we knew you guys had dinner or something on a Friday night but we always assumed it was..." He broke off with a grin.

"Yes, I know, don't say it – you assumed I was subjecting Leo to my cooking. Well, Josh I can tell you that in fact Leo was subjecting my ass to a good cooking instead."

Josh laughed out loud but he still looked completely amazed by what he'd learned.

"I don't need to tell you that this is entirely confidential," Bartlet continued, nudging him. "I'm not making any excuses for what I am or what I need – but Leo and I both have very stressful jobs and this really does help me unwind. I do a much better job as President of this country because of it."

"I understand that, sir." Josh nodded. "You know I'd never tell anyone."

"Good – then I think it's time we rubbed something into that thoroughly whipped ass of yours." Bartlet tousled Josh's hair affectionately, and then went into the en suite bathroom and fumbled around in the cabinet until he found the tube of gel that Leo always used on him. He pulled the blanket off Josh and the young man began to try and lower his shorts.

"I'll do that," Bartlet told him, swatting his hands away. "I'm still in charge, Josh until we agree that this evening's session is over." Josh made a little sound of acquiescence and buried his face in the pillow, allowing Bartlet to carefully lower his shorts. "Hold still – sometimes I swear this part hurts more than the actual spanking," Bartlet said, smearing a liberal amount of cool gel onto his finger and then spreading it carefully on Josh's butt cheeks. Josh made another of those endearing little mewling noises in the back of his throat and Bartlet thought he really could come to enjoy those sounds. He was quick about his work and then pulled Josh's shorts up again. Josh emerged from the pillow, his face flushed with embarrassment. "The sting goes in a few minutes," Bartlet assured him and Josh nodded, but he had that bright, inquisitive, Josh Lyman look in his eyes and Bartlet knew that if he wasn't careful he'd be subjected to a Josh Lyman grilling session any moment now. The younger man was clearly bursting with questions.

"All right, Josh, fire away," he said, with a sigh, realising that the question and answer session was unavoidable. Josh grinned, but what he said next took Bartlet completely by surprise.

"This...Friday night club that you and Leo have going – does it end with just that – with..." he flushed again, clearly embarrassed. "Spanking?" He bit on his lip.

Bartlet thought about it for a moment – this wasn't his secret alone to share, Leo was involved too...but he and this man lying on the bed next to him had already kissed and shared moments that demanded a certain level of trust and confidences.

"No," he ventured finally. "Leo and I are very old friends, Josh. At first our Friday sessions were just as I told you, just spanking – but we moved on from that. Now we do a lot more."

"You're lovers?" Josh held his breath as he waited for the reply.

"Yes." Bartlet nodded. "Well, on a Friday night we are. And before you ask, yes, Abbey knows about that too." He gave a little smile. "As a matter of fact, judging by the way she asks me about what happens between Leo and me on a Friday night, I'd say she finds it a bit of a turn on."

"And she's okay with that?" Josh looked puzzled. Bartlet laughed.

"Josh, Abbey and I have been married for years – she would throw me out of the house on my ass if she caught me in bed with another woman, but she seems to feel that my one night a week with Leo is actually a good thing for all concerned and I'm not about to argue with her about that. Abbey's always accepted that my friendship with Leo is as much a vital part of my life as my love for her. She knows that on Friday nights I sub to Leo – I think it amuses her as a matter of fact. She's pleased that there's someone with whom I don't get my own way, although lord knows I don't always get my own way with her either – she just likes to think I do."

"Would you – do you think she'd mind about me?" Josh asked. Bartlet frowned – to be honest he hadn't even thought about what Abbey would say about this. He assumed she'd view it the same way as she viewed his relationship with Leo. In fact, he was pretty sure she would. "I mean..." Josh continued, "Do you think she would mind if I joined this Friday Night Club you and Leo have going? If I was your...your lover too?" There was a look of intense yearning on his face, and Bartlet remembered how he had responded to that kiss, in the darkness of the gym, his lips parted, his eyes lost in some rapt world of their own.

"Is that what you want?" He asked gently.

Josh nodded, just a shade too eagerly. "Sir, when you talked about being Leo's sub, I knew that was what I wanted – I want to be your sub, and Leo's too if he'll let me, if that's the best way to make this work. I've always envied what you have with Leo. I know I'm much younger, I know you two go way back and you'll never feel the same way about me as you feel about each other...but I would so love to be a part of what you have, even if it's only a small part."

There was a look of wistful longing in his eyes and Bartlet knew he didn't have the heart to refuse him – no, that wasn't true – he didn't want to refuse him.

"I'd need to talk to Leo about it," he said.

Josh swallowed hard, as if that thought worried him.

"Don't look so anxious – Leo doesn't bite," Bartlet chided. Josh gave him a hollow smile in return.

"Leo's wonderful but he's...well, you know, he can be kind of scary," he said. "Do you think he'll agree to this, sir?"

"I have no idea...but it was Leo's idea that I came to you this evening, so..." Bartlet shrugged.

"You don't know what it's been like – watching you two, the kind of relationship you have together. I've always wanted that kind of friendship. I'm never happier than when I'm with you both, when we're working together, when you're bouncing ideas off each other. I kind of feel like the little kid at school who tries to hang out with the older, smarter kids - you let me tag along with you as long as I don't get too irritating." Josh gave another little smile and

Bartlet stared at him fascinated – he'd had no idea that all this had been going on inside Josh's head.

"We'll see what Leo says," he repeated softly, gently pushing back Josh's hair with his hand. The young man smiled up him, utterly trusting, and completely willing and in awe of him. A look like that could, Bartlet thought, swell his head – thank god he had Leo to cut him down to size occasionally. He continued stroking Josh's hair, absently, and, after a little while, the younger man's eyes closed and his breathing deepened. Bartlet looked down on him, still faintly astonished by the way the evening had turned out.

His cell phone rang a few seconds later and he quickly fished it out of his pocket and answered it. Josh, his body as boneless as a jellyfish, completely relaxed, a wide smile still etched on his face, remained asleep.

"Bartlet," he said in a low tone.

"So, how did it go?" Leo's voice asked, just the tiniest trace of amusement in the gravelly tones.

"How did you guess? Oh never mind – although we should really talk about this annoying prescience of yours. It's disturbing."

"You did as I suggested then?" Leo asked.

"Yes, I did." Bartlet smiled down at the sleeping man beside him.

"He's there now, isn't he?" Leo said.

"Yeah, he's here. He's fast asleep."

"Where are you?"

"In the Blue Bedroom. I brought him back here...after...Leo, this kid is amazing," Bartlet confided. "He's not like me – you wouldn't have any trouble with him at all. He just eats out your hand."

"If you treat him right. If you treat him wrong I suspect he'd savage you like a Rottweiler," Leo commented. Bartlet chuckled.

"Yeah, maybe so. Leo..." He hesitated.

"You told him about Friday nights didn't you?" Leo said.

"I wish you'd stop guessing everything I'm about to say before I say it," Bartlet said in an exasperated tone. "Yes, I told him about Friday nights. He calls it our Friday Night Club - and he wants to join, Leo."

There was silence for a few seconds, and then:

"We'll see," Leo said, finally.

"Leo, we've started something here – we can't just..."

"I said we'll see," Leo told him firmly.

"It's not just your decision to make," Bartlet snapped.

"Yes it is," Leo replied calmly. "Sir, the ultimate responsibility for this entire country rests on your shoulders. Just accept that there are some decisions you don't have to make and this is one of them. I'm in charge on Friday nights, not you. That's the way we both agreed it, isn't it?"

Bartlet sighed. "Yes, yes it is."

"Good. Now, tell me, was tonight what you expected?"

"Yes...and no...it was fantastic, Leo. He trusted me so much. I felt...exhilarated by it - by him. He says he's willing to sub to you too...in fact, I think he's more than willing..."

"Don't get ahead of yourself, sir. If we decide to invite him to join us on Friday nights then we'll need some new rules and I'll need to think very carefully about what those will be. As for him subbing to me, well I sure as hell ain't subbing to him, so I think we can take that as read."

"What is this power complex you have, Leo?" Bartlet teased.

"I could ask you the same thing, Mr. President," Leo shot right back. Bartlet made a face at the phone. "I'll talk to him when I get back."

"He's one of us, Leo. He always has been. You know we both feel the same way about him."

"I said I'll talk to him. Don't wheedle, sir."

"I was not wheedling," Bartlet exploded, and then he dropped his voice as Josh stirred on the bed beside him and muttered something in his sleep. "I'm not wheedling," he repeated in a whisper. "But you have to admit that you feel the same way about him as I do. I know you, Leo. I know how much you care about Josh."

"Yes, I do," Leo admitted readily. "Which is all the more reason to take this slowly and make sure nobody gets hurt. He means too much to both of us for us to rush in and screw up his life because we didn't wait to find out exactly what it is he wants and expects from us and to ensure he knows the limits of what we can give him."

Bartlet sighed, and nodded. "You're right, Leo."

"I know. Tell Josh I'll speak to him on Monday. Good night, sir."

"Good night, Leo." Barlet turned off the cell phone and looked down on the sleeping form beside him again. "Friday night club," he snorted, although he had to admit that it was an apt title. He stroked Josh's hair again and smiled to himself. "Welcome to the Friday night club, Josh, because whatever Leo says, somehow I have the feeling that you just joined."

He leaned over, brushed Josh's hair aside, and bestowed a gentle kiss on the younger man's forehead.

PartTwo-Leo by Xanthe

Author's Notes:

This is my first proper fanfic set completely outside The X Files so be gentle with me <g> This series is unbeta'd - just a bit of fun and something new to play with. Many thanks to dot for encouragement to continue :-) And to Penny for the pep-talk!

Posted: 6th November, 2002

Warning: This chapter contains scenes of graphic dom/sub sex between Leo and Jed. If the idea of Presidential spanky/slashy sex upsets, offends or squicks you, then don't read it!

Seven fifty eight...seven fifty nine...

Leo McGarry glanced at his watch, and then at the door. It was Monday morning, and all the senior West Wing staff were gathered in his office for the usual weekly briefing; all except Josh.

Eight O Clock.

Precisely on time, to the second, Josh put his head around the door and then insinuated his entire body into the room as if he hoped nobody would notice he was actually there.

"Come in, Josh, we were waiting for you," Leo said, gazing at his Deputy Chief of Staff dispassionately, his sharp gaze missing nothing. Josh was usually the first to arrive for their regular Monday briefing – and Leo knew for a fact that Josh had been in the West Wing at 6am this morning so it was hardly a case of him oversleeping.

"I'm not late am I?" Josh had a look very much like a startled rabbit - and his eyes made sweeping contact with every single person in the room except Leo. Leo was not surprised. He had wondered whether Josh would bounce in, bright and early as usual, and pretend that he had not spent Friday evening in a rather unorthodox situation with the President, or whether he'd do exactly this – creep in just on time, and try to avoid Leo's eye. No, Leo was definitely not surprised that Josh had taken the latter course of action. His Deputy Chief of Staff was excellent at his job, and Leo was pleased to count him as one of his closest friends

– but nobody ever pretended that Josh was remotely emotionally literate. Usually he wasn't even sure of what he was feeling precisely because he was too caught up in his own emotions to understand them. Leo, on the other hand, had made an art form of practiced detachment – and he was an acute observer of those around him.

"You're exactly on time, Josh," Leo said, waving his hand to his Deputy. Josh nodded, fixing his gaze absently but determinedly on a spot somewhere over Leo's right shoulder and took his place standing by the door in the crowded room, still not making eye contact with his boss. Leo gave an inner sigh – he had expected something like this to happen, but he needed Josh's mind to be 100% on his job right now, and not on what had happened to him on Friday night. Leo knew that this was a situation he'd have to take care of sooner rather than later.

He turned his attention to the meeting, giving his usual quick, incisive briefing. CJ was on good form, playing around with a story that they knew would break later that day, trying to find a positive spin on what was clearly a defeat for this administration whichever way you looked at it. Josh stood with his shoulders hunched miserably throughout – the fact that this story was breaking at all was his fault and he knew it and everyone else in the room knew it, and all CJ's amusing word plays didn't change that.

Finally Leo brought the meeting to a close and the staff began to file out. Josh, closest to the door, turned to go with a look of relief, which Leo proceeded to wipe off his face with three terse words.

"Not you, Josh."

Josh stiffened, swallowed hard, and turned back. CJ smiled at him and glanced at Leo.

"Is Josh being punished for the Crossley story getting out?" She asked. Out of the corner of his eye, Leo saw Josh wince – this was standard CJ talk, standard West Wing talk – CJ couldn't possibly have had any idea how her choice of words would have impacted upon his hapless Deputy.

"No, Josh isn't being punished. Josh was punished for that last week," Leo told her with just a hint of a gleam in his eyes. This time Josh's wince was pronounced and his face was painted a shade of deep red. "And as far as I'm concerned that's an end to the matter," Leo added. "We're into damage limitation now."

"Okay," CJ said brightly, giving Josh another smile as she passed him on her way out – a smile that didn't even register on his radar as he stood, glumly, gazing into space.

Leo waited. He didn't say a word even when the door closed leaving the two of them alone together. Josh shifted uncomfortably and his gaze moved erratically from a spot over Leo's right shoulder to a spot over his left shoulder. Leo tapped his finger on the desk, still waiting. Josh bit on his lip, and then, finally, reluctantly, his eyes slid downwards to meet Leo's. That was Leo's cue, and, having finally gained Josh's full attention, he started to speak.

"So, I've been speaking to the President about what happened on Friday night," Leo plunged straight in there, wanting to study Josh's reaction – which, as it turned out, was quite dramatic. Josh took a sharp intake of breath, his dark eyes almost agonised. "What's the matter, Josh? Did you think I was just going to ignore what happened?" Leo said, still gazing at him intently, pinning the younger man where he stood with the full force of his steely stare.

"No. Sorry...it's just taking me some time to get used to this," Josh said, his voice barely more than a whisper. He sat down on the chair in front of the desk with a heartfelt sigh.

"If you've changed your mind..." Leo began.

"I haven't!" Josh said, too quickly.

"Okay then." Leo nodded. "I told the President that I would talk to you and I intend to do just that."

"Here?" Josh looked shocked.

"No, of course not." Leo gave an impatient wave of his hand. "You'll be having lunch with me at my hotel today."

"I will?" Josh looked surprised. "Uh, sorry – it's just that I already have a lunch appointment."

"Then you'll cancel it." Leo shrugged. "I'll see you at the hotel at one o'clock."

"Okay," Josh said, getting up and hotfooting it eagerly to the door, clearly glad that the meeting was over.

"Not so fast, Josh. Come back here," Leo said. Josh turned, and gave a weak smile. He returned and stood in front of the desk, looking for all the world like a naughty schoolboy which, Leo supposed must be pretty much how he was feeling. "Josh, you do an important job and you do it well. I need to know that you're going to continue to do it well and that you're able to keep your mind on your work," Leo said gently but firmly. Josh relaxed and ran his hand through his hair, which was already starting to take on the appearance of a crazy professor.

"You can rely on me, Leo. You know that," he said, a hint of the old Josh finally starting to shine through.

"I'm glad to hear it. Perhaps when this lunchtime meeting is out of the way you'll feel that matters have been resolved more in your own mind," Leo said, still studying the young man thoughtfully. Josh seemed aware of the scrutiny. He straightened up, trying to look purposeful and together, and nodded. "Yes, everything's changed," Leo said softly. "But at the same time, everything is still exactly the same. Do you understand that, Josh?"

Josh took a long, deep breath and then exhaled slowly. "I think so, Leo. It's just taking some time getting used to it."

Leo sat back in his chair and studied Josh intently. He tried to imagine this young man as Jed had seen him on Friday evening. The President had told him all about his session with Josh – in some detail, as Leo had requested a full briefing. It had been Leo's suggestion that Jed approach Josh on Friday; Leo had an instinct for people, and his instinct had told him that Josh would welcome Jed's help. At it turned out, he hadn't been wrong.

At that moment there was a knock on the door and the President breezed into the room without waiting for a reply – something that Leo really hated, and which, moreover, Jed knew Leo hated - which was the source of many a bickering contest between the two of them, a contest that Leo always won - every Friday evening in fact.

"Good morning, Leo! Good morning, Josh!" The President said brightly, clearly in one of his better moods. "Leo, I need to see you – we've got that Ambassador coming and I want to go through the briefing notes with you as I can't make head nor tail of them. Josh are you in on this meeting with the Ambassador or not?"

Josh jumped like a startled fawn. "Uh, no, sir," he said.

"Okay." The President turned back to Leo. "Is anyone in on this meeting except me?" He asked.

"I could arrange for Charlie to sit in on it if you feel you want some moral support," Leo said. The President made a face at him and then turned to Josh with an expansive wave of his hand.

"Ambassador Farley was an appointment of the previous administration, Josh," he said. "I think it's fair to say that he stands for everything I do not and that even two minutes spent in the same room as him is two minutes too long."

"You'll do fine, sir," Leo said. "Josh – you can go. I'll see you later."

"Yes, by all means go, Josh," the President declared. "Everyone else seems to have deserted me in my hour of need."

Josh gazed at both men for a split second, a look of utter incredulity on his face, and then fled, closing the door behind him.

"Was it something I said?" Jed asked, coming to perch on Leo's desk – another habit Leo hated, as his old friend knew only too well.

"I think you just scared him, sir," Leo pointed out.

"I scared him? His face was as white as a sheet when I walked through the door. You scared him, Leo. I was just putting him at his ease."

"You're in a fine mood today, sir," Leo commented, not intending to get drawn on that topic.

Jed studied him for a moment, and then his entire persona changed, his mood shifting diametrically in the space of a few seconds in a way that Leo had come to be very familiar with.

"Did you speak to him yet, Leo?" Jed asked, his voice soft and full of concern.

"Not yet, sir, but then it is only 8am and I did only arrive back in Washington at 5.30 this morning," Leo pointed out. "I have however invited him to lunch."

"Invited or ordered?" Jed chuckled.

"It's fair to say that I didn't give him many options," Leo replied with a slight smile, and an inclination of his head.

"Damn - I hope you can stop him looking so scared. He was fine on Friday."

"He's had two days to think about things since then, sir," Leo pointed out.

"I guess. I really want this to work, Leo," Jed sighed. Leo studied his old friend for several seconds, and then nodded.

"I know, sir. I'll talk to him. If it's right then it'll happen."

"And if it isn't it won't?"

"That's right." Leo shrugged. "Have you spoken to Abbey?" He said, changing the subject. He knew Jed's heart was in the right place, but, as always, his enthusiasm could sometimes hamper more objective considerations. Leo knew he needed to have a very long talk with Josh before he could decide how best to proceed.

"Yeah." Jed smiled. "I called her last night in Oregon or Tucson or wherever it is she is right now."

"And?" Leo waited patiently.

"And what?"

Knowing Jed was being deliberately obtuse, Leo continued waiting, one eyebrow raised ever so slightly. Finally his recalcitrant friend gave in.

"And I mentioned Josh and...what happened on Friday." Jed shrugged.

"And?" Leo prompted again.

"And she was fine about it!" Jed said in an exasperated tone. "In fact she didn't seem remotely surprised when I broached the subject. I wonder why that is, Leo?" It was Jed's turn to raise an eyebrow now.

"She's a very perceptive woman, sir," Leo commented neutrally.

"Yeah." Jed gave him a knowing look. "Just how long had you been planning this, Leo - and when did you talk to Abbey about it?"

Leo gave a little grunt, and smiled. "Planning is probably too strong a word, sir. I just thought it might be something that would work out the way it did and I thought I ought to run it by Abbey first to see if she was okay with it. If she hadn't been, then I wouldn't have suggested it to you."

"Are you telling me that you've been seeing Abbey behind my back, Leo?" Jed demanded.

"We have lunch together once a week, sir," Leo informed him. "Schedules permitting of course. She's a very busy lady and occasionally my diary can get a little full too," he said with masterly understatement.

"You have lunch together?" Jed got up and threw his hands in the air. "Since when?"

"You knew about this, sir. She tells you, and I've certainly told you. Several times."

Jed paced around the room while Leo sat back in his chair watching him calmly. This was not a serious Jed explosion. This was just his old friend letting off some of the steam he built up in his job by releasing it safely, over trivia, and with his best friend who he trusted with his life. Leo could take it – and it was better to blow up a storm with Leo than to lose his cool in a meeting with the UN security council or the joint chiefs of staff, or any of the other people he had to meet during the course of his working life. Leo knew that and he thought Jed probably knew that too. Leo also knew that Jed wasn't remotely upset by the fact he had lunch with Abbey once a week, although he suspected that Jed was uncomfortable with the idea that the main topic of conversation during those chats was undoubtedly himself. No, all this current drama was about getting Leo to tell him what he talked about with Abbey and Leo had no intention of doing that as Jed well knew – it was a cat and mouse game between them which they both enjoyed, even if, on this occasion at least, Jed knew he wasn't going to win. Jed stopped pacing and glanced at Leo, who was still sitting, patiently, in his chair, completely unmoved by his President's sense of melodrama.

"Once a week?" Jed asked.

"Yes, sir." Leo nodded.

"And what do you talk about during these lunches, Leo?" Jed demanded. Leo smiled – this

was at the crux of the matter.

"Things." He shrugged.

"Me?" Jed pressed.

"Sometimes." Leo inclined his head. "And other things."

"Once a week?" He asked again.

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Leo, are you having an affair with my wife?" Jed asked, the twinkle in his eye showing that he did not think for a second that that was the case.

"No, sir," Leo replied. "I'm having lunch with your wife. I'm having an affair with you."

That stopped Jed in his tracks. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and made a strangely endearing little face, his eyes soft and full of affection, his mouth pursed into a half smile. Leo knew all of his lover's little gestures and expressions and this one never failed to melt him. He didn't need Jed to say he loved him. Didn't need him to give up his wife, or his job, or to openly declare that they were lovers. Didn't need that or want it. He had everything he wanted right here, could see it in Jed's eyes every day of their working life, and on Friday nights he got to feel and taste and revel in that love and that, for Leo, was enough. He had never been a greedy man; he was content to share Jed with his job, his country, his wife and his family. Leo was happy enough to be on the short list of those people who the President loved – and to know that a small corner of his lover's heart belonged to him and him alone.

"Yeah," Jed said, softly. "Yeah," he said again. Then: "I missed you on Friday night, Leo. I missed us. Josh..." He hesitated, and shrugged.

"I know," Leo said. "I do know. I understand perfectly, sir." And he did, because he understood every single thing that went on in his old friend's mercurial but steadfast heart. Jed didn't pick people up and drop them again – but it took a hell of a long time for anyone to penetrate that protective field around his heart. He didn't want to let anyone in there who would hurt him, the way he had been hurt as a child by a father who had been envious of his abilities and treated him with cruelty. Leo had often wished he could spend just five minutes with Jed's father – he was not a violent man nor given to outbursts of explosive temper, but he sure as hell had a few words that he wanted to say, and which, if he only had the opportunity, he'd deliver in the coldest, most cutting way he could. So, Leo did indeed understand. He understood that he alone wasn't enough for Jed, any more than Abbey was. He understood all the different parts of Jed's complex psyche, and also knew that of all the other staff in the West Wing, it was Josh who had, slowly, over a period of some time,

somehow penetrated Jed's well fortified defences. Josh with his bright, inquisitive, questioning mind and that occasionally lost look in his eyes. Josh who had taken a bullet because of his job, and nearly died because of it; Josh who had struggled to cope with the aftermath of that bullet but kept that struggle to himself for fear both of what he might find out about himself and also for fear of losing his job – and with that, his access to Jed Bartlet, a man he clearly adored. Josh who was phenomenally smart but who still compared himself unfavourably with his colleagues and their abilities. Josh who liked nothing more than to be in the same room with Jed Bartlet, listening, learning, debating... Leo understood Josh Lyman almost as well as he understood Jed Bartlet. He wasn't jealous of Josh any more than he was jealous of Abbey, or jealous of the White House itself for taking up so much of his lover's time and energy. Leo's love was inclusive – and if the addition of Josh to their Friday night arrangement helped Jed do the effective job he did, gave his lover pleasure, and was something that Josh wanted as badly as Jed did, then Leo would do his best to make it happen.

A knock on the door broke the mood between the two men and Jed glanced away, his expression changing back to an entirely presidential one in a split second. Leo did not have Jed's facility for compartmentalising his emotions – so he had learned to control his own feelings and give away very little with his facial expressions.

"Come in," he said, giving the President one last look and the faintest trace of a smile. Charlie put his head around the door.

"Ambassador Farley is here, sir," he said, addressing himself to the President.

"Okay." Jed smiled brightly, and began walking to the door. "Once more into the breach, dear friends..." he quoted dramatically as he went.

"You love your meetings with Ambassador Farley, sir," Leo said softly. "He might stand for everything you do not, but you find his company exhilarating and you admire his mind and his conviction. You don't need any briefing notes for this meeting and you'll ignore them anyway. Farley keeps you on your toes; he keeps you sharp and makes you examine your own convictions. You don't want anyone else in your meetings with him because you want his company to yourself and because nobody else would get a word in edgeways anyway. "

Jed turned a little on his way through the door, a slight smile playing on his mobile lips.

"Yeah," was all he said as he left the room.

Josh was late. Leo glanced at the clock in his hotel room. Josh was definitely late. Leo frowned – this wasn't like Josh, no matter how much he might be dreading this particular meeting.

A thought occurred to Leo and he reached for the hotel room phone and dialled Josh's cell phone number.

"Lyman," Josh answered promptly.

"Josh, you wouldn't happen to be waiting in the hotel restaurant would you?" Leo asked in a dangerous tone.

"Uh, yes, Leo...I thought you said..." Josh began, his voice confused.

"I'm in my room, Josh," Leo interrupted. "Get your ass up here," he said, his mood fraying. Josh might well be dreading this meeting but Leo was feeling the strain himself - for entirely different reasons. Taking on the role of Jed Bartlet's top was a responsibility that had come to permeate his entire life, and now there was an added complication, a new person to worry about – and Leo did worry. He was very sure of himself and his abilities, but he was equally very concerned that the people he cared about got the best of him and that he made their lives better, not worse. Josh was a new responsibility - and he cared about the young man far too much to screw up in this meeting. Just as Jed needed him to be a certain way, to fulfil a certain role in his life, so did Josh - and he intended to do just that. He would consider doing no less for someone who was not only the son of an old friend, but was also someone beloved of the President and someone who, he had to admit, he had a healthy affection for himself.

There was a knock on the door a few seconds later. Leo answered it to find Josh standing there, his hair sticking on end and that familiar bemused look in his eyes.

"I'm sorry. I was..." Josh made a vague gesture in the direction of the elevator.

"Honestly, Josh, did you really think I'd invite you to sit and talk about Friday night in the public restaurant of a busy hotel?" Leo snapped. Josh looked ridiculously sheepish and Leo sighed. "Sit down, Josh. I already ordered for you." He gestured to the meal that was waiting for them at the table. "I figured you wouldn't taste it anyway, so it wouldn't matter if I went ahead and ordered," he commented as Josh took his seat. Josh looked up, startled, and then realised that Leo had made a joke. He gave a grin, and the tension in the room dissipated a little.

"I'm sorry, Leo. I'm so freaked out by this," Josh admitted. "I'm just not thinking straight. The restaurant thing was stupid."

"And yet you're sure you want to be a part of it?" Leo asked, taking his own seat, his gaze fixed firmly on Josh's face.

"Yes." It was just one word but there was no doubting the depth of feeling in it. Josh's eyes were dark and his gaze absolutely unflinching under Leo's scrutiny. Leo put a forkful of food in his mouth, chewed on it thoughtfully, his eyes never leaving Josh's face, then dabbed his napkin over his lips, leaned back, and asked the \$64,000 question.

"Why?"

Josh looked startled and he flushed again – Leo couldn't remember ever having noticed Josh blush before but now it seemed as if his deputy had spent the entire day with a rosy glow on

his face.

"Why?" Josh repeated blankly.

"Yes. Why?" Leo sat there calmly, just watching. Josh bit on his lip.

"I told the President...Friday night was..." he took a deep breath. "He kissed me, Leo."

"Ah." Leo nodded sagely. "And you liked that?"

"Yes. Don't you?" Josh shot back, a challenge in his voice.

Leo's gaze became dark and dangerous and he turned on Josh, slapping him down like an angry lion lashing out at a mischievous cub that's gone too far. "You may think you know a good deal about me, Josh, and you may think you know a good deal about the President but you don't," he growled. "There are some things you don't know anything about; and one of the things you clearly don't know is that you don't ask me that kind of question. I can ask you, but you can't ask me. Is that understood, Josh?"

Josh was looking increasingly out of his depth. "I...no," he said, the rebellion in his tone coming out as nothing more than petulance. "Why don't I get to ask you?"

"Because we aren't in the office," Leo warned, continuing with his theme. "This isn't an extension of our jobs. This is separate, and different. You will have different needs on a Friday night than you have on a Monday morning or a Tuesday afternoon or whenever in the office. There are lines drawn on a Friday night, Josh, and you don't cross them. If you aren't happy with that, then we don't need to go any further. We can end this right now." He put his napkin down and got to his feet.

"No," Josh said quickly. "I'm sorry. I guess I hadn't really understood..."

"No...clearly not," Leo said, still standing. He turned his back on his deputy, walked over to the other side of the room, and poured himself a glass of water from the huge decanter on the sideboard. He drank the entire glass, aware that his hand was shaking slightly. He needed to compose himself, needed some time to think about what to do next –needed to be sure that he got this right. Only when he was in complete control of himself did he turn back to Josh.

"Tell me what happened on Friday night, Josh," he requested.

Josh took a deep breath and nodded. "The President...he found me in the gym. He knew I was upset about the way the week had gone. He seemed to understand what I was feeling. He..." Josh hesitated, the flush on his cheeks becoming more pronounced. "You know what he did, Leo. He must have told you," he whispered.

"Yes he told me but now I want to hear it from you," Leo said implacably.

Josh took another deep breath and then, reluctantly, continued. "He asked me if I was punishing myself and I said I was. He asked if he could take care of that for me...it took me awhile to figure out what he meant, Leo, but when I did..." Josh gave a ghost of a smile. "I admitted to him that it was something I'd fantasised about, Leo and he made everything seem so okay. You know what I mean? He just made everything I was feeling seem okay. I knew I could trust him to take care of it, to make me feel better, and he did."

"How?" Leo didn't move. He had no intention of making this easy on Josh – if the younger man was going to join them on Friday nights then he needed to thoroughly understand his motivation and needs.

"He..." Josh swallowed hard but, to his credit, kept going. "He took off his belt and tie and said he was going to whip me. Then he fastened my hands over my head with his tie...but he didn't use the belt at first. I was surprised – I wanted him to, but he wouldn't. He said something about his father – about how his father had been a cruel man and he wasn't? Some of that is hazy but I think that's what he said. Then he spanked me with his hand, and after that with his belt, and when he was done, he took me up to the Residence and just held me – I think that was the part I liked best apart from when he kissed me, but I think I needed the whipping part in order to be able to get to the being held part. Does that make any sense at all?"

"Yes, it makes sense, Josh," Leo said, nodding, thinking privately how much Jed Bartlet had learned at his own hands – not that he would have expected his old friend to give Josh anything less than what he needed. "And this was a good experience for you? Why?"

"Because I felt a part of him...because I could give up responsibility for my lousy week to him...because he was so kind to me." Josh took a deep breath.

"And because it hurt?" Leo asked. Josh hesitated.

"You think I enjoy pain, Leo?" He asked back. Leo's gaze didn't falter.

"I think you might. Do you?"

"I..." Josh bit on his lip and then gazed at the floor. "I don't know. Maybe," he admitted. "I was glad I'd taken it. "

Leo studied him for a long time, wondering whether to push him on that, but in the end decided that Josh didn't know the answer himself and pushing him would just cause him more confusion.

"So you liked the closeness, you liked the absolution – and you liked giving up control of yourself to someone else, someone you trusted?" Leo summarised. Josh nodded. "And do you trust me, Josh, or only the President?" Leo asked.

"I trust you too, Leo," Josh replied promptly, without hesitation, but, to Leo's mind at least, too glibly and easily. "The President asked me who I'd fantasised about doing this to me,

and I told him I'd fantasised about him – and you. To be honest..." He flushed again and ducked his head slightly, then looked up. "To be honest I'd fantasised about you more than him – maybe because I work with you so much more, but also because I think I had a slight blockage about...well, he is the President." Josh made a face. "But I figured my fantasies were my own – they weren't anybody else's business and nobody had to know. I had no idea something like this would happen. I'm still in a state of shock about the fact that it happened at all – and that you and he...that he lets you on a Friday evening..." Josh trailed off. "He said you were lovers," he added finally, maybe deciding that was safer ground.

"We are." Leo nodded, but he remained concerned about Josh's inability to articulate the most basic aspects of his Friday night arrangement with the President. Josh was one of the most articulate men he knew after all. Leo decided to demonstrate the level of honesty and communication that he expected from his Deputy – maybe it would encourage Josh to really talk about his own experiences, honestly, and without any of this lowering of his head, flushing of his cheeks and trailing off in a haze of inarticulacy, endearing though those things were. "We're a great many things to each other, Josh. We're lovers, we're best friends, we're President and Chief of Staff, we're boss and subordinate, and we're top and sub. You do understand those last terms don't you?"

Josh swallowed again. "Yes, sir. He told me he subbed to you. I'd be happy to do the same. I'd like to sub to both of you, Leo, if you'll let me."

Leo exhaled a deep breath. "Well I don't know, Josh," he said, holding the empty glass lightly between his fingers. "Why would you want to be part of such an...unorthodox arrangement?" he said with a slight smile. "Why not go out there, and find yourself a partner who'll do these things for you, without it being the complication of people you work with?" Leo said.

"I don't want it from anyone else," Josh replied. "It wouldn't be the same."

"Or are you too scared of what it means?" Leo said.

"What do you mean?" Josh frowned.

"You're holding out on me, Josh. You aren't being completely honest with yourself or me."

"I am!" Josh protested.

Leo put the glass down and walked slowly back over to the table where Josh sat, his meal virtually untouched, as Leo had predicted. Leo stood behind him, close enough to invade Josh's body space but without touching him. Josh sat very still, and when, finally he could bear the silence no more, he looked up.

"Leo?" He whispered.

"Have you ever had anal sex, Josh?" Leo asked him softly. "Have you ever gone down on your knees and sucked another man's cock? Have you ever knelt and allowed yourself to be

penetrated?"

Now Josh was beyond flushing – all the colour drained away from his face instead. He was unable to meet Leo's hard gaze and looked down. There was silence for a long time.

"Josh, if you can't even talk about it, how the hell do you think you'll be able to do it?" Leo said softly, taking pity on the younger man. He moved his hands and placed them gently on Josh's shoulders for a split second and then went and poured another glass of water. He brought this one back to the table and handed it to Josh who took it gratefully while Leo sat back down in his chair. Josh swallowed the water in one gulp and then sat up straight in his chair but kept his eyes fixed firmly on the table in front of him.

"I had a male lover at college. I've had anal sex, and I sucked him off. I didn't sub to him because he wasn't interested, but I wanted to," he said, in a voice barely above a whisper. "I've fantasised about it all my life, since I was a kid, but I could never tell anyone – it was always my own dark secret. When I told my lover...I thought he'd reject me but he didn't - it just wasn't something he wanted to do. I've had girlfriends too, Leo. I love women – but you've been married and the President is married so I figure this isn't about that. This is different, this is about something else entirely." He ducked his head, still too shy to actually look at Leo after what he had just shared. "I always remembered what I had with my roommate and I've always wanted it again...I've wanted it and more," he whispered hoarsely.

There was silence for a long time – Josh seemed to have run out of steam; either that or his courage had failed him. Leo allowed the silence to linger for at least two minutes before finally breaking it.

"Nice try, Josh," Leo chuckled and Josh's head shot up to gaze at him, "but I'm not convinced." He sat back and watched Josh's eyes turn dark.

"I'm not lying!"

"I know...but you aren't convincing me that this is what you need either, Josh, and I'm not going into this, I'm not taking you into this, unless I'm sure that it's right for you and right now I'm not," Leo said firmly. "Josh, you're the son of one of my oldest friends. I'm not going to screw up your life and I'm sure as hell not going to take advantage of you in a vulnerable moment."

"Please, Leo...I don't know what I can say to make you agree. Just tell me why you won't let me be part of this?"

"Because I don't think you really know what you're agreeing to, Josh. I accept that you think you want this, but how much of that is just so that you can get close to the President? Maybe you have a little crush on him? I wouldn't be surprised – hell, I'd be the last person to be surprised," Leo said with a self-deprecating shrug. "But we're not talking about a Friday night fuck here." He used the crude choice of word deliberately. "We're talking about something special, something that brings us close – something precious, something that isn't easily or lightly shared – something that very few people would understand. Why the

hell should we make you a part of that, Josh?"

Josh's innate personal insecurity was evident in his eyes, but Leo steeled himself against it. If Josh wanted this, let him fight for it, let him make Leo believe it could work – but what Josh said next took him totally by surprise.

"Everything you do you do for him, don't you, Leo?" Josh said in a shaky voice. "I didn't understand that." He looked as if he'd just been winded by a sucker punch to the gut. "I should have – I know the way you look at him, and I know what you do for him...I just didn't figure it out. I'm not here because you want me to be part of what you have with him, am I? I thought I was...I thought because you were the one who suggested it that you liked me, that you wanted me too, but that isn't true. I'm here because he wants me to be part of it, and you'd do anything to keep him happy."

Leo sat there, silent as a statue, his face immobile – he had the best poker face in town and he knew it. Nobody – nobody – knew what Leo McGarry was thinking or feeling unless he wanted them to know or he told them, but it was hard keeping his composure in the face of this most astute of observations. Josh Lyman, he thought to himself, had his own knack for understanding what motivated people.

"I love the President, Josh," he said finally, keeping firm control over his voice so that Josh wouldn't get an inkling of just how much he loved Jed Bartlet, just how much he'd suffer, sacrifice and endure for the other man. "I'd do anything for him – including turning you down if I don't think this could work."

Leo got up, and walked towards the door.

"It was you I loved first," Josh said. Leo stopped dead in his tracks. "Not right at the beginning but soon after – when I started working with you on the campaign. Him...I used to wonder why you wasted so much of your affection on him – not your time, I could see that he was a good man and that he'd make a good president so I could understand you putting so much of your time into him, but I didn't like him. I didn't know him then."

"He doesn't let people know him," Leo said, turning. "He doesn't let people know him until he knows them, and then only if he likes them. He doesn't want them knowing about that big heart of his in case they take advantage of it."

"At first I couldn't figure out what it was about you," Josh continued, talking too fast. "I just knew I wanted to do my best work for you, I wanted you to be proud of me. I wanted to protect you when those bastards were gunning for you over your alcoholism. And then when you helped me, when I was falling apart, when you called in Stanley, when you waited for me all through that long day...I figured it out then. What confused me was that I felt the same way about the President too. Those days when I was in the hospital after the shooting, when you and he would visit me together...I was happier then than I've ever been in my life despite what I'd been through. I love him too, Leo. Just like you. I love him but I loved you first. I'm not talking about romantic love, or the love I've felt for the women in my life – I'm talking about something else, a different kind of love, the kind of love I think you understand

because I think you feel it for him. That's how I feel about you, Leo. I loved you first."

Leo stood very still for a long time. He hadn't expected this. Hadn't anticipated it or wanted it – no, hadn't thought he wanted it but now that it was said, now it was out in the open, he found himself strangely touched. It had been a long time since his own emotions had taken him by surprise in this way and he struggled with it for a moment. His feelings for Jed Bartlet had never been in question – he knew that Jed was the love of his life despite the long years he'd been married. What he had with Jed was so unique, so special; it meant everything to Leo, although he would go to his grave rather than admit that to anyone, least of all Jed himself. Jed knew anyway. Now here was this young man, someone he'd worked with and mentored, speaking of love, and offering to bring a new dimension to the love he shared with Jed. He thought of Jed, his eyes bright with the fire of his experience with Josh on Friday night, thought how much Jed wanted this and knew, for the first time, that he wanted it too, not just because Jed wanted it, but for himself, for both of them, and for Josh too.

Finally, he spoke. "It's just Friday night, Josh – you don't get to have him, or me, for any longer than that. And it wouldn't be every Friday night – he needs some time alone with me, so all I can offer is every other Friday – at least to begin with."

"Just being a part of what you two have, even just once a fortnight, would be enough," Josh said softly.

"I'll need your total, unquestioning obedience, Josh," Leo said coming back to sit down at the table again. "On those Friday nights you spend with us anyway – at the office you can argue with me all you like - if you must." He gave a wry smile. "But on those nights you're with us, you do what I say and what he says, and you do it without question, and you give us everything you'd prefer to keep hidden inside. You give it all up to us. That's the only way it ever works. I can't undertake it for less. I told him that, and I'm telling you the same."

"I can do that," Josh said.

"It's easier said than done, Josh." Leo gave a sigh. "Sometimes it isn't easy getting there. Sometimes, with him, it can take a long time. I'm used to him and I know what he needs but sometimes...sometimes I have to be very hard on him to get him there. Could you watch that?"

For the first time, Josh faltered. He dropped his gaze again, thought about it for a long time, and then nodded.

"I think I could, Leo, because I'd understand why he wanted it because I feel the same way," he said.

"We would never, ever harm you, Josh," Leo said softly. "But do you trust that? That, also, is easier said than done."

"Leo, please, I do trust you," Josh pleaded, his eyes almost desperate.

"Why, Josh? I'm a recovering alcoholic; why the hell would you trust me to whip you, to tie you up and play with your body until you scream with pleasure, with pain, with something somewhere between the two?" Leo asked, in low, gravelly tones. "Why would you trust me to do that, Josh?"

Josh swallowed hard but his eyes never broke contact. "You said it yourself, Leo," he replied. "You'd never harm me. I believe that."

"Do you trust me – or him - to lead you into the dark and out the other side? Do you really trust either of us to do that?" Leo said softly.

Josh was silent for a long time, and then, without warning, he got up, and knelt in front of Leo. Leo looked down on the bent head in front of him with surprise.

"Leo, please. Let me show you how much I want this," Josh whispered.

He looked beautiful kneeling there, utterly submissive, having laid himself bare for the man he wanted so desperately to be his top – and for the first time Leo understood what Jed had meant when he had told him of Josh's willingness to please and his compliance. Josh wanted to be handled, wanted to surrender himself in a way that Jed wanted too but which he found so very hard. The two of them were like chalk and cheese, and Leo knew that he had his hands full with a very difficult – and yet ultimately very rewarding task.

"Oh goddamn it, Josh," he sighed, and then, because he couldn't resist, he leaned forward, wrapped his arms around the man kneeling in front of him, and pulled him close.

Leo was the first to arrive in the Blue Bedroom on Friday evening. He had seen Jed in the Oval Office a few minutes before and the President, who had been on the telephone, had waved at him to go on up. Leo doubted that Jed would be long and he always liked having a few minutes in the Blue Bedroom by himself before the evening's activities got underway. Leo removed his jacket and hung it in the closet, then took off his tie, rolled it into a neat ball, and left it on the dresser. Finally he undid the top collar of his shirt, breathing a sigh of relief at the relaxation it afforded him. He rolled his shoulders experimentally, feeling the slight ache in them. He might, if Jed wasn't in too truculent a state of mind, order his sub to give him a massage. However, it might take the best part of the evening to get Jed to wind down, in which case any hope of a massage was unlikely. Leo whistled to himself softly as he crossed the room, feeling some of the tension of the past couple of weeks slip away. He loved Friday nights as much as the President – it was a time for the two of them to really let go and play, without any of the strains and stresses of their jobs intruding on them. Leo enjoyed spending his few idle moments in the preceding week planning what he would do during his hours in control on Friday evening. This week, he had something very specific in mind.

Leo opened up the large trunk at the foot of the huge kingsize bed and removed some of the items he found within. He busied himself arranging them on one side of the bed and then wandered into the en suite bathroom. He washed his hands and splashed the

deliberately cold water on his face, waking himself up and firing himself for the evening ahead. Then he opened the bathroom cabinet and removed some more items he thought he might need, before returning to the blue bedroom and placing them on the nightstand. He stood back, regarded his work thoughtfully, and decided that everything was exactly as he wanted it. In the space of ten minutes the Blue Bedroom had taken on a very new aspect. Leo couldn't help chuckling as he wondered whether any of the rooms in the Residence had ever been used for this purpose, but then decided that with its long history and the number of guests it had entertained, it was likely that the place had a past colourful enough to compete with the Friday night activities of its current inhabitant.

A few seconds later there was a loud but brief knock on the door and then Jed breezed in without waiting for a reply. Leo sighed – it was one thing for the President to barge into the office of his Chief of Staff without waiting but another thing entirely for Josiah Bartlet to do the same to Leo McGarry on a Friday evening in the Blue Bedroom. They'd had this battle before and Leo didn't think that Jed forgot on purpose – it was just that he was still in bright and breezy Presidential mode, and hadn't gotten anywhere near the mindset he needed to be in for the night's activities. This happened occasionally and Leo knew how to handle it.

"Hoynes seems to think that I have nothing better to do on a Friday evening than listen to one of his little tantrums. Did you know that Sam has a date with Ainsley tonight – not a date-date – well I don't think so anyway - but are we paying the staff too much if they have time for a social life, Leo?" All this was said in one continuous sentence without stopping for breath. Leo looked at his old friend sternly. "Leo?" Jed repeated. Leo raised an eyebrow and glanced at the door.

"Go out and try coming in again properly, Josiah. Then we can have a conversation," Leo said. In this room, Jed Bartlet was always Josiah. Not Sir and not Mr. President for obvious reasons, and not Jed because that was a name that Leo had used for his old friend before he'd been elected and would do so again when his term of office was over. No, in this room, Jed was Josiah – a name hardly anyone used for him, but which worked very well in the context of the role he played in this room on a Friday night.

"Leo, can't we have a conversation first, before we begin?" Jed said with a grimace. "I've hardly spoken to you all week and I want to know what's been going on - not least with Josh. Those mysterious hints you've been dropping all week have been so infuriating. Is he here?" Jed glanced around the room as if he expected Josh to emerge from under the bed or out of the closet. Leo didn't move.

"Josiah, in this room you do as you're told, without question and without arguing as we agreed. There is no 'before' – we've begun as soon as you step foot inside the room. Now go out and come back in again – and you can spend a couple of minutes outside the door thinking through your attitude before you knock again," Leo told him in a warning tone. Finally, Jed started to take notice. He looked as if he was about to open his mouth again and protest but one even more pronounced raised eyebrow stopped him.

"You're in a mean mood tonight, Leo. I can tell," he grumbled.

"That's Mr. McGarry or sir to you, Josiah," Leo told him firmly. "And yes I am, so maybe you should think twice about what you say when you step through that door a second time."

Jed paused just long enough for it to be a moment of rebellion, but Leo waited him out as usual. Patience always won the day with Jed Bartlet – he relied on Leo's patience, no matter how much he tested it, and right now Leo could sense something more than just playfulness in Jed's manner; no, the President was going through one of the usual struggles he had in checking his status and his ego at the door and coming down and back to being himself again - only this time there was an added dimension to that anxiety. Jed was worried about Josh, and how the younger man would fit into their Friday night sessions. Leo deliberately hadn't told Jed much about his conversation with Josh – Friday nights were his responsibility and he decided how they were conducted. He didn't think it would do Jed any harm to have that lesson drummed home and so he had been deliberately obtuse when Jed had asked him about it. He had also forbidden him to speak to Josh about it as well – and he knew that Jed would follow his orders on that, even though his old friend was itching to know what was going on. For a man who was kept constantly informed about every single thing of importance that was happening in his country and around the world, Leo thought it might do Jed good to know that there was one area where he not only had no control but also information was given to him on a need to know basis. And he hadn't needed to know – not yet anyhow. Leo had every intention of filling him in on his conversation with Josh – but only when he'd spent a couple of hours working with his mouthy, opinionated sub and had him in the right frame of mind to listen.

Jed, in typical Jed fashion, spent a good five minutes outside the door before knocking again. Leo knew this wasn't because he was psyching himself into the right mood for their session – no, it was an act of rebellion of and by itself, as Jed took a perverse delight in making Leo wait. Leo knew all of Jed's little tricks for avoiding the one thing he wanted most on a Friday night. It was hard for Jed to give up control, and he needed to test Leo's resolve, his strength and his ability to take charge and be the top that Jed needed him to be. Leo hadn't failed any of these little tests yet and he didn't intend to. Jed would settle, and come, eventually, to heel. It might take a little while but it would happen, and then his old friend would feel much more comfortable inside his own skin.

Leo sat down on the bed, making himself comfortable, with the pillows tucked up behind his back. He put his glasses on, picked up the book he had placed on the night-stand, opened it, and began reading. It was a novel – he had banned the President from talking shop during their Friday night sessions and any kind of official papers were banned for the same reason. If anyone needed to contact the President or his Chief of Staff on a matter of national importance, Leo had a cell phone switched on which he left on the nightstand along with the other items. It wasn't his usual cell phone which might ring just if Mallory wanted a chat or Margaret needed to check something in his diary – he kept his personal cell phone switched off, and the other one had a number known to a select few people who could be trusted to call only in a genuine emergency. Leo figured that even the President of the United States deserved a few hours a week to himself, insulated from the pressures and demands of the constantly ringing phone and high level meetings. The trouble with top level politics was that it was sometimes hard distinguishing the genuine emergency from what might merely be a minor crisis; and Jed wasn't always the best person at identifying the

difference. Leo had insisted that Friday evenings were sacrosanct as much as was humanly possible – a time when Jed really got the opportunity to recharge his batteries in peace and quiet, away from all the hustle and bustle of his job.

A couple of minutes later there was a knock at the door.

"Come in, Josiah," Leo said, lowering his glasses fractionally and glancing up from his book. Jed opened the door, and stepped into the room – this time more quietly. He stood there for a moment, his eyes crinkled up slightly with irritation when he saw Leo calmly reading and not at all put out by his sub's attitude. Leo knew that sometimes Jed acted out because he wanted a response – Friday nights were when he could let go, and sometimes that meant behaving in a more extreme and petulant manner than President Bartlet ever would. Leo was used to it and more than knew how to handle this side of his lover's personality.

"Reading anything good?" Jed ventured, filling what Leo knew was, to him, an unbearable silence. He needed to take Jed into that silence and calm, and let it work its usual magic on his frenetic lover's overactive mind. Leo didn't answer Jed's question, just gazed at his sub thoughtfully. Jed stood there, uncertainly; Leo knew Jed wouldn't move any further into the room until he was given permission, but Jed wasn't anywhere near enough into his Josiah mindset to just stand still yet. Instead he shuffled uncomfortably, thrust his hands into his pockets, took them out again when Leo frowned at him, put them behind his back instead, gazed at the ceiling, then back at Leo again. Leo remained completely still, never taking his eyes off his lover. Not yet able to meet that firm gaze, Jed glanced around the bedroom and his eyes alighted on the items Leo had laid out on the bed. He gave an exclamation.

"Damn it, Leo, you must be really pissed off with me. What the hell have I done to deserve all this?" He whistled, gazing at the implements with incredulous eyes. Leo noted, with some satisfaction, that the layers were starting to peel away. Jed had a strange attitude towards spanking; he invariably wanted it, just as invariably hated it, fought Leo over its intensity, and yet at the same time did his best to egg his friend on to harsher levels than Leo would ever give him. Leo knew that ultimately the only kind of spanking that worked with Jed was to be totally, completely in control of it, to never allow his lover to dictate the terms, to not even give Jed an inkling that he could either provoke Leo into using more force, or wheedle him into stopping early either.

"Is this to do with Josh?" Jed asked plaintively. "Are you pissed off about your meeting with him? Did something happen that I should know about? Why isn't he here? Is that why you're pissed off?"

Leo sighed. "You're doing way too much talking, Josiah. Don't make me order you to stay silent. You know how hard you find that and how painful the consequences can be when you invariably forget."

Jed made a clicking sound of impatience in the back of his throat. "You're such a hard ass, Leo..." He hesitated, fought an almost visible battle with himself, and then finally wilted under Leo's stern gaze. "Sir," he amended with a sigh.

Leo inclined his head, removing his glasses as he did so and replacing them on the nightstand. "I think it's time you undressed, Josiah," he said.

Jed nodded, and quickly undid his tie and pulled it away from his collar. Leo watched, enjoying the moment – Jed never had a problem with nudity and was always completely matter of fact about his undressing, but for Leo one of the highlights of the evening was watching his lover strip away the trappings of their everyday life, until he was standing there butt naked as Josiah, his lover, and his much loved, if somewhat difficult, sub.

"Okay, so it's been two weeks," Jed said, pulling his shirt out of his pants and unbuttoning it. "I know you always like to make up for lost time when we miss a session, although I would like to point out that it's your fault that we missed last week as you decided you'd prefer to be sunning yourself in Florida. Maybe you think my evening with Josh went to my head or something. Maybe that's why you've brought out the full army over there." He gestured with his head at the implements on the bed. "But it's been a good week. It has been a good week, hasn't it, Leo...uh, sir? I'm not especially tense this evening. Probably won't take more than a couple of taps and then we could do something more..." He grinned at Leo, "recreational," he finished. He removed his cufflinks and then glanced around the room for somewhere to put them. Leo got off the bed and held out his hand, and Jed gratefully deposited the cufflinks in it. Leo went over to the nightstand and found the little pot that he always used to house both Jed's cufflinks and his own – when he removed his own cufflinks which wouldn't be until later. In all the time that they'd been doing this he didn't think Jed had even noticed that Leo always put their cufflinks in this little porcelain pot. At this stage of the proceedings Jed was always far too caught up in what was going on in his own head to notice this kind of minutiae.

"I thought it had been a good week anyway," Jed said, somewhat plaintively, in the absence of any comment from Leo. He folded his shirt, put it on the armchair along with his tie and then perched on the edge of the chair to take off his shoes. "Not like last week, but I don't have any lingering, you know, concerns or anything left over from last week. I think the way this week has gone has wiped out last week's problems. Okay so we still have the fallout from the Crossley fiasco to deal with but..."

"Josiah, what is the number one rule in this room?" Leo interrupted. He didn't raise his voice but his cool, crisp tones were enough to break through the stream of consciousness currently emerging from his lover.

"I call you sir?" Jed asked.

"No. That's not the number one rule – it's an important rule but it isn't the number one rule," Leo replied. He folded his arms and waited.

"Uh, okay – we don't talk shop. That's fine. Did I just talk about work? I didn't mean to. Now you're not going to punish me for that, Leo, sir, are you?"

Leo gazed at his friend thoughtfully for a moment. "You know," he said eventually. "I think I am."

"It was just...I'm nervous. You're making me nervous, sir. One tiny slip up and..."

"Josiah – you don't question my decisions," Leo said firmly. "I decide how to punish you, for how long, how hard, and what for."

Jed made a little face but Leo noticed that those words had an effect on him. He looked a bit more relaxed, as if he was finally starting to give up control and accept that Leo was the one in charge here tonight, and he therefore didn't need to be.

"Hard ass, just like I said," Jed muttered under his breath but Leo chose to ignore it.

Jed finished undressing, laid his pants carefully over the armchair and then stood up. Leo returned to the bed and sat down again, rearranging the pillows behind him.

"Come over here, Josiah," he said, patting his knee.

There was a horrified silence. Jed looked at him in a way that was positively comical and it was all Leo could do not to laugh out loud.

"When you say, 'come over here'...where exactly d'you mean?" Jed asked. "Sir," he added for good measure.

"I mean come over here," Leo replied pleasantly, patting his knee again.

"You didn't mean over your knee though, right?" Jed questioned. "That was just a 'come over here' gesture wasn't it? Not a 'come over here and get over my knee' gesture."

"No, it's definitely a come over here and get over my knee gesture," Leo said, patting his knee again.

"Leo!" Jed protested. "You are not going to put me over your knee and spank me like I'm a little kid! You are NOT!"

Leo gazed at his sub with every ounce of steeliness he could muster. He had known this would be hard for Jed – spanking usually took place with Jed lying flat on the bed, bent over the armchair, or braced against the wall. He had never ordered Jed over his knee before and it was very interesting seeing the reaction. Still, he intended to insist.

"Josiah, you have ten seconds to get your ass over here, or, I can promise you, there will be trouble," Leo predicted, with a good deal of certainty. Jed crossed his arms over his chest in a flat out refusal, but Leo wasn't remotely worried. Jed had experienced the emotions of topping last week for the first time but he was still a novice in that field; Leo was a master. He had chosen the over the knee position deliberately. It hadn't been something he had felt necessary before, but this week was different. Having witnessed at first hand Josh's need for and enjoyment of the submissive role, and how sweetly and beautifully he surrendered and offered himself to him, Leo could well imagine how intoxicated Jed had been by his

experience last Friday. Now, more than ever, Jed needed to know that there was someone who could take him down and remind him that he wasn't superhuman - that he had needs too. Leo had decided that the over the knee position would serve two purposes – on the one hand, it would leave Jed in absolutely no doubt about the fact that he had no authority whatsoever over Leo during their Friday evening sessions, but in addition to that, it would also serve to bring them closer together after missing their usual Friday night session last week. Leo didn't like the President to go too long without the pair of them re-establishing their unusual connection. Jed started to get antsy when that happened; he'd have trouble sleeping, and be more prone to illness. For someone with a serious medical condition like Multiple Sclerosis, it was important that as few strains as possible were placed on Jed's health – and for some reason, his Friday night sessions with Leo helped keep Jed's immune system healthy.

The ten seconds passed, with neither man budging but with both of them counting down the time limit that Leo had imposed. Then, on the precise second that Jed's time was up, Leo got up and crossed the room towards his recalcitrant sub, every single movement of his body full of intent. Jed held up well until Leo was two steps away, and then his gaze faltered slightly. Leo knew that look all too well; Jed wanted so much to give in, to give everything up to Leo, but it was hard for him, and this battle of wills was all part of the necessary process involved in getting the President to where he needed and wanted to be. Leo reached out to put a firm hand on Jed's shoulder and Jed flinched slightly, as if he expected that hand to punch him instead. Leo sighed inwardly – the shadow of Jed's father could appear at the most unexpected and inopportune moments. Leo understood that during their Friday night sessions Jed, in many ways, returned to the status of the kid that he'd once been – the kid who couldn't fight back when his father punched or hit him. He was also aware that on some level they recreated that relationship here but in a way that was good and felt healthy for Jed. Leo was aware of all his lover's many demons; Jed still wanted his father's love, and while Leo's love was not a substitute for that, he did know that in some sense Jed's longing for his good opinion came from his desire to be loved by his father. He didn't play on that – their relationship was about a lot more than the pop psychology of Jed's abusive childhood; a hell of a lot more.

"Hey. No. That doesn't happen here," Leo said firmly but gently, caressing Jed's shoulder with his fingers. "Nobody gets punched, nobody gets hit. You might get your ass spanked here, Josiah, but nothing else. You know I wouldn't let anything else happen to you."

"I know that, Leo...I don't know what that was...just an old instinct I guess." Jed made a face. Leo put his other hand on Jed's shoulder, slowly, so that his friend could see it coming, and he caressed the other man for a good few seconds, never taking his eyes off Jed's face. Finally the muscles under his hands began to relax.

"Good," Leo smiled. He leaned forward and gently kissed Jed's mouth and his lover moved into the kiss eagerly, returning it with need. Leo pulled him close, enjoying the feel of Jed's naked skin next to his own clothed body. His lover came willingly, and they kissed, hungrily, for a long time. Suddenly those two weeks without a Friday session seemed a very long time indeed and Leo's hands dropped lower, wrapping around Jed's back and then lower still, caressing his ass. Jed was completely compliant in his arms, much of the fight leaving him.

Only when he was satisfied that his lover was completely reassured, did Leo pull back.

"You didn't mean it about the over the knee thing, did you, Leo?" Jed said when he was released. "You were just teasing, right?"

"No, I wasn't." Leo smiled pleasantly, resumed his grip on Jed's shoulders, and turned him abruptly to face the wall. He pushed Jed so that his face was pressed up close to the corner and then gave him a very hearty swat on the backside with his hand. "And it's sir, Josiah. Please remember. There will be one stroke of the paddle for every time you forget from now on."

"I'm not doing it on purpose!" Jed protested. "I just forget! It's not easy remembering."

"Sure it is. I remember to call you sir every day in the office – it's very easy," Leo told him. "You're just not focussing, Josiah, and you're not focussing because you haven't really given in and accepted that in this room, on this evening, what I say goes. You're a smart man - the sooner you get your head around that fact the sooner we can get onto the good stuff."

"Ah, the good stuff." Leo couldn't see Jed's face but he could tell by the tone of his voice that his lover was grinning. "Why don't we skip this stuff and go straight onto the good stuff, sir?"

Leo shook his head, trying his best to keep his own grin from sounding in his voice. "Okay," he said.

Jed spun around with an expression of amazement – combined with sheer anxiety - on his face. However much he protested, Leo knew that he needed this and Jed knew it too – hence the anxiety. He relied on Leo never to crumble, never to give in, to take everything he threw at him and still be there, steadfast, and in charge.

"Really?" Jed asked.

"No, of course not really," Leo snapped. "Now turn your face to the wall, Josiah. You can stand there until you agree to get your ass over my knee for a spanking. I have plenty of time. I'm fully clothed and I have a novel to read. You just take as long as you need."

And so saying he returned to the bed, sat down, made himself comfortable, put his glasses back on, picked up his novel, and began reading again. There was silence for a while, but Leo didn't kid himself that it would last for long. When he glanced over at his sub, he found that Jed was quoting something to himself in what sounded suspiciously like Latin. Leo ignored him, both exasperated and amused by his lover's behaviour. He had known it would take quite some time convincing Jed to do this, but time was something they had plenty of and he had no doubts whatsoever that his lover would finally give in. Jed needed this too much to hold out for long.

Jed clearly grew bored of the Latin and started to hum instead. Leo smiled. The very fact that Jed was standing, butt naked, facing a wall, told him that his lover would eventually

come around to doing what he'd been told. Jed might not like the idea of an over the knee spanking but if he ever had any serious objections about what Leo told him to do then he knew he could call a time out or simply get dressed and leave.

"Have you come to a decision yet, Josiah?" Leo asked, breaking into the tuneless humming.

"I'm still thinking on it," Jed replied, waving his hand in the air.

"Well don't take too long," Leo said. "Much as I'm enjoying the view, I should warn you that for each minute you delay you'll get three whacks from the paddle."

"Okay," Jed said brightly. Then, a few seconds later. "Leo?"

Leo ignored him. Jed cleared his throat.

"Sir, could you perhaps explain to me why you want me in such a...well, humiliating position? If I could understand it then maybe it'd be easier for me to come to a decision."

Leo raised his eyes to the heavens, an expression that was lost on his sub who couldn't see it but which made Leo feel better. Now his hand was positively itching to spank some sense into his lover.

"Well, I'm sorry, Josiah, but no explanations are on offer. You do as I tell you because I'm in charge," he said firmly. "This isn't a process of negotiation."

The important thing about being Jed Bartlet's top was understanding that the spanking itself was only part of what Jed needed. First of all he needed to give up control, and submitting to a spanking was one way in which he did that. Jed Bartlet was the smartest man Leo knew and as a sub he put those brains to fiendishly good use if you let him. If he got Leo to explain, then that gave Jed a chance to argue and if he argued, he knew that as an expert debater he stood a reasonable chance of winning his argument. Leo had no intention of being drawn into that trap. Apart from anything else Jed needed to know that what Leo said went during these sessions and no amount of wheedling or smart talk would change that.

"So, that's eight minutes. I make that 24 swats from the paddle," Leo said, raising the stakes.

"That was never eight minutes!" Jed protested.

"I'm counting from when I first made you face the wall," Leo replied implacably, waiting for the inevitable explosion.

"What? That's not fair!" Jed protested, turning to face Leo.

"Who said I was fair?" Leo raised a malicious eyebrow. "Josiah, you're my sub and I've decided under the rules we both agreed on that I want to spank your ass and I want you over my knee when I do it. There isn't anything for you to consider except how quickly you can get said ass over here and over my knee."

Jed was silent for a moment, and then turned back, pointedly, to face the wall. Leo flicked open his book again and pretended to read. In reality he hadn't read any of the book since the session had begun but there was no way that Jed knew that. He kept one eye on his sub, and the other on the clock. After a further couple of minutes he broke the silence again.

"That's 30 swats now, Josiah," he said calmly.

There was silence for another few seconds and then:

"Leo?"

He ignored it. Then, a few seconds later:

"Mr. McGarry, sir?"

"Yes, Josiah." Leo shut his book and replaced it on the nightstand, judging that the time had come.

"I'm going to do as you say but I just want you to know I'm not happy about it," Jed said.

"Noted." Leo rolled his eyes again, and rearranged the pillows. Jed turned slowly, and, equally slowly, began walking towards the bed. Leo removed his cuff links, put them in the little pot on the nightstand, and then began, just as slowly, rolling up his shirt-sleeves – a performance that wasn't lost on his sub, who eyed the action warily, clearly knowing what it presaged.

"I don't know why this is necessary, Leo, unless you're on some kind of power trip," Jed grumbled as he came to a halt beside the bed.

"Over my knee please," Leo ordered. Jed shot him a very hostile glare.

"I am way, way too old to be going over people's knees," he protested.

"You aren't going over people's knees, you're going over my knee," Leo replied imperturbably. Jed made a face and knelt on the bed.

"Leo," he said softly, his face close enough to kiss. "You really don't have to do this."

"Josiah," Leo replied, equally softly. "I really do." And with that he took hold of Jed's arm, and pulled him expertly over his knee.

Jed's body was stiff and unresponsive at first so it took Leo quite a few seconds to get him into position and to get them both comfortable, piling pillows up around Jed so that he had something to rest on and could breathe easily. He knew that it wasn't always easy for Jed to accept this kind of affection before he'd been spanked but he was in charge here and he liked giving affection throughout a scene, so he spent several minutes stroking the naked

body that was lying over him like a blanket. Jed was heavy, but Leo was fit enough and wiry enough to be comfortable with the weight, and his lover was supported by the bed at both ends. Leo arranged him deliberately so that Jed's nose was practically buried in the lined up row of disciplinary implements that had shocked him so much earlier – a fact that wasn't lost on his sub.

"You aren't really going to use all these on me are you, sir?" He said, his tone becoming much more deferential and relaxed now he had stopped having the internal battle with himself about whether or not this was going to happen.

"I don't know, Josiah, but I thought it would be a good idea to have them to hand just in case," Leo replied. He continued stroking his lover's offered body. He hadn't expected to be so affected by having Jed over his knee when he spanked him. He had never spanked him in this position before and there was something very intimate about it. He enjoyed having this naked body, lying like an offering in front of him. He stroked Jed for quite some time and then, without warning, he began tapping his lover harder. Jed made a little noise, acknowledging the change in pace. Leo smiled, and continued with the warm up. He loved being able to feel the noises Jed made as well as hear them, and particularly enjoyed being able to study the white imprints his hand made as it came into contact with Jed's buttocks. The white faded in a second to be replaced by a glowing pink colour that fascinated Leo. He rarely had any opportunity to express the sensual side of his nature, and his Friday evening sessions with Jed had been an eye opener for showing him just how much he enjoyed playing with his lover; fondling, kissing, stroking and yes, even spanking him. The deeper they went into this kind of territory, the more fulfilling it had become for both of them.

Leo finished the warm up and began spanking in earnest now. Jed gave a low growl and bunched his fists into the pillows.

"I was right, Leo, you are on a power trip," he complained between pants.

"I make that an extra 4 swats with the paddle for calling me Leo after I ordered you not to in addition to the 30 you'll be getting for your disobedience," Leo commented amiably, not stopping the spanking for even a second.

"You do know I could call the security guards in here and have you arrested for assaulting the president, don't you?" Jed said, his voice sounding decidedly high pitched.

"Go ahead," Leo replied. The president's security detail were under strict orders not to disturb them during these Friday night sessions unless either Leo or the President went to the door and actually asked them to come in. They hadn't been happy with that injunction but had, reluctantly, agreed to it. What they made of the noises that emerged from this room, Leo did not know, but at least their confidentiality was assured. One thing he had noticed was that they were all particularly deferential to him on Saturday mornings. "If you want your security guards to see you upturned over my knee getting your ass spanked then that's your call, Josiah," Leo commented.

"I'm not saying I will, I'm just saying I could," Jed pointed out, and then he gave a surprised

yelp as Leo stepped up the pace to the highest level and dropped a really hard spank on the top of Jed's thighs.

"You know I think you have way too much breath left over for talking and not enough for breathing and yelling," Leo told him, making sure that every hard spank counted from then on. He continued for several minutes during which time Jed's body gradually started to unwind, like an uncoiling spring, until his movements stopped being considered and instead became entirely spontaneous. Leo smiled – this was good. This meant that Jed was at last starting to stop perceiving the world with his brain and starting to connect with it on an instinctive level instead. He waited until Jed was thoroughly loose limbed and making loud, growling noises in the back of his throat and then paused for a moment.

Jed looked up, startled – he had been so lost in the sensations of the spanking that it had taken him awhile to realise it had stopped. Leo stroked his lover's hair gently and then rubbed warm circles on his back with his hand.

"I'm going to use the paddle in a moment, Josiah," he said in low, deep tones. "Are you ready for that?"

"I'm fine," Jed replied, his forehead sweaty from the exertion but his eyes curiously much calmer than they had been all evening. "You don't need to worry about me, sir. I can take everything you can throw at me."

"How does it feel being over my knee?" Leo asked. Jed made a face.

"Stupid, ridiculous and juvenile," he muttered, and then, in a voice so low that Leo nearly didn't hear it: "But I like your hand there."

Leo gave a satisfied smile. "Pass me the paddle, Josiah," he ordered. Jed glanced up and shot him a look – he hated being made to give Leo the implements that would soon make hard contact with his upturned ass. Leo understood that only too well; it made Jed complicit in his own punishment, but then again Jed was complicit and nothing happened here without not only his consent but his tacit approval and request, so Leo saw no reason why they should soft pedal around that fact. "Now please," Leo said, giving Jed's now glowing backside a firm swat.

Jed reached out for the paddle and handed it over his shoulder to Leo who thanked him for it and then rested the cool surface of the leather-bound item on his lover's warm backside. He held it there for a moment, giving Jed time to adjust to what would be a harder tempo and more stinging swat, and then raised it and brought it back down sharply on Jed's bottom.

"Oh hell," Jed yelped, jumping slightly. Leo pressed his hand more firmly on the small of Jed's back, where Jed had said he liked it, partly in order to hold his lover in position and partly to reassure him. He swung the paddle down expertly for the next few minutes, and was aware of Jed counting each swat after receiving it. This was always the danger with someone as articulate and addicted to being in control as Jed Bartlet. Instead of letting go,

he was focussing on the number of swats he'd been promised, counting them off, trying to find a rational way of dealing with the tally, rather than just allowing the sensation to take over. Leo sighed – he had hoped to stop after using the paddle but now it was clear he'd have to use another implement as well. With that in mind he eased off the severity of the swats although kept up the tempo so he doubted that Jed would realise what he was doing.

"31...32..." Jed counted, his voice growing higher in triumph at his own feat of endurance. "33...34!" Leo stopped, and laid the paddle on one side and then gently brushed his hand over his lover's now reddened backside. They were both silent for a moment, and he could see Jed thinking that it was now over, that he'd faced it out, hadn't given in to it and had thus, in some small way, triumphed over the situation. Unfortunately, Leo knew from experience that if he left Jed like this there was always a corresponding low to match the current high. No, he had to finish this job and finish it well.

"Pass me the strap please, Josiah," he said, breaking into his lover's mood.

"What?" Jed looked up in surprise.

"We haven't finished yet," Leo said implacably.

"But you said 34! 30 for the disobedience and 4 for calling you Leo," Jed objected. That decided Leo – his lover was still way too coherent – to say nothing of argumentative - for the spanking to be over.

"That was over and above the spanking I was going to give you anyway," Leo told him firmly but calmly. "Hand me the strap, Josiah, or I'll happily give you a few more swats with the paddle while I'm waiting."

"No! That won't...be necessary, sir," Jed sighed, reaching for the strap. He handed it to Leo, and then straightened out his shoulders and rested his head on the pillow once more, a slight hitch in his breath – which Leo thought was a good sign.

Leo wielded that strap like the expert he was. He barely give his sub a chance to draw breath as he peppered his ass with stroke after stinging stroke. And finally, slowly, reluctantly, Jed gave in. It happened so gradually that it would have been easy to miss the first few signs but Leo was very practised at this and knew them well. First, Jed's legs splayed out and his upper shoulders relaxed as he abandoned himself to his fate and stopped trying to control it or minimise it. Then he began to growl but harder this time, and harder still, until he was yelling out loud, screaming out what sounded like rage and acceptance both at the same time. Leo was never entirely sure what all the noise was about but it seemed to be a necessary part of Jed giving up control and in some way he felt honoured that his friend felt safe enough with him to shout out so uninhibitedly and unashamedly. He had an inkling that when his father had given Jed a more formal kind of punishment, rather than just clouting his son around the head when he annoyed him, that Jed had stayed quiet as his way of hanging on to some last vestige of self respect and not giving his father the opportunity to know that he'd gotten to him. With Leo, there was no need for Jed to hang on to anything – Leo always respected Jed, whether in the Oval Office

or in the Blue Bedroom. With Leo he could just be himself, without having to guard against being known or harmed in an emotional way that hurt far more than anything that could be done to his body. Finally, Jed's entire body seemed to become a jellified mass as he gave in totally and irrevocably to what was happening, and to Leo's will. Leo continued for a good few seconds more and then, slowly, took the pace down, slowing until he stopped completely a minute or so later.

He put the strap on one side, and resumed stroking his lover's body. Jed lay there, still too boneless to react to the end of the spanking. Leo smiled down on him, and slid a little bit further down the bed, taking Jed with him. Then he pulled Jed a little bit closer so that his lover's head was resting on his chest. Jed opened his eyes and gazed, lazily at Leo.

"Thank you," he whispered, his entire body totally relaxed.

"That's okay." Leo leaned down and deposited a kiss on his lover's head and then stretched out as much as he could on the bed with Jed's weight on him, and stroked his lover's hair for a long time. Jed never stopped watching him the entire time, his eyes dreamy, completely blissed out.

"I love you Leo McGarry," he murmured.

"I love you too, Josiah Bartlet," Leo said softly, still stroking.

They lay there for a long time, both of them just enjoying the post spanking closeness, and then Leo decided it was time to get his now zoned out, compliant sub to give him some personal services.

"Josiah, undress me. I want a massage," he ordered.

"Yes, sir," Jed said dreamily. They disentangled themselves slowly, and Jed knelt beside Leo, his eyes bright with enjoyment. It took a lot to get to Jed to this state of tranquillity and acceptance but Leo knew that it left his lover feeling utterly at peace with himself and this world that he had so much responsibility for.

Jed reached out and unbuttoned Leo's shirt, and Leo remained where he was lying, enjoying his sub's adoring attention. Jed went slowly, pausing to drop frequent kisses on Leo's face and chest. Leo continued to just lie there, accepting it all. Jed could be a difficult, mouthy and opinionated sub but, as in everything he did, once he committed to the role he gave it his total attention and performed it expertly. He finished undoing Leo's shirt and then smoothed it away from his lover's shoulders. Leo sat up a bit to facilitate complete removal and then allowed Jed to crouch over him and undo his pants. Jed spent quite some time undoing and removing Leo's shoes, which gave Leo a great view of his lover's reddened ass, and then Jed finally removed his pants and underwear, leaving him totally naked. He wasn't as comfortable with his own nudity as Jed was, and it had taken him awhile to be happy with the two of them being naked with the lights on, but time had changed that and he was happier with it now than he used to be, although still a little shy – a fact he hoped Jed hadn't picked up on.

"There's lotion on the nightstand," Leo instructed, sweeping all the implements from the bed and onto the floor before rolling onto his front, and resting his face on his hands on top of the pillow. A few seconds later he felt the mattress give as Jed straddled his back, and then two warm, capable hands descended on his back. He almost gave a shout of pure pleasure – god this felt good! The first time he had ordered his sub to give him a massage, Jed had looked at him blankly although he'd gone about his task with a good deal of enthusiasm if very little skill. That had been the first time. Since then, Leo knew that Jed had either invited someone in to give him classes or found a very good book on the subject, because, in typical Jed-like fashion, he had become a total expert at giving a good massage. His strong hands seemed to know exactly where to rub for best effect and he effortlessly rooted out all the little knots and tight areas in Leo's muscles and released the tension. His attention was not entirely of the professional variety though – he frequently trailed a line of tender kisses along Leo's spine as he worked, or licked his earlobe. It was utterly relaxing and made Leo feel very cherished – which meant so much when coming from this man who he loved with every single atom of his being.

Jed moved lower, concentrating on Leo's buttocks, and then his legs, before finally coming to a finish.

"Would you like me to do anything else for you, sir?" He whispered in a low voice, kneeling beside Leo. It was all Leo could do to rouse himself from the splendid torpor of the massage but they were a long way from done yet – and the best part was yet to come.

"Yes you can, Josiah," he said, his voice sounding low and gruff and strange to his own ears. "You can come here." He turned onto his side, held out his arms, and Jed came willingly into them. "I think that I want to spend a good long time kissing my sub and then I'm going to make love to him. Do you think that sounds like a good idea, Josiah?" He asked. Jed smiled hazily.

"I think that sounds like a very good idea, sir," he replied.

Leo grinned and lowered his head for a kiss. He loved the moment their lips first touched, and how Jed invariably opened up immediately, wanting Leo to kiss him thoroughly, sweetly, until neither of them had any breath left and they had to back off to get a second wind before beginning again. Leo was true to his word and kissed Jed for a very long time. He enjoyed kissing more than just about any other activity, and he could never resist tangling his hand in Jed's thick hair while he plundered his lover's mouth, his other arm wrapped around Jed's body, keeping him close. This was how he best liked to demonstrate his mastery on Friday evenings – everything else, to Leo, was just preamble. Now that the initial rebellion was over, he had Jed still, calm, loving and at peace with himself, utterly surrendering himself to Leo's embraces. This was when he truly enjoyed the feeling of dominance that Jed gave him on Friday nights. He loved taking charge of these long, deep kisses, keeping Jed still with the hand wrapped in his hair, pressing his lips firmly on those of his sub, demanding an entrance that was never denied. He rolled on top of Jed, keeping him down, and continued kissing him, often his lips, but now also straying to other parts of his body, tracing a tongue along his lover's collarbone, or nibbling at his neck in a way that

always drove Jed insane, at the same time as keeping him pinned down with the weight of his body and the force of his will. Jed's eyes were now dark and heavy-lidded with arousal and total abandonment. Leo loved this sight best of all – he knew that Jed was lost in the moment and in the pleasure of being so thoroughly made love to, and he also knew how much Jed enjoyed being in this state. They had made love without the top and sub dynamics occasionally, usually when they were tired or in a hurry, had experienced sex just as two lovers enjoying each other's bodies and it was always good – but Jed was much more jerky, much less lost in the moment, still too switched on to his political life to really lose himself in his personal life. Only when Leo took the role of dominant to Jed's submissive did Jed ever truly relax and just enjoy himself.

They probably spent an hour just kissing and caressing – Jed never objected and Leo enjoyed it too much to want to bring it to an end. They were both old enough to be able to hold their climax for a good long time – Leo thought that as he had gotten older he enjoyed the foreplay at least as much as the actual culmination of making love. He spent a long time becoming reacquainted with his lover's body, deeply regretting the fact that it had been two weeks since he had last been able to enjoy it. Very occasionally he wished they could extend their Friday night activities to other times but he had to concede that at least with their once a week arrangement he had all the joy of delayed gratification and anticipation – and it made their Friday night union all the more intense and beautiful because of that.

Leo kept Jed pinned down while he went lower, making love to every single part of Jed's body. This was when he was able to truly unleash the sexual, sensual side of his personality and really revel in it. He knew that Jed had been surprised by how passionate he was in the bedroom – certainly he suspected that none of the people who knew him in his professional life had any inkling of how uninhibited and forceful he was in the bedroom. This was the apex of his enjoyment of being a top and when he truly came into his own in the role. After the first time they had made love, Jed had lain on the bed looking at him exhaustedly with something akin to amazement in his eyes.

"Well, Leo, I never suspected that," he had commented, for once rendered almost speechless. "I guess I should have expected you to be as single minded and attentive to detail in the bedroom as you are in the office though," he'd said with a grin.

Leo smiled to himself as he remembered that conversation. One of the reasons his marriage had lasted as long as it had was that his wife had always enjoyed their sex life so much. Even when the emotional side of their marriage had been breaking down irrevocably, they had still made love as passionately as ever. Leo wasn't someone who could do things in half measures; if he was going to make love it was always passionate. Leo had a true enjoyment of his lover's body. He loved the feel of skin on skin, loved the slightly salty taste of Jed's flesh, enjoyed moving his lover this way and that, exploring every inch of him, while Jed turned willingly under his fingers and tongue, offering himself up to be conquered and explored, like a foreign country welcoming an unstoppable and secretly admired invader.

Leo reclaimed all those areas of territory that he had missed for the past two weeks, stamping his own mark on them, finding them again and enjoying the familiar scents and tastes. He found the nape of Jed's neck, just where the hairline met the skin and nuzzled

appreciatively. He loved Jed's hair, and frequently paused just to bury his face in it and inhale the scent of it. He traced the hairline with his mouth, then dropped lower and found the slightly bumpy ridges of his lover's spine. He traced his tongue down each ridge, massaging gently with his tongue, and then returned up again, pausing to suck on Jed's neck and then lick behind his ear. Jed arched up into him, muttering something incoherent. Leo grinned to himself – it was always a matter of great pride to him that he could reduce Jed Bartlet to a state of complete inarticulacy – no mean feat of and by itself. Jed's skin was a light golden tan colour, darker than his own pale flesh and he loved the colours it turned when he sucked or nibbled or, occasionally, bit. Jed liked being bitten and Leo liked biting him – not too hard, just enough so that his lover could feel Leo's teeth and they could both enjoy the sense of Leo's domination.

Leo snaked back down to Jed's buttocks and lapped at the still tender flesh with his tongue. He often wondered what it felt like to have the glowing, sensitised flesh touched and licked in this way, but his curiosity did not extend to allowing Jed to top him. He had his reasons; firstly, the role of submissive did not hold any appeal to him. He thought he could endure it easily enough but doubted he'd actively enjoy it. Not because he didn't think he could handle giving up control, but because his enjoyment of love making was predicated so much on being the active, initiating partner and on those occasions in his life where he had been more passive it had frustrated him and spoiled his enjoyment of the act to a certain degree. He would have taken the role if he had felt that Jed would have gotten something from it, but after giving the matter a good deal of thought he had come to the conclusion that it wasn't a good idea for Jed to see him in that role; Jed needed Leo to be his certainty, his rock, and to know that Leo could always take him down when he needed it. Leo worried that certainty might falter if Jed topped him. He had realised that Jed's curiosity on that subject wasn't going to go away though – and when he had seen an expression in Josh's eyes that he was all too familiar with seeing in Jed's eyes, he had considered whether this might not be the solution to this particular problem. He thought Jed would make a very good top in the same way that he made a good president and a good father, and he was looking forward to seeing his lover in action with Josh in a week's time. However, he also knew that Jed needed to sub as well – needed it on a fundamental level that went to the root of his entire being, and he was more than happy to fill this role for this man who he loved so completely.

Leo sank his teeth very gently into Jed's buttocks and was rewarded by a low moan. He parted the flesh and explored within, taking his time, loving this as much as he loved all the aspects of being in charge of this particular body. He loved the noises Jed made as he drove his tongue inside, exploring gently but thoroughly and he worked for some time before moving on, down Jed's legs, down to his feet, before working his way just as slowly back up again, right back to the nape of his neck where he had started.

Leo wrapped his hand in Jed's hair again, and pulled his lover up, his other hand wrapped around Jed's waist. Jed came willingly into a kneeling position, his every sense seemingly tuned to doing whatever Leo wanted and getting into whatever position Leo wanted him to be in. Leo covered Jed's body with his own, moving as ceaselessly as ever, and reached underneath to touch his lover's belly and chest, his tongue still claiming Jed's neck. He enjoyed the sensation of covering his lover from behind – although they were both aroused

he had no intention of entering Jed yet, but he knew that it excited his lover knowing he was so close and could bring their union to a climax whenever he chose. Instead he turned Jed onto his back, and worked on the front of his body, going in for another long kiss, sucking on Jed's lower lip, then down to his collar bone and on to his nipples. He ignored his lover's cock for most of the time, enjoying the sense of power that Jed's moans and incoherent cries gave him. He returned over and over again to Jed's lips for more kisses in between exploring his lover's body and then finally, without warning, enveloped Jed's needy cock with his mouth. His lover gave a startled shout and bucked up against him but, like the maestro he was, Leo took his time, pausing and starting in again and then pausing once more - over and over again until Jed was on the brink of total abandonment, begging for release, pleading with Leo to let him come. Leo loved driving his lover this wild with need and was utterly ruthless in keeping Jed balanced on the brink of ecstasy. This was another way he liked to exert his control and Jed always responded so well to it. He backed off again, chuckling at Jed's cry of frustration, and reached for the condoms and lube on the nightstand. He leaned over his lover, and ran his free hand through Jed's hair, smoothing it away from his face and looked into those much-loved eyes. Jed was ready – he had probably been ready for the past hour but Leo saw no need to rush. He kissed his lover again, firmly and authoritatively, and felt a tremor of total arousal and need course through Jed's body.

Leo spread the lube on his fingers and spent several long minutes preparing his lover, gazing all the while into Jed's heavy-lidded, totally aroused, and completely surrendered eyes. Jed's submission always made his heart pound – although he had usually been the more active partner in sexual relationships prior to Jed, he'd never formally taken on the role of top, and it never ceased to surprise him how much he adored seeing his lover so naked, abandoned and submissive. He loved the way Jed responded to his touch and gave himself up so eagerly to his every caress. Finally, having prepared his lover thoroughly, Leo sank himself into Jed's waiting body. Jed gave a heartfelt sigh, and Leo settled himself on top of his lover, taking a position where he could see into Jed's eyes, and kiss him hard as the mood took him. He thrust gently, taking his time, just enjoying the closeness. Jed's cock lay between them and he stimulated it with his own body with every forward stroke, occasionally stopping to fondle it, and suck on Jed's nipples or go in again for another long, deep drink from Jed's lips. Finally, when Leo judged that Jed couldn't hold out for much longer and when he himself was on the brink, he brought them both expertly to climax, Jed first and himself a few seconds later. They lay there for a long time afterwards, Leo resting on Jed's chest, and Jed breathing the long, deep breaths of a man totally relaxed and at peace with himself.

Finally Leo pulled himself together enough to withdraw and take Jed in his arms, spooning up with him and drawing a blanket over both of them to keep warm in the post-coital haze.

"So, you missed me last week then, huh?" Jed murmured a few minutes later. Leo chuckled.

"Nah. I was sunning myself in Florida like you said," he replied. Jed gave a bark of laughter and turned in Leo's arms so that he was facing him. Leo loved these moments, when they were closer than at any other time. He lived for these moments. "C'mere," he said, drawing Jed even closer and kissing him again. "Yes, I missed you; you might be the most impossible, infuriating, disobedient and downright difficult sub in the entire world but I missed you like crazy, as you know all too well."

Jed laughed out loud. "Well you do like a challenge, Leo," he commented cheerfully. Then, a few seconds later: "I'm not too difficult am I?" There was a shade of anxiety in his voice; Leo knew that sometimes after the event Jed was embarrassed by his behaviour at the beginning of these sessions and he squeezed Jed's butt affectionately.

"Oh, I can handle you, Jed Bartlet," he commented. "I can handle you without any problem at all."

"That over the knee thing," Jed commented. "Were you planning on doing that again?"

"I expect so," Leo replied with a slightly malicious grin. "I enjoyed it far too much not to."

"I thought you'd say that," Jed grunted.

"How much did you hate it?" Leo questioned thoughtfully.

"If I tell you that then you might do it even more often," Jed replied. Leo squeezed his butt again, a little more firmly this time and Jed sighed. "Oh okay – I did find it hard, Leo, but you knew I would. It felt ridiculous...but I liked being that close to you and I liked you holding me in place – that's nicer than being tied and makes it easier than when you just ask me to hold position."

"Thank you. I thought that was the case." Leo nodded, deciding that whether Jed liked it or not the over the knee spanking was definitely going to happen a lot more from now on. It had taken him a long time to convince Jed that spanking was a shared activity born out of and executed in an atmosphere of affection and love. At first Jed had just wanted punishment, and some sense of atonement for what he perceived as his sins. His only experience of that kind of absolution had been at his father's none too tender hands and he didn't have any other frame of reference by which to judge it. Leo hoped he'd provided a good alternative because he sure as hell could never give Jed the kind of treatment he'd received from his father. He could never be cold, clinical or angry in these sessions. He could be matter of fact and he could be every bit as strong and in command as Jed needed him to be but never without a good deal of affection underneath that.

He glanced down at Jed who had closed his eyes and was resting his chin on Leo's shoulder. He could still vividly remember the first time they had done this. It had been after the State of the Union well over a year ago. Jed had been ill with the flu, and Leo had pressed Abbey about the President's health, knowing that something else was going on. He had been deeply hurt to find out about Jed's MS. He had thought they were close; Jed had been the first person he had turned to when he had realised he was losing his battle with alcoholism years ago. Now, it turned out that his best and oldest friend had a disease that he had kept secret from him for years. Leo had very nearly gone home and drowned his sorrows in drink, but only the look in Jed's eyes as they spoke in his bedroom, Jed still recovering from the flu, had stopped him. Jed was abject with guilt; the last thing he had wanted to do was to hurt Leo, but he had been in denial about his MS for the longest time – almost as if, if he told anyone he had it, even Leo, it would become true, and he desperately hadn't wanted it to

be true. He had finally come to accept it, but by then he was on his way to being President, and he had feared that Leo would withdraw his support if he knew about the illness. Leo had no idea whether or not he would have – but he did understand his friend's fear. A few days after the State of the Union speech, when Jed was fully recovered from the flu, he had asked Leo to come up to the Residence for a private dinner, just the two of them. Leo had understood right from the beginning that Jed wanted to make his amends, but he had been taken totally by surprise by what the President had suggested.

To ensure their privacy, the President had set up their dinner in the Blue Bedroom. Leo had been surprised by that too although the choice of room started to make sense later on. They had eaten, talking at length about Jed's health, and Leo's sense of betrayal, until the emotions of both men were running high. Jed barely touched his dinner and afterwards pushed his plate away, leaned over the table and spoke to his oldest and best friend in a low, intense tone of voice.

"Leo, I feel bad about this. I don't like seeing that hurt look in your eyes and knowing I caused it. I only ever want you to look at me with trust and affection. I don't want you to doubt me again. I want you to be proud of me." It had taken him a lot to say that and Leo had valued every single word, but he wasn't sure his emotions could be switched on and off that easily and had said so. Jed had nodded, almost impatiently, as if he accepted that.

"I'm not talking about me telling you to get over it and you doing so just like that," he said, waving his hand in the air. "That wouldn't be fair on you and it would hardly excuse the enormity of what I did to you. I've thought about this for some time, Leo and you can refuse if you want, but I think it would help us both if you'd punish me."

"Punish you? I don't understand." Leo gazed at the other man, trying to figure out what he meant.

"I think you do, Leo. I want you to punish me. I deserve it and I'd feel a hell of a lot better if you did. My father had a cane – I doubt we've got one of those lying around here but my belt would do just as well."

Leo had found himself speechless, and yet, curiously, although he knew the request to be completely extraordinary, it hadn't felt unexpected. He remembered several occasions when he'd seen a similar look in his friend's eyes and had felt some inkling of what Jed had wanted from him even then, although he'd never have been able to put it into words. Leo had considered Jed's request, taking his time, needing to make the right decision. Jed had remained silent throughout, his eyes never leaving Leo's as he pondered the possible consequences of what Jed was requesting. Leo wasn't sure that his own hurt feelings could be relieved by whipping the President's ass, but there was no doubt that the offer had been genuinely meant and that if it would help mend the rift between them, Jed Bartlet, President of the United States, would allow his Chief of Staff and best friend to whip him with his own belt.

Leo had agreed in the end not because he thought it would help him but because he recognised the real distress Jed was in and he thought it would help his friend more. That

first occasion had been a revelation to Leo. Jed had clearly expected the cold, formal kind of punishment that his father had handed out to him as a kid, but when it came to it, Leo had been utterly unable to deliver that kind of punishment. While he had no problem with meting out the kind of thorough whipping Jed clearly needed, he wasn't about to do it any way but his own. So, he had taken his time and followed his instincts. Jed had never experienced a warm up before a spanking, and equally had never been given any wind down time afterwards and both these things took him by surprise when Leo insisted upon them, even in the face of Jed's objections. When Jed had braced himself over the armchair Leo had found himself curiously affected by the fact that his friend was prepared to let him do this to make amends. Suddenly he realised that he had been wrong, and that his hurt feelings were appeased, at least in part, by Jed's willingness to submit to such an indignity to mend the wrong that he had done him. Instead of wanting to hurt his friend though, Leo had wanted instead, as usual, to be of some service to him. Yes, Jed deserved his whipping, but he also deserved Leo's affection and admiration for submitting to it in the first place. Leo had taken his time, and although Jed had rebelled against the lightness of his touch at first, thinking maybe that Leo wasn't going to be able to see this through, his old friend soon realised that this wasn't going to be an easy whipping.

Leo had taken Jed right into himself and out the other side. Jed never once tried to break position but Leo tested him right to the limits of his endurance on that, needing to make sure that his contrition was genuine and needing Jed to know that he had performed his penance – if Leo had given him an easy ride Jed would have known it and the whole thing would have been rendered completely pointless. Afterwards, Jed had stood up and tried, in a matter of fact, even offhand way, to bring the evening to a close. Leo wasn't going to stand for any of that – he had no intention of allowing his friend to slink off and lick his wounds in silence after they had both shared something so profound, and instead had pulled Jed into a hug. At first Jed had stood there stiffly, but then, as if a dam had broken inside, he had slumped against Leo, sobbing silently. Leo had half-walked, half-carried Jed to the bed and laid down with him on it, holding his friend for the next hour and a half while Jed dealt with the turbulent emotions that were raging inside. They had talked for another two hours solid after that, and that was how their unconventional Friday evening activities had first begun. It had been a short step after that to making love – but one that had felt very right. Leo was still amazed that something so very good could have come out of a situation that had been so very hurtful but he was eternally grateful that it had.

"You still with me, Leo?" Jed asked, bringing him back to the present day.

"Sure." Leo smiled. "Just remembering the first time you invited me to this room."

"Ah." Jed smiled too. "Seems like a long time ago."

"Yeah. And now we've asked someone else to join us," Leo commented softly. Jed stiffened slightly in his arms.

"Josh?" He asked.

"Yeah. My meeting with him went very well. He's going to be joining us next week, and

every other Friday from now on, depending on how it goes the first time of course. I want you to be clear about this though – you can top Josh but you're still my sub."

"What does that make Josh? The sub's sub?" Jed wrinkled up his face, considering that.

"Yeah," Leo chuckled. "The lowest of the low although he doesn't seem to mind that – in fact I think that's pretty much the way he wants it. So, in this room you're still Josiah and you'll still do as I say. I won't countermand anything you say to Josh unless I think you're wrong – and if I do, you'll accept my decision immediately. I have a lot more experience of this than you do and the way I see it you have a lot of learning to do."

"Yes, Leo," Jed said in a mock-meek voice. Leo slapped his ass.

"I mean it. We don't screw around with Josh – this has to be as good and as right for him as it is for you."

"Yes, Leo," Jed said again, but this time his tone was completely serious. "Hell, we both care about that kid – there's no way I'd do anything to hurt him."

"I know." Leo smiled. "It's going to be mighty interesting seeing you top him," he chuckled.

"What – you don't think I can do it?" Jed asked. Leo shook his head.

"Oh I think you can do anything you set your mind to, Jed Bartlet - but it's still going to be mighty interesting watching you!"

They talked for another half an hour and then finally fell into deep, peaceful sleep, limbs still entwined, Leo's hand resting on his lover's hair, Jed's cheek on Leo's chest.

Leo woke up just after 7 the next day, slipped out of the bed, took a shower, shaved, and cleaned his teeth. He got dressed silently, and then spent a couple of minutes clearing up the room and replacing all the implements in the trunk at the foot of the bed. When he was finished, he went over to the bed and looked down on his lover who was still fast asleep, utterly lost to the world, completely relaxed and at peace. Jed had a dreamy half-smile on his features and his hair was all awry. He didn't look like the President of the United States; he looked like the tousled haired lover and wayward but charming sub of Leo McGarry.

Leo leaned over and dropped a kiss on his lover's forehead.

"See you next Friday, Josiah," he murmured and then, very quietly, he left the room.

End of Part Two

Part Three - Josh by Xanthe

Author's Notes:

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Many thanks to: Shan for lively discussion and help, Phoebe for advice and comments, and dot for encouragement, support and suggestions.

Warning: This chapter contains scenes of graphic dom/sub BDSM sex between Leo, Jed and Josh. Don't read on if that squicks you.

Saturday Morning

Josh woke with a start and gazed at his desk, disoriented. Somewhere down the hallway he heard the sound of a door slamming shut.

"Donna?" He muttered, glancing around blearily. He came to and shook his head, trying to clear it, and then winced - his neck felt as if it had spent several hours squished to one side on a hard surface...which, he realised, it had. Josh reached for the glass of water on his desk and raised it to his lips - when the sound of footsteps in the hallway outside, combined with his own state of zombification caused him to miscalculate the distance between his hand and his mouth with the result that the water ended up mostly in his lap and down the front of his shirt. It was at that precise moment, as if decreed by the personal intervention of the god of bad timing himself, that Leo McGarry appeared in his doorway.

"Josh? I thought I heard a noise down here - what's going on? You're here very early," Leo commented. His sharp eyes travelled up and down Josh's body, taking in every single facet of his deputy's dishevelled state of dress, culminating in the damning wet patch currently decorating his crotch.

"It's water," Josh said quickly. "It's not...you know...anything else," he muttered, knowing that his entire face was now bright red from the tips of his ears to his Adam's apple.

"I figured," Leo commented with barely more than a minutely raised eyebrow.

"I was...I misjudged..." Josh waved his hand expansively to show how the accident had happened and, too late, realised that the glass he was still holding wasn't quite empty. He could only watch in abject dismay as he showered his boss with the remaining contents of the glass.

"Thank you, Josh. I did just take a shower though," Leo commented crisply, pulling his handkerchief out of his top pocket and brushing down the lapel of his jacket with firm, slightly irritated strokes of his hand. Josh sighed and sat down.

"I'm sorry, Leo," he muttered, wondering just how much more of an idiot he could make himself between this moment in time and next Friday. Leo looked up, those sharp eyes of his assessing his deputy thoroughly. Josh was suddenly acutely aware of the fact that there was stubble on his chin, the collar of his shirt was open, and his tie was currently decorating the handle of his filing cabinet. Leo, on the other hand, looked immaculate for a Saturday

morning. Usually dress at the West Wing was more casual at the weekend, but Leo was still wearing the suit Josh had seen him disappear in yesterday. Josh felt himself starting to flush again as he realised that Leo had come straight from the Residence where he had, undoubtedly, just spent the night with the President. That thought made his groin ache, and his heart ache even more with a kind of longing that he'd been unable to even put into coherent thought until a week ago. Now Josh wondered how he could ever have been blind to what was going on between his boss and the President. Leo was positively glowing this morning – his face was open and relaxed, his eyes clear and sparkling...he radiated contentment and was clearly a man who was very happy in both his personal and working life. Josh felt grubby, unshaven, and not exactly very pleasant smelling by comparison.

"Josh, have you been here all night?" Leo asked, with a slight click of disapproval in his voice.

Josh hesitated. "I was just...I...there was...yes," he admitted with a sigh.

Leo nodded. He turned and shut the door, then came and sat down in front of Josh's desk.

"What's going on, Josh?" He asked, those perceptive eyes of his missing nothing. Josh exhaled a long, deep breath. He could well imagine that Leo McGarry was a top extraordinaire. There was no way any sub of his would get away with concealing anything from him. That was a curiously reassuring thought and Josh felt himself relaxing.

"The never-ending Crossley fiasco, is, well, never-ending," he sighed. He had screwed up badly on this a week ago and it looked as if it was never going to go away, no matter how hard he worked on the damage limitation. It had all been his own fault – he had been arrogant, showing off in a meeting on the hill, and had made an incautious comment about Senator Crossley's character and abilities that had gotten straight back to the Senator who had come out all guns blazing as a result – and it turned out that Senator Crossley had some rather interesting opinions of his own which he wanted to share with the world, and a whole suitcase full of ammunition to back them up. It wasn't seriously damaging to the Bartlet administration but it was a constant nagging headache that didn't show any signs of going away – and the ongoing fallout was overshadowing everything else in the news cycle. "I spent half the night on the phone trying to deal with it but..." He shrugged. "It isn't over yet, Leo...and..." he hesitated, and sighed. "At some point we have to tell the President that too," he finished.

"Okay," Leo said, gazing at him steadily. "We all know this one's down to you, Josh, but nobody could say you haven't busted a gut trying to sort it out. I can't have you beating yourself up over this any more. Get the file up to date and then bring it to me – I'll see if I can fix it."

Leo gave a clipped smile, then got up and walked over to the door, every movement tight and contained. Josh sighed – he had single-handedly managed to puncture Leo's relaxed mood and he'd liked seeing his boss radiating such contentment. Sometimes they all forgot just how much Leo took on himself. Yes, the President bore responsibility for the welfare of the entire nation, but it was Leo who bore responsibility for the welfare of the President,

and that wasn't a job he took lightly. Leo stopped at the door, rested his fingers on the handle, and then glanced back at his deputy. The expression in his eyes softened, and changed to one that Josh had rarely seen before, one of intimacy.

"When I left him, he was sleeping. He looked...peaceful." A little smile tugged at the corner of Leo's lips. "We don't tell him this has come up again until we know if we can fix it, Josh," he said firmly.

Josh nodded, understanding. The President had a lot of things to worry about – but if Leo could worry about them for him then he would, right up to the point where the President needed to take that worry on himself.

"And Josh, you done good. It isn't even 8 o'clock yet - go and take a shower, shave, and have something to eat before you work on that file," Leo said, his voice soft with an underlying current of affection in it. Josh smiled at his boss, basking in the other man's few brief words of praise. He would go to the ends of the earth to hear praise from Leo McGarry's lips. Leo nodded to him and then left the room and Josh leaned back in his chair and stretched, unable to stop smiling. Leo's praise warmed him inside in a way that made up for all the sleepless nights. He wondered if the President felt this way – would he go to the ends of the earth to hear Leo McGarry say, "You done good"? He was the President for god's sake – surely he didn't need anyone's praise or approval? And yet...Josh recalled all the times when he had seen Jed Bartlet look to Leo McGarry for confirmation that he had done the right thing, that he had performed his job to the high standards Leo McGarry expected of him – and, something more - that he'd made Leo proud of him. Josh smiled to himself - despite the fact that he was the most powerful man in the world, what Jed Bartlet wanted more than anything else was to make Leo proud and Josh could empathise with that emotion all too well.

Josh wandered down to the staff gym and took a shower, pondering on the President's relationship with Leo. He still found it hard to wrap his head around the idea of someone as strong, vibrant, sure of himself and powerful as the President subbing to anyone but he had to admit that if there was anybody in the world who could top the President then it was Leo McGarry. He replayed the memory of Leo's expression as he had leaned on the door and told Josh that he had left the President sleeping. Josh had seen the President sleeping on plenty of occasions and so had Leo but it was obvious that to Leo this was different – he wasn't talking about the President, he was talking about his lover, someone he'd spent the previous night with, someone he'd just left in the bed they'd both shared and Josh guessed that must be a very different thing. Josh's cock ached at that thought and he took it in his hand almost reflexively, allowing the hot water to pound on his head and wash him into wakefulness as he pumped his cock hard, all the time thinking of Leo and the President making love. He came, explosively, and leaned his wet head against the shower wall, wondering how the hell he was going to remain sane and do his best work for a whole week before the big day came when he would be welcomed into the most private, exclusive and intimate of all the clubs in Washington DC.

Josh found a blue polo shirt and pair of faded blue jeans in his locker and returned to his desk feeling much more human. He liked working at the weekend. The West Wing was his

life to all intents and purposes and he couldn't think of anything else he'd rather be doing, especially as during the course of his working life he got to spend his time not only with people he counted as his closest friends but also with the two men he respected more than anyone else on the planet since his father's death. There was a different atmosphere at the weekend – only a few staff were present, and there was a holiday kind of feeling.

Josh spent the next three hours working on the Crossley file and then wandered along the more or less empty hallways to Leo's office. He knocked on the door and when there was no reply he pushed it open only to find that it was empty. The door to the Oval Office was open though, and Josh heard the sound of voices in the next-door room. He hesitated for a moment and then walked quietly over to the open door, not wanting to disturb the President. He was about to knock on the open door to the Oval Office when he caught a glimpse of the men inside and paused.

The President was sitting at his desk, with Leo standing at his right shoulder. Jed Bartlet was dressed casually like Josh, in a dark blue sweater and blue jeans, in contrast to Leo's more formal attire. What struck Josh though, was the look in the President's eye as he looked up at his Chief of Staff. There was a tenderness there that took him completely by surprise. He had always known that Jed was fond of Leo, but this was different – this was a look of total admiration...and love. Whatever happened between these two men on a Friday night it was clear that on Saturday morning the bond between them was completely renewed and they both knew that and loved the way it made them feel.

"I'm supposed to sign this?" The President was saying, an expression some way between a grimace and a grin on his features.

"Yes you are, sir," Leo said, his tone of voice just bordering on stern, which belied the amused expression in his eyes.

"I'm supposed to sign it even though I don't agree with it?" Bartlet asked.

"Sure. You're the President – you have to do lots of things you don't agree with," Leo replied.

"I thought becoming President meant I'd never have to do anything I didn't agree with ever again," Jed groused.

"Who told you that?"

"You did – when you were trying to explain to me why it would be a good idea for me to run for President in the first place," Jed replied.

"And you believed me?" Leo sounded incredulous.

"I always believe you, Leo. Either I'm very gullible or you're very persuasive." Jed made another face and signed the paper with a sigh of distaste. Leo smiled fondly, and removed the paper from in front of the President.

"Well done. I know that had to hurt," Leo commented. Jed made a little 'hmphing' sound under his breath and Leo grinned and rested his hand briefly on Jed's shoulder, and squeezed. It was a small gesture that lasted only for a split second, and one that the casual observer would have missed altogether, but there was something so beautiful about it, so loving and so intimate that Josh felt as if he had forgotten how to breathe. Bartlet didn't say anything but he glanced up momentarily and the two men exchanged a look that spoke volumes. Josh was hit, then, by how huge a deal it was that he had been invited into this unique and very special relationship. What the hell did they want him for? He knew why he wanted to be there but he had no idea why they wanted him there. Confused and full of sudden doubt, he turned to go and bumped into the door, making both the men in the Oval Office look up sharply.

"Josh – come in," Bartlet said, waving his hand.

"Uh... I was...I needed to see Leo," Josh said, hoping they didn't mind him intruding on a private moment.

"Excuse me, sir," Leo said. Bartlet looked disappointed, as if he would have enjoyed having Josh come and talk for awhile but Leo shut the door to the Oval Office firmly behind him as he left.

"This is it." Josh waved the file at Leo and then threw it down on his desk with a heartfelt sigh, glad to be rid of thing.

"Okay." Leo nodded at him in dismissal, sat down at his desk, and began flick through the file. Josh hovered, uncertainly. Leo glanced up at him with a raised eyebrow.

"You're still here?" He commented.

"I haven't...that is..." Josh hesitated.

"What is it Josh?" Leo sat back in his chair and gazed at his Deputy steadily.

"I saw you earlier – before you saw me, Josh blurted out. "I, uh, saw you with him. In the Oval Office."

"Okay. And?" Leo took off his glasses and then continued gazing at his Deputy.

"Why did you invite me along next Friday, Leo?" Josh asked in what sounded like a pathetically small voice to his own ears. "You two...you don't need anyone else. You sure as hell don't need me." He swallowed hard – that wasn't what he'd meant to say but his insecurity had somehow found its way into words anyhow.

"Josh, it's Saturday morning and you're worrying about next Friday night already?" Leo

asked, with a slightly raised eyebrow. "Are you scared about next Friday, Josh?"

Josh gave a little smile. "Petrified, Leo," he admitted honestly.

"You still want to go ahead though?" Leo questioned, gazing at Josh intently.

"Oh god, yes," Josh said softly.

"Then go and close the door, Josh," Leo told him, with just the slightest trace of a weary sigh. "There's nobody around. Let's talk about this some more." Josh did as he was told and came to sit in the chair in front of Leo's desk. "Josh, we've already been through what you can expect from us and what we'll expect from you," Leo told him, that steady gaze never wavering. Josh felt a flush spread from his neck all the way up to the roots of his hair. Oh yes, Leo had told him, in excruciating detail, what he could expect. He had gone over all manner of BDSM sex practices and asked Josh how he felt about them, and whether they were things he would be interested in experiencing, and if so, how much he was interested in them. It had been one of the most embarrassing meetings of Josh's entire life but he had seen it through with grim determination because what was being offered to him was something that came pretty close to being his ultimate dream come true.

"I know what to expect, Leo. I just don't know why you want me there," Josh muttered. "I've seen you and him together – you don't need me or anyone else."

"We don't, no," Leo agreed with a terse nod. Josh ducked his head, not surprised at having had that confirmed. "We don't need you, Josh," Leo continued, "but we'd like it if you joined us. There isn't anybody else we would invite to join us, trust me."

"There isn't?" Josh raised his head again, surprised.

"No!" Leo replied testily. "What – did you think that maybe next week we'd invite CJ along, and the week after that it'd be Toby?"

"Oh god. I hope not." Josh tried hard to get an image of CJ bearing a long black whip out of his mind. Much as he admired and respected her, CJ Cregg was scary enough without the addition of an implement of discipline. "Thanks for the mental image, Leo."

Leo gave a little grunt of amusement. "Josh, we invited you because we recognised in you someone who would enjoy what we had to offer – and also because we thought we'd enjoy getting to know you better in the context of what we do on Friday nights. We asked you because we both feel the same way about you, Josh. We felt you might add something to the mix, not detract anything. And also..." His expression softened, and he gazed at Josh affectionately over his glasses. "We happen to like you, Josh. Very much." He shrugged. "The President is very fond of you."

"And you?" Josh whispered. Leo's blue eyes bored into his soul and he felt as if he was drowning. He wasn't sure why it was important but it was – he adored both these men and while he didn't expect for one moment that they reciprocated the depth of his emotions, he

wanted very much to feel that they cared about him in some small respect –both of them. He had already had evidence of the President's affection – he could still taste Jed Bartlet's kiss; over the past week he had replayed over and over again in his mind the moment when the President had pulled back his head and planted the softest, most tender and loving of kisses on his mouth. It had been the most magical of moments for Josh and he had surrendered himself to it, completely and absolutely, embracing a long buried dream that he had never even imagined could come true. Now he wondered what it would feel like to have Leo kiss him – and he wanted that more than anything else in the world right now. Leo was still gazing at him, and Josh blundered on, trying to explain.

"Leo, I've fantasised about this for a long time. When he came to me last week...I felt as if I was trapped in one of my own most treasured dreams. I want to belong to both of you...I want to give myself up to both of you. I want that so much sometimes that I ache just thinking about it," Josh admitted. Just a few short weeks ago he'd have gone to his grave rather than share this particular secret, but all that had changed now. There was something about this Leo that demanded that he give up every single secret in his heart if he was ever to stand a chance of having his most cherished dreams come true. Josh wanted Leo to know that he trusted him with this information – that he would tell Leo everything he wanted to know if Leo would just allow him to be his sub.

"Josh," Leo leaned forward, his eyes curiously gently behind the glasses. "Don't worry about it," he said softly. "Friday night will be everything you've ever wanted or hoped for – but you have to stop doubting us. We want you, Josh, and we'll take very good care of you. Just let the rest happen naturally. You won't have to worry about any of it on Friday – in fact, I'll need you to give up precisely those kinds of anxieties. I'll need you to give yourself up to us completely and to do that you need to trust us."

"I do trust you, Leo," Josh protested.

"Enough to accept that we want you with us and to stop questioning that?" Leo said softly. Josh bit on his lip, and then, finally, he gave a long, heartfelt sigh, and nodded.

"Okay, Leo. I'll try," he agreed.

"Good." Leo nodded. He picked up his glasses and glanced at his Deputy. "Now, go home, Josh. You've been here long enough. I don't want to see you back here until Monday morning, barring some huge, unforeseen crisis. We'll talk about this," he gestured to the file Josh had handed him, "some more on Monday. Okay?"

Josh nodded, and then got up and left as instructed. He wasn't entirely sure that he wanted to go home although the idea of slipping into bed and just falling asleep for several long hours was very appealing. However, the moment his head hit the pillow he found himself suddenly wide awake.

He lay there, gazing at the ceiling, wondering what it would feel like to kneel at Leo's feet, and have Leo pull back his head and kiss him the way the President had kissed him, full on the lips. He could imagine no greater happiness in the world, and wished he could skip

forward in time 6 days, to finally know what it would be like to sub to the two most powerful men on the planet.

None of this seemed real - he felt as if he was in a dream that had started the previous Friday and that he wanted to go on and on forever. Josh had fantasised about being sexually submissive for most of his adult life and even as a child he had made up stories in his head, stories which he had never shared with anybody, in which he was invariably spanked by a kind but authoritative man who had his own best interests at heart. As a child that person had been his father, who had never spanked Josh in his life, but after puberty he found his fantasies altering considerably taking an adult focus in the shape of a teacher at his school, Mr. Feig, a strong, firm man with an athletic build, who made American history both a pleasure and a torment for Josh as he watched the object of his fantasies giving a lecture, moving his large hands around expressively. Josh had wondered what those hands would feel like caressing his body, or punishing him for some minor act of wrongdoing. His fantasies were conflicted – he wanted, desperately, to please the strong, older male figures in his fantasies, so he hated thinking up any reason why they would want to spank him, yet at the same time that was what he yearned to happen. He wanted to be slung over a pair of strong knees and have his ass tanned, wanted to give himself up for punishment or pleasure - whatever the fantasy male of his imagining wanted to deliver he would receive, gratefully. As he had grown older he had managed to find a place for those fantasies among the multi-layered facets of the rest of his life. He could go for many weeks without even thinking about them but then returned to them, like the old, comfortable pleasure they were, letting them soothe and caress him, restoring his equilibrium after a particularly difficult time at work. His fantasies were his escape during times of stress, his secret, and one that he had never thought he would share with anybody until the President had surprised him in the gym last Friday, his voice low, dark, and purring, his demeanour so utterly compelling, sexy, and authoritative; it had almost been as if Jed Bartlet had reached into Josh's fantasies and plucked one out, then recreated it for his Deputy Chief of Staff in its entirety...or almost its entirety. Josh would have liked for last week's punishment to have ended in something altogether more intimate, and while he was disappointed that it hadn't, he had been more than compensated for that by the promise that when Leo was able to join them, they would explore this territory much further.

Josh turned over and tried to sleep but found it impossible. He was scarcely able to believe that this was actually happening to him, and not simply a figment of his imagination. Working with two such strong men of integrity as Jed Bartlet and Leo McGarry had brought the same mix of torment and pleasure to Josh's life as his secret crush on Mr. Feig had years before. Leo and the President embodied all those qualities he had given to his fantasy figures for so many years. They were good people - smart and professional and yet real, vulnerable and flawed for all that. They were kind but firm, caring but no-nonsense; they were mentors to him in a very real way in his working life and he looked up to them, believing in them both utterly and completely, captivated by their skills and their personalities. He worked night and day to please them, wanting them to be proud of him, and yet, when he screwed up as was occasionally unavoidable, he hated hearing their reprimands; Leo's were usually informal but to the point. He would unerringly find Josh's sense of guilt, making Josh admit to his failings: he was too quick-tempered, he over-reacted and when his mood was heated he spoke incautiously and said things he shouldn't. Leo had

a way of dryly going over Josh's misdeeds in a manner that made Josh squirm inside and feel as if he was 8 years old – and then it would be over, and somehow Leo knew how to put him back together again as well, finding the good in the bad, lending his unswerving support to Josh, no matter how badly he'd fucked up. The President's reprimands were usually shorter but no less devastating for all that. Jed Bartlet had a way of glancing at him over the top of his glasses, and saying just a few short words: "Josh - don't do it again," or "Next time, think before you speak, Josh." It wasn't so much what he said but the way he'd say it, those blue eyes of his, almost violet in shade, softer and deeper than Leo's sharp blue gaze, searing his message into Josh's soul.

Seven days...Josh wasn't sure he could survive seven days. He had a pang of absurd fear; supposing he got knocked down by a car between now and next Friday? Supposing something happened that prevented him from ever joining in the exclusive Friday Night Club? Supposing he came this close to something that had been so long and heartfelt a fantasy only to have it snatched away from him before it actually happened? Josh dismissed his fears with a wry smile at his own overactive imagination. Leo had told him to have trust – and he was going to have to do just that.

Monday Morning

As it turned out, it wasn't a car accident that threatened to prevent his entry into the Friday night club, but a nuclear warhead. That huge, unforeseen crisis that Leo had mentioned arrived unexpectedly and in full force on Monday morning in the middle of an Oval Office meeting of the Senior staff. Leo took the call while the President held forth to the room about the intricacies of economic diversity - something always guaranteed to make Josh's eyes glaze over. He was almost relieved when Leo interrupted the President in full flow, but that relief was short lived when he heard what was behind the interruption.

"We're needed in the situation room," Leo told the President, handing him his jacket. The entire room went silent.

"What's going on, Leo?" Jed said, his expansive, almost teasing mood changing abruptly as he shouldered himself into his jacket.

"We've had intelligence that one of those old Soviet nuclear warheads that went missing has just turned up," Leo told him.

"Where?" Jed asked as they walked towards the door.

"The middle east. A known terrorist organisation are currently threatening to wipe out half the world in exchange for a list of demands as long as both our arms. You go ahead – I'll be there in a couple of minutes.

Leo watched the President go and then turned to Josh. "Josh – this one's big - it might take some time. I need you to take care of everything while we're focussed elsewhere. Okay? I don't want to hear about anything but the really important stuff while this is going on and I sure as hell don't want him to hear about it – he's going to need to concentrate on making the right decisions for the next few days and I don't want him distracted. I want you to deal

with everything that comes up while we're doing this." His sharp blue eyes held Josh transfixed in their gaze for a second, impressing on him the importance of what he was saying. Josh swallowed hard – it had been only a week since he had badly screwed up and his confidence was at an all-time low. "I have every faith in you, Josh," Leo said urgently, as if sensing the way he was feeling. He patted Josh firmly on the arm.

"Everything's going to be fine, Leo," Josh said, with more confidence than he felt. "Go."

Friday Morning

The next four days were tense for everyone – Josh spent most of the time watching from the sidelines as Leo and the President spent most of their time walking to and from the situation room, their faces grim. They were all working day and night, and the strain was taking its toll on the President who was dealing with one of the most potentially serious crises of his Administration. Leo was, as ever, a faithful watchdog at his side. Watching them work together, moving in tandem with each other like the components of a well-oiled machine, Leo taking what burdens he could from the President to enable him to concentrate on making the really tough decisions, Josh was struck again by what an incredibly brilliant team they made. If Jed was weighed down by a particular decision, a few words from Leo could help him home in on the really crucial issues. Leo didn't offer an opinion unless asked, but if he did ask, Jed always listened carefully to the reply and invariably acted on Leo's advice. They were a superlative team and Josh felt humbled to be working with them, in whatever capacity.

His own task felt no less weighty – he was only too well aware that the President and Leo were trusting him to deal with everything that didn't need their direct involvement and he worked night and day to be worthy of the faith they'd placed in him. More than anything else he didn't want to stand in front of the President and tell him he'd let him down. He couldn't face doing that - it would hurt too much. The prospect of Jed Bartlet hauling them all back from the brink of disaster only to hear that his Deputy Chief of Staff had messed up on the day to day running of the place was too depressing to think about.

They were all so busy that the week passed without him having a chance to so much as think about Friday. With the way things were he doubted that their Friday night meeting would happen anyway; there was no way that Leo and the President would leave the situation room for any length of time when the entire world was standing on the edge of nuclear catastrophe. He had done his best to hold the place together while everyone rushed around, an air of panic bubbling just beneath the surface. He had deftly fielded any number of difficult issues, keeping them away from both Leo and the President, dealing with them himself, and, if he had any doubts, running them by Toby or Sam or CJ before making a decision. The other senior staff were tremendously supportive of him and his waning confidence had been bolstered by his success in taking care of the West Wing while Leo and the President were focussed elsewhere. He thought he'd done a good job – hoped he had – but it had been a long week and Friday morning found him sitting at his desk, feeling incredibly weary.

He was surprised a few seconds later to find a lemon muffin stuck under his nose, and a hot

cup of coffee thrust into his hand.

"Eat. Drink," Donna commanded, sitting down in the chair in front of his desk.

"Yes, Mom," Josh made a face at her. "Why are you being so nice to me?" He asked, taking a bite out of the warm lemon muffin and then giving a satisfied sigh. Lemon muffins were his favourite – although he wasn't sure how Donna knew that.

"I'm always nice to you, Josh," Donna replied. He was going to argue with her about that when the need to take another bite out of the delicious muffin overcame all other considerations. There was silence while he stuffed his face, and then Donna leaned forward, chewing on her lip thoughtfully.

"Josh, do you think this is it? Do you think we're all going to die?" She asked.

"Whaa? Ow Unnna!" Josh replied incoherently.

"Say that again without a mouthful of muffin," Donna instructed. Josh swallowed hard.

"No, Donna." He told her, taking a swig of his coffee to wash the muffin down.

"Everyone is so tense. You know, usually things are busy but kind of fun around here but not this week. Everyone looks so miserable and people are so touchy," Donna told him, looking desperately unhappy. He smiled at her – they rarely ever talked seriously like this, but he was enormously fond of her and if he could help her with this then he would.

"Donna – we are not all going to die. Everything will be fine."

"How do you know that?" Donna asked him.

"Because Leo and the President are in charge and I have absolute faith in them. I trust them to make all the right calls on this one, Donna," Josh said softly. "And so should you. I trust them quite literally with my life – I don't think they're going to let any of us down."

She gazed at him for a moment, her blue eyes clearing slightly and then she nodded, and her expression became much happier.

"Okay. You're right. Thank you, Josh."

He watched her go with a wry smile. He'd only told her the simple truth as he saw it, but it seemed to have worked. That thought gave him an idea... He glanced at the Crossley file, which he had taken back from Leo's desk - Leo had way too much on his plate right now to deal with this and it had been Josh's mistake in the first place. Maybe the simple truth would work as well with Senator Crossley as it had with Donna? It was always worth one last shot and he'd tried everything else so there really was only one thing left to do; he picked up the phone and called Senator Crossley.

Friday Evening. 7pm.

Josh walked into the West Wing after his meeting with Senator Crossley to find himself immediately accosted by Donna who flung herself into his arms and kissed him firmly on the mouth.

"What was that for?" He asked, not quite knowing where to put his hands as she hugged him voraciously.

"It's over! They got the warhead. We're safe!" She beamed at him, before kissing him again and then moving off to some other hapless victim. Josh noticed Toby taking cover unobtrusively behind a filing cabinet. He hurried along to the Oval Office, annoyed that he'd missed the excitement of the announcement but exhilarated by the tangible sense of relief and delight that was cascading infectiously around the West Wing. He passed CJ hurrying to a press briefing and found Charlie excitedly making a phone call from his desk by the door to the Oval Office. Charlie waved him through and Josh knocked and put his head around the door to find the President and Leo sitting side by side on the sofa, looking tired but extremely happy. Leo's tie was askew and the President's hair looked as if he'd spent the entire day running his hand through it despairingly, but both were in high spirits.

"Josh – come in!" Jed said, getting to his feet and waving his Deputy Chief of Staff into the room. "You heard the news?"

"Yes, sir. Congratulations." Josh grinned as he shook their hands. The President briefed him rapidly, talking so fast that it was all Josh could do to follow what he was saying, while Leo interjected little salient comments along the way, making sense of the President's hurried speech.

"So," Jed said, finally, gazing at Josh. "I've been hearing good things about how you've kept everything together this past week, Josh."

"Thank you, sir." Josh glanced at Leo who shot him an approving smile.

"I told you I had every confidence in you, Josh. I think you just needed to find confidence in yourself again," Leo commented.

"And, I just got a call from Senator Crossley," the President added. "He says you came to see him and it would appear – thank god – that this particular news cycle is finally going to come to an end. How on earth did you achieve this minor miracle, Josh?"

Josh flushed and then shrugged. "I went over there and apologised," he said.

"That's it? You just apologised?" Leo raised an incredulous eyebrow. "I thought you'd already apologised anyway?"

"Yes I did – but maybe with too much..." Josh bit on his lip, "Attitude?" He shrugged. "So I

went back to see him with a different approach. I took full responsibility and uh..." Josh flushed again. "I gave him an honest and fulsome apology, told him I'd been a jerk and also that the President himself had thoroughly punished me for the whole fiasco. I think it was something about the way I said it..." He glanced at the President from under his eyelashes, remembering all too clearly how he'd been punished for this particular screw up. "A kind of sincerity maybe," he murmured. "Whatever it was, the Senator seemed pleased I wasn't bullshitting any more or trying to weasel my way out of it and so... he agreed to drop it."

The President looked at Leo and then back at Josh, and then, much to Josh's surprise, he winked at him, and clapped him affectionately on the shoulder.

"You did well here, Josh," he said. "Not just with Crossley, but with all you've done this week. Everyone has been telling me how hard you've been working and what a great job you've been doing."

Josh thought his heart would burst with pride. It was, perhaps, the best moment of his professional life – being praised by the President and seeing that fond, protective, affectionate look in Leo's eyes as he gazed at him – a look that he was sure he'd only ever seen Leo give to the President before now. He basked in it for a second, and then Leo put a hand on Josh's other shoulder, and whispered softly into his ear.

"Why don't you go up to the Residence and wait in the Blue Bedroom? We have a couple of loose ends to tie up here but we'll be along in a few minutes."

Josh felt as if the earth had opened up and swallowed him whole; he hadn't even been thinking about tonight – he had been so sure that it wasn't going to happen. He hadn't prepared for it mentally, and now he felt as if an entire swarm of butterflies had taken up residence in his stomach.

"Yeah." The President smiled at him, and squeezed his shoulder encouragingly, as if guessing how he was feeling. "I think we all need some recreation tonight after the kind of week we've had," he said.

"Josh." Leo's hand touched his back lightly, his breath warm on Josh's cheek. "Go on. You deserve this as much as we do," he murmured.

Josh felt a surge of warmth spread through his stomach – yes, he was still nervous as hell, but Leo's words were reassuring and he was reminded of how much he wanted this. The two men were standing so close that he could smell both the exhilaration and weariness on them. The President was right – they did all need some recreation and he could think of nothing more wonderful than sharing that recreation with these two men whom he adored. Josh gave a tentative smile, and was surprised when Leo's hand slid down further, rested on his ass for a second, and then gave him a light swat, encouraging him to go.

"Take some time to get where you need to be in your head, Josh," he said softly. "We won't be long."

Josh nodded, and then, tingling with nervous anticipation, he left the room.

Friday Night

The Blue Bedroom looked different somehow. Not that he'd had a chance to really look around it the last time he'd been here but...Josh turned on the light, closed the door behind him, and stood, bewildered, in the centre of the room. It had been such a long, difficult week and he was so full of pent-up emotion that he wanted something – anything – to happen. It would be good to let go, and really allow these emotions to spin out...but... Josh sat down on the bed and ran his hand over the crisp, cold sheets. Were they really going to do this? Tonight? He supposed that to Leo and the President it might not be such a big deal but to him...it was the culmination of an entire lifetime's worth of fantasies. It was such a big deal that he almost turned and walked out of the room, unable to face having those fantasies finally become reality.

Get to where you need to be in your head, Josh, Leo had said, but Josh didn't have a clue how to even begin doing that. He glanced around the room, noticed the heavy, locked trunk at the foot of the bed and wondered as to its contents but didn't dare open it.

He got up again, unable to remain seated, ran a restless hand through his hair and tugged at his collar, which suddenly seemed too tight, as if it was suffocating him.

Where did he need to be in his head, he wondered? And how the hell did he get there? At that moment he heard the door opening, softly, behind him, and he jumped and spun around, his stomach leaping into his throat. Leo stood in the doorway for a moment, just looking at him, and then he closed the door and stepped into the room. Josh's throat went dry and he stood there helplessly, not entirely sure that he was even breathing.

"You really need to relax," Leo commented dryly. He removed his jacket and tie and hung them up in the closet. Then he walked over to the nightstand, turned on the lamp, and returned to the wall switch and turned off the main light. Finally he walked past Josh to the lamp in the corner and turned that on as well. Now the room glowed seductively – it looked much warmer and more inviting like this, Josh noted.

"I...is there something I should be doing?" Josh asked.

"No, there's nothing you should be doing," Leo told him. "In this room, you only do what you're told to do. I don't want you thinking, Josh."

"I'm supposed to stop thinking?" Josh wondered how that might be possible.

"Yes you are," Leo said, as if it was the most normal thing in the world. "You need to stop thinking and start surrendering, Josh."

"You know, Leo, that's a lot easier said than done," Josh commented, injecting a note of humour in his voice, trying to sound natural in these completely unnatural circumstances.

"I do know that, yes," Leo replied, "and I seem to recall telling you that myself a couple of weeks ago." He came to stand in front of Josh and looked at him searchingly for a moment. "I'll help you, Josh. You just need to let go."

"Okay." Josh swallowed hard and tugged on his collar again, needing to get more air into his lungs.

"Okay." Leo nodded calmly, still gazing at Josh with a scrutiny that made the younger man feel extremely uncomfortable.

"Uh, the President...is he...?" Josh looked towards the door.

"He'll be here. No more questions, Josh. You need to switch off. The President will join us in a moment. First of all, you and I need to establish some rules."

"We do?" Josh gave what he was sure was an almost audible gulp.

"Yes we do." Leo smiled, but it wasn't a smile Josh had ever seen in the office. It was almost...seductive; dark, powerful, full of intent, and utterly and completely masterful. Josh tugged on his collar again, wondering if he was going to faint.

"But before that, I think we need to help you breathe," Leo commented pragmatically. He stepped behind Josh, and a second later Josh felt Leo's arms settle around his body, wrapping him in a warm embrace. He stiffened slightly, unsure what was happening. "Relax," Leo chided. "Just let go, Josh." Josh nodded, and tried to do as he'd been told. He felt Leo's hand slip across his chest and come to rest over his heart. "Okay...now breathe with me," Leo told him. Josh remembered the President doing something very similar in the gym two weeks previously and he suddenly realised that Leo had made the President tell him every single thing about that encounter, even down to this tender moment. For some reason that thought relaxed him a little, and the presence of Leo's hand on his chest and the warmth of Leo's body against his back helped relax him even more. He took a deep breath, synchronised his breathing with Leo's, and exhaled slowly. He started to feel better within seconds; Leo's hand was firm but comforting on his chest and he liked the sensation of being held – nothing was being asked of him except that he submit and he wanted nothing more than to do just that. He liked the idea of his own submission – he didn't have a problem with getting down on his hands and knees and showing these two men how much he adored them. His problem was the incessant chatter of his own brain that sometimes got in the way.

"That's good," Leo commented, his breath warm on the back of Josh's neck. "Okay, now I'm going to ask you some questions, Josh, and I want your full and honest answers. Understood?"

"Yes, Leo," Josh said softly.

"Okay. Firstly – I want you to tell me what you don't want to happen here tonight."

Josh's head jerked up. "What I don't want to happen?" He asked, confused.

"That's right." Leo's arms settled more firmly around Josh's body. "Tell me what you really don't want to happen here tonight, Josh."

"Uh..." Josh thought about it for a moment. "You know...I really don't want to be humiliated," he whispered, flushing furiously in the lamplight. "I figure I do a good enough job of humiliating myself – I don't need anyone else to do it."

Leo gave a little chuckle, and his left hand moved to stroke Josh's hair. It was an affectionate gesture and it reassured Josh that he'd said the right thing.

"That's good. I can promise you, Josh, that you won't be humiliated here. That was never on the cards anyway. This is about you feeling good about yourself and getting what you want...and I think what you want is to surrender to us and to please us, isn't it?" Leo asked softly.

Josh swallowed hard again and then nodded, closing his eyes. He could already feel a warmth in his groin at those words – Leo was right; that was exactly what he wanted.

"Okay." Leo removed his hands from Josh's body and Josh took a deep breath, missing the comfort of those steadying arms. Leo went to sit in an armchair facing Josh. "The second question is – what do you want to happen here tonight?" Leo said, studying Josh intently.

Josh gazed at the other man, feeling suddenly helpless. The instant Leo had asked that question Josh had immediately had a mental image of what his answer should be – but it had been far easier to admit to what he didn't want than what he did.

"Uh..." He hesitated, flushing again, and glanced at his shoes.

"Joshua!" Leo's tone of voice was so sharp in contrast to the low, mellow tones he'd been using that Josh stood up straight, startled. "I thought I made it clear that in this room you give me honest responses. You don't hide – I don't care what it is that you've got to say, as long as it's what you're really feeling." Leo's blue eyes seemed to be boring straight into Josh's soul and he stood, transfixed by the other man's stare. "Okay..." Leo said, in a gentler, more calming tone. "Let me repeat the question and then I want your reply – what do you want to happen here tonight, Josh? Name me one thing that, if it didn't happen, you'd feel disappointed."

"I want you to kiss me, Leo," Josh admitted, biting down on his lip as he said the words. He felt so exposed and vulnerable; yes, Leo already knew about many of his most treasured and private fantasies, but this one expressed wish was so personal, and, to Josh's mind, so full of need, that he felt as if he had shared a part of his soul with Leo. If this had just been about sex it would have been so much easier, but admitting that he wanted Leo to kiss him took everything into a much more emotional realm – and Josh wasn't a person who had ever been entirely at ease with his own emotions.

Leo's gaze didn't falter and his expression didn't change. He continued to study Josh who felt himself wilting under that sharp, blue-eyed stare. "He kissed me in the gym," Josh whispered almost defensively, trying to explain why this was his wish. "I already told you how much that meant to me. I want to...I want you to..." He faltered and trailed off, feeling utterly ridiculous. He was a grown man talking about a kiss for god's sake! And yet...he was still so full of insecurity. He knew the President was fond of him, knew that Bartlet had wanted him to join them but Leo – Leo was a different matter and he didn't think he'd ever had a proper answer from Leo about why he wanted him here tonight. In his heart, Josh thought that Leo wanted him here only because the President wanted him here and Josh wanted there to be more to it than that. He had worked closely with Leo for the past few years, had looked up to Leo, seen him as a mentor and friend, and he longed for Leo's good opinion as much as he longed for the President's. He had felt Jed Bartlet's tangible affection for him through that kiss in the gym, still treasured the taste and feel of the President's lips against his own, and now he also wanted to know what it would feel like if Leo kissed him. He thought he'd know the truth about Leo's feelings if he'd only kiss him.

"Okay," Leo said at long last, nodding. "Now let's move on to the rules..."

"Does that mean yes or no?" Josh interrupted, unable to let this go. "Do I get what I want or do I only get to ask for it?"

"Rule number one..." Leo continued, his glare making it clear that those weren't questions he intended to answer. Josh felt absurdly vulnerable, and hit out in the way he usually did in such situations.

"Damn it, Leo! I'm putting myself on the line here! Is this how it works? You get to lay down all the rules and make all the decisions while I just get to look like a fucking idiot?" Josh exploded. "Well, no thanks, Leo," he snapped, storming off towards the door, knowing as he went that he was doing this on purpose, jeopardising what he wanted most in the world because he was too nervous about getting it wrong and screwing up something he had fantasised about all his life. Better to bring it to an end now rather than risk ruining it later, when they were in the middle of something, when it would really hurt to know that he'd screwed up the best thing that had ever happened to him.

"Joshua – get your ass back here." Leo's firm, calm voice descended on Josh like a bucket of icy water, cooling him, and sending shivers down his spine. He hesitated by the door, his hand reaching for it blindly. "Now, Joshua," Leo said in a tone of voice that brooked no dissent. Josh found himself turning on his heel and walking slowly, disconsolately, back to where Leo was sitting in the armchair. He felt wretched – he didn't like screwing up; he only wanted to please but he had already made Leo angry with him and they'd barely started yet. He came to a halt in front of Leo's chair and stared at his shoes.

"I'm sorry, Leo," he whispered, and then, because he didn't know what else to do, he sank to his knees in front of the chair and just stayed there, head down, waiting to find out what Leo was going to do to him. A few seconds later he felt a hand grasp his chin and then his face was forced up so that he had no choice but to meet Leo's implacable gaze.

"That was about trust," Leo commented. "You not trusting yourself to get this right and you not trusting me to know how to take care of you."

"That's not true..." Josh began and then he sighed as he caught the flash in Leo's eyes; it was true. Leo, as always, saw far more than anyone ever suspected. Josh sank back on his heels, accepting the comment. "No, you're right," he admitted. "I just got scared – thought I could run off before you sent me packing," he said with a feeble grin.

"You're jittery – that's to be expected," Leo told him. "But I don't want to see any more displays of temper tonight, Josh. If you have a problem with anything that happens here then you say so – politely. I'll always listen."

"Okay." Josh nodded, feeling much calmer than he had.

"If you act out in this way again you'll be punished," Leo said, and those words made Josh's entire body tingle in anticipation. "You can ask as many questions as you like – I don't promise to answer them but you can ask." There was a gleam of slightly malicious humour in Leo's eyes as he stamped his authority on the proceedings. "That's where the trust comes in, Josh," he added. "It's also part of giving up control. You accepting, you not knowing everything. I do know something about your insatiable curiosity..." He gave a slightly quirky smile, which Josh, tentatively, returned, "And while in some situations that can be a good thing, it isn't something you need here tonight. "

"That's really hard for me, Leo," Josh murmured.

"I know." Leo grinned. "Nobody ever said it was easy. But you'll try, Josh, because I'm ordering you to. Okay?"

When put like that it seemed a lot easier. Josh nodded.

"Okay – then let's get back to the rules; firstly, you don't talk about work in this room. That's the most important rule. We're here to switch off and get away from work; what has happened in our working lives might inform and influence what we do here but we do not talk about any of the specifics. In this room you are not Josh Lyman, my Deputy Chief of Staff. In this room you are Joshua, my willing and obedient sub. From this moment on that is what I'll call you and that is what you will answer to. Is that understood?" The intensity in Leo's blue eyes had Josh pinned to the spot and he blinked.

"Yes, Leo," he whispered.

"Good. Secondly, everything that happens in this room is confidential – I can't stress that enough. Neither the President nor I will ever refer to it in the hearing of a third party. Whatever you say to us, whatever you confide, remains between us. We expect the same courtesy of you. I don't need to stress that our jobs depend upon our discretion. I know we can trust you but I need you to tell me that you understand how important this is."

"I do." Josh nodded. "You know I wouldn't say a word to anyone, Leo."

"Yes I do." Leo nodded. "Okay, thirdly..." He was interrupted at this point by a soft knock at the door. "Come in, Josiah," he called and Josh gazed at Leo in surprise at the name he'd just used. He had never heard Leo call the President anything other than 'sir' or 'Mr. President' and although, now he thought about it, it wasn't surprising that Leo would have a different name for the President in this room, it still seemed strange.

The door opened and the President walked in. He looked as confident as ever, and there was an eagerness and affection in his eyes as he viewed Josh that made Josh's heart soar. While he didn't know where he stood with Leo McGarry, he was pretty sure that he knew where he stood with Jed Bartlet – the President liked him and was happy that he was here.

"Good evening, Leo; good evening, Josh," the President said brightly, coming to stand in front of Josh. "Ah, I see you've started without me," he winked, surveying Josh's kneeling position with what looked very much like approval. Josh was sure he heard Leo give a faint sigh. "Josh, first of all I'd like to say that I'm glad you're here. You did a great job this week and I'm proud of you. I'm also delighted that you decided you wanted to be a part of this – Leo has filled me in on everything I need to know and I can assure you that we both want this evening to be as good for you as it always is for us." He glanced at Leo who returned his gaze with a steely glare. Josh winced slightly – he didn't know much about the specific sub/dom dynamic between the President and his Chief of Staff but he could tell that the President's little speech hadn't gone down too well with Leo.

"You've come at just the right time, Josiah," Leo said smoothly. "I was just going through the rules with Joshua. Maybe you need a refresher too?"

The President turned to gaze at Leo quizzically and then, laughter in his eyes, he nodded deferentially to the other man. "I'm sorry, sir, you're quite right. I apologise," he said, the grin he threw in Josh's direction making it quite clear that the apology was far from heartfelt. Josh was still too busy getting over the fact that the President had called Leo 'sir' to respond though. Leo gave a grunt and shot Bartlet a look that would have chilled Josh to the bone if he had been on the receiving end of it but which Bartlet blithely ignored. Josh wondered if the President was even aware of how much danger he was courting – or maybe, he thought, this was part of their dynamic. He remembered Leo telling him that sometimes it took a long time to get the President to where he needed to be. He was intrigued by that, and hoped he'd see more of private workings of their relationship during his evening in their company. Bartlet removed his jacket and tie, just as Leo had done, and threw them untidily onto a nearby chair instead of hanging them in the closet.

"Okay, Joshua – let's return to the rules," Leo said, turning back to his newest sub. "For a start, in this room you don't call me Leo. You'll address me as sir, or Mr. McGarry."

"Yes, sir." Josh nodded, quite happy with that rule. It felt weird calling Leo by his first name in here where he was so utterly and completely the consummate top in any case. He was happy to call him sir. It felt right.

"You'll have noticed the name I use for Josiah. That's my name for him – you do not call him

that. Nor do you call him sir or Mr. President in this room, Joshua. Those are names you use for him at work and you will not use them here. What we do here is separate from work and will be marked as such by the names we use for each other. To reinforce that fact, he will call you Joshua just as I do. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir," Josh nodded. "What should I call him then?" He asked anxiously.

"How about Master?" Bartlet offered, looking very pleased with himself. Leo rolled his eyes.

"Okay," he said, obviously deciding to call Bartlet's bluff. "By all means call him Master if that works for you, Joshua. Otherwise you can call him Jed."

"Or Master Jed," Bartlet interjected.

"Or you could call him Master Jed," Leo agreed, "But only if you want to sound like you're addressing a 6 year old from the pages of a 19th century novel."

Josh couldn't help grinning at that but the President wasn't so happy.

"Leo!" Bartlet complained. "You're ruining my whole top thing here with your mojo!"

"Do I need to go through the rules again with something more instructive in my hand? Like a paddle maybe?" Leo asked dangerously.

Josh gazed at the two of them wide-eyed, utterly transfixed by the power dynamic that was playing out in front of him. He didn't know what he'd expected but two weeks ago the President had been utterly and completely the top with him and now he saw that in his relationship with Leo, the President was most definitely not in charge and it was such a change from the way he'd seen them all week that he was startled by it. For the past several days he had seen Jed Bartlet sweeping in and out of the situation room with all the presence of the President of the United States, and Leo had always been one step behind, a constant support, offering advice only when asked. Now, their status had changed and, in this room at least, it was clear that Leo was totally and completely in charge and that while the President might complain about the implications of that, it was a situation he was not only happy with but also revelled in. Bartlet reminded him of a child acting out, wanting to be pulled back into line.

"I don't think that will be necessary," Bartlet said hastily, holding up his hands. Leo raised an eyebrow. "Sir," Jed added.

"I'll decide what's necessary. Perhaps you can influence my decision by standing there and keeping quiet until I've finished running through the rules," Leo suggested. "That might go a long way towards helping me decide whether or not to be lenient with you later."

"Yes, sir." Bartlet nodded, although he gave Josh another wink as he took a step back and leaned on the armchair.

"Okay, do you have any questions about the rules so far, Joshua?" Leo asked.

"No, sir." Josh sat back on his heels serenely. Somehow the bantering exchange, unfamiliar in content and yet so very familiar in tone, had calmed him. These two were still the same men – they were still the two people he trusted and admired most in the world. It was actually fun to see them letting go and playing like this – and he could tell that they were enjoying it as much as he was. There was something about their easygoing communication and evident affection that was so damn...sexy. Josh felt proud of the fact that he was their sub and they were his...masters? That felt weird, but it made his groin flood with warmth all the same. He was happy to be kneeling here in front of these two men – he'd happily worship at their feet for the rest of his life if they'd let him. He wanted nothing more than to be of service to them in any way they chose.

"Good. Finally – this is a scene, Joshua. I know you're familiar with that term. I've already spoken to you at some length so I know what you want and what you expect and I have a fair idea of your limits. You must accept that you have no control over what goes on in here and you make no decisions; in this room, you do as you're told, unquestioningly. We expect your total obedience," Leo told him sternly.

Josh exhaled the breath he didn't even realise he'd been holding, thrilling to the words. He felt almost giddy from the sensations coursing through his body. Leo was behaving as if he'd stepped straight from Josh's fantasy world – he was saying all the right things and pressing all of Josh's buttons.

"That obedience extends to telling us if something is happening that you don't like," Leo continued. "This is not an ordeal and you do not endure something because you think it will please us – it won't. If something is happening that you really don't like or which distresses or scares you then you tell us. Immediately. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir." Josh gazed at Leo, utterly spellbound.

"Good – then I think we're done. Do you have any questions, Joshua?"

Josh shook his head wordlessly. It had all been as completely clear as one of Leo's briefings – he'd have expected nothing less from Leo McGarry in his guise either as boss or consummate top.

"Okay... then I think it's time to begin. Josiah – it seems to me that our sub is over-dressed. Perhaps you'd like to amend that situation?" Leo glanced at Jed who bounced immediately into life.

"You're right, sir," he agreed, surveying Josh's work clothes thoughtfully. "I think that our boy should be naked in the presence of his masters, don't you?"

Leo pursed his lips, his eyes glinting with amusement although whether that was from Jed's use of the term 'masters' or because he agreed with the sentiment, Josh couldn't tell.

"Definitely, Josiah," he commented smoothly. "This boy..." He lingered over the word and Josh felt his cock starting to harden in his pants. He was surprised to find just how much he liked the idea of being addressed in such a way. "...should always be kept naked in this room, I think. So that he understands what his status is here."

"What is my status, sir?" Josh asked, his whole body quivering slightly. Jed moved towards him, and ran the back of his hand gently over Josh's cheek. Josh leaned into the caress, trembling even more. Jed seemed delighted by this response and glanced at Leo as if for reassurance or confirmation. Leo just smiled and nodded at him. Jed ran his hands through Josh's hair, smoothing it away from his forehead as he looked down on him. Josh surrendered willingly, putting his head back and gazing up at his new master adoringly.

"Your status is that of our beloved plaything, Joshua," Jed said fondly, caressing Josh's face affectionately. "And we're really going to enjoy playing with you." He grinned.

"Why don't you undress our new toy, Josiah?" Leo suggested. "Stand up, Joshua. I don't want you to do anything – just stand there while Josiah undresses you."

"Mmm. Yeah. I think it's time that we took our new toy out of his box and took a good look at him," Jed murmured. Josh got to his feet, flushing furiously. Jed stood in front of him, and quickly undid his tie and stripped it away from his collar.

"Slowly, Josiah. I want you to go very, very slowly," Leo told him from where he was sitting in his armchair. "I want to enjoy this – put on a show for me."

Josh was sure that his entire face was now flushing bright purple. While he loved the idea of being at their mercy, the reality of standing here butt naked in front of these two fully clothed, powerfully sexy men was daunting.

"Remember that you don't make any decisions in this room, Joshua," Leo said softly from his vantage point in the armchair. Josh nodded, feeling curiously reassured by that fact.

Jed undid Josh's shirt, going slowly as ordered. He took his time over each button, pausing to smooth his fingers across Josh's body every now and again, his fingers gently explorative. Josh gave a little sigh in the back of his throat and put his shoulders back, relaxing. This felt nice – Jed's breath was almost caressing as he bestowed a little kiss on Josh's newly revealed collarbone, and then worked his fingers down to pull Josh's shirt from his pants. His fingers seemed very warm and heavy as they lingered on Josh's belt and then undid it. He pulled it slowly from Josh's pants and then threw it on the bed next to the tie. Josh could feel his cock straining inside his pants; this felt so erotic.

Jed moved around behind him, his fingers still sensuously fingering the collar of Josh's shirt. Then he took hold of it and began to pull it from Josh's shoulders. Josh's reaction was instinctive but it took him by surprise all the same. He hunched forward and the moment the shirt was off his back he crossed his arms over his naked chest.

"Hey, what's this?" Jed asked softly, placing his hands on Josh's shoulders. Josh jumped,

suddenly feeling very exposed. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Jed look at Leo for direction.

"Hands by your side, Joshua," Leo ordered, stepping in to deal with the situation. "And straighten up."

Josh took a deep breath and tried to do as ordered. He managed to get one of his arms down by his side but the other one refused to budge. Jed stroked his shoulders affectionately from behind and he felt reassured but he still couldn't move his arm.

"Joshua?" Leo got up out of the chair and came to stand in front of him. Jed stood behind him, his hands resting casually but supportively on Josh's shoulders. "I asked for your obedience, Joshua," Leo said softly but firmly. "Is there a reason why you can't give it?"

Josh swallowed hard and nodded.

"What's going on?" Leo asked gently. He didn't touch Josh, but his blue eyes were watchful and stern. Josh struggled with his reply. He felt Jed's lips graze the back of his neck and relaxed a degree, but he still couldn't escape from Leo's implacable gaze.

"Tell us," Jed said softly. "It's okay." His mouth was warm and caressing on Josh's neck and his tone was seductive. Josh gave a little laugh.

"This is like good cop, bad cop," he said shakily. "You're scaring me into submission and he's seducing me into it," he said to Leo gesturing with his head over his shoulder in Jed's direction. He heard the President take a sharp little intake of breath behind him.

"A word to the wise," Jed whispered into his ear, although they could all hear him well enough. "Remember to call him sir and please don't piss him off for both our sakes. You won't like him when he's angry."

"I'm not sure I like him right now anyway," Josh said defensively, still clutching his arm to his chest. He could feel his vulnerability overwhelming him again and he was lashing out as he always did when he felt like this. Somehow he knew that he could lash out safely at Leo though; deep inside he knew that Leo would catch him when he fell. Leo's blue eyes were thoughtful but not angry as he surveyed Josh.

"Hmm, it looks as if I've got two spirited subs," he commented. He reached out and Josh drew back only to find himself stopped by Jed's powerful presence behind him. He wasn't sure what he expected Leo to do but it wasn't what he did do which was to gently place his hand on Josh's collar bone, and then slide it down towards the arm that was covering his chest.

"I'm sorry, sir," Josh whispered, grimacing. "I didn't mean to be rude and I do want to obey you...I just – can't."

Leo gave a wry chuckle. "Joshua – if you think you've got anything on Josiah here when he's

giving me trouble then you're deluded," he commented cheerfully. "If I can handle him, which, incidentally, I can..." He gave Jed a knowing look, "Then you aren't going to be any trouble at all." His fingers slid onto the hand Josh had pressed against his chest and rested there.

"I know what's under here, Joshua," he commented.

"It's ugly," Josh told him angrily but he knew he was lying and that wasn't the reason for his anger.

"No – it's a badge of honour. You should wear it with pride," Leo told him. Josh heard Jed give a little grunt of surprise as he realised what they were talking about, and then the President slid his arms around Josh's waist and rested his chin on Josh's shoulder, holding him tight, his body warm and comforting.

"Hell, Joshua, I've got a scar on my side that doesn't look too good either – and you should see the deep scar Leo's got on his arm from when he was doing his big war hero thing," Jed commented.

"I got it in a fight in a bar in Thailand as you well know," Leo commented grumpily.

"Where you wouldn't have been if you hadn't been serving in the Air Force," Jed reminded him.

"I'm not sure I can do this," Josh whispered, tensing in case he heard that familiar sound in his mind that would signal a flashback. He hadn't had one for quite awhile, but he knew from experience that they could assault him at the most unexpected and inconvenient moments. Josh was grateful for Jed's arms around his body, keeping him there because otherwise he thought he might have tried to leave. He'd had no idea that he'd feel this way about his scar. Maybe it was the nature of the scrutiny that concerned him – he'd been naked with a lover since the shooting at Rosslyn, but that had been a matter of slipping between the sheets in the darkness. It was light enough in this room to see the damn thing properly and he was standing here as a goddamn plaything for god's sake. He hadn't even considered that it might bother him to have people seeing and touching his scar. It wasn't something he had ever paid a great deal of attention to – it wasn't something that worried him in the normal course of events as long as he could ignore it, but he didn't want people noticing it, was concerned that such notice would lead to those terrible flashbacks, and he'd be lost once again in the sensation of bullets ripping through his body.

"You took off your shirt two weeks ago – in the gym," Jed commented.

"It was dark in the gym!" Josh replied heatedly. "I couldn't see the damn thing there."

"Okay, that's enough," Leo said warningly. He wrapped his fingers around Josh's hand and squeezed, prying some of the tension out of it. "What's more important – that you can see it or that we can?" He asked perceptively.

"I..." Josh shook his head. "Me," he sighed.

"Okay...so don't look." Leo's fingers massaged his hand soothingly, prying it loose.

"Joshua...let him," Jed murmured.

"I won't turn off the lights for you, Joshua," Leo told him firmly. Josh wasn't sure how long he could hold out against the loving voice behind him and the stern gaze in front of him.

"Let it happen, Joshua," Jed said in a low voice into Josh's ear. "Let it go."

"It..." Josh stamped his foot on the ground, angry with himself for this mattering so much. "I lied, Leo," he said, his hand faltering as Leo insistently insinuated his own beneath it, pushing it away. "It's not the way it looks – I don't give a damn about that. I just don't like it being noticed in case I start remembering again. I don't want to lose control the way I did before. I don't mind giving up control but I don't want to lose it...if that makes sense." It was a hard thing to explain and he found himself resenting that he had to.

"Why do you think you might lose control, Joshua?" Leo asked, finally managing, without any force at all, by dint of pure, gentle persistence, to dislodge Josh's hand. Josh gave a sigh and let his arm fall to his side. Leo put his own hand over the scar, replacing Josh's, and held it there, obscuring the scar from sight.

"I didn't have any control over what was going on in my own mind," Josh told them, grateful for Jed's reassuring steadfastness behind him, holding him up, shielding him almost from the intensity of Leo's blue-eyed gaze. "That's what scared me. Sometimes if I feel the edges of the scar I can remember what it felt like when it was happening and then I'm back there again. I can feel the skin exploding, feel the heat of my blood on my chest..." Josh fought back the memory, not wanting this right now. "I just prefer not to think about it in case I make an idiot of myself again – kind of like I'm doing right now." He made a face.

"Do you want to stop, Josh?" Leo asked softly, and Josh was very aware of the change in his name.

"No, damnit. I don't!" He retorted, furious with himself for having let this happen.

"Then you need to trust us and you need to submit to us. Can you do that?" Leo asked. There was silence for a moment while Josh considered this. "Or do you want me to make you?" Leo asked softly and astutely a few seconds later.

Josh fought with himself for a moment, hating the damn scar and all it stood for – which as far as he was concerned was his own weakness and inability to deal with something that other people managed to deal with; hell, the President had been shot too but he wasn't standing here making this kind of a big issue out of it.

"Please, Leo," he said desperately, hanging limply in Jed's arms. "Make me," he whispered.

"Stop fighting us then, Joshua," Leo told him firmly, taking control effortlessly in response to Josh's need. Josh nodded and bit down hard on his lip, grateful to Leo for taking over so decisively. Leo removed his hand from Josh's body and Josh found his arms crossing defensively over his chest again, despite himself.

"Josiah – Joshua seems to be having trouble obeying our orders. I think some special measures are called for. If he won't keep his hands where we tell him to, then we'll have to tie them," Leo said firmly.

Josh gazed at Leo in admiration, feeling utterly relieved by this solution to the problem. He wanted to obey, and this way he'd have no choice. He watched as Leo handed Jed his own tie from the bed. Jed ran his hands down Josh's arms, and then, gently but firmly pulled them back behind his body.

Josh put up just the slightest bit of resistance, but Jed's hands were strong and commanding on his wrists and it felt good to submit to them. Josh gave a sigh of total relief as his hands were fastened behind his back. He was also relieved that Leo hadn't made a big thing of looking at the scar or touching it – he wasn't sure he'd have been able to bear that. As it was, Leo just ignored it, which was the best thing he could have done in the circumstances.

"Thank you, Jed. Thank you, sir," he whispered in a heartfelt tone. Leo nodded to him and Josh couldn't stop himself leaning towards him, wanting to feel Leo's hands on his body again, hoping against hope that Leo would put him out of his misery and kiss him, but Leo just stepped back, and sat down on the armchair again. Josh sighed and rocked back on his heels. Damn but he wanted that kiss so much.

Jed resumed undressing him. He came around to stand in front of Josh again, and undid his pants. Josh took a sharp intake of breath although he was less worried about losing his pants than he had been about revealing his scar. That moment was over though – and Josh felt much more relaxed now that his hands were tied behind him. It was so much easier surrendering to the President removing his pants when he couldn't resist. Josh couldn't believe that this was actually happening to him; the President was close enough to kiss, and Josh could smell the other man's scent emanating from his shirt. He suddenly wanted to laugh – this must look ridiculous; the President, fully clothed, slowly undressing his Deputy Chief of Staff like this. He knew that Leo had told him he wasn't to refer to Jed Bartlet as the President while they were in this room but he couldn't help thinking of the man in those terms. Two weeks ago it had seemed much simpler. Then he had just been punished by this man, as he'd deserved, and somehow that hadn't even seemed strange – it had just felt peculiarly right...but now this same man was undressing him so lovingly and this definitely did feel strange. He remembered how the President – Jed – had asked him at the time why it was so much easier to accept a whipping than a hug and he hadn't known the answer; it just was. He was still confused by it.

"What are you thinking, Joshua?" Leo asked him as Jed knelt down in front of him and began undoing his shoes. Josh shifted, nervously – it felt very wrong that this man should kneel in front of him, either in his role as President of the United States or as his top, even if it was just to remove his shoes.

"Uh...I was thinking that Jed shouldn't be kneeling because he's the top and I was thinking..." Josh paused and coloured.

"Joshua," Leo said in a warning tone, reminding him of his promise of total honesty.

"I was thinking of what the Pr...what Jed did to me in the gym two weeks ago, and that being punished is easier than being..." He hesitated, unsure how to describe the eroticism of being tied and so slowly and lovingly undressed.

"He had a problem with me hugging him a couple of weeks ago," Jed said, nudging Josh to make him lift up one of his feet so he could remove the shoe and sock. Josh balanced awkwardly for a second, his tied hands making it hard to stay upright.

"You two are just as bad as each other," Leo sighed wearily. "I don't know what it is about you that you'll endure a severe whipping but find it hard to accept a gesture of affection. However, it's the not way I do things and I'm in charge around here, Joshua so you'll just have to get used to that the same way Josiah has had to get used to it."

"Oh yeah – I'd recommend you get used to it really fast, Joshua," Jed told him, finishing with his shoes and socks and standing up with a wink at his new sub. "Leo can be a total hard ass about this – you'll find yourself upended almost constantly and your ass paying the price if you're slow in learning this particular lesson," he grinned. Josh wrestled for a moment with the mental image of the President upended and at the mercy of his Chief of Staff. He wondered if he'd see a demonstration of their unique role reversal in action in a more physical way tonight and realised, with a secret thrill, that he hoped he would.

"Joshua – a couple of weeks ago you were being punished for something you felt bad about and that made you feel better didn't it?" Leo asked, casting a severe glance in Jed's direction. Josh knew that it definitely had not gone unnoticed that the President had just called him by his first name and that Jed would pay for that later.

"Yes, sir." Josh nodded, answering Leo's question.

"I know Josiah told you at the time that the punishment was for you because you wanted it and not because he thought you deserved to be whipped," Leo continued. Josh nodded again.

"He made that pretty clear."

"Okay. So, you've had a pretty good day today, Joshua, although admittedly it's been a rough week. Is there anything you feel you should be punished for?" Leo continued. Josh thought about it and then shook his head.

"Well, apart from not obeying you earlier," he said, flushing.

"We worked that one out." Leo shrugged. "I'm not punishing you for that."

"He's nicer to you than he is to me," Jed told Josh conspiratorially. "He punishes me for every single, tiny, little thing I've done wrong and when I haven't done anything wrong he makes something up."

"No I don't, Josiah, and I'll be punishing you for that smart mouth of yours very comprehensively later," Leo said with a click of impatience in his tone. Jed grinned and gave Josh a 'see what I have to put up with?' look although he didn't seem too downcast at the prospect of the imminent punishment. "Okay, Joshua - I don't think any punishment is in order, do you?" Leo questioned. Josh thought about it and then shook his head, wondering if he looked as disconsolate as he felt. He didn't feel the need to be punished the way he had a couple of weeks ago, but it was part of his most cherished fantasies that these two men would spank him so he didn't know how to reconcile those two facts.

"I think what Leo is trying to say," Jed said, standing behind Josh and looping his fingers into Josh's boxer shorts. "Is that we'd like to play with our sub and one of the ways we'd like to play with him is by giving him a nice, long spanking." He grinned. "Not for punishment," he purred, in those low, dark tones he'd used a couple of weeks ago, "but because you're our toy, Joshua, and it would please us to spank this ass of yours." And so saying he stripped Josh of his boxer shorts. Josh stepped out of them, flushing slightly to now be completely naked. Jed seemed pleased though, and after throwing Josh's shorts onto the bed he returned to Josh and touched him lightly again, running his hands over Josh's arms and then around to his back. He traced a finger down Josh's spine, ending up at his ass and Josh gave a little squawk as Jed's hands caressed his buttocks. He stepped forward, surprised.

"Joshua!" Leo's voice rang out from in front of him. "Your..." He hesitated, glanced at Jed with a mischievous look in his eyes, and then continued, "Master wants to play with his new sub. Stand still and let him."

"Yes, sir." Josh swallowed hard. This was the most delicious tension he'd ever experienced in his life. Being made to stand still and accept the most intimate caresses of this man he worshipped, while the other man he worshipped sat and watched. Only his own embarrassment made him want to move away. He took a deep breath and relaxed as Jed continued to fondle his now naked body. He was aware that he was already hard but neither of his new masters commented on that and he didn't see how that could be anything other than a tribute to them anyway. Jed didn't touch his cock but he did however caress Josh's ass for a long time, kneading slapping and generally playing. Josh found he was enjoying himself. He still felt slightly ridiculous but he loved being the centre of their attention and it felt good to be ordered to surrender – it took away his brain's incessant need to interfere and generally get in the way and put up obstacles. He had to stand still because he had no choice and that meant he got to do what he wanted to do anyway, and didn't have to angst about it into the bargain because he had no control over what was happening. That was the most liberating feeling he'd ever experienced.

"I think it's time to spank this ass now," Jed whispered in his ear and the dark, erotic tone thrilled Josh to his core. He glanced over at Leo, who was still sitting impassively in the armchair, watching everything. It felt twice as erotic knowing that one of these men would

spank him while the other watched. "Come with me, Joshua," Jed invited silkily and Josh swallowed hard and did as ordered. He followed Jed over to the large trunk at the foot of the bed, his arms still tied behind his back. "Kneel down, boy," Jed said in those same dark, rich tones. Josh sank willingly to his knees and a second later felt Jed's hand on his hair, caressing him and rewarding him for his instant obedience.

"Here. You'll need this." Leo threw Jed a key and Jed missed it – which drew an audible sigh from Leo. Jed grinned and retrieved the key from the floor, then crouched down in front of the chest. He touched it, almost reverently, with his finger in a way that made Josh think that he wasn't usually allowed to touch it at all, and then glanced at his sub.

"You don't ever get to touch this trunk, Joshua – understood?" He said.

Josh nodded, his throat going dry.

"Okay, I'm going to show you what's inside and then we'll decide which of the many implements that Leo has collected over the past year will make the best impact on your ass." Jed grinned and Josh had the distinct feeling that he was enjoying himself enormously. He had always known that the President had dramatic tendencies and wasn't at all surprised to see him imbuing the trunk with this kind of build up. He wondered what Leo was making of Jed's performance but when he glanced over at the armchair he found Leo's expression as inscrutable as always.

Jed unlocked the trunk and Josh gazed in something akin to amazement at its contents. The President and Leo had amassed a wide assortment of paddles, straps and crops; Josh had a strange reality check as he wondered how the hell they had bought all this stuff. Clearly the President couldn't have done the shopping so he guessed that Leo had but even that blew his mind. He wondered briefly if Leo had gone online to purchase these items as he couldn't ever imagine Leo McGarry standing in a sex shop calmly discussing the merits of a leather paddle over a wooden one with a store assistant.

"Impressed?" Jed asked with a laugh in his voice at the expression in Josh's eyes.

"You have no idea how impressed," Josh commented, with a cheeky grin. "Please tell me you didn't buy these yourself."

"No, of course not. Leo's the one who seems to think we need all this stuff," Jed replied, a note of complaint in his voice. "I don't know why as his belt does the job quite effectively enough." He grimaced. "I can only think he just enjoys tormenting me with the sight of some new implement of torture. I think he gets a thrill out of it," he confided.

"Not nearly as much of a thrill as I get out of putting them to good use," Leo commented dryly from the armchair. "Josiah – I think it's time we put the boy out of his misery, don't you?" He added, nodding in Josh's direction. Josh, meanwhile, remained utterly transfixed by the sight of the assorted implements in the trunk. He didn't see any bondage equipment or sex toys and guessed that those didn't play a part in whatever games the President played with his Chief of Staff on a Friday evening. He wasn't sure how he felt about that –

his own fantasies were liberally peppered with all kinds of equipment but he got the feeling that their own interaction was enough for Leo and Jed – they didn't need any other kinds of paraphernalia. In fact, Josh doubted that they even needed the contents of this trunk; as Jed had pointed out, Leo's belt almost certainly did as effective a job as any of these implements and yet...having seen Jed in action, and having noticed the way he liked to push his top, Josh thought he understood why Leo had bought them. It couldn't be easy mastering someone like Josiah Bartlet, and Leo had clearly decided that he needed more weapons at his disposal than just his own will – fierce and unyielding though Josh suspected that will was. All the same, having something else in his armoury, something that Jed might find visually arresting, had to go some way towards quelling even the most argumentative and teasing of subs.

"Okay – you can choose one and I'll choose one," Josiah said, standing back so that Josh could get a good look at the contents of the trunk. "I'll use them both on your ass so be careful what you choose. Now, I'm going to untie you – are you going to be okay with that?"

Josh nodded, resolving to concentrate on the trunk in front of him and ignore his scar. Jed knelt behind him and quickly removed the tie and Josh gazed at the contents of the trunk like a child in a chocolate factory as he made his decision. He suspected that, unlike Jed, he imbued these implements with a sense of eroticism. He got the feeling that Jed had more of a love/hate relationship with them – he didn't like the idea that they'd be used on his ass and that he'd have no choice in that, but at the same time he needed Leo to use them. Josh had a different attitude towards his own submission – he wanted it badly and he saw being spanked as part of it; he found the idea of surrendering and allowing his masters to spank him or play with him intensely erotic, no matter how much it might hurt. In fact, the pain rendered his own submission all the more erotic and thrilling because he was offering himself up to this, willingly giving himself to his masters. He suspected that Jed had a different relationship with these implements and his own punishments; he needed them to take him down to a level where he could switch off and enjoy himself, and these crops and paddles and straps helped him get there, but he didn't like surrendering, didn't yearn for it the way Josh did. He needed it and wanted it but the process was hard for him. For Josh, the process was everything and he loved the thought of it.

"I'd like this." Josh reached into the trunk and touched the handle of a shining, sleek, black leather paddle.

"Joshua!" Leo's voice rang out. "Don't touch unless you're given permission," Leo told him. Josh pulled his hand back as if he'd been stung.

"Sorry, sir," he said quickly. Jed put a reassuring hand in Josh's hair and stroked, something he was profoundly grateful for. It was strange how heightened his emotions were in this situation. He wouldn't normally have found Leo's sharp tone alarming but kneeling here, butt naked and submissive, everything was different and his own responses and feelings were much more acute.

"Joshua, this paddle has not been a friend to me," Jed told him, picking up the paddle and waving it in the air in a slightly alarming fashion. "It's one of Leo's nastier toys. It stings and

it's heavy. It's undoubtedly one of the most painful implements in this trunk. You can choose something else if you'd like."

"No. I'm fine with the paddle," Josh murmured, colouring slightly. He wanted this to count. Who knew if they'd ever invite him back? He didn't want to wimp out of any part of this experience.

"Okay." Jed nodded, placing the paddle on the bed. "Now it's my turn." He spent a long time considering the contents of the trunk, until Josh thought he would expire from the sheer tension of the moment. Jed seemed blissfully unaware of his sub's torment though – or maybe he was just skilfully stoking it up. Jed's fingers toyed with an extremely nasty looking cane and Josh held his breath...then Jed passed on and his hand alighted instead on a sturdy suede flogger. "I think this will do," he announced, holding it under Josh's nose for his inspection. Josh couldn't help himself – he leaned forward and buried his face in the flogger, inhaling the suede smell, and then he kissed it reverentially. Jed looked both surprised and pleased by his sub's reaction, but Leo was less impressed.

"Joshua, what part of 'don't touch unless you're given permission' didn't you understand?" He asked, standing up and crossing the room towards them. Josh gave a muffled squeak of anxiety, not entirely sure what Leo intended to do to him for his infraction of the rules but Leo just stood in front of him, arms folded across his chest, gazing down on his sub's sub sternly. Jed put his hand gently in Josh's hair, and then pulled his head back so that Josh was gazing up at both his masters in a blind panic.

"I think you should answer him," Jed murmured.

"I'm sorry, sir. I forgot," Josh said quickly, his voice sounding suspiciously like a squeak to his own ears.

"Is this what you call obedience?" Leo demanded.

"I just forgot!" Josh protested, angry with himself.

"Well, Joshua, we were going to give you a nice, light spanking this first time but as you've been disobedient, Josiah will administer ten hard strokes with the paddle to help you remember better in future," Leo ordered.

Josh felt a thrill start in his stomach and fizz all the way through his body at those words. Leo's blue eyes were hard and forceful and he felt utterly in thrall to him. Jed's hand was still entangled in his hair, keeping his head back, and Josh had never felt more ecstatically submissive in his entire life than he did to these two men at this moment in time. It was a good feeling – it was everything he had fantasised about.

"Now – I don't want to tie you again for this," Leo said thoughtfully. "But I'm not sure if we can trust you to hold position. So, I'm going to hold you in place while Josiah delivers your punishment."

Leo sat down on the side of the bed, and glanced at Josh.

"Remove my shoes, Joshua," he ordered. Jed pushed his sub forward and Josh eagerly removed Leo's shoes, lingering perhaps a little too long over the shiny black leather as he undid the laces and then slipped them from Leo's feet. Then Leo arranged some pillows against the headboard and sat back, leaning against them. "Okay – come here, Joshua," he ordered. Josh got on the bed and knelt between Leo's open legs, unsure where he should position himself. Leo grabbed a few more pillows and arranged them on his lap, and then he beckoned Josh forward. Josh went, easily submitting to being put into position by the older man. Leo pulled him so that Josh was lying with his head on Leo's chest, and then Leo wrapped his arms around Josh's upper body and his ankles around Josh's legs, effectively imprisoning him. Josh felt uncomfortable – not because of the position itself which was completely relaxing but because the position was so intimate – his own naked body pressed against Leo's fully clothed one, and Leo's arms and legs wrapped around his body in such a way as to expose his buttocks for Jed's attention. More than that though, Josh was profoundly aware of Leo's proximity – his scent, the feel of his firm body beneath his own, and the warmth of his arms around his torso. He looked up, and found himself gazing into Leo's stern, blue eyes but he caught an unguarded warmth and affection there that took him by surprise. He managed a weak smile, and Leo grinned back at him.

"Okay there, Joshua?" He asked. Josh nodded, swallowing hard.

"Yes, sir," he whispered.

"Good. All right, Josiah – he's all yours." Leo nodded in the President's direction and Josh tensed, waiting for the ten hard strokes he'd been told to expect. He was therefore taken completely by surprise to feel the gentle caress of the flogger – swung at nothing like close to full force, merely tickling the surface of his skin. He gave a hiss of surprise and heard Jed laugh behind him.

"I told you last time, Joshua, we'll go at my pace. I'm in charge of this."

Josh heard Leo give a grunt and glanced up to find Leo giving Jed a look of approval. Somehow he sensed that this was something that Leo had taught his sub by example. It felt good that he wasn't being punished immediately – he felt as if he was a much loved plaything, to be stroked and tantalised and thoroughly warmed up before things got more serious. Josh felt himself relaxing into Leo's arms, reassured that he was in safe hands. Leo's arms settled around him more firmly - it was thrilling to be so close to this elusive, enigmatic, attractive man and Josh revelled in it. He couldn't stop himself from pressing his lips against Leo's shirt and then he froze, wondering if he should have done something so bold without permission although Leo hadn't specifically made a rule against Josh touching his masters and Josh didn't think Leo was the kind of top who would punish his subs for something that he hadn't already made clear was a rule. A second later Leo's hand moved and stroked his naked back gently and thus reassured that Leo wasn't angry with him, Josh sighed and relaxed against the other man's chest again. He heard the flogger rustling once more and then it caressed his buttocks, the suede strands snapping against his flesh, exciting him more than hurting. Jed took his time, but gradually the strokes came down

faster, and it was harder for Josh to just lie still under the flogger's biting caress. He began to moan softly, and moved his legs trying to avoid the flogger's sting, even as he welcomed it. He had a mental picture of himself, lying on this bed, wrapped in Leo's arms, with the President standing behind him wielding that flogger on his naked, unprotected ass, and his cock was rigid with arousal at the image. Now the flogging was proceeding in earnest – not hard enough to cause real pain, but hard to bear without moving or moaning all the same.

"I think he's warmed up enough," Leo commented after several minutes of this. "I think it's time to show Joshua what it really means to submit." And so saying he leaned forward, slid his hands down Josh's naked body and placed them on Josh's glowing buttocks, pulling them gently apart. Josh gave a little gasp of anxiety and wriggled, unsure whether he would be able to take this.

"Joshua – trust me," Leo told him firmly and, looking up into those blue eyes, Josh found that he did. He grasped onto Leo's hips with his hands, waiting for what he was sure would be the painful sting of the flogger on his anus. A few seconds later he gave a low growl of arousal as the flogger made contact, its fronds snapping against his asshole, sending sparks of sheer sensory pleasure through his body. He looked up at Leo in surprise – he hadn't expected it to feel so good.

Leo grinned down at him. "I told you to trust me," he said and Josh grinned back at him and released his sweaty hold on Leo's waist a fraction as he relaxed. Jed swung the flogger forward again and again and each time it made contact with his anus, making the nerve endings tingle, warming him. He had never expected being whipped on this intimate part of his anatomy to be so arousing and he abandoned himself to the pure joy of it for the next few minutes. It felt so good that he started to writhe, opening up his legs wider to receive the next stinging kiss from the flogger, trying to urge it deeper into his body. He gave a little sigh of regret when the strokes stopped, and Leo released his hold on his buttocks and sat back against the headboard again.

"I think our sub has been rewarded enough," Leo commented, smoothing Josh's hair back from his sweaty forehead and looking into his eyes. Josh gazed back, lost in a haze of arousal and endorphins. "I think it's time he took his punishment now, Josiah," Leo ordered. Josh tensed, mentally trying to prepare himself for a change in tempo. Leo had promised him ten hard strokes from the paddle and he was sure that was exactly what he would have to endure. He found the idea of being punished by these two men intensely erotic, even though he knew it would hurt, and he took a deep breath and held onto Leo more tightly. Leo wrapped his arms firmly around Josh's body, readjusting him and getting him back into position, pinning Josh's legs to the bed with his own again. There was a long silence and Josh looked up into Leo's eyes for reassurance. Leo gazed back at him impassively, a stern but comforting presence at one and the same time. He nodded at Josh who nodded back and few seconds later he heard a hard thwacking sound of the black paddle impacting on his bare skin and a split second after that he felt a rush of pain in his butt cheeks.

"Shit!" he whispered, as his entire ass felt as if it was on fire.

"I told you this one packs a mighty sting," Jed commented from behind him.

"I should have listened to you," Josh grimaced. Leo gave a low chuckle.

"Too late, Joshua," he grinned.

Josh was about to say something else when the second stroke cracked down and he forgot everything save for the fact that the President was royally paddling his ass while Leo was holding him in place. The next few strokes took his breath away and while he was as aroused as all hell by the situation, it wasn't easy getting through his punishment all the same. He gave a low growl as the 8th hard swat hit home and looked up at Leo in mute pleading. Leo smiled down at him and moved his hand to brush Josh's hair away from his forehead. He caressed the side of Josh's face and Josh lifted his head, wanting, needing that kiss that he'd asked for at the beginning of the session...but Leo put his finger over Josh's mouth instead.

"Uh-uh, you have to earn that, Joshua," he said in deep, gravelly tones that made Josh shiver. He moaned again, wriggling as the paddle continued its inexorable work and then, suddenly, it was over. Josh gave a sigh of total abandon, overjoyed and exhilarated by having taken the spanking, the endorphins hitting him in earnest now. Leo released him and he rolled over onto his side, hearing a laugh behind him. Jed dropped down on the bed beside him and Josh gazed up at him, grinning inanely.

"Thank you, Jed," he whispered, completely blissed out. Jed laughed delightedly, and then he grabbed Josh's face with his hands and kissed him firmly on the lips. Josh surrendered himself to the kiss; he felt almost boneless as he lay there, just offering himself up. Jed's lips were insistent on his mouth and Josh opened up, and felt an erotic charge spark through his body as his mouth was firmly and thoroughly plundered by the President's tongue. Finally, the President drew back, letting them both catch their breath. He leaned delightedly over his sub, grinning happily, clearly incredibly pleased with himself for having brought his sub to this state. Josh grinned back blearily, feeling completely at peace with himself. All the stresses and strains of the past week faded away. He felt lost in the approval of these two men, lost in the joy of surrendering to them, nothing being asked of him except that he be their loving, adoring sub. He didn't have any responsibilities here – didn't have to think or question - and it was a relief to have a few hours without any responsibilities. Now he was beginning to understand why their Friday night sessions were so important to them. He had never felt more relaxed, more as if he could float into the air and fly away. The tensions of the week and the threatened nuclear meltdown were now so distant that they could almost have happened to someone else. Josh was suddenly glad that Jed and Leo had this opportunity for release. It had to be good for them to escape into this kind of serenity for at least a few hours every week, to recharge their batteries and just play like this.

Leo swung his legs over the side of the bed and gazed at his two subs for a moment, as if assessing the situation. Jed had one arm slung around Josh and was stroking his sub's body affectionately. Josh thought that if he continued to do that for much longer than he'd be sure to come and he didn't want to yet – there was so much more that he was hoping would happen first.

"Joshua – I need you to think about where you go from here," Leo said.

"What d'you mean, sir?" Josh asked, almost breathlessly, as Jed tweaked one of his nipples gently between his fingers.

"I need to take Josiah down," Leo said, gazing at Jed firmly.

"Leo! I'm doing fine! I don't need taking anywhere!" Jed protested.

"Sure you do." Leo shook his head, an amused twinkle in his eye. "You need to be taken down and then when we're done we can come back to Joshua and see what he's decided about what happens next. Joshua – we can take this all the way or you can stop right here. It's up to you," Leo said.

Josh suddenly realised what he was talking about. They had discussed how far Josh wanted to go during this session and while Josh had been adamant that there was very little he didn't want to do, Leo had been more cautious, telling Josh to wait and see how he felt on the night, in case he changed his mind. Josh hadn't changed his mind though – he wanted to be made love to, to be used as the willing sub he was, and the sooner the better as far as he was concerned.

"Leo, I don't need to think about this!" He protested. "I want the whole deal."

"Okay – we're still in scene time, Joshua so I might choose to punish you for that lapse later," Leo warned him and Josh realised, too late, that he'd called Leo by his first name. Jed gave a wry chuckle and kneaded Josh's neck comfortingly, almost conspiratorially, with his hand. "And it's great that you want to continue but Josiah comes next anyway so you have the time if you need it. Now, I have another question to put to both of you. Joshua – do you want to be present while I work on Josiah? If that isn't something you want to see then you can go and sit in the bathroom for the next half an hour. If you do stay then I'll expect your total silence and absolute obedience and I'm not kidding around on this – understood?"

Josh nodded, wide-eyed. "I'd rather stay," he whispered, feeling another thrill tingle through his body. He wanted to see how this dynamic worked between the President and his Chief of Staff – he found the very idea of this particular role reversal intensely erotic.

"Josiah, are you okay with Joshua watching?" Leo asked the President. Jed grinned, and squeezed Josh's neck lightly.

"I guess after what I just did to him it's only fair," he said, with a wry grimace.

"No, it doesn't have to happen this way – it's your decision, Josiah," Leo told him firmly.

"I'm fine. Honestly, Leo." Jed shrugged. "We asked him along – we're not hiding anything we do here and I'm sure it won't destroy some 'mythical mystique of the Presidency' or my own ability to top him if he sees what goes on between us." He grinned. "Besides – it would be cruel and unnatural punishment indeed to send him to the bathroom for the next half an

hour when he's so clearly panting to see you get mean with me." He cast a reproachful look at Josh who gave a guilty grin in reply, unable to refute that accusation.

"Okay." Leo held up his hands. "You both made your decision."

"What about you?" Josh asked suddenly. "Are you okay with it, sir?" Leo looked surprised to be asked, and considered the question thoughtfully before finally shrugging.

"Sure – I'm fine with it. I think Josiah will give me more trouble because he knows you're watching, but what the hell." Leo shrugged. "I can handle everything he wants to throw at me as he knows only too well." He grinned at Jed who, for the first time, looked a little bit unsure of himself.

"Why, Leo, you make me sound so ornery," he grumbled.

Leo raised an eyebrow. "I'll refrain from stating the obvious," he muttered under his breath. "Anybody need any time out?" He surveyed his two subs who both shook their heads, eager to continue. Josh noted that the President's eyes were gleaming in anticipation. "Okay – then let's get started. Josiah – go and face the wall."

"Why?" Jed protested. "I haven't done anything yet, Leo!"

"Firstly, I don't need a reason – you go just because I tell you to go, and secondly, I have plenty of reasons and I'm happy to list them all to you and might do just that while I'm whaling on your ass. Now go," Leo said firmly. Josh gazed wide-eyed at the pair of them, excited by the power play on show. Jed glared at Leo but got off the bed and did as he was told. It was an incongruous sight - the President of the United States sent to stand in the corner like a little kid, and Josh grinned, enjoying it.

"As for you," Leo's baleful glare was pitched in his direction and Josh swallowed hard. "I think this might wipe the smile off your face," Leo said, reaching into his pocket. He drew out a little chain attached to two small clamps and Josh's grin faded immediately. He knew what these were although he'd never had any attached to his body before – but they'd certainly featured in his fantasies. "Josiah and I don't exactly go in for toys as you've seen," Leo said softly. "But I thought that as you'd be joining us it would be nice to have something just for you. Call it a present if you like." He gave a malicious grin.

"That was so thoughtful of you," Josh said, wondering if he had gone as pale as he felt. Leo raised an eyebrow. "Sir," Josh added quickly.

"You'll wear these while you watch – unless you'd like to rethink the bathroom option?" Leo asked pleasantly. "If you'd prefer to sit in there, then I'll spare you these."

"That's just mean!" Josh protested, suddenly understanding why Leo was so confident that he could handle Jed – Leo was too damn good a top for even the President of the United States to get away with anything while he was in charge of the proceedings.

"It is. Yes." Leo smiled serenely. "But every pleasure has its price, Joshua. So you either wear these while I work on Josiah, or you go and sit in the bathroom. What's it to be?"

Josh gazed at the nipple clamps thoughtfully – he wasn't sure how much they'd hurt, but Leo had bought them just for him and that of and by itself was a turn on for him. He wasn't seriously weighing up this decision – nothing was going to stop him witnessing the President being taken down by his Chief of Staff tonight. Nothing!

"I'll wear the clamps, sir," he replied.

"Good boy." Leo nodded approvingly. "Josiah – head back to face the wall," he added smoothly. Leo had his back to the President so Josh had no idea how he had known that Jed, hearing their conversation and unable to resist seeing what was going on, had turned his head to see what Leo was holding in his hand. "Come here, Joshua," Leo said, going over to the armchair and sitting down. Josh climbed off the bed, still feeling high on endorphins and followed Leo obediently to the chair. Leo clicked his fingers and pointed and Josh knelt in front of him. Leo leaned forward and stroked Josh's nipples gently with his fingers which felt very nice until Josh realised that Leo was only doing that to make them stiffen into hard points, at which time he moved in with the clamps and a second later Josh felt a painful pinching sensation in one nipple and a second later in the other too.

"Ow...shit!" He complained. Leo surveyed him dispassionately.

"Sure you don't want to rethink the bathroom option?" He asked. Josh bit down on his lip. The clamps were pinching but they weren't very severe and the initial pain was already receding a little – he thought he could bear wearing them for awhile.

"No, sir," he shook his head. "I'll stay."

"Good boy." Leo smiled at him affectionately and Josh felt as if the sun had come out and shone just for him – Leo's praise, whether in the office or in here, was something he could never get enough of. Leo caressed the side of Josh's cheek with his hand and Josh leaned forward hopefully, wondering if he'd earned that kiss yet. Leo laughed and tapped his forehead reprovingly. "Not yet, Joshua," he said, accurately guessing what was going through Josh's mind. "Now, I want you to come here." He gestured to a spot next to his right knee, "and stay kneeling. If you get tired, just sit back for a bit and then kneel again when you're comfortable but don't move from this spot or there will be trouble." Josh nodded, taking up position as ordered. From this position he could see everything that was going on in the room. He wondered whether Leo would mind if he rested against Leo's thigh, wanting to be as close to his master as possible. He tried leaning in to see what would happen – only to find a fistful of his hair grabbed by an irate hand, and his head yanked back. "If you want to ask for something then ask," Leo told him dangerously.

"Uh, can't I just...?" Josh bit his tongue because it sounded so absurd but Leo's grip didn't falter and those blue eyes were boring holes into him. "Put my chin on your leg?" Josh finished, wishing the ground would open up and swallow him. God this was embarrassing!

"Sure you can. Just remember to ask next time you want something," Leo told him, much to Josh's relief. He released Josh's hair and then gave him a gentle warning swat on the side of his head. Josh found himself grinning ridiculously as he tentatively placed his chin on Leo's knee – he grinned even more broadly when Leo's hand came to rest on his head, and caressed him absently.

"Okay, Josiah – I think it's time you got undressed," Leo said. Josh thought that Jed was like a wind up toy – the moment you pressed his button he just sprang into life, full of energy. He turned around with a grin and began undoing his shirt, talking non-stop as he went.

"I was thinking that as we have Joshua here we shouldn't waste too much time on me, Leo. I know you talk as if I need some kind of big scene here but I really don't – I've had a good week – okay, a stressful week, but it ended up pretty damn good." He grinned at Leo. "It all worked out in the end so I don't have any of those, you know, issues to deal with that I sometimes have. I'm not depressed about how it went and..."

"Josiah – I told you to get undressed, not to give a speech," Leo interrupted. Josh held his breath – he couldn't imagine anyone talking to the President like this but somehow in this room, with these two men, it seemed entirely natural. Jed stopped in mid-flow and gave Leo a disgruntled look.

"Okay, so I know I forgot to call you sir a few times this evening, but I'm just in high spirits. I saved the world today, Leo! Anyone would be in high spirits. And then Josh took care of everything so brilliantly while we were..."

"Okay that's enough." Leo got to his feet and Jed stopped in mid-sentence. Leo walked over to him and, for the first time, Josh saw real concern in Jed's eyes. He was biting on his lip and looked very uncertain about what Leo was going to do to him. "What's rule number one, Josiah?" Leo said with a sigh, as if this was something he had to remind the President about extremely frequently.

"Oh for god's sake, Leo! I know what the rules are. I was just mentioning it in passing to explain..."

"What's rule number one?" Leo asked again, in a low, deadly voice. Josh felt his fingernails biting into his flesh as he clenched his fists. He wanted to scream at Jed not to push this when Leo was in such a dangerous mood but somehow he had the feeling that Jed needed to push Leo and also that he also needed Leo to stand firm. The dynamic between them was incredibly powerful and deeply charged.

"Not to talk about work. Sir," Jed sighed.

"Okay. Now finishing undressing – in silence please," Leo ordered. Jed rolled his eyes and fumbled with his cufflinks, but, to Josh's surprise, he saw that Jed's hands were shaking slightly and he couldn't complete the task. Leo took his wrists wordlessly in his hands, and removed the cufflinks, although Josh noticed that he took his time about the task, and his fingers soothed Jed's wrists comfortingly as he worked. Leo took the cufflinks, walked over

to the bed, and placed them in a little porcelain pot on the nightstand. Jed watched his every movement...and when Leo removed his own cufflinks and placed them in the pot and then began rolling up his sleeves, the attention of both his subs was focussed fully on him. Josh watched, transfixed, as Leo undid the top button of his shirt, and then went over to the trunk and, after surveying the contents thoughtfully for a moment, retrieved a flat, hard, wooden paddle which he slapped against his hand a couple of times. Josh glanced back towards Jed who also seemed pretty transfixed by the sight. Leo looked at the paddle and then at Jed, and that galvanised Jed into finishing undressing hurriedly, a shade of anxiety in his expression.

Josh found that his attention was now fully focussed on Jed – the President might have been several years older than he was, but he was a handsome, well-built man and Josh felt a rush of attraction as he surveyed him in all his naked glory. Leo seemed to take a moment or two to savour the sight as well, and then he walked slowly back towards his sub, slapping the paddle against his hand as he went. Jed watched him out of defiant eyes right up until the moment Leo stood in front of him, and then he dropped his gaze.

"I'm sorry, Leo," he murmured, in tones almost too low for Josh to hear. "I really am. I don't know why I get this way."

"Turn around and face the wall, Josiah. Put your hands against it – butt out," Leo ordered, ignoring the apology. Jed sighed, and, very slowly, turned and did as ordered. Josh felt a thrill tingle through his entire body. This was getting really hot – the exchange of power between the two men was so charged as to be almost visible and he found it unbearably erotic. The dull throbbing his nipples was now matched by the ache in his extremely hard cock.

"So..." Leo said softly, standing very close to the President. "You saved the world today, huh?"

"Yeah," Jed's voice had a definite grin in it. Leo took a step back and brought the paddle down smartly across the President's ass. It was just a hard tap, not a proper stroke, but Jed jumped all the same, clearly startled.

"Damnit, Leo. I wish you'd give me some warning when you're going to do that," he snapped tersely.

"I don't give you warnings, Josiah. I give you orders, and instructions," Leo replied calmly. He put a hand on Jed's back and stroked softly. "Do you know how many times you've failed to address me properly this evening, Josiah?"

"No, but I bet you've been counting," Jed griped. Leo swatted him lightly with the paddle again and Jed gave a little growl.

"I have, but that isn't important because I'm going to give you many, many more strokes than that," Leo promised.

"You weren't this mean to Josh," Jed complained.

"That's because Joshua doesn't give me the trouble you do. Now, I want you to kneel down and beg me very nicely to deliver your spanking," Leo said. Jed's face was a picture as he spun around and gazed at his top incredulously.

"You want me to beg, Leo?" He asked, in what sounded to Josh very much like a presidential tone of voice. He clenched his fists again, wondering if Leo had gone too far, or crossed some invisible line.

"Yes, Josiah. I want you to get down on your knees and beg me to punish you. I want you to list all your transgressions and I want you to ask me to spank you for them, extremely hard," Leo said, not giving an inch. Jed's mouth settled into a straight, determined line.

"Leo, if you want to punish me then go right ahead but don't damn well expect me to ask for it," he snapped.

"Okay." Leo nodded amiably and Jed glared at him, his eyes narrowing, clearly expecting some kind of trick.

"Okay?" He questioned uncertainly.

"Sure. Okay. Joshua, will you come here please," Leo ordered. Josh got to his feet, startled to be included in this – Jed was just as surprised too judging by the look on his face.

"Josiah – I gave you an instruction and you refused to obey me. As a punishment, you will kneel and ask Joshua if you can give him a massage," Leo said.

Josh froze, suddenly wishing the ground would open up and swallow him whole.

"Joshua is my sub. You're asking me to kneel in front of him?" Jed asked dangerously.

"And ask to give him a massage, yes." Leo nodded pleasantly. "When you're done with that, maybe you'll then obey my original instruction and kneel down in front of me and ask me to spank you," he said. Jed gave a low growl of annoyance.

"Leo, if I'm not going to kneel down and ask you to spank me, what on earth makes you think I'm going to kneel in front of him and ask to massage him?" He said.

"Because if you don't, I'm going to give Joshua this paddle and allow him to deliver your spanking instead," Leo said. It was, Josh thought, a masterly stroke. Jed's eyes bulged for a moment and then narrowed.

"You wouldn't," he said softly. Leo raised an eyebrow.

"Wouldn't I?" He replied.

There was a tense silence. Josh gazed from one man to the other wondering what was going to happen. It was obvious to him that Leo was bluffing – he suspected that Leo would never let anyone but himself lay a finger on the President. He was surprised that Jed didn't know that – but then, on the other hand, Leo had an excellent poker face, and his expression at the moment was masterfully unreadable.

"You're bluffing," Jed said, but he didn't sound so sure.

"Am I?" Leo smacked the paddle down on his hand thoughtfully.

Josh could almost see Jed's thought processes playing out on his face. Indecision warred with need, and through it all Leo remained totally implacable, completely in control of the situation. Josh held his breath, hoping, desperately, that Jed would make the right decision. He didn't know what Leo would do if Jed pushed him on this – while he was 100% sure that Leo wouldn't give him the paddle and allow him to touch the President, it had been a huge risk on Leo's part to suggest it as his authority would obviously take a massive tumble if he didn't follow through on his threat. If Leo was aware of how big a risk it was it didn't show on his face - he looked calm, determined and utterly masterful as he waited.

"You know, I think you are bluffing," Jed said.

"Okay. Joshua, take the paddle." Leo handed it to Josh who took it, his throat dry, wondering what was going to happen next. "You haven't ever used one of these have you, Joshua?" Leo asked. Josh shook his head, numbly. "Okay – I'm going to show you how to use it. Josiah, put your hands against the wall so that Josh can give you a few practice swats before we get going."

Jed stood there, struggling with the order he had been given. "Leo..." he whispered.

"Face the wall, Josiah," Leo said implacably. The two men stared at each other for several seconds and Josh could feel a sweat breaking out all over his body. This was so hot and so tense that he wasn't sure that he could bear it; it was a game of brinkmanship between Jed and Leo – and Jed crumbled first.

"Damn it, Leo," he snapped. "Damn it, damn it, damn it. Okay. You win, Leo!"

With a bitter expression on his face, he got down on his knees – but in front of Leo and not in front of Josh. Josh realised that Jed was still trying to play Leo and he could have groaned out loud; he knew that Leo wouldn't let the President get away with this. There was a tension in the room that you could cut with a knife as Jed looked up at Leo and then ground out:

"Please, sir, I'd like you to spank me."

"I'm sorry, Josiah – it's too late for that. First you have a punishment to perform," Leo said pleasantly, putting an arm around Josh's shoulders and taking the paddle from him. "Ask nicely, Josiah," he ordered. Jed gave Leo a look of mute pleading which Leo cheerfully

ignored. "Quickly, Josiah, or I'll give Joshua the paddle again," he said.

Jed took a deep breath, and then turned slightly so that he was now kneeling in front of Josh – who was suddenly aware that the President of the United States was naked and prostrate on the floor in front of him. He swallowed hard, grateful for Leo's reassuring arm around his shoulders.

"Uh...Joshua...would you like a massage?" Jed said, his words hard and clipped.

"Oh, I think you can ask better than that, Josiah." Leo smiled pleasantly. Jed shot him an extremely bitter look and took a deep breath. Josh watched, fascinated by the struggle that was playing out in front of him. Jed closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them and tried again.

"Please can I massage you, Joshua?" He asked softly. Leo nodded approvingly.

"Joshua is forbidden to speak at the moment but I'm sure he's very pleased to accept," he said on Josh's behalf. "Go and lie face down on the bed, Joshua," he ordered, tapping Josh's ass affectionately. Josh hurried to obey, and a few seconds later he felt the bed dip, and then felt the warmth of Jed's thighs straddling his body. He looked around to see Leo watching approvingly from the armchair and then two strong hands descended on his back and began rubbing some kind of musky scented lotion into his skin. Josh almost purred with pleasure – and glanced at Leo in surprise.

"I know," Leo said, accurately interpreting the look. "Josiah is extremely good at this. You're very lucky to be on the receiving end of one of his massages, Joshua. Enjoy it."

Josh nodded, and closed his eyes, resting his head on his hands. Leo wasn't wrong! Jed's big hands devoured all the knots in his shoulders, finding kinks he hadn't even known had been there and straightening them out efficiently and pleurably. Who would ever have guessed that the President of the United States was such a skilled masseur? Josiah might have been ordered to do this but there was nothing half-hearted about the massage he gave to his sub. In fact, within a few minutes he was humming as he went about his work, so Josh thought that his master was enjoying himself, however difficult it had been for him to have to make the offer to his sub.

Josh found himself moaning softly in pleasure as the President massaged him tenderly and intimately. The atmosphere in the room seemed almost profound and he wanted that massage to last forever. Not even the slight nagging discomfort of the nipple clamps could detract from the pleasure of it. He was surprised to feel Jed's lips trail a path down his spine, and the President took a long time massaging his still tingling backside, nudging impertinently between his butt cheeks in a way that made him long to feel something bigger and harder in that area of his anatomy.

Then it was over, and Josh felt as if he was a boneless heap of jelly, completely zoned out by the experience. He sensed that the atmosphere in the room had changed; Jed seemed much calmer now, as if he was well on his way to his own submission – although it hadn't been an

easy path.

"All done," Jed murmured, resting a hand tenderly in Josh's hair. He leaned forward and bestowed a kiss on Josh's head and Josh smiled happily.

"Thank you...Master," Josh whispered to Jed, sitting up. Jed flashed him a delighted smile and while Leo gave them both a disapproving frown he didn't say anything, so Josh was pretty sure that he wasn't too unhappy that his newest sub had spoken without permission.

"Come here, Josiah." Leo beckoned and Jed took a deep breath, got to his feet, walked over to where Leo was standing and then sank down on his knees without being prompted.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said in tones of the utmost respect. "I've been insolent and disobedient all evening. Please punish me hard, sir."

Josh noticed the little grin that tugged at the corners of Leo's mouth. Leo tapped Jed on the head and then helped him get to his feet again.

"Thank you, Josiah," he said softly, and then, much to Josh's surprise and intense jealousy, he pulled Jed close, took his face in his hands, and kissed him passionately on the lips. Jed moaned and leaned into Leo, melting against him. His hands went around Leo's body and Leo's hands dropped down to cup Jed's ass. Josh gazed at them, transfixed, wanting nothing more than to be part of that loving tableau but knowing it wasn't his turn and that this was between Leo and Jed. Then, finally, Leo released his sub. He gazed at Jed fondly, caressing his face with his hand.

"You've done very well, Josiah. I'm proud of you," he said and Josh saw that same look on Jed's face that he knew he sometimes wore whenever Leo praised him. He felt a warm glow of happiness, knowing exactly how Jed felt right now.

"Remove my belt, Josiah," Leo told his sub. Jed nodded, and unbuckled Leo's belt, drew it from its loops, and then handed it to his top. Leo took it, and doubled it over in his hand. Jed took a deep breath, but he seemed much more relaxed than he had been earlier – he was less jumpy and seemed, if not resigned, then at least accepting of his fate. "Go and lie on the bed," Leo ordered. Jed swallowed hard and then turned – but Leo pulled him back. "It's going to be okay," he whispered, caressing the President's arm affectionately. Jed nodded, managing a small smile although he still looked as if he was operating in a total fog right now. "Joshua – kneel on the floor beside the bed," Leo ordered. Josh did as he was told and his position on the bed was taken by Jed, who laid face down, arranging a pillow under his body so that his ass was lifted up invitingly to his top for punishment.

Leo took up position beside the bed and trailed the belt languorously over Jed's body for several long minutes. Josh watched as Jed visibly relaxed, his limbs becoming looser – and then Leo began to tap. He just flicked the belt at first, snapping it at regular intervals over Jed's entire body but just enough to warm the skin, not enough to hurt. Then he began to concentrate more on Jed's ass, and the taps became harder – until finally he was swatting the President's buttocks in earnest.

"Okay, Josiah, what is this for?" Leo asked as he worked. The President made a little face, but he spoke up quickly enough.

"For forgetting how to address you, sir; for being insolent towards you, sir. For disobedience. For forgetting ---ahh --- the rules, sir," he said. "More than once, sir," he added, with a sigh.

"All right, Josiah – brace yourself," Leo said and then he brought the belt down much harder, with a resounding crack. Josh winced but Jed's reaction was a complete surprise. He gave a low, growling roar at the back of his throat, sounding like a wounded lion. His hands wrapped themselves into fists and he grabbed the pillow he was resting his head on and tore at it. His low roar became louder and louder, and his entire body was thrashing and flailing as if he was fighting some kind of struggle with himself. Josh looked at Leo, alarmed, but Leo didn't seem too concerned so he guessed that maybe this was all part of the process of getting the President to where he both needed and wanted to be. "Let it go, Josiah – don't hold anything back just because Joshua is watching," Leo said in a steady, warning tone of voice.

Jed was silent for a moment, as if processing this instruction as Leo continued to rain down those hard strokes on his ass, and then, gradually, Jed started becoming more and more vocal, until he was yelling and roaring at the top of his voice. Josh watched, startled, wondering at the internal battle the President must be fighting with himself, and then, suddenly, everything changed; the roar turned into a mewling, keening sound, low and almost melodious and Jed stopped kicking around on the bed. His movements slowed and he began moaning softly. His eyes were closed and he looked so vulnerable that Josh couldn't stop himself; he reached forward, and gently stroked the President's hair, and then began covering the older man's face with reassuring kisses. Leo's arm didn't falter and he didn't reprimand Josh either so he continued what he was doing, soothing and comforting the President until some kind of dam broke, and Jed stopped fighting altogether. Leo's strokes were becoming fewer and further between and less forceful in intensity, and then they stopped completely. Jed opened his eyes and Josh found himself gazing into their violet-blue depths. The President looked hazy and serene, a blissed-out smile on his lips.

Leo put the belt down on the dresser and came to sit on the bed beside the President. He stroked Jed's hair and Jed gazed up at him with a look that could only be described as adoring.

"Thank you," he murmured.

"You're welcome," Leo replied, bending forward to kiss Jed's lips again. Josh felt that familiar surge of jealousy – Jed had kissed him and Leo had kissed Jed but so far Leo hadn't given Josh the kiss he wanted so much.

"And thank you," Jed said, gazing at Josh. Leo smiled down at his two subs with an affectionate look on his face.

"Joshua did very well too," he said approvingly. "I like what you did there." He reached out and caressed Josh's face. "I think you've earned that reward I promised you earlier."

Josh looked up, unable to hide the eagerness in his eyes, and Leo laughed at him.

"On your feet - both of you. Josiah, I want you to stand behind Joshua and put your arms around his waist. Keep him still."

"Yes, sir." Jed rolled off the bed and got into position behind Josh, who stood still, wondering what was going to happen.

"Okay..." Leo said softly, standing in front of Josh and gazing at him with that intense, blue-eyed stare. "There's something you should know about these clamps, Joshua." He put his fingers on each of Josh's clamped nipples. "They hurt a lot more coming off than they did going on. Ready?"

Josh gazed back at his top, took a deep breath, and then nodded. He was grateful for Jed's arms around him, holding him in position. Then Leo's fingers moved and the clamps were gone. There was a split second in which he felt nothing and then he was assaulted by a wave of pain – which he barely noticed at all because at that precise moment in time Leo leaned forward, took Josh's face firmly in his hands, and kissed his lips. Josh moaned, sagging forward into Leo's embrace. Leo's tongue pressed against his lips, demanding entrance, and Josh opened his mouth eagerly, allowing Leo inside.

Jed's lips had been soft and sensual, full of affection; his essence had been that of a crashing wave on the seashore, a natural force of boundless energy. Leo's lips were harder and more demanding, and Josh had the sense of a tightly contained fire, a volcano simmering a long way beneath a seemingly serene surface. He felt as if he was falling into the depths of that fire, burning up from the force of that intense, exploratory kiss, and, when at last he was released, Josh knew the answer to the question that had been troubling him for so long; Leo wanted him here as much as the President did and Leo felt about him as strongly as the President did, even if he took great care not to show it. While Josh could never hope to mean as much to them as they did to each other, they both, in their own way, loved and wanted him. Thank god for Jed's strong hands holding him up or Josh was sure he would have fallen as that realisation swept through him.

Finally, after several long seconds, Leo released him. Josh hung in Jed's arms, panting, completely lost in a haze of total pleasure, endorphins racing through his body.

"Okay?" Leo asked softly, caressing Josh's face with his fingers. "Was that what you wanted, Josh?"

"Oh god yes," Josh breathed. "Thank you, sir."

"You're welcome," Leo smiled, still caressing his exhausted sub affectionately. The mask of the consummate top slipped for just a moment and Josh caught a glimpse of the man beneath, and understood something he hadn't before; this was where Leo got the most

intense satisfaction – in understanding his subs, in giving them what they needed, and by getting the timing just right so that he had them stoked to the heights of expectation before he gave them what they wanted. The entire contents of that trunk, the rules, the demands for obedience, the physical punishments and all the mind games hadn't been about Leo getting off on being in charge or having power over the other two men in this room. No, this entire evening had been about Leo serving them more completely and more humbly than they could ever hope to serve him. Josh felt completely bowled over by that realisation and he desperately wanted to give something back to this amazing man standing in front of him.

"Sir – can we do something for you now?" He asked, and Jed seemed to understand how he was feeling because he let go of Josh's waist and slipped forward to stand beside him.

"Yes, sir...we want to do something for you," Jed said, reaching out to unbutton Leo's shirt. Leo gave a smile and opened his arms wide.

"By all means. Now that both my subs are looking so peaceful and contented, I think it's time that we took this to another level," he said. Josh grinned and knelt at Leo's feet and undid his pants while Jed took care of his shirt and then they both swarmed over Leo, divesting him of socks, pants and briefs and tumbled him, naked, onto the bed.

Leo laughed out loud as he surrendered to their insistent hands as they kissed and caressed their master. Then, as if by unspoken agreement, Jed took up position behind Leo, and placed those large, strong hands of his on his top's shoulders. Leo gave a deep sigh and leaned back against the President. Jed nodded to Josh, who knelt between Leo's open legs.

"Do you have any objections, sir?" Jed whispered in Leo's ear. Leo gave an amused sigh.

"I don't think you two would take any notice if I did," he said.

Josh gave a broad grin and then, as if on cue, the President began massaging Leo's shoulders while Josh dipped his head forward and took Leo's cock in his mouth. Josh could feel Leo's entire body relaxing into the bed as both his subs worked on him zealously. Josh loved giving oral sex and it meant all the more to him to be able to perform this intimate service to Leo. Leo sighed and leaned back against the President, whose strong hands were caressing and massaging him in equal measure. Both subs worked slowly on their top, pouring every ounce of their devotion into their work, and they were rewarded when Leo unwound even more, and began to make small sounds of arousal in the back of his throat. Josh loved the feel of his top's eager cock in his mouth and he played with it for a long time, sucking and licking, before finally deep-throating Leo in a move that took his top by surprise. He heard Leo's startled murmur and grinned to himself, continuing with his entirely pleasurable work until he felt Leo coming in his throat. He kept his position, wanting to swallow every drop of his top's come and then, when Leo was done, he pulled back, grinning inanely in the knowledge of a good job well done. Leo rolled his eyes at him.

"I don't think I really need to tell you how good that was, do I?" He grinned.

"No," Josh said modestly, laughing.

"I will anyway – it was damn good," Leo said, tousling his youngest sub's hair. "Okay, Joshua...that was extremely nice, but now I think it's time we played with our toy some more. Are you up for that?"

Josh nodded, gazing from Leo to Jed and back to Leo again.

"All right – he's all yours, Master Jed," Leo said with a slight smirk. Jed looked like a man utterly at peace with himself. It seemed to Josh that he was almost shining with contentment – a man completely comfortable in his own skin and Josh had a full realisation of just why these Friday night sessions were so good for the President. No wonder he always looked so relaxed, rested and in tune with his Chief of Staff on a Saturday morning.

Leo handed Jed condoms and lube, and Josh watched, silently, waiting for the moment when he could finally surrender to them both, totally and absolutely.

"On your hands and knees, Joshua, facing me," Leo ordered. Josh did as he was told, and Jed disappeared behind him. A few seconds later he felt his ass cheeks being parted and then a cool, lubed finger was slipped inside him. He gasped, and Leo took his face in his hands and gently stroked the hair from his forehead.

"You've been so good tonight, Joshua," he murmured, and Josh felt another finger slipping inside him. He opened his legs wider, and pushed back on those questing fingers, wanting more, but Jed went slowly, playing with him for several minutes before finally withdrawing his fingers. Leo put his hands on Josh's nipples and began rubbing the sensitive nubs into little points. Josh sighed, loving the sensation, and then he felt Jed's hard cock enter him from behind. He moaned in pleasure, bucking back against the President and as he did so Leo knelt up in front of him, pushing Josh's hands away from the bed, so that they were all kneeling upright, Josh in the middle like the filling in a sandwich. Leo pressed his lips against Josh's mouth, claiming another kiss, while Jed thrust into Josh from behind, slowly, carefully, tantalisingly. Josh thought he was drowning in a sea of the most intensely pleasurable bliss as too many wonderful things were being done to his body at the same time. Leo's fingers continued to caress his nipples while his mouth plundered Josh's mouth, claiming and insistent, and Jed moved in and out of his ass with rhythmic thrusts. Then Leo's hand moved lower and, while still kissing Josh's mouth, he took hold of his cock and pumped it hard. Josh was lost now – he didn't know where he ended and they began. Every single nerve ending in his body was exploding in starbursts of pure white light. He didn't know how long that moment went on for but it felt like all eternity as he was so tenderly caressed and made love to. Then his body was consumed with what felt like white fire, and everything was happening at once. He could feel himself coming over and over again into Leo's hand, could feel Jed still inside him, could feel Leo's tongue in his mouth and then he was collapsing against Leo, utterly and completely sated, every pleasure point in his body overloaded.

There was darkness for a long time. He was dimly aware of being laid gently on the bed, and then two bodies were pressed against his, stroking and holding him. He could hear voices, but wasn't sure what they were saying. He was too completely jellified to move.

He thought maybe he slept – certainly he was aware of some time passing - and then someone was nudging him and offering him a glass of water. He gulped it down greedily and then looked up into Jed's amused blue eyes.

"Okay there, Josh?" Jed asked, grinning at him.

"Dunno. What?" Josh frowned, squinting up at him.

"Poor kid – he's had way too much excitement for one day," Leo's voice commented from behind him.

"Yeah, well, that's what happens when you play with the big boys," Jed grinned. "You know what, Leo, we old guys have a lot more stamina than these young kids."

"Well, I don't know about that..." A hand insinuated itself between his thighs and he felt his cock spring into life again in response.

"Hey!" Josh protested lazily.

His ass was slapped affectionately from behind. "Plaything," Leo reminded him.

He grinned and then he started to laugh, blushing to the tips of his ears. "Yeah," he agreed, loving the idea that he was exactly that right now.

"So," Jed commented. "You want to come again, Josh?"

"Oh god yes!" Josh replied.

"Uh, I think he was asking if you wanted to join us again the Friday after next," Leo clarified.

"Oh – yeah, that too!" Josh said, grinning. "If you want me," he added, turning anxiously to look into Leo's blue eyes. Leo glanced at Jed over Josh's shoulder.

"Well, I don't know. Do we, Josiah?" He asked.

"Oh, I think that after tonight Joshua Lyman is now a fully paid up member of the Friday Night Club," Jed replied, lazily stroking the back of Josh's neck.

Josh felt himself giggling in a totally ridiculous way, utterly relaxed in the company of these two wonderful men he adored, who had just spent the entire evening doing such delicious things to his body. They spent another hour making love more slowly, and then, at some point during the middle of the night, they all fell into a deep, satisfying sleep, a tumble of tangled limbs and tousled hair in the huge bed.

Saturday Morning

Josh woke to find Leo already washed and dressed. He was busy replacing the implements in the trunk and he looked like Leo McGarry again, and not the forceful, amazing top that Josh had spent the previous night with.

"Well, sleepy head. Nice to see you're still with us," Leo commented. "Hold out your hand." Josh did as ordered, and Leo dropped the nipple clamps into it. "You keep them. I bought them for you. If you want me to use them on you again then bring them to the next session," Leo told him.

"They hurt," Josh commented, gazing at the innocent-looking and yet wicked silver clamps. Leo grinned.

"Yeah. So you'll be bringing them again?" He raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah." Josh grinned back.

"I thought so. Listen, Josh – Jed's finishing in the shower. We're in a weird space here and now. We're not in scene time but not back to normal either. Why don't you get washed and dressed and then we'll go back to our everyday lives."

Josh ran his hand through his hair and gazed around the room. There was little trace of what had gone on the previous night – Leo seemed to have cleared it all up.

"Josh?" Leo was gazing at him and he guessed that he looked a little lost in his memories.

"It was fantastic, Leo. I'm just making the most of the last few minutes. I feel like I don't want it to end."

"It was pretty good." Leo smiled.

At that moment the bathroom door opened and Jed walked into the room. He was fully dressed and smelled of cologne and toothpaste.

"Good morning, Josh!" He said breezily. "Hey, Leo – your belt's over here." He picked up Leo's belt from the dresser where he'd put it the night before. Leo held out a hand for it, but Jed batted it away, and threaded it through Leo's pants himself. "See, I told you that you didn't need anything more than this in order to succeed in your evil quest for world domination," Jed teased as he buckled the belt around Leo's waist.

"Oh, I know that," Leo replied. "I don't even need this to keep you in line, Josiah Bartlet. I could do it without anything at all."

Jed glanced at him, a surprised look in his eyes as if he hadn't realised that before and Josh wanted to laugh out loud. Jed was such an innocent and had so little understanding of his own needs, while Leo, luckily, had every understanding of them. They made such a great team.

"Hmph," Jed commented, looking a little put out. Leo laughed at him and gave him a quick kiss on the lips.

Josh watched, fascinated by the interaction between the two men. As Leo had said, they were in a weird place right now – full of intimacy but without the scene structure of the previous evening. Josh liked it; it felt like a lazy, peaceful, connected place to be. Jed turned to him and frowned.

"Time for you to get up, lazybones – the bathroom's free."

"Hey, don't playthings get a lie in?" Josh groaned, flopping back onto the bed and pulling the sheet over his head. A few seconds later it was ripped mercilessly from his body and two strong sets of arms pulled him bodily from the bed and shoved him in the general direction of the bathroom.

"No, they don't," Jed told him firmly. "Not while we're in charge anyway." Leo gave him a sharp swat on the backside to reinforce that message and speed him on his way and he went, laughing. He took a quick shower, shaved, and returned to the other room to get dressed. Leo and Jed were helping each other to put their cufflinks on, their two heads close together, their bodies pressed against each other, utterly at ease with one another. Josh felt a tiny pang. He thought he belonged here with them; he hoped he did. Leo finished with the cufflinks and turned to glance in Josh's direction.

"You done?"

"Yeah." Josh sighed. "Can I just say thanks again? Last night was incredible."

"Yes it was," Jed agreed. He crossed the room and tousled Josh's hair affectionately. "See you in a couple of weeks, Joshua."

"Yes, Jed." Josh smiled.

"And you, Mr. McGarry, sir." Jed pressed a kiss to Leo's cheek and then exited the room, closing the door behind him. Josh watched him go with another sigh. Leo came over and straightened Josh's tie, looking him in the eye as he did so.

"Okay, Josh. Now, when we go out of the door we're back to normal. You understand? You'll be Josh Lyman again, my Deputy Chief of Staff, and I'll be Leo McGarry, your boss; and he will most definitely be Jed Bartlet, President of the United States. We have whole other lives out there."

"Yes. I know that, Leo." Josh gave a wistful sigh.

"It works best this way, Joshua," Leo told him firmly, emphasising the use of his scene name.

"Yeah. I can see that." Josh nodded. "But two weeks seem like a very long time right now."

"I know. Here's something to keep you going in the meantime." Leo pulled his deputy's head towards him, and kissed Josh firmly on the lips. It was a sweet, tender kiss, tasting of toothpaste and that special Leo fire, with just a hint of command. "See you in two weeks, Joshua," Leo said softly, before turning on his heel and walking out of the door.

Josh remained where he had been standing and pressed his fingers wonderingly against his lips where he had been so expertly and lovingly kissed.

"See you in two weeks, sir," he said softly to Leo's departing back, and then, with one last, lingering look around the room, he followed the President of the United States and his Chief of Staff out of the door and back into their everyday lives.

The End

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