

Dinner

Streetlights glowed through the thin mist like orange Christmas baubles strung up early, giving the quiet Richmond cul-de-sac an almost Victorian feel—if one ignored the cars lining curbs and driveways, that was.

Jack parked his Gixxer beside Gareth's Triumph, blew warm breath on his freezing fingers, and berated himself for forgetting his gloves. He was relieved to find that Gareth was home, as if, at the very back of his mind, he'd expected the man to stand him up.

The porch light was on, and the enticing aromas of spices and roasting meat hung around the front door. It didn't smell like anything he could identify, and as Jack leaned on the bell, he wondered about the extent of Gareth's culinary skills.

While they'd served together, Gareth had mastered the art of one-pot cooking for a crowd, using whatever ingredients came his way. He'd had a well-deserved reputation, and their fire had always been good for tasty, filling stews and the very best curries. Jack also recalled large pans of softly scrambled eggs and even pancakes on the odd day when eggs, flour, and milk happened to coincide with time to cook breakfast.

Whatever Gareth was cooking tonight smelled homely and inviting, yet at the same time richer than the food Gareth's mother had cooked during the week Jack had been staying with her and the boys. More... decadent, somehow, and Jack's stomach growled in happy anticipation.

"I almost thought you weren't coming."

"Yeah, I can smell that you thought that." The smile on Gareth's face started butterflies in Jack's gut. He managed a smile of his own, held out the wine he'd brought, and then bent to take off his motorcycle boots. "What *is* this, anyway?"

"Goose."

"Goose?"

"Goose."

Jack looked up into amber eyes and considered. Gareth didn't seem to be pulling his leg. And technically goose was very much like duck or chicken, so why shouldn't it be edible?

"You said you didn't have any preferences, and I felt like it. It's a grown-up thing, sort of." Gareth sounded almost apologetic as he set the wine on the shoe cupboard and turned to lock the door. "You don't have a problem with eating goose, do you?"

"I'll tell you after dinner," Jack said. He set his boots down and shrugged out of his jacket, hanging it beside Gareth's. Freed from the restraints of damp leather, he wrapped his arms around Gareth's neck. "It smells damn nice. And I missed you."

"In that order?" Gareth wasn't slow returning the embrace. He nuzzled Jack's shirt collar out of the way to trace his lips along the strip of leather around Jack's throat.

“Maybe not,” Jack allowed, tilting his head to give Gareth’s lips more space to explore. The warmth and soft light, the scents of cooking, Gareth’s hands and mouth on him, even the shivers running up his spine, all made Jack feel as if he was coming home—until a sudden alarm sent his hand flashing for a weapon.

“Dinner’s ready.” Gareth’s warm breath against Jack’s neck comforted and soothed, and he was unfazed by Jack’s grab for the knife. “Good timing.” He dropped a brief kiss on Jack’s forehead and headed toward the kitchen. “Bring the wine?”

“My timing’s crap,” Jack grouched, shoving the knife back into its sheath and picking up the bottles. He’d been hungry when he arrived, but now his body didn’t want goose. It wanted Gareth. And it was anyone’s guess when he was going to get that.