

# Physical Chemistry

					helium 2 <b>He</b> 4.0026		
		boron 5 <b>B</b> 10.811	carbon 6 <b>C</b> 12.011	nitrogen 7 <b>N</b> 14.007	oxygen 8 <b>O</b> 15.999	fluorine 9 <b>F</b> 18.998	neon 10 <b>Ne</b> 20.180
		aluminium 13 <b>Al</b> 26.982	silicon 14 <b>Si</b> 28.086	phosphorus 15 <b>P</b> 30.974	sulfur 16 <b>S</b> 32.065	chlorine 17 <b>Cl</b> 35.453	argon 18 <b>Ar</b> 39.948
copper 29 <b>Cu</b> 63.546	zinc 30 <b>Zn</b> 65.39	gallium 31 <b>Ga</b> 69.723	germanium 32 <b>Ge</b> 72.61	arsenic 33 <b>As</b> 74.922	selenium 34 <b>Se</b> 78.96	bromine 35 <b>Br</b> 79.904	krypton 36 <b>Kr</b> 83.80
silver 47 <b>Ag</b> 107.87	cadmium 48 <b>Cd</b> 112.41	indium 49 <b>In</b> 114.82	tin 50 <b>Sn</b> 118.71	antimony 51 <b>Sb</b> 121.76	tellurium 52 <b>Te</b> 127.60	iodine 53 <b>I</b> 126.90	xenon 54 <b>Xe</b> 131.29
gold 79 <b>Au</b> 196.97	mercury 80 <b>Hg</b> 200.59	thallium 81 <b>Tl</b> 204.38	lead 82 <b>Pb</b> 207.2	bismuth 83 <b>Bi</b> 208.98	polonium 84 <b>Po</b> [209]	astatine 85 <b>At</b> [210]	radon 86 <b>Rn</b> [222]

By: Jana Downs

# **Physical Chemistry**

**Jana Downs**

Dedication

To my friends in the Chemistry Department for letting me pick your brains. 😊

## Chapter One

When one notices a chemical fire the immediate reaction is to douse it with H<sub>2</sub>O. This is bad. Most chemicals found in labs have a natural reaction to water. Some chemicals are diluted when water is added. Others blow up. That's the way chemistry works. The proper reaction is to use a neutralizing agent. That was exactly what Nico should have done when the question was posed to him on whether or not he was upset about Jin Rogers claiming his coveted first spot in the overall GPA rank in the department of Chemical Engineering. Instead, he dumped water on the fire and watched the world explode like a hydrogen bomb.

"Of course I'm aggravated about it, Renee! *Jesus*, as if I have been pushing myself for the past semester and a half to be number one only to have my position usurped by some newbie transfer student who probably doesn't know the chemical makeup of a freaking element!" Nico snapped as Renee walked over to him where he stood staring doggedly at the little pale white print out as if sheer determination could somehow miraculously change the name in the number one slot.

"I wouldn't call him a newbie, Nico. I mean, he did transfer from Penn State," Renee murmured. It was the wrong thing to say.

"Oh Christ! You are in love with him like everyone else is, aren't you? Argh! Isn't it enough that the guy is great looking and good at freaking *everything*? No! He has to be exceptionally smart too and take *my* spot. You are supposed to be my sister. Act like it!" Nico screeched, turning several people's heads as they trailed down the white cement block hallways on the way to class.

"Stop pitching a fit like a three-year-old!" Renee hissed, looking around the hall "Everyone is staring!"

"Let them!" Nico fumed, stalking down the hallway toward the main corridor of the Sciences and Arts building. "I hate him so much."

Renee snorted, the sound far from ladylike. "Oh please. You've barely said two words to the guy since he transferred here last semester. Give me a break, Nico. You can't hate the man without talking to him."

Yes. Yes he could. He was bound and determined that he would never ever feel anything that even resembled tolerance for the guy who was ruining his life.

"I talked to him in Organic Chem. He's a really nice guy. Gay too, from what I hear."

That did not interest Nico in the slightest, despite the fact he was admittedly queer as a three dollar bill. "I told you. I am above dating in college. I have my entire life to find

someone in my field of study. Preferably someone with their PhD in either chemistry or molecular biology and who works for a corporation grossing over two-hundred thousand a year." Nico kicked a rock that had somehow found its way into the main hall and watched it skitter down the polished floor. Jin Rogers was nothing if not despicable.

"You're so cerebral that it is disgusting. I'm going to laugh when some hulk of a guy with no brain and fifty pounds of muscle, that is hung like a mule, comes in and sweeps you off your tremendously picky and left-brained feet," his sister quipped.

Nico didn't even entertain the possibility. While Renee had a thing for the hunky jock type, Nico had had one too many bad experiences in high school to even go there; one experience in particular made him wary of any great looking guy with a "great" personality.

"I need both brain and brawn, dear sister. But most of all I need Jin Rogers to drop off the face of the Earth and give me back my life. Professor Belleman even suggested the two of us become research partners for our senior thesis. He originally was going to have me work on the project by myself!" They hung a right at the corner and exited out the double doors that led to the quad.

"Maybe he thinks you two would work well together." Renee suggested. He hated to point out to Renee, who should know him by now, that Nico Johnston did not work well with others. He was a damn island and he liked it that way. "When do you start that, by the way? I know it's supposed to be soon."

"Right before midterms. I am supposed to be compiling a list of print sources to refer back to at this point so that when we begin to run titrations I'll know if the results are valid." Nico just prayed that Jin had declined the offer to work as his partner on the project. Nico was very fastidious about his research and most lab partners got annoyed with his extreme attention to detail.

"Ah. That explains the mountains of books all over our coffee table and couch," Renee said dryly.

They had elected to share an apartment near campus as opposed to living in the dormitories. Neither of them were exactly easy to live with and both liked a quiet atmosphere better than a loud one. Nico surmised their preference was a result of having one parent a librarian and another who worked as the head of a research department for a pharmaceutical company back east. Renee was actually going to do an internship with their father at his company over the summer holiday. She hoped to work in his lab after graduation. Nico had bigger plans. He wanted to go on and get his PhD in Chemistry, a BS in Business, and run his own department one day.

"I'll clean it up when I am done compiling. Promise." He would have to get rid of it anyways since he had planned to devote his entire Saturday to Modern Warfare and Nazi zombies. Richard and Dillan, his friends, were even set to come over at lunch to start their marathon of shooter games.

They crossed the quad, which was filled with people throwing balls at one another or sun bathing with their dogs. Spring had finally arrived and everyone was taking advantage. Nico was intensely grateful he had no more classes today. They finally hit the concrete sidewalk which would lead them to the on-campus deli they always ate at on Thursday and which was conveniently located about a hundred feet from where they parked their car. Everything in life would be good if he didn't have one enormous pain in his side named Jin Freaking Rogers.

\* \* \* \*

Nico had just settled into their normal booth and bitten into his thick sliced ham, salami, and provolone cheese sandwich when a shadow blocked his view of the window looking out into the street. A navy blue cashmere sweater over jeans was the only thing in Nico's line of sight until he lifted his gaze and met the face of the obstruction.

"Hi, Nico," Jin greeted, his signature amped smile in place. His teeth were so straight and white that Nico was sure he'd have to have had some sort of work done. They went well with his deep hazel eyes and thick chocolate-colored hair.

Nico tried to keep the snarl off his face as he spoke.

"Hello, Jin. What did you need?" he asked. Jin shifted from foot to foot and gave him a sheepish grin, no doubt used to disarm people. He was such a manipulator! There was no way a guy that good-looking could be so unsure of himself.

"Nothing. I just saw you sitting over here and thought I'd come by and say hi. Some test in P-Chem huh?" The physical chemistry test they'd had earlier in the day hadn't been the easiest one Nico had taken but he'd never admit it.

"It wasn't too difficult. I think I managed to scrape by." *With an "A"*. Nico finished internally. *Knowing you, you've got an A+ just to piss me off.*

"Sweet. I had issues with the conversions, but I think I did okay. So, are we meeting Monday in the lab to go over our game plan for this project? Professor Belleman wanted me to run it by you before I just assumed." Jin gave him another smile whose wattage was probably off the freaking charts.

"What time Monday?" Nico asked through gritted teeth as Renee covered her laughter with a cough.

"Um, I have class until three. We can meet up after that," he said.

"Three-thirty is fine with me."

He seemed to notice Renee for the first time. "Oh hey, Renee. You were being super quiet so I didn't see you. How are you?"

Nico's sister managed to stop "coughing" long enough to reply, red-faced. "Doing well. Congratulations on top GPA, Jin."

Nico kicked her shins under the table and she winced but continued anyway.

"The way my brother goes on and on about the whole ranking thing, I think you must be equivalent to a chemistry god or something."

Jin shrugged. "I didn't even know but thanks. I don't usually pay attention to that sort of thing. It's a silly way that the professors try to get students to compete for grades. I won't be manipulated like that."

Nico nearly exploded. How could he not care that he'd taken first? He was such a freaking asshole! Something must've showed on Nico's face because Jin started to backpedal.

"I mean, if that's important to someone then I suppose that it's a big deal. It's just not to me. Uh, you know?" He shifted his weight again and adjusted the one-shouldered backpack like he wanted to bolt. "Well, I've better get going. I've got another class." He turned and walked away from the two of them without a backward glance.

"Unbelievable." Nico said in disgust, tearing into his sandwich again. "What a jerk. Did you see how he was trying to act like the grades were no big deal?"

"The only jerk here is you. You're such a snob, Nico. I thought the poor guy was going to have a stroke," Renee chastised. "You should be ashamed of yourself."

"It is just an act, Renee. No one that good looking has social issues. Get a grip. That guy wouldn't know nervous if it bit him in his nice round ass." Nico took another bite of his sandwich and a swallow of cola.

"Nice round ass?" Renee asked with raised eyebrows. "So you were looking at his ass?"

Nico waved his hand in dismissal. "It's impossible to miss. I never said the guy wasn't attractive. I said that I hated him."

Renee rolled her eyes. "You are so weird, brother mine." She pointed to him. "I wish someone that good-looking who dressed that well with that sweet personality would come walking into *my* life like that."

"He's devious, I tell you." He touched his own Super Mario Brothers T-shirt that he'd had since high school. "I don't need a fancy cashmere sweater to know that I'm pretty far up the food chain academically. He's a show off."

"Gay men are supposed to have good taste in clothes. You're a super nerd. You missed every branch except the one where you like penis when you fell out of the gay tree." She wadded up her deli wrapping and stood.

Nico followed her to the trash bin. "Excuse me for not living up to your stereotypes."

## Chapter Two

"So, I think you're like the hottest guy I've ever been out with." Jerry said, tugging on his shoulder length blond hair as they sat together at the Cream Puff, the campus ice cream, sweets, and coffee shop. Jerry wasn't a bad looking guy. He was thin, willowy, and a dancer. All the guys at the GLBT student club wanted Jerry but unfortunately he also had a 2.0 GPA to go along with his good looks, which did absolutely nothing for Jin. Maybe that was snobby of him but he felt like if someone didn't understand him intellectually they wouldn't connect with him physically no matter the attraction. This first date was quickly sliding into boring territory.

"Thank you." Jin said woodenly. He fished out his medicine, unscrewed the lid, and popped one pill into the back of his mouth. He took a sip out of his hot chocolate to avoid the sigh of indifference that he wanted to issue. This date was another bust. Most guys his age were just aiming to get off. Jin wanted something else. Having "played" in high school, he was done with that approach. He was almost twenty-four. It was time to stop dicking around and at least *try* to have a serious relationship.

His mind began to drift off as Jerry started talking about his "super hard bio class with like the most terrible prof in like the whole world". Jin had already had that class. It was intro. It wasn't hard. He sipped his drink and tried to ignore his bust of a date as Jerry continued to babble on about God-knew-what.

He wondered what Nico was doing right then. The shorter, dark-haired chemist made no effort to hide the fact he was a genius. He was almost arrogant about it, but at the same time seemed excessively unsure of himself when his intelligence was challenged. He wasn't what Jin thought of as traditionally beautiful but he was certainly a looker in Jin's eyes. He was shorter than Jin with dark hair that was thick and begged to have fingers run through it. His expression was often serious as he worked, and Jin would bet the guy had never been late to a class in his life. He had soft eyes though, to balance out the seriousness, and gorgeous creamy skin that Jin wagered was almost too soft to touch. He was Jin's type to a "T".

"Are you, like, bored or something?" the bubble head asked.

Jin swore that it would be the last time he let his roommate Carl set him up.

"Sorry. I'm just spacing out, I guess. I have a lot on my plate this week." He tried for a smile that probably didn't reach his eyes.

"Uh huh."

Okay, so Mr Bubble Head didn't believe him at all. It was time to wrap this up. He

opened his mouth to give his "thanks but no thanks" line but Jerry beat him to it.

"So listen, Jin, I know this is totally going nowhere. Why don't we call it a night?"

Did the man not realize it was still daylight?

"Um, sure. If that's what you want." Jin agreed. There had to be a trap somewhere. There always was a trap when ending a date early was this easy. He met Jerry's eyes. Yup. There was a blistering rage simmering in those depths. *Yow-za*.

"Oh my God. You are just as stuck up as everyone says you are." Jerry sniffed. He was looking at Jin like he was a cockroach requiring immediate squishing.

"Stuck up?" Jin echoed dumbly. Was Jerry serious? He wasn't stuck up, was he? He just had standards. Friends were fine and he had lots of them from all walks but for his boyfriend he wanted something a little more than skin deep.

"Yeah. You walk around here like Mister Nice Guy and really you're an overachieving snob. Nico was so right about you."

"Nico?" He was starting to sound like a parrot. But really, how many gay Nicos did he know?

"Nico Johnston, of course. What other Nico would I be talking about?"

\* \* \* \*

Jin wanted a pint of ice cream and a fifth of liquor. Unfortunately, he could have neither. The first was impossible because he was lactose intolerant, and the second would be unwise because he had a test tomorrow. "Fuck my life," he mumbled, plopping down on the bean bag in the living room in front of the massive flat screen currently displaying Assassin's Creed.

Carl paused his game and looked down. "What happened? Jerry not your type?"

"He's a bubble head," Jin said, picking up the stress ball that sat on the coffee table and tossing it up and down in the air. "Never again will I ask you to set me up."

"You didn't ask. I just did it. You never date anymore, Jin." The game resumed. Ah, so Carl obviously hadn't anticipated success.

"He used 'like' more times in one sentence than I usually do in several. On top of that I felt as if everything he said wasn't actually an independent clause. They all had these great big looping commas over and over. He couldn't form a mental period," Jin complained.

"Give me a break, Jin. The guy is hot and he spreads like fucking butter. I thought you could use a little stress relief. I swear, all you do is worry about grades and tests and lab work

and experiments. It goes on and on. You need to get laid with a desperateness that defines traditional masculine bounds, my friend." Carl sliced into an opponent on the screen only to have another sneak up on him. His fingers moved quickly but with his fading life he wouldn't last much longer.

"That isn't the worst part."

Carl gave a noise of frustration as his character died. "What was the worst part? Since you're not going to shut up about how much of a dick Jerry is until I actually listen."

"He called me stuck up." Jin announced, tossing the ball just a bit higher.

Carl laughed. "Who cares? You're not stuck up, Jin. You're just picky. Nothing wrong with that, within reason. Mind you, your check list is a million miles long and needs some definite trimming but other than that, you're fairly open-minded."

"Him saying it was not the problem." Jin murmured. He knew he sounded miserable. He just couldn't help it.

Carl frowned. "Spit it out man, jeez. Who said it if not Jerry?"

"Nico Johnston."

"Oh Christ. The guy you've been crushing on since you moved here? Man, Jin. That blows. You guys are working on a project together, right?" Carl waited for Jin's nod. "Then that's great. Show him differently. You're a great guy. Wow him. You're good at doing the romancing thing."

"How can I? He already freaking hates me and I have no clue why." Jin motioned for Carl to pass the root beer sitting by his elbow and his roommate obliged. He took a swallow of the vanilla flavored drink. He was supposed to be meeting the guy for their project. How was he going to do that when he knew what Nico really thought of him? "Maybe I should tell Professor Belleman I'm not doing the project."

"No way, Jin! You've been after that research position since you transferred here. Just because there might be some tension with your lab partner isn't a good enough reason to not do it. Seriously, how unprofessional would that look?"

Very, but, Jin hated to tell Carl he was right about anything. He sighed heavily. Man this sucked. He *really* liked Nico. He could absolutely see them taking a casual relationship to the next level. Not that they really had any sort of relationship to begin with, but the potential was there. Man, was he that repulsive? He didn't understand. He thought most people liked him...

"I'd confront him about it if it's bugging you that much," Carl continued as Jin wrestled with it internally. "Hit it head on. Least then you won't have to worry about where

you stand with him."

Jin shook his head. "Uh, no. I don't know. I mean, he's kind of intimidating to talk to anyways and I feel as if I'll just be some whining idiot if I ask him. It is a little high school to be 'he said, she said'. You know?"

Carl swigged his root beer and put the bottle back down with a shrug. "Whatever. You're the one who has to work with him."

\* \* \* \*

"So, now that you're all set up, do you have any questions?" Professor Belleman asked as Jin threw his backpack down on one of the empty lab tables. Nico was already there with his lab notebook out in front of him, dressed in standard lab attire: a white coat and closed toed shoes. He hadn't put his goggles on though, which meant there were no chemicals involved yet.

"Ah, Jin, glad you could join us. How was Doctor Carter's class?" Belleman asked, not missing a beat.

"Fine, thanks. Had a quiz," Jin said. It was a little awkward even being in Nico's presence. He felt like he was imposing and it really ticked him off.

"I'm sure you did well." Belleman waved toward Nico. "Nico has all the procedures I'll need you two to conduct while you're in the lab. I've reviewed most of his notes but I'm sure you'll have more to add."

"I do. I've got a list with me if you'd like it." Jin dug in his pack and extracted the packet he'd put together. "It was a little last minute so it's not a hundred percent complete but I think it's a good base to jump from." His eyes strayed to Nico, who was frowning. He forced himself to look back at Belleman.

"I'm sure it will be fine. You two can cross reference when I'm finished. Nico said you'd be going over project approach today and I figured I'd stop by and check on you." Belleman patted him on the arm and walked toward the door. "You two have fun." If the expression on Nico's face was anything to go by, they wouldn't. God, how had he missed the raw contempt in his expressions before?

The door clicked behind Belleman, leaving them alone.

"Um, hi," Jin said, pulling out his lab notebook and a pen. Nico made him feel so damn awkward!

"You are fifteen minutes late." Nico's tone was dead pan.

Was he serious?

"My quiz ran over. I won't be late in the future," Jin reassured. He walked over to the table Nico was using and sat down on an adjacent chair.

Nico sat down beside him. "Please don't. I hate getting saddled with a slack lab partner, especially since this project is so important to graduation."

"I won't mess it up," Jin said. Now he was getting annoyed and he could hear it creeping into his voice. Nico was berating him for his tardiness. It wasn't as if he was a professor and Jin was his student. They were equals. "Besides, it wasn't as if we could've talked about it anyways. Professor Belleman was here until just a second ago."

"But now I'm going to have to repeat all the procedural instructions he gave me," Nico groused.

"I can *read*. Thank you very much." Jin snatched up the procedures manual. "I'll have it back by tomorrow. Besides, we don't have to start on the experimentation tonight. We were supposed to discuss how we were going to approach this project, work out a schedule, and divvy up responsibilities. Your attitude is unnecessary." Had he really just said that?

"Fine," Nico snapped, "That's just fine."

"Good," Jin returned.

"Great."

Jin wanted to scream. He felt that there was a big elephant in the room and neither one of them were talking about it. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "Nico, don't get defensive about this, but what is your problem with me? Have I done something to offend you or your sister? Have I in any way bothered you?"

Nico's brown eyes widened almost comically. "Uh, I, um..." His face reddened. "I—I don't think it is necessary to talk about this."

"It's very necessary if we're going to work together. Come on, Nico. I'm not asking you to like me but I *am* asking you to talk to me about it." Jin thought he sounded reasonable. "Let's just lay out our cards on the table and that way we won't have to try and pretend that we don't feel that way."

"You first," Nico said, crossing his arms over his chest. He looked like he was bracing for a blow. Well, he was going to be sorely disappointed.

"Fine. I like you. I liked you since I moved here. I was going to ask you out, was working up the courage since we were working on this project together. Then Jerry told me that you hated my guts and thought I was an asshole so there was no point in even going there. Now I'm a little bewildered and a whole lot of annoyed about the whole thing," Jin

said, tapping his pencil on the hard top of his notebook at a quick-clipped pace.

Nico's face reddened. "I don't hate you," he muttered. He looked as if he'd swallowed a golf ball. "I mean, not really." He cleared his throat. "I think you may be a little full of yourself. That's why I dislike you. You're... a little..." He looked at the ceiling, the desk, anywhere but at Jin. "You're a little bit of a manipulative show-off."

Jin's jaw dropped in surprise. He shouldn't have been surprised given what Jerry had said but to have the object of his long-distance affections admit to it was rather like being punched in the stomach by someone with an extraordinarily large fist.

"I've got to go." He heard himself say, grabbing his bag and his notebook before pushing away from the desk.

"Jin, hang on. Wait a second. What about the project?"

"Fuck the project. I'll email you my proposal tomorrow," Jin said, slinging his bag over his shoulder. "For the record, you asshole, I am not stuck up. I just happen to enjoy what I do, and if that makes me stuck up then I guess I'm a snob." He turned sharply on his heel and marched toward the door. He half expected Nico to call him to stop again but he didn't. *Unbelievable*. He tore into the hallway and was halfway to his car before someone grabbed his arm.

"I said hang on. Don't be such a queen," Nico snapped, the guy's fingers biting into his bicep. "You told me to tell you what I had a problem with and I did. Then you flounce off with your panties in a wad. What the hell was that?"

Jin sighed and forced himself to calm down. "That was me making a dramatic exit, which you ruined, by the way."

## Chapter Three

Nico had no idea why he'd decided to chase after Jin, but he had. Like in every teen flick ever written he'd left his crap in the lab and taken off after the person he'd obviously hurt. Wasn't this the part where Jin stabbed him in the stomach with a long pointy butcher knife?

"Look, Jin, I don't know you very well and if I have misjudged you I will correct it, okay? Let's just take things slow." Nico could've kicked himself for the way he'd phrased that. He wasn't asking the guy on a date. He was asking him to stop the dramatics and let them work on this project. It would be hell explaining to Professor Belleman that his lab partner had quit because Nico had been talking about him.

Another sigh, and a tug against his grip on Jin's arm, a subtle "lemme go". "All right. Can we please just start over again?"

Nico nodded and extended his hand. "I'm Nico Johnston."

Reluctantly, the other man pumped his hand.

"Jin Rogers." A small smile flirted with the edges of Jin's lips. "Nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you, too, Mister Rogers. Now, shall we go plan out this project?" Nico could work through his feelings of dislike to get this done. Though clearly, they were going to have issues if tonight was any indication.

"Fine with me."

\* \* \* \*

Nico surprised himself by actually enjoying the rest of the meeting. Jin was just as charming as he had originally thought and he still didn't trust him, but when the full weight of his praise was turned on Nico, he felt his cheeks heating. Jin was dangerous to his tidy little world and Nico knew it.

"So we'll meet back here in two days to start the tests," Jin said, smiling as they packed their bags. Full night had fallen outside and it was pretty obvious that they were the only people left in the natural sciences building.

"Yes. Sounds like a plan." Nico was only half paying attention to the formalities of ending the conversation. They'd rehashed this about a thousand times before. His contentment with their meeting disturbed him. He felt the vestiges of hostility attempting to slink away as Jin's easygoing and warm nature made Nico want to get to know the man just a

little bit better.

"You know, Nico is a very original name. I've never heard it before." The words were unexpected and gave Nico pause.

"My mother's Greek," he explained. "My dad was Air Force. It is a pretty romantic story actually. They met on the islands. Dad named me Nicolas after his dad. My mother gave it a Greek flare. So Nico I became." He finally finished packing his bag and threw it over his shoulder.

"Nico." Jin tested it on his tongue. He made it sound like a purr, something exotic. No one had ever made Nico feel exotic before. He was a nerd. Exotic was for the pretty people. Then Jin smiled at him, the wattage of it turned up just bright enough to cause the tell-tale feeling of a warm blush to steal over Nico's cheeks. "I like it. You want to walk to the commuter lot with me?" Just like that, the invitation was issued.

"Um, sure." What else could he say? And why did this suddenly feel like a date or something?

Their shoulders bumped walking down the long hallway that connected one building to the next. It was easier, and often warmer, to go through the connecting halls to get closer to the commuter lot rather than go around the outside. Though there was no real reason they should have to stroll this close to one another. They weren't even friends really. Nico glanced up at Jin and was fascinated by the look of contentment he found there. The strong jaw and high cheekbones were relaxed and those deep eyes were thoughtful as they stared at the polished white floor ahead of them.

"You know, I always thought I'd graduate from Penn State like my mom and dad. I'm kind of glad I didn't, though," Jin said as they continued on side by side. He had a bemused expression on his face that Nico didn't remember ever seeing before. The guy really was quite breathtaking and for a minute, Nico allowed himself the luxury of letting his competitive side go and enjoy the beauty that was his new lab partner. Under any other circumstance Nico might have caved to his baser imaginings and asked Jin to take him home. Pride, and something that felt an awful bit like shame, made him reconsider. Nico'd been a real jerk to him, and he was beginning to suspect that maybe Jin hadn't deserved it... Maybe.

"You know, I'm, uh, sorry about earlier." Nico mumbled the words, unable to make them more than a soft murmur in the halls that amplified every little noise to a dull roar.

Jin blessed him with a smile. "It's all good. You're not the first person to think I'm a stuck up jerk." He shrugged. "I guess I should be used to it." He paused. "Hey, you know what? I think I know how you can make it up to me."

Nico started. Huh? "How's that?" He asked a little suspiciously. What was Jin up to? That look on his face did weird things to Nico's stomach. The expression was devious and more than a little playful. Dangerous.

"You can come over to my place and hang out with me. It's not much but my roommate is pretty cool and I've got enough movies and games to keep us occupied forever." He grinned. "It's a pretty sweet setup."

"What games do you have?" Nico asked slowly. Usually he reserved nights like this for studying for the quiz that would inevitably follow the onset of his eight am Organic Chem class, but if he could assuage his conscience by "making up" to Jin for his earlier outburst of jealousy then he'd be all the better for it. He'd had lab partners in the past that he'd hung out with. This would be no different.

"We've got a little bit of everything. I've got all the shooter games, the new Zelda game, all the game systems. You name it, I have it."

Huh. This was a side to the normally serious student that Nico had never seen. Not that he'd ever gotten close enough to be able to see anything but Jin's work ethic but still. It was strange seeing him like this. He looked just like every other video game nerd Nico had ever known as he prattled on about the merits of this or that game system and how awesome the graphics looked on his new flat screen.

"Okay. I'll come check out your setup but I warn you, I'm competitive." Nico heard himself say. They'd finally reached the end of the obnoxiously long hallway and Jin opened the heavy metal door and held it open to let Nico through. Like a real gentleman.

"Good. It'll make the victory sweeter when I cream you," Jin joked, all but skipping down the concrete path towards the car lot.

"You wish!" Nico said, laughing at the giddy look Jin gave him. The guy was a real dork. He was nothing like the cool and reserved student that had been in several of his classes.

They talked animatedly all the way to their cars. They actually had a lot in common other than their chosen field of study. The realization startled Nico. Who would've guessed that they had mutual interests? All things considered, Jin should probably be looking down his nose at Nico's nerdy image and likings.

"Okay, I gotta ask before I lose my nerve."

Nico tensed at the phrase. The relaxation he'd been slipping into vanished into thin air. Unbelievable. What was this about?

"Um, okay. What?" Why couldn't he be half as smooth as Jin? The guy always

sounded like he was in charge. That he knew what he was talking about. Nico couldn't even string a sentence together that didn't include "um", at least not when Jin was around.

"Do you think we're going to be okay working together?" The sentence was rushed and it took Nico a minute to process it.

"Yes. Why not? Honestly, now that everything is out in the open, there is no reason why we can't have a fine business association," Nico said.

"Well, I don't know. Never mind." Jin shrugged. "If you don't think it'll be a problem I guess it won't be. Do you always sound like a text book when you talk?" Jin asked, a slightly teasing note in his voice.

Nico frowned. "Not always. But there's nothing wrong with proper enunciation and word choice. Most people around here sound like they're sixteen when they talk. Honestly, how often do you hear of someone being hired who uses "like" and "dude" in a sentence?"

"You're not in a job interview, goofball." Jin reached out and ruffled Nico's hair which sent a thread of irritation through him. He wasn't a kid to be patted on the head. It was one of his pet peeves.

Jin scuffed his expensively clad feet on the broken concrete as he headed toward the end of the lot where he'd probably left his car. They must have parked in the same area since they continued on a similar path.

Jin looked at him. "So does this mean we can't be friends?" There was a vulnerability in Jin's voice that had Nico slowing his forward movement.

"We hardly know each other, Jin. Besides, don't you have to like each other to be friends?" It was probably a cruel thing to say but Nico was still on the fence on whether or not he liked Jin at all, forget whether he wanted to be friends or not.

Jin nodded like he'd expected that answer. "Okay, so long as I know where we stand. You still game for coming over and goofing off for an hour or so?"

Nico considered it. A moment ago he was ready to jump in his car and drive over to Jin's place on a whim. He never did anything that impulsive. "I have a quiz in organic tomorrow. Another time?" There probably wouldn't be another time but Nico figured it would be best to imply that politely.

"Yeah." Jin's expression was easy to read by the light of the streetlamps and even Nico could see that he looked a little upset. He turned sharply and headed toward what looked like a blue and white Mustang. The lights flashed as Jin hit the unlock button. It was a really nice car.

Nico continued on down the row towards the vehicle he and his sister shared and

opened it by hand. The unlock mechanism in the key fob had long ago quit working and neither one of them had been able to get it fixed. They'd had the battery replaced about half a dozen times now. It was a simple champagne hand-me-down from their parents that they'd gotten for graduation as their mom had traded in for a new BMW. It wasn't a bad looking vehicle per se, but it certainly wasn't sporty. The engine of Jin's car roared to life behind him. Wow. It sounded like a sexy purr too. It suited the man who drove it. Whoa. Where did that thought come from?

"Hey, Nico!" Jin's voice had him turning away from the door. "See you tomorrow to go over preliminary procedures? That way we'll be ready to start experimentation the day after."

Nico nodded.

"Sweet. See you then." Jin circled out of the nearly empty lot.

Nico watched his progress with a weird feeling in the pit of his stomach. It felt almost like regret. Had he really wanted to go with Jin to play video games? The guy was a live wire, for sure. He was entertaining and funny. On top of that he had a rapier wit and an intelligence he managed to show off without being obnoxious. So why then didn't Nico like him?

"Because no one is that nice for no reason. Everyone has flaws. The guy is probably a serial killer or something." The muttered words didn't really help him. Nico knew he was just grasping at straws to justify his dislike of Jin but couldn't get past the idea that he had to have a Jekyll and Hyde personality. "Besides, it's only a matter of time before I find out what he's really like." Maybe once he found the flaw in Jin Rogers he would be able to finally put the other man from his mind, dismiss him, as it were, like he did with all the other students who went to his school. He'd already wasted enough time trying to get Jin out of his head. He didn't want to waste any more of it.

\* \* \* \*

Jin didn't know how to feel about the situation as he stretched his tired muscles and poured himself into his bed a few hours later. On one hand, he felt as if he had a slightly better shot with Nico now that the ice had been broken. There was no longer this undercurrent of dislike that had been there. On the other hand, he felt like Nico thought he was either completely fake or someone whom he couldn't measure up to. Neither possibility made Jin happy.

Nico was gorgeous to Jin. Who cared if he was nerdy? Jin was really into smart guys. He'd never date a guy seriously who wasn't nerdy.

"He doesn't even *like* you. Why in the world would you even be trying to figure out a way to win him over?" Carl asked as Jin let out another long suffering sigh while crawling beneath the covers. He'd come in to borrow a pair of Jin's jeans and had subsequently got the story of his night on his way out.

"I don't know, man. He's this enigma that I can't get out of my head no matter what I do." It really sucked liking someone who didn't even like you back. It fucking sucked to be honest.

"I'm telling you, Jin, you need to get laid with an urgency that defies the imagination. Let me hook you up."

Jin groaned at the suggestion. "No way. Every time you hook me up with someone, I end up regretting it."

"What if he looks like Nico?"

"Dude, you are compounding the problem not neutralizing it." Jin had to wonder if Carl was really that thick.

"What if it's someone you already know?"

"Not interested."

"What if it's someone you already like?"

"I don't like anyone but him."

"You like other people as *friends*."

Jin looked at Carl quizzically. "What is your point?"

"My point is, I'm sure others would be willing to get the sheets dirty with you. I mean, you're a good looking guy. It'd be no hardship doing the horizontal tango with you." Was Carl blushing? Seriously?

"Um, Carl, something you want to say?" Jin didn't know how else to react to that statement. It sounded like Carl was up to something.

"I'm saying you're good looking, dick head. Jesus. I'm not writing sonnets."

"How much beer have you had to drink?"

Carl made a noise of frustration in the back of his throat. "None yet. I'm on my way to get some. And that is the last time I try to throw you a bone." He turned and stomped out of the room and back out into the lit hallway. Jin couldn't help but chuckle at that. He knew his friend was trying to help out but his delivery left much to be desired. No, sleeping with Carl would accomplish very little in Jin's mind. There was only one man that would satisfy him

and he was also the one man who had adamantly declared he wanted nothing to do with Jin.

## Chapter Four

"What were your test results from the last gel set we ran?" Nico asked, frowning over his print out as he read the chemical components and their arrangements.

"They're in my notebook." Jin pointed over his right shoulder as he hunched over his own lab book and scribbled like a madman. He really was a machine when it came to lab work. They'd been at it for over three hours now and it didn't look like he was taking a break anytime soon. It was really nice working with someone who took this as seriously as Nico did.

Nico rolled his chair over to the empty computer desk Jin had indicated and gave a sigh of irritation. "I think I contaminated my sample. I'm getting a strange discoloration in section thirteen for some weird reason."

Jin perked his head up. "Oh?"

"Yeah. I am going to have to rerun it." Nico's spirit dropped at the prospect. It took over an hour to run the material and he'd planned on calling it an early night tonight. He groaned. "I can't believe I contaminated the sample. Dammit!" He hated screwing up experimentation. It was one of the cardinal sins he'd held against most of his fellow undergrads when he was in lab groups. His gaze flicked to Jin. He probably thought Nico was an idiot.

The kind look in Jin's eyes filled Nico with relief. "No sweat, Nic. You had class all day today. Why don't we call it a night and continue on tomorrow?"

"Are you sure?" Nico asked, not believing for a second that Jin was at a place that he could stop.

"I'm just doing my lab report for the experiment. I can finish it at home." He paused. "Why don't you come back to my place? I can throw a pizza in the oven and we can unwind a bit and play some Xbox." The carrot was effectively dangled. Nico was just tired enough and just embarrassed enough by his screw-up that his resolve to stay away from the perfect and gorgeous Jin Rogers wavered.

He shrugged. His sister had taken the car tonight anyway so riding with Jin would save him from having to take the public transit. "Okay. I don't have anything due tomorrow."

They started shutting down their files and packing up their things in silence. On the outside, Nico was calm and measured, like Jin, as he prepared his things to leave. Inside was another thing entirely. His heart pounded and his mind raced just thinking of what he'd signed up for. *Get a grip, Nico.* He commanded himself. *It's just some mindless entertainment with*

*your mortal enemy. No big.*

If felt like a big deal. Why was his adrenaline pumping? It didn't make sense for him to be this nervous. It wasn't a date. He nearly had a coronary over the word "date". Why had his mind even gone there?

"Hey, you okay?" Jin asked, his hand resting gently on Nico's shoulder. The warmth sank into the material of Nico's T-shirt and warmed the skin beneath. *No, I'm not. I'm reacting to you and I don't like it at all.*

Nico attempted a reassuring smile. "I'm fine. Sorry, got lost in thought. Did you say something?"

"Nope. You just looked as if you were in pain for a second." Jin pulled his messenger bag onto the shoulder. "You ready for this?"

Why did it feel like the question was so much more than what was asked?

"Of course. Stop dragging your feet, Rogers. Let's do this."

\* \* \* \*

"Motherfucker!" Jin cursed as Nico sniped him again. Nico grinned in triumph, sipping from his glass of water in reward for his excellent shooting skills. Jin threw his controller down on the coffee table and made a noise of frustration. He fished out one pill from his pocket and with the help of his drink, swallowed it down. It was probably some allergy medicine or something. "Damn sniper rifles." Jin grumbled.

Nico chuckled. So Mr Amenable did have a competitive streak. "Sorry, Jin. I could give you some pointers if you'd like." He said the words with practiced innocence, adding batting eyelashes for effect.

"Hmph. I'll get you next round. I'm getting some pizza from the kitchen. Want a piece?" Jin stood and started walking towards his destination.

"Sure."

"Pepperoni or cheese?"

"Cheese."

Despite his earlier nervousness Nico had relaxed in Jin's presence almost immediately when he'd sat down in front of the TV and the games had begun. It had helped that Jin was like Novocain to his brain. The man had the ability to settle Nico in a way that no one had been able to accomplish in his twenty-three years of life.

A paper plate slid onto the table in front of him before Jin plopped down on the couch

beside him. "You ready for the next round?"

Nico shrugged. "I'm a little burnt out on the shooter games. Why don't we put in a movie?" Had he really just suggested that? Almost immediately he regretted opening his mouth. Watching a movie while sitting side-by-side one another on a couch definitely sounded "date-like" to Nico.

"Sure," Jin said, turning slightly toward him on the couch. "What are you in the mood for?"

Maybe it was the way he said it that made Nico's mind short-circuit and take the sentence in a direction it wasn't supposed to go. He swallowed hard and raised his eyes to meet Jin's. The look of easy congeniality that had been plastered on Jin's face all evening wavered and his eyes darkened and took on the half-hooded look of someone who'd just realized that the object of his lust was located in his immediate vicinity. Nico swallowed. Jin really was a handsome guy...

"Nico?"

The question shot to Nico's dick. It was like Jin was asking permission and damn if Nico didn't find that incredibly stimulating. *I hate him*. He told himself as he wet his bottom lip with his tongue. *I hate him so much*. Then Jin's lips covered his and all his thoughts ceased entirely.

Jin immediately took control of the kiss. The firm press of his lips was a display of possession as much as a declaration of desire and Nico found himself falling effortlessly under the other man's spell as their tongues met and tangled. God, he'd never been kissed like his partner was drowning. He'd always felt superior to the men he'd been with. With Jin it was almost like he was tangoing with an equal. If he were honest, more like a superior.

Nico tried to break the kiss and regain his breath and his sanity but Jin was having none of it. He chased Nico's mouth and covered up the protest that was forming with another deep plunge of his tongue. His head swam and he fell back into the kiss with only a ripple of concern. They really shouldn't be doing this.

Within seconds Jin had Nico on his back on the couch, pressing him into the soft surface. He rested his hands on Jin's chest, but whether to push him away or pull him closer he wasn't sure. All he knew was that if Jin didn't touch him he was going to explode. They rubbed against one another, their jeans an unforgiving barrier that Nico wasn't sure he really wanted there. The fact that his brain had switched itself on to autopilot and was following the lead of his body should've been cause for concern. Unfortunately, Nico was past the point of caring about his intellect.

"Christ, Nico, wanted you for so long." The husky sentence was pressed against his lips and Nico whimpered at the admission. Had he really wanted Nico? What did Jin see in him? He was scrawny and nerdy and completely cerebral. Most guys found that an absolute turn off.

Nico gasped as Jin's hands reached down and cupped his ass cheeks and kneaded them like they were the sexiest things he'd ever had in his palms. But Nico wanted more... needed more, really.

His hands tugged on Jin's shirt, trying to pull it up to get to the tantalizing flesh underneath. Contact sizzled as Nico managed to get his hands under the cotton material to trace the muscled stomach above him with worshipful fingertips. Jin broke the kiss and Nico whimpered in protest only to sigh in appreciation as Jin obliged him by pulling off his shirt entirely and tossing it toward the other side of the room. He knew then that they were going to have sex. There was no other option. Nico couldn't stop touching and he didn't want Jin to realize that he probably shouldn't be touching him either.

Jin panted and stared down at Nico for a long time as if he was searching for permission to continue. Nico half sat up and offered him his mouth again. As Jin groaned in surrender and met his kiss, Nico realized that he'd won.

"Holy shit, Jin! On the fucking couch, man? Really?"

Ice water could not have been a more effective cock block. Every muscle in Nico's body froze and the stiffness of Jin's gave Nico the impression that Jin felt the same. *Oh God. Kill me now.* Nico pushed against Jin's chest, demanding he get off as his arousal deflated like a helium balloon with a hole in it.

Jin raised his head. "Carl, you are such an asshole!" he said, rolling off of Nico and standing up. Apparently he wasn't as embarrassed as Nico because he was still sporting an impressive half mast in the confines of his jeans.

"You could've sent me a text or something and I would've slept over at Brian's."

Nico wanted a hole to open up in the living room floor and swallow him. He sighed and sat up, looking at the newcomer who had to be Jin's roommate. "Um, hello." He tried really hard to sound cool but he had the sneaking suspicion that he sounded like a strangled poodle. The guy was actually quite good looking, dark hair, dark eyes, clean cut. It didn't make it easier to be caught by someone good-looking though.

"Hi, uh, sorry, man. Didn't mean to bust in here like that," the guy said. "I'm Carl, Jin's roommate." He extended his hand and Nico shook it lightly, praying that his lips weren't nearly as puffy as they felt.

"I'm Nico."

Carl's eyes widened a bit and shot to Jin who had retrieved his shirt and was putting it on and then back to Nico. "Oh. *You're* Nico. Huh. All right. Well, if you guys want to continue that's cool, but can you take it to Jin's room? The living room is kinda public space."

Nico jumped up from the couch. "No, thank you. I really need to get home anyway." He looked at Jin pleadingly. Without missing a beat, Jin nodded.

"Of course. I'll drive you to your place." He glanced at his roommate and the "we'll be talking about this later" look was firmly in place. Carl had the sense to seem at least a little contrite before ambling off in the direction of the back bedrooms.

As the door shut, Jin turned toward Nico. "I'm sorry about that. Truly, I forgot that he might be coming home."

Nico felt his cheeks start to heat as Jin spoke. "No worries," he said. "I'm glad he came in. Otherwise I might've—" He cut himself off to keep from sounding like an idiot. No way did Jin need to know that Nico had absolutely considered giving it up to him so easily. He needed to play it cool and just ignore the churning in his stomach.

The clink of car keys being jostled had Nico raising his head from his fascinating contemplation of his feet. Jin was looking at him like Nico was a puzzle that he just couldn't figure out. Nico busied himself by fetching his hoodie and back pack and stood by the exit.

"Um, ready to go?" Nico asked, pulling open the door. Jin nodded and followed him out of the house.

Nico hugged his coat around him as they got into the car and began the silent drive to his apartment. *Jin Rogers cannot be trusted. Jin Rogers is too beautiful and too perfect and too nice to be real.* Nico repeated the phrase in his head like a personal mantra. *No one is really that good. No one. Especially not to me. I'm not good looking or suave or anything else guys like Jin find attractive. This was a fluke, one that I initiated. He probably only wanted me because he thought I was easy or something.* Nico resolved to keep things professional between them. He didn't have any other choice. Jin was dangerous. He'd proved that irrevocably tonight.

He leaned his head against the cool pane of the glass and wondered what Jin was thinking of everything that had happened tonight. He stole a glance at his companion as he drove. Jin's expression was absolutely unreadable. Anxiety filled Nico. How in the world were they supposed to work with one another with this hanging over them? Jin reached over and ruffled Nico's hair without taking his eyes off the road.

"Don't over think it."

The statement made a measure of calm return to Nico's panicked thoughts. That was right. Jin was good at everything. If he could compartmentalize this so could Nico. Besides, he said not to over think it. They were just two guys who'd had a moment. It was nothing more than that... Really.

## Chapter Five

Jin had anticipated things getting awkward between them after their encounter at his place, but he never expected it to be quite like this. Nico had retreated behind his veritable wall of intellect and had refused to discuss any subject that didn't involve their project. The tension between them was thick enough that Jin was pretty sure he could make blocks out of it if he cut it out of the air.

As two weeks passed and there was still no sign of Nico yielding a little to the invitations of coffee dates, study sessions, or dinner meetings, Jin was at his wit's end. Kissing Nico had been the most powerful experience of his life, and damn it all if Nico wasn't getting in his own way. There was a passionate creature behind the nerdy exterior and Jin fucking ached to have him back in his arms.

"Okay, I'm finished with these cultures and I've run the soil samples through the machine. I'm just waiting on the results." Nico spoke from the other side of the lab where he'd set up shop. Spending thirty-plus hours a week together working on this project had not done them any good. It felt as if there was an entire continent between them. Jin stared down at his nearly empty lab notebook. He had gotten zero done since getting here.

He pushed the paper away from him. Nico looked over at him as Jin crossed his arms over his chest.

"What's wrong?" Nico asked.

"This."

"What do you mean? We are making good headway on the project. Doctor Belleman has been really happy with our results and he is even talking about letting us present it at the undergraduate expo." Nico looked genuinely confused by Jin's statement.

Jin shook his head. "I'm not talking about this damn project. I'm talking about the fact that we kissed and you aren't even giving it a thought."

"You told me not to over think it!"

"I told you not to over think it so you wouldn't do what you did anyway, close up like a fucking clam shell. I'm not just some guy aiming to get off here. Is it so hard to believe that I want to date you, Nico?"

Nico's face had paled over the course of his sentences. "You can't like me, Jin. Jesus. You're nothing like me."

Jin had finally had enough of that same line. He threw up his hands and gave a growl of frustration. "Nothing like you? Give me a fucking break! We're in the same department,

take the same classes, have the same interests, and enjoy the same subjects. How are we nothing alike?"

"Why do you always start fights in the lab? It is really unprofessional," Nico sputtered, forcing his eyes back on the sheet of paper in his hands. "We... kissed. I would prefer to think that it was an enjoyable one-time experience. There is no reason to take it further."

"This all goes back to the fact that you think I am this asshole who is only *pretending* to be me. God, who hurt you so badly that you see me as this bad guy who is such an unfeeling dick that I'd play you like a violin for kicks?" At Nico's wince, Jin knew he had something. He continued. "What was his name, Nico? Who hurt you?"

"I-I don't know what you are talking about. I d-don't even date!" The stammered shout only confirmed Jin's suspicions.

"No you don't. But I bet you did before. What was his name, Nico?"

"Leave me alone."

"What was his name, Nico? If I'm going to be compared to him every single second of every single day at least tell me who the fuck I'm being compared to," Jin demanded. He was not letting Nico retreat. Not this time. If he was going to reject Jin, he was going to do it because he didn't like Jin not because he was seeing Jin transposed over some ex-boyfriend of his.

Nico seemed to slump in defeat, doggedly staring at his shoes once again. "Nathan Casters," he said. "His name was Nathan Casters and he was my first and only boyfriend in high school."

Triumph flowed through Jin's veins. *I knew it!* He pushed himself from the desk he'd been working at and crossed the tile to stand in front of Nico.

"Nate was a track star and a damn math genius. He was smart and funny and everyone liked him." Nico's bitter words confirmed that this story was not going to end pleasantly. "It was senior year and we were in AP physics together. We started talking, hit it off really well. He was *so* charming." Nico started to tremble and Jin wrapped his arms around Nico's waist, half pulling him off the chair as he wrapped him up in his comforting embrace. "He was still in the closet so we kept our relationship a secret. He was always really nice to me but then he was nice to everyone so it didn't look too weird. Anyway, the relationship went okay for a while and then things changed. It was around prom and we agreed to meet up afterward and hang out at my place since my parents were conveniently gone to my aunt's house that weekend." He took a deep breath. "So he came over and we ended up sleeping together. The

entire weekend was just one big moment of bliss. I was seriously convinced that I loved him more than anything and that we were going to go to college and spend the rest of our lives together. Monday rolled around and everyone is talking about how Nate had come out at prom as gay and how it was this big scandal. I know it must've been hard on him but I was so happy that we wouldn't have to hide the fact we were going out anymore. I went to physics with this big smile on my face and my other lab partner Charlie starts talking about how Nate came out and blah, blah, blah, it was the same crap I had heard all morning so I didn't pay much attention. Then he mentions that he saw Nate with his boyfriend in the hallway."

Jin's stomach dropped. *Oh hell.*

"Apparently he'd been secretly dating one of the guys on the track team and now they were together. I couldn't fucking breathe. All I could think of was that it was a mistake and my Nate wouldn't do something like that. After all," he looked up at Jin, "he was so nice and everyone liked him."

"What happened, baby?" Jin asked, knowing that this story was letting Nico get this off his chest where it had sat for God only knew how long.

"I confronted him after class and he just stared at me with this evil smug look on his face." Rage simmered in Nico's expression. "He asked how I could even think that we could ever be a legitimate couple. After all, we ran in completely different social circles and though I was great in bed, he couldn't see himself 'lowering his standards' for a guy like me. It was then I realized that we were all being played for a fool. Nate was not some nice guy who liked everyone and just happened to be popular and good at everything. He was a stuck-up bastard who cared more about his image than anything else. The only reason he'd even gotten involved with me to begin with was so he could have an edge with his physics and copy my homework."

Jin hugged him tight and Nico returned the grip. "I'm not like that, Nico. I like you for who you are. Not because I want something from you. That guy was an asshole."

"I'm difficult to get along with," Nico said, obviously still trying to put some distance between them.

"That's okay. I'm easy to get along with."

"I work all the time."

"So do I."

"I'm not going to sleep with you right away."

"I didn't ask you to."

Nico sighed, the fight going out of him. Jin smiled and looked up into the other man's

face. "I'm going to show you what it's like to be treated right, Nico. I promise. I'm worth it."

"I hope so. Because if you hurt me, Jin Rogers, I'm going to make you miserable." The threat was actually cute. He much preferred Nico showing his fear like that than by retreating behind his wall.

Jin couldn't resist him. Not when Nico worried his bottom lip like that and blushed like he was sixteen. He brought his hands up to cup Nico's face. "So you're giving me a chance?" Jin asked, just for clarity's sake.

Nico's blush deepened. "Yeah, I guess I am."

"Good."

Then Jin claimed Nico's lips. He couldn't think of a better way to seal the deal than to kiss Nico stupid. Just like last time, Nico yielded so sweetly that Jin had to tamp down on his impulse to take more than what was offered. Nico just tasted fantastic and he was so soft against Jin's body, he was nearly impossible to resist.

"Jin."

Oh that was a hell of a good sound. The wonder that one word conveyed made Jin's nightly fantasies come to roaring life. He'd always imagined that Nico would feel just like this in his arms but never thought he'd get the chance to experience it again.

Nico's hands tangled in Jin's hair, demanding in a way that he hadn't been the first time they kissed. Instead of passive acceptance, Nico met him step for step, plunge for plunge. Jin could already imagine tangling more comfortably in his room. He could get used to touching Nico like this. He imagined his oh-so-prim-and-proper soon to be boyfriend was a real hellcat when he got worked up.

Jin nipped his lips once before letting Nico break their kiss. "You cannot do that when we are in the lab. We are liable to forget everything and mess up our samples." Nico's words might've been more effective if they weren't so breathless. Jin smiled and kissed his nose.

"I'll trust you to keep me on track."

\* \* \* \*

"Oh my God!" Renee screeched as Nico confessed why he was wearing a big goofy grin when he'd walked into their living room. She threw her arms around him as he fairly vibrated with excitement that he hadn't allowed himself to express since Jin had extracted the promise of a chance from him earlier in the lab.

"I can't believe he actually got me to say yes," he said, plopping down onto the brown

suede sofa and pulling his sister beside him. "He's so..."

"Dreamy?" Renee asked the adjective with a grin.

Nico rolled his eyes and tried to maintain a stern expression and feared that he failed miserably.

"Well, that too," he said. His sister giggled at the admission. "However, I was going to say that he is tremendously pushy and overly confident, not to mention he is still a know-it-all." Odd, the words no longer sounded like an insult.

"Oh, well that is an improvement," Renee teased, laughing. "I'm happy for you. He's a great looking, smart guy whose only flaw is that he's better than you in school. I'd say that is a win, Mister Johnston."

Nico frowned at the reminder. "I am going to beat him at the P-Chem final."

She just laughed harder. "I love you, brother mine. Honestly, only you would feel the need to be competitive with your new boyfriend."

"He is not my boyfriend yet. We have agreed to date. Doesn't mean he's mine." He didn't want to get his hopes up in case it didn't work out but he was definitely on cloud nine right now. It still blew his mind that Jin had actually coaxed a confession out of him about Nate. He'd not dated seriously since then and had never told a soul, not even Renee, about his and Nate's relationship. Somehow it had just felt right to talk to Jin about it.

Renee rolled her eyes. "Oh please. It's only a matter of time. If he can put up with your OCD, left-brained self for longer than two weeks, I'm going to force you guys into matrimony."

"My God, Renee. A little fast to be considering all that." *Way too fast.* A sudden wave of insecurity hit him. "Do you think I should tone down my OCD for him? Maybe dress a little differently?"

Renee erupted into peals of laughter.

Nico felt his face redden. "Yeah, yeah, laugh it up. You are such a bitch. That was a legitimate question."

When she finally got her laughter under control she sat back on the couch and considered him. "If he likes you, and I mean really likes you, then you don't need to change anything for him. I mean, your nerd-dom is a part of you. As much as I lament the fact that you have zero fashion sense, your wardrobe is part of the package. I don't think you should change it just for some guy. Granted, he's a hot guy, but if it's going to work long term, he's going to have to get to know you for you, not some image you give to him on a silver platter."

"But... what if he doesn't like me?" Nico asked. He didn't even recognize the small voice that spoke. To say he was insecure was a vast understatement. He was terrified this was all some big mistake and that he'd walk into the lab tomorrow and Jin would say "just kidding about liking you".

Renee wrapped her arm around his shoulders and gave them a squeeze. "Oh please. You're adorable. Like a teddy bear with thistles."

He rolled his eyes. "Thanks, sis. Thanks."

\* \* \* \*

Nico was reading a book in the lab when Jin came through the door. He looked up just in time to see Jin toss his backpack violently to the ground. Instant concern flooded Nico.

"Hey, are you all right?" He asked, putting in his bookmark and pushing away from the lab station. The worst part of running the experiments was having to wait for the results which took an hour per sample. It allowed for a lot of waiting and a lot of reading.

Jin stood with his back to Nico, taking a couple of deep breaths as if to calm himself. "Yeah, I'm fine." His voice was so tight that it sounded downright brittle. When he turned around as Nico got closer, he gave him a very forced smile. "I'm sorry, beautiful. Didn't mean to startle you."

Nico tilted his head, watching him. It was the first real display of temper Jin had ever shown. "It's okay. Did you have a bad day or something?" When they'd spoken on the phone earlier everything had seemed fine.

"No, everything was fine today. I just stopped by the student health center to pick up my medicine and it won't be in until next week. It's just frustrating," Jin said. He opened his arms and Nico went into them willingly. Jin gave really nice warm hugs but there was an element of underlying tension in it now. He seemed almost afraid. It made Nico wonder exactly what kind of medicine they were talking about. Nico had always assumed the pills Jin popped every once in a while were for allergies or something. Maybe it was for something more serious.

"It isn't anything life threatening, right?" If it was they'd have to come up with a way to get the medicine Jin needed. Maybe Nico could call his father. He would know whom to speak with.

Jin looked pained for a second. "Not really. It can just make things uncomfortable for me and those around me if I run out for any length of time." He gave Nico a squeeze before

releasing him. "Don't worry about it too much. But, er... if I am acting a little strangely that's why, okay? It has nothing to do with you." He cleared his throat and bent to get in his backpack. "I got you a little something today. It's nothing extraordinary but I thought of you when I saw it."

Nico watched, perplexed, as Jin dug in his book bag and took out two plush toys, one bright red and the other green. He handed them over with an embarrassed look on his face.

"They're a set of DNA molecule stuffed animals. They have magnets where they naturally hydrogen-bond. I thought it was cool." He smiled, revealing his pearly white teeth. It was the first genuine smile he'd shown today. "I almost got you the brain cell plush but they were out. So, I hope you like it."

Nico felt a smile stretch across his lips. "I really like them." He clipped them together where they were magnetized and held them to his chest. "Though, you might as well give it up now."

Jin frowned. "Give what up now?"

"Your reputation, Mister Rogers." Nico grinned. "No cool kid buys this kind of thing for his boyfriend. I'm sorry. You're officially relegated to the nerd table."

Jin stepped into him then and stole a kiss from Nico's startled lips. "That's okay. I like the nerd table," he said as he lifted his head from the kiss and gave Nico a wink. "Now, would you like to look over my notes from yesterday to cross reference? I thought I saw a dissimilarity but I wasn't a hundred percent sure."

## Chapter Six

The week drew to a close like every week of the middle of the semester. There was too much to do and not enough time to do it when one tried to balance it with any sort of social life. Nico was usually panicking about numerous projects and finishing up reports about that time. Instead, he was looking forward to the close of his day so that he could meet up with Jin for dinner before they went back to Nico's house for some studying and perhaps a movie. It wasn't the typical Friday night date for a college student but Nico was happy with the possibility of being able to relax with Jin without the pressure of a more social atmosphere.

The professor dismissed class with a warning of a quiz on Monday on the material they'd covered in class and also shouting a reminder as the students shuffled toward the door that the lecture on Wednesday was cancelled. Nico carefully put his laptop in its case and felt the burden of scholastic concerns lift in favor of excitement at the idea of seeing Jin so soon.

He put his bag on his shoulder and followed the herd of his peers into the hallway. A firm hand grabbed his arm, making him jump. He looked up as he was plucked out of the throng and pulled off to the side. He was surprised to see Jin's roommate, Carl, behind the maneuver.

"Hey," the other man said. The stern set to his jaw perplexed Nico. He hadn't thought he'd made *that* bad of an impression on Jin's roommate. He frowned. How in the hell had he found him anyway?

"Hi. Did you need something?" Nico asked, pulling his arm out of the other man's grip. It made him intensely uncomfortable to have Carl staring at him so intently.

"I wanted to talk to you before you meet up with Jin." Carl took a deep breath as if he was about to drop a bomb. "I need you to look after Jin when you guys are out today."

Nico blinked. "Uh, all right." He paused. "Is something going on that I should know about?"

Carl looked at him strangely. "He's out of his medicine. He was up most of the night and is irritable as hell today. I just don't want him to freak out and do something stupid."

"Does he have some kind of sleep disorder?" Nico asked. Jin had shrugged off his medicine like it wasn't a big deal but Carl didn't look like he agreed with the sentiment. The idea that Jin had deliberately kept something important from him didn't make Nico happy at all.

"Um, not exactly." Carl seemed to realize Jin hadn't told him. "I shouldn't have said

anything. If he doesn't want to tell you yet, I sure as hell shouldn't have mentioned it. Forget I was here."

"Wait a second!" Nico said, grabbing Carl's arm before he could walk away. "I need to know what is going on."

Carl sighed. "You have to ask Jin about that. I can tell you that despite your very high view of him that Jin is far from perfect. He has some pretty deep issues that he hides behind that steady smile and good looks. It's nothing he can help and I think that he's pretty insecure about it." Carl almost sneered when he said the next bit. "Since *someone* has been telling him that he's probably deceitful and probably not a good guy, I imagine he doesn't want to show you or admit that he may have a dark side. Just a thought."

Nico took the thinly veiled jab with a sharp intake of the breath. "You are awfully protective of him for a roommate."

"Yeah, well, someone has to be. He's always had my back and I will continue to have his. So, you better watch that defensive tone of yours, bud, because I don't think you're good for him to begin with. He's always liked you and for his sake, I'm not saying anything to him about how he deserves better. But, if you hurt him, if you keep playing him like a yo-yo I will bury you." Carl finished his speech and Nico had no doubt that he meant every word he said. *God, was I really that bad to Jin? And how is this any of Carl's business?*

He opened his mouth to deliver a scathing reply only to come up with a pledge instead. "I'm not going to hurt him." *I'm scared he's going to hurt me and this is not making me any more confident that he won't.*

Carl nodded. "Good. I'll see you around." He turned on his heel and walked away without a backward glance.

Nico stared after him for a minute, in limbo as his mind tried to catch up with the conversation he'd just had. Very much deflated from his earlier good mood, Nico headed toward the exit.

\* \* \* \*

Warm arms wrapped around Nico's shoulders from behind and a chaste kiss was pressed to his neck. Instantly, the smell of man and cologne enveloped him. He relaxed into the embrace and turned his head.

"Do you always run up to your dates and nuzzle them like a teddy bear?"

Jin gave him a wink. "Not recently. I've had this guy on my mind. He's really brainy

and not into that sort of thing but I've been wanting to do it since he said he'd go on a date with me."

Nico gave him a playful shove. "I'm sure he wouldn't protest too badly, given the proper motivation."

His nerves were still shot from earlier and his worry for what was really going on with Jin grew with each passing second. At the same time he didn't feel like he should just come out and ask what was going on. Carl had made him feel so damn bad about how he'd treated Jin to begin with.

He met Jin's eyes and the smile he put on his face wavered. Jin did not look like regular composed Jin. First off he had dark circles under his eyes and his hair wasn't nearly as well groomed as it usually was. Second off his clothes looked slept in. It was definitely not what Nico normally thought of when he thought of Jin Rogers.

"Are you okay?" he asked. Jin shifted, an embarrassed look on his face. He smoothed his hands down the front of his clothes.

"Yeah. I thought so."

Nico shook his head. "I'm sorry. You just look... off." He knew he said the wrong thing when Jin's eyes narrowed.

"Well, damn, I am human, Nico. My bad for not looking a hundred percent." Jin shoved his hands into his pockets and motioned his head. "You ready to go grab some food or what?"

Nico was stunned. Jin never growled at him, nor did he ever wear an expression so damn sullen. "I don't know, are you going to be a jerk while we eat? I asked because I was concerned for you."

Jin paused, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath. When he opened them again his expression turned apologetic. "I'm sorry. I—" he sighed, paused again, and then spoke. "I really shouldn't have snapped at you like that, Nico. If you want to skip our date, I'll understand."

Nico frowned. "But I want to see you."

"Well, then you'll see me, baby," Jin said, extending his hand to Nico so that they could entwine their fingers. The motion was a relief and Nico took his hand gratefully.

"Carl came to see me today," he admitted as they walked towards the small sandwich shop across from commuter parking.

"Oh?" The single word seemed to contain a wealth of menace.

Nico nodded and proceeded very carefully with his next statement. "Yes, he seemed

really concerned for you."

"Nosy fucking bastard."

"No. Don't be like that. He seemed to really be concerned. The guy does *not* like me, though."

"I will have a talk with him," Jin bit off.

"He is afraid I am going to hurt you. So I understand. Jin?"

"What?"

"Will you please tell me what is going on? If we are going to make a go of this, and I fully believe that we are, I kind of need to know." Nico hoped he wasn't being too forward by asking. Technically they were lab partners and maybe sort of dating, but he didn't know if that gave him the right to ask Jin about something personal like a medical condition. Jin's steps faltered.

"Did Carl say something to you? Because it'd be just like him to say something." Jin seemed to be getting really worked up, a look of pure fury on his face.

"No. Seriously, Jin. He didn't tell me anything because he said it was up to you to tell me anything important, and I'm on board with that sort of thing." Nico said, trying to keep the anger from boiling over.

"He shouldn't have said anything! It's not his place to fucking interfere with my—" Jin was shouting so Nico didn't feel like he had any choice in the matter but to maneuver Jin back against the side of the brick supply store and kiss him to shut him up.

The words died as Jin kissed him with a thinly veiled desperation. Nico may have initiated the kiss but he certainly didn't control it as Jin ravaged his mouth. He fell into the kiss, oblivious to everything but their fiercely mating tongues and Jin's grip on his hips. His mind fogged over in lust. It wasn't until he heard the catcall of someone on the street that Nico forced himself to pull back.

"Damn, beautiful. You have a way to distract me." Jin panted softly, smiling self deprecatingly. "I'm sorry. I got worked up."

"I noticed," Nico said dryly. "This isn't like you, Jin. Now tell me what is going on."

Jin stared at the ground as if searching for answers in the cracks of the pavement. "Can we go back to your place and talk? I'm not really hungry and I honestly don't want anything to eat right now."

Nico nodded. The forlorn look was so sad that Nico couldn't resist reaching out and cupping Jin's cheek. "We can go back to my place and order a pizza if we get hungry. Let's go get your car."

\* \* \* \*

They'd driven to Nico's place in silence and Jin was sweating at the tension in the air. God, why did *this* have to happen this week? Jin gave himself a plethora of vile nicknames to call himself in his head on the drive over. He'd wanted to win Nico over, show him how perfect Jin really was. Now he was going to have to explain how much of a lie that statement was. *Fuck, I just can't get a break with him.* Nico had finally, *finally*, given in to their attraction and now Jin was going to mess it up and send him running away from Jin again.

"Stop thinking so hard, Jin. You have got a vein pulsing at your temple that I'm pretty certain is about to signal an aneurysm." Nico reached over and gave his thigh a squeeze through his denim before resting his hand there to give Jin much needed warmth. The touch felt so good that he found himself relaxing in slow degrees at Nico's command. "I'm here, Jin." The reminder helped center him.

He'd had this problem since he was in middle school. It had always been controlled by a couple of pills a day and he'd only run out three times that he could remember. This was not the situation he wanted to burden his new relationship with, but it didn't seem like the universe was giving him a choice in the matter.

"Is your sister home?" He asked. He didn't want an audience for this if he could help it.

"No. She is spending the weekend at her boyfriend's place so we'll be alone."

Jin felt a sharp relief at the words. Good. That was what he needed, Nico and him and a nice relaxing environment. If Nico wanted him to leave afterward that was okay. He'd go home and drown himself in the bathtub or something. The thought startled him. He hated when he thought like that.

He parked the car in a visitor's space and climbed out. Nico did the same and grabbed his bag out of the backseat. Jin considered leaving his, glanced around the crowded lot, and thought better of it. He didn't need to get his hopes up for a prolonged visitation. He pulled out his heavier books and put them on the backseat. No one was going to be tempted to take those. He followed closely behind the smaller man as they walked up to his apartment. All the buildings around looked the same, relatively new with shiny cream siding and red brick underneath. It was nice student housing. Very clean in comparison to some of the dives people lived in.

Nico finally came to the front door of his place and undid the lock with his key. The

door swung inward and Jin followed him inside. Nico deposited his backpack on the shelf below the coat hangers and toed off his shoes, before bee lining for the living room. Jin kicked off his own shoes, put down his bag beside Nico's, and followed at a slower pace.

He reached the end of the couch and looked down at his date. God, Nico didn't even know how beautiful he really was. No freaking clue how gorgeous he looked. "Before we start this, I gotta do something." Jin leaned down and took Nico's lips once again. Like he had since the first time, Nico yielded to Jin's passion, drowning in it the same way Jin himself often did. Nothing seemed so precious as the quiet strength his nerd boy possessed or the way it felt when Nico let Jin touch him.

Nico was the first to break the kiss. "Stop doing that. It feels like a cheap good-bye kiss from a chick flick. This is not even remotely good-bye. This is only the beginning. Now, tell me what is going on, Jin. I can handle it."

Jin sat back on the couch and took a deep breath. "Well, I really didn't want to tell you this so soon, to be honest. But, you're right. You need to know why I'm being a psycho this week." He paused and at Nico's nod of encouragement he continued. "I have an anxiety disorder, Nico. I've had it since I was a kid and I take a few pills a day to keep it under control. Without them I get scattered and irritable and have problems interacting with other people. I just... I become a mess." Silence met his declaration and Jin's anxiety soared. His heart pounded and a near hysterical urge to scream bubbled up in the back of his throat. He needed Nico to say something. Anything. Either to reject or accept what he was saying. He just needed to know so the tension would stop choking him.

Nico took both of his hands and pressed a kiss to the knuckles. Some of Jin's fear eased at the motion. "Thank you for telling me."

Jin opened his mouth to ask what Nico thought but he was cut off when Nico all but crawled in his lap. He sat there stunned as Nico straddled his hips and leaned forward to kiss along his jaw line.

"Why?" Jin asked. He didn't understand why Nico was doing this.

"Because," Nico whispered in his ear, "you trust me. Beyond that, you are the most wonderful man on the face of the planet. Your imperfections make you sexy, Jin. The perfect image just makes you intimidating to me. It gives *me* anxiety because I think I can't measure up."

"But, I love everything about you!" Jin protested, shuddering as Nico's teeth nibbled the flesh of Jin's earlobe and teased the nerves there.

"I know. Sorry it took me so long to come to that realization. But you're amazing, Jin."

You hold it together so well that even I was fooled by the image you project. I'm not saying that it's going to be easy. God knows I'm not easy. I'm just saying that I want it to be good."

The way Nico's body was pressed so snugly against his made it very difficult for Jin to think of anything other than how relieved he was and how good it felt to have Nico in his arms. A thought struck him.

He chuckled. "You know, it's a little weird that it took me having an anxiety disorder to get you to finally think I wasn't perfect."

"You *are* perfect, you idiot. I just realized you were also human and that, sir, is fucking sexy as hell."

"So you're really not freaked out?" His heart started to pound at the thought. What if Nico was only pretending to—?

Nico's lips descended on his again. "Calm down before you have a heart attack. In fact," his hands crept under Jin's shirt and began tugging it over his head, "I know the perfect way to calm you down." Jin started breathing heavy at the implication of what Nico was saying.

"Nico, slow down. You said that you didn't want to rush things." His beautiful nerd boy shouldn't feel obligated to sleep with him just to show he trusted him. "I'm okay with waiting."

"I'm not."

"Nico—"

"Shut up, Jin. Shut up and make love to me or else I am going to chew you out for making me wait. I get it. You have an anxiety disorder. Sex gives you endorphins, endorphins make you happy, happy people are not anxious."

How could he argue with that? He stopped resisting Nico's advances and let the smaller man strip off his shirt. Their lips met again and Nico groaned and ground his ass against Jin's suddenly too tight blue jeans.

"You're so damn hot, Nico."

"Oh yeah? Am I hot like when two chemicals react and there is a change in temperature?"

Jin froze for about a half a second before he burst out laughing. Nico pulled back and blushed a deep crimson.

"Too much?" he asked, his face so red that he was almost perfectly cherry. Even his ears were that color.

When Jin was able to breathe around the laughter he shook his head. "Nah, baby. It

was just perfect for you."

Nico sighed and sat back on Jin's knees. "I ruined the moment huh?"

"No, you reminded me why I like you so much." Jin gave him a squeeze. "And also why we shouldn't do this just because you're relieved I don't have some sort of terminal illness. We can take this slow, Nico."

Nico cupped his cheeks with his hands and kissed him. "I don't want to take things slow, Jin. I want you to be my boyfriend and that means you are stuck with me and making love to me on a regular basis. Since I am currently turned on from staring at your sexy, disheveled ass, can you please hurry up and fuck me?"

That surprised Jin, most people liked him when he was perfectly dressed. "You like me messy?"

"I think it's sexy. Put on a Dungeons and Dragons T-shirt and I'll hump your fucking leg. Come on, Jin. Do I have to beg here?" There was the impatient, demanding man who was his lab partner.

"You never have to beg me for anything, baby." Confident that Nico was doing this for the right reasons, Jin started much more purposefully. "Want you, Nico. Always have."

"Hmm, want you too."

"Where is your room, Nico? I don't want our first time to be on a couch."

Nico shimmied off of his lap and headed towards the two doors toward the back of the apartment. He ditched his shirt and threw it playfully at Jin. He grinned and Jin could honestly say that it was the first time he'd ever seen Nico so absolutely carefree.

"What about the studying, baby?" Jin couldn't help but tease just a little bit. His boyfriend shot him a wide grin.

"It can wait."

The thrill of knowing that Nico was going to put aside his serious studying in favor of Jin made Jin want to shout his triumph from the rooftops. He'd won his lab partner over. That much was obvious. For the first time in a few days, Jin felt the tension and the anxiety drain off of him. He still needed to get his medicine but the knowledge that Nico supported him and wasn't going to run when he found out gave him a measure of comfort. That man was his.

"Hurry up, Mister Perfect!" Nico called from beyond the pale white entryway to his bedroom.

Jin chuckled. His nerd boy was so damn impatient.

## Chapter Seven

By the time Sunday rolled around, Nico was thoroughly and absolutely debauched. He'd made sure that Jin was so completely exhausted he'd finally gotten some sleep Friday night, and had walked the floors with him on Saturday when he'd babbled about his fears and dealt with the consequences of coming off his medicine, which apparently balanced out his brain chemicals to keep him from being so anxious. They'd made love twice more and each time Jin had seemed to be in better spirits afterward. How Nico had ever looked at this man as anything other than honest, wonderful, and most importantly, his, he didn't know.

It was still early morning. The urge to sleep had been chased away by the knowledge that they actually had to accomplish some homework and studying today. But not yet. Nico lay in the early dawn hours, wrapped in the arms of the warmest man on the planet and just reveled in how things seemed so much brighter with Jin as a permanent fixture in his life. As sappy as the reaction might have been, Nico was already planning on asking Jin to come back to his home during Christmas break and introducing him to his family.

"Hmm, you're thinking too hard, too early," a groggy voice whispered in his ear.

Nico smiled and turned his head so that he could get a brief good morning kiss.

"I am going to kick your ass on the final in Chem," he said, knowing that it would get Jin going.

"You're seriously thinking about the final and beating me on it this early? You are a nerd, baby. Seriously." Jin rubbed his eyes with one hand. "Hmmm... I could think of other things to occupy you with."

"Then please do. I've been waiting for you to wake up for fifteen minutes," Nico said, turning in his arms so that they were face to face.

Jin's rough chuckle washed over him like a physical caress. An amused and sexed up Jin was a very, very fun Jin. "It is true. Nerds really are nymphos."

"Says the guy who has a higher GPA than me. Shut up and kiss me, Jin." The other man could say what he wanted, but he absolutely loved when Nico bossed him around in the bedroom. A couple of well placed "fuck me already's" could turn his usually gentle lover into an animal.

Jin's kiss was deep and slow, as sleepy in its expression as Jin no doubt was from his late night of pacing. One hand reached over Nico's body to fiddle for a condom in the nightstand. If this weekend was any indication, Nico needed to pick up some more. The pop of the cap of the lube was music to Nico's ears as his heart began to pound and his already

prominent erection wept a pearly string of precome from its slit.

Jin rolled the condom over his own turgid length and positioned himself between Nico's legs, putting a pillow under Nico's hips to give him a better angle. Nico looked up into Jin's lust-drunk eyes and saw love there. Even if the words weren't spoken yet, they would be soon. Nico thought of his checklist, his rules, everything he'd put in place to keep from dating seriously. None of that mattered. Nothing mattered but Jin.

Fingers plied his entrance, stretching him with all the care and concern Jin usually gave him. Nico just closed his eyes and let Jin's magic carry him to another plane of pleasure.

"You okay, baby?" Jin asked, panting softly.

"Yeah. Come inside, Jin. I need you inside me." And he did. God knew he needed his Jin. *I have a boyfriend, a wonderful, smart boyfriend.* He must've done something clever in a past life to warrant such good fortune. Then his thoughts scattered as Jin's thick cock pressed against him, slid inside. The slow push of that first contact made Nico gasp in pleasure. He loved making love face to face just so he could see every change in Jin's expression as he fucked him. The serious expression on Jin's normally laid-back face made Nico shudder as he became seated fully inside him.

"Oh baby, you're always so damn tight for me," Jin murmured, his hips jerking in a rhythm designed to have Nico's toes curling in no time.

"Hmm, harder."

Jin obeyed, increasing the depth and strength of his fucking until they were writhing against one another in absolute ecstasy. The increased pace and depth nailed Nico's pleasure spot with every lunge until he was all but coming off the bed with every forward motion of Jin's hips.

"Come, baby. Fuck. I'm close." Jin begged, his thrusts becoming a little erratic as he began the build toward orgasm. Seeing Jin lose it was enough to send Nico screaming over the edge and into the abyss beyond. His hands fisted the sheets as he spiraled out of control and almost instantly on the heels of his pleasure, Jin stiffened above him and gave a low groan of completion.

After a few suspended seconds, Jin collapsed on top of him, claiming Nico's lips in a grateful kiss. Nico returned it and gave a nuzzle to his cheek.

"Damn. I'll never get tired of doing that." Nico said, stretching his arms over his head. Jin pulled out and rolled to his side.

"Me neither." Jin was looking at him like Nico was the only person on the planet and it made Nico feel warm all over to be the recipient of that look.

"I could fall in love with you, Jin Rogers," Nico said, entwining their hands as they lay side by side in his bed.

"I could form a covalent bond with you too, Nico Johnston," Jin answered, giving him a wink.

Nico rolled his eyes and couldn't help but smile.

"Guess that means we're even on nerdy come-ons, huh?" Nico asked.

"I think so," Jin said, tracing Nico's jaw with his fingertip. "I fully intend for you to fall in love with me Nico, just thought I would warn you."

"Why's that?" Nico smiled as he asked, already somewhat realizing the answer.

"Because it would suck being the only one in love in this relationship."

The words worked their way into Nico's heart and took up residence there. When one notices a chemical fire the immediate reaction is to douse it with  $H_2O$ . This is bad. Most chemicals found in labs have a natural reaction to water. Some chemicals are diluted when water is added. Others blow up. That's the way chemistry works. The proper reaction is to use a neutralizing agent. But now, Nico just wanted to burn.

"Yeah, it would. I maybe love you, Jin."

Jin looked stunned for about five seconds before he seemed to realize that Nico was waiting on him to return the gesture. "I maybe love you too, Nico."

Satisfied, Nico rolled to his side and padded toward the adjoining bathroom, still naked. "Come on, lover mine. We have a lab report to write up before our meeting with Doctor Belleman tomorrow."

Obediently, Jin followed. "Whatever you say, nerd boy. Whatever you say."

The End

## **About the Author**

Jana Downs lives in the beautiful mountains of Western North Carolina with three cats, one dog, several dozen fish, and a very understanding partner-in-crime who hates to read but makes exceptions for her stories.

You can usually find her either watching bad reality TV, buying way too many books on Amazon, or dreaming up another man or two to occupy her time because life is good but several drop-dead gorgeous nonexistent men is just better.

She welcomes comments from her readers on her website or Facebook page.

Website:

<http://janadowns.blogspot.com/>

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/jana.d.downs>

Email:

[Jddowns07@yahoo.com](mailto:Jddowns07@yahoo.com)