



Coming In

By Kelly Blake

Jack opened and held my door as I slid into the seat of his car. He closed it as I buckled my seat belt and he went around getting in on the driver's side. This all felt so usual and yet so...foreign. I had become too accustomed to this ritual and I missed the days of not doing it.

I kind of stayed on the right side of the seat...away from him? Although I felt nervous and maybe a little upset, he still had that weird effect on me. I was hoping, not all that successfully, to kind of be immune by the short distance between us. I clutched my hobo bag to my breasts and crossed my arms holding it tightly. I cast my gaze downward as if to even look at him would defeat my resolve.

As he started the car...oh my God those engine vibrations...I caught him glance at me out of the corner of my eye. Good...he could feel the distance. That's what I wanted. I mean it's not like I didn't try to do something all week...make peace...even argue...just...talk?

We drove off in a very uncomfortable silence. I could feel that Jack knew I was angry; good! Whatever he wanted...whatever he meant by 'talk'...I wasn't going to make easy. Fortunately we didn't have very far to drive. It took us only a few minutes to get to where he lived. Jack pulled into the driveway, stopped, and got out to come around and open my door. I beat him to it and let myself out.

I could see from the expression on Jack's face that maybe he felt...hurt? I mean...this is what he did for me, always. He opened doors, held out chairs, all that kind of stuff that made me feel kind of...special? But I was in control now...at least at the moment...and I had to remain in control if I was going to speak to him on an equal level...you know?

My arms were still crossed and my bag still between them and my breasts as though this was my body armour against the 'Jack Effect'. I tried to look everywhere but at him as he opened the door and let me precede him. I walked into his aunt's home ahead of him trying to keep the distance between us and trying very hard not to gaze at him.

"Let's get something to drink...okay?" Jack spoke to my back which I intentionally turned toward him.

"Yeah."

I followed him into the kitchen where he promptly got two huge cups and filled them both with fruit juice.

"Do you mind if we go into the garden...the gazebo maybe? It's quiet and peaceful and..."

"Sure. That's fine." I was curt and quick to answer. Quiet and peaceful was less likely to produce war. And anyway...I was still feeling a little bit angry and that setting would help me keep my cool.

I finally put my bag's strap on my shoulder and held my sweater in one hand as I grasped the cup with my other hand. I followed Jack out the back door. I walked down the few steps as he closed it and trailed me. I chose a spot that would have me in dim light if I sat one way and in shadow if I moved slightly.

Jack entered the gazebo and sat catty-cornered from me. I placed my bag between us and placed my sweater on top of it. I wanted a 'wall' to separate us. I took a sip of juice and looked at the bougainvillea blooms across from me and to the side opposite Jack.

"I am very sorry about how I acted when you told me...about...uhhh..."

Crappers!!! He couldn't even say it. I answered before he could go on.

"Accepted..." I put no spirit into my acceptance. He really deserved none of that...yet.

"It really...you really caught me by surprise and I wasn't...I don't know...prepared for it?"

I looked at him for the first time; I mean really looked. Jack was hunched over and kind of looking at his hands; rubbing a callous or something. But his voice is what really made me look. It was soft, subdued, and kind of...choked?

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

Okay...big bomb number one...I did expect that and I really hadn’t thought of a good answer. So maybe the answer wasn’t in the form of logic or facts? I looked away for a moment and decided to go with how I felt. I could feel the tears begin to well up. I reached into my bag and grabbed a few.

“Well Jack...” I sniffled. “I wanted to tell you a hundred times...” Well maybe not a hundred but at least fifty...maybe. “...but...” I looked at him and he instinctively looked back into my eyes. “...but every time I’m with you...I don’t know what happens to me but...it’s like my mind goes blank or something and anything I might want to think or say just disappears. I mean...you just have this effect on me that I can’t seem to control...you know?”

I looked at Jack as I dabbed at a tear or two...or three. He looked at me and nodded. Then he looked back down at his hands...kind of picking at a spot.

“Yeah...” He said with resignation. “I know. I guess I feel the same thing when I’m with you. It’s kind of hard for me to control what I would like to do. But...” He looked back up at me. “...you could have trusted me...you know?”

I felt my anger build now.

“Yeah Jack...sure. I trusted my closest friend once and she outed me. I’ve been outed twice by people I should have been able to trust. Do you have any idea of what that’s like????!!!”

I was sooo...faaahhhkn angry...that I was crying and trembling at the same time. I felt myself on the very edge of hysteria.

“The names...the pushing...people throwing shit at me...the phone calls to my phone...the on-line comments...things said to my parents...MY PARENTS!!! We had to move!!!”

Jack turned his body toward me.

“I didn’t tell a soul. Not even my aunt. I wouldn’t have told anyone.”

“Yeah Jack...and how am I supposed to know that!!! Do you have any idea how I felt after you left??? It was like...like sitting and waiting for my world to end Jack....end again; a third time Jack. I couldn’t have handled that. I couldn’t have handled having to tell my mom and dad that.”

I literally hissed my words at him. I threw them at him. I finally had a target for all the anger and frustration of the past couple of years. I could see Jack was at a loss of what to say. I had overwhelmed him with my venomous assault.

I lost my cool. I gave up control to my anger. And it was anger so intense that I didn't even realize I had it. It's like all the teasing and the name calling and the bullying and all the little, and big, horrors that kids and adults inflicted upon me came out all at once. And poor Jack, who at least held faith and told nobody, was now my victim.

We sat silently for a while; silently except for my crying. I guess we were both waiting for me to compose myself a little bit. I was looking down at the tissue in my hands. I heard Jack clear his throat.

"I guess your makeup is ruined. You looked...beautiful tonight."

"Water proof..." That's all I could manage to say.

"Good thinking..." Jack laughed.

I sort of giggled and then laughed. It was the perfect thing for him to say to break the tension. I was still wiping my nose when Jack spoke.

"Well...I am really sorry you had to go through that. But I had no way of knowing."

"Yeah..." That was true. "...I know. I'm sorry too."

"I was so...angry at you...with you. I mean...it's like I wasn't going with the person I thought I was."

Okay...so here it comes. It's his turn to vent a little. Jack's body was still turned toward me and he was looking down at his hands again.

"I mean...am I gay? I've been kissing a boy? I mean Jesus Christ Kerrie..." Jack was choking up a little. "The problem is that I have such strong...I don't know what. Whenever I see you or think about you, I only see one thing; a girl named Kerrie...you know?"

Jack cleared his throat again and stretched his body as he looked off to the side. Then he drew in, hunching over again and looking at his hands. I could tell he was kind of at a loss for words. Or maybe he was just trying to think of what to say. I really didn't leave him much room with my rant.

"I thought about the things we've done together, you know? And I thought about how I felt about you. I mean we definitely can't be friends after this. When I thought about it...and the

more I thought about it...what are we supposed to do when we see each other? Do we shake hands or simply say 'Hi...how are you?' or what?"

Crappers...I feel those tears coming up again. He's thinking the same stuff I was. He's going to dump me. This is the big kiss off. Oh my God! I have to barf!

"And the memories I have of you are...well...way too strong and way too good, great actually, to simply say 'I'll see you later'...you know? And I felt all that anger and...hatred of you melt away. It was so weird. All that was left were all those good things. All that was left was...you...the person. But then there was the trust thing again. At least I understand that a little better."

Jack was definitely having as hard a time as I was trying to keep it together. Good! Why should I be the only one to suffer? Jack looked up at me again. I guess his callouses were getting boring to look at.

"You still have your..." His eye brows shot up. He couldn't say the word penis.

"First thing after school in May it's like...'goodbye to you'" I smiled and giggled as I waved to...it.

"You know...you could have probably strung me along until after and I guess you wouldn't have had to tell me at all." Jack looked down again.

"No jack...I would have had to tell you no matter what. It was only a question of when." Now I looked down. "I would have had to tell someone sometime...you know? It's not like I can have kids or anything. And I'll be taking hormones and other pills the rest of my life."

"Yeah..." Jack nodded in agreement. "Though you never know what science will transplant next." He laughed. "But you're right. You would have had to tell someone sometime. I guess I'm glad it was me." He smiled coyly.

"You know something...I was born a girl and all this time I've been waiting for the rest of me to catch up. That's the last piece...so to speak...and there isn't much of that...to say the least." Now I had to laugh.

Jack reached into his jacket pocket. He pulled his hand out and there was something in it but his hand was more than large enough to keep it out of sight.

"Well..." Jack ran his hand through his hair, sweeping a lock of it out of his face. "...I guess we can't go back to the way things were."

Oh...my God!!! We're going to crash!!! My heart pounded like it was going to explode right out of my chest.

“So...” Jack extended his right hand toward me...palm up! He wants to faaahhhkn shake my hand and that’s that???!?!?? “...I guess we have to make it even better.”

Jack leaned forward and grasped my right hand. With his left, he flipped open a small box and stared at it for a long moment.

“If you accept this...that means we are a ‘we’ again.” Jack held the tiny box out to show me its contents.

“Oh my God...Jack...”

I was shocked and stunned. My tears flowed before I could even see the ring...it was a ring of course; a gold one. I removed it with my left hand to try and look at it thought my teared up eyes. There were two hands holding a heart and atop the heart was a crown. I was too choked up to answer Jack so I simply nodded my head and smiled through my tears. He held out his left hand again, palm up, and I gently set the ring in it.

“It goes on the right hand...for now.” He looked up and smiled at me. I could see the light glint off of his eyes. He was on the verge of tears himself. “I didn’t know the size so we kind of guessed.”

“We...?”

“My aunt sells these so I worked extra hours to pay for it. It doesn’t mean anything unless I do. That’s why I was out of school the past couple of days. She wouldn’t let me buy it till yesterday. She wanted me to be sure...you know?”

Jack tried to slip it onto my ring finger but the ring was too large to stay put...but not by much. He tried my middle finger and the fit was perfect.

“The crown goes...”

“Up...” I smiled at him. “...I know.”

“I...love you Kerrie Ann Collins and I want the world to know it.”

“I know John Francis Xavier O’Dwyer. I love you too.”

I got up and, still grasping his hand, and went around and sat on his lap facing him. I kissed him as deeply as I could. My arms went around his neck as his came around my waist and up my back. The energy was so strong between us that I felt like we were truly one person. After our lips parted, we held each other for a very long time.

I knew that my mom and dad would be up even though I called to tell her I would be home a little late. She always waited up for me. I unlocked the door and she called my name from the kitchen. I walked in to find her making my dad a sandwich. He was at the counter on one of the stools.

The moment I put my bag down she grabbed my hand and looked at the ring with a very wry smile. She wagged the knife at me as she spoke.

“If I see that ring on your left hand before you at least graduate...college, I’ll kill you and that faaahhhkn Jack!!!”

“Nice ring...” My dad always knew what to say as he winked at me.

The End

Author’s Note:

This is not a part two for ‘Coming Out’. This is merely a supposition of what might have occurred. I have not added this to the other tale because...well...the other tale ended exactly where it should have. Nothing is certain in life save the day we live in. May we all make the most of it and mend what is mendable.