Exquisitely Hidden

M. Jay Granberry

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

­­—Pablo Neruda

For the hidden lovers that found love in the light.

Now

Prologue

Adam

I let my weight sink into the cushions of the chaise lounge as I eye the backyard. Trimmed hedges line the brick fence, towering palm trees rest in the corners. Wicker patio furniture with bright blue cushions decorate the covered patio and to round it off, is the infinity pool that overlooks the Las Vegas skyline.

It’s perfect.

Sometimes, I have the urge to pinch myself because I still can’t believe that this is my life.

The heat from the sun warms my skin, soaking into muscle and bone relaxing me to the point of senselessness. I take in the view behind mirrored sunglasses as a big body breaks the water’s surface. Seth’s lithe form cuts through the water, smooth and deliberate. His last stroke short as he nears the side. Instead of turning for another lap he places both palms on the edge of pool and lifts himself out.

And I can’t help but to stare. Even now, when I know that body as well as I know my own. I’ve caressed every sinewy inch, memorized every peak, kissed every valley but I’m still in awe of all things Seth Cody.

He walks toward me, eyes unblinking, chiseled jaw clenched, and I fight not to fidget under his gaze. He doesn’t stop walking until he’s right in front of me. Lowering, his solid weight settles near my hip and a soft pair of cool lips brush along the whiskers on my jaw in a slow tease before moving across my mouth.

Seth leans into me, beads of water glisten on his tan skin and roll forward to splatter on my chest and arms, nimble fingers remove my sunglasses and I stare into sad eyes the color of aged whiskey. His hands move into my hair as he angles my head licking up the center of my lips asking permission before his rough voice whispers a demand.

“Kiss me.” He says.

But I shouldn’t.

Last night we had words, spoke like two sensible adults, no yelling, no cursing, no tears. I made it clear that I don’t do relationships. Even when every fiber of my being is begging me to reconsider. I let him know that I have no intention of picking up the mantle and becoming a representation for gay men anywhere, let alone in the music industry. Regardless of the fact when I look into his eyes I see forever. I told him that being in Las Vegas, trying to get custody of my sister, being the leader and the glue for my band is more important than our fledgling relationship. Although the idea of never touching or kissing or simply being with him, really connecting as two human beings with lust and something that could be love is killing me.

I try to turn my head away from the sweetest temptation but the hand in my hair hampers my halfhearted escape.

“You want me, Adam. I’m right here.” He nibbles on my bottom lip. “Right in front of you. Take me.” He pleads. And this time when our lips meet, I let him in. I revel in the pressure of his mouth and the heady taste I get when his tongue finally breaks the barrier of my lips to twist with mine.

I ache for him. *Always* for him. *Only* for him.

I groan into his mouth and curl a hand around the back of his neck pulling him into me. If this is the last time. I might as well make it count, right?

I’m a glutton for this man. A whore greedy for his lust and desires. So, I take what he’s offering and plunder his mouth. I kiss him like it’s the last time, because it is. I kiss him like he’s precious and like I’ll miss him, because he is, and I will. I own his mouth the way I want to own his body, deep and sweet with the sting of pain.

We part on a breath, and I look up into those pretty, pretty brown eyes and for the first time since I told him we were over. I regret it.

He deserves better than me.

He deserves a man that can love him out loud and in front of world. One he can build a life and a future with.

I chose my path at seventeen and claiming a man for my very own has never been part of the plan. I have the music and my band, my family. I always knew fame would demand its due. It’s the way this world works

I trail my fingers across the thin red material of his swim trunks. His shaft twitches under my touch and air hisses from his lungs at the contact. I smile because I love that his body is so expressive, reacting to the softest touch. I work my hands under the waistband of his shorts and pull them down his hips. I see nothing as I kiss down his chest, but unfettered inches of honey kissed skin and a long thick dick lined with veins tapered to a flared crown.

“Adam it doesn’t have to end here. We… ahhhh—”

The words die on his lips as I open my mouth wide and moan around his length as it slides along my taste buds to the back of my throat. His hands cradle the back of my head, his hips involuntarily rolling with pleasure.

I suck him down like I mean it with succulent sounds and fuck me eyes. I suck until he haunches forward and my nose settles in the soft hair at the root of dick. I suck him until the muscles in his thighs shake and his shaft becomes impossibly hard and starts to pulse.

“Don’t stop. I’m almost there. Just a little…”

I grip him in a tight fist my hand now working in tandem with my mouth. His eyes never leave mine as he shutters and releases deep in my throat.

Seth pulls himself free and those pillow soft lips immediately find mine. He tastes like chlorine and summer and something I recognize as uniquely him.

When he pulls back his eyes are glassy with unshed tears as he studies me.

“So this is goodbye then?” He asks.

“This is goodbye.” I parrot.

A couple of tears leak from the corners of his eyes, but he squeezes them shut cutting off the flow.

“Aw, baby...” I say. My thumb swiping over the ridge of his cheekbone. *You’re breaking my fucking heart.* He leans forward again kissing me one last time before he stands. His movements are slow and methodical. And there is a slight tremor to his hands when he pulls up his shorts. I see him start the process to morph into the ideal body guard and the elite soldier. His eyes lose their innate softness and his jaw sets in an unforgiving hard line. He pulls in all that emotion and stuffs its somewhere far away from the surface and a little part of me hurts that I’ve caused this.

“Seth…”

“Don’t. No explanation necessary I understand. I do. Let’s just…” he rubs the back of his neck. “Let’s just take it for what it is…I mean was.” He won’t look at me as he speaks and when I sit up, naturally leaning toward him, my hand coming out to rest the back of his knee, he skirts my touch immediately backing away.

“I gotta go. Sin gets in today. I have to get to the hotel and make sure everything is ready.” He still refuses to meet my gaze as he steps into the house. Slipping quietly through the door.

I drop back on the lawn chair with a thud. *Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuuuuuck!* I punch my hands into the air and slam my head on the thick padding of the chaise. I’ve never been a romantic. That’s my best friend Sin, not me. But dammit just this once I wish I was. I wish I had it in me to give him an epic kind of love. The kind that fills the pages of a notebook and inspires hit songs.

Fifteen minutes later I catch a glimpse of his broad shoulders, now encased in layers of fabric, a duffle bag slung over his shoulder, radio piece in his ear, gun clipped to his belt. Those gorgeous brown eyes covered with dark sunglasses and those soft lips I kissed what now feels like forever ago are pressed tight into a thin stoic line. The sound of his boots beat a steady cadence on the wooden floor as he passes in the hallway.

I stand just outside the open sliding glass door, hands pressed on either side of the metal frame.

“Seth?” I whisper.

His footsteps pause halfway to the front door, but he doesn’t turn around.

“I’m…” *Terrified that when you walk out that door, you’ll take piece of me. A giant piece that I’ll never get back.*

“I’m sorry.” I say instead. His shoulders rise and fall with one big heaving breath before he continues toward the door. He doesn’t look at me or acknowledge my unbefitting apology.

I let my head drop forward until it hangs heavy and the muscles between my shoulder blades pull tight. I can’t watch him walk out. Even though it’s the right thing. Possibly the best thing, I can’t watch it. I won’t. My heart starts to beat faster as the footsteps move away. I hold my breath when the door opens, and when it closes, I exhale a long-frustrated stream of moist air.

So, this is what a real goodbye feels like? Like someone just placed my heart in a blender and pulverized it.

Yep. This sucks!