



Episode Forty-Nine

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Boxer Falls: Episode 49

By Geoffrey Knight

Do I really know myself? Zach asked himself after sitting bolt upright in bed, remnants of the nightmare still spinning in his head. Visions of Adam being tortured, being hurt, whirled and swirled through his mind. But they were more brutal than the images on the DVD.

The visions that Zach's unconscious mind had conjured up in his sleep were truly violent. Cruel. Frightening.

And they didn't turn him on at all.

In fact they did the opposite.

They terrified him.

How on earth had he been aroused by watching the man he loved being victimized?

What was he thinking?

Why the hell did he go looking for that damned DVD?

All he could think was, he was grateful it was gone; he prayed it was something they could both put behind them; and all he wanted to do now was hold and protect his lover for the rest of his days.

Beside him in the bed, Adam stirred. "Zach? You okay?"

"Let's get married," Zach blurted desperately in response.

Adam chuckled, still half asleep. He sat up next to Zach and wiped a crusty piece of sleep out of his lover's wide, frantic eyes. "We're already getting married. Remember? I said yes."

"No, I mean, let's set a date. Let's do it as soon as possible. Why wait?"

Adam looked at him a little concerned, blinking the sleep out of his own eyes. "Are you okay? Why the sudden urgency?"

Zach responded by planting his lips on Adam's, then answered, "I love you, that's why. I love you more than anything in the world. I want to be your husband. I want to keep you safe, every day for the rest of our lives. And I want the rest of our lives to start now. I can't wait another day."

Adam chuckled again at Zach's sudden seriousness, both amused and turned on at the same time. "Are you saying you wanna get married tomorrow?"

Zach nodded vehemently. "Yes. Let's do it. Let's just elope."

"We can't. What about your dads? What about all our friends? Don't you want everyone we love to be there? To share the most important moment of our lives with us?" He rubbed Zach's bare back gently, his palm sweeping back and forth across his lover's muscles. He could feel them slowly untense at his touch. "Don't you want to make a list of people to invite? Pick a cake? Write out our own invitations... and vows?"

Zach turned and looked into Adam's loving eyes and eventually... finally... smiled. "I do."

"Me too," Adam smiled back. "Let's set a date. Let's make it a month from now, how does that sound? We'll buy tuxedos. And hire caterers. And get Quinn to be our flower-boy and throw rose petals down the aisle. How does that sound?"

The thought of it made Zach laugh, and suddenly the nightmare was gone. Only the dream of their life together remained.

He kissed his lover, then smiled. "That sounds...perfect."

Do I really know my son? Conrad asked himself, casting an eye across the room and catching Oz's hand brush Quinn's as the two men cleared the soup bowls from the table before returning from the kitchen. All his life, Oz had acted straight – had been straight – yet this fiery, fast-mouthed redhead had now come along and turned Oz Cotten into something he had never been –

Himself.

And Conrad was only now realizing this.

Somewhere inside the melting pot of good and bad that was Conrad Cotten's heart, he felt a glimmer of happiness for his son. Along with a sharp stab of jealousy.

Thoughts of Grady filled his head and stirred his loins when suddenly Jerry spluttered out a loud snore. For a moment, Conrad, Oz and Quinn all stared at the passed-out man, as though waiting for him to lift his head and shake himself awake. But after a moment his snoring returned to its regular pattern.

"I don't know if anyone else agrees," Quinn said softly, "but I think it might be a good idea if we ditch this bitch and get the hell out of here before Sleeping Beauty sobers up."

"You're not exactly the kind of company I like to keep," Conrad said to Quinn, "but I have to agree."

Quinn raised an annoyed eyebrow and turned to Oz. "Geez, your dad has such a way with words. And here I was thinking he was some money-grabbing, Republican-voting megalomaniac with a Donald Trump complex."

Conrad bit straight back. "And here I was thinking you were some useless, pitiful, purse-snatching, gold-digging rentboy with one hand on my son's dick and the other in his back pocket!"

Quinn gasped.

Conrad scowled.

The two actually stepped toward each other, ready to lunge, when Oz jumped in between them, arms raised as their chests thudded hard against his open palms. "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Back down, both of you!"

"He started it."

"Quinn! I said enough."

"Fine," Quinn backed away with a cranky, child-like expression.

Conrad too stepped away.

Oz sighed, frustrated with them both, and said, "I agree that we need to get out of here, but Dad, what about the people who are still after you?"

Quinn quipped, "Yeah, don't forget you have an evil twin even more evil than you."

"I didn't forget," Conrad snapped back. "Why do you think I wanna get back to town?"

"Dad, you're still a target. You need to lay low." At that moment Jerry snorted loudly in his sleep again. Oz added, "You just can't stay here, that's all."

"If people think I need to go into hiding, then I'll go to the last place where anyone will think to look for me."

"Where?"

"Whispering Ridge."

Oz looked at him, stunned. "Dad, that's the first place they'll look."

Quinn shook his head. "I hate to side with the tyrannical tycoon with better hair than Donald, but he's right. It's so damn obvious, nobody will look there."

"Not to mention the resort has so many long-forgotten rooms and hidden corridors, I could stay there for weeks and not be seen. I know that place better than anyone else."

Oz sighed. "Fine. In the meantime, Quinn and I will find out exactly what that damn twin of yours is doing in Boxer Falls."

"We will?" Quinn asked.

Oz nodded at him angrily.

Quinn conceded defeat with a roll of his eyes. "And here I was thinking Boxer Falls was just gonna be another sleepy little town. How stupid of me!"

Do I really know what I'm doing here? Phil asked himself as he heard the doors unlock on Conrad's car. He had been squatting by the passenger door, out of sight from Conrad – or the man pretending to be Conrad – as the man had approached the car and hit the auto unlock button on his keys.

The doors unlocked.

Fake-Conrad opened the driver's door and slid behind the wheel.

At the same time, Phil hauled open the passenger door, sat down and shut the door behind him.

"Phil!" the startled driver exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"I'd like to ask you the same question, Conrad. Only I know you're not Conrad."

The man behind the wheel laughed incredulously. "What are you talking about? Of course I –"

Before the man could finish his sentence, Phil reached across, seized the man by the back of his head and pulled him into a kiss that was powerful, passionate...and one-sided.

Phil released him, licked his lips as though he had just taste-tested the man, and shook his head. "No, you're not Conrad. So who are you?"

"You're being a fool, Phil. Can't you see I'm trying to push you away. For your sake. For Grady's sake. There's nothing between you and me, Phil. There never can be. If you think I'm acting strange, then fine, think what you like. But you'll thank me later when you can see what I see."

“Oh really? What’s that?”

“How in love you and Grady are.”

Suddenly a pang of doubt hit Phil’s heart. What if he was wrong? What if Conrad was indeed trying to do the right thing. Trying to stop Phil from making the worst mistake of his life.

The man behind the wheel started the car. “Now if you don’t mind... get out of my car and leave me alone.”

Did I do the right thing? Grady asked himself as he stood across the street in the shadow of a large tree, watching as Phil stepped out of the passenger seat of Conrad’s car. *Did I do the right thing marrying Phil? Or should I have stayed with Conrad all those years ago?*

Right now, Grady couldn’t think straight at all.

He knew that following Phil would only lead to pain, but Phil had become so distant and remote over the last few days that Grady felt he didn’t have a choice. He feared something was going on.

A fear that was confirmed moments ago when he saw Phil kiss Conrad on the lips.

As Conrad’s car pulled away, Phil turned, and for a moment Grady thought he would spot him across the road. Grady’s already broken heart froze as he ducked further into the shadows, pressing his back against the trunk of the tree, hoping he hadn’t been seen.

He closed his eyes, as though it might make him invisible.

When he opened them again, Phil was gone.

And Grady couldn’t help but wonder –

Have I just lost the two great loves of his life to each other?

Do I really want gold or silver? Adam asked himself. He was thinking wedding rings, not

that either really mattered at all; hell, Zach could twist a paperclip into the shape of a ring and Adam would cherish it forever. But suddenly Zach piped up and said –

“Gold.”

Adam’s brow creased with surprise. “Did you just read my mind?”

“I have no idea,” Zach shrugged unwittingly. “I was just gonna say make sure you use the gold pen. It’ll look better on that paper.”

They were lying naked on the bed together, invitations and envelopes strewn across the bed. Zach was lying on his stomach, a hard-on pressed between him and the sheets. His bare ass was firm and round, his back smooth and flat. A perfect desk for Adam to start writing out their wedding invitations.

Adam picked up the gold pen and one of the pearlescent invitation cards.

He placed the invitation on Zach’s back and positioned himself to start writing. “Keep still,” he ordered, biting the cap off the pen and spitting it out onto the bed.

“You’ve already got one part of my moving,” Zach grinned mischievously, resting his chin on the pillow.

“I said shhh.”

“So bossy.”

“We’re getting married, get used to it.”

“I can’t wait,” Zach’s grin spread even wider, his stiff cock pressing itself even harder into the sheets.

“Now, who’s first on the list. Your dads?”

Zach nodded.

“I said don’t move,” Adam smiled as he carefully began writing Grady’s and Phil’s names in gold ink. “We’re gonna be here till midnight, writing all these. You do know that, don’t you?”

“Well you will insist on inviting the entire town... And then some.”

Zach started chuckling and the 'y' in Grady turned out all wonky. Adam started laughing too. "You're not concentrating! Keep still! I wanna get these all delivered tomorrow."

"We'll get it all done in time, don't worry about it," Zach said, rolling over as soon as Adam was done with invitation number one. "But in the meantime..."

As Zach turned and lay flat on his back, his cock sprang upward, straining at its full length and girth. Confidently he clasped his hands behind his head and positioned his pelvis a little higher...an invitation of his own.

"Seems your hubby has a chubby," he grinned.

Adam laughed again. He pushed the envelopes off the bed and put the gold pen down on the bedside table. Then he wet his lips, took Zach's cock in his fist and said, "Let me take care of that for you...dear."

*

Does anybody in this fucking town really know me? the man asked himself. And he knew the answer was —

No.

With a tug on the cord the lightbulb swung like a pendulum as it blinked to life. The man walked down the creaky steps into the basement as the shadows cast from the swinging light swept up and down the craggy rock walls.

In his arms the man carried a box.

He placed it on the table in the middle of the grim basement, then turned his attention to the far wall.

A large pinboard was fixed to it on a slightly crooked angle, but the man wasn't concerned or focused on the tilt of the board. What held his attention were the photos pinned to the board.

From the box he retrieved an envelope, already opened.

He slid out the wedding invitation with his name so painstakingly written in gold ink on the pearlescent card.

Calmly he ripped it up.

He dropped the pieces to the floor, then reached into the box and drew out a deck of cards.

Tarot cards.

Slowly he stepped toward the board.

“Oh Boxer Falls,” he whispered to himself, looking at the faces in the pictures pinned to the board; faces he knew well. “It’s time to finally find out who I really am.”

He flipped through the large cards in his hands and came across the Hanged Man. He pinned it above the photo of a dead man with fresh, visible stab wounds...a photo obviously taken moments after the man’s death.

The man with the Tarot cards smiled. “That bumbling private detective Kurt Brandt found out who I was...just a little too late.”

He moved to the next picture on the board, another photo of a dead man, this one with a bullet wound to the head. He pinned the Moon card above the picture and mumbled, “Then there came Ben Vreeland, who came so close to messing up my plans he needed to be taught a lesson.”

He looked at the other pictures on the board and added, “Now it’s time for the rest of you to learn a thing or two. All I wanted was a little love, but you couldn’t see it. You couldn’t see the real me, simmering inside. Burning. Aching. Now you’ll pay the price. All of you.”

He took another card and pinned it above a picture – a secret surveillance photo – of Grady and Conrad. “The Lovers,” the man said with a mocking kiss.

He took another card and pinned it above a photo of Phil. “The Fool,” he almost laughed.

He pinned the Magician card above a photo of Bryce and said, “You might have tricked everyone else into thinking you’re Conrad, but you haven’t tricked me.”

He pinned the Justice card above a photo of Vic and muttered with a smile, “Justice? Yours is coming.”

And above a photo of Zach and Adam, he pinned one more card. "And for the two handsome grooms, the Star card. Such a symbol of hope." With a deep breath of determination he turned and sneered, "But not for long."

With a certain stride he returned to the table and threw down the cards. They fanned across the splintered wood and came to rest, the Death card on top.

That's when the man took the rest of the items out of the box.

An LED timer.

A coiled connector wire.

Four sticks of dynamite.

And a block of C4 explosive large enough to blow half of Boxer Falls to hell.

With the swinging light still dancing its macabre dance across his face, the man began to laugh with delight. "This will be a wedding to remember. It's written in the cards."

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**Will Grady lose Phil forever?*

**Will Bryce's identity finally be uncovered?*

**Will Zach and Adam's wedding see their dreams come true?*

**Or will the Tarot Card Killer – whoever he may be – destroy the lives of everyone in Boxer Falls?*

TUNE IN NEXT WEEK!

Boxer Falls: The bigger they are...

AUTHOR BIO:

Geoffrey Knight is the author of over 30 published novels, novellas and short stories including *The Cross of Sins*, *The Riddle of the Sands*, *The Curse of the Dragon God* and most recently *To Catch a Fox with Ethan Day*. With a slate of novels scheduled for release in 2013, Geoffrey has now also taken on the role of publisher of The Empire Press with plans to publish the very best in GLBT literature. He currently lives on an island off the coast of Far North Queensland, Australia.