did happen. Another dumpster, another ruined outfit, but this time, oh Glory be to God on High, Fraser had lost his hat, and we all know what that means. Yes, Benton Fraser had, for possibly the second time in his life, got dirty. Filthy. Although, it must be confessed, it had taken the loss of his hat and the intervention of Ray Vecchio wielding a black trash bag filled with particularly noisome restaurant cast-offs to achieve this rare state of his affairs.

Ray shook his head as he glanced over at the closed door, Fraser not yet back from the absurdity of a shared bathroom down the hall. Just think about it: Fraser, stuck in a dumpster with a bag of rotten food dumped over him, and Fraser had still managed to keep partly clean. Life, he decided, just wasn’t fair. Still, he brightened, at least Fraser’d been half-filthy, too, almost as dirty as Ray had ended up.

So they’d found the missing handcuffs (don’t ask), solved the case (don’t ask) and arrested the baddies (definitely don’t ask), and here he was, sitting in Fraser’s apartment waiting for his own clothes to stop dripping or for Mrs. Figueroa’s creaking clothes dryer to finally work its miracle or whatever Benny had arranged, so Ray could shove his probably-ruined-anyway clothes in a bag and take them home. Or maybe, he thought, going over the list of some of the other things in that dumpster, he should just toss the entire outfit back in the trash and leave it there this time. He could borrow something of Fraser’s—those navy blue sweatpants with the RCMP logo had a drawstring waist, right?—and go home. Stopping on the way for a day or two to come up with an answer for his mother as to why he was wearing another man’s clothes and where he’d left his own.
Oh, God, if he showed up wearing Fraser's clothes, it'd be his fifteenth birthday all over again, and no way was he going to subject himself to that. And maybe, no way he could subject himself to that now: one thing to let Ma say those things to him then (and even now, he shut the hurt away deep inside where he could pretend it was dead and buried), another to let her say them to him now. If she would. After all, so he dated women, he'd been married, but there were other things he did, too, and Ma had eyes in the back of her head. Had Ma noticed the occasional phone-calls from guys? Or the way he dressed some nights when he went out?

Or the way he looked at Fraser when Benny's back was turned?

He stood up, all movement and attitude, turning his back on that line of thought: no point depressing himself, not when it was getting late, he was hungry, and he still had to get home. Early start tomorrow, big important meeting with the review panel, might get himself moved up a notch or two on the pay scale. Or demoted. Nah. With the way his cases—including the ones that became official cases only after they'd been solved—were going these days, they'd be making him commissioner in a week or two.

“Ray—”

Ray did not, absolutely did not, gasp or sigh or jump Fraser's bones. The man was still damp from his bath, hair curling slightly, skin sheened, feet bare, and all he was wearing were those uniform pants of his, suspenders dropped loosely down to drape around his hips. No, Ray didn't gasp or sigh, but he did gulp, and harden, and sit down abruptly so that the table would hide his wayward reaction from view. “Uh, yeah?” he asked, realizing that Fraser was just standing there, discarded clothing and damp towels tucked under one arm, staring at him.

“Are you hungry?”

You could say that. “Already called for pizza. The usual.”

“Oh. Thank you kindly, Ray.”

“Hey, I didn't know bath night was such a special event.”

One of those blank, uncomprehending looks that should have made Fraser look like a stupid dweeb, but instead made the rest of the world look dumb for not making sense.

“You know, it's bath night and you're saying 'thank you kindly' to me.”

Oh-ho, a frown this time. Deep emotional stirrings, Ray thought to himself, sarcasm his last line of defense against the way the soft glow of the lamplight was highlighting Fraser's naked chest, showing off the muscles, the layer of protective softness that the mildness of Chicago weather still hadn't gotten rid of, the slight rise of those little brown nipples. Ray had expected them to be flat, untouched, but they weren't, quite thick, only slightly prominent, but Ray was willing to bet a month's pay check that if you sucked them, bit them a bit maybe, if Fraser liked that, those nipples would get real prominent, sticking out hungrily, begging for more mouth action, his fingers twisting them, pulling on them—

And just how long had Fraser been talking to him—or worse, how long had Fraser been standing there staring at Ray staring at him?

“Uh, sorry, I was thinking about the case...”

Hmm. That was one of the mountie's expressions Ray hadn't figured out yet. There was the obvious, “I'm too polite to even consider that you might just possibly be lying,” but there was something else as well, something he nearly recognized.

But he let the speculation go, entered into conversation with some gusto, keeping up the endless friendly bickering right through paying for the pizza and putting up with Fraser's disapproval for ordering Dief his own personal deep-dish meat-lover's special.

“C'mon, Benny, Dief's a wolf, he's a meat lover, and you never heard the homily about bein' hungry like a wolf and havin' an appetite like a wolf or wolvin' food down?”

“Well, Ray, I think that the first two are similes and the last one is an adage—”

“D'you get special mountie points for good grammar? Or's this just the lingering, painful aftereffects of one long winter too many with only your grandma's books to read?”

“Good grammar—”

“Oh, no, we're not gettin' into a discussion on grammar. Lexicography on a Friday night? Jeez, bad enough I don't have a date...”

Bingo! Never failed: bring up anything that hinted at personal life and sex, and Fraser would shut up like a clam. Best trick Ray had ever learned.

They sat quietly and ate pizza, Fraser not even remonstrating when Ray gave Dief an extra slice. Which of course, had Ray looking at him in concern. Looking at him for the first time since his lapse earlier, when his mind had raced off on that tangent about nipples. The nipples were still bare, Fraser still half-naked, but maybe that was just because the spartan apartment was, by arctic standards, warm as June. Or maybe it was one of those Canadian manner things: your guest is not fully clad, therefore do not embarrass him by
being overdressed yourself. Ray hunched the top towel more tightly round his shoulders, making sure his own nipples were well and truly covered, then checked to make sure the towel round his hips was nice and secure. Yep, nothing showing, nothing indiscreet.

But maybe he shouldn’t wait for Mrs. Figueroa to wash his shirt and pants. Maybe he should just borrow the RCMP official issue sweat pants and get out of here.

“Ray…”

He didn’t like the sound of that tone of voice, didn’t like the expression that went with it, didn’t like any of it one little, teeny, tiny bit, not considering he’d just spent the last however long staring at Benny’s bare chest. Ray looked away, made like he was distracted. “Sorry, Fraze, I was a million miles away. I got that review board in the morning, with Captain Dowling—hey, I ever tell you about Dowling? He’s a real neatness freak, and this was back when I was a rookie, still green behind the gills, and I saw this car—”

And so it went on, Ray sitting talking up a storm while Fraser cleared away the small disarray of dirty glasses and pizza boxes, as Fraser brought out the ironing board and began, calmly, to iron and starch his underwear.

No way, no fucking way was Ray going to comment on that. So he ignored it, ignored Fraser handling his underwear (and how could a man so sexy and gorgeous wear shorts so staid and ugly?), ignored the light on skin, the flex of muscles in gorgeous forearms, the small looks Fraser cast his way. Ignored it all, and tried to tell himself the only reason he hadn’t already left for his own home was that he didn’t want to have to face Fraser in nothing but sweatpants and no underwear. He even believed himself. Well, nearly.

“So Dowling’s gonna be real glad to see me, you can guess, and if he finds anything—any tiny, little thing—he’s gonna bust my ass outta there and—”

Break off, swallow, look away as Fraser bent over at the waist, lick his lips as Fraser displayed that ripe ass, run his hands over his hair—

“Oh, great, the guy’s gonna give me the wolf cut.” Fraser wasn’t keeping up his end of the conversation; he was, instead, taking an old, leather-worn-soft bag out of his father’s trunk, opening it to reveal scissors, nail clippers, all sorts of personal hygiene things it boggled Ray’s mind to see, because if Fraser had them, it meant Fraser used them.

Weird, to think of Fraser having to cut his toenails. Weirder, to realize that you thought it was weird to think of Fraser being that human.

“You’re gonna cut my hair? You are gonna cut my hair?” Ray said, even though they both knew he’d let Benny do this. “You think I’m gonna let you cut my hair when I’ve never seen what you did to anyone else? When I have a review board in the morning?”

“I cut my own hair, Ray. And I trimmed Dief’s hair for summer.”

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“If I do it to you too, don’t I?”

“Do what to me, Ray?” Fraser asked calmly, loosening Ray’s top towel and rewrapping it around him like a barber’s cape.

“Treat you like Mr. SuperMountie, like you’re not normal and mortal the way the rest of us are.”

That gave Fraser pause, and then the scissors were picked up, and Fraser began to trim very close to the skull. “You’re the only one who ever treats me as just a man. Sometimes.”

“Sometimes? When do I?”

“When you don’t expect me to be perfect. When you give me help because I need it—”

“Get my hair cut—”

And bless the be-pelted one, he didn’t so much as look a comment at Ray’s nearly non-existent hair.

“—but I was too busy ruining more clothes for you and there’s no way my stylist’s gonna be open at that ungodly hour tomorrow morning. Dowling’s gonna comment, oh, man, I just know he’s gonna look at me and give me one of his ‘a good detective knows he represents this department to the public’ speeches. Man, there goes my raise.”

“Not necessarily, Ray.”

“Oh, you find some barber’s lost baby kitty and he owes you big?”

“No. I can cut your hair for you.”

“You? They teach hairstyling in mountie school?”

“I grew up in the far reaches of the Territories and I’ve lived most of my adult life in the wilderness, or near wilderness. There aren’t very many corner barbershops north of the Circle, Ray.”

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“You need my help?” Fraser leaned down over Ray’s left shoulder, his face right beside Ray’s, very nearly touching, and Ray could count the man’s eyelashes, if he wanted to. He wanted to; nearly missed what Fraser was saying.

“Yes, Ray. I need your help quite often. I need your help in cases, where I have no jurisdiction, I need your help with Dief, and Willy, and Francesca, not to mention adjusting to living in a large urban metropolis, the different mores and approaches of the people…”
“And you’ve sure had some different approaches, huh, Benny?”

Two miracles in one day: Fraser getting dirty, and Fraser not pretending to misunderstand a sexual comment. “Some of them have been very different indeed.”

Fraser straightened up then, pausing for a second to breathe deeply, Ray half expecting him to start tasting things again. Fraser did nothing of the sort, just went back to carefully trimming Ray’s hair, Ray only now realizing just exactly what Benny was doing, Benny’s hands touching Ray, and just how close Benny was standing. If Ray were to lean back, just an inch and a half—probably some precise measurement in Canadian—he’d be leaning against—

No. Nope, he was not going there, he was not, not, not when he was sitting here near-as-spit naked and all Fraser would have to do is lean over and look and—

Lean over and look, the way Benny already had. Oh. With the scissors skimming over his skull, Ray didn’t dare look up, and that was a good enough excuse for him. “So, uh,” attack being the best form of defense, this would get Fraser all closed off and distant, “what’s the most different approach you’ve had?”

Pity—maybe—that Benny didn’t know that. “Well, actually, the most different approach wasn’t here, it was up in a summer hunting settlement near Tuktoyuktuk, when a young man arranged to have me delayed so that I would have to accept his family’s hospitality, and since he knew that his sister had a crush on me and I was therefore honor-bound not to toy with her affections—”

There was a pause that could, very well, have been called pregnant. Ray cleared his throat again, and tried not to sigh out loud as Fraser’s hands took hold of him and tipped his head forward. “So you were offered this guy as hospitality?”

“Yes, Ray.”

“And…uh…did you, you know?”

“Did I know what?”

Oh, so the mountie was teasing now, was he? Well, this was Frannie’s big brother he was talking to. “Did you know him Biblically.”

He very nearly lost an ear tip for his boldness.

“That depends on whether you mean Leviticus or I Samuel.”

Ray’s head was tipped backwards this time, the top of his head touching Fraser’s bare stomach, Fraser bending over him, bending way down low over him, curving over him warmly, welcomingly, and those nipples were more pronounced than before, peaking, and puckering all round the aureole, and if Ray could tear his eyes away from them for just a moment, he could see Fraser’s face leaning down over him, those blue eyes saying something Ray couldn’t quite make out.

And then Ray’s heart stopped, the beat skipping, as Fraser ran the backs of his fingers along Ray’s jaw. “You need a shave,” and Fraser’s voice was very quiet, almost a whisper, but not quiet enough to silence the faint tremor running through it.

There wasn’t a single suitable comeback in Ray’s head: there was no room for anything but Fraser leaning over him like this, Fraser all but giving him the come on—

—Or was this Fraser giving him the go-ahead? Was this what Fraser was like with Victoria? Letting her know that he wouldn’t say no? And was that what Ray had been almost seeing in Fraser, was that what he almost recognized? What he would surely have recognized, if it had been coming at him from a woman.

If Fraser were a woman…

If Fraser were a woman, they’d have been lovers a long, long time ago.

But while Ray had been thinking, he’d given Fraser more than enough time and Fraser was pulling back now, blatantly confused, hurt and chaos darkening his eyes.

“Hey,” Ray said, daring to reach up, his hand catching Fraser’s bare forearm, the most intimate touch they’d shared thus far. “Hurry up with that shaving gear, okay?”

And there it was. Clear as day now that Ray’d taken his blinkers off: Fraser all warmth and delight, but so quiet, though, hidden away, and there, along with the warmth, a definite heat, the sort of thing that if Ray saw it in his sister’s eyes, he’d lock Frannie up in the nearest convent for a year. Or two.

Fraser was coming back now, taking Ray’s upper towel off, setting it on the table, right beside all the other arcane things that seemed to be needed for a straight-razor shave. “It’ll be just a minute until the kettle’s ready,” Fraser said, fussing around, folding the towel, rearranging the accouterments, finally stopping, doing nothing but leaning his bum on the edge of the table, crossing his arms and looking at Ray.

They broke apart for a few moments, while Fraser dealt with getting hot water, and sudsing up the old-fashioned brush. He came round behind Ray again, holding Ray’s face with one hand while he lathered Ray up. The straight razor glinted like a weapon, and Ray swallowed, hard.

“It will be all right,” Fraser whispered, and began stroking Ray’s face with the sharpened steel.

This, Ray thought, this was trust, and he swallowed hard, again.
“There’s no need to be afraid.”
“I’m not scared.” Another swallow, mouth gone dry.
“I was just thinking, about trust. And you.”
And was blessed by the most glorious smile.
Fraser didn’t say anything, didn’t even give him any
Inuit stories or quotes from literature, just kept right on
smiling, stroking that blade across Ray’s face, and neck,
until Ray was smooth as silk.

And Fraser’s voice was just as smooth when he said,
“You usually have your barber shape the hair on your
nape, don’t you?”

And without warning, Fraser came round to the front,
the table shoved unceremoniously out of his way, and
then Fraser was standing astride the still-seated Ray,
Ray’s head bent forward as Fraser took his own sweet
time to lather up the back of Ray’s neck.

His head was touching Fraser again, pressed up
against the softness of Fraser’s stomach, and right in front
of Ray’s face was Fraser’s groin. He dressed left, Ray
noticed, interested, as Fraser leaned forward, rubbing at
the back of Ray’s neck. Dresses left, and was, he
guessed, uncomfortable, for Fraser reached down and
adjusted himself right there in front of Ray. Right in front
of Ray.

The razor now, and Fraser lifted Ray’s head up, Ray’s
face soft and smooth against Fraser’s belly, and Ray
couldn’t help it, didn’t want to help it, just did what they
both seemed to want. As the razor stroked across the
delicate skin at his nape, he stroked his tongue across
the delicate skin of Fraser’s belly. A hissed intake of
breath, a quiver of stomach muscles, a blatant beat of
interest from inside those pants, and then the razor
stroked again, and Ray licked, again, lingering this time,
and with the next stroke of the razor, he licked again,
ending this time at Fraser’s belly button, dipping his
breath, a quiver of stomach muscles, a blatant beat of
interest from inside those pants, and then the razor
stroked again, and Ray licked, again, lingering this time,
and with the next stroke of the razor, he licked again,
ending this time at Fraser’s belly button, dipping his
tongue in there, sucking at it, licking the skin again
and again, leaving damp trails across the smoothness. There
wasn’t even a hint of hair visible, not even the faintest
trace of stubble, and Ray was consumed with curiosity
as to what lay hidden by those uniform pants. Another
stroke of the razor against him, and he undid the top
button, Fraser’s thighs trembling, Ray’s hands going to
steady them, bracing his hands on Fraser’s legs. Licking
now at the small v of skin that had been revealed,
sucking too, in promise, and there was a pause as Fraser,
cumslily one-handed, undid his trousers, pushing them
open, that hand shaking as it delved within and brought
Fraser’s cock out to Ray’s waiting mouth.

A groan, then, from either or both of them. Ray’s
mouth widened as he swallowed Fraser whole. God, he
loved sucking cock, and to be doing it to Fraser was part

of his wildest dreams. He sucked hard, then gently,
playing with the foreskin, slipping his tongue under it,
sucking hard on the head, opening his throat and taking
Fraser all the way down, until soft, soft hair pressed
against his nose, and his cheek, and the tenderness of
balls cradled up against his chin.

No pretense of shaving now, the razor gone some-
where, Fraser’s hands both cupped around Ray’s head,
gently at first, harder and more insistent as it became
obvious that Ray was no novice at this. Fraser withdrew
from Ray’s mouth, crouched down to kiss him, hard and
deep, his tongue tasting himself in Ray’s mouth. A
moment, then, to look Ray straight in the eye, and Fraser
was standing again, holding Ray’s head steady as he
thrust his cock slowly, so slowly, all the way inside Ray’s
mouth. Thrusting in, pulling out, Fraser’s hands and cock
controlling the depth of penetration, Fraser fucking Ray’s
face like this, standing astride him over a rickety chair in
a spartan room.

Ray’s hands stopped stroking Fraser’s thighs, sought
out something more, conforming to the ripe fullness of
Fraser’s ass. Perfect. Round, and full, firm muscle, the
curve leading in to the secret heart of the man. There,
right there, he pressed hard through the heavy cloth of
Fraser’s uniform, his reward Fraser’s groan and Fraser in a
rush to shed those pants, dropping them so that the dark
navy revealed the paleness of skin. Ray stroked Fraser,
dipping in to caress him there, and lower, fingers
smoothing over Fraser’s balls from behind, following the
delicate rimple back up to Fraser’s hole. Stopping there,
circling, pressing inwards, teasing, teasing, as Ray
sucked hard on Fraser’s cock.

He felt Fraser trying to pull out, let him go, reluc-
tantly, because it was too stupid nowadays not to. Both
hands were hard around Fraser’s cock, Fraser’s hands
tangling with his, Ray holding orgasm at bay, Fraser
hungry to come. “I’m clean, Benny. You?” Ray asked,
trust this man as always.

“Yes,” Fraser said, all but groaning, “yes…” as he
thrust once more into Ray’s waiting mouth. A few more
moments, and it happened, semen spurting into Ray’s
mouth, filling him, overflowing, and he still swallowed,
wouldn’t let go, held on, and held on, his hands bruising
on Fraser’s backside, his mouth so tight and hard on
Fraser’s cock.

Three miracles in one day: the chair held, as Fraser
sank down, replete, sitting astride Ray, Ray’s mouth
immediately fastening onto one of those tempting
nipples, sucking on it, his mouth and face leaving moist
kisses of Fraser’s semen on the pink-flushed skin.

A few minutes, Fraser’s heartbeat slowed to some-
thing approaching normal, and then he was sliding down off Ray, taking him by the hands, and kissing him, with such tenderness, it was enough to break Ray's heart.

Breaking off the kiss, he led Ray to the bed, one broad hand rubbing Ray through the thinness of the towel, Ray's erection tenting the fabric, Ray's need burgeoning as Fraser tugged the towel off and out of the way.

“Later,” Fraser said, licking his lips, “I'm going to do for you what you just did for me. But right now,” another kiss, devouring, possessive, “I want more than that.”

Lust kicked Ray in the stomach, a lurching, heated hunger, and Ray could scarcely control himself as Fraser turned to display his back, his ass, as Fraser knelt on the bed, shoulders down as he braced himself on folded arms, asshole visible as he spread his legs. Ray hadn't actually consciously decided to get on the bed, or move, or anything, but there he was, kneeling behind Fraser, positioning himself, his hard cock stroked by the rough woolen blanket, and his tongue just as rough as he stroked it across Benny's exposed pink asshole. There was just the faintest brushing of fine, delicate hair surrounding the clean skin, and the muscle was tight, thrillingly tight, as Ray pushed his tongue inside. He withdrew, sucking on the bud for a while, kissing and licking and even biting, just a bit, just enough to make Fraser groan. Too soon for another erection, but obviously not too soon for Fraser to love the stimulation.

Ray loved doing this, had had far too few opportunities, no one, in fact, since Angela, and it was tempting, just a bit, to keep on doing this while his hands squeezed and pumped himself to satisfaction. But how could he not take what was being offered? With a last, sucking kiss, he stopped, and got back up onto his knees. Fraser was wet and loose now, opened up and ready, his back long and strong, his buttocks white and round, very firm, with dimples, there, and there, just right for a man to fit his thumbs in as he gripped on to give Fraser a good, hard ride.

Next time. He'd do that next time. But even as he mocked himself for his mile-wide romantic streak, he turned Benny over, was met by that unexpected blinding, happy grin—and had the stray, absurd thought that he'd never think of 'sunny side up' quite the same way ever again.

He took Fraser's penis in his hand, began stroking—and had his hands shifted, down, lower, to the opening of Benny's body, as Fraser lifted his legs up, knees hooking over Ray's shoulders, that sweet pink hole open and waiting and exposed. Ray didn't bother asking if Benny was ready, such conceits plastic and out of place amidst such obvious intent and willingness. Steadying himself, Ray pushed forward, and nearly lost it when Fraser reached down and took hold of Ray, guiding Ray's body within his own.

No resistance, only a perfect pressure as Ray's cock passed through the tight ring of muscle, as Ray's cock sank deeper, ever deeper into Fraser's body. He held still for a long, long moment, not to give Fraser time to adjust, no need for that, but simply to rejoice in the sensations of his body. Then and only then, did he begin thrusting, fucking Benny deep and hard, loving every second of it, staring down to meet Benny's eyes, seeing the pleasure there, seeing the happiness there, his own cock happy in its temporary home. Even while his body threatened to OD on pleasure, his mind was busy going crazy with the sheer joy of knowing that he was fucking Fraser, that Benny was loving this, that even without an erection, Benny's cock small and vulnerable on his belly, Benny was getting so much pleasure out of this. He could see it, in Benny's eyes, in the sweet tension of Benny's body, in the way Benny thrust up to meet him, to take him deeper. No, there was no hard-on to signal Fraser's pleasure, but everything about him sang his enjoyment.

Fraser was clenching down on him now, deepening the pleasure, postponing orgasm, but even so, Ray could feel himself getting close, and closer, rising up from deep within, hurtling through his body and exploding, streaming from him and deep, deep into Benny. A few more ragged thrusts, his body swept away on the tide, and then he was slowing, and stopping, slipping free and collapsing down into the welcome of Fraser's embrace.

He lay there, probably for a while, before a noise disturbed him and he realized he'd fallen asleep. Starting to apologize, he realized that Fraser wasn't complaining about his weight on him, or anything else. Fraser was sound asleep, and still smiling. Sweet dreams, Ray thought, looking at him. Something Fraser deserved, sweet dreams. A glance at the clock confirmed it was late at night, just after midnight, and with Fraser right here in bed with him, he had no fear of sleeping in late for his review board. Fraser would be awake at some unholy hour, bright-eyed and bushytailed, even without the benefit of caffeine.

No fear of sleeping late, then. But a guarantee that they would both be awake early, in plenty of time: time enough, in fact, to cement this new aspect of their relationship. Ray crossed his arms on Fraser's chest, leaned his chin on his forearms and gazed at the sleeping face so serene and calm before him.

It had taken a while, but at least Fraser had had the
sense to realize that if he wanted to be caught, he had to tell a man to start chasing. Shortest chase in history, Ray thought fondly, wondering how early this would have happened between them if Ray had only known. Up in Fraser’s dad’s cabin that first time? Right after Ray had taken Fraser home to meet his family? The day they’d moved Fraser’s bed into his apartment?

Probably right there in the holding cell, tattooed men, drag queens and Internal Affairs guy and all.

Eyes drooping, Ray arranged himself more comfortably on top of Benny, reaching round awkwardly until Fraser mumbled under his breath and tightened his arms around Ray. Drifting off to sleep, Ray buoyed himself up with the knowledge that as soon as his alarm clock woke up, there’d be time enough to make love again, and still be pristine enough to face the review.

Not that the review much mattered, now. Hard to care about a paper promotion when he had Benny asleep and sated under him, harder to care when he knew that come morning, he’d be the one under Benny, or on Benny, or in Benny, depending on what they wanted. Time enough for variations, he thought contentedly, there would be time enough, for them, for every variation they could think of. Maybe Benny knew some books they could get from the library…