expecting this. The familiar footsteps, Dief’s welcoming whuff, Ray not bothering to knock. Fraser got up from the bed, not hurrying, stood silently aside for Ray.

Nothing was said, of course, Fraser not one for wasted words, Ray looking as if every word had been wrung out of him hours before.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, empty words spoken over a full grave, leaving Ray’s eyes hollow.

There was an absence, of Ray’s usual chatter, of Ray’s usual brightness, of Ray’s usual vibrancy, an absence that cut all the deeper because there was nothing Fraser could do to fix it.

Fraser didn’t even bother making coffee: no point, Ray wouldn’t drink it. Wouldn’t eat anything, and after that awful night with the Zukos, Fraser was fiercely glad he had no alcohol in his home. So he did nothing, said nothing, simply waited, quietly, with the same patience that could see a man through a winter where the dawn never came. He stood there quite calmly, watching, watching as Ray sat down in one of the kitchen chairs, as Ray leaned on the table, as Ray closed his eyes and shut the world out.

Stood there, still, when Ray re-opened his eyes, and looked at Fraser, and let Fraser see inside.

He kept standing there, passive, impassive, while Ray got to his feet and approached, and didn’t move until Ray grabbed him, hauled him close, hugged him tight and hard, cradling him in as if Fraser were a wounded child, some hurt smallness that needed comfort, some broken smallness Ray could keep perfectly safe.

It had been like this, after Irene Zuko’s death. Had been like this after
Ray had found the body of that missing girl, had been like this after Ray had had to kill his car. Hardly surprising it should be like this after today's funeral. His own arms tight around Ray, Fraser lay his head on Ray's shoulder and closed his eyes as Ray had told Irene to do, Ray's hand on the nape of his neck, stroking, comforting, soothing. Giving, always giving. They stayed like that for a long time, uncomfortable, awkward, Ray taking comfort only through giving it, Fraser giving comfort through taking what Ray needed to give him.

Until finally, although neither made mention of it, the fraught hug changed, a subtle shifting, first of bodies to relieve aching muscles, then of attitude, and of need, and finally, of intent.

Ray, frowning intently, slid Fraser's braces down off his shoulders, his fingers unbuttoning the top of uniform trousers, his hands cool and smooth as they stroked Fraser's stomach.

Again, Fraser stood there, still, unmoving, and watched; watched as Ray watched his own hands under the white cotton of Fraser's undershirt; watched, as Ray lifted that shirt up, tugging it over Fraser's head, pulling it down to pin those strong arms, rendering Fraser's strength immobile, vulnerable. Trousers next, Fraser stumbling backwards, fetching up against the wall with his shoulders, hands scrabbling for purchase as Ray stole his balance, lifting his feet out from under him, right foot, left foot, until the trousers were gone and his feet were bare.

Ray stopped now, and stood back, and took his time just to stare.

So that's how it was going to be tonight.

Fraser waited, his gaze never leaving Ray, his breath coming faster, aware of his heart rate increasing. Aware, more, of the blood heating his penis, aware of the precise moment erection began, aware of the first minute lengthening of his own penis, and there could never be words to describe how that felt, his sex growing, and hardening, and rising, a miracle of liquid engineering that brought the head of his penis against the starched cotton of his underwear, trapping his flesh uncomfortably.

Ray was, as always, still looking at him. Looking at his erection, looking at the damp spot seeping through the pristine cotton. Stepping forward, blessedly, to reach in, to take Fraser's cock in his hand, and adjust him, such a casual, intense intimacy.

Ray stepping back again, his eyes so very dark, a lure, and alluring, to Fraser.

Fraser didn't move: he stayed where Ray had put him, and waited until Ray chose to move again. Ray coming towards him, unsmiling, brow furrowed, mouth so tense, so tight, but his hand gentle enough as he reached for Fraser, only a touch, and then Ray becoming distant once more.

The coolness of air on his penis, and Fraser didn't have to look down to know how Ray had left him: erect, darkened flesh sticking out through the slit in his white underwear. He should feel ridiculous, arms constrained, sex exposed, facing this man still fully draped in his somber, formal Armani, but there was nothing in Ray's eyes that could ever humiliate him, nothing in those eyes that made Fraser feel anything but aroused, hungry, wanton. He wanted to thrust, to fuck, to mate, his hips canting forwards, his throat allowing a sound to escape, his legs automatically spreading.

And Ray was just standing there, watching this. Watching Fraser, arms pinned by his undershirt, strength made helpless; watching Fraser, hard cock thrusting through the shorts, virility rendered impotent.

Ray, watching Fraser, the pale skin flushing red, small brown nipples hard, surprisingly thick, unless a man knew what Fraser liked to have done to those excessively sensitive nipples.

Ray, watching still, as desire gave way to passion, as passion gave way to need, as need, ultimately, gave way to surrender, and Fraser's eyes pleaded.

Then, and only then, did Ray step forward again.

He filled his hands with Fraser, rough as he kneaded Fraser's chest, rougher still as he flicked and twisted those nipples that knew his touch so well.

Giving, still, for this roughness was Fraser's secret need, the darkness within him that had resonated so to the darkness in Victoria, this harshness another of Ray's gifts to Fraser: sex as punishment and pleasure, penance and reward. Oh, Ray understood, and Ray gave, and Fraser took, greedily, and took, needing this.

Ray leaned forward, teeth gleaming in the light, just for a second, before his lips and teeth closed over one hard nipple, and Fraser's breath hissed inwards, while his chest heaved upwards, and his cock thrust upwards just as Ray's hand pushed downwards. The soft skin of Ray's hand met the softer skin of Fraser's cock, skin whispering on skin, too dry, and so Ray straightened, and brought his hand up between them.

They both looked at it, as Ray turned it, this way, that, the tendons moving under the skin, the skin olive over the whiteness of bones. They both looked at that hand, until it was too close and Fraser looked at Ray's face instead, at the intent expression, at the parted lips, the hooded eyes. Fraser kept on looking, at the way Ray ran his tongue over his own lips, a fore-shadow of what they
both knew Fraser would do. Ray’s fingers touched Fraser’s mouth and Fraser ran his tongue over Ray’s fingertips, echoing Ray’s desire. He watched Ray’s face, addicted, as Ray slid one finger inside Fraser’s mouth, watched Ray’s face even while sucking on Ray’s finger, watched the shift in Ray’s expression as Ray slid another finger into him, and another. Fraser knew what was going on in Ray’s mind, for he’d told Ray: Ray knew he’d done this for Victoria. Ray knew that, and knew, too, that Fraser had sucked other things, on other people. Knew, first-hand, what it was to have Fraser suck Ray’s own body, down low, at the hard heat of him.

Ray’s fingers were wet now, and he withdrew them, slowly, his touch lingering, and then that wet touch was lingering on Fraser’s erection, fingers teasing the foreskin, palm pressed hard along the length of his shaft. That hand tightening, loosening, sliding up and down, doing everything exactly, precisely, the way Fraser liked it best, the hand tightening into a fist, hard and rough, the way Fraser needed it most.

Ray, giving, and giving, and Fraser stared into Ray’s eyes as Ray’s hand blessed him with pleasure, giving it to him, Fraser’s own hands useless, Fraser’s body helpless. Ray was staring back at Fraser, staring at his own hands giving, his eyes finally beginning, gently, to take: taking in the sight of Fraser standing there, unsteady, arms pinned behind his back, chest flushed red, nipples hard. But that wasn’t enough for Ray, obviously, for he actually, at last, took a little more for himself: Ray grabbed the front of Fraser’s underwear, lowering it ungently, Fraser groaning in pleasure as the cloth scraped down over his penis, Ray’s hand hard and tight around Fraser again almost instantly. Ray’s hand lingered as he adjusted the fabric just so, the waistband pulled taut across rounded buttocks as Ray lowered the front to exactly where he wanted it to be. Ray’s hand so tanned compared to Fraser’s paleness. White underwear cupping balls drawn up at the base of the rigid cock, black pubic hair a shock against the white of Fraser’s belly, and now Ray was satisfied with the vista before him, or seemed to be, because he stepped back once more.

His need too great, Fraser stumbled forward, following Ray, stopping only when Ray turned a dark, heated glare on him. It was Fraser’s turn to stare, to gaze and watch and devour with his eyes as, basking in the heat of Fraser’s gaze, Ray Vecchio finally began to undress. The coat first, folded over the back of the chair, then the jacket, seating himself to take off shoes, and socks, Fraser barely daring to blink at even this small nakedness, Ray’s feet narrow and bare on the brown floor. The belt-buckle opened, the button undone, zipper rasping like a tongue on stubble, shirt pulled out over the gaping trousers, denying Fraser even a glimpse as Ray bent forward and peeled off trousers and underwear. The tie, finally, top two shirt buttons opened, cuffs flicked open, and Ray walking towards Fraser, naked under that shirt, long, gorgeous thighs with the muscles flexing, and brief moments when perhaps, perhaps, Fraser was gifted with a glimpse of hardening cock as Ray stepped forward.

Not until Ray’s hand—so warm, so strong—pressed against his chest and pushed him did Fraser back up against the wall, and then Ray was taking that last step, until they were plastered together, chest to knees, Fraser’s cock so hard and aching, trapped between them, nudging, blindly seeking Ray’s cock, seeking relief, frustrated by the creased cloth of Ray’s shirt.

At long last, Ray was shedding that shirt, and there was nothing between them but skin, and hunger, and need. Fraser thrust forward, the head of his cock rubbing through the soft hair at Ray’s groin, and touching, temptingly, tantalizingly, the soft skin of Ray’s own cock, hips thrusting forward again, trying to find Ray again—denied, wrenching a horrible, lonely sound from his throat.

But this was Ray, who always gave, and who always knew. Fraser was guided, hurriedly, need dictating the pace, to the table. Within moments of that one wordless, need-filled sound, Ray was bending Fraser over the table, Fraser’s cock trapped between his belly and the tablecloth, the coarseness a piquant pain. Fraser’s back was covered by the warmth of Ray’s body, Ray’s cock nudging at him between his legs, Ray’s cock rising up between Fraser’s thighs to dandle Fraser’s balls, to slide, once, the head so slick and moist, up the underside of Fraser’s cock. Ray’s fingers were in Fraser’s mouth, and Fraser sucked, hard, but they were taken from him anyway, if only for a moment, because Ray knew where Fraser wanted them: now those wet fingers were probing him, seeking out his darkness, spreading him and wetting him and opening him up.

A thicker hardness probing at Fraser now, the skin so very different, the heat so very much more intense, and the thrust slow, and sure, and familiar, sliding into him, taking over the darkness within, beginning the deep, slow thrusting. Ray was bent over him, giving Fraser no room to move, no way to ease the sweetly painful friction on his cock. Ray, giving to him again, Ray giving him what Benton Fraser never, ever, dared ask for. What he never dared hope anyone, but Victoria, would ever love him enough to offer.
Ray’s body hair was so soft and caressing on Fraser’s back, and on Fraser’s buttocks, Ray’s thighs pressing against the backs of Fraser’s legs. A moment to adjust their position, Ray controlling even that, and then Ray was thrusting in so hard, so deep, Ray standing straighter, his hands tangling in Fraser’s undershirt, grabbing hold of the fabric, holding Fraser immobile and helpless as Ray thrust his cock deep within Fraser’s body.

Ray thrust harder, deeper, staying there, shoving his hips forward for that last fraction of penetration, possessing Fraser utterly. Withdrawing, then going inside Fraser again, holding steady, deep within Fraser, and moving, just enough, his hips tilting, his cock twisting inside, touching, touching and stabbing and stroking.

Stillness, and stillness, until Fraser feared he would cry out, and then Ray moving again, the table creaking dangerously, Ray’s thrusting in his strong, steady rhythm, plunging in, pulling almost completely out, again and again and again. It was the way it always was, on these nights that were so different from their usual way. But this was one of the rare nights, when Ray needed, and he gave, gave Fraser the fulfillment of the deepest of their desires.

They were as they always were, the pattern of these nights unchanged, giving and taking, the two of them moving as one, sweat sheening on Ray’s back, sweat sheening on Fraser’s face, as Ray pushed so deeply inside, Ray’s mouth open in soundless completion, his movements arrhythmic, jarring, fucking Fraser so hard.

And Fraser lay pinned under Ray, splayed helplessly across the table as Ray came inside him, Ray’s seed spilling into him, as Ray’s hardness slowly softened, and dwindled, and left Fraser, alone.

A few moments, the sound of their breathing so very loud. Then Ray was helping Fraser to his feet, was turning him round, Fraser’s arms still bound, his underwear still tight up under his balls, his cock dark with need. Ray looked at him, looked him straight in the eye, and wrapped one hand round Fraser’s cock as he leaned forward and for the first time that night, kissed him. His groan of final pleasure swallowed by Ray’s kiss, Fraser came, semen hot against Ray’s hand, Fraser’s mouth hot and open against Ray’s.

Too quickly, at the end, as always, for the kiss ended, shame creeping in on cloven hooves, until Ray looked away, then kept his eyes on the neutrality of Fraser’s shoulder as the undershirt was finally removed by Ray’s tender hands, as the underwear was finally pulled off, used, in the end, to swab spilled semen from hands and inner thighs.

And now that Fraser was fully naked at last, Ray turned back towards his own clothes, his hands unsteady as he made a move towards getting dressed, and leaving.

No.

Not this time.

This time, there would be as much comfort for Ray as there had been balm for Fraser; if there was to be shame for what they did on these nights, then it was Fraser’s, not Ray’s. And Ray had taken all that shame away, the very first time he had filled Fraser’s darker needs and loved him still, in spite of it all. Even after Victoria. Perhaps especially after Victoria.

Fraser was reaching out, now, taking the clothing away from Ray, turning his friend towards the bed, holding Ray in his arms as he lay down on the bed, pulling Ray to lie down on top of him.

Now, now at last, perhaps, it would be Fraser’s turn to give. He nestled Ray in closer, draping Ray over his own stolid form, encircling Ray with his arms. And Ray allowed it. Allowed himself to be cradled close and caring the way Ray had held Fraser such a short time before; allowed himself to lay his head on Fraser’s shoulder, and to close his eyes, as Fraser stroked his hair, and his back.

They lay like that for a long time. Fraser’s hands never still as they soothed, and comforted, as they did what Ray so rarely permitted. Fraser gave Ray small kisses, and caresses, and Ray took them, settling into the embrace, relaxing into the warmth of Fraser’s body. They didn’t talk, neither one asked the other a single question, they just lay there together as the last echo of sex left their bodies, and sleep whispered in. In the quiet, Dief’s breathing was loud, and the noise from the outside world intruded upon their own small pocket of silence.

But for tonight, the world was out there, and the hollow ache had left Ray’s eyes, and Fraser didn’t need to hear Ray say anything; he already knew and didn’t need to hear any of the pain of the funeral and of saying good-bye; they didn’t need words to know that this was different from the usual, that this time, this tight, hard hug was Ray Vecchio taking what Fraser had always so desperately wanted to give him.

And with that, Benton Fraser was content.