

# 60 PERCENT PROOF

A BY DEGREES INTERLUDE



TAYLOR V. DONOVAN

# *Sixty Percent Proof*

By Taylor V. Donovan

A By Degrees Interlude

Distributed at [www.taylorvdonovan.com](http://www.taylorvdonovan.com) by Taylor V. Donovan

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This work contains graphic language and explicit sexual content between two men.

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**NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:**

**This Interlude is part of the By Degrees serial, and takes place during the timeline of Six Degrees of Lust.**

Blurb:

*Sam Shaughnessy knows what he wants from Mac O'Bannon: monthly, uncomplicated casual encounters.*

*Mac is on the same page. For two months they have been enjoying each other's company, never forgetting that their agreement leaves zero room for long-term commitment.*

*But a visit to a local gay club during a weekend getaway in South Beach tips the scale, and it isn't long before Sam starts showing how much he really doesn't like to share.*

*Firmly placed rules get suspiciously bent, and by the end of the night only two things are clear: body shots are conducive to extreme displays of arousal and possessiveness, and anything can be blamed on tequila.*

*South Beach, Florida*

*August 29, 2009*

# One

There was something completely decadent about lying down on a bar top with your shirt bunched up under your chin and your jeans pushed dangerously low on your hips while surrounded by a bunch of horny guys. Then there was the half-naked Go-Go boy. He couldn't forget about the Go-Go boy dancing above his head. Mac had been staring at him long enough to know which way he dressed and when he'd last waxed.

Knowing most of those guys found him attractive didn't mean anything to Mac, but he was thrilled by their presence and enthusiasm nevertheless. Strangely enough, the wolf-whistles and lewd comments only added to his excitement. It was all very surreal, to say the least.

He liked looking good and turning heads, but as hard as he worked on his body, and as happy as he was with the results, the truth was he wasn't narcissistic, and exhibitionism had never been his thing. Yet Mac couldn't deny he was getting off on it. Not because he knew some of those guys were dying to touch him, but because Sam had sprinkled salt all over his navel, and was now eagerly licking the modesty out of him in front of an audience.

Having Sam not only hold his hand in public, but also touch and kiss him, and not once try to hide the fact that they were lovers meant the world to Mac. Coming out of the closet and being completely open about his sexual orientation was one of his goals, but meeting that special someone who'd push all his buttons and dare to claim him in front of the entire world was his dream, and he was finally living it.

A deep sense of headiness came over him when he thought about it, and he closed his eyes until it'd passed. He supposed the flashing strobes lighting up people's faces could be making him dizzy, and there was a chance all the alcohol he'd consumed since arriving at the club had made its way to his head, but he knew better than that. The euphoria that had him feeling faint was man-created. It was all Sam's fault.

Mac bit down on the lime wedge, the acidic flavor bursting in his mouth as he watched Sam go to town on his belly button and suck tequila out of it while their audience cheered him on.

Mac held his breath and did his damn best to keep his dick under control, but as soon as Sam looked up at him from under his lashes, he realized it was a lost battle. Mac *knew* the intense shine in Sam's pretty blue eyes meant his guy felt... determined, and so Mac might as well kiss what little was left of his modesty good bye. That was fine by him. For some reason

Sam had decided it was a good idea to drive him out of his ever-loving mind in public, and, considering he'd pretty much accomplished that the second he ground against Mac and ordered him to hop up and lay down on the bar, it was safe to say Mac had no chance in hell of stopping him now.

Not that he wanted to.

He'd have to be an idiot, or have powerful reasons —like a gun pointed at his head— to not indulge in a sexy time with his guy, so yeah. He couldn't wait for what he knew would come next, mortifying hard-on be damned. Going by the increased volume of their audience's encouraging words, he wasn't the only one and Sam, God bless his insatiable soul, promptly obliged.

Mac clenched his stomach, and his balls drew tight as his body became a feverish mass of aching anticipation.

Lips firmly latched on the lime wedge, he breathed noisily through his nose when Sam lowered his head and brushed Mac's rock-hard dick with the tip of his nose. A few seconds later he closed his lips around the shot glass he'd placed between Mac's legs. It was so close to his crotch, the darn thing would be nestled between his nuts had he not been wearing jeans.

A growl escaped him when Sam threw his head back and downed the tequila. His guy looked sexy as fuck, and Mac's already painfully hard cock thickened further. More than anything he wanted to sit up and maul the strong column on Sam's neck, but he forced himself to remain in place, waiting until Sam leaned over him and bit the lime out of his mouth. Then all bets were off.

He grasped Sam's shoulder with one hand, the back of his neck with the other, sitting up in one swift move. Sam stepped between his legs. Mac immediately wrapped them around his guy's waist, and they finally shared a kiss that had the guys around them good-naturedly telling them to get a room. Not surprising, as it was one of those tongue-sucking, teeth-clashing kisses that usually ended up with someone on his back with the other man's dick buried in his ass. They might've said a few other things, but Mac didn't understand any of it.

He was too buzzed.

Too busy sliding his hands up and down his guy's back, fisting his shirt, and fighting the urge to take it off so that he could sink his teeth into Sam's chest.

Too consumed by the rawness and carnality of their kiss to give a shit about anything other than his extremely complex lover, and the amazing time they'd had in South Beach.

Sam circled Mac's hips with his strong arms and pulled him toward the edge of the bar top, and Mac could've sworn he felt sparks crackling around them as he rubbed his body against Sam's until his feet were firmly planted on the floor.

He sucked on Sam's tongue like he wished he could suck on his dick, and then it was Sam's turn to do the same to him.

He surrendered.

Sam's kiss was an ambush to his senses; a lustful, dominant weapon powerful enough to fry every brain cell Mac possessed, making him forget his own name. He pressed his cock against the hard wedge of Sam's. His hands were almost shaking as he arched his hips, and grabbed Sam's ass. Mac had never wanted anything the way he wanted this man... nor had he been so thoroughly consumed by another man's desire for him.

Sam may be a pro at erecting walls around his heart and mind, but he never hid his passion or made excuses for it. He hungered for Mac; as simple as that, and Sam never hesitated to show him how much.

Everything around them disappeared. Mac greedily took every kiss, every caress, and reveled in it, and soon enough he found himself navigating the interchanging waves of pleasure, solace, and desperation he'd come to expect whenever things got sexual between them.

Their chemistry was off the charts and, whether they talked about it or not, there was no denying they found peace in each other's arms. But that didn't change their reality. They still were nothing but friends with benefits hooking up under very specific parameters, and every time they were together could be the last, especially after the past few days.

Because Sam was too stubborn to consider the possibility they could be more.

Because he'd bolt if he ever took the time to analyze the many ways in which he'd broken his own rules.

Although his Yankee talked one excellent game, the fact remained he'd been playing a different one since they got together in NYC the second time. It was frustrating as hell, but Mac was too scared of losing the guy to risk pointing out the boyfriend-like things he'd said and done. Bursting Sam's protective bubble wouldn't do, and at the moment Mac had no other option but to bite his tongue, and hope actions spoke louder than words.

The kisses didn't last as long as he would've liked.

Way before Mac was ready to let go, Sam eased his head back, cupped his face, and nibbled on his bottom lip in a clear attempt to simmer down the intensity of their exchange. Mac didn't protest. He knew they had to slow the fuck down. The last thing they needed was to get arrested for indecent exposure at a frigging gay club and have their faces plastered all over the news, but Mac still whimpered in disappointment when their kiss came to an end.

His ass clenched, and his dick leaked pre-cum inside his boxers.

Even though only three hours had passed since Sam last fucked him though the mattress, Mac's body burned with wanting and unsatisfied need all over again. It was insane. He had no idea what the hell he was going to do once they parted ways and he couldn't have Sam every day.

"You looked so damn hot, kitten," Sam growled into his ear. "I wanted to devour you."

Mac licked his lips, and ran his fingers through Sam's black hair. "Then why didn't you?" he croaked, not really expecting an answer, but loving the tremors he could feel rippling through his guy's body.

Normally Sam had a tight leash on his actions. Everything he said was carefully analyzed and calculated, and knowing he had no control whatsoever over his physical reaction to their nearness made Mac a hundred different kinds of giddy.

He hugged Sam closer and buried his face in the curve of his neck, holding him tightly as Sam fought what probably was an all-consuming urge to bend Mac over, and fuck him 'til next week.

"Do you want to go back to the hotel?" Mac offered, not too interested in letting Sam win his internal battle. Their mutual desire was the most intense rush of adrenaline and rapture he'd ever felt, and he was set on getting lost in it as often as he could.

The velvety lips moving from his earlobe to his jaw sent shivers down Mac's spine, and just when he thought Sam hadn't heard him, he felt him pull away.

Mac opened his eyes and stared at the blue fire burning in Sam's orbs, intent on memorizing the naked, unguarded expression of his face.

*Dear God*, he thought as he tried to understand the meaning behind the savage hunger and fear in Sam's eyes. *There's no way in hell this thing between us is as simple as lust.*



Sam leaned in and pressed their foreheads together. “Not yet,” he rasped as their heated breaths mingled. “I like this place, and even though you manage a gay-friendly bar, and have gone to other clubs with your friends, you’ve yet to experience a gay club as a simple paying patron. You aren’t working tonight, so I want you to enjoy yourself, okay?”

“Okay...” He smiled adoringly at Sam. He probably looked like a dork, but he couldn’t help it. He was fucking buzzed, and Sam wanted to give him another first.

When Mac accepted Sam’s invitation to spend a few days basking under the Miami sun, the only thing he’d expected was sex and lots of booze. Going on romantic dates and trips to Busch Gardens just because that was the kind of thing he dreamed about or liked to do had never crossed his mind. Yet that was exactly what he’d gotten thus far.

Sam had been on a mission to give Mac every single thing he’d mentioned during their conversations, and he’d have had to be much stronger than he really was not to be touched by that.

“Okay,” he repeated. “I’ll stay if that’s what you want.”

Damn if Sam didn’t blush.

“You want a beer?” Sam asked, rubbing the back of his neck and clearing his throat. “I’ll get you one.”

Mac watched his lover signal the bartender out of the corner of his eye. Sam had moved slightly to the right without waiting for his answer, but his arm was firmly wrapped around Mac’s body.

Instead of reading too much into, or commenting on it, Mac took deep, calming breaths, and looked around the place. Little by little his blood pressure returned to more normal levels, and once his heart stopped thumping its way out of his chest, he became aware of his surroundings.

Strobe lights.

Another two guys doing body shots on top of the bar.

Dozens of bodies in different states of undress swirling on the dance floor.

The heavy pounding of the bass as Lady Gaga crooned about love games.

Like Sam said, this wasn’t the first time Mac hung out at a gay club, but it most definitely was the first time he’d been able to let loose and be himself.

There was no need to hide his attraction for other men, or pretend hard pectorals, bulges, and tight asses didn't turn him on. He was far from home and wouldn't have to pay dire consequences for daring to step out of the closet.

He could afford to relax.

It was time to have fun.

"I can almost hear you thinking over the music."

The teasing voice next to his ear snapped Mac out of his thoughts, and he turned to take a beer from Sam's hand.

Sam surveyed his face intently. "You okay?"

Mac pointed toward the dance floor with his bottle. "I've always admired the way people seem to shake off all their worries and inhibitions when they dance," he answered after taking a few gulps from his beer. So that wasn't exactly what he'd been thinking, but it was all he was willing to share.

"I know what you mean," Sam said.

"It's like they don't have a care in the world."

Sam nodded his agreement, stepped in front of him, and pressed his back to Mac's chest.

Mac almost swallowed his tongue.

This was another first.

Sam had never put himself in what could be considered a more submissive position, and Mac didn't know what to make out of it, but fuck it all if he'd let that stop him from taking advantage of it.

He snuck his arm around Sam's waist and pulled him so close, there was no space left between Mac's groin and his lover's jean-clad ass. And what do you know. Instead of protesting, reciting the rules of their friendship-with-benefits deal, or pointing out the gesture didn't mean a thing, Sam became almost liquid and let Mac support his weight.

Jesus.

How strong was that tequila anyway? Sixty proof? Eighty? A fucking hundred?

Was Sam drunk?

He'd only had three shots and a few beers, which wasn't that much considering Sam was six-foot-three and two hundred and ten pounds of lean muscle, but he had to be. It was the only

explanation Mac could come up with for the guy's uncharacteristic behavior. Sam had had more liquor than he could handle, and now he was acting like they were boyfriends.

*Talk about living the dream...*

Mac rested his chin on Sam's shoulder and kissed him on the cheek. He knew he'd get his ass handed to him the moment Sam sobered up and remembered this little episode, but at the moment he didn't give a shit. Sam had told him to enjoy himself, and that's exactly what he intended to do. There would be time later to figure out the best way to handle things.

## Two

Alcohol was a dangerous thing.

It prompted people to do either stupid shit they knew was a bad idea, or potentially good things they'd wanted to do for the longest time, but hadn't had the balls to try.

Sam knew this for a fact, as he'd been drunk off his ass when he knocked up his ex-wife, and the first time he dared to kiss a man. If he could also blame his current clinginess on the tequila, he'd be the happiest man in the world. Unfortunately, he wasn't nearly as buzzed as he hoped Mac thought he was, but whatever. He'd worry about his inability to keep his hands to himself when his main goal wasn't giving the guy the best night out he'd ever had.

Or when there weren't at least five extremely persistent, obviously blind, and soon-to-be dead queens cruising his man.

Okay, so Mac wasn't his man in the strict sense of the word. More like, he was the only man Sam had sex with on a regular basis in over ten years, but those fuckers had no way of knowing that detail. He and Mac had gone to the club together, remained together for the past two hours, and would damn well leave together. They hadn't talked to anyone other than the bartender, and for all intents and purposes, they were fucking *together*. As far as Sam was concerned Mac was his man for the remainder of the night, and he thought he'd made that clear enough, but he'd been wrong.

Needless to say, he didn't appreciate the blatant disrespect, and he was this close from doing something about it. Every man in the club needed to understand Mac wasn't available and Sam wasn't above walking up to each of them if needed, and kindly advising they look elsewhere.

Sam gulped down half his beer, his attention divided between doing something about the almost painful hard-on he was sporting and the tall, skinny dude with the spiky hair and come-hither grin he'd just spotted approaching from the right side of the bar.

*Son of a bitch.*

He clenched his teeth and once again reminded himself possessiveness didn't belong in their agreement, and he had no business losing his shit over other men's interest in Mac, but his body wouldn't accept that fact. One second he was raging and plotting ways of keeping Mac

hidden and all to himself, and the next he was grabbing Mac's hand, and placing it firmly over his cock.

There.

That was good, regardless of how much it bothered Sam that he hadn't even known he intended to move.

He *so* had to get a grip.

He controlled his body, and not the other way around. He couldn't let his desire and unexpected emotions dictate his behavior around Mac. Not if he wanted to retain his sanity when Mac finally got sick of Sam's bullshit and told him it was time to move on.

"Why are you so tense?"

As usual, Mac's deep drawl reduced him to a trembling mess, and the soft brush of his lips on Sam's ear was all it took for him to seriously reconsider going back to the hotel.

He wouldn't, though.

Mac had been neglected by his loser ex-boyfriend to the point where he'd never been taken out on a proper date. He'd been forced to remain in the closet for years after deciding he was ready to come out. It shouldn't matter to Sam that Mac had yet to experience life the way he would like to, but it did, and he meant it when he said he wanted Mac to enjoy himself, so they weren't going anywhere.

Not yet.

But he had to relax.

Get his dick under control, and keep in mind they were casual. And more importantly, he needed to dial down the territorial crap.

Mindless of how hot it was inside the club and their sweaty shirts, Sam cozied up against Mac's bigger frame, and glanced at him over his shoulder. "I'm fine," he said, even though his stomach felt uneasy, and his mind was working overtime denying all the possible reasons why Mac had the power to affect him so deeply, and in so many different ways.

Mac's gaze was filled with hunger and something other than lust that Sam preferred not to explore. His raised, dark blond eyebrow a clear indication he thought Sam was full of shit, but he didn't call him on it.

Sam was grateful for it.

They'd always kept things real between them, but Sam couldn't voice his tumultuous emotions. Hell, he'd catch the next flight to NYC and pass on all the sex he knew he'd be having for the rest of the weekend before admitting he had any. He would've been forced to lie to Mac, and Sam would rather not do that, so he'd better get a grip and start behaving like the aloof prick he normally was.

He leaned in, swiped his tongue over Mac's plump lower lip and gently sucked on it before turning sideways and glaring at the twink that was now blatantly staring at them.

Sam grasped Mac's thigh with one hand and tightened his grip on the beer bottle, and just when he was about ready to tell the twink to fuck off two things happened: the kid finally got a clue, and Mac whispered something in his ear.

"You don't mean nothin' at all to me..."

*What. The. Fuck.*

He knew they didn't mean anything to each other, being how they were nothing but casual fuck buddies, but Mac's statement left him breathless. He couldn't believe he'd chosen to ruin what up to that point had been a fucking special night with unnecessary statements.

"In the day... in the night... say it right... say it all..."

*Say it all.* Sam fixed his eyes fixed on the sticky floor. *What the hell does he want me to say?*

"Either you got it... or you don't... you wither stand... or you fall..."

Sam ran his fingers through his hair, then slammed his bottle on the bar top.

*What is it that I don't "got"?* He rubbed his face. *I keep you satisfied, you bastard. I've done more for you than—fuck!*

"When your will... is broken... when it slips, from your hand..."

Sam narrowed his eyes and bit the inside of his cheek.

"When there's no time for joking, there's a hole... in the plan..."

*A hole in the plan... What does that even mean?*

"Oh you don't mean nothin' at all to me..."

Sam's stomach dropped to the floor.

"No you don't mean nothin' at all to me..."

*Right back at you, you fucking jerk.*

Sam spun around to confront Mac and give him a piece of his mind.

“But you got what it takes to set me free...” Mac put his arms around Sam’s shoulders and gave him a quick peck on the forehead. “Oh you could mean everythin’ to me...”

He snapped his mouth shut, and Mac smirked at him.

*Singing. The asshole’s singing.*

“What’s the matter, darlin’? Mac asked against his lips. “Don’t you like Nelly Furtado?”

Sam blinked and opened his mouth to answer, but nothing came out. He couldn’t decide if he was impressed by Mac’s wit, or royally annoyed by it. One dizzying moment later he figured that, more than anything, he was turned the fuck on.

As inconvenient as it sometimes was, the fact remained he loved that the Texan boy gave back as good as he got, and never shied away from teasing Sam.

Mac was watching him with blazing green eyes and that little smile that only showed one of his dimples, and meant he was well aware he’d bested Sam yet again.

*Jesus.* Sam took possession of Mac’s lips, and slammed him against the bar. *This man’s gonna be the death of me.*

He’d been sexually active since his sixteenth birthday, and hooking up with a different someone at least three times a week for the majority of his adult life, but none of his one-nighters had ever made him feel like he might’ve swallowed a couple hundred butterflies.

A thrill ran through Sam’s veins when Mac circled his waist and pulled him closer. They’d been kissing for months, yet every time their lips met felt like the very first. It was an unbelievable buzz. It impaired Sam’s senses faster than the strongest alcohol. And man, the tequila he’d been drinking all night had nothing on Mac’s tongue.

Sam curled his fingers tightly at the nape of Mac’s neck. Their kiss turned deeper. Urgent. It felt almost desperate; as if they were afraid they’d never get to do it again, and it was amazing. But when Mac ground their cock’s together, Sam broke apart, utterly breathless.

*Goddamn.*

They had to stop making out like a couple of horny kids.

That shit was madness.

Mac let out a harsh breath, set his beer on the bar top, and pushed down on his hard-on with the heel of his hand.

Sam watched Mac’s glazed over eyes. His flushed cheekbones. The tight lines bracketing his mouth as he tried to get himself under control and all Sam could say was, “Fuck this.”

He took a step back, and held his hand out. “Dance with me,” he whispered, but Mac heard him anyway, because he smiled at Sam and took his hand.

The music blasted through the speakers as he led Mac to the dance floor, and Sam realized R. Kelly had replaced Nelly Furtado at some point.

*Come on, so hot you're on fire...*

*So hot you're on fire...*

Sam mouthed the words as they squeezed between a few incredibly beautiful dancing queens, and chuckled at how appropriate the lyrics were.

*When you roll it, I can't control it.*

*And when you throw it, it's hard to catch it.*

*And when you shake it, I pray you don't break it.*

*And when you drop it, I cannot take it...*

Oh yeah. That was a very accurate description of how he felt every time he hooked up with Mac.

He stopped in the middle of the dance floor and turned to look at Mac, his heart thumping in tandem with the bass. As often as he'd cruised both men and women in NYC clubs, the truth was he'd never done anything other than buying them a drink before they left in search of a room. Deep, meaningful conversation wasn't an option with Sam, and he hadn't danced with any of them. It was all about the sex, so he supposed dry humping a man he had every intention of fucking later on was a new experience for him as well.

Were Sam in the right frame of mind he would've left the club and go do something more fuck-buddy appropriate, because this smelled like a date.

Like it was a special time.

Like Sam was doing it because he couldn't resist anything as long as it involved Mac.

After a couple of days of posing for pictures together, sharing meals at cutesy little restaurants, and holding hands while they walked all over God's creation, Sam should've been eager to reinforce their boundaries. It wouldn't benefit either one of them to get things confused.

But the Miami sun must've melted his common sense because instead of bolting and taking a few minutes to get things into perspective like he'd normally do, Sam slid his hands over Mac's broad shoulders and started swaying his hips.

Seducing his guy.



Tempting him.

It worked.

Mac slid one knee between Sam's legs, gripped his ass with his big, strong hands, and matched every bump and grind. Hesitantly at first, but only seconds later he moved *and* looked like he'd been born for it.

Nose full of Mac's scent, a combination of soap, cologne, sweat and hot flesh that made him dizzy, Sam got into the beat. That he didn't dance often didn't mean he couldn't hold his own, and soon enough they were engaged in some sort of dance off. No surprises there. He and Mac were competitive about everything, and at the moment it was all about who could get who to give in first and beg for a blow job. Considering they both loved giving *and* getting head, it really didn't matter who won and it was fun.

At some point they pressed their foreheads together and started singing to each other. Nelly Furtado featuring Timbaland again. Obviously the DJ was a fan.

*Hey, don't be mad, don't get mean.*

*Don't get mad, don't be mean...*

*Wait! I don't mean no harm. I can see you with my t-shirt on.*

*I can see you with nothing on, feeling on me before you bring that on.*

*Bring that on?*

*You know what I mean.*

*Boy, I'm a freak you shouldn't say those things.*

*I'm only trying to get inside your brain, to see if you can work me the way you say.*

*It's okay, it's alright. I got something that you gonna like...*

Sam grinned and snuck one hand between their bodies; slowly and boldly, not stopping until he had a firm hold on Mac's boner.

Mac humped his hand at the same time he slid a finger under the waist of Sam's jeans, all the way down to his crack.

"Fuck," Sam groaned, closing his eyes against the pleasure assault.

"As soon as we get back to the hotel," Mac told him over the music, "I'm gonna fuck your mouth until you can't remember your name, and you're gonna spread me open and stick that big, fat cock of yours in my ass."

Sam's mouth watered, and he almost dropped down to his knees right then and there, mindless of the fact that he was a federal government agent. Fuck the job and his obligation to conduct himself in a morally sound manner. At the moment he couldn't care less about any of it. He'd already done body shots on top of a bar, and now he was ready to get busted for having sex in public. That's how badly he wanted his mouth stuffed with Mac's cock... how out of his mind with lust he already was.

*It isn't supposed to be like this*, he thought as he slowly opened his eyes and fixed them on Mac's taunt face. *I never signed up for this blinding, maddening need.*

It was time he snapped out of it.

# Three

Nerves buzzing, tingling and tightening beneath his skin, Mac retrieved his hand from Sam's delectable ass crack, and wrapped it around his neck. He didn't caress him like he wanted to, though. He didn't kiss him soothingly either, or tried to talk him down. Doing any of that would only make Sam aware of the fact that Mac was onto him, and it was in his best interest to pretend he hadn't gotten pretty good at guessing Sam's every move.

That he could see in Sam's eyes that he had every intention of ending this magical interlude.

The guy could be prickly as hell, and the second he started feeling cornered he lashed out and said all kinds of detrimental things, so yeah. The last thing Mac wanted was for Sam to know he could read him like an open book. It was imperative he backed off and let Sam believe there was nothing but sexual chemistry between them, and that he was in total control.

But he wasn't.

He *so* most definitely wasn't, and now Mac had proof of it.

Sam had reminded him in more than one occasion that their vacation together didn't change anything. Mac disagreed, and after all the things Sam had done for him and witnessing his non-so-subtle displays of possessiveness, he was sixty percent sure Samuel Shaughnessy was full of shit when he assured Mac nothing would ever come out of this.

Needless to say, he totally intended to change his Yankee's mind.

Having learned the best way to keep Sam from bolting was to always make sure their face to face interactions revolved mainly around sex, Mac lowered his head and bit Sam's shoulder. He nuzzled his ear and licked his stubbly jaw. He rocked so hard against Sam's cock, he thought he'd come in his damn pants, and judging by the way in which Sam almost scratched the skin off of Mac's back, he could tell he wasn't the only one.

Mac took a deep, shuddering breath.

They were back on familiar ground, and now he could look at Sam again.

But keeping the status quo for the time being didn't mean he couldn't use this opportunity to try to get his message across. They said everything's fair in love and war, and so a sneak attack was perfectly justified.

He smiled at Sam, ran his fingers over the side of his face, then opened his fly and grabbed his cock. Sam gasped. Mac kissed him on the lips, and then started singing along with Kelly Rowland, keeping his expression relaxed, as if the lyrics didn't mean shit to him.

As if he wasn't literally singing his heart out.

*When love takes over, yeah, you know you can't deny.*

Sam's eyes flickered, and a deep "v" formed between his brows.

*When love takes over, yeah... 'cause something's here tonight.*

Sam licked his lips and looked away.

*Give me a reason, I gotta know. Do you feel it, too?*

Sam's hand tightened on Mac's waist, and their eyes met again.

*Can't you see me here on overload, and this time I blame you...*

Sam's lips twisted in a tiny, totally smug smile.

*Looking out for you to hold my hand, it feels like I could fall...*

Sam gulped.

*Now love me right, like I know you can, we could lose it all...*

Sam shook his head, grabbed Mac's face, brought their lips together, and shut him up for the rest of the song.

## *Six Degrees of Lust*

### **\*WARNING FROM THE AUTHOR:**

Six Degrees of Lust is both an ensemble novel and the first installment in the By Degrees serial. This means the story will continue. Thanks.

### Blurb:

*New York City FBI team leader Samuel Shaughnessy lives for his immediate family and his job. After a marriage gone wrong he has stuck to a firm rule when it comes to relationships: he doesn't have them. Sexually active and emotionally unavailable keeps him satisfied, especially now that he is in hot pursuit of a serial killer targeting gay men.*

*Former firefighter Machlan O'Bannon now manages a successful sports bar in Houston and after years of waiting he's ready to stand up and be the man he always wanted to be: out, proud and drama-free. His politically-aligned family wants to keep him locked in the closet, but Mac just wants to meet the man of his dreams.*

*One man is as high strung as the other is laid back. A chance meeting brings the two men together, and one night of passion ignites a fire neither can fight. Their lives are not only miles apart, but as different as day and night. They don't want to get involved...but will they be able to stay apart?*

Coming Soon:

## *Six Degrees of Separation*

Excerpt:

**Contains Spoilers!**

Chapter Fifteen

*September 10, 2009*

*New York City*

Sam was exhausted when he finally got home. With all the recent activity on the Leviticus case and the trip to Houston, he should've fallen asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. No such luck, though.

The mattress felt lumpy, the pillows were flat, and the room was stuffy.

Sam tossed and turned until he couldn't stay in bed any longer. He'd slept with two hundred fifty pounds of heated flesh and muscle wrapped around him for days, but he'd been having trouble getting comfortable in his own bed for over a week.

And wasn't that some shit.

Before he could start thinking about wandering hands and tangled limbs —again— he threw the covers to the side, put on sweatpants and a t-shirt, and checked his cell phone for missed calls and messages. He had neither. Mac hadn't tried to call him all day.

Sam knew he should've been the one to call Mac after his plane landed in NYC, but he hadn't... for no particular reason.

In all honesty, he wasn't sure what it was he wanted to prove anymore. But determination rode him so hard that he'd passed on talking to his guy in favor of proving something Sam couldn't even identify.

And so there he was.

Incapable of sleeping through the night, all because his king size bed didn't feel quite right.

Itching to call Mac, but scared shitless of the way things were changing between them.

Totally aroused, and looking forward to Mac's business trip next week, because he couldn't get enough of the guy.

Painfully aware of the fact that even though he could've summoned a few memories and get the job done, he really didn't want to get off without Mac anymore. It wasn't the same.

*It'll never be the same.*

And wasn't *that* the stupidest thought he'd had in the past ten years.

Christ.

He couldn't afford to think that way. He had to snap out of whatever pheromone-induced trance he was stuck in, keep in mind Mac's permanent residence was in Texas, and revisit the reasons why Sam was the shittiest relationship material in existence.

*But what if I didn't have so much emotional baggage? Would I still fight my attraction to him? Would I deny he's fucking perfect for me, or that I want to be the man of his dreams? He wondered as he paced in front of his bed. What if I manned up and took Lo's advice? Would I even know how to live without a guilty conscience? Would I feel any different if I got closure with Gabi?*

Sam put on sneakers, a sweater and a hat, collected his phone, keys and wallet and, after making sure Nicky and Sandy were asleep he got inside his SUV and headed to the cemetery. It wasn't that far from his house, and he knew he wouldn't have any problems getting in, even though it was so late at night.

He didn't have an umbrella with him, but he grabbed a towel from his gym bag before getting out of his SUV, put it down on the dewy grass across Lindsey's resting place, and sat on it. It'd been raining on and off all day, but the huge oak tree standing over the gravestone had kept the soil from getting too wet.

Sam didn't talk at first. Whenever he came to visit he liked to absorb the calming and comforting aura provided by the trees and the open sky, and was content to just watch the pine needles, fir cones and leaves blowing all over the place as he organized his thoughts.

"Hey baby girl," he finally whispered, not wanting to disturb the peace and quiet of the night. "A lot has happened since I came to see you last week, but I specifically wanted to talk to you about your mom. See... Logan and I have been talking, and he says I need to move on."

Sam brought his legs up, and rested his chin on one knee. "I kinda agree with him, you know? It's been a long time since you left us, and even though I'm responsible for what went

down, there are some things I'd like to say to your mom. But that's not all." Sam lowered his hat to cover his eyes from the cold drizzle, and got ready to pour his heart out. "You know Mac? The guy I've been seeing? It's been pretty hot and heavy between us from day one, and even though I convinced myself I could keep it under control, shi— *things* happened between us when we went to South Beach. You see this?"

He pulled up his sleeve and lifted his arm, somehow convinced his daughter could see his ink. "I got jealous and designed us this matching tattoo because I wanted all those fuc— guys out there to know Mac is taken... But he really isn't, right? I mean, he can't be... Not by me." Sam squeezed his eyes shut, and took a shuddering breath. "See, he took me to his house, and I..." He smiled self-consciously. "I was okay... I was fine. Can you believe that? I didn't have a nervous meltdown or anything like that. But he lives too far. He'll be in NYC quite often for work in a few weeks, but still... I think the only reason why we've lasted so long is because he's so far away. If he lived here, he would've already seen how much of a motherfu— frigging Neanderthal I can be, and dumped my ass."

Sam opened his eyes and focused on his daughter's headstone. It was too dark to see her name, but there was enough illumination coming from strategically situated light posts to see the outlines of the engraved angel.

"A few weeks ago I was convinced I could enjoy the moment and just... I don't know... get as much as I could from him, and be happy with it when he left me 'cause, why would he stay with me, right? Heck, intentionally or not, I did everything I could to push him away. But things are a bit different now, and the truth is I can't let him go. It kills me to think of him with someone else, you know?"

He leaned forward and laid his hand over the headstone. His vision became blurry and his breathing faltered, but the pang of remorse he usually felt whenever he came to see his baby girl was noticeably absent.

"You'll probably think I'm still a selfish bastard. I know I should be focused on Nicky, and making things right with your aunt but— See, Logan says we all deserve a second chance in life, and I was wondering if..." Sam blinked rapidly and breathed deeply again and again, until he stopped feeling like he was about to choke. "Do you agree with him? Do you think I deserve some happiness after all this time?" Sam wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. "Would you mind it very much if I had someone in my life that isn't your mom?"



Sam's jaw ached and his legs fell asleep, but he didn't go back to his SUV. He just kept waiting for an answer.

Or was it absolution?

He couldn't be sure, but he waited and waited for *something*.

Minutes passed, and the night got darker. The only thing Sam heard was the rain falling harder as the cold wind swept through and around him. The downpour soaked through his clothes, and his ass got so numb he could barely walk, but by the time he returned home and threw himself on his bed, a foreign sensation had invaded his soul.

He felt almost at ease, and for the first time in years he dared to believe that maybe life had something good in store for him.