

## Excerpt from *Second Chance Sam* by ©Bren Christopher

A sharp elbow bumped his arm. Sam barely managed to keep the beer bottle from flying across the bar.

"I'm so sorry! I wanted to get some water. I didn't mean to bump you. Are you okay? It feels like I've been dancing for hours, and I really need something to drink. It's just so crowded in here. It's like I can't help banging into people, but I shouldn't have been so pushy. Are you sure you're okay?"

The kid stopped talking long enough for Sam to nod. He looked a little worried. Did he really think Sam would take offense and start something? Maybe the tats, the black T-shirt, and the uncut hair were a bit intimidating. Or the fact that he had several inches and about fifty pounds on the slim blond.

"No problem." Sam smiled at him, and the boy smiled back, looking relieved.

Sweat plastered his curls to his forehead, and his cheeks were flushed. The light blue shirt clung wetly in spots. He'd obviously just gotten off the dance floor. "I've never been anyplace so crowded and noisy because I turned twenty-one last month and I've been way too busy with school to go out anyway." He jumped up, trying to catch the bartender's attention.

Sam had to chuckle at the kid's attempts to get service. "But you're having fun, right?"

"Oh yes. The music is great."

The bartenders were slammed and didn't seem to notice the kid waving his arm in the air. They could at least give him a nod to let him know he'd been seen. Sam stood and leaned over the bar. He caught the eye of the nearest bartender and gave him a long stare. The man nodded back.

Sam settled onto his stool again. "You'll be next."

The kid gave him a grateful smile even prettier than the relieved one from earlier. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Entirely too pretty. And young. This place was fun for dancing, but it was almost all college kids.

Sam usually preferred the biker bar at the edge of town, but that hangout was for shooting pool with Carlos and the guys from the garage. It could be a rough place and not somewhere he went looking for company, male or female.

Sam often had to remind himself—or let Angie remind him, as she did frequently—that he wasn't long past thirty, though he often felt older. So the age difference wasn't *that* great, even if it felt like it. He stuck out his hand. "I'm Sam."

"Jeez, I'm babbling away and I haven't even told you my name. I'm Tristan." Tristan took his hand and gave it a brief squeeze. He dropped it quickly, and Sam felt a little disappointed.

"When the bartender comes over, we'll get your water," Sam told him. "But why don't you let me buy you a beer too?"

"Oh, that's nice of you, but no thanks."

Sam persevered. Angie would be proud. "Can I get you something else then? What do you like?"

"Oh." The light finally dawned. "Um...no, thank you." Even in the dimness of the bar, Sam could see a blush staining the pale cheeks. Adorable. "I'm sticking to water. We're here celebrating my boyfriend's birthday, and I told him he could have a drink if he wanted and I'd drive us home since I don't drink anyway."

Boyfriend. Of course. How could a kid as cute as this one not have a boyfriend? Good of him to mention it as soon as he realized Sam was hitting on him.

Sam gave up on pickup mode without much of a fight and went straight into friendly chat mode. No reason he couldn't enjoy a pleasant conversation with a good-looking young man. "Is it his twenty-first?"

“Yep. I’m a month older than him. We didn’t go out on mine because I’m not interested in drinking, but I did think it would be fun to go out, only we both had to be old enough for that. Besides, it was the end of last semester, and finals were killing me.”

The bartender came over, and Tristan bought two bottles of water.

He twisted one open and threw his head back as he took a drink. Sam watched the long line of his neck as he swallowed. Then Tristan put down the bottle with a sigh.

“Better?” Sam asked.

Tristan nodded. “Much.”

An arm slipped around Tristan’s waist from behind, and Tristan handed the open bottle back over his shoulder without looking. Although the other man was slightly taller than Tristan, he stood half-hidden behind him, and Sam could only see a shadow of dark hair in the dim light.

“Do you come here often, Sam?” Tristan asked and then grinned. “That sounds like a pickup line, doesn’t it? It’s not, I swear. I was just curious if you’ve been to any of the drag shows they have here sometimes. We’ve heard they can be a lot of fun.”

The man pressed to Tristan’s back finished the water and then reached for the other bottle. Tristan opened it and handed it back over his shoulder automatically.

Sam envied the way the two moved so comfortably together without speaking. “It’s been a while, but yeah, the shows are fun. You’ll need lots of dollar bills for tips.”

The dark-haired man behind Tristan finished another swallow, then handed the bottle back to Tristan as he lifted his head. Shifting from behind Tristan, he looked straight at Sam. “Hey, Motorcycle Guy.”

Sam blinked in astonishment. “Hey, Computer Guy.” He held out his hand. “Good to see you again, Cory.”

Cory shook it and then spoke to Tristan. “This is the guy I told you about, with the motorcycle shop.”

“Oh.” Tristan brightened. “It was so nice of you to offer to help Cory with his bike.”

“It’ll be fun.”

Angie bumped against him and then grabbed his shoulder to steady herself. “The guys have gone off to make out in some corner. I told you they—Oh, hey. It’s the computer guy with the nice ass.”

“Angie!” Had she had more to drink than he realized? No, she didn’t need to be drunk to tease him mercilessly.

“What?” she said innocently. “You were the one looking at it. I would never do such a thing.” She held up her left hand so the rock on her finger could catch the sporadic light from the dance floor. “I’m taken.”

“Cut me some damn slack. How do you think it feels to strike out twice in as many days? And on top of that, I find out the guys I hit on are together.”

“He hit on you?” Tristan rounded on Cory with a frown on his face. “I thought you said he wasn’t gay.”

Cory looked puzzled. “He used to have a girlfriend.”

Tristan and Cory turned in unison to stare at Sam.

Sam shrugged. “I’m flexible.”

Tristan’s eyes widened. “You’re bi? Really?” Sam might as well have said he came from a different galaxy or that he could dance on the head of a pin.

Tristan appeared to give the concept of swinging both ways some serious thought. Finally he shook his head as a shudder ran down his body. “Nope. Can’t imagine it.”

“Good to know the female sex is safe from ravishing by you guys,” Angie said dryly.

“More for me,” Sam remarked. “Did you want a drink, Angie?”

“Ginger ale.” She slipped her arms around his waist.

“A couple of beers ain’t gonna get me drunk, babe. You can have a real drink if you want.”

“I’m hoping you *will* get drunk. Then I can drive us home on that very fine machine.”

“In those shoes?” He looked disbelievingly at her four-inch spikes.

“No problem,” she insisted. “Maybe I’ll drive us home even if you’re not drunk.”

“All you have to do is ask. I’d let you take out the Glide.”

Cory looked up. “Glide?”

“His new Harley-Davidson Electra Glide,” Angie explained. “A sweet ride.”

Cory seemed interested, so after Sam got Angie’s ginger ale, he said, “It’s right outside. Want to take a look?”

At Cory’s eager nod, the four of them headed out.

Sam had managed to secure a space in the motorcycle parking not far from the front door. They stood around the bike while Sam pointed out a few features to Cory.

As Tristan’s eyes started to glaze over, Sam realized the blond had little interest in motorcycles. But he did have an interest in Cory. Every time the other man smiled at something Sam said, Tristan looked at Cory affectionately – almost indulgently. So he had come out with them...why? Just to be sociable? Or because he didn’t trust Sam with his boyfriend?

But Sam hadn’t meant to take Cory’s attention away from Tristan, even though they’d only been outside for a few minutes. He straightened from pointing out the twin cam engine. “Maybe we should head back in. We can talk bikes another time.”

Cory looked at Tristan with a raised eyebrow. Asking if he could stay alone with Sam and talk bikes?

If so, Tristan didn’t seem to like that idea. He took Cory’s hand. “You ready to dance some more?”

Cory shrugged and nodded.

Then Tristan surprised Sam as he held out his arm for Angie and spoke to both of them. "You guys want to join us?"

"Love to." She looped her arm through his.

"I'm going to sit for a minute and get something to drink," Sam said as he followed them inside. "I'll join you in a minute."

After fetching another beer from the bar, Sam grabbed a recently vacated pub table and sat watching the others having fun on the dance floor. Angie stayed with them until Jim and Jonny came by and swept her away.

Sam picked at the label on his half-full beer. Going home alone once again seemed more and more likely with each hour that passed. Not that he'd tried all that hard to find someone. Lately, the idea of a one-night stand held no appeal at all. Sometimes he wondered why he continued to fix up the house when he had no one to share it with. At one time, he'd thought... But there was no point in going there.

Angie would be disappointed. She could be a nag, but he knew she had his best interests at heart. Anyway, she could hardly blame him if the only two guys who appealed to him were already taken – and by each other, no less.

Those two were sure something to look at. Cory slid his hands down Tristan's back until he cradled the smaller man's ass, then Tristan's hands tangled in Cory's hair to pull him in for a long, slow kiss. They grinded together as though they were the only two people on the crowded dance floor. Sam didn't know Cory very well yet, but he still had a feeling that wasn't something Cory would have done in public if he hadn't had a few beers.

Sam grinned as he watched them. If nothing else, he had plenty of fodder for a major jerk-off session when he got home.

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