Bound by Trust

B Alan Bourgeois · Opening excerpt · 1 of 2

The Friday night crowd was already pressing shoulder to shoulder at The Iron Eagle, Austin's go-to hybrid of a neighborhood bar and discreet gay leather watering hole. Music thumped low from the back, not the relentless club beat of Fourth Street, but something with a steady pulse — bass guitar over a slow rock groove, the kind that set conversations into a rhythm.

Michael Grant eased his way through the door, adjusting the fall of his black leather jacket over his broad shoulders. At sixty-four, he carried himself with a calm, commanding air that turned heads without him having to force anything. The jacket wasn't flashy — broken in, polished where years of wear had smoothed the hide — but it told anyone who knew leather that it belonged to a man who respected what he wore.

His white hair was cropped neatly, his goatee trimmed but full, framing a smile that sat somewhere between genuine warmth and knowing amusement. His eyes — a sharp steel blue — scanned the bar, not hunting, but taking stock. It was an old habit from years in leather spaces: you read the room before the room reads you.

Reading sample — continued

The scent of whiskey and lime mixed with faint leather polish and the sweet tang of someone’s vape cloud. Michael spotted a space near the bar, close enough to the service end where bartenders moved fast but customers lingered. He slid into the spot just as the bartender turned toward him.

That was the first time Michael saw DJ up close.

The younger man was in motion — towel in one hand, pint glass in the other, forearm flexing as he polished the rim. Blond hair fell slightly forward when he tilted his head, catching the glow of the bar’s Edison bulbs. The blond goatee was neatly trimmed but not precious, just enough to frame his mouth and give him a slightly mischievous look.

He wore a fitted black T-shirt with The Iron Eagle logo across the chest, the cotton pulling just enough over his biceps to make it clear he worked out. Still, the shirt hinted at the faint curve of a belly, the kind that came from equal parts beer and good living.