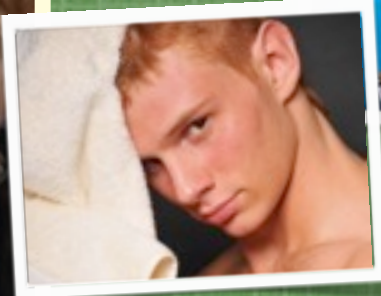


# News from Coda and Beyond

FROM MARIE SEXTON



*Random ramblings  
of a m/m author...*

## HaMEMA

### Heidi and Marie's Excellent Manlove Adventure

It all started in September when Heidi Cullinan sent me an offhand email saying she wanted to drive to McAllen, Texas in order to research Sam and Mitch's next book. "Do you want to go on a roadtrip?" her email asked. I think she was shocked when my answer was, "You bet!"



It started with me boarding a train in Denver. I arrived in Deliverance-- err... I mean, Osceola, Iowa. I had a day of napping in Heidi's chair, and then we

set off. We were armed with a temperamental GPS named Lady G (that bitch), a good old-fashioned road atlas (because Thelma and Louise didn't have GPS) and copious amounts of chocolate.

We bought random crap in Memphis, Iowa, and spent a stupid amount of time trying to figure out the timers on our cameras. We got lost in the downtown section of the *real* Memphis. We absolutely *loved* Beale Street. We had some fabulous barbecue and some not so fabulous beer (when the waitress doesn't even know what a microbrew is, you know you're in trouble). We got carded on more than one occasion (hooray!!!). We got tattoos. We drank lots of Arbor Mist. We tried Absinthe. We might have visited every single bar in downtown Austin. We ate more tacos than we could count. We

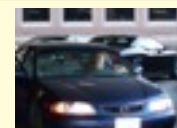
hunted for Starbucks left, right and center. We did not drive off any cliffs. We did not meet Brad Pitt. We did meet a fan in Arkansas (you people talk funny!). We did

Check out the  
HaMEMA [blog](#), [photos](#),  
and [podcasts](#).

not see Elvis. We did see Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, which made Matt very happy. We did podcasts from the road. Overall, we had a blast.

Starbucks and Arbor Mist really should sponsor us next time.

L to R: Heidi buying gifts, Marie getting a tattoo, meeting Laura in Arkansas, lost in the bowels of hell in Memphis.



## What we learned...

### **Downtown Memphis is hell...**

Especially if you're trying to park. We somehow ended up in a parking garage which bore a striking resemblance to the bowels of hell. All in search of coffee...

### **People in south Texas will sell anything on the side of the road...**

Chunks of scrap metal, rocks, bathtubs, bald tires. You name it, and somebody in south Texas is selling it out of their front yard.



### **Southern Texas is depressingly short on Starbucks...**

How many hours did we spend wishing for a Starbucks? McDonalds is a really poor substitute (but at least they have free wifi).

### **Austin is absolutely fabulous!**

Downtown Austin is gorgeous and fun. If you're ever there, check out [BarChi Sushi](#). After that, walk up the block to [Rain on 4th](#), and [Oilcan Harry's](#).

### **Absinthe is evil...**

That contraption on the bar at Oilcan Harry's may look exciting, but take it from us: it's NOT a good idea. Back away slowly!

### **Texans love tacos...**

Honestly, you can't go five feet without hitting a taqueria. Tacos for breakfast, lunch and dinner. We do recommend the milk



candy empanadas, and the Manzanita Sol.

# Yaoi-Con



*The fabulous Lynn Flewelling, Andrew Grey, and myself.*

Halloween weekend, I traveled to San Francisco for Yaoi-Con. This was my first convention, and it was amazing! I met so many great people: Clare London, Andrew Grey, Mary Calmes, Z.A. Maxfield, Belinda McBride, Chris from Stumbling Over Chaos, Jenre and Tam from Jessewave, Tracy from Tracy's Place, Lori Hawkins, Amy Lane, Ginn Hale, Astrid Amara... Honestly, the list is so long, I could go on forever and still end up leaving somebody out.

I must admit that I know next to nothing about Yaoi, but that didn't stop me from buying some gorgeous Yaoi prints to hang on my office wall.

I also had a chance to catch up with the amazing Lynn Flewelling. We drank wine, watched cute young boys (Bishies), and ate the most amazing sushi ever at xxx.

**L to R:  
Felicitas Ivey,  
Clare London,  
Andrew Grey,  
Lynn  
Flewelling,  
and myself**



# *Between Sinners and Saints*



Levi Binder is a Miami bartender who cares about only two things: sex and surfing. Ostracized by his Mormon family for his homosexuality, Levi is determined to live his life his own way, but everything changes when he meets massage therapist Jaime Marshall.

Jaime is used to being alone. Haunted by the horrors of his past, his only friend is his faithful dog, Dolly. He has no idea how to handle somebody as gorgeous and vibrant as Levi.

Complete opposites on the surface, Levi and Jaime both long for something that they can only find together. Through love and the therapeutic power of touch, they'll find a way to heal each other, and they'll learn to live as sinners in a family of saints.

Between Sinners and Saints is my latest novel. It is just under 100K words, my longest novel so far. It has been submitted to a publisher, but so far, I haven't heard back from them. Hopefully, it will be available sometime next year.

Between Sinners and Saints is about Levi, a playboy bartender and his rather innocent massage therapist, Jaime. I posted a tiny little excerpt on my website, but decided to give you a bigger taste here. The following excerpt is from Levi's first massage appointment with Jaime.

Enjoy!

Jaime's hands were incredibly soft. He didn't rub hard at first. He seemed to be exploring the muscle high on Levi's thigh with his fingers, watching Levi's reaction.

"Does it hurt here?"

"Not as much."

"And here?"

"Yes, more there."

"And is it focalized, or does it radiate out to other places?"

"It's only there."

"That's good." His hand slid toward the inside of Levi's thigh, and Levi tensed. "Just relax, Mr. Binder." At least he pronounced it right.

"Please don't call me that."

"You prefer Levi?"

"Yes."

"Okay, Levi. Try to relax." But Levi was finding it very difficult to relax. Jaime's soft hand was moving slowly up the inside of his thigh, stopping every inch or two to press into the muscle before moving on, and Levi's body was reacting in a way which he feared was wholly inappropriate, given the circumstances. "Relax," Jaime said again.

"I can't!" Levi snapped.

"Don't worry about it," Jaime said. His tone was clinical. Professional. Detached. "It's a common physical reaction. You don't need to be embarrassed."

"That's easy for you to say."

"It's a natural response to physical stimulation—"

"No shit!" The stupid thing was, now that they were talking about it, it was only getting worse. He was pretty much flying full mast now, and the thin sheet covering him certainly wasn't hiding it. "Are you almost done?"

Suddenly Jaime pushed harder on his tender thigh. It hurt so much Levi almost jumped off of the table. "Ow! What the hell Did you do that on purpose?"

"Took your mind off your other problem didn't it?" Jaime said, without cracking a smile.

"You're a little bit sadistic, aren't you?"

"You're not the first person to think so." He pushed again on Levi's thigh, and Levi winced. "This is really a symptom of the problem with your psoas, so we'll do a few movements, and then I'll try to loosen it up and release some of that lactic acid."

Those words sounded harmless, but Levi soon learned this was going to be the worst part of the whole deal. It felt like there was broken glass inside his thigh when Jaime started to work on it.

"Fuck, it hurts!"

"I know. I'm sorry about that."

“You don’t sound sorry!”

“It’s important that you keep breathing—”

“That’s your best advice? Keep breathing?”

“Are you from Florida?”

The sudden topic change flustered him. “What?”

“Some people find talking distracts them from the pain. So... are you from around here?”

Levi found the entire situation aggravating, but he gritted his teeth and answered. “My family lives in Georgetown, South Carolina.”

“When did you move here?” Jaime wasn’t looking at him. Not at his face, at any rate. His eyes were on Levi’s thigh as his hands continued to work. His expression was distant and analytical. He didn’t seem to care about the answer, but Levi gave it anyway.

“When I was twenty-one.” That was the point when he’d given up on trying to pretend he could be what his parents wanted him to be. He’d dropped out of BYU and intentionally picked the one place in the country his parents associated with sin and excess. Even Vegas offended them less than Miami.

“You’ve been a surfer your whole life?”

“Yes.”

“It looks like fun. I’ve always wanted to try it.”

“It is fun,” Levi said, relaxing now that he was talking about something he loved. “I’ll be happy when I can do it again without paying for it for days afterward.”

“And you’re a bartender?”

“Yes.”

“Where at?”

“The Zone.” Jaime’s hands stopped moving for a fraction of a second, before resuming their assault on Levi’s tender thigh. Just enough that Levi knew Jaime recognized the name. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you there,” Levi said.

Jaime shook his head. “I don’t get out much.”

“But you’re gay, right?”

“Does it hurt less now?”

It did hurt less. Talking was helping. But Levi wasn’t that easily put off. “You should come by sometime. Drinks on me.”

“I appreciate the offer—”

“The offer usually comes after the drinks,” Levi said, and he was happy to see Jaime blush. It was the first break in his professional demeanor.

“I assure you Mr. Binder—”

“It’s Levi.”

“—I have no interest in being one of your conquests.”

“Conquests? You think that’s the kind of guy I am?”

“Isn’t it?”

His eyes met Levi's as he asked the question. There was no laughter in his voice, but no accusation either. Levi was surprised at his forthrightness, and he laughed. "What gave me away?"

"I know I look like a farm-boy from Kansas—you probably think the tornado missed Oz and dropped my in Miami by mistake—but I assure you that isn't the case."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means, I've met guys like you before." Levi was trying to decide if he should be offended by that comment. "Anyway, The Zone has...", Jaime hesitated, and his blush deepened. It made him look even younger. "It has a reputation."

"Really?"

"There's a rumor about a storage room?"

"All true. I'd be happy to show you some time," he said, just to watch Levi blush more. "I'll give you a personal tour."

"I'll pass, Mr. Binder."

"It's Levi."

"It's Levi when you're cooperating. It's Mr. Binder when your trying to hit on me."

Levi laughed. "Fine. I'll stop." For now, at least.

Jaime moved on to his other leg, which was quick and painless, and then he had Levi turn over. His lower back and left butt cheek prompted more of the strange exercises. They were painful, and yet, he could tell already they were helping.

When he was done, Jaime left the room while Levi got dressed.

"How's your leg?" he asked as he came back in.

Levi flexed it, testing his weight on it. It did feel better. Not good. But better than it had felt in a while. "I think you might be a miracle worker."

"Not really. It will tighten back up if you let it. I'm going to give you some stretches to do. Make sure you drink a lot of water tonight, to help flush the toxins out of your system." He spent the next few minutes explaining the stretches he wanted Levi to do. Levi doubted he'd do them, but he wasn't going to tell Jaime that. He made an appointment to come back on Thursday. "It was nice meeting you," Jaime said at the end of the appointment.

"You too," Levi said. "Thanks for your help."

"You're welcome, Levi."

Levi started to open the door, but stopped and turned to look at Jaime. He really was cute, in a boy-scout kind of way. "That drink offer still stands you know."

"Have a nice afternoon, Mr. Binder."

*That's the scoop for now. I'll be moving over the next couple of months (yikes) and so am not participating in NaNoWriMo. I know many of you are, and I wish you all the best of luck!*