



# A Christmas Less Lonely

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**Category:** LGBT+

**Description:** London at Christmas, the loneliest place of all.

The handsome older man in the suit is dining alone. He's been stood up on Christmas Eve and waiter Alex wants to make him feel better.

What follows is an evening where two fragile souls meet and forge a deep understanding, taking them beyond the differences that separate them and into new love.

**Total Pages (Source):** 28

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

The restaurant was hot and heaving. Patron chatter almost drowned out the discreet classical music. Waiting staff bustled between tables carrying plates and silver trays of drinks. It was the sort of place where you were looked at like shit on the bottom of their shoe by the staff if they thought you couldn't afford to dine there. Not by everyone though, and certainly not by me. It was also the sort of place where your tips exceeded your pay at the weekend.

Over by the wall with the stencilled Japanese cherry blossoms at possibly the worst table for two in the house, sat a dark-haired man in his forties wearing a black suit. I had already got three orders wrong since he'd arrived.

"Put your fucking eyes back in," hissed Max as he dumped a foaming pint of lager on my tray and grabbed a bottle of Coke to go with the vodka and ice.

"I can't," I said, glancing across the room again. "He's beautiful." And he was. His short, immaculately groomed glossy black hair had streaks of silver around the temples. He was clean-shaven, his jaw strong and smooth. I hadn't yet got close enough to see the colour of his eyes, and I needed to. Badly. And I bet he smelled amazing. I needed to lean over his shoulder, put my nose to his neck and inhale his scent so much it hurt.

"Someone doesn't think so," Max said. "He's been stood up."

I scowled. "They can't be in their right mind." Secretly, I was glad. I didn't want to see this angel with someone. Not when he'd look best on my arm. Nonetheless, it

bothered me. If someone of his calibre was sitting alone in one of the most expensive restaurants in town on Christmas Eve, what hope was there for the rest of us? I sighed. What a terrible situation. I felt so sorry for him. He wasn't the first person I'd seen here waiting fruitlessly for someone who would never arrive and he wouldn't be the last, but Jesus Christ, it was Christmas. The person who did this to him deserved no less than hanging, drawing and quartering. "Arsehole," I spat.

"What did I do?" Max asked. He was a charming man of thirty-five who had taught me everything I needed to know when I first started here seven months ago.

"Not you. Whichever twat stood him up."

"Oh yeah, right. Well, he's been here twenty minutes now. They're not coming, are they?"

I smoothed down my shirt and adjusted my bow tie. "Then I better give him my commiserations."

"I hope that's all you're going to give him," Max said.

I smiled and winked, but as I set off across the room, the distance suddenly became a gaping chasm imperilled with crocodiles and sharks. My heart beat hard, my hands clammy. I was too afraid to approach him. He was way out of my league. As I got there, I spun, about to turn and run for the hills, but it was too late. He had already looked up.

Our gazes met and that heart of mine almost jumped out of my chest. Mother of God, he was utterly divine. His almond shaped eyes were the darkest sapphire blue and fringed with lush, black lashes. His jaw and cheekbones were chiselled like someone had sculpted them from the finest marble. His mouth was made for sin, full-lipped and sensual. I stared at him. I started to wonder if maybe he was an actor or a rock

star or a male model—we had our share of those—because there seemed to be no other explanation for his beauty. He couldn't just be a...regular person, could he? He was staring at me too and I wondered how long I had been frozen there at his table. Maybe an hour, maybe two. Hell, maybe it was already Christmas Day and I should have been driving to Devon to spend the day with my parents.

He wore a black shirt with his black suit, and a silver tie, the whole ensemble immaculate. His shoulders and chest were broad. It looked like he was concealing a seriously impressive physique.

“Er, hi,” I said, like he was my mate. I was such a dick.

“Hi,” he said. He looked pissed off. I doubted it was at me. Nonetheless, I knew very well how to deal with pissed off customers. I had never slid onto my knees under the table for one, but that was definitely on the menu for him if he wanted it. Right here, right now. Not a problem.

“Can I get you another drink?” I asked him. Plus, your phone number, if it's not too much trouble.

He looked down into his crystal glass, a few lumps of melting ice covering the dregs of some clear liquid. My money was on gin. He looked like a gin drinker to me. He shrugged. “Why not? And the bill, while you're at it.”

My heart sank in disappointment. “Oh, you're going?”

He laughed without amusement. More a savage bark. “Yeah, I'm going. A man can only take so much humiliation.”

I swallowed at the expression on his face. “They're an idiot,” I said, a watered-down version of what I'd said to Max.

He raised a perfectly sculpted brow. “Are they? That’s what you get for getting your dates on Grindr.”

I coughed to hide both my delight and shock. Oh really, how lucky was I? He batted for my team. “I don’t know why anyone would want to stand you up,” I said ardently and cursed myself.

He stared at me like he couldn’t believe his ears before seeming to compose himself. He tossed back the remaining liquid in his glass, crunching an ice cube. I saw a flash of beautiful white teeth. “You don’t know me,” he said. “Maybe I’m a terrible person and I deserve it.”

“You don’t look like a terrible person.” Oh, what was I doing? Why didn’t I just ask to suck him off right now?

Once more he held my gaze. “What’s your name?” he asked.

Fuck! “Alex,” I said.

“Well, Alex, get me my drink and my bill, please, then you can have the table for some other poor bastard hoping for some Christmas cheer.” With that, he turned his attention to study the bottom of his glass like it was the most interesting thing he had ever seen, and I was dismissed. I scuttled away with my face red, feeling so sorry for him my heart could have burst.

“That was a very long conversation,” Max said, when I made it back to the bar.

“Yeah. What’s he drinking?”

Max tapped a few buttons on his iPad. “Raspberry gin with rhubarb tonic. Fruity bastard.”

“Get him another. Make it a double. And take it out of my tip jar.”

Max frowned. “He’s staying?”

“He’s having another, then he’s going.”

Max took a gin glass from the shelf and held it against the optic. “Why are you buying him a drink?”

“I feel sorry for him.”

“You don’t usually buy people drinks. You’re a waiter. Do you know how much this costs?”

“It’s Christmas,” I said. I considered that enough explanation. Although I scrimped and saved and shopped at Aldi, I also wasn’t a miser. I believed in altruism. The world would be a better place if more people tried it. Being nice to people gave me a warm glow. Usually I enjoyed giving presents much more than receiving them. It was the best part of Christmas.

Max added some ice and berries and a slice of lime and bent to the fridge to take out a can of tonic. He poured it in and gave it all a stir with a gin spoon. “You know who he is, don’t you? I thought I recognized him, so I googled him.” He put the glass down on a tray and whipped out his phone.

There it was. I braced myself for some superstar. Premier league football manager and ex-England player. Hollywood superstar. One of those Z-listers who had been in the jungle. If he’d been eating cockroaches in Australia, he could fuck right off out of here. I had some standards.

Max showed me his phone. There was our diner standing on some red carpet in

another expensive suit, no trace of a smile on his handsome face. “He owns a massive men’s underwear company. The headquarters is only around the corner.”

I stared at Max and at the photo of the divine customer. My mind plummeted into degradation. I wonder if he wears his own underwear. I wonder if he’s ever modelled it. If he has, I need five minutes to find those images and check out his bulge. “Of course,” I said in a croak. “Of course he does.” And I laughed. I saw his name on the screen. Lucas Rainford. I tried it out in my head and liked it a lot.

“He’s very ethical. All his pants and socks are made from organic cotton or bamboo and manufactured here, no sweatshop shit. He’s carbon neutral with no plastic packaging. Gives ten percent to charity. He pays well above minimum wage. And check out the blokes he has modelling for him.” Max showed me a picture of a scowling dark-haired guy reclining on a bed wearing tight white briefs with what looked like a cucumber and two apples shoved down them.

I stared and Max scrolled down, reading an article. “Seems he’s kind of a recluse. Doesn’t often appear at public things. This was a charity event for animal rescue.”

My heart swelled in my chest. I smiled to myself. Then I felt depressed again on his behalf. A recluse who agreed to a date, only to get stood up in public. I felt burning hatred for the man who had done this to him. “Get me his bill, please,” I said.

Max was still looking at the picture of Lucas Rainford. “He looks like a rabbit caught in the headlights.” He cackled. “He really doesn’t get out much. You’d think the CEO of a massive company would have more social skills.”

“Stop being so mean,” I snapped.

Max looked at me in surprise.

“How would you like to be sitting here on your own on Christmas Eve?”

Shame poured over his face. He shoved his phone back in his pocket. “You’re a good bloke, Alex,” he said. “I wish you had someone to treat you like the diamond you are.”

I reddened. “Calm down.”

“I mean it.” Max was married with a young baby and loved his wife more every day. I envied the sort of all-consuming love he had found, but it was a source of tension for him that he worked unsocial hours and couldn’t be there for his family all the time. He folded the bill on a little saucer and placed it on the tray next to the drink. “Go and ask him out.”

I spluttered. “Yeah, right.”

“Why not?”

“Because he’s probably twenty years older than me.”

“So?”

I looked across the room. Lucas had his phone out, head bent over it. “Show me your phone again,” I said. “Let’s see how old he actually is.”

Max smiled. He swiped his phone open, went back to his google search, and located a Wikipedia page. Shit, the man had his own entry. There it was at the top. Born in Lincoln on 25 December 1979.

“Fuck, it’s his birthday tomorrow!” I blurted.



Max looked amused. “He’ll be forty-five. Only nineteen years older than you. Not bad at all.”

I glowered at him. Eighteen really, as it was my birthday in January. What would my mum say? Well, she’d be delighted I was bringing a millionaire home, wouldn’t she? “Scroll down to personal life,” I said.

There were two precious lines summing up the customer sitting by the cherry blossom wall.

Lucas Rainford lives in London. He is currently single.

“There,” Max said. “That’s all you need to know. And now, courtesy of Grindr, he’s still single. Go on.”

I dithered and saw Lucas glance across at me, probably wondering where his drink was. “I can’t!”

“Yes, you can. Write your phone number on his bill.”

“Are you trying to get me sacked?” I cried.

“I’m your manager. I’m not going to sack you.”

“Do you encourage all the staff to harass the customers?”

Max lifted an eyebrow. “Harass? You’re a hot gay man and he’s an even hotter gay man. I doubt there’ll be any harassment.”

“Stop it.”

“And if he’s not into twink, he’ll tell you to fuck off, won’t he?”

“I’m not a twink, I’m twenty-six!”

“You are a twink. He’ll probably eat you for his birthday breakfast. If you’re lucky.”  
Max laughed. My cheeks flamed and my cock twitched at the very idea.

“Shut up.” I grabbed the tray. I wasn’t so desperate and so gauche that I would write my number on a customer’s bill. If he wanted it, he would need to ask for it. Not that he would. He was a rich, powerful man, and I was a waiter. I crossed the shark-infested waters once more with my heart racing even faster than previously.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

He looked irritated when I reached him. “I thought you’d forgotten me,” he said, putting his phone down.

“No. Sorry,” I said. I placed his drink down and he reached for it so quickly, he touched my fingers.

“Sorry,” he said without looking at me before taking a gulp. I guess he’d decided alcohol was the only way to go tonight, and who could blame him.

“Your bill.” I placed the saucer down.

“Thanks.”

“Do you need the card machine?”

“Yes.” I saw him wince. “God, that’s strong.”

I hurried away. Shit, I would have to confess it was a double. I could get into serious trouble for giving a customer a double when he asked for a single. What if he was driving and ended up being too pissed to control his car?

Oh God, what a bad mistake. What had I been thinking? I snatched the card reader off the bar and hurried back with my stomach in knots. He had the bill open. He glanced up as I arrived.

“You haven’t put this on.” He gestured to his drink. “There’s only one drink on here.”

“It’s on the house,” I said, with my cheeks flaming.

He frowned. “What?”

“A gift. To put a smile on your face.” I shrivelled mentally. He was about as far from smiling as a person could get.

“What?” he said again, staring at me. “Are you allowed to give away free drinks to customers?”

Oh God, enough with the Spanish inquisition! “No,” I said.

He kept those jewelled eyes on mine. “So... are you going to get in trouble?”

I shook my head. “No.”

“No?”

Fuck, leave me alone! “I bought you it,” I blurted. “It’s a double. I’m sorry. I’m not trying to get you drunk! I felt sorry for you! Please don’t drive home. You might kill someone.” Oh fuck, someone just kill me now.

He was completely still. I couldn’t look into those amazing eyes anymore. I lowered my head and shuffled my feet and waited for him to call Max, or the fucking owner and tell him his waiter had given him a double for some nefarious purpose unclear to him. He was so silent, that I ended up looking up and saw him glance at the bill again.

“It’s twenty-five pounds,” he said.

Again, I shrivelled. He may as well have said I couldn't afford it. I mean, I could, because tips were astronomical so far tonight and it was only nine p.m. Before I could splutter a response, he said, "It's too much."

I swallowed.

"I don't want you to feel sorry for me," he went on. "I'm not a charity case."

My face flamed. "I'm sorry."

"Stop saying you're sorry," he said.

"But I am. What do you want me to say?" The conversation was getting away from me. I felt like I might be about to cry.

He took another drink. "It's really bloody strong," he said. "Just what I need."

My breath caught in my throat. I tapped the bill amount into the reader with an unsteady finger. He reached a wallet from his inside pocket and withdrew a card. I saw it was nothing fancy. I expected some platinum American Express or whatever the fuck millionaires carried. I saw a range of cards here at the restaurant that made my eyes water. It was a Barclays debit card, the same as mine. Maybe he was the same as me. Maybe he cleaned his own house and went shopping at Aldi like me. Okay, maybe not. My stomach turned to mush, my bones to water. I wanted to kiss him. "Stay," I blurted.

He paused, about to hold the card to the reader. "What?"

"Don't go home hungry just because some asshole stood you up. We have some amazing specials on tonight." I gestured wildly at the board across the room.

He regarded me. “I’m a vegan. I didn’t even want to come here, because I knew I’d end up with a green salad and a dry bread roll if I was lucky.”

I shook my head. “Nooo,” I said, drawing out the vowel like a cow. “Let me bring you our vegan menu.”

He raised an eyebrow. “You have a vegan menu?”

“Yes. Please, don’t move.” I ran off. Max was making up a massive drinks order at the bar when I scuttled behind it and grabbed a menu.

“What are you doing?”

“He’s staying,” I gabbled breathlessly.

“He is?”

“Yeah.” I rushed back, expecting to see an empty table. I had left the card reader, so he could have tapped his card and done one, but no, he was still there sipping his ridiculous drink. “There.” I presented it with a flourish worthy of Basil Fawlty.

He took it, staring down for a few seconds. “Hmm,” he said. “Not bad at all.”

I whipped my iPad out of the front pocket of my apron and stood there on tenterhooks. Please order, please, please. Just stay a bit longer so I can admire you some more. Please, God, make him stay.

He looked up.

“What can I get you?”

He smiled for the first time. His teeth were pearly and straight, but didn't look like he'd had them done in Turkey. Nothing about him seemed fake and manufactured. His was a natural beauty down to the crow's feet around his eyes and the silver in his hair. "You're very persistent," he said.

I blushed.

"Getting me to soak up the alcohol so I don't crash my car and sue you?"

I gaped at him.

"I'm joking. I'm not driving."

I let out my breath.

"I'll take the mushroom stroganoff," he said.

I tapped the iPad with a trembling finger. "Okay."

"But you're not paying for the drink. Put it on the bill."

I gulped and eyed him.

"I'll buy you one. You seem like you need it." He smiled again. "Go and choose whatever you want."

My breath was caught in my chest. I looked over at the bar and saw Max gawping. "Do you..." I stopped and cleared my throat. "Do you want a starter?"

"No. Just that. Thank you."

“Thank you, sir.”

“Don’t call me sir . I haven’t got a knighthood. I’m just some bloke you’ve got the misfortune to have to serve on Christmas Eve.”

I stared at him. “Trust me when I say it’s not a misfortune,” I said, holding his gaze.

This time he blushed. And I loved it. Really fucking loved it. I think I was in love. He smiled again. He really knew how to take a compliment. “Go and get your drink,” he said.

“Okay,” I said and walked away. All the way to the bar, my heart soared somewhere into the stratosphere. When I got there, Max gaped at me.

“Fuck me, you’ve been chatting him up, haven’t you?”

“No.”

“You have. You were over there a very long time and he was smiling. I’m not sure he ever smiles judging by the photos we saw of him.”

I sighed. “He’s really nice.”

Max nudged me. “Good on you.”

“He doesn’t want me to pay for his drink. He told me to get myself one.”

Max grinned. “What do you want? I think you should have champagne.”

I looked at him aghast. “I’m not going to take champagne from a customer, Max!”



“Why not?”

“He would be appalled.”

“Why? Just a glass. I’ve just opened a bottle.”

I shook my head and ducked to the fridge. “I’ll take a beer.” I reached out a bottle and flipped the top off. When I glanced over, Lucas was looking at me. I raised the bottle to him. He raised his glass in return. I grinned like an idiot.

“Shit, he likes you,” Max said in admiration.

A warm glow enveloped me. I took a long drink and burped. Then I remembered I had other tables to wait on and hurried off.

The beer had gone to my head. I hadn’t eaten before my shift due to frantically wrapping Christmas presents. The booze gave me a warm glow, and I felt more festive than I had ever done so far this month. It wasn’t the booze; it was him. A little voice inside asked me if it was his money giving me a warm glow. I was confident about my answer. I saw customers here that probably made ten times what he did in a year. Occasionally I got asked out. I turned them all down because I didn’t fraternize with customers, no matter how much money they had. And usually, they were arseholes. He was an exception. I would fraternize with him until the cows came home if he let me. There was something about him beyond his movie star good looks. The hint of vulnerability after what we’d read about him online, ratcheted up further by his humiliation here tonight. His word, not mine. He didn’t need to feel humiliated. He should just have been grateful he hadn’t wasted his time on someone who didn’t deserve him. Did I deserve him? I didn’t have an answer to that question but I’m a good and honest person and I don’t treat people badly. The age gap was an issue though, as was my job. Who was I kidding? He was just being polite. Buying me a drink didn’t mean he wanted to go to bed with me.

My spirits had sunk low by the time I was called to the kitchen for service. Two steaming plates waited, one with the mushroom stroganoff, the other with some garlic bread accompaniment. I would still happily kiss him, garlic or no garlic. The meal looked and smelled amazing and I beamed in delight at Chef, receiving a scowl in reply. Now there was a woman with no social skills.

I whisked it out to his table. He was on his phone talking. “I might drop in,” I heard him say. “I’ll let you know. Got to go.” He hung up and shoved the mobile into his jacket pocket. He had been frowning but his expression relaxed as I approached.

“Mushroom stroganoff,” I announced.

“Thank you.”

I put both plates down and noticed his glass was empty. “Another drink?”

“You really are trying to get me drunk, aren’t you?” he asked.

I blushed. God, I had never blushed so much in my whole life before tonight. “No.”

He looked amused. “A single this time, please. And some water. And get yourself another.”

“Oh no, I couldn’t.”

“Course you could. It’s Christmas.” The word made him grimace.

“Not a fan?”

He laid his serviette on his lap and shook his head, tight-lipped.

“I’ll get you your drink. Oh, would you like some black pepper?”

“No, thanks.”

“Okay. Be right back.”

He wasn’t the only one who disliked Christmas. The work during December was just insane. Not that I should complain with the amount of tips I made, but still, I needed a bloody month off after to recover. Maybe he felt the same. I guess he sold a lot of underwear at this time of year. The idea made my mind wander again. Him in his own underwear. Mmm. Once he was nothing but a distant memory after tonight, I could stalk the hell out of him online in the hopes of catching some images of him undressed.

“Another for table three, please, Max,” I said when I got to the bar. I poured a jug of water, added some ice and set it on the tray with a tumbler. Then I took another drink of my beer, finishing the bottle.

“He’s going to be rolling out of here,” Max said.

“A single this time,” I told him.

“Shall I put a double in, you bad boy?” He grinned at me.

“No, you shouldn’t!” I gasped out.

“You might have to put him in a taxi anyway,” Max said. “Even see him to his door. Perhaps help him undress.”

I stared at him until we both started laughing. “Will you stop? What do you take me for?”

“A bloke who hasn’t been laid since last Christmas.”

It said a lot about Max as a person that he knew these details about me, considering he was my boss and considering he was straight. But he was down with the gays. Perhaps too down. I thought maybe he was bi, which was okay by me. “Yeah, well,” I muttered, watching Lucas eat his mushroom stroganoff as Max made the drink, “I’m sure the next time won’t be at his hands. I’m his waiter, not the models he probably fucks every night.”

“He’s here alone and he never goes out. He probably gets his end away even less than you do.”

I said nothing as Max put the drink on my tray. By rights, a man like that should have been getting all the cock he could eat. I smoothed my hair down and picked up the tray, heading for Lucas’s table.

“Gin and tonic,” I said, placing down his glass. “Water.” I added the jug and the tumbler.

“Thanks.”

“Is everything okay with your meal?”

“It’s excellent. My compliments to the chef.”

“Thank you, sir.”

He scowled.

“Sorry. Mr. Rainford.”

“Not Mr. Rainford either,” he said. “That’s my dad. Lucas.”

“Of course.” I bowed like he was royalty and backed away. Fuck, fuck, fuck, no wonder I never got laid.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Lucas

The waiter was the high point of the night. Maybe the high point of my whole fucking year. Some smooth talking bastard on Grindr had left me here high and dry when I'd rather be at home in my PJs. And instead of creeping away with my tail between my legs like the sad bastard I was, I was enjoying a slap up meal for one in one of the most exclusive restaurants in London. Being waited on by the most attractive waiter I had ever seen in my life.

He's too young for you.

Yeah, and I'm just looking, aren't I? I've still got a pulse, thanks very much. I didn't ask him to sit on my cock.

Not yet, you didn't. But you will.

Shut up.

I scowled at the mental dialogue that never went away. Always that fucking voice on my shoulder telling me I was waste of time, a failure, an imposter, that everyone thought I was a dick. I was here alone, like I always was, so it had to be right, didn't it?

In the early days, my vice president, Adam, had encouraged me to be seen at photo shoots with models. He thought photos of me and them would look good, that me being visible was all for the benefit of the company. He wanted me to trade on my face. That was until I realised what some of the models were like. I was horrified at

some of the propositions. Men offering me a blow job as soon as I'd shaken their hand. Pouting when I declined as though I was being rude.

Then the incident had happened. The one that still haunted my nightmares, still made me feel powerless and impotent, like a little boy again, not a grown man.

Adam didn't understand why I wouldn't go on a shoot again after that. I told him it just took one model to make up some tale about me and plaster it over social media and I could be up on sexual assault charges. Ruined. I had seen it happen many times and I had seen CEOs take advantage of their position to get all the arse they wanted. I've never taken advantage of anyone and never would. He didn't understand. He thought I should take what was being offered on a plate as a perk of the job. I've never told him the real reason.

I started to hide away at home even more after that. When the business got really big, the invitations to this dinner and that opening flooded in and I nearly always issued a polite no unless it was for charity. It left me with no social life, not that I've ever had one, but I'm most happy alone. Still, a man has needs, so I turned to Grindr. What a mistake that was. I had a couple of mutual wanking sessions on the phone, then one of them asked to take me out. I said no, but he insisted. And here I was. Obviously he must have been at home laughing to himself right about now over the gullible bastard who thought he was getting a Christmas Eve date.

I finished my meal and laid down my cutlery. It was really good but so it should have been for the price. I drank some water and dabbed my mouth. Alex materialised at my table out of nowhere.

"Have you finished?"

"Yes, thanks." I looked up at him as he took the plate. He really was astonishing to look at. Shorter than me, maybe five eleven, with a lean, toned body, very smart in

black trousers and white shirt with bow tie. His hair was dark brown, thick and tousled, held in check from his face by styling product. His face was pale, freckled over the bridge of his upturned nose and very, very beautiful. His eyes were the colour of sherry. I wondered if he had ever thought about modelling. He was hands down better looking than any one of those guys modelling my underwear on billboards.

“Can I get you a dessert menu?”

I wavered. I had a sweet tooth that I tried to keep in check. He was smiling like he knew. “There’s a vegan chocolate soufflé that’s to die for,” he said. “And it is Christmas.”

I pulled my face. “Stop reminding me.” I didn’t need to think about tomorrow.

“Sorry.” He hovered. I looked at him. Our gazes held for the longest time and I drowned in his eyes. Like amber with sparks of gold. “So,” he said, “shall I bring you the menu?”

“Yes.” I was going to get fat, but if it meant staying here longer with him, I’d have a dessert. Then maybe coffee. And a liqueur. Until I was pissed as a fart and they got sick of me and threw me out.

He grinned and my heart clenched. “Coming right up.” I watched him retreat and tried not to look at his pert little arse. It was Christmas Eve, I was on my own, and it was the best night of my life.

He returned in two ticks with the menu. Then he hovered again. “Shall I wait or...” I wondered if he was so ill at ease with other customers. Was he like this because he fancied me maybe? I glanced at the desserts but they were all a blur because my cock was stirring like a long dormant beast and it gave me a sweet little ache.



“I’ll take that one that you said.”

“The soufflé?”

“Yes, that one.” I didn’t care. I watched him tap his iPad. His fingers were long and slender. I imagined them wrapped around my cock. Fuck. I wondered what he was like when he was coming. What sounds would he make? I had an image of him on his back, his legs around me, me driving into him and watching the fireworks as he spilt cum over his belly. I shifted in my chair as my dick pressed against my zip.

He looked at me for another moment. “Coming right up.”

“Thank you.”

“Would you like some coffee after that?”

“Yes, er...” I looked at the menu again but it seemed to be written in a foreign language. My cock was throbbing. I wanted to pull him onto my lap. “Do you have oat milk?”

“Of course.”

“Then a latte with oat milk. Thank you.”

“Thank you.” He tapped again and inclined his head like I was the king before he walked away.

I followed his progress across the room. I saw the bar man wink at him as he walked past and my stomach plummeted instantly with mortification. They were laughing at me. The lecherous middle-aged businessman perving over the young waiters. He had chatted me up to get a good tip. My heart sank into the ground and I was consumed

with misery.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

I went into the kitchen floating on air and buttered myself a bread roll. Then I leant against the wall and took a couple of minutes break while I ate it and watched Chef prepare the chocolate soufflé. “Make it really, really good,” I told her.

She glared at me. “Excuse me?”

I dipped my head. “Nothing.”

“You’ve been flirting with that man on his own at table three. Everybody keeps talking about you when they come in here.”

I reddened. “No, I haven’t. I’m just being polite.”

She was a squat lady with a fierce face and a grey bun. She reminded me of The Governess on The Chase , my favourite quiz show. “Of course you are. Are you expecting a massive tip from him?”

I made eye contact and drew myself up. “I don’t flirt with customers to get tips. I’m sorry you think I do. He was stood up. He’s on his own on Christmas Eve and I feel sorry for him. I’m giving him some human contact before he has to go home to an empty house. I don’t want anything from him. I like to think that doesn’t make me a terrible person.”

I realised the kitchen had fallen silent and the waiting staff and other chefs were staring at me. Then Anna and Liam started clapping and the other waiting staff joined

in, while the chefs shook their heads and went about their business. My face flamed and I scuttled out. I went to the coffee machine and got it ready with a glass set up for his latte. Then I went to clear a few tables while I waited for Lucas's dessert to be ready. I didn't like to be in confrontation with anyone, least of all Chef—I didn't know her actual name—because she was fearsome. And a tip from Lucas had never crossed my mind. The drink was enough. He was enough. Eye candy on a tiresome evening. He had made my fucking year and I would remember meeting him forever.

I heard Chef yell for service and I went back to the kitchen for the soufflé. The first thing I saw was the heart-shaped strawberry on the top of it. I looked at her. "What?" she asked.

"Are you trying to embarrass me?"

"What do you mean?" She looked innocent but was trying to hide a tiny smirk.

"You know what I mean."

"I don't."

I sighed and picked up the plate. "Do you want two forks with it?" she asked.

I frowned. "What?"

"Nothing."

I hurried out. Nothing would have given me greater pleasure to sit at his table and share the dessert with him. Even better if I sat on his knee and let him feed me. I would definitely get the sack for that. I walked across the floor towards the cherry blossom wall and stopped dead.

He was gone.

I stood and looked around. He was in the bathroom, right? But his glass was empty and a new bill sat opened up on the saucer, with a credit card receipt on top.

No, no, no, no.

I rushed to the bar. “Where’s he gone?”

Max looked sorry. “He paid his bill.”

“Why?”

“He didn’t say. He asked for the bill and left.”

Oh God. Oh no . Tears rushed to my eyes. Disappointment consumed me whole. I put the dessert down and set off towards the door. “Where are you going?” Max called behind me but I ignored him.

Lucas was standing in the snow outside the main entrance with the collar of his winter coat pulled up. It was a long black coat with brass buttons. It made him look like a highwayman. Hot as unholy hell. He turned to look at me when I skidded to a halt, panting and feeling ridiculous.

“Where are you going?” I asked him.

He looked surprised but tried to hide it. “Home.” There were flakes of snow in his black hair.

“Why?”

He arched a brow. "Do you always chase the customers out?"

"No."

"Well, I left you a tip, so you can go back inside."

I stared at him. Oh God, now even he was accusing me of that. "I don't want a tip from you," I said, aggrieved. "I just..." I stopped.

He stepped forward. "What? What do you want? I saw your mate wink at you." He was close. We stood almost nose to nose if I hadn't been a bit shorter. I smelled the alcohol on his breath and shivered in my thin shirt.

"It wasn't like that!" What a mess. God, how could he think...

"You felt sorry for me," he said. "And I already told you I didn't want you to. Then you traded on me being alone to butter me up."

"No! I didn't want you to go home and be alone!" I cried. "And I liked having you here! Your dessert's ready and it smells amazing and now it'll go in the bin when there's people starving!"

He looked taken aback. A taxi drew up at the kerb and opened its window. "Taxi for Lucas?"

Lucas nodded at him. He looked back at me. "What time do you get off?"

I gawped at him. "Er, I don't know. When everyone's gone." My heart hammered so hard I was sure he must be able to see it pounding against my ribs.

He reached into his inside pocket and withdrew his wallet. He extracted a tenner and

gave it to the driver. “Perhaps you can come back later for me.”

The driver nodded. “Give me a ring. Ask for Ibrahim.”

“Will do, thanks.” The taxi drove off and Lucas turned back to me. “Let’s go before they give my table away.”

I couldn’t speak. I led the way back inside, astonished that my outburst had persuaded him to stay, and chilled to the bone. He gave his coat back in at the cloakroom and followed me back to the dining room. Max’s jaw was on the floor when I seated Lucas back at his table and headed over to reclaim the dessert.

“What the fuck did you promise him? Have you just sucked him off outside?”

“You’re so funny.”

I took the plate back to Lucas. “Shall I get it warmed up?”

“I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

“I’ll make your coffee.”

“Thank you.”

I headed over to the coffee station and stood there breathing hard. Oh my God . My hand shook as I frothed the oat milk. What did his question mean? That he wanted to take me out when I finished? Surely it couldn’t be that. Maybe he wanted to have a drink with me here. Either one of those two scenarios would be fine. God, I couldn’t ever be that lucky, could I? I thought back to his other words. I’d hurt his feelings. Getting stood up tonight had clearly rocked him and he was feeling sensitive and fragile. I knew how that felt. I finished the coffee and used a stencil to add a cocoa

powder heart-shape to the top. Idiot . I took it back over to him.

Our chocolate soufflés were messy. They stained lips and faces and teeth and nobody got out unscathed. The most perfect scarlet lipstick became a brownish smear. Kids had been known to get it up as far as their ears and there was no stain remover in the world that would get your clothes clean. Lucas was no exception. He had a small dark patch on his upper lip. He looked up as I approached and licked his lips, missing the spot entirely. I looked at it and imagined leaning down to him, cupping his head in my hand and running my tongue over the chocolate stain. Backwards and forwards until we were both moaning. My dick loved that idea. It surged to life and I shifted nervously from side to side once I'd placed the glass down.

“Thanks,” he said and wiped his mouth on his serviette, missing the stain once more that seemed to be ground into his lovely skin.

“You’re welcome. Was it okay?” I took his plate, still looking at the chocolate on his mouth.

“Very nice.”

“I’m glad. Can I get you an after-dinner liqueur?”

“Yes. An amaretto, please.”

“Of course.” I bit my tongue before the word sir spilled out and turned to go. I headed back to the bar, sensing his eyes on me all the way and went behind it where I could hide my bulging groin. I stood facing the optics, breathing hard in relief.

“What’s wrong?” Max cast a glance at me from pouring a glass of wine.

“I’ve got a hard-on.”



“Fuck’s sake, Alex.” He shook his head.

“Sorry. I can’t help it. He’s fucking delicious.”

“You’re right, he is. I’d probably do him.” I darted a glance at him. “Want to tell me now what went on outside?”

“He saw you wink at me. He wasn’t happy. Thought we were taking the piss out of him and I was buttering him up for tips.”

“Shit.” Max cast a glance across the room. “Shall I go and speak to him?”

I looked at him in admiration. That my boss was willing to go and have a difficult conversation rather than just brush off a customer’s feelings impressed me. “I don’t know,” I said. “I’m not sure it would be a good idea.”

Max looked torn. “I feel bad. I caused him to walk out. Obviously he only came back in because he fancies you. And you sucked him off.”

“Stop saying that,” I hissed.

Max smiled. “I’ll go over. Is he having a drink?”

“Amaretto.”

“Okay, I’ll take it in a minute. Table six needs clearing.”

“On it.” Hard-on subsided, I hurried off.

When table six was done, I turned my attention to the starter order for table eight with dread. They were a rowdy bunch of businessmen who spent a lot of money here and

knew the owner. One of them, a guy named Bill, was a problem. He was fifty-ish, balding with a paunch, and treated the staff like shit. He reserved his flirting for me though. On three occasions, he'd run his hand over my arse. One time, he'd squeezed it. I had glared at him, but said nothing. I'd gone home all three times asking myself why I'd let him get away with it. I could have caused a scene, I could have gone to Max, or I could have gone straight to the owner, who was in attendance on each evening. Instead, I'd done nothing and it made me feel sick.

I worked my way around the table taking orders, leaving him till last. "Hello, beautiful," he said when I reached him. "Happy Christmas." He made sure to say it in an undertone. His friends were obviously straight and he practised his groping of me discreetly too.

"What can I get for you?" I asked coldly.

"Want to go out later?" he replied. "I know a great place." His arm came down behind me and he stroked my arse. I jerked and stepped back, fixing him with a glare. He smiled. "I'll take the scallops and your phone number." I walked away with my heart beating hard with fury. In the kitchen, I took some deep breaths. I glanced around me, wondering if any of the staff had seen, but nobody had followed me in to mention it. I should do something about this situation tonight. I should. It had to stop. But I was potentially on the hook for a date with Lucas. That overruled everything else. I didn't want to have to stay behind to talk about the harassment with the owner when maybe Lucas was going to take me out to show me the sights of London. I was getting carried away. Maybe it would all come to nothing and I would go home alone to my little flat to look out of my window at the Christmas lights and wish I had someone there to share the night with.

I came back out of the kitchen in time to see Bill getting up from the table and waddling his way over to the bathroom. I went back to the bar and saw Max over at Lucas's table. My stomach clenched with anxiety. Max walked away, towards the

kitchen, and I watched Lucas toss his serviette onto the table and follow Bill to the bathroom.

I frowned. What the hell?

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Lucas

A shadow fell over my table and I looked up from contemplating the love heart in my latte to see the blond guy in a suit from the bar. Alex's mate. He of the winkage. I regarded him coolly as he placed my shot of amaretto in front of me.

"Has everything been to your satisfaction, sir?"

"Yes, thank you. Very nice." I didn't tell him not to call me sir . He could.

"Alex tells me I offended you. I'm very sorry. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I only winked at him because he fancies you. No other motive. Certainly we weren't laughing at you. I would never..." He trailed off, his face red. But not as red as mine. I glanced past him and watched Alex working his way around a table of eight boisterous men.

The blond man seemed to be waiting for a reply. I didn't have one. He tried again. "Certainly we could offer you your meal on the house tonight as a..." He trailed off at my lack of attention. I had just seen one of the pricks across the room fondling Alex's arse. I stiffened in my chair, staring.

"Sir?" The man asked, unsure.

"That won't be necessary," I said, clenching my fist in my lap and watching as the man got up from the table and headed towards the toilets.

"Very well, if you're sure."

“I’m sure. But thank you.”

He walked away and I waited a moment before I threw my serviette down and stood.

The bathrooms were located down a discreet walkway behind the kitchens. I stood for a minute outside the gents, because I didn’t want to walk in and see this pervert with his dick in his hand. Then I pushed open the door. There were four urinals in a row and three cubicles on the other side of the room. Fat, sweaty businessman stood at one urinal, just zipping up. As he turned around, he caught my eye. I marched right up to him and he lurched back, banging into the porcelain behind him.

“Why are you groping the waiters?”

His jaw fell open; he reddened and sweated, blustering a bit. “Come on, it’s a joke. He’s a pretty thing. You’ve noticed, I see.” He tried an all-boys-together grin.

I stepped closer but didn’t touch him even though I wanted to punch him in the face. “I’ll be here a lot from now on. If I ever see you touch him, or anyone, like that again, you’ll have me to answer to. And it won’t be pretty. Have you got it?”

He nodded, eyes wide with fear.

“Good. Keep your disgusting hands to yourself.” I stepped back and he scarpered around me and ran for the door without washing his hands. In the entrance, he collided with Alex.

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Alex

I hurried over to the bathrooms and swung the door open, only to run right into a

sweating, terrified Bill. I stood back and let him brush past me. Inside, Lucas stood watching me. I looked at him.

“What are you doing?” I asked with trepidation.

“Warning him to keep his hands to himself.”

My heart warmed but I shook my head. “You don’t need to do that.”

He cocked his head. “I don’t? How long has he been coming here feeling you up?”

I looked away. “Not long.”

“Not long? Have you told your boss?”

I shook my head tight-lipped.

“Why not?”

I sighed. “It’s not a big deal.”

“Really? It’s a big deal to me. If someone came into my place of work and groped my arse, I’d be pretty upset.”

I bit my lip. “Look, it happens. It’s happened to some of the women and yeah, Max has barred the patrons for life, but, you know, I’m a bloke. It’s different.”

He frowned. “How?”

“I can look after myself. I’d be a laughing stock if I reported getting my arse fondled.”

“No, you wouldn’t. It’s not any different. It’s still sexual harassment.” He moved closer to me so we were stood face to face. I looked away rather than into his crystal blue eyes. “Hey.” He put up a hand and ghosted his fingertips down my cheek. “Are you listening to me? It’s not any different. Tell me why you should have to take that.”

I said nothing. I trembled under his touch as he traced the curve of my jaw, then lifted my chin to look at him. Oh God, we were so close. He was tall, over six feet, maybe three inches bigger than me. The look in his eyes made me squirm. Protective and fierce. He was going to kiss me. Right here in the bathroom while I was supposed to be working, and I wasn’t going to stop him.

I closed my eyes as he inclined his head and brushed his lips over mine. Soft, gentle, tender. I caught my breath in sheer bliss. Our mouths came apart, we looked at each other, and he went back in again. I opened my mouth to his and slid a hand around the back of his neck, touching the velvety stubble of his closely-cut hair. I heard his intake of breath. He cupped my head and put his other arm around me, easing me against his hard body. Our tongues touched and the kiss deepened to consume me whole. We staggered back until I had him pinned against the wall between two urinals and we kissed with the wonder of the new. I forgot everything as I drowned in him. There was only him. I was hard and he was too. His body felt wondrous pressed against mine, so firm with muscle, so exciting. His spicy cologne filled my senses and sent my arousal to boiling point. I reached to pull his shirt free from his trousers so I could slide my hands greedily up his spine. Then I managed to remember where I was and stepped back with a gasp.

He was flushed, his mouth kiss-swollen. He smiled and it was contagious. I touched my lips. “Wow,” I said. I noticed I’d manage to remove the chocolate stain from his lip.

He laughed softly. “Wow indeed. If I had known it would be that good, I wouldn’t have waited all night to do it.”

I flushed in pleasure. “I have to get back to work.”

“Can I take you out? I’ll wait for you to finish.”

I swallowed with birds taking flight in my head. “Are you sure? It might be late.”

“Oh yes, I’m sure. I’ll go home and come back. In my pyjamas.”

I laughed. “People might leave early. Their kids are going to be up at the crack of dawn.”

“Yeah,” he agreed.

We watched each other for another moment, then he pulled me back into his arms and kissed me again and I melted to a puddle of goo. I wasn’t sure anyone had ever kissed me like him before. My entire body was on fire for him. I pulled away again and hurried out.

I swooped on the first table I saw with empty dishes and started clearing like a mad thing, trying to get my mind back on the job. My hard-on had calmed down somewhat to my relief. The heat consuming my body had not. I wanted to go back into that bathroom, bundle him into a cubicle and have him up against the wall. As I carried an arm load of plates away, I saw him appear around the corner. He gave me a little smile before he made his way back to his table and I grinned to myself as I entered the kitchen.

“Here he is,” Anna said, my favourite among the waiting staff. “What exactly’s going on between you and table three?” She was a sweet thing, very pretty with red hair and a lovely smile. She told me more of her secrets than anyone else and always had a lot of gossip to spill.



“Nothing.” I scraped the plates and stacked them by the sink.

“You chased him outside and got him to come back in!”

I reddened. If she had seen, maybe everyone else had too. Including the owner. I said nothing.

“He’s fucking fit,” she said. “Really fit. He makes underwear, you know.”

“I know.”

“Do you reckon he wears it?”

“Do I reckon he wears underwear? I don’t know, maybe he goes commando.”

She glared. “No, I mean do you think he wears his own underwear?”

“Probably. I would, wouldn’t you? Free underwear for the rest of your life.”

“I suppose so. It would be funny though. To look in your underwear and see your own name. Like being at school.”

I rolled my eyes. Now if I ever got him undressed, I’d be looking in his underwear to see if his name was in there.

“Is he gay?”

If he wasn’t, he played the part pretty well. “I don’t know.”

“Yes, you do, Alex! Stop being mean.” And she linked her arm through mine and batted her eyelashes at me. Her sleeve was smeared with cheesecake and she

transferred some of it to my shirt.

“He might be,” I said with a smile. “Why don’t you google him?”

“Already have. There’s not much gossip online. He’s beautiful. Please go home with him tonight.”

“All right then, because you asked me so nicely.”

She pinched my arm before kissing me on the cheek and heading out. Behind the work bench, I caught Chef looking at me over her pan. “What?”

“He appreciated the love heart strawberry then?”

I gave her a smile too because I was feeling love towards everybody at that moment. “That must be what tipped him over the edge and into my arms,” I said in a whisper for her ears only and left the kitchen.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

The restaurant was getting rowdy in direct correlation to the amount of alcohol consumed and the anticipation of the big day ahead as Christmas Eve counted down. Lucas was drinking his latte and his amaretto very slowly. From time to time he pulled his phone from his pocket, scowled at it, and put it back. I wondered who was bothering him. I wanted to go over to his table but I didn't really have an excuse to be there. I certainly didn't want to give him the bill for the second time. I thought about that second drink he'd offered me and took another beer, quenching my parched throat. Max watched me add it to his bill. "So what's going on?" he said. "This is quite a love story I'm watching play out tonight."

I laughed but his words warmed me. "He wants to take me out. After."

He lifted a brow, then glanced around. "I should let you go early then."

"Really?" Before I could turn to him in delight, I saw Tom, the *maître d'*, escorting a tall, well-built man over to table three. Well no, it couldn't be table three. There had to be some mistake.

But apparently not. The tall man stopped at the table, addressing Lucas.

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Lucas

I glanced up as a shadow fell over the table. I recognised Pete from his profile,

although unusually, he was better looking in the flesh. We'd spoken a couple of times on the phone. He'd not been remotely interested in details about my life; he only wanted to talk dirty. We'd both wanked off and I'd consigned him to the bin. Then he'd texted me and asked me to go out tonight. I'd expected the usual quiet Christmas Eve at home. I hadn't fancied saying yes to some random. But I'd forced myself to come here tonight. And the thanks I had got for it was being stood up.

Apparently.

"I'm really sorry," he said. "Something came up."

I frowned at him. He wasn't flushed or out of breath like he had driven here at sixty, screeched to a halt outside, left his engine running, and charged in like a crazy person, only to avoid making me wait one more second. On the contrary, he was smooth and cool and way too laid back. Obviously he operated on his own time zone and expected everyone else to agree.

I looked at my watch. "You're over an hour late."

He waved his hand and sat down uninvited. "I'm here now. Shall we order?"

It was all I could do not to gape at him. I couldn't believe the brass fucking neck on this dickhead. I could feel my lips purse. "I've eaten," I snapped.

"Well, I'll get something. I'm starving." He clicked his fingers at thin air. "Garcon! A menu."

Now I couldn't believe my eyes as well as my ears. Had he really just done and said that? I looked around and wondered which unfortunate member of staff he had summoned. Then I saw Alex approaching and I shrivelled inside with mortification. Please no.

He was pale, his face tight, all the humour and life fled from it as he eyed Pete and studiously avoided looking at me. Not long ago I had kissed flushes into his lips and his cheeks. He had been warm and real in my arms and this horrible man from Grindr had wrecked it all. He held out a menu. "Would sir like a drink?" His tone was as stiff as his face.

Pete swivelled in his seat to stare at him. "What I'd like from you, young man, is a smile," he said. "Or would it crack your posh face?"

I froze in my chair, looking at Alex, who gave a grimace of epic proportions.

"Try again, and I'll leave you a nice tip," Pete said.

"Will you shut up and stop being a dick," I told him.

He glanced at me. "What's got your knickers in a twist?"

"Don't speak to him like that." My voice was a low growl.

Pete eyed me, then looked at a red-faced Alex. "Hmm," he said. "Did I miss something? Has the waiter sucked you off while you were waiting? That's fine. I have room for both a little twink and you , big boy." He pushed his tongue into his cheek and mimed a blow job with his fist against his other cheek.

I stood up. "Get out."

"I'm not going anywhere. I'm hungry." He yawned. "Twinkie, get me some of those fancy mushrooms in cream and a beer. Hold the garlic bread because I'm going to shove my tongue down this bloke's throat shortly. And don't spit in them."

Alex was stood rooted to the spot as I grabbed Pete by the lapels of his jacket and

dragged him out of the chair. “Get the fuck out, right now. I mean it.”

He responded with violence, shoving me backwards hard, where I careered into a waitress and knocked her plates all over the floor. Just fucking great . I tried to help her while snarling at Pete.

“You know what,” he said. “I only came that time I was on the phone to you because I was watching porn at the same time. Your boring voice down my earhole was enough to give me a limp dick. I nearly fell asleep. In the flesh, you’re even more disappointing. And your underwear’s shit. It chafes my balls. I want a refund.”

He stalked off, leaving me hoping the floor would swallow me up. I glanced at the other people in the nearest vicinity and looked away when I caught Alex’s eye. He helped the now-crying waitress to the kitchen. I sank down into my chair and squeezed my eyes shut.

A minute later I felt a hand on my shoulder. A glass appeared on the table. “On the house,” said the blond man and walked away. I gulped the liquor in one and resisted the urge to put my head down on the table. The whole room was staring at me. Someone turned the music up a touch and conversation gradually resumed. Still, I wanted to sink through the floor. I made that my sixth shot. I needed to ease back or I wouldn’t even remember my date with Alex. I nearly laughed aloud. Right, I was still taking him out, was I? Fat fucking chance.

I sensed a presence and looked up into Alex’s eyes. “What a horrible man,” he said. “How dare he turn up like that and expect you to still be waiting for him. I mean, I know you were but...” he trailed off, blushing. “Just for the record, I don’t think your voice is boring. If you were talking to me on the phone, I’d have no trouble coming to climax.”

I couldn’t help but laugh and he did too, his colour deepening. “Just saying,” he said.

I regarded him, taking in his even, handsome features, lingering on his lips. That kiss of his had jolted me back to life. “You’re quite remarkable, do you know that?”

He shuffled on the spot, turning red up to his ears. “If you say so.”

“I do say so. Has that bell-end ruined my chances of taking you out?”

He held my gaze. “No.”

I smiled and my heart fluttered in my chest like a caged bird taking flight. “All right then. Please will you bring me some more water and the bill?”

“Yes.” He walked away.

I sat back in my chair and pulled my phone out of my inside pocket when I felt it vibrate against my chest. Another invite to Christmas dinner. I had told them all I would try and drop in. I had no intention of doing any such thing.

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Alex

I went back to the bar and poured another jug of water and found a glass. “Can you do table three’s bill, please, Max?” I asked.

“Is he going?”

“I don’t know. He said before that he might come back when I finish.”

“You can go,” Max said.

My gaze jerked to his. “Really?”

“Yes. Get your tips and go.” He gestured to the jar which looked to be overflowing with more notes than coins. On the top I saw a fifty, which was rare, despite my decent tips.

“Who...” I began, my eyes wide.

“He did, earlier.” He nodded towards Lucas.

“Fuck,” I said.

“Yeah. Have a good time and don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

I laughed and pulled my rucksack from under the bar, retrieving the little bag inside that I used to transport my tips home. I crouched so the patrons couldn’t see, pouring the jar into the bag before I zipped it away. I stood and took the tray with Lucas’s water and bill to his table along with the card reader.

When I got there, I saw another fifty on the table along with his debit card. I swallowed and said nothing, unloading the tray. He didn’t look at the bill so I opened it and checked the amount before I entered it into the card reader. The only things on it were my second beer and his after-dinner liqueur. “Please check the amount and tap your card,” said.

He did so. “Thank you, that’s gone through. Would you like your receipt?”

“No thanks.”

“Thank you.”



“That’s for you.”

“You already left me fifty after your first bill.”

“Well, there’s fifty more for being so kind to me tonight and not treating me like a freak who dines alone on Christmas Eve.”

I swallowed, suddenly choked up. I understood loneliness. There had been many times in my life where I had felt it and I still did. Even with people around me. “It was no hardship. You’re an easy man to be kind to.”

He smiled as we gazed at each other for a long moment.

“Max said I can go,” I said.

His smile widened. “Get your coat then.” He put the fifty in my hand. “I’ll call a cab.”

“Be right back.” I hurried to the staff changing room and grabbed my coat.

It was unfortunate that I had nothing to change into, but I pulled off my bowtie and shoved it in my pocket, then opened the top two buttons on my shirt. I examined my reflection in the mirror and restyled my hair a little. I wished I could have a shower and brush my teeth before going out with the sexiest man in the world, but I would have to do. At least I had some mints in my coat pocket.

I went back to the bar to get my rucksack. I saw Lucas speaking into his phone, then he rose from the table and my breath caught in my throat as he walked across the room. I hadn’t had time to study him properly when I had seen him warning off Bill in the bathroom. And then I was too busy kissing him to look. He was a vision. Tall, subtly muscled under his suit, long fluid limbs and that gorgeous face.

“Thanks, man,” he addressed Max.

“No problem,” Max said. “Take it easy.” I half expected him to give Lucas some fatherly lecture about treating me right but he turned away with a smile at me and Lucas slid yet another note onto the bar top and walked away. I went after him, catching him up in the lobby.

“You’re very generous,” I said.

He didn’t say anything. He retrieved his coat from the cloakroom and pulled it on. I saw him look down the V of flesh exposed by my open shirt and my blood quickened. “Let’s go,” he said, opening the door for me.

Outside, the snow was falling in denser flakes now. It was a proper Christmas Eve like we hadn’t had in so long. I stood for a moment turning my face up and letting it fall onto my closed eyelids. When I glanced to my side, Lucas was watching me. I gave a self-conscious smile.

“Do you like the snow?”

“Yes. Do you?”

“Not usually. Maybe you could change my mind.” Our gazes held. My mind went tumbling into a future of Christmases, snowmen and log fires. Us rolling around on a rug in front of the flames. Ludicrous. I didn’t even know him. We would have a drink and then I would go home. Would I go home alone or would I go home with him ? Did I want to go home with him? Would he ask me to? Expect me to? My head hurt from overthinking. Better to go with the flow and see where this ended up. But it had been a great night so far. Maybe we could make it magical. I wanted to make it magical. I wanted him .

“I’d love to change your mind. Maybe if the snow sticks we could build a snowman.”

He laughed and stepped closer. “What a refreshing change you are,” he said.

We were almost nose to nose, the snow falling around us and the background receding. Nothing but me and him alone on the street on Christmas Eve. Then a taxi squealed to a halt at the kerb and the spell was broken. He gave a rueful roll of his eyes and opened the door, waiting for me to get in. I loved his manners. He was a refreshing change. Maybe he was a beast behind closed doors. A crazed serial killer who was taking me home to dismember and eat me. Somehow I doubted it. I thanked him and slid inside. He got in beside me and greeted the driver, giving him the name of a fancy wine bar in South Bank that I could only dream of going to. And now it looked like I was.

We fastened our seat belts and settled back. We set off down the snow-covered street, passing the shops and bars draped with Christmas lights and spilling celebrating patrons out onto the pavement. I hoped the place wasn’t so noisy that we couldn’t even talk. I very much wanted to talk to him. Failing that, we could just kiss. I liked that idea too.

A subtle hint of his spicy aftershave wafted across the back seat. It wasn’t a brand I recognised and its novelty made it even more intoxicating. I felt him watching me and turned my head. His eyes gleamed like sapphires in the dark of the back seat. “Is my age a problem?” he asked in a soft voice.

“No,” I said, not sure if I was lying or not. “Is mine?”

His teeth were bright in the gloom when he smiled. “No. As long as you don’t think I’m a dirty old man.”

I snorted. “You’re not old.” I glanced at my watch. “Although it is your birthday

soon.”

He raised his eyebrows. “You googled me.”

I shook my head. “Max did. He knew who you were. I didn’t.”

“And what do you think now you do?”

“I’m wondering if you wear your own underwear.”

He laughed, then leaned closer over the middle of the seat. “What do you think?”

“I think yes. And I think they’re snug briefs. You look like a man with a lot to contain and restrain.”

His chuckle was deep-throated and it raised goose pimples on my skin. “I’m liking you more and more.”

I was disappointed that he didn’t say I was going to find out for myself, but at the same time, I liked that he was a gentleman. So far he had made not one crude insinuation. Any other man might have been leaning over the seat telling me what he was going to do to me later. I hadn’t had a lot of men, but I wasn’t behind the door either. I knew what I liked and what I didn’t and this man was different from others I had met; I was sure of it. I reminded myself he appeared to be a hermit who didn’t go out. Maybe, despite being so physically blessed, he was sexually inexperienced. I wasn’t sure if I liked that idea or not, because something about him made me want to be mastered by him very much. But I wouldn’t care when it came down to it. If he needed me to help him along, I could do that too. I was versatile but I liked to do the fucking. I would love to fuck him. We continued to look at each other. Shadows shifted across his face. I was presuming we were going to have sex. I shouldn’t. I was happy enough to be in his company and not be going home alone and tired after a

hard shift. I was happier still that he was not going home alone just yet either. I was still angry at the dickhead who had stood him up, angrier still that the guy had then dared to turn up. I suspected it had badly dented an already fragile ego.

“I’m glad you’re here,” he said and sat back to look out of the window.

I reached across the seat to lightly touch his fingertips with my own. “Me too,” I said.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

The wine bar was as fancy as I'd heard, but I was relieved that it was also not too busy, dimly lit, and the music was at a discreet level. You had to wait to be seated, that's how fancy it was, and the man who greeted us led us across a smallish room and into a booth along the wall. We both slid onto the seat along the back. It could have comfortably held six. I didn't want to sit opposite him and talk over the vast table, so I shuffled right around to sit next to him. Much better. He smiled at me.

The room was decorated in silver and red with a beautiful tree winking with fairy lights at the far end. The lights changed colour, dappling colours across his beautiful face, his eyes lustrous with reflections. I caught my breath over how stunning the lighting made him, even though I didn't think he could get any more attractive.

The waiter handed us both a drinks menu and went away and I perused. The first thing I noticed was the prices. They nearly made my eyes water.

"Are you having a cocktail?" Lucas asked.

"Are you?" I countered, wondering if I should. I didn't want him to pay, but I also didn't want to dig into my rucksack for tip money. He'd got the cab before I could fumble any money free and I felt embarrassed. Perhaps before he could pay later, I could pretend I was going to the toilet, then go over to the bar and pay with one of the fifties he had given me.

He shook his head. "I shouldn't. I've had enough. You have one."

I wavered, looking at the list again and trying to ignore the prices.

He leaned closer, breath warm against my ear. “Please don’t hesitate because of the money. Only the hangover.”

I smiled and kept my eyes fixed on the page. I knew he was watching me. My belly was on fire and my cock was stirring once again. While I hadn’t been sure if I wanted to go home with him, now I was. His proximity was electrifying. I wanted him badly. Enough that my dick was wetting my underwear. But I didn’t want a one-night stand. I was sick of them. But would a man like him want any more than that?

I did want a cocktail. I wanted something strong to settle my nerves and enable me not to talk like a twat. Well, if it was strong, it would make me talk like a twat but anything would be an improvement on some of the stuff I’d said to him tonight.

When the waiter came back, I asked him for a Porn Star Martini. He asked Lucas what he wanted and Lucas responded that he would have a rhubarb and apple fizz. My mouth watered because I loved rhubarb. I would have that next if I was still conscious after the cocktail. When the waiter went away, Lucas said, “Do you want something to eat? We could go somewhere if you’re hungry.”

I shook my head even though I was. I didn’t want to move.

He regarded me. “So, tell me about yourself.”

Here it came. He wanted to know if waiting was my full time job. “What do you want to know?”

“How long have you been working at the restaurant?”

“Seven months.”

“Okay. What did you do before that?”

“I was a postman.”

Lucas arched a brow. He looked amused. “And before that?”

“I worked in a vet’s reception.”

“And before that?”

“How do you know there’s a before that?”

“A wild guess.”

I smiled. “You think I’m flighty.”

“Did I say that?”

Our gazes held. “I was a car salesman.” I spoke again before he could. “Before that, I was at university.”

That was what he wanted to know. He wanted to know if I could match up to him.

“And?” His tone was gentle. Maybe he knew what was coming.

“I was studying English Literature.”

“What happened?”

I looked down, fiddling with a coaster on the marble surface of the table. “I had a breakdown. I dropped out.”



He was silent for a moment. Then, “I’m sorry to hear that.”

I bit my lip, wishing so much that I hadn’t told him.

“Were you hospitalised?”

“Yes.”

“How long for?”

I glanced up at him, studying his dark blue eyes. What did he want? Just to know I was okay now and not some sort of psychotic axe murderer?

“Sorry,” he said. “I’m prying.”

“It’s okay. It was for a month. Then I lived back with my parents for a while.”

“Were they supportive?”

“Yes. I did come out at the same time to them, though.”

“Oh. But they were okay?”

“Yeah. My dad was pretty upset, but he seems over it now.”

He gave me a long look. “Do you think your breakdown was precipitated by trying to come to terms with your sexuality?”

“Yes. It was that, it was being away from home at eighteen, and it was the stress of uni.”

“I’m sorry.” His eyes were tender with empathy. He touched his fingers to my hand.

I swallowed a sudden lump in my throat.

“And now?” he asked. “How are you now?”

I shrugged. “I’m okay.”

“Are you really okay?”

Tears rushed without warning to my eyes. I tried to laugh. “I didn’t realise I was coming for a counselling session.”

“Sorry.”

“Stop saying sorry.”

“S—” We both laughed.

“Are you on anti-depressants?”

I shot him a look. “Do you give all your dates the third degree about their mental health like this?”

He looked rueful and apologetic. “Only the ones I’m interested in.”

Warmth blossomed in my stomach. “Will it go against me if I say yes?”

“No. I’m on them too. Isn’t everyone?”

I wanted to take him in my arms. It would be ignorant of me to ask him what a man

with his money and looks had to be depressed about. Instead, I said, “Do you want to tell me about that?”

He eyed me. “Will it go against me?”

I laughed. “I don’t think anything you could say could go against you.”

“What, not even if I say I want you to dress up as a horse later and indulge in pony play?”

We were laughing when the waiter arrived with the drinks and a bowl of olives that he put near me. I made sure to push them away when he’d gone.

“Not a fan?”

“They make me sick just looking at them.”

“Me too.”

“Good. I don’t think I could have allowed you to kiss me again if you ate them.”

He leaned over to me, his nose almost touching mine. “Is that right?”

“Yes.”

“I see.” He brushed his lips against mine in the softest kiss I had ever had. My toes curled. I thought I would swoon like a Regency heroine. He smiled and turned his attention to his drink. I watched his Adam’s apple as he swallowed and wanted to trace its bulge with my tongue. I’ve always liked a man’s Adam’s apple, I’m not sure why.

I took a drink of my cocktail. I was still waiting for him to answer my question. He was silent for the longest time. I felt the need to fill it. “So, do you hand pick those models for your underwear?” I was teasing him, but jealous at the thought of it too.

A shadow crossed his face, his jaw tensing. “No. Nothing to do with me.”

I studied him. What had I said? “I would expect you to have your pick of them, not be slumming it on Grindr.”

He scowled into his drink. “I’m not interested in models.”

I regarded him, curious about his vehemence. “Okay.” I still wanted him to answer me about the anti-depressants but accepted that wasn’t going to happen. Another time. If there was one.

He looked at me. “How do you like working at the restaurant?”

“It’s okay.”

“Do you get many dickheads groping you like that one?”

I shook my head.

“I’m glad to hear it. Do you want to model for me?”

I stared at him, shocked to my core.

“Sorry, I realise how sleazy that sounds,” he said. “I’m not a pervert. I don’t pick up men and offer them modelling contracts. I’m not going to ask you for sexual favours.” That was a shame, I thought. “But you’re beautiful. Way more than any of those blokes we’ve hired before.”

My heart thumped. “I don’t know what to say.”

“How about you say, I’ll come to your office to discuss. Next week after the tedium of Christmas has died down.”

I licked my lips. “I could do. Don’t I need like an agent or something?”

“No. But bring someone with you if you feel that I’m actually going to ask you to suck my cock in return for the gig.”

I reddened. “I don’t think that.” Particularly as I’d suck your cock with nothing in return. Just for the fun of it.

“I’m glad, but still, I realise how this looks and how it sounds.” He shook his head. “Shit, I really didn’t mean to ask you that.”

“It’s okay.”

“Is it?”

“Yes.”

“All right then. Tell me something else about you.”

“What do you want to know?” I drank some more of the cocktail and felt my senses swim just a little.

“What do your parents do?”

“My mum’s a librarian, my dad teaches English lit at university.”

“That’s where you got the love of English lit from. Are you a bookworm?”

I grinned. “You better believe it. Are you?” I held my breath for the answer which was all important to me.

“Yes. I have a room just for my books at home.”

I smiled in delight. Now I needed that invite back to his.

“Any brothers and sisters?”

“No. What about you?”

He turned his attention back to his drink. I sensed him closing down once more.

“What about me?”

“Parents?”

I’d struck a nerve. He shook his head. “I don’t have any family. I grew up in foster care.”

I swallowed. I didn’t know what to say. He took a gulp of his drink and almost finished it. Hesitating, I said, “Do you know who your mum and dad are?”

He clenched his jaw. “I last saw my mum when I was nine. She came to take me out on a visit and she was drunk. I never saw her again. I’ve never met my dad.”

I looked around the room at the happy, smiling faces and back to his sober expression. I placed my hand over his. He looked at me. He turned his palm face up and entwined our fingers. His skin was soft and warm. We sat in silence for a long moment.

“Did you go to university?” I asked.

“Yes. I did business and economics in Manchester. Boring as fuck.”

“But it paid off.”

He shrugged. “I suppose.”

“What are you doing tomorrow?”

“Nothing. What are you doing?”

He was trying to deflect the attention back to me. “Going to my parents in Devon. You must be doing something.”

“If I want to, but I don’t.”

“So you have invites?” I knew he had. I’d heard him on the phone saying he would try to drop in.

“Yes.”

“Who from?”

“People at work.”

“Any friends?”

“A couple.” He avoided my gaze.

“You don’t fancy going to any of them?”

He shrugged. “They’re going to be noisy dinners, with children. I like to be on my own. I do enough socialising at work.”

I studied him. “Max googled you and it said you didn’t really go out much. Is that right?”

“Yes. Don’t tell me, you’re a social butterfly who never stays in?”

“No,” I said. “I like to read and go to bed early.”

He smiled. “In that case, why don’t we—” He stopped as a shadow fell over the table and let go of my hand.

A tall, olive-skinned handsome man in an ostentatious purple velvet suit stood there. He looked like a seventies pimp. He was dark-haired with cheekbones you could cut yourself on and perfect designer stubble. I bristled, because he had to be one of the models Lucas didn’t like.

“Well, well, well, Lucas Rainford out on the piss on Christmas Eve. This is a surprise.”

Lucas regarded him coolly. “Hello.”

“Who’s your little friend? I thought you didn’t like models?” He sounded Spanish, his accent thick and exotic.

Lucas’s jaw pulsed. “He’s not a model.”

The man perused me like a pair of shoes in a shop window. “Hmm, no, I can see that.”



I flushed and wished I could crawl under the table.

“What do you want?” Lucas looked like he was about to lose it the way he had with the man from Grindr.

“Can I buy you a drink?”

“No, thanks.”

The man continued to eye me. “Where did you find him?”

“I am here, you know,” I said in irritation.

“All right, sweetie. Don’t get your knickers in a twist. Has he fucked you yet? I wouldn’t bother.”

Lucas stood, nearly spilling my drink. “Off you pop, José.”

José laughed. He winked at Lucas and wandered off.

Clenching his jaw like his teeth would shatter, Lucas sat down again. “Why don’t we go?” he said.

I nodded and finished off my cocktail.

The snow had got thicker, a dense blanket shrouding everything. We shivered for a minute on the pavement outside the bar. “Do you want to go somewhere else or do you want to go home?” Lucas asked. He seemed miserable and deflated. It sounded like he very much wanted to go home.

“Do you want to call it a night?” I asked, hoping he would say no, fearing he would

say yes.

“I don’t really want to go anywhere else.”

There was my answer. “Okay.” I glanced down the road for a taxi.

“Do you want to come home with me?”

I stared at him.

“I didn’t fuck him,” he said.

Our gazes held. I nodded.

The taxi ride seemed to go on forever. The car crawled along through snow heaped streets and I lost all my bearings. I didn’t know London that well, only the area where I lived and worked. I asked myself what I was doing going this far away with a man I didn’t know, a man who was bigger than me and looked physically powerful. A man with a temper, it seemed.

He looked at me in the dark with streetlights playing over his face. “You look like you’re regretting the idea. Do you want me to ask him to turn around?”

I swallowed.

“I’ll make sure you get home safe. You can trust me.”

“So said Jeffrey Dahmer.”

He laughed. “Now I’m worried about your thoughts.” He stared at me, leaning across the seat and lowering his voice. “Hey, if you’re feeling afraid for any reason, then I’m

really sorry. Let's go back. I'll drop you at yours. Or I'll get out here and walk. It's not far."

I hesitated. The driver was looking in the mirror. It was Christmas Eve and I had spent some of it with this exciting, gorgeous man. Was I really going to turn down the chance to fuck him?

I was still unsettled by José at the bar. I was no longer as blasé about going home with strange men as I used to be. The world had changed in the seven years I had been sleeping with them. I remember my mum's talk on the subject when I moved to London.

"You know, if you ever meet a man at a club or whatever and go home with him..." I had gaped at her, my face burning. "You should think twice. Maybe stay where there's people. Or tell someone where you're going."

"Mum," I said.

"Times have changed," she said, holding her hand up. "You're in London. I worry about you. I would say the same to any daughter I had."

But you wouldn't say it if I was straight.

I glanced at Lucas. What were women's thoughts when they went home with a stranger? Did they always have an undercurrent of fear or unease? Should I be afraid? What would a woman think about him? A tall man, well-built and quick to anger. Would she be afraid to go home with him?

He looked back at me for a long moment. Then he leaned towards the driver, holding out a note. "Pull over here, please."

“Hey,” I said as the taxi came to a halt.

Lucas opened the door, letting in a flurry of snow. “Take my friend home, please.”

“Hey, hey, wait!” I scrambled after him. “Don’t go. I’m not afraid of you.”

He stopped and turned around. “We should have just gone for another drink,” he said.

“I don’t want to put any pressure on you. I shouldn’t have asked you to come home with me. It’s not what I do.”

“So why did you?”

“Because I like you.”

“I like you too. So let me come home with you.”

He regarded me. “Are you sure?”

“I’m sure.” I was. I wasn’t sure if I was going to fuck him, but I did want to spend longer in his company.

“All right then. Come on.”

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

The taxi wound its way through some iron gates that already stood open, up a long tree-lined drive to a large detached house standing at the top. It wasn't a mansion, but it was pretty fucking big. My entire flat could have fit into the parking space outside. And in that space stood a yellow Lamborghini and an electric black Hyundai—I could see it was plugged in, a long lead snaking over the ground towards the house. I stared at the former and ignored the latter.

He paid, got out and held the door open for me. I climbed out and he probably noticed my jaw on the floor looking at the Lambo because he said, "It's not mine."

"It's not?" Oh God, it was his rich boyfriend's who was waiting inside, expecting to penetrate me doubly.

"No. The showroom lent it me. They want me to do an advert for them. Giving me that for a month is their little bribe."

"Fuck me, I'd take that," I said.

He smiled. "I haven't used it much. It's a pain in London."

"Oh, I can imagine," I said. "Must be really hard to beat off all the fit blokes it attracts."

He didn't comment on that. "That's mine." He pointed to the electric Hyundai. "Much more practical."

“But it probably gets you less cock.”

He rolled his eyes. “They’re good cars. And I wanted an electric. That’s why I’m not particularly happy with driving a petrol now.” He gestured to the Lamborghini.

I pondered behind him. Any other man might have bragged about the amount of cock his money and Lamborghini got him. He didn’t seem interested in impressing me. Not that bragging ever impressed me. Shallow men out for one thing didn’t do it for me.

I followed him up some steps to the front door. The roof was decorated with icy white Christmas lights in a fringe that swayed in the light breeze. There were lights on inside and I had a moment’s panic that I would find someone inside, that maybe he really did live with someone and was bringing me back for a ménage. Then I reasoned with myself. He had a nice house. He left lights on so people thought he was in and didn’t burgle him on Christmas Eve.

He opened the front door and I followed him inside. There was a large entrance hall tiled in black and white and a spiral staircase curved upwards. At the bottom tucked beside the stairs was a very tall Christmas tree with red and silver decorations. I noticed it had maybe eight or ten presents underneath it.

He hung his coat on a coat stand and took mine from me. A shoe storage bench was built into the wall and he sat and took off his shoes, putting them on the lower shelf where there was space. I did the same and he toed a pair of black slippers towards me and slipped his feet into some himself.

I followed him down a corridor to the right and into a spacious kitchen. It was all marble and granite and stainless steel surfaces. He went to the fridge. “What can I get you to drink?”

“Anything.”

He filled two glasses with water from the dispenser at the front of the fridge and handed one over.

“Thanks.” I drank thirstily.

“What about some coffee? I have decaff.”

“Okay.”

“Do you want a latte with oat milk?”

“That would be nice.”

I watched him set the fancy machine going on the work-top. He handled the mugs and coffee pods deftly. His hands were pale and long-fingered. He wore a silver ring on his right ring finger and a knotted silver bracelet on his right wrist. Silver engraved cufflinks shone at the cuffs of his black shirt. His suit was immaculate, tailored to his subtly muscled body. I felt my cock start to stir and my spine tingle. God, I wanted him.

As the coffee trickled out, he loosened his tie and unfastened his top button. Then he shrugged out of his jacket and hung it on the back of one of the chairs at the marble island. My mouth went dry. Please carry on.

He glanced at me and I wondered if I’d spoken aloud. “There you go.” He placed a tall glass in front of me.

“Thank you.” I swept my gaze down his back as he turned back to make the other coffee, lingering on the globes of his round, tight arse. Beautiful. The bloke was

utterly exquisite. I was desperate to see what he looked like under his suit.

“Do you want to go through?” he asked. “I’ll join you in a minute. To the left of the stairs.”

I nodded and picked up my glass. Wandering down the shiny tiles back towards the front door, I noticed two doors and popped my head in the first to find a comfortable lounge. Three lamps were lit strategically around the room. A large L-shaped sofa and two armchairs were placed around a wall-mounted TV above a log burner. The whole house was cosy and warm although the fire wasn’t lit. My flat would be freezing right about now, because I never left the central heating on when I went to work. I could barely afford to put it on when I was at home.

Thick, dark red velvet curtains covered what I guessed were French doors at the bottom of the large room. I wanted to have a peep through them at his garden but just then he entered the room.

“Sit down,” he said, placing his glass on the coffee table and sitting on the sofa. I followed with my glass and took a sip of coffee before I sat, cradling it, at the other end of the sofa.

I didn’t want to sit there. I wanted to sit on his knee and taste the coffee from his mouth, but I was unaccountably nervous. I wanted him. Did he want me? Who was going to do the fucking? Would he let me fuck him? I doubted that very much. He didn’t look like the sort of guy who got fucked. Was I happy to get fucked tonight? It had been a while. A long while. I wasn’t sure. I wanted to fuck though. I really, really wanted to fuck.

He leaned over to take a few sips of his latte, then sat back and crossed his left ankle over his right knee before he relaxed into the seat. The motion had my gaze dropping down to the bulge in his pants. He didn’t look hard, but he did look ample.



“About the models,” I said, because it was preying on my mind. His look when he’d said he didn’t like models. And then José saying Has he fucked you yet? I wouldn’t bother. It sounded to me like maybe Lucas had once liked models very much but something had happened to sour them for him. Maybe a bad experience with one, like José.

Lucas tensed. He looked away for a moment, his jaw clenched. Then he reached for another sip of coffee before giving a sigh. “There was an incident. With some models.”

Disquiet prickled down my spine. “What incident?”

He licked his lips. “It’s a story for another time. When I know you better.”

As much as the words worried me, they also made my heart surge. When I know you better. That implied us meeting beyond one night, didn’t it? How could I ever be lucky enough to spend more than a few hours with this man? More to the point, why would he want to spend more than one night with me ? I was hardly a prize catch.

I took a drink of coffee. Our eyes met. I fumbled for conversation. “Can I see your books?”

He smiled and I saw the tension drain from him. “Is that the real reason you came back here?”

I grinned. “Is there another?”

He stood and grasped my hand to pull me up. His palm was warm and soft. He didn’t do manual work. Not that I thought he did. He sat behind a desk and auditioned hot models all day, didn’t he? I wondered if he worked on the designs of his underwear. Designing undies would definitely give me a hard-on.

I put my coffee down and followed him out of the room. He led me out onto the corridor and into the next room along. I stopped and stared on the threshold. Bookcases lined the walls on either side of me from floor almost to ceiling, all crammed with books. In the centre of the room stood a large mahogany desk with two monitors and a wheeled chair. A stack of papers sat next to the computer keyboard, almost spilling to the floor. There was also a log burning fire with an armchair in front of it. I concentrated on the books, moving closer. To the left of me at eye level, a row of books with colourful spines caught my eye and I saw they were all classics, cloth-bound and pretty, probably the special editions you could get in Waterstones . I went closer still, reading the titles. Wuthering Heights, War and Peace, A Tale of Two Cities, Lorna Doone, Dracula . I wanted to touch. The row went on and on, every classic book I could think of and some I hadn't even heard of.

I glanced at him and he smiled when he saw my face. "Okay, you can just leave me here, thanks," I said.

He grinned. "I spend a lot of time in here." He gestured to the armchair and I burned with jealousy. I imagined him sitting here on a winter's night in front of the fire with a book and a hot chocolate in this secluded house away from the world. Bliss. What more could anyone want?

I read some more titles and noticed his taste among modern works included crime and horror. I had read a lot of the ones he had. I was pleased.

"There's nothing worth anything," he said. "I don't have any first editions or anything like that. Just an addiction to buying books."

"Me too," I said. My books were spilling from my one bookcase all over my flat, piled up on the floor, taking over the coffee table, the bedside table and stacked up next to the bed. Reading on my Kindle didn't stop me browsing charity shops for more books. Hello, my name is Alex and I'm addicted to books.

I sensed him move up behind me and my attention was distracted from the books by my awareness of his warmth, the scent of his aftershave, his solid body. My dick started to fill. Oh God, I wanted him so much it hurt.

I turned around, grasped him by the back of the neck and kissed him. He caught his breath before his mouth opened up to mine and he held my head in one hand, wrapping one arm around me and pulling me against his body. He was hard and so was I. I groaned as our tongues tangled and all my self-control spiralled away. I was more than aware he might have brought me here for a one-night stand to cheer himself up at Christmas. Was I going to accept it for what it was and let him have me anyway?

Almost certainly.

Our breathing was hot and heavy; we devoured each other the way I guessed we'd wanted to do all night and my dick throbbed with urgency, nearly bursting through my clothes. He pulled back and rested his forehead on mine, his lips shining with saliva, holding my face in his hands. "What do you want?" he said in a low voice.

"For you to take me to bed," I replied without hesitation, staring into his dark blue eyes.

He licked his lips. "I don't get fucked," he said.

I was both surprised to hear him say that and yet, not surprised. I was disappointed in a way that he could dismiss the idea out of hand but he wasn't the first and wouldn't be the last. I bit back the instant retort of me neither, because I didn't want to sour the mood by arguing about it. Plus, it wouldn't have been true because I did, for the right man. It had just been a while since the right man. Had there ever been a right man? Was he the one I would let fuck me? I wasn't sure but he was welcome to try to persuade me. I liked that idea a lot.

“Okay,” I said.

He searched my eyes with a penetrating gaze. “Do you still want to go to bed?” he asked.

“Very much,” I said.

“All right then,” he replied and he put his arms around me and lifted me under the arse. Shocked, I wrapped my legs around his waist and my arms around his neck as he carried me from the room. He kissed me again as he walked down the corridor and flipped on a light switch before he turned to ascend the stairs. Fuck . I clung on, thinking this was the most romantic thing to ever happen to me. No one had ever carried me to bed before.

When our lips broke, I gasped out, “Watch where you’re going.”

He smiled and ignored me, kissing me again, mounting the stairs with sure, steady steps. He didn’t need to seduce me once he got me to the bedroom. I was already thoroughly seduced, putty in his hands. I was pretty sure I was going to let him fuck me if he wanted to.

He reached the top of the stairs and I saw a long landing stretching around six doors in a square shape. He chose the first. The dark space revealed a massive room with a king size bed and two ornate bedside tables. On the other side of the room was a couch and coffee table but I didn’t take in any more details because I was focused on getting to that bed.

He lowered me down slowly to the mattress and then he climbed onto the bed, covering my body with his and kissed me, and I thought maybe I fell in love at that point.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

Alex

As we kissed, he started to unfasten my shirt buttons with one hand, pulling the material free from my trousers. When he had the shirt open, he slid down my body, parting the sides of the garment and kissing my chest. I arched under his touch with a whimper at the softness of his hot mouth and the way it set me on fire. He found my right nipple and sucked it into his mouth before licking it to a peak and leaving it wet and rigid. A flash of heat spread right down into my groin, making me squirm, my cock leaking in my underwear.

He moved across to the left nipple and did the same, tormenting the other with his fingertips while he worked, sucking and licking and giving gentle bites. Holy fuck, his mouth was something else. While he used his fantastic mouth, his hands were busy unfastening my belt, popping open my button and sliding down my zip. When my trousers were open, he kissed his way down over my belly to my groin. My breath caught in my throat as he touched the bulge in my boxers, running his fingers down my length before he mouthed the head, tonguing my slit through the already damp material.

“God,” I choked out, writhing under him.

He lifted his head and looked at me through the dark. The only light came from outside the room on the stairs but it was more than enough. He knelt back and dragged my trousers down my legs and discarded them before peeling off my socks. Then he grasped my boxers and pulled them down too, revealing my hard cock for his attention.

I shivered as he pushed my thighs apart before he settled between them. Then he dipped his head and ran his tongue right around the rim of my cockhead before flicking over it and licking the slit. I almost came against his mouth right then. I grasped him by the hair with both hands, arching as he opened his lips and slid down my shaft to take me deep.

I couldn't help the little cry that came from me or the way I pushed my hips to get right to the back of his throat. He didn't complain. He sucked me off long and slow, pulling his lips back until they were just touching the head of my cock before going down again. The slick of his wet mouth and the touch of his hand as he rolled my balls in his palm was paradise. If I had ever had it this good before, I couldn't remember. What I did know was that I was going to blow my load in record time.

So I grabbed his shoulders and pulled him back up to kiss me even though I wanted nothing more than to come right down his throat. His kiss was deep and wet, our tongues tangling furiously, our bodies humping each other and I needed him naked so badly. I wrenched at his tie, yanking it open and free before discarding it and starting on his buttons.

But he pulled back and slid off the bed and I watched the sexiest striptease I had ever seen. He finished the buttons on his shirt and slid it off his shoulders, baring his torso. My mouth went dry as I gazed upon his sculpted pecs and abs. He had a bit of dark hair dusting his pecs and a line of it that ran down his belly to disappear beyond his waistband. He started on his belt and I gulped as he peeled his trousers open and pushed them down long legs. Oh my God . He balanced on one foot then the other to take his socks off and somehow even managed to make that look sexy. Usually I fell over when trying to impress a partner while stripping.

He wore tight white briefs that were strained by their contents, his cock almost rearing past the waistband. I shifted on the bed, my dick leaking, my senses on overload at seeing him almost naked. He climbed back onto the bed, kneeling,

shuffling towards me and I sat up, grasped his underwear and peeled it down.

His heavy cock bounced, jutting out, and I let out a moan. I couldn't help myself. He was long and thick and perfect. I ran my tongue over the velvety head and he caught his breath, grabbing at my hair. "Fuck," he said as I opened my mouth and took him down as far as I could. Which wasn't very far as I was cursed with a sensitive gag reflex. He wasn't complaining as I started to suck, nor did he try and force my head further down. He kept his hips still and he played with my hair, shifting the dark strands through his fingers, shivering and breathing hard as I bobbed up and down on him.

I drew back to lick over his cockhead once more, tonguing the slit and gathering the taste of pre-cum while I rolled his balls in my palm. I looked up and found him looking down at me intently, his face dappled with shadows. "You're so beautiful," he said in a whisper. At that, I got to my knees and put my arms around his neck. He gathered me close, mouthing my throat, turning my limbs molten with desire.

Slowly, he lay me down, easing between my thighs until our cocks were pressed together, both slippery with fluid, and I thought I would lose it right then and there. We frothed, groaning into each other's mouths, rubbing our dicks together, our movements becoming frantic.

Then Lucas pushed his hands between our bodies to grip both our cocks, wanking us off, and I squirmed, panting hard. "Oh my God, I'm going to come," I moaned.

He drew back an inch to look down at me, his hand stilling. "Do you want to come?"

I hesitated, staring up at him. His eyes were dark pools in the low light from outside the bedroom. "I want to fuck," I said because I did, so fucking much. I wanted one of us to be inside the other but it looked like it wouldn't be me inside him.

“So do I,” he replied, his lips almost on mine, his words a whisper.

I licked my lips, watching him, and the silence dragged on and on. He had made his case downstairs. He didn’t get fucked. If I wanted to fuck tonight, it would have to be me to give it up.

“I’m not going to make you do anything you don’t want to do,” he said, his voice still low.

Still I watched him, unable to speak.

“Shall I carry on then?”

His hand started to move on our cocks again and I writhed with a moan as I felt my balls tighten. “Stop.”

He did so. Instead, he moved his hand down, trailing over my balls and around my thigh before his fingers lightly slid down my arse crack and something ignited inside me. I jolted, digging my fingers in his shoulders.

“Tell me what you want,” he whispered, gaze on mine, tightening his palm on my arse and rocking into me.

“Oh God,” I groaned out. “Oh God, please.” I wasn’t in the habit of begging for anything. He made me want to beg.

“Please what? Say it.” He was teasing now; I knew he was. He knew I wanted it and he wanted to hear those words so we could both get off on them. Once more his fingers slid between my cheeks until one of them lightly grazed my hole. I knew then that I wasn’t in the hands of an amateur here. I’d expected someone sexually inexperienced and I knew he wasn’t. He was a man comfortable in his sexuality who



knew what he wanted in bed. And I knew if I let him, he would show me the greatest time of my life.

I let go of my self-control with a long moan, clutching him hard and shivering against that hand on my arse. “Fuck me,” I said. “Please, fuck me.”

I expected him to throw me down and plunge into me at the green light. I should have known him better. Instead, he cupped my buttock, stroking, still looking at me intently. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. Give it to me. Please.”

He smiled and lowered his mouth to mine. We exchanged another long, deep kiss before he knelt back, leaning over to the bedside drawer, opening it and scrabbling in the dark for a few seconds. He came out with a bottle and a packet of condoms. I was pleased to see the pack was still sealed. He tore it open and pulled one out, placing it on the pillow beside my head. Then he sat back on his heels and pushed my thighs apart. Splayed open, I waited as he pumped some lube onto his fingers before delving between my buttocks.

Cold gel touched me, his finger stroking my entrance, taking his time, seeking admission. My legs shook. I caught my breath as he entered me with his fingertip and slowly slid inside to his knuckle. He fucked me a couple of times with his finger as I breathed hard, before he crooked it and pressed and I nearly shot off the bed. Oh yeah, he knew what he was doing all right.

“Oh fuck!” I cried, almost dislodging him as I bucked. My cock spurted a jet of cum against my belly and I writhed, whimpering. I couldn’t remember the last time someone had managed to find my prostate so easily.

He smiled and leaned down over me, lips brushing mine as he stroked my insides

with that finger. My cock dribbled cum like a leaky hosepipe with every pass of his finger. It was rock hard, harder than I'd been in forever, my balls aching, and I was like a bundle of jelly under the control of his finger.

When he pushed a second finger into me, I thought I would come. I whined, clutching at his wrist and he stilled, maybe thinking I was trying to stop him. I didn't know what I was trying to do. Maybe stop him from making me come so soon, or maybe push him to go harder and faster.

We looked at each other. I could smell the spicy scent of his aftershave and the smell of cum and sex and sweat and I felt about to erupt any moment like a volcano.

"If you want me to last," I said unsteadily, "which I'm absolutely not going to do by the way, you should stop."

He looked amused. "All right. Shall I proceed to the main event?"

"Please do."

He laughed softly, withdrawing his fingers. We were so polite and British.

I watched him tear open his condom with his teeth, with the blood pounding in my ears and my body shaking with need. He rolled the latex down his shaft and pressed his cock against my entrance.

We looked at each other. He pushed and I arched, throwing my arms above my head, crying out as he breached my arse, sinking deeply inside.

"Oh God! Oh God!" I wasn't usually so dramatic, but then I'd never felt like I was coming apart at the seams during sex before. He didn't stop until he'd impaled me all the way and I was gasping at the fullness inside me. I couldn't move, I couldn't

breathe. It had been a while, but I couldn't remember it ever feeling like this in the past.

"Are you okay?"

I didn't remember anyone ever asking me that before when they fucked me. I gripped his shoulders. "Yes. God, yes." I pulled him down and kissed him hard and he responded, our tongues tangling, easing back before taking me deep again. I hissed, panting against his mouth, lifting my legs around him.

He took me with slow, sure strokes. He slid a hand under my arse, lifting me against him as he penetrated me as deeply as he could go and I shook, white sparks going off behind my closed eyes, sinking my nails into his back.

He swore, pressing his face against my neck, kissing my throat, and I dissolved. His lips were so soft, his kisses so passionate. He moved into my body like he knew the way I wanted to be fucked and like we had done it a hundred times before. He was perfect. This was perfect. The orgasm was building in my balls, the pit of my stomach, and when it came, I would be swept away from all that I knew.

When Lucas drew back and changed his angle, thrusting just right, he got my prostate once again and I nearly screamed the place down. I clung to him, lifting my hips, pressing ardent kisses to his temple, his cheek, his hair. He gave a breathless laugh before he lifted his face and kissed me, then reached between our bodies and curled his fingers around my desperate cock.

"Come on," he said. "Let me see you come."

"Oh fuuuuck," was my gabbled response. "Oh fuck, Lucas, oh my God." I'm surprised he didn't tell me I needed a thesaurus. I had never been so vocal, so loud, during sex before. Usually I made a few grunts before I was done and rolled away

unsatisfied. Now I was some wild out of control man having the time of his life with the lover I'd been looking for forever. And to think I'd actually stopped to consider it long and hard before I agreed to getting fucked by him. Now I really was getting it long and hard.

He rested his forehead on mine, our lips an inch apart. He wanked my cock in time to his thrusts and he took me all the way to blistering ecstasy I had once only dreamed of. I grabbed his tight, muscular arse and bucked against him as the climax washed over me in a flood of scalding pleasure that shook my entire body. My cock jerked in his hand, spurting over my stomach and chest, thick ropes of cum that seemed to go on forever, wringing me dry. I cried out, holding onto him hard as though he would slide away and take my orgasm with him. I heard him groan as I was coming and he nailed me another couple of times with jerky thrusts before he started to slow.

As the waves died away, leaving me barely conscious, I felt his hand on my forehead, stroking my damp hair back. "Happy Christmas," he said.

I dissolved into laughter and he laughed with me, our bodies shaking together, still entwined. We kissed, lazy gentle kisses that still held passion and even though I was wrung out and couldn't move, I thought to myself that I could probably go again, such was the power of his kiss.

He eased free and knelt up to take care of his condom. Without his warmth on top of me, I was cold with the sweat cooling on my body. I turned onto my side, drawing my legs up. He got up and leaned down over me to plant a kiss on my head. Then he padded off towards the door in the corner which I was guessing led to an en suite. I closed my eyes and smiled. Fuck me.

I'd fallen asleep when I felt the mattress dip beside me. "I brought you a cloth," he whispered. "Seeing as you don't seem able to move."

“That’s very kind of you,” I muttered with my tongue feeling thick in my mouth, uncurling my body stiffly. Wet warmth touched my cock, wiping the head, and I twitched, wishing it was his mouth. He cleaned my belly, then he lifted my knee, spreading me open and wiped lube off my arse. I felt a little embarrassed but not so much that I stopped him, because it was kind of nice. Another first for me. Someone mopping me up after they’d fucked me.

He kissed my forehead. “Get warm,” he said, lifting my legs to get the quilt from under me before he pulled it up to my shoulders. I sighed in pleasure and closed my eyes again, drifting away.

Lucas

I looked at my flushed face and chest in the mirror as I rinsed out the flannel. I came too quickly, but Alex was there before me so I supposed it was okay. I was just impressed I got it up at all after all the booze I put away at the restaurant. Alex was an easy bloke to get it up for though. I would challenge anyone not to get it up for him. I couldn't remember the last time I had come so hard. Actually, I didn't think I ever had come so hard. I literally saw stars. I thought I was going to pass out. What an amazing man he was. I hoped I wouldn't find him dressed and about to creep out when I returned. I'd had some anxieties that I wouldn't be able to perform at all when I'd brought him home. All the way back in the taxi I'd asked myself what I was doing and told myself I wouldn't be able to get it up. Not because of the booze but because the last time I'd been with someone, a long time ago, I'd had an episode of impotence. My partner for the evening, a man I'd met in a club, jeered at me and pulled his clothes on before leaving the hotel room I'd just paid for. I hadn't wanted to bring him back here to my house and he was amenable enough to shagging in style at The Bloomsbury.

Until I'd failed to get it up. I'd wanted to fuck him but my body obviously wasn't feeling it. My dick had zero interest. He'd said he'd have to fuck me instead, and I refused. So he'd more or less ordered me to suck his cock and I refused that too. Because I'd realised what an asshole he was and I wasn't going to do anything of the kind. He'd called me a pricktease and a limp dick before he'd stormed out. I'd drank a few shots from the mini bar before I'd headed home, vowing to never pick anyone up on a night out again. In fact, vowing to never go out again. And I hadn't, until tonight.

The episode had haunted me. I'd told myself ever since then that my impotence was now a thing—after all I didn't often get spontaneous erections from day to day and I rarely had the urge to masturbate. That had changed when I'd seen Alex though. I'd had no trouble getting wood at the restaurant, nor at the wine bar, and most definitely not in the taxi coming home. I'd been hard as a rock when he'd peeled my underwear down and put his mouth around me and I thanked God as I looked down at his dark head that I was able to get it up. You're so beautiful, I'd said to him, and he was. The most beautiful man I'd seen in forever. And I wanted him for my own, way beyond tonight. I'd wanted him as soon as he'd approached my table to witness my humiliation and my dinner for one. And despite the fact he'd witnessed this. I hung up the flannel and I went back out to him with my stomach still in flames and the tip of my desire for him barely sated.

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Alex

Once more I awakened when the bed dipped behind me. He slid up to me, warm skin pressing against my back, wrapping an arm around me and kissing my neck. I stirred, stretching, glorying in his soft skin and the warmth and possessiveness of his embrace.

I measured men by their manners. Particularly, their bedside manner. I had been with those whose idea of foreplay was putting on a rubber and whose idea of afterplay was telling me to make sure the door was shut properly on my way out. Lucas had yet to throw me out. He was cuddling me. Maybe we'd even go for round two.

His fingers tangled in my hair. He stroked my head. I think I purred like a cat. "Are you all right?"

I swooned at his words, caught up in the romance. "Yes."

“Was that okay?”

I almost laughed. He had to have been joking. But he didn't sound coy. He didn't sound like he was looking for me to massage his ego. He sounded insecure. Could my amazing lover actually have performance anxiety?

I reached behind me to clasp his thigh. “Do you really think I'm that good a faker?”

He laughed softly. Then he paused before he said, “Have you had reason to fake it before?”

It was my turn to take a moment. I'd been known to, if it meant escaping a bad sexual encounter more quickly. I thought of the last time I'd got fucked. How horrible it was. How I'd lost my hard-on and not come. I'd made a few noises in the hope the bloke would come quicker and he'd shot his load, rolled away, and told me to see myself out. I'd skulked out with tears in my eyes because when he'd bought me drinks in the club he'd listened to me talk like I was the most fascinating creature he'd ever met. All for show. All to get some arse.

I felt Lucas slide away. He flicked on the lamp on the table nearest to him, then returned to me. “Turn over,” he said.

I did so with reluctance. I didn't want a heavy conversation, I wanted to wrap myself around him and sleep.

His face had a peachy glow from the lamp. His cheeks were still stained with a flush. He feathered his fingertips over my cheek. “You don't usually get fucked,” he said, not a question but a statement.

I sighed. “I've done it a few times and hated it every time.”



He frowned. “And yet you let me do it.”

I had no answer to that. I couldn't explain how I'd ached for him to do that to me. I wondered if it was a comfort thing, because I'd used the act that way before. To be taken, to be mastered, to give up control and let someone do that to me. I'm not sure the reason made sense even to me.

“Why?” He stared into my eyes, lifting my chin so I had to look at him. “Did I coerce you?”

“No,” I said. “Of course not.”

“Then why?”

I closed my eyes. “I can't explain.”

He lowered his voice further, his hand now stroking the back of my neck. “You've been with men you had to fake it with. Men who didn't please you.”

I didn't speak. I felt tears building behind my closed lids. Now I thought about it, I wasn't sure if anybody had ever actually pleased me much. Had they?

“I wouldn't do that for any money,” he said. “If they couldn't please me, it's their problem, not mine.”

I tried to roll away from him then and he grabbed me by the shoulders. “Hey, hey, it's okay. Don't go. I didn't mean that. What a terrible thing to say. Sorry.”

I bit my lip. The first tears streaked my cheeks and he caught his breath, gathering me into his arms and holding me hard. He stroked my head. “I'm sorry,” he said. “I'm sorry.”

He had been holding me for some minutes before my sobs subsided. I felt embarrassed. My head ached and I was so tired. He lay me down, the covers pulled over us, my head against his chest and smoothed his hands over my back and my head.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Shall I get us a drink?”

“Please. And maybe a couple of paracetamol if you have them? I think my hangover’s started to kick in.” I wasn’t sure how true that was. I hadn’t drunk that much. It was usually crying that gave me a headache, dehydrating me fast.

“Of course.” He kissed my head and slid out of the bed. I watched him pull on a robe, admiring his naked body before he covered it up.

I lay down and closed my eyes. My face was sticky. I felt foolish and ashamed. What the hell had happened? We had had a fantastic time. Why had I brought the mood down by behaving this way? I was so disappointed. He and I should have been rolling around in bed for the second time right about now, rather than him bringing me something for a fucking headache. Why hadn’t I used this meeting with this gorgeous man to its full potential and had him bang my brains out for a second time as soon as he could? He’d certainly proved that taking it up the arse didn’t have to be miserable and painful at all. The last bloke hadn’t even been that well-endowed, and he’d hurt more than Lucas. It must have all been in his technique. He was well hung, but he still managed to fuck me with minimal hurt. It must have been the foreplay. He’d relaxed and loosened me just right with the prostate stroking. There was hope for me after all. I could enjoy being fucked. I didn’t always have to do the fucking. I could relax and let go and put my pleasure in someone else’s hands.

As I was falling asleep, I heard him coming back up the stairs. He was carrying two glasses of water and he put one down on his side of the bed, then crawled onto the mattress and held the other out to me.

“Thanks.” I sat up, drinking.

“Here.” He held out his hand, two white tablets sitting in his palm. Taking drugs from a stranger without seeing them in the packet was risky, but I trusted him. I was more sure about this man than I’d ever been with anyone before. I plucked the pills from his hand and thanked him again, swallowing them with a drink of water before I placed the empty glass on my side of the bed.

“Do you want to go to sleep?” he asked.

He really wasn’t throwing me out. I was both mystified and grateful.

“Can I stay?”

“Of course,” he said. He drank some water and lay down beside me. As he did, I saw red numbers on the clock on the bedside table. It was Christmas Day.

“Happy birthday,” I said.

He turned his head to look at me with a smile. “Thank you.”

I rolled against him, face against his shoulder, my arm around his back. “Is it shit having your birthday on Christmas Day?”

“Yes,” he said.

I laughed softly. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be.” He smoothed a hand up and down my spine, making me shiver.

I lifted my head to look at him. “I’m sorry,” I said again. He knew what I meant.

“No, I’m sorry I upset you.”

I didn’t speak. Our noses touched before he angled his mouth to slant it over mine.

I drew my breath in at the softness and warmth of his mouth and how perfectly it slotted against mine. We kissed slow and long with no rush, exploring each other’s mouths, hands sliding over bodies.

I started to forget about sleeping when my cock reawakened. He pushed me onto my back, one hand tracing my chest, my nipples and belly, before sliding over my hip and cupping my arse, lifting me against him as he had done when he was inside me. My breathing quickened. I hooked my leg around him and his fingers spread over my buttocks, between them, sliding down my crack and fluttering over my entrance.

I drew in my breath. I felt that ache again for him. That need to be penetrated. My cock was fully hard against my belly and his was too, pressing against my length in the most delicious way. The pad of his finger circled my opening, rubbing. I was still wet and open, because he sank inside me as soon as he applied some pressure and I gave a little moan, squirming against him.

He kissed me on the throat as he worked my hole with his finger. “Can you take me again or am I just being a selfish prick?”

I groaned, reaching to slide his cock through my palm, making him shudder. “Yes.”

“Yes, I’m being a selfish prick?”

“No. Yes, I can take you again. No, you’re not being a selfish prick.”

He laughed. “A second erection within an hour is unheard of for me, just so you know. I kind of want to make the most of it.”

“That sounds reasonable,” I said, the words trailing off to a strangled yelp as he found my prostate.

He licked my earlobe. “Are you sure?”

“Yes,” I said, my dick jerking as he tapped on my gland.

He withdrew his finger, reached across to the bedside table and delved in the drawer for a condom. The lube he located under my pillow. He tossed the quilt back and knelt behind me and I let him roll me onto my side, facing away from him. Then he lifted my knee, spreading me open and I whimpered as he squirted some lube between my cheeks and started to rub it into my entrance, circling and pushing before sliding two fingers into my heat.

I groaned, gripping the pillow. He twisted and turned the fingers. He fucked me with them for a few strokes before he found my prostate again and once more, my cock started to leak with every touch. I gasped, easing back on his fingers, rocking shamelessly the way I wanted to do on his dick.

“God,” he said, pressed behind me, mouth against the back of my neck. “You’re so amazing.”

I glowed with pleasure. He made me feel so beautiful and so sensual. His cock was hard against my arse as he continued to finger me and I ached so badly to be filled by him once again. He withdrew his fingers suddenly and before I could wonder what he was doing, he slid down in the bed, lifting my knee some more, spreading me wide

open to him so I was almost pressed onto my face, where he started to rim me.

“Oh God!” I cried.

I heard him laugh softly. His tongue traced my opening, wet and soft, circling, licking, pressing. I shook with each pass. He speared me with darting jabs and I thought I would scream with pleasure. I liked a rim job but again, this was the best I’d ever had. Everything he did was just right. It was like he’d read a manual on how to please me.

I heard him tear open the condom and roll it on as he licked and I tensed in anticipation, hoping he would push into me the moment he took his tongue away.

“Please,” I moaned, grabbing my cock and wanking off as he rimmed me. I could have easily come like this and I hoped he would progress to penetration before I could. He carried on, fondling my balls as he licked, rolling them in his hand. I started to gasp. I could feel the orgasm begging to be allowed to break over me and I was desperate to stop him, but it was so good. I wanted to come. I wanted to come so much with his tongue stimulating my entrance.

He pulled my knee down, pushed my thighs wide apart so I was flat on my face, and lowered himself onto me, sliding deep inside me. It was a near scream I let out as he sheathed his cock, taking me all the way to the hilt in one slick slide.

We were pressed skin to skin all the way down our bodies and he was as deep as he could go. I gasped and panted for air and he reached to my splayed arms and entwined his fingers with mine, holding my hands down. He started to move.

I moaned with every thrust, relishing every movement he made, squeezing his fingers. He kissed the back of my neck. His breathing was ragged with groans. He increased his pace to hard and fast and suddenly, I was over the edge with my cock

trapped under me, spurting against the sheets and crying out, shaking with my release.

He cursed, carrying on, his thrusts becoming unsteady, prolonging my orgasm, keeping me dancing on that line of pleasure until I was sure I was going to pass out. He gasped before he slowed, slumping onto me. Pinned down by his glorious weight, I was pretty sure I was in love. His warm breath tickled my neck. His heart pounded against my back and he held onto my hands. He planted soft kisses on my ear and hair, my shoulder and neck, making me shiver in delight. Bonus points for afterplay once again.

He eased free after a couple of minutes, kneeling up to remove his condom. When he slid off the bed, he made sure to pull the covers up over me and I smiled into the pillow and closed my eyes. This time I had to get up. I needed to wash and pee. I heard water running in the bathroom and the toilet flushing.

He came back over to the bed. “Just going to refill our glasses and lock up downstairs,” he said.

I really was staying the night. My chest swelled with emotion. I lifted my head. “Please can you bring my phone out of my coat pocket?”

“Yes.” I heard him retreat, his footsteps virtually noiseless on the thick carpet. I shifted across the bed as I became aware of the damp sheet under me and started to drift once again as I heard the stairs creak as he descended.

I forced myself awake and slid from the bed to walk across to the en suite. The room had a shower big enough for two and was warm. A shelf held towels and flannels and I took one of each and washed before rinsing out the flannel and hanging it on the radiator to dry, along with the towel. I looked at my reflection in the mirror over the sink. Flushed and well fucked. Really well fucked. I smiled to myself. Maybe I’d let

him fuck me again tomorrow before I left. Okay, no maybe about it. I'd beg for it if needed. I padded back to the bed and slid between the still warm sheets, making sure to avoid the wet patch.

His weight on the mattress woke me up, warm skin sliding against mine. He put an arm around my waist and kissed my shoulder. "Here." He pushed my mobile into my hand.

"Thanks." I glanced at the screen and saw two messages, one from Max and one from my mum. The one from Max was prominent on the screen.

Are you okay? Has he murdered you and dumped your body in the river or are you still getting your brains fucked out? Marks out of 10?

Fuck's sake. Had Lucas seen this? I reddened, shifting in his grip so I could sit up and turn the phone screen away as I replied.

11.

Max replied instantly. You dirty dog. I knew he'd be a great shag.

I glanced at Lucas. He was lying looking at me in amusement. Yeah, he'd seen that first one all right. I read the one from my mum. Happy Christmas, darling. See you tomorrow. Is 2 p.m. okay? x

I replied with Happy Christmas, that's fine, see you soon x. I switched the phone to silent and leaned over to place it face down on the bedside table.

Lucas smiled at me. "I hope you told him I haven't murdered you. He might send the police around if you don't answer."



I slid against him, placing my head on his chest. “Sorry about that.”

“Don’t be.”

“I told him you were an eleven.”

He chuckled and kissed my hair, stroking my back and making me shiver. “What time do you need to be away in the morning?”

“I need to be there for two, so I suppose I need to set off from mine about nine-thirty.”

“Okay.” Lucas reached over to the bedside table on his side and thumbed his phone. “I’ll set an alarm for eight-thirty and drive you home.”

“I can get a taxi,” I said even though his words once again made me glow.

“No, you can’t,” he replied. “It costs a fortune on Christmas Day and it’ll be hard to get one. No arguing.”

I smiled. “Are you driving me in the Lamborghini?”

He grinned. “Do you want me to?”

“Yeah! Imagine my neighbours’ faces!” That slipped out before I could control it and I blushed at my own gaucheness.

“Right then. Tell them I’m some Hollywood superstar though, not that I sell underwear.”

I laughed. “Your job is just as glamorous.”

“Of course it is.”

I lifted my head. “ You are just as glamorous as a Hollywood superstar.”

A light blush stained his cheeks. He lifted his head to rub his nose against mine. “You’re very sweet.”

I remembered the burning question I had yet to have answered. “Do you wear your own underwear?” I hadn’t looked too closely at those tighty whities he had been wearing when he stripped off.

He shrugged, looking nonchalant. “It would be rude not to.”

I laughed. “They looked very nice. Can I have a better look in the morning?”

“Of course.”

“You can model them for me. I bet you look ten times better in them than José.”

I saw his face darken. He looked away, his jaw tensing, his fingers stilling on my hair.

I swallowed. “What did he do to you?”

He bit his lip, still not making eye contact. I slid up so my face was level with his. I looked down at him, stroking his dishevelled hair back from his forehead. “He hurt you,” I said.

He swallowed. Oh God, something terrible was coming; I was sure of it.

He smoothed his hand down my spine and kept his palm on the small of my back,

stroking as though soothing himself. “My PR team used to be keen for me to be at photo shoots. Adam—he’s my vice president—wanted pictures of me and models splashed all over Instagram. I hated it. Some of the models were just ridiculous. I got a lot of propositions and they didn’t like taking no for an answer.”

I stared down at him, finding it hard to believe he wanted to turn models down. But then I remembered José, who I wouldn’t have touched with a barge pole.

“I’m not saying they’re all bad, but a lot of them were coked up to their eyeballs, starving themselves and wanting to get laid at every opportunity when they were supposed to be working. I didn’t like it and I argued with Adam. And then, a year ago, just before Christmas, I was on a shoot at a hotel in Scotland.” He stopped, biting his lip, working his mouth as though trying to get the words out.

“It’s okay,” I said, stroking his cheek. “You can tell me.”

He fought with himself some more and sighed. “We were in a suite and had just finished. Everyone was packing up and moving out. I went to the bathroom and when I came out, Adam and some of the others were nowhere to be seen. There were four models on that shoot. One of them was José. Two of them, well, they’re household names. You’d know them if I told you. You probably follow them on Insta.”

I scowled. “I don’t follow anyone like that.”

He gave me a sad smile. “The four of them were still in the underwear they’d been modelling. They surrounded me, suggesting I get undressed and play with them.”

I stared at him. What was coming here?

“I wasn’t interested. People might laugh that I turned down a gang bang with four hot models, but seriously, they intimidated me. They were full on, working as a team, and

I got nervous. I tried to leave and one shut the door while the others pulled me back. They started to touch me, pulling at my clothes, telling me they wanted to fuck me.

“I punched one of them when he groped my crotch and the mood changed. They were on me, dragging at my clothes, stripping me. I shouted and swung at them. They tore my shirt and forced me down on the bed and two of them held my hands down while the other two stripped me.”

I looked down at him in horror, my fingers stilling on his cheek. He met my gaze, his dark blue eyes raw and wounded with memory.

“They pushed my legs apart when I was naked,” he said, “and played with my cock. I wasn’t hard and they slapped me about, squeezed my balls until I cried out, then José bit me on my inner thigh, broke the skin. One of them shoved his dick into my mouth and they all held me still, forcing me to take it. I struggled and bit him and he punched me in the face.”

I stared at him in horror, my eyes welling with tears. I couldn’t speak.

“I saw stars and things went dark for a minute. When I came to, they’d gagged me with my own tie and José had his fingers inside me. He told me they were all going to fuck me one after the other and I was going to love it. I struggled and fought as hard as I could. They pushed my knees up to my chest and José spat on his hand.”

Please no, please don’t tell me it went any further than that , I said silently.

“Then my phone rang in my jacket pocket. They stopped and looked at each other. When it went to voicemail, the caller rang straight back. I knew it had to be Adam or someone else from the shoot wondering why I hadn’t joined them. Someone would come looking for me, but by then it might have been too late. They exchanged a few words. José wanted to carry on. He said, Look at him, he’s desperate to get fucked.

Let's do it. I'll never forget that. I'm not sure when I had given him even the slightest encouragement. I'm not sure how he could think I wanted it when I had four men holding me down. The others didn't agree with him. They let me go and climbed off the bed and José told them they were pussies and reluctantly followed, dressing himself. He winked at me and said, You'll keep .

I sat up, pulled Lucas into my arms and held him hard. If I had known all this when I'd met José in that bar, I would have punched his lights out.

"I hated how weak I was," he said into my shoulder. "I hated that I lost control and they were able to do that to me."

I drew back, holding his face into my hands. "You weren't weak," I said as tears streaked my cheeks. "There was four of them. Nobody can fight off four men."

He said nothing.

"Did you go to the police?"

He shook his head, gaze downcast. I didn't ask him why not. I didn't need to. Shame, humiliation, not wanting to live it all again in court. All the things that stopped people reporting sexual assault.

"Did you have a lot of injuries?"

He swallowed. "I had some bruises."

"Did you take photos? Of the bite mark too?"

"Yes."

So he must have considered going to the police at one point if he'd collected the evidence. "What did you do with the clothes you were wearing?"

"I wanted to throw them away," he said. "But I didn't. I put them all in a bin bag. They're in the loft."

He'd kept the clothes. When he'd put them back on after the assault, maybe they'd caught any DNA his attackers had left on his body. I hesitated before I said, "You could still go to the police. I could come with you."

He met my gaze. "It's my word against theirs. There were four of them who will all have the story that we engaged in rough consensual sex. The scandal will ruin me. I'll be painted as some lothario who abuses his position to sleep with models."

"Didn't they punch you in the face?"

He nodded. "I had a black eye."

"That's evidence. They made you..." I couldn't say the words. I swallowed. "They raped you." The graphic word sounded horrid on my lips, but he had to know, in case he had been in any doubt. Legally, it had been rape.

He closed his eyes and buried his face against my shoulder, holding me. I gathered him as tightly to me as I could, pulling the covers over us and sliding down so we were lying pressed together and I could hold him and provide what comfort I could. Never had I thought that when he'd said I don't get fucked, this was the reason why.

In a few minutes, I realised his hands had relaxed on my body and he had drifted off into sleep. I held him close to me and closed my eyes.

Lucas

I woke before the alarm to find Alex still in my arms. I was pressed against his back, my arm around him and he was still asleep, breathing softly. I smiled to myself but anxiety overwhelmed me when I remembered what I had told him last night. Something I'd never told another living soul. Why had I shared it with him?

I'd tried to put the incident from my mind so hard. I hadn't even rationalised it as a sexual assault before Alex had called it that. Much less the R word. But I knew he was right when I thought about it.

A cold weight settled in my stomach when I remembered our conversation. I should have gone to the police; Alex was right about that too. I had allowed my attackers to get away with it and who knew if they hadn't done it to someone else after or before me. I had showered in my hotel room after the event, huddled in the bottom of the cubicle. Then I had got dressed and driven back to London without a word to anyone, least of all Adam. He had left me a few angry voicemails but I knew he had accepted that this wasn't unusual behaviour for me. I liked to hide away; he knew that. The next day I had photographed the bruises on my body. There were many. I was black and blue. The bite mark on my thigh had been visible for weeks. I had to make sure I pulled the sleeves of my shirt down and keep my hands hidden when I went into work after Christmas to hide the evidence of being held down on that bed. The black eye I hid with make-up, but it wasn't enough. A couple of people asked me about it and I told them I fell over drunk at home after a party. They knew I was lying. I didn't go to parties.

It was Christmas Day and my birthday. There were several people hoping I might

drop in today, including Adam, Charlotte my PA, my friend James, and Heidi and Gordon who had fostered me as a teenager for a few years until I went to university. I would be disappointing all of them. The only place I was going to go was running Alex to his house before I came back here and probably went back to bed.

I stroked Alex's belly, lingering on the dark hair that ran down in a line to his neatly-trimmed bush, before I moved my fingers up over his chest, tracing them over pecs and nipples. I thought again of how I'd asked him to model for me. I thought about last night and my cock swelled beyond its usual morning glory. He had an exquisite body, lean and subtly muscled and not a spare inch of fat on him. As well as his obvious physical attributes, he was also patient, kind, sweet and funny. A heady combination that stirred parts of me long dead. The night with him had gone some way towards expelling my demons. But he had his own. His mental health. Did I want this to go somewhere and if it did, was I man enough to be strong and supportive?

He made me want to be that man. From the very moment he had stood at my table in the restaurant and said I don't know why anyone would want to stand you up. But what about the age gap? It was ridiculous. And I didn't even know how ridiculous. He was in his twenties, wasn't he? He couldn't yet be thirty. God, maybe I was looking at twenty years. Or more. I squeezed my eyes shut. What would people say? Not that it was anybody's business.

I brushed my lips against his neck and inhaled the scent of his lovely soft skin. God, he was beautiful. I had never wanted last night to end, when I was inside him for the second time. Then I had come crashing down to earth with a bang after confessing my terrible shame to him. And yet, I felt lighter for telling someone. The secret of the assault I had carried for twelve long months because I had felt shame that I couldn't fight the men off, and shame that I wouldn't be believed because the idea of being manhandled by four male models would be a wet dream come true for most people. Instead, it featured in my nightmares regularly.



Seeing José last night had brought it all back to me. And he'd acted like nothing had happened. That he hadn't been about to force his cock into me when my phone rang.

I squeezed my eyes shut and tightened my arm around Alex. I wanted to hold onto him now that I'd found him, for as long as I could. And fuck my age, and fuck his age. Fuck that he was a waiter and fuck that I sold fucking underwear.

He stirred against me as I planted soft kisses on his neck where his hair was cut close to his nape. His fingers moved over mine and he stretched. "Sorry to wake you," I said against his ear. "Hashtag not sorry."

"Did you just say hashtag?"

"Yeah. I'm down with the kids."

He laughed. I pressed some more kisses to his neck, inhaling his wonderful scent. Just then my alarm shrilled and I grumbled and rolled away to silence it.

"I have to get ready to go," he said as I shifted back to him. My arm hovered in the air, about to pull him close again. Disappointed, I lowered it and lay back.

"Of course." Was it my imagination or had he cooled off overnight?

He cast me a glance over his shoulder as he moved to the edge of the bed, looking around for his clothes. It was nervous, awkward, and my heart sank. Where was last night's man? I slid out of bed and bent to snag the robe I'd left lying on the floor. Then I crossed to the door and plucked my spare robe from the back, before going back to hand it to him. He looked at me gratefully, obviously not wanting to walk naked to the bathroom.

"Thanks." He stood and pulled it on and I saw a flash of half-hard cock that made my

own harder. “Is it okay if I shower?”

“Yes, be my guest. I’ll go to the other bathroom and I’ll see you downstairs for coffee?”

“Yes,” he said and walked around the bed. As I set off to the door, we almost collided and danced around each other.

“Sorry.”

“Sorry.” I stepped out of the bedroom as I heard the en suite door close with my stomach sinking right down into my bare feet. I went along the landing to the guest room next door. In the chest of drawers there, I kept samples of products I sold. Of course I’d taken note of his underwear last night. He wore white Calvin Klein trunks that fit him just perfectly, moulding to his lean, strong thighs and delicious package. I searched through the underwear in the drawer. There were some recent additions—Christmas themed ones and some Pride ones. I guessed he’d be a medium and after lingering on the more exotic ones, I went with a pair of classic black trunks. My cock twitched as I imagined him in them. I found some socks too—Christmas ones— and I picked a few more pairs of underwear to make them a gift for him and pushed them into a paper sample bag with my company name stencilled on it.

I went back into the bedroom. All was silent in the bathroom when I knocked on the door. “I thought you might need clean underwear and socks,” I said. “I’ll leave them outside.”

“Thanks,” he said.

I’d just finished two lattes and set them down on the island when Alex came downstairs. I’d showered and dressed in a good suit, seeing as it was Christmas Day. And my birthday. I wasn’t going anywhere other than taking him home, but I still

wanted to look nice for him. He didn't need to see me in the joggers I watched Netflix in.

Even if he was giving me the brush off.

He entered the room and his gaze travelled over my body in my suit. There was no mistaking the interest in his eyes and it made my dick start to harden. I gestured to his latte. He hovered, looking at it, casting a glance at me before averting his gaze, making no move to sit down. His manner was uneasy, anxious.

My heart sank further. "Does the underwear fit okay?"

"Yes. It's really nice, thank you."

"You're welcome." I pushed the paper bag across the island. "There's a gift for you. Happy Christmas."

He looked at me in surprise before he pulled the packets of underwear out of the bag. "You shouldn't have," he said.

"It's fine."

"Thank you." He seemed touched, his cheeks flushing. "Sorry," he said. "I really have to get going. I have to get presents together and get changed and..."

He really was fucking me off. Disappointment overwhelmed me. What had changed overnight? He'd seemed into me. What a fool I was. What a fucking dick. He must have been drunker than I'd thought, maybe regretting going home with a strange man. Maybe it was what I'd told him. Maybe he couldn't handle it. Maybe he didn't want to be with a man who'd been sexually assaulted and was still traumatised and didn't want to be fucked. Perhaps he couldn't deal with that kind of shit. He'd come

home with me for a good time and ended up listening to that .

I turned away so he couldn't see my face. Robotically, I reached a travel mug from the overhead cupboard and poured his latte into it, sliding it across the island to him. I gulped at my own. I couldn't take mine with me because the wanky Lamborghini didn't even have a cup holder. Bollocks to that. Another reason to drive a Hyundai. That bad boy had two different sized cup holders in the middle. You could take a cup and a bottle of water. And at the back of those you could fit another drink and some snacks. Yeah, you'd never get dehydrated in a Hyundai. "Come on then," I said, grabbing my keys from the worktop. "Let's go." I heard my cool tone and hated myself for letting him see I was wounded. He'd got fucked and now he wanted to leave. Why did I think it would be something more?

He hesitated then. "I can get a taxi," he said. Perhaps my manner worried him.

"It's fine," I replied.

He watched me for another moment before he took his travel mug and headed for the door. He pushed his feet into his shoes and bent to lace them up. He pulled on his coat while I was getting my own shoes on, then I stepped past him to unlock the door while shrugging on my coat. He followed me out. While I locked the door, he went down the steps to wait for me next to the passenger side of the Lamborghini. Everything was coated in fine, powdery snow. My garden looked like a winter wonderland, birds flocking to the feeder I had hung on one of the oak trees. I saw him looking dubiously at the car.

"Don't be fooled," I said. "This model handles all terrain."

He raised an eyebrow. He was probably wondering how he'd get home if we broke down or got stuck in a drift.

We settled inside to a nice uncomfortable silence as I headed down the drive.

“Nice ride,” he said awkwardly as I pulled out onto the main road.

“Likewise,” I said before I could stop myself. He shot me a look. I kept my gaze on the road and didn’t dare smirk.

“You’re a very funny man,” he said and his tone was half-amused, half-cool.

I said nothing. We lapsed back into silence broken only by the windscreen wipers lazily clearing the fat snowflakes and his instructions to get him home. He held his coffee in both hands, sipping occasionally. I bemoaned the fact we had conversed so easily last night and now we seemed to have nothing to say. Alcohol. It lubricates the tongue. Perhaps it had lubricated his arse too. Why else did he let me fuck him? He was clearly regretting the decision.

He only lived a few miles away. We were there in no time.

“Just here,” he said, indicating a small block of flats. It wasn’t the nicest of areas, but it wasn’t the roughest either. My car would probably be safe if he invited me in. Not that he was going to.

The car got some stares as I pulled over to the kerb. “Thanks,” he said, unclicking his seatbelt. He looked around for somewhere to put his travel mug, then passed it to me. I took it and looked around too. There was nowhere to put it in this ridiculous car. Apparently Lamborghini drivers didn’t drink. Anything.

“You’re welcome,” I replied, as ever polite and British when I wanted to demand what I’d done to deserve the silent treatment. He reached for the door handle. “And thank you,” I said quickly. Then I realised that sounded like I was thanking him for the shag. I rushed on. “I mean for last night. For the restaurant. Thanks for the

restaurant .” Oh God, just shut up. He clearly hates you this morning . You must have been a shitty lay. “For not making me feel even more of a loser than I already am. For... keeping me company so I didn’t go home alone and hang myself.”

His eyes widened.

“Sorry, sorry,” I said hastily. “I didn’t mean that.” Didn’t I? I probably did.

“It’s okay,” he said with his gaze fixed on the hands folded in his lap.

I waited for something more. Nothing came. He reached again for the door handle and this time, I said nothing. There was nothing to say. I was a one-night stand that he didn’t want to repeat. For a short while, I had got caught up in the emotion and the excitement of it all and I’d thought it was something more. At my age, I should know better.

He opened the door, climbed out and closed it. I didn’t watch him walk away. I put the travel mug down on the passenger seat then stared straight out of the windscreen for a moment before I pushed in the clutch and shifted to first gear. As I started to pull away, a sharp rap on the window had my foot moving to the brake.

Alex was bending down to look at me. I buzzed down the glass with my heart surging in my chest.

“Do you want to come to my parents with me for dinner?” he asked.

I stared at him. “What?”

Alex

I wasn't surprised he gaped at me. Where had that come from? I'd been analysing my behaviour all the way to mine and I wasn't sure what was going on either. I could count the times I'd woken up with a man in my life on the fingers of one hand and those times had always ended in an embarrassing slink away for one or both parties. I didn't spend the night with people. Nobody had ever cared enough to ask me to stay before. Now I'd woken up in a man's arms on Christmas Day. A man who hadn't crept away in the night. A man who still looked at me with fondness in his eyes after the event rather than regret, and it confused me.

And then there was what he had confessed to me. A rape. An actual rape. And despite this secret that still weighed so heavily on him, he'd taken me to bed and showed me the time of my life. Nobody had ever made me come that way before. Nobody had ever wanted to. But the secret now pressed down on me because I shared it. I told myself while I stood in his shower letting the water rain down on my aching body that I couldn't take on someone who had been through such trauma. I couldn't hold us both up when some days my own head was hardly above water. Nor did I want to. I was too selfish. I told myself as I sat silently beside him that the real reason was because I wasn't man enough. And he knew that. And I had hurt him. I had pretended last night meant nothing to me this morning and he didn't like it. Nor did I. He wasn't a man I could walk away from. I didn't want to walk away from him. It was Christmas and it was his birthday and this wonderful man who I had had the best night of my life with was alone. I couldn't countenance that. What sort of human being would I be if I did? A miserable excuse for one. I needed to step up. And I would.

Hence the offer.

I smiled at him and jerked my head towards my building. “Come on.” I turned and walked away. I hoped he would follow.

He did. I heard his door open and close and his footsteps on the pavement as he followed me to the front door, which I opened with my key. He followed me inside and closed the door, trailing up the stairs after me to flat two. I tried to remember if I had left any dirty pants lying around on the floor or if there was a pile of washing up mouldering in the sink. I hoped not. He would have a shock at how I lived compared to his palatial gaff.

I wiggled the key for a few seconds before I let myself in and held open the door for him. “You need to slam it,” I said. “Something wrong with it.”

While I kicked off my shoes in the hall and hung up my coat, he was pulling the door back and forth, examining the hinges. “Have you got a screwdriver and some WD40?”

I glanced at him with a smile as a burst of warmth hit my stomach. It didn’t take much to turn me mushy. An offer to do DIY and I was putty in a man’s hands. “Stop it, you’re turning me on.”

He grinned. “Get your toolbox out.”

“Best offer I’ve had all day.” I went to root in the little cupboard thing that should have probably been referred to as a pantry but instead held the vacuum and floor steamer and miscellaneous crap. Locating the box, I put it on the kitchen table and opened it. “Choose your weapon.” I went back in the cupboard for the can of WD40.

I watched him as he fixed my door. He glanced at me. “Do you really want me to



come all the way to Devon with you?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you think you should at least ask permission?”

“I suppose so.” I pulled my phone out of my pocket and started to text.

“You’re texting your mum and telling her you’re bringing a strange man home with you? A strange man twenty years older than you.”

“Nineteen,” I said. “Eighteen next month.”

“Well, that makes all the difference.” He swung the door back and forth and I admired the lack of stiffness and squeak as I texted.

Can I bring a plus one today?

My mum texted straight back. Of course, darling! Is it a man?

Yes . My finger hovered. A rich, fit, silver fox . I deleted that bit and sent the yes .

Wonderful. See you soon! Xx

I smiled. “She said yes.”

He looked pensive. “She did?”

“Yes.”

“You didn’t tell her how old I was, did you?”

“No. Nor did I tell her how good looking you are. She might faint when she sees you. She has a thing for tall, dark men in suits.”

He smiled but looked unsure.

“Do you want a coffee seeing as you had to leave yours behind? What’s the deal with the no cup holders in the Lambo?”

“Yes, please,” he said and closed the door, following me into the kitchen. “And I know. Where are we going to put our refreshments on the way to Devon?”

I glanced at him. “You want to drive the Lamborghini to Devon?”

He shrugged. “Why not? Let’s see what it can do.”

“Are you sure?”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

“It’s a five-hour drive.”

“Good. I can get to know you.”

Once more, I felt warm inside. I filled the kettle and put it on to boil. With embarrassment I took the instant coffee from the cupboard. “Sorry,” I said. “Aldi’s own.”

He shrugged. “I’m not a coffee snob. Or a supermarket snob. I just need something to wake me up.”

Our eyes met and I bit my lip before I offered to do just that or we’d never get there. I

poured him a mug and his eyes lit up when I pulled a carton of oat milk from the fridge.

“Ah,” he said. “I knew you were the man for me.”

I blushed and my heart soared. Then I remembered. “Oh shit.” I pulled out my phone and texted quickly.

He’s vegan.

Now you tell me , my mum replied straight away.

I shoved my phone away. “Just letting her know about your dietary requirements.”

He smiled cynically. “Why do you think I’m staying at home? Because if I went anywhere today, I’d end up with a plate of parsnips and carrots. And fucking sprouts. The only vegetables I hate.”

I knew that wasn’t why he was staying at home at all, but I didn’t say anything. We could save that for our five-hour chat. “My mum’s an amazing cook,” I said. “I promise that won’t be all you’ll end up with.”

“I don’t want to put her out,” he said, looking anxious.

“Relax. I’m going to get changed. Have a seat in here.” I gestured to the lounge and went to my bedroom. I’d already hung my best shirt and suit out on the front of my wardrobe. I pushed the door up before I stripped. I wondered at trying to preserve my modesty when he had seen everything last night and had put several bits of his body inside me. I burned hot when I thought about it and my cock stiffened in record time. I crammed it into my trousers and zipped up. I knotted my tie and pulled my jacket on before checking myself out in the mirror. I was done up like a dog’s dinner. I hope he

liked it. I worked some styling paste through my hair, playing with it, giving it the bed head look I liked before I splashed on some aftershave and went back out to the lounge. He was sitting looking at his phone while drinking his coffee. He stared at me with the cup poised at his lips as I approached.

“What?” I asked self-consciously.

“You,” he said. “You’re divine.”

I blushed. “Stop it.”

“I mean it.”

I smiled with flames licking around my heart.

As we hadn’t had any breakfast, I grabbed some crisps, fruit, and a couple of cereal bars and shoved them in a bag along with some bottles of flavoured water. We both had a toilet break and then we loaded up the car. I had Christmas presents for my parents and an overnight bag as I had been intending to stay over, but I would have to play it by ear with my guest. I had no doubt my mum would be happy for him to stay but if he didn’t want to, we could always drive back later. I had put extra socks and two pairs of the new underwear into my bag in case he wanted to share. And yes, the underwear did have his name in the back. I got a major thrill from wearing it.

My bag went in the tiniest boot I had ever seen along with some presents. Of course it was at the front of the car not the back. The rest had to go down by my feet and I had to remember not to crush them when stretching out.

We clicked our seat belts on. He gestured to the central screen. “Put the postcode in.”

I tapped the letters and numbers in and pressed go and a female voice told us to turn

left in ninety yards. He started the engine and plugged his phone in, dropping it into the little holder below. Then he fiddled with the heat settings and checked his mirrors before setting off. I looked at his hands on the wheel. I looked at the dark blue orb of the iris I could see in profile, the long lashes framing his eye, his strong, chiselled jaw and sensual lips. I travelled my gaze down the perfectly fitted black suit he wore to his muscled thighs and the way they flexed when he shifted gear. I let out a laugh.

He darted a glance at me. “What?”

I scowled at the sat nav as it interrupted me with a direction and shook my head. “Nothing. Just thinking that when I came to work last night, I didn’t think that twelve hours later I’d be being driven to my parents’ by the fittest man I’ve ever met. In a Lamborghini.”

Nor did I think that I would be fucked to within an inch of my life by him last night and I could have been again this morning if I hadn’t been such an uptight twat , I added silently.

He smiled. He turned another corner and headed down the main road. The speed limit changed to fifty and he eased his foot down on the accelerator. The car purred smoothly below us. We were cocooned in silence.

“I’m sorry,” I said.

He glanced at me again before indicating to overtake a Skoda crawling along on the inside. “What for?”

Turn left , said the sat nav and I huffed before I said, “Being a twat this morning.”

He licked his lips. “I didn’t think you were a twat.”

“You did.”

“I didn’t. It was a bonus that you were still there.”

I sighed. “I felt... embarrassed.” He was silent. I felt the need to go on. “I don’t usually do this. With strange men. It’s been a while. And...my God, I had such a good time. I’m embarrassed by how much of a good time I had and letting you know what a good time I was having.”

“I understand,” he said with his gaze on the road.

“Do you?”

At the roundabout, take the third exit , said the sat nav and he reached out to lower the volume. I felt like jabbing the bloody thing off, but then we might get lost before we reached the motorway. He might have been an even worse navigator than me. Which I doubted. He had taken every turn as though he knew these streets and not once glanced at the route on screen.

“Yes. Although I thought maybe it was something to do with what I told you last night.”

I swallowed. I shook my head and I knew he saw it from the corner of his eye although he didn’t look at me. Step up , I reminded myself. Fucking step up . “I was shocked,” I said in a low voice. “And heart broken. Doesn’t mean I want to walk away.”

To my surprise, he indicated and pulled over to stop at the kerb outside a row of shops. He pulled on the handbrake and turned in his seat, reaching over to cup my cheek. “Are you sure about that?”

I gulped at the intimacy. I remembered what we had done last night and my body heated. I wished I could swing my leg across the gap between us and straddle his lap. I nodded. "I'm sure." Because I was.

He searched my eyes as though reading the truth and my heart stuttered when he leaned closer and brushed his lips over mine. My eyes fluttered closed and I drowned in him. The scent of his aftershave and hair gel, the softness of his mouth. Fuck, I never wanted to come out alive.

He drew back. "Let's switch places before we get to the motorway," he said, unclipping his seatbelt.

I stared at him. "What?"

He smiled. "I thought maybe you'd like to drive part of the way."

Still I gaped at him, unable believe my ears.

"What?" he said.

"Am I insured to drive it?"

"Yes. Everyone's insured." He looked at me with amusement. "You've got a license, haven't you? Weren't you intending to drive there yourself today?"

"Y-yes," I stuttered. We'd been parked behind my old banger at the flat. I'd had no intention of letting him know it was mine.

"How long have you had your license?"

"Seven years."

“Good. Ever written off a supercar while driving to Devon?”

“Yeah, every week. That’s why my insurance is sky high.”

“Perfect. Out you get.”

I swung open the door on legs suddenly not quite steady. We met at the back of the car. He reached for my hand, squeezing my fingers briefly before he let go. I slid into the driver’s seat and shifted a bit closer to the wheel. I clicked on my seatbelt and fussed with the mirrors, aware of him watching me.

“All right?” He put a hand on my knee.

His touch scorched me. I still wanted to climb on his lap so badly. “You’re crazy letting me do this.”

He shrugged. “It’s not my car.”

I laughed. “So it’s okay if I wreck it?”

“As long as you don’t kill us. Limit yourself to ninety and don’t get us pulled over or we’ll be late for dinner.” He settled back in his seat.

I couldn’t believe how blasé he was. He really was relaxed to the point of horizontal and didn’t sweat the small stuff. I could learn so much from his outlook on life.



Lucas

I cast a look at Alex behind the wheel. His elegant profile, his smoothly-shaven jaw, button nose, sensual lips. His sherry eyes with the thick lashes and his milky skin without blemish. He looked like he belonged behind the wheel. He fit the car better than me. There was a distinct lack of room for my big body and sometimes it was hard to crane my neck up past the windscreen to see traffic lights from my low position. A ball ache all around. I couldn't wait to get it back to the garage. I hope they didn't offer it to me to keep.

He smiled without looking at me. It was a nervous smile. His teeth were pearly and straight. I looked at his long-fingered hands on the wheel, clenching it a little too tight.

“Relax,” I said softly.

He nodded with a forced chuckle. I wasn't worried he was going to wreck the car or kill us. I trusted him, after just one night with him. After all, I had told him my biggest secret. Plus, it wasn't my car. I wasn't precious over cars the way some men were. It was just metal and it was on loan. I looked again at his hands, remembering them on my body, how they had touched me so tenderly, how they had pleased me so easily, and I felt my cock start to thicken. I wanted him again so badly. I wanted to slide deep into his tight heat and lose myself.

He checked his mirror and flicked on the windscreen wipers instead of the indicator. I smiled. “Other side.”

He grinned and flipped up the indicator stalk before pulling out. A careful driver. I doubted it was going to be a white-knuckle ride to Devon unless he decided he wanted to see what the Lambo could do on the motorway. I wasn't too concerned.

The annoying sat nav started to direct him again. He followed the instructions, sitting stiff and straight in the seat, gaze fixed on the road and flicking constantly to his mirrors. I said nothing. I knew he'd calm down once we settled in for a lovely, long monotonous cruise on the motorway. Traffic wouldn't be busy today; there wouldn't be much to challenge him. He could probably keep two fingers on the wheel and fall asleep. Or use the cruise control.

When he accelerated down the slip road to the motorway and felt the power of the car beneath his foot, he whooped in exhilaration. "Fuck!" He didn't take his eyes off the road to look at me. I laughed. I loved the thrill on his face. The same sort of thrill I had seen last night as I made love to him. I wanted to be responsible for that look on his face forever. My thoughts scared me. I had met him last night and barely knew him. And yet... I was going to his parents' house for dinner on my birthday and it was suddenly vitally important that I make a good impression. God, they would be horrified when they saw me. I was probably the same age as his dad. Anxiety knotted my stomach. What was I doing?

Alex joined the motorway and overtook a slow-moving Nissan Micra before settling in the middle lane. As I'd predicted, traffic was light and I saw his shoulders relax. He was coming down off high alert. He shot a glance at me. "You okay?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Please will you get me some water out of the bag?"

I reached down to my footwell and plucked free a bottle, unscrewing the cap and handing it over to him. He took it and I watched the undulation of his Adam's apple

as he swallowed. Oh, I'd love those lips around my cock again. I struggled to get my mind out of the gutter.

"You're having second thoughts," he said quietly, handing the bottle back. I took a drink and recapped it.

"How old's your dad?" I asked by way of reply.

He groaned. "Don't."

There was a moment's uncomfortable silence before he said, "Get me out a snack, please, I'm starving."

We shared a cereal bar. I fed him salt and vinegar crisps. He caught my fingers and licked and sucked them. I tried not to moan as my cock stood to attention. Then I peeled a satsuma and fed him segments. I sucked my fingers after he'd sucked them and relived last night. Every kiss, every touch, every glide inside him. Beautiful. And way more than a one-night stand. I hope he agreed with me.

The car was cruising steady. I snuck a glance at the speedometer and saw he held it at seventy. I smiled to myself and settled back in my seat, my eyes growing heavy. I'd slaked my hunger and thirst and now my body reminded me I hadn't had adequate sleep last night. I was already falling asleep before I could ask him if it was okay.

???

Alex

Lucas stirred in his seat and glancing at him, I saw him open his eyes. He blinked and looked at the clock on the screen. He'd been asleep for an hour while I'd stole looks at him and marvelled at my good fortune. "Sorry," he said.

“Why? You clearly needed it.”

“I did. You wore me out last night.”

I grinned, my cheeks heating and my dick stirring as I remembered last night. Actually last night was nearly all I was thinking about while he slept. I’d become worried that my parents would see how well fucked I was when I arrived, because I felt different somehow, like a virgin who’d popped their cherry last night. It was a ludicrous way to feel, but something had changed.

“Likewise,” I said.

“Want me to take over then?”

I looked at him. His suit was still immaculate but his posture was relaxed, his face still sleepy and his lids heavy. He really was the most attractive man I’d ever seen in my life. I didn’t care what my parents would think about his age or the fact I only met him last night. But actually, was I going to tell them I only met him last night or should I make something up? We’ve been dating four months and I forgot to mention it?

I didn’t really want to paint Lucas as the man who’d taken me home and fucked me last night even if that was what he was, because it would cheapen last night. And last night was anything but cheap. “You could do,” I said. “I don’t know about you, but I need a wee break. Services in three miles.”

“Okay,” he said.

“You’re a good driver,” he said as after a few huffs and puffs and grinding of gears, I reversed into a tight parking space and switched off the engine. I glowed with pleasure. “Your parking’s lousy though.” I hit him on the arm and we both laughed.

“I appreciate you letting me have a go.” We looked at each other for a moment. He smiled and opened his door. My heart was beating hard. I had been hoping he would kiss me. I needed it so much.

We walked side by side to the services. His fingers brushed mine and I wondered how accidental it was. In the toilets, we peed side by side and washed and dried our hands side by side. I looked around the vast services when we exited. It wasn’t bustling, as to be expected on Christmas Day, but I was just surprised it was open at all. There was a Gregg’s, a Costa and an M&S among the shops. Lucas gestured to Costa. “Shall we get a coffee in case I nod off again?”

“Yeah.” I followed him inside. There was a queue of four people and we joined them.

“What are you having?”

“A latte with oat milk.” I reached into my inside jacket pocket for my wallet. “I’ll get them.”

He shook his head. “No, you won’t.” We stood looking at each other, close enough to touch. Almost close enough to kiss. Once more his fingers brushed mine. My skin prickled and my stomach lurched. This was sweet torment. I wanted him so much it hurt. I wondered how feasible a quickie in the car would be. I wondered what the other patrons would say if I kissed him right here in the queue at Costa. He smiled as though he read my mind. I looked away because I was getting an erection. I glanced out to the other shops and an idea presented itself.

“I’ll be right back.” A shop next to M&S sold all kinds of gifts and trinkets—London memorabilia for tourists, chocolates, books, alcohol and more. I nipped inside and perused as quickly as I could, worried he would come in and catch me in the act of buying him a birthday present. I settled on some outrageously expensive vegan chocolates and added a rip-off gift bag for good measure. I also bought a bottle of

pink Prosecco to take to my parents and some roses for my mum. I hurried out to find him standing outside Costa with two cups and a paper bag, a bottle of champagne wedged under his arm. He must have nipped into M&S after Costa. He smiled at me and handed me a cup.

“Thanks.” It was the biggest coffee I’d ever seen in my life. I had no idea they did them that big. I always got a small latte when I went to Costa. That was my budget. The place cost a bloody fortune. I’d be stopping every half an hour to piss after this.

We walked back out to the car park and he opened the miniscule boot so I could lay the flowers down and wedge the bottle of Prosecco and the champagne down the side of my bag. I guessed the champagne was to give to my parents, which I thought was very kind of him. He got behind the wheel, placed his cup on the dash, and showed me inside the paper bag. “I got the last vegan brownie.”

I smiled. He broke off a piece and held it out to my mouth. I opened up and let him deposit it on my tongue. While I chewed, he popped a piece in his own mouth. Overcome, I grabbed him by the neck and kissed him. I loved the sound he made. A shocked intake of breath before he kissed me back, cupping my head. We both had half-melted brownie in our mouths and the taste on his tongue electrified me. We kissed fiercely for some seconds before we slowed down, swapping long and slow chocolate kisses before we drew apart. My head was spinning and my dick was rigid. I could barely think straight.

I licked the taste of him from my lips. “I got you these,” I said, handing him the gift bag. “Happy Birthday.”

The smile that crossed his face was so big and genuine that it tugged at my heart strings and I reminded myself yet again that my first impression of this man really hadn’t been wrong. He was a worthwhile guy and I wanted him in my life beyond last night and today. He pulled out the chocolates and admired them.

“Thank you,” he said softly and leaned forward to give me another kiss.

One kiss wasn't enough. We ended up back in each other's arms, clinging together awkwardly over the gap between us, lips locked. My cock throbbed and although he didn't try to touch me intimately, I was so turned on I was scared I was going to come just from his kisses alone, like some sort of teenager.

I pulled back. “We should leave, otherwise you're going to have to take me over to the Premier Inn for an hour.” I motioned with my head in the direction of the hotel in the corner of the car park.

He smiled and ran his thumb over my lips, making them quiver. “Only an hour?”

I laughed. “No. An hour isn't nearly enough for all the things I want to do to you.”

His smile widened but behind his bright eyes, I was sure I saw unease. I had phrased it wrong. All the things I want to do to you . I'd made it sound like I wanted to fuck him. Understandably, he had recoiled from the idea. I opened my mouth to speak and closed it again. I would gain no benefit from trying to rectify the words. Perhaps I would make things worse. I held both cups of coffee as we set off. I fed him bites of brownie as he drove. Once he was cruising, he held his coffee in one hand and the wheel in the other.

The motorway got quieter and quieter. We lapsed into silence, during which I admired Lucas behind the wheel. He looked like he belonged there, unlike me. He really was such a classy, elegant bastard. His exquisite suit, his strong, clean-shaven jaw and high cheekbones, his beautiful crystal blue eyes. The way he held the wheel so casually with one hand and maintained a steady speed at seventy. I wondered if he was keeping his speed to the legal limit because I was in the car and if I wasn't, he'd be breaking it. He wasn't a man who had a need to show off. Any other man with a Lamborghini might have been going 120 in the fast lane. Lucas didn't need to prove

he had a big dick. I already knew he did. I smiled to myself, coils of heat twisting my stomach. If he was invited to stay over tonight at my parents' house, how was I going to keep my hands off him?



Alex

As we entered the picturesque little fishing village where my folks lived, my stomach did somersaults. I still hadn't decided what I was going to tell them about Lucas.

"Places like this make me want to get out of London," he said.

"Yep." Black Cove was always beautiful but particularly so at Christmas with the streets decorated with lights and the snow now falling thickly. We drove along the seafront. The ocean was grey, white-tipped breakers splashing against the floodguards. I was still amazed at the performance of the Lamborghini in snow. We would see what it was like when negotiating my parent's cul de sac on a hill. Lucas might have no choice but to stay the night; we would probably be snowed in within a couple of hours. I knew the sleeping arrangements at my old house. There were four bedrooms. One was my parents' and one was my old room, which still had my single bed in it. The other one had a double bed for guests and the fourth was an office. So there was enough room for both of us, either together or singly. I couldn't imagine us both in the double bed with my mum and dad down the hall.

Lucas negotiated the steep hill slowly. I felt the tyres lose traction on the road a few times and my stomach turned over. He didn't seem concerned. I was so glad I wasn't the one driving. The sat nav talked incessantly as we made twists and turns getting closer to our destination. He punched the button to shut it up. "I'll let you direct me," he said. "She's giving me a headache."

"Turn left here."

Lucas flicked the wipers on to full as the snow obscured his view. He slowed for a passing car, then took the corner. The day had darkened and the headlights picked out the familiar landmarks leading to my childhood house. I loved coming back here and always went walking on the beach, no matter what the weather.

“Right to the end, then turn right.”

The street was narrow and untouched by snowploughs. Most cars were snowed in on their owners’ drives. A few spaces were cleared and gritted. Lucas drove in the tyre tracks of other cars, bumping slowly through the rutted snow before he turned into my parents’ street and climbed.

“It’s a bit tricky here in the snow sometimes,” I said.

“So I see.” He squinted through the thick flakes, the car starting to slide on the hill.

“They live at the top. Shall we stop here and walk?”

“I think I can make it.”

And make it he did. With skilful handling of the car, he made it right to the top of the hill and parked on the drive behind my dad’s BMW and my mum’s Mini.

“You’re a great driver,” I said in admiration. “I think I would have abandoned it at the beach.”

He laughed. “I didn’t much fancy getting wet walking up the hill. Not sure how I’ll get it back down later though.”

“You can stay.” We looked at each other for a long moment.

“I don’t know,” he said. “It’s one thing to blag an invite to Christmas dinner, it’s another to stay the night.”

“It’ll be fine,” I said, squeezing his knee.

He smiled at me.

“You’re not nervous are you?”

“Of course I’m nervous. I’m some random man you met in the restaurant last night. I’m twenty years older than you and...”

“Eighteen.”

He rolled his eyes and pulled the key from the ignition, swinging open his door. We gathered our stuff from the boot. I pulled my coat on and grabbed my overnight bag. I carried the flowers and the Prosecco and he carried the champagne and my Christmas presents.

The door opened as we got to the step and my dad stared first at the car, then at Lucas. “What have you arrived in?” he asked.

I smiled. “Hi Dad.” I put an arm around him and he hugged me back.

“Come on.” He ushered me in.

“This is Lucas. This is Martin, my dad.”

“Hello,” Lucas said. He shook hands with my dad. I looked at them side by side. My dad was a trim man with grey hair and brown eyes. He looked a bit like an older version of me. He was a few inches shorter than Lucas and, what I hadn’t told Lucas,

he was only nine years older than him. They didn't look similar in age now I saw them together, much to my relief. But my dad clearly was appraising him. I hadn't brought a young man home, but a mature one. And I'd never brought a man home before at all. My dad had struggled to accept my sexuality and all these years, he'd never had to witness it at first hand, since I moved away. Now he was up close and personal with no warning beyond five hours, looking at the man who was fucking his son. An older man, closer in age to my dad than me. I held my breath and felt sick.

"Hi, Lucas, nice to meet you." My dad ushered him in. He was politeness personified but it was a stiff politeness. I think he was still getting over the shock of having Lucas thrust on him today. I dropped my stuff at the bottom of the stairs and kicked off my shoes. I hung up my coat as Lucas took his own shoes off.

Lucas glanced at me as we followed my dad down the hall to the lounge, both holding a bottle and me holding the flowers for my mum. I squeezed his hand reassuringly. He looked anxious and I wished I could smooth his troubled brow and kiss him. I looked around in admiration. The Christmas tree in front of the French doors looked amazing, loaded with beautiful decorations and twinkling with lights. The dining table was set for four, my mum's lovely attention to detail visible in the serviettes folded into fans, the holly and mistletoe wreath in the middle, the multitude of cutlery, the crystal glasses and the little bowls of snacks and nibbles. She came out of the kitchen with such a happy smile on her face when she saw me that my heart ached. She hugged me hard. There's nothing in the world like a hug from your mum. "You look so handsome," she said. I knew she was distracted by Lucas though, eyeing him over my shoulder. Who wouldn't be distracted by him?

I drew back. "These are for you." I thrust the flowers and Prosecco at her.

"Thank you darling."

"This is Lucas. Lucas, this is my mum, Pam."

“Hello,” she said, holding her hand out. I could see she was very impressed. Much more so than my dad. “Are you my son’s boyfriend?”

I let the words hang in the air between us and fumbled for something to say to save Lucas, before he replied for me. “Yes. This is for you.” He offered the champagne.

I swallowed my astonishment and he felt for my hand and squeezed it, smiling at me. I beamed back and fell just a little bit deeper over my head.

“Thank you.” My mum regarded him for a little bit longer, then she said, “What can I get you to drink?”

“He likes gin,” I said.

“Then you’ve come to the right place,” my mum said with a smile. “Come in here and see what I’ve got.”

Lucas glanced at me before he followed my mum into the kitchen to view her extensive gin collection. I wondered if she was taking the opportunity to grill him. I turned around to see my dad regarding me and steeled myself.

“Is he your sugar daddy?”

I scowled at him. “Don’t.”

“So he’s not?”

I’d never told my dad to fuck off before. Now I felt like telling him exactly that. While I stared him down, he said, “How old is he?”

“Forty-five.”

My dad's mouth tightened into a thin line.

"Would I have got the same reaction if I'd brought a forty-five-year-old woman home?" I asked.

Now he looked like he was sucking lemons. "Yes. It's nothing to do with him being a man."

"Sure it's not, Dad."

We eyed each other and I wished I hadn't come. I wished I was still in Lucas's warm, comfortable bed with him holding me. A Christmas with just the two of us would have been amazing and infinitely preferable to this. And instead, Lucas had agreed to come with me for this punishment. I bet he was re-evaluating all the choices he'd made since he met me right about now. At least he wouldn't get any shit from my mum. I was sure on that point. She didn't have it in her. Or did she? Maybe she was quietly telling him our relationship was inappropriate right at this moment. Maybe he was going to walk out of that kitchen, shake my hand, tell me he was sorry and get into his Lamborghini, driving out of my life never to be seen again. My heart sank further and further. I went out into the hall and brought in the bag of presents. I knelt and carefully unpacked them, placing them under the tree. Then I slumped onto the couch and wallowed in my own misery, ignoring my dad.

After a few excruciating moments where my dad nursed a whiskey on the other couch and looked at me, my mum and Lucas re-entered. She was carrying two crystal glasses and he was carrying one, sipping as he came. When he smiled at me, it was like the sun peeping between clouds. I was so relieved, I grinned at him and jumped to my feet. "Here you are, darling." My mum handed me a glass. "Rhubarb gin with elderflower tonic. Your favourite."

"Thanks, Mum." I took a hearty swallow.

My mum sipped her own and glanced at my dad. She crooked a finger at him with pursed lips and disappeared back into the kitchen. He and I shared a look before he followed her and the door closed firmly behind them.

I looked at Lucas apologetically. “Whatever she said, I’m sorry.”

“She didn’t say anything,” he said. “Other than to tell me I was very handsome and just the sort of man her son should be bringing home.”

I gaped at him. “She really said that?”

“Yes.”

I opened my mouth to tell him bitterly that I wished my dad had said the same, and closed it again. I’d rather he didn’t know my dad’s opinion. He might feel the urge to get in that car and drive away.

“Sit down.” I pulled him down next to me. We looked at each other as we drank. I tried to think of the words to tell him to warn him that maybe my dad might be frosty during dinner and couldn’t do it. My dad and I had never had a heart to heart talk about my sexuality. He had sat there and listened while I told him and my mum and he had never voiced an opinion. At least, not to my face. He had said plenty to my mum but she had only ever given me the edited highlights. I hadn’t expected antagonism from him when I turned up with my first man. But then I had to see it from his point of view. The age gap. A rich older man in a Lamborghini. It had made my dad bristle and feel protective. I had to convince him there was nothing sordid in our relationship. Not that we had a relationship, but I had somehow lied about that and my parents thought we did. It was better than them knowing that Lucas was, so far, a one-night stand.

I rested my hand on his knee. “I’m sorry.”

He shook his head. “You don’t need to be sorry.”

“I do. My dad, he...”

“Hey.” He put his glass down on the side table next to the couch, then cupped my cheek in his palm. “I get it. His son brings a strange man to Christmas dinner with no notice. A strange older man. I hardly expected him to roll out the red carpet.”

I bit my lip, emotion welling up in me. He was right. In what alternate universe would my dad have thrown his arms around him? He was the man fucking his son, I reminded myself again.

He stroked the curve of my jaw. “Do you want me to go?”

“No!”

He smiled at my vehemence. “I don’t want to cause any trouble.”

I eyed him anxiously. “Do you want to go?”

He shook his head. “Of course I don’t.” His gaze held mine. “I’m with you. I’m having the best birthday ever.” I blushed and felt tears prick my eyes. “I don’t want to go, but at the same time, I’m intruding on a family Christmas, we just met, and your dad doesn’t like me.”

I shook my head. “He hasn’t said that.”

He regarded me for a moment. Then he slid his hand to the back of my neck, leaning forward to rest his forehead against mine. I could almost taste the sweetness of his mouth and my stomach flooded with butterflies, my loins stirring from his warmth and closeness. I closed the inches between us to brush his lips with mine. I heard him



draw in his breath. His fingers tightened on my neck; he stroked my nape, setting me on fire. God, I wanted him. I wanted him so much. Thoughts of last night hardened my cock. Me under him, his dick stretching me open. I couldn't help the quickening of my breath and I knew he felt my arousal. The kiss deepened; his tongue touched mine, then I heard the kitchen door open.

Lucas sat back. He reached for his drink and took a gulp. My dad sat down on the opposite couch again, his gaze meeting mine. He had seen us. Did he look faintly disgusted or was it my imagination?

“Come and help me plate up the starters, love,” my mum said.

I glanced at Lucas. I expected him to look terrified at the prospect of being left alone with my dad, but he didn't. Just cool and unruffled. I admired him more and more. He could handle my dad.

I got up, taking my drink, running my hand over his shoulder as I passed. Perhaps offering him moral support even though he clearly didn't need it. I followed my mum into the kitchen and shut the door behind us, because she obviously wanted to talk about Lucas. She smiled at me as she started reaching food out of the fridge and laying it on the marble island.

“He's very attractive,” she said.

I grinned at her like a fool, taking it as a compliment on my pulling power.

“How long have you known him and why haven't you mentioned him before?”

My smile slipped. I couldn't lie to my mum. I didn't want to. I sighed. “He's not my boyfriend. I only met him last night. I'm sorry.” She raised an eyebrow. “He was going to be on his own today. He had invites but he didn't want to go anywhere. I felt

sorry for him. He would have sat at home alone. I couldn't bear it." I was gabbling, my face red.

"You spent the night with him?"

My face grew hotter. I didn't need to answer.

"How old is he?"

"Forty-five."

"I see."

"It's his birthday today," I blurted.

Her expression was open and relaxed. "Then we should make it a good one." She smiled.

I threw my arms around her. She held me tight. "I'm sorry," I said.

"You don't have to be sorry," she said, just like Lucas had.

"Dad hates him."

"He doesn't."

"He hates me too."

"No, he doesn't, Alex, it's just come as a surprise. This is the first man you've brought home and if you'd let us know, he would have had time to prepare, get used to the idea."

“He’s had five hours,” I muttered into my mum’s shoulder.

She laughed and kissed my cheek before moving away. “Wash some lettuce for me. We’re having avocado salad for starters. I think him being a vegan was more shocking to us than you bringing a man home.”

I laughed too and gulped some of my drink, feeling some of my anxiety leaching away.

“Lucky we’ve got Moira on hand, isn’t it?”

Moira was my mum’s neighbour, a crazy cat lady with a heart of solid gold who baked treats and cakes for my parents all the time.

“I went over there for advice because she always has her vegan granddaughter around for Christmas, and lo and behold if she didn’t have plenty of everything to share. He’s not going to go hungry, bless her.”

I smiled.

## Page 15

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Lucas

I was left alone with Alex's dad. Just perfect. He nursed a glass of whiskey while eyeing me like Alex had brought home some sort of serial killer, cannibal and kitten eater all rolled into one. You're fucking his son, I reminded myself for not the first time. How exactly does he accept that when he's probably trying his hardest not to picture the two of you in bed together?

Martin was a handsome man. An older version of Alex. A preview of what my young lover would look like in thirty years.

"So, Lucas," Martin said after he'd let the excruciating silence drag on long enough. "What do you do for a living?"

"I own an underwear company," I said, and found myself cringing inwardly.

He raised an eyebrow. "Women's underwear or...just men's?"

He made me feel like some sort of pervert. I was gay therefore I must get a thrill from making a living from men's underwear. "Just men's," I said, holding my chin up and keeping my gaze on his. Was he going to ask me now if I dealt mainly in kinky underwear for gay men?

"Hmm," he said. "What's your last name?"

"Rainford," I said.

He nodded then, looking surprised. "I've seen your stuff in the shops. It's nice."

Was that a compliment? I nearly had to pinch myself. He'd realised I wasn't a pornography peddler but made an honest living selling nice underwear to ordinary blokes. "Thanks," I said.

"You must make a good living," he said and gestured with his head in the direction of the front door. I presumed he meant the Lambo.

"It's not mine," I said, feeling embarrassed by the car as I always did. I wasn't a flash bastard which not everyone understood. "It's on loan."

"Right," he said, looking bemused.

I needed to change the subject. I hate talking about me and my dull life. At all costs I had to dodge any questions about mine and Alex's history and any subsequent revelations about me being on my own at Christmas. "Alex says you teach English literature," I said.

He seemed surprised again. Was it a bonus point to his son that he had talked about his parents to his older man? "That's right," he said. "Do you like to read?"

Damn it, he'd brought it back around to me again. "Very much," I said which was almost an understatement. I got through two books a week. I constantly bought books to add to my library and I kept a reading journal. Confirmed bookworm. There was nothing I would rather do in the whole world. Apart from make love to Alex as I'd discovered last night. Just the thought stirred me inappropriately and I felt heat crawl up from my shirt collar.

"Who's your favourite author?" he asked.

“Emile Bront?,” I said and wondered if he was going to judge me on this. Wuthering Heights perhaps wasn’t the most masculine of books and no doubt he would think I had a crush on Heathcliff from a young age, and he’d be right. How could I not? A savage, wild bastard who loved with violence and desperation from the bottom of his black heart.

“She only wrote one book,” he said.

“And what a book it was,” I countered. Could you not be a great author if you’d only written one book? Besides, we had her poetry too.

He inclined his head. “Who else?”

“Edgar Allan Poe.”

He looked impressed. “I’m teaching American authors this semester. Poe, Hawthorne, Twain.”

I nodded. “The Scarlet Letter is a great book.” Was I trying to impress him now? Perhaps a little. I hope he didn’t ask me about Mark Twain, because I found him dull as ditch water.

“Yes,” he said. “Do you like Dickens?”

“Who doesn’t?” I said.

“What’s your favourite Dickens novel?”

I eyed him. This felt like it had turned into some kind of literature test that I had to pass. Would any partner of Alex’s get this third degree or was it just rich older men who were supposed to know things? Good job I did then. “A Tale of Two Cities,” I

said. "It was the first one of his I read, and I still love it."

Martin nodded as though satisfied. "What other classics do you like?"

I could talk about books all day until the cows came home but still, this felt like an interrogation, not a pleasant chat. I imagined a lie detector coming out next, me strapped to it while Martin stood over me in his vest, smoking, and asked me, Have you read War and Peace , yes or no? And no lying or I start chopping fingers off.

I visualised my expansive shelf of cloth bound classics and the way Alex had hung over them with delight last night. " The Count of Monte Cristo ," I said. "I've read it three times."

"A great book," Martin agreed with me. He waited, obviously expecting me to name more. Was he going to sit there watching me until I named every classic I'd ever read and he found me wanting because I hadn't read enough? It was true that not all those lovely editions of the classics on my shelf had been opened.

" Crime and Punishment ," I said. "I want to read that one again." It was the truth but I was starting to sweat a little under my arms and down my back. I didn't even sweat when I had to stand up in front of all my employees and give a speech. I didn't sweat when we had our monthly board meeting and tough questions were asked. When was this going to end? Alex's dad looked at me. He was going to ask me about War and Peace, I knew he was. I was one of those people who'd had it on his shelf twenty years and picked it up a dozen times, then put it down, put off by the small type and the length. When I'd bought it, I didn't need reading glasses. Now I couldn't see a bloody thing and used a reading light in bed for paperbacks. I should just get it on Kindle and use the big font for blind old farts, and get it over with. A great work of literature shouldn't be an obstacle you needed to conquer though. I'd seen War and Peace adaptations on the telly and liked them. I'd read Anna Karenina and loved it and that was nearly as long, so what was the problem? Maybe it was the ridiculous

pages-long list of characters in the front of the book or how everyone had three names plus nicknames which confused me no end.

He was going to ask me and I was going to be shamed in his eyes because I hadn't read War and Peace. He'd tell me to get out of his house and never come back because a man who hadn't read Tolstoy's greatest work was not fit to lick his son's boots. Or any other part of him. Oh God, now was not the time to start thinking about licking parts of Alex and how much I'd enjoyed it.

Martin opened his mouth to speak as the kitchen door swung open and Alex and his mum came out holding two small plates each. "Starters are served," Alex said, looking at me. He was flushed and his eyes were sparkling. He seemed happier than he'd been since we arrived. I felt a couple of the knots in my stomach ease. Perhaps his mum had given her blessing. But still, after dessert I was clearly going to end up being strapped to the lie detector and my War and Peace shame revealed to the entire family.

Alex ushered me to a chair. He took the one next to me and although I was relieved I didn't have to sit next to his dad, I found myself opposite Martin instead. He shook out his serviette and laid it on his lap while still eyeing me. Perhaps he was going to mention other titanic works of literature that I should have read by rights but never had because I'd always heard they were giant borefests, like Moby Dick or Don Quixote .

Pam was smiling at me as she went around the table pouring white wine into glasses. She paused at my glass. "Wine?"

"Just half a glass, thanks," I said because I wasn't sure about the sleeping arrangements and very much had the urge to flee as soon as dessert was concluded. She ignored me and poured a full glass so I resolved to make it last for the full meal and eat plenty to soak it up. The way home would be a dark, treacherous nightmare



that I didn't want to contemplate at the moment.

Alex picked up his cutlery and started to tuck into his starter with gusto. I liked what I saw. Avocado on a bed of mixed leaves and spinach, with baby plum tomatoes and pearl barley.

"I put the dressing separate," Pam gestured to the tiny jug by my plate. "In case you didn't like it. It's a mustard vinaigrette. No honey obviously."

I smiled and used the teaspoon to drizzle it all over my salad before I started eating. The flavours burst over my tongue and I noticed the garlic in the dressing immediately. I glanced at Alex and he grinned at me as though he read my mind, a big piece of spinach stuck in his front teeth. Rather than offend me, it made him even more endearing to me. Damn, I had it bad.

"There's a lot of garlic, Mum," he said. "Lucas won't want to come anywhere near me later."

I swallowed and almost choked on some rocket, unable to help myself glancing at Martin. He didn't say anything but looked like he was trying to hide a scowl.

Pam smiled and said with twinkling eyes, "Yes, he will, sweetie, you're too adorable to stay away from, no matter if you stink."

Hadn't she got that right? I couldn't care less about his garlic breath. If I woke up tomorrow morning with him wrapped around me breathing stale fumes all over my face, I'd be the happiest man alive.

Alex laughed. Under the table, he rested his hand on my thigh and squeezed reassuringly. I tensed immediately. Do not get an erection at the dinner table. Under any circumstances. That didn't work. For a moment I was transported back to that

dark room with his lean body under mine as I thrust into him. Fuck.

I coughed. “This is lovely.” I indicated the salad. “The dressing is perfect.”

“Thank you, darling,” Alex’s mum said and I was startled by the endearment. When was the last time someone called me that? “I suppose I should have asked you if there was anything you didn’t like, although when you’re vegan, I tend to assume you must like all fruit and vegetables, which can’t be true.”

I smiled. “You’re right. It’s not.” I didn’t want to tell her about the sprouts. They were a mainstay of any Christmas dinner.

“He hates sprouts,” Alex said with his mouth full, squeezing my thigh.

I looked at Pam apologetically as though she’d be offended. She just laughed. “Who does? I just do them because it’s tradition. I force them down Alex every year.”

“She does,” Alex confirmed. “And I still don’t have the balls to refuse them.”

“Language,” Pam said.

“Sorry, Mum.”

“No sprouts,” she said. “Anything else?”

I gestured to the small dish in the middle of the table. “Those.”

Alex mimed sticking his fingers down his throat and made puking noises. “Yeah. The devil’s veg.”

I laughed.

“Actually,” Martin said. “Seeing as they have a stone, they’re actually a fruit.”

Alex snorted. “All right, Professor, They’re still minging.”

Everyone laughed while I looked at Martin. Dear God, was Alex joking or was his dad actually a professor? If he was, then fuck War and Peace , he’d hunt me down like the Philistine I was when he found out I hadn’t read Homer’s Odyssey or The Canterbury Tales .

Martin made a big show of popping an olive in his mouth and chewing with satisfaction. “Mmm,” he said and pulled his tongue out at Alex.

I saw the love there then as they looked at each other. This was difficult for Alex’s dad, but he loved his son. Both Alex’s parents clearly adored him. He was a lucky man and I was lucky to be welcome here today. In the heart of a family I’d never had. People had come and gone throughout my life and I had learned never to get attached to the good ones. Maybe that’s why I was alone now. I didn’t form relationships. Safer that way. I felt my eyes start to sting and cursed myself for my softness. It must have been the booze. It had gotten me maudlin last night too when I’d sat there in that posh, noisy restaurant full of people out with their loved ones and asked myself why I deserved to be alone. I didn’t consider myself to be a bad person. I treated others as I would want to be treated myself and yet, they kept their distance. Or was it all me holding them at arms’ length?

I felt Alex’s gaze on me and glanced at him. He was watching me with concern, his look penetrating as though he could see right inside me to the frightened core of the child I still was. He stroked my thigh again, lifted an eyebrow enquiringly, and I nodded. I was okay. I had to be. A part of me wanted to be at home alone though. Sitting in my library with the fire lit and a book on my knee. A cup of hot chocolate on the table beside me and only the silence and my own thoughts for company. My thoughts did me no good though. Never had. And despite all the mindfulness and a

shelf full of meditation books, I still hadn't learned to master them. Instead, they mastered me.

I carried on eating. I would make my excuses and leave straight after dessert. Hopefully, Alex wouldn't be too offended, because I wanted to see him again. Really wanted to see him again. But would he want to see me again? Hadn't I given him a glimpse into my inner self, warts and all? He'd got an idea of the sort of man I was and that man wasn't fun to be around. He was old before his time, a recluse who preferred his own company and relied on himself alone in times of trouble. It was too late for me to change any of that. I held a sigh inside. It had been a magical night with Alex and it had carried on into today. He had shown me a great time, but it was over. I had to let him go.

## Page 16

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Alex

I could see Lucas retreating into his shell as the meal wore on. Did he regret coming here? It had to be my dad and his attitude. Who needed that shit on their birthday? Or maybe my mum had said something to him when they were alone in the kitchen even though he'd said not. Made him see that I was too young for him or something, or too much responsibility to take on with my fragile mental health. My dad was quiet too. It was my mum and me who kept the conversation going past the main course and Christmas cracker pulling and into dessert.

Then mum asked me to help dish up and left him once more alone with my dad. Poor bastard. As she reached covered dishes out of the fridge she said, "Are you both staying tonight?"

I looked at her in astonishment. Lucas refusing any more alcohol after the gin and a glass of wine told me he was biding his time until he felt it wasn't impolite to leave. I'm guessing as soon as dessert was finished he'd be off. I should leave with him. "I don't think so," I said.

"You can both stay," she said. "It's fine. The snow's really coming down now. I don't want you driving home in this. It's not safe."

I swallowed. "I don't think he wants to stay. And where would he sleep?" A silly question as there was plenty of room, but I held my breath, expecting her to say we would have separate rooms.

"He can sleep with you."

I stared at her.

She popped a Christmas pudding into the microwave and turned the dial around. “This has got eggs in, so he can’t have any, but I got some nice treats from Moira.” She peeled the foil off a plate containing a whole range of bite size desserts—brownies, cakes and chocolates.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

She nodded. “Get some plates out for me, sweetie, and put some cream in a jug.”

I did as I was told.

“And there in the door of the fridge. A can of squirty vegan cream. Not posh, but better than nothing. And the mince pies are vegan too.”

I smiled. “I love you.”

“And I love you too. I’m so glad you’re home.”

I saw her eyes were dewed with tears and my stomach clenched. I fought back my own. “He shouldn’t stay. Dad doesn’t want him here.”

“Not true. Leave your dad to me.”

Lucas looked relieved when I went back to the table carrying several plates and his platter of goodies. My mum followed, pointing out which was vegan and which wasn’t as we set everything down and went back for more. Mum had made up a big bowl of fruit too and brought in some sparkling elderflower drink which Lucas accepted. We helped ourselves to dessert and he took two of the little treats and added a blob of squirty cream to both.

I grinned at him. "I knew you were a squirty cream sort of bloke."

"Anyone who says they don't squirt some straight in their mouth from the fridge is a liar," he said.

"Guilty," I said.

My mum nudged my dad. "He does."

He scowled. "I don't."

"I've caught you loads of times. Sometimes he pops a strawberry in then squirts the cream on top."

"So classy." I smirked at my dad. He was smiling, taking it in good humour.

I stroked Lucas's leg again and this time I thought the tense muscle had relaxed just a touch which had to be a win.

"Do you play chess, Lucas?" my dad asked out of the blue and I gaped at him. There it was. An invitation to chess. It didn't get much better than that.

"Yes," Lucas said and I smiled so hard I thought my face would crack.

Coffee was accompanied by after dinner liqueurs. "You can take a drink, Lucas," Mum said. "You're both staying."

Lucas glanced at me, trying, it seemed, not to look too horrified, and I just beamed at him because I was a bit drunk and all was right with the world. I was going to stay here in my mum and dad's lovely cosy house with Lucas lying beside me. Nothing could be more perfect.

Warmth heated my stomach as I remembered last night and I shifted in my chair as my dick hardened. That was one thing we couldn't do tonight under my parents' roof. No way. As much as I wanted it. And I really wanted it. I squeezed his leg and when he looked at me, I'm guessing he saw the desire in my eyes because I felt him tense, then shift in his chair, his pupils dilating. Yeah, he was as hard as me and wanted to fuck me. I don't know how my parents couldn't feel the electricity crackling between us. How exactly would I keep my hands off him later? The scent of his alluring aftershave wafted over to me. I felt the heat and solidity of his body and remembered what he looked like naked. Like a God. Solid and hard and... I ground my teeth. Perhaps I could go to the toilet for a quick wank. The way I was going, I was going to come in my pants if I didn't.

We got to the present opening finally. The four of us on the floor by the Christmas tree, passing gifts to each other. My mum had bought me a mountain of presents as she always had from being a baby. I doubted my dad ever had much input other than money into these. This year there was a new Kindle and I squawked in delight because my model was ancient and on its last legs. Lucas nodded in approval and smiled as I fawned and shrieked. This was followed by some good old fashioned paperbacks, chocolates, my favourite toiletries and some clothes. My mum always got everything right. She knew me inside out and had never bought me a bad present.

I'd bought her a pair of diamond earrings. They had cost me a fortune on Ebay but well under the retail value and came with one of those certificates to say the diamonds were real and not some knock off Christmas cracker shite. My dad was harder to buy for. I tried to avoid the cliché of socks, but it was hard. This year I'd bought him a few books from Waterstones and he looked delighted enough. So did Lucas. I nudged him. "Jealous?"

"A bit," he responded with a smile. It was a winsome smile though. I hadn't missed the edge of unease he had during present opening. I was guessing he had never had this before. Sitting around a tree opening presents. But there was one here for him



with a tag inscribed to him from my parents and he looked at them both with embarrassed astonishment when my mum handed it over. Where had she got a gift for him at such short notice? I had no idea any shops were open on Christmas Day and I doubted even Amazon would be willing to send somebody around on today of all days. It didn't look like she was going to spill the beans. She glanced at me with a serene smile that said not telling.

Lucas tore open the brown paper printed with red Christmas trees. Only recyclable paper for my mum. Inside was an adult colouring book called Vegan Problems Not Safe for Work Edition together with a box of expensive marker pens. I sniggered as Lucas flicked through the pages looking bemused and I saw multiple expletives.

"It's for stress relief," my mum said hurriedly. "You know, mindfulness."

"Of course," Lucas said with a smile edging onto his face.

I nudged him. "Perfect to take to the board room for one of your boring meetings."

The warm look he gave me nearly curled my toes. I marvelled again that this gorgeous, adorable man was here with me on Christmas Day. I needed to go for that wank badly.

"Happy birthday," mum said and he thanked her graciously.

I shifted on the floor, bringing my knees up to hide the bulge in my pants and wishing we'd booked in at the shit hotel on the way here for fast, furious sex.

Present opening was finally over. Lucas was sitting stiffly on the couch at the opposite end to my dad, the chessboard set up on the marble-topped table between them. I excused myself and while visitors normally used the downstairs bathroom in the entrance hall, I ran noiselessly upstairs in my socks and locked myself in the

bathroom. There I let a groan spill from my mouth as I ran a hand over my pants, teasing the shape of my hard cock. I was torn between dwelling on Lucas's unease and worrying about what it meant for our future beyond this day, and satisfying myself as quickly and dirtily as I could.

My baser urges won. I yanked my belt open followed by my button and zip, dragging my erection from my underpants and aiming it over the sink as I stroked greedily from root to tip. I gasped in relief at the feel of my hand on my needy flesh and shut my eyes, conjuring up last night to help me over the finish line. The dark room, his amazing body, him going down on me, the feel of his hot, wet mouth around my swollen cock and then his fingers inside me, stroking my prostate. I shivered as I jerked my dick hard, remembering the feel of him penetrating me, how he felt in my arse, filling me so full, so perfectly. "Fuck," I moaned out. "Please." As though I was back on that bed begging him to fuck me. I wanted to beg him again. I wanted him to be here behind me, bending me over the sink. Making me beg him for it before he slid inside and made me scream.

I couldn't last. I didn't want to last. I wanked myself into oblivion, coming with a cry, spurting into the sink and onto the tiles behind it, thick hot ropes, emptying my balls with one spasm after another. I withered over the sink, panting hard, wrung out and still wishing his dick was in my arse.

Lucas

Alex looked flushed when he reappeared in the lounge. I regarded him curiously while I waited for his dad to move. So far we'd been dancing around each other on the chessboard with no first blood spilt. Alex seemed shifty. He grabbed his drink off the dining table and took a seat opposite with a little smile on his face. I thought I knew that smile. After all, I'd fucked him last night. Had he been...? He couldn't have, could he? I stared at him. He'd been for a wank at Christmas dinner with his parents? Alex smiled. Then he winked at me and blew a kiss. I blushed scarlet and dipped my gaze, fixing it unseeingly on pawns and knights and black and white squares. Fuck, that dirty little minx! I felt both appalled and admiring. An image of him with his dick in his hand jerking off and gasping drifted into my mind. My trousers started to tighten and I shifted on the couch. God, I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall in that bathroom. Then I imagined him lying face down and naked on my bed when I got him home while I punished him for being a dirty bastard and rubbing one out in his parents' house. What form would that punishment take? I'd spank him. Tell him how bad he was as my hand left red marks on his plump little cheeks. He'd cry out, tell me he was sorry, all the while wriggling on the sheets with his thighs spread wide, inviting me. After lubing him up, I'd push inside him and he'd cry out, his tight arse milking my cock.

I squeezed my eyes shut. Holy fuck, what was wrong with me? My dick was painfully rigid. I had to cross my legs and angle my body away from Martin, who was still studying the board intently. Alex continued to smirk. He ran his tongue over his lips slowly and I shook my head, throwing daggers looks at him. I would definitely punish him. Maybe I would gag him and take him on his childhood bed upstairs later, telling him one sound would result in a worse punishment when I had the leisure to

attend to him at my house. These thoughts were not helping calm me down. Could I also go and rub one out in the bathroom? Why not? He bloody had. But I wasn't that kind of bloke. I wasn't some raving sex maniac that needed to wank off in the in-laws' toilet. Ha ha, in-laws. Yeah, right. I had never been that highly sexed. I lived like a monk. I had never been prone to rash, dirty behaviour and public exhibitionism. So why did Alex make me want to indulge now? Why did I like the idea of fantasizing about being inside Alex while climaxing in my hosts' bathroom? What a terrible person I was.

I had a stern word with myself then. You're forty-five years old for fuck's sake and just because he's made you feel like a teenager again, doesn't mean you should disrespect your kind hosts by wanking in their toilet. Or fucking their son when you get him up to bed for that matter, if your thoughts go that way. Which they will. And they mustn't.

I felt chastened. Shame on me. Alex watched me with hot eyes and I had a flashback of him lying beneath me, naked, his pale skin glowing in the light from the landing as he asked me to fuck him. Please. Please fuck me. God, I couldn't stop with the explicit images. Him with my dick in his mouth, looking up at me from beneath his thick lashes. My cock was throbbing, oozing pre-cum into my underwear.

Gritting my teeth, I turned my attention fully to the chessboard and tried to tune Alex out. I remembered the promise I had made to myself to give him up after tonight. I would not be good for him. He didn't need someone like me. Someone withdrawn and socially awkward. He was a young man who wouldn't take kindly to long nights by the fire reading. He needed a strong rock of a man to lean on in times of trouble, a port in a storm for his fragile mental health, not a man who was damaged goods with too much baggage of his own.

A surprising ache blossomed through my chest at the thought of never seeing him again. It wasn't just the amazing sex, it was the connection we had forged last night.

The kindness and warmth he had shown me when I was dining alone. The way he had restored my faith in humanity. How could I let all that go?

“Check,” Martin said and my attention jerked to his hand as he took my castle with his own, nestling his piece right in my back line.

Fuck. I hadn’t seen that coming. A small smile curled around his mouth. I glanced at Alex to see he was grinning too. They were ganging up on me. I reached for a sip of gin from the table on my other side. Sometime over coffee I had decided to stay the night. How could I refuse when it had been offered? How would it look if I left Alex here and set off back to London in this weather? The curtains were open and my glance confirmed snow was still coming down thickly, shrouding the whole street in white. The Lambo would never make it back down the hill. Well, it would, but it would be at a hundred miles an hour, taking out every other vehicle in the vicinity and catapulting me off a cliff into the sea. I almost laughed at the image.

I looked at Alex again and despite my intentions to let him go, I wanted to sack off this game so I could sit over there on the couch with him, my arm around him and him leaning back against me, his head on my shoulder so I could breathe in the scent of his lovely hair.

Warmth spread through me. I ached to feel his weight against me and reassure myself that I was wanted. He wanted me. I shouldn’t throw that away. Not for anything. Would a man like him come along again in my lifetime? It was doubtful. I smiled at him as my heat melted, wide open to him and ripe for the taking. I just hoped he didn’t break it.

“Are you moving?” Martin asked when mine and Alex’s gazes remained locked for too long. “Or are you going to carry on making eyes at my son while I wipe the floor with you?”

I cleared my throat and tried to focus, my face heating. The sooner I threw this game, the sooner I could make it over there to Alex. I didn't want to throw it though. It would cause Martin to have an even lower opinion of me than I guess he already had. I needed to beat him, or at least go down with a fight. I moved my king out of check and too late saw my queen was exposed. Jesus Christ, what the hell was I doing? Since when did I make such rookie errors? Was it the booze or just Alex crashing into my life like a whirlwind and turning everything I knew upside down?

With a smirk, Martin took my queen. I retaliated by taking his castle with my king but the damage had already been done. I'd never won a game when I'd lost my queen. I didn't know how to. I thought I was an okay chess player, but no way was I a master tactician. I looked at Alex again and hoped he wasn't too disappointed that his dad was pasting me. Alex gave me a sweet smile and pursed his lips at me and once more my treacherous cock jumped and begged to be allowed access to him. At that point, Martin swooped from nowhere with his bishop and took my knight.

For fuck's sake.

"Might I say, son, that if you stop blowing kisses at him, he might perform a whole lot better," Martin said without looking at Alex.

I shrivelled, my face glowing, but Alex merely laughed. He was tipsier than he had been last night. "Come on, Dad," he said. "He's a man who needs to have guys blowing kisses at him."

I didn't know what that meant, but it just made me blush harder. I hurriedly moved a pawn without really considering the board. With a dramatic sigh, Martin brought his queen out of nowhere. "Checkmate," he said. "You lost him the game, Alex."

I groaned inwardly at my own inadequacy. I knew I was inadequate through and through. I hadn't intended to show Alex's parents that I was.

“These aren’t the best circumstances to appreciate his true talent at the game,” Alex said with a sniff. “He’s nervous and drunk,”—I wasn’t really—“and you’re putting a lot of pressure on him.”

I took a hefty swig of my gin and said nothing. My thoughts drifted to bedtime, to lying beside Alex with his parents on the other side of the wall, not being able to touch him, and I wished I’d gone home where I could wank in secluded luxury and relive our night together.

“Okay, okay,” Martin said, standing up. “Next time we meet and we’re sober, we’ll have a rematch.” He wandered off to the kitchen and I stared after him. Next time ? He was expecting Alex to bring me home again? Obviously Alex hadn’t yet told him I was his son’s Christmas Eve lover and after today we went our separate ways.

As though he read my mind, Alex said, “I told my mum. That I only met you last night. I don’t know if she’s told him yet or not.”

I cringed. “Right.” I really, really needed to get out of there and cursed the weather and the amount of alcohol in my blood.

“You’re wishing you’d gone,” Alex said with his eyes all big like a wounded puppy’s.

I sighed. “It wasn’t the best idea for me to stay. I should call a taxi.”

He barked a laugh. “A taxi? How much will that cost on Christmas Day?”

I raised an eyebrow at him.

“Oh right, yeah, you can afford it. And what about your car?”

I said nothing.

“Please don’t tell me this is the end,” Alex said and I saw he had tears in his eyes which brought a lump to my throat.

I shook my head. “I want to see you again. Very much.”

“Are you just saying that until you can get away?”

I swallowed. “No. But you need to know what you’re getting yourself into.”

“And vice versa,” he said. “I think I’ve got the better end of the deal.”

I smiled and shook my head. Getting up, I crossed the small gap between us and sat next to him on the couch. Then I pulled him to me like I’d wanted to do while I was over there playing chess with his dad. He fitted so perfectly into my arms, his head on my shoulder where I could stroke his hair and press my lips to it. I felt the constriction in my chest ease and something like happiness overtake me.

“Please don’t go,” he whispered. Then he looked up at me with those eyes and I wondered if anyone had ever managed to deny Alex anything in his life. How could you?

“Your dad doesn’t want me here,” I said, floundering, needing that reason to get away.

“He does. Do you think he asks just anyone to play chess with him?”

Our gazes remained fixed. I traced his cheek with my fingertips before I lowered my lips to his. Heat sparked between us. The kiss went from a soft brush to firmer pressure to a deep exploration with tongues and lots of heavy breathing with a



corresponding rush of blood to my dick, making it ache beyond all endurance.

I pulled away with a groan and put my mouth to his ear. “Listen to me. If I stay, I won’t be responsible for what I do to you.”

Alex let loose a little whimper, his eyes closed, his eyelashes trembling against his cheeks. “I want you,” he said in a whisper. “I want you so much it hurts.”

I ground my teeth, moving away from him when I wanted nothing more than to nail him to the couch, plunging into him over and over again.

Alex

As soon as I lay down that night in bed, I felt tiredness overtake me. I yawned, snuggling beneath the duvet in the dark, listening to the distant run of water in the bathroom as Lucas got ready for bed.

Mum had got some board games out. We'd had a few more drinks and some cheese and biscuits. Of course she'd managed to find some stinky blue vegan stuff for Lucas from the ever-obliging Moira. We'd picked at some chocolates and nuts and slumped virtually comatose with our fat bellies like millions of others all over the world. Not everyone though. I was well aware of how lucky I was. If it wasn't for my parents, I'd be in my dreary little flat alone. Although I guess Max or someone else from the restaurant would have invited me for dinner. I was doubly lucky to have Lucas here with me, more so that he hadn't gone home even though he clearly wanted to. I heard the bathroom door open and shivered in anticipation.

He came into the room and shut the door. I watched his silhouette in the dark as he shed his clothes, folding them neatly over the back of the chair in the corner. I'd found a new toothbrush for him, still in the wrapper, and given him my toiletry bag to use after me.

When he turned, I saw the thick outline of his half-hard dick as he pulled the covers back and crawled into bed, and I gritted my teeth. Nothing could happen tonight. But if it didn't, I'd be so hard for him, we'd have to pull in tomorrow at that manky hotel we'd been outside earlier today. I smothered a giggle as he settled beside me, lying on his side. We watched each other in silence, our faces close, but not touching.

“I hope it hasn’t been too awful for you today,” I said.

“Are you joking?” he replied. “Your mum’s waited on me hand and foot. She’s gone out of her way to find me vegan food.”

“And my dad?” I asked with a sarcastic eyebrow lift that he probably couldn’t see in the dark.

“Well, he beat my arse at chess.”

I smiled. “I appreciate you staying even though you didn’t want to.”

He sighed. “It wasn’t that I didn’t want to, I just...I don’t want to make things difficult between you and your dad. The first time you bring a man home, that bloke shouldn’t be sleeping with his son right next door.”

“We’re not next door, we’re down the other end of the hall.”

“Don’t be pedantic. You know what I mean. You should have eased him in gradually.”

I couldn’t help the crude reply. “Like you did with me last night?”

Lucas gave a little growl. He reached out and smoothed his hand over my shoulder, down my arm and onto my hip, his fingers warm and soft and making me shiver. “Just like that.”

I bit my lip. God, I wanted him. His fingertips traced slow circles on my hip, the only contact of our bodies. “I need to suck your dick,” I said in a whisper.

He groaned. “Don’t. You can’t.”

“I can. You need it and I want to give it to you. As a birthday present.” I laughed at my own joke.

He squirmed as I shifted across the bed and clambered on top of him. “Don’t. You already gave me plenty...” He gasped as my mouth found his throat. “Stop.” His protests were half-hearted at best. He breathed hard as I worked my way down his chest with kisses, sliding beneath the covers. “Alex.” He grabbed my hair.

His cock was lying hard against his belly. He arched with a moan when I flicked my tongue over the already leaking head.

“Let me,” I whispered. “Let me make you come.”

Lucas fell back, fingers tangling harder in my hair, stifling a moan as I opened my mouth and swallowed as much of his length down as I could. “Oh God, Alex,” he gasped out in a ragged whisper, shifting restlessly beneath me, spreading his legs.

I drew back, licked a trail from tip to root, then focused on his balls, sucking one then the other. While I did that, I stroked the little spot behind his balls gently, taking my time, not trying to freak him out or bring back unpleasant memories. While he flinched initially, he let me do it, sprawled beneath me in supplication, his breath coming in pants.

I went back to his cock, licking around the head, tonguing the slit while I pressed against his perineum, trying to stimulate his prostate from the outside in. “God,” he said, jerking under my touch, both hands plunging into my hair and holding my head. “God.”

I sucked his dick with an ever-increasing rhythm as I stroked him and his trembling body beneath me told me I was getting it just right. Harder and harder he breathed, sliding about on the sheets as I took him right to the back of my throat and my fingers

pressed over and over again at that soft strip of skin. His gasps came to a crescendo; his dick stiffened to iron hard in my mouth and he shuddered all over as though from an electric shock.

Hot cum spurted into my mouth and I swallowed it all, continuing to suck until he lost every drop. As I eased back, he released his grip on my hair and fell back on the bed like a bundle of jelly, panting and gasping, still trying his best to stifle his sounds. I smiled to myself and ran my tongue around the rim of his cockhead then over his slit, collecting the last taste of him. Never had I enjoyed giving a blow job so much.

“Oh fuck, Alex,” he said, his voice hoarse.

I wondered how quiet we had been and if we had been heard. I slid up his body and buried my face in the crook of his neck, inhaling the scent of his soft skin.

He wrapped his arms around me, one hand stroking my head. I felt his heart beating against my chest. “You shouldn’t have done that,” he said in a whisper.

“Of course I should,” I retorted with my mouth brushing his ear. I liked the way he shivered with the contact of my lips. One of his hands slid over my arse in a caress.

“I need to return the favour,” he said in such a tone that my already very hard dick throbbed with need.

“You can’t,” I said, squirming, acutely aware that no way could I be as quiet when coming as he had been.

“Yes, I can,” he replied, his fingers sliding down the cleft of my arse before cupping my balls between my spread legs. “Do you want to sit on my face?”

I have no idea how I didn’t come right then and there from the power of that

whispered suggestion. My cock spurted pre-cum though and he gave a little laugh as he felt it against his belly. "Come here," he said and gripped my hips, manoeuvring me up his body. I let him take me. I was only a man after all. A man who needed to come so badly I couldn't think of anything else.

He got my knees over his shoulders so I was straddling his face, holding onto the headboard. How was this going to be a quiet position when I would probably rock the headboard like he was fucking me as I fucked his mouth?

He opened his mouth wide as I guided my dick beyond his lips. I gasped at the wet contact of his hot mouth as I slid into his throat. He gripped my arse cheeks with both hands and lay still, encouraging me to fuck his mouth. I didn't need the invitation twice. I thrust and he sucked and I soared away on a tide of pleasure. It was going to be quick. There was no doubting that. Minute man was going to come down his throat after barely a few thrusts.

His hand came up to my mouth, fingers seeking. I sucked on two of them as he pushed them inside. Then I saw his intention as his fingers felt between my cheeks, rubbing my saliva over my entrance, teasing it open. I stifled a groan with a hand over my mouth as one finger penetrated me. My breathing was heavy. I'd always loved something in my arse while I was being blown. I was hanging onto that headboard with my other hand for dear life. He found my prostate with that finger and I jerked forward with an electric shock, my cock spurting, nearly choking him.

Holy fuck, this was such a bad idea. I wanted to scream in my pleasure as he tapped on my gland, stroking, massaging, making my dick jerk and leak. With self-control I didn't realise I had, I eased my dick free of his mouth and sat above him, shaking, his finger still in my arse. "I can't," I said in an unsteady whisper. "I'm going to make too much noise."

In the dark I could see his white teeth as he smiled. Then his hands found my hips

and he was manoeuvring me once again, turning me around on his body so my arse was on his face. I stifled another moan as I leaned forward, my mouth honing in on his cock. He was thickening again and as I took him inside, he started to harden just nicely. Gripping my arse cheeks, he parted them and found my hole with his tongue.

I gasped around his cock and started to suck him hard while he rimmed me. It was a better idea. I couldn't grasp the headboard and rock it against the wall like this and his dick plugged up my cries of pleasure. He gave a rim job like no other, his tongue burrowing and wet and indefatigable. I bounced on his dick with my mouth, dribbling down the shaft, coating it thickly in saliva while I squeezed and massaged his balls. Meanwhile, he worked two fingers into my wet arse and continued to lick around my hole while he fucked me with them. His other hand found my dick and wanked me off.

The blow job I was giving him became clumsy and uncoordinated. I panted hard for breath, pleasure rippling through every cell in my body and I felt his arousal in every line of his body, the tensing of his muscles beneath me, the stifling of his groans. He withdrew his fingers and pushed his tongue inside me and it took me over the edge. I came into his swiftly jerking hand, keeping my mouth around his dick so I couldn't scream and praying I didn't bite him. Everything whited out as I shook on top of him. Then my mouth was full of cum and I gulped, swallowing everything he had to offer and still my limbs shook as I came and came and came as though the orgasm would never end.

I slumped down onto him barely conscious.

Lucas

When I came around, the room was full of sunlight, shining on the bed through the thin curtains. I was lying on my side facing Alex. His sherry eyes were open and he was watching me. I felt delicious warmth invade my chest, my stomach and lower down, stiffening my morning semi.

“Hello,” he said. His smile was almost shy, as though he were embarrassed by the wanton man who had sat on his lover’s face the night before.

“Hello, you,” I said, beaming from ear to ear in a most unfamiliar way. I had it bad. There was no denying it. I remembered creeping to the bathroom in the dead of night, washing off my cock and belly, washing my face and brushing my teeth again, all the while grinning to myself with my dick twitching at the memory of our illicit sex. I felt like a bloody teenager again and I loved it.

He touched my hand, interlacing his fingers with mine. “How are you?”

“I’m okay.” I realised at that moment that my head was hurting but it wasn’t enough to put a dampener on things.

“Good.” He leaned forward, brushing his nose against mine before his plush lips settled on mine and I was swept away to Alexland. We kissed slowly, gently, sweetly, with all the time in the world, our tongues held back.

A knock on the door startled us apart. “Put each other down, boys, breakfast is ready.”



Alex gave me a rueful smile. “Thanks, Mum.” He gave me another peck on the lips. “Later,” he said and that word was so full of promise I wondered how I would contain myself on the way back to London.

The kitchen was full of delicious scents as I took a place next to Alex at the marble island. We had glasses of water and cranberry juice already poured. I felt pretty scruffy in yesterday’s shirt and suit seeing as I hadn’t brought anything with me, but Alex had produced clean socks and underpants for me—my own of course—which eased the pain somewhat.

His mum set two hot plates before us and I was thrilled by what I saw. Sourdough bread with smashed avocado and chia seeds and what looked like scrambled tofu on the side, with tomatoes, mushrooms and spinach. I saw Alex had the same. He didn’t comment, just grinned at me and tucked in. I was overwhelmed at Pam’s thoughtfulness. Condiments were set out—balsamic vinegar, black pepper and pink Himalayan salt. I added some balsamic vinegar to the avocado and set about demolishing the food.

Pam was setting up the posh coffee maker on one of the counters. “Coffee, Lucas?” she asked.

“Please, I said.”

“He likes latte,” Alex piped up. “With oat milk.”

She produced a carton of Alpro from the fridge. “Me and your dad have been drinking this stuff for a while. He loves it.”

I smiled at the icing on the cake of my fantastic breakfast.

“Where’s Dad?” Alex asked.

“He’s gone for a walk,” was his mum’s reply.

I tensed at her words. Why had he gone out? Was he avoiding us, or more likely, me? I didn’t dare look at Alex in case he saw my thoughts on my face.

Alex and I ate ravenously. My headache was getting worse and worse and when I downed both glasses, Pam set a jug of water in front of us so I could replenish my fluids rapidly.

“This is amazing, Mum,” Alex said with his mouth full.

“Thank you, sweetie,” Pam said and placed two lattes before us. It was fair to say I was in heaven.

When I had polished off everything, she asked me if I wanted any more.

“No, thanks,” I said because I was just the right side of full. “That was lovely.” Alex didn’t want anything else either, so we sat finishing our lattes while Pam stacked the dishwasher. Now breakfast was done I suddenly wanted desperately to leave and felt bad about it when his mum had been so hospitable.

But Alex must have read my mind. “We’re going to get packed up, Mum,” he said after a last drink of water. “It’s a long drive back.”

“All right, love,” she replied.

We both got up and I followed Alex out of the kitchen. When I glanced back, his mum smiled at me. I returned it, feeling grateful that she had welcomed some random man into her home who had fucked her son on Christmas Eve and done unspeakable things to him right under her roof the night before.

Much to my disappointment, Alex's dad was back when we took our stuff downstairs. I loitered by the front door with my shoes on as his mum came out of the kitchen and hugged him. His dad hugged him too and his mannerisms seemed warm enough. Hopefully, he wouldn't choose to disown Alex once he had left the house.

Pam hugged me also and when I put my arms around her, she felt soft and was fragrant with a floral perfume. It gave me a sudden pang for Heidi, my foster mother, who still kept in touch with me but who I hadn't seen in so long, because I was so good at hiding myself away.

Martin stuck his hand out and I shook it. His grip was firm and dry. For a moment his expression seemed fierce. A warning. Mess with my son at your peril. I held eye contact until he seemed to relax, perhaps satisfied by what he saw in my gaze. I had no intention of messing with his son. Only treating him like a prince if he would let me and didn't get too bored with an old knobhead like me.

"See you," he said and I nodded.

Then we were outside on the drive and Alex was waving goodbye all the way to the car. The sun was still out, melting the snow to slush, and I was optimistic that once we got off this crazy street, the main roads would be clear. I stashed Alex's bag in the boot and we got into the Lambo.

There was ice on the windscreen and I put the heaters on, directing them onto the glass while we sat there shivering as the car warmed up. While I fiddled with buttons, Alex's hand rested on my knee, instantly scorching me through my trousers.

"You okay?"

I glanced at him. "Yeah."

“Glad to get away?”

I reddened. “Of course not.”

He laughed. Then he leaned forward, captured my jaw in his palm and kissed me. A little squeak of pleasure escaped me and I returned his kiss with all the hunger I still felt for him, the hunger that had only been sated a little with our dirty little interlude the previous night. Soon we were swapping tongues and breath, my hands on his face, caressing his cheeks and his neck while I stopped myself from going any further.

He had no such inhibitions. One hand slid up my thigh and onto the bulge in my trousers. I gasped and pulled away. “Don’t.” His parents had gone back inside, but still.

“They can’t see us from here,” he said with his mouth against my neck, planting hot, erotic kisses that made my toes curl.

“God, Alex,” I groaned out, sliding a hand up his coat and jumper to touch his naked spine.

He shivered under my touch and took my mouth again, his lips firm and insistent and needy and I drowned in the kiss. Somehow I managed to pull back, panting with my dick wetting my underwear. Christ, how I wanted him.

“Let’s go,” I said unsteadily. I clicked my seatbelt closed and eased the car into gear.

“Drive like you stole it,” Alex said. When I shot him a glance, he was grinning, his beautiful lips all kiss swollen and his pupils dilated, and it was as much as I could do not to drag him onto my lap and sit him down on my desperate cock. I ground my teeth and asked myself why all my iron self-control had deserted me and why I felt

like a teenager experiencing the first pangs of sexual desire. I had no answer. But it worried me that once we had shagged a few times, maybe it—whatever it was—would be out of our system and we would be done. That was a chance I had to take, for the first time in a long while. I couldn't imagine ever being done with Alex though. He was fresh, fun, and impossibly exciting. I wanted him in my life for much more than a few romps in the hay. Another intrusive thought made itself known. While I had kept pace with him so far, there was no way it would always be the case. If he was a man who liked to go three times a day, I would probably disappoint him. Even if he made me harder now than I'd ever been in my life. I reckon I'd been in my twenties when I last went three times a day. It was never going to happen again. However, I had a mouth and fingers. I could definitely keep him happy that way. Or I could get a few toys. I drifted off into a fond reverie of what I could do to Alex as I made my way down the still treacherous hill and weaved the car carefully back to a semi-safe main road.

Alex

The warmth of the car and the rhythmic rumble of the tyres on the deserted motorway soon made me sleepy. My eyelids kept drooping shut, then I'd jerk myself awake and look at him, feeling guilty.

He glanced at me, catching me fighting myself. "Tired?"

"Yeah."

"Go to sleep then, we've got a long drive."

I shook my head. "I can't."

"Why not?" He flicked on the wipers as a flurry of snow started.

"You've just said it yourself. It's a long drive. We should share the driving. You had a late night too."

He shot another look at me. "And I'm fine. Why would I make you drive when you're tired?"

He fixed his gaze back on the road and I looked at his strong, handsome profile. "But..."

Lucas reached for my knee. Warm fingers squeezed gently. Without taking his eyes from the grey stretch of empty motorway in front of us, he said, "Just relax. That's all

I want you to do. Let me be your chauffeur and rest while you can before you have to go back to work. This car isn't familiar to you and the weather's bad. You don't need that stress." His tone was as gentle as his touch. I swallowed, moved. There were such layers to this man. He was kind, generous and sensitive. He had a firm set of morals and wouldn't tolerate the sort of behaviour he'd witnessed in the restaurant with Bill groping me.

But we hadn't even scraped the surface of his childhood. And then there was the attack on him a year ago. I suspected a broken child lay below his confidence, causing him to reject people. Somehow he'd trusted me though. What was it about me? Perhaps he didn't feel threatened because of my age and social status. Perhaps I set him at ease. I hope he found me as kind and sensitive as I found him, because it was the sort of person I strived to be. And more than anything, I wanted to be that person for him.

He looked at me again when I was silent. "Can I interest you in coming home with me?" he asked.

A shiver snaked through me. Was the Pope Catholic? I thought of that warm, comfortable house. The reading chair in front of the fire in the library. The big comfortable bed and fluffy pillows. The feel of his body pressed against mine. I wanted it. I wanted it all.

"I have to work tomorrow," I said, as though that was some kind of obstacle. "We're open for lunch." Was I making excuses? I didn't know.

He nodded without taking his eyes from the road. "We could get some stuff from your flat when we get back. Your uniform. Then I could drop you at work tomorrow."

I swallowed. He wanted me. Actually wanted me. We had survived a trip to my

parents after one night together and now he planned to extend that. I was the luckiest man in the world. My voice was hoarse when I spoke and I had to clear my throat. “I’d like that.”

He flashed me a smile and squeezed my knee again. “Now rest.”

I leaned my head back, warm and cosy and soporific, and let my eyes close. I was frightened by how happy I felt.

I woke when I felt the car slowing, then turning, before rumbling to a halt. The engine went off and I opened my eyes. Lucas was looking at me. “Sorry to disturb you. Just needed a wee break.”

I looked around me. We were at a services, not too many cars parked up. I nodded. “I’ll come too.” I shrugged into my coat and opened my door, feeling groggy and thirsty.

The air was biting cold, our breath making plumes as we walked side by side over to the entrance. His hand brushed mine, one finger curling around my index finger before moving away. I felt a strange sense of pride when a guy gave Lucas a second look. He was with me. I had hooked this amazing man. I didn’t know how. My spirits sank a little when I asked myself again what I had to offer him. He just wanted a fling with young flesh, didn’t he? We had nothing in common and couldn’t aim for an actual relationship. He was ageing and wanted to make himself feel better. People would call him my sugar daddy and say I was only with him for his money. Although he was so good looking, they had to realise that could never be the case. I followed him into the toilets and chose a cubicle rather than a urinal. He did the same. I could see his smart black shoes under the partition next to me as I peed. When I tucked myself away, my dick was starting to harden. I was thinking about kinky public sex. I didn’t know why. Why would I want to have him in the goddamn services when he had that amazing bed waiting for us at home? I heard him flush and exit the cubicle



and I followed suit. We stood side by side at the sinks washing our hands. Then we moved to a dryer each and let the water evaporate while the hot air warmed us up. I glanced at him when his dryer shut off. He turned to me, cupped my cheek in his hand and kissed me.

I was hesitant, but he obviously didn't care and besides, I'm sure the bathroom was empty. He caressed my lips gently, taking his time, giving me more than a peck. I softened against him, sliding a hand around his neck, pressing myself to him.

I heard footsteps then, more than one set. We broke apart as someone shouted, "What the fuck is going on here?"

My heart sank. Four youths in tracksuits and baseball caps had entered the bathroom and didn't like what they saw. The bloke at the front must have been the leader, the one who'd spoken. A gobby spotty guy of about twenty, his face red and twisted in disgust.

"It's a fucking public toilet, mate, not a gay knocking shop." He seemed to be addressing Lucas. "Is this your fucking rent boy and are you George Michael?"

I blushed and started to shake. This kid was surely too young to remember poor George's indiscretions. How I'd loved him and how broken hearted I'd been when he died. We had lost such a great talent and we would never see its like again.

Lucas squared his shoulders, his impressive height taller than any of the youths. "He's not a rent boy, he's my partner and I was kissing him, which isn't a crime."

I nearly gulped. I felt fragile and diminished under four lots of angry stares, all the men glaring at me with disdain and hatred. It wasn't the first time I had faced this, but it was the first time in an enclosed space where I couldn't run away and I would have to fight. I didn't fight. That wasn't me. Now it seemed I had no choice.

Spotty gobby guy laughed. “Fucking partner ? Partner in what? Gay orgies in service bogs?”

I was sure they could see me shrivelling under their eyes. I moved closer to Lucas, like a cowering animal.

“Turn around and walk away.” Lucas’s voice was steady and betrayed no nerves. I couldn’t believe how composed he was. Had he faced this sort of thing before? Was he used to four against two brawls in public toilets?

“Not going to happen mate.” Spotty looked at his compadres. “We’re going to teach you a lesson, you disgusting little queers.”

My legs started to shake at that. I cursed my cowardice and my foolishness for kissing Lucas in public. For forgetting that not everyone was okay with how I lived my life.

I gaped at Lucas when he said, “Bring it on.” And when Spotty stepped forward, Lucas caught him by the arm, spun him around and twisted it up his back, causing the ringleader to cry out a string of curses. Lucas shoved him forward into his friends and they all roared then, coming at us.

I danced back when a fist flew my way but another one of the lads caught me in a headlock, squeezing hard before landing a blow above my ear. For a moment everything went silent and my vision swam. Then sound crashed back in, my ears ringing, the bathroom filled with grunts and shouts and fists and boots colliding. I dropped to my knees and someone caught me under the chin. Then I was on my back, head bumping the wall, senses spinning. I saw a foot coming towards my ribs and I grabbed the perpetrator’s ankle and yanked as hard as I could. The little scrote fell over me, cursing, and I swung my arm and punched him in the bollocks. He creased in two with a groan and fell by my side, curled up in a ball and retching.

I heard a cry. "I've phoned the police!"

A smallish elderly man stood by the door. His words stopped the action and turned my gaze fearfully to Lucas. He was taking on two of the gang, while one lay out of commission by the sinks. His cheek was red and beginning to bloom with a bruise and his lip was bleeding but he looked better than the others, one of whom was clutching his stomach, the other who had a wound above his eye streaming blood. Lucas stood with fists raised like a boxer. His stance was secure, strong and confident. He seemed as far from that man he had described to me a year ago as it was possible to get. The man who had been held down by four men and assaulted. I felt pride and warmth swell my chest. Lucas glanced over at me as the gang started to regroup and head towards the door. He hurried over and helped me to my feet, brushing a hand over the sore bits on my face.

"Are you okay?"

I nodded, holding onto him as a wave of nausea swam through me.

"Do you need an ambulance?" The man at the door asked fearfully, watching us.

Lucas shook his head. "We're all right."

"What's wrong with people?" The man uttered the question that I asked myself every day. The reason why I didn't watch the news, when it was filled with murder, child abuse, animal cruelty, destruction and war. The world was getting worse and worse and I no longer wanted to be a part of it.

Alex

The day was lengthening by the time we were sitting in the Lamborghini with a couple of lattes and a flapjack from Costa. I saw the same look on his face as must have been on mine when we told the police it had been a homophobic attack. Humiliation, shame, embarrassment. Neither of us wanted to talk about it. We would have preferred to let it go but the old bloke had already called the cops and they were followed by paramedics who checked us both out. They advised me to attend hospital as the back of my head was bleeding, but I declined. I wasn't going anywhere near an A&E department on Boxing Day. Around the country they would be full of Christmas pissheads. I just needed to get home and rest.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Lucas asked gently.

I nodded. "Are you?"

"Yeah."

"You're okay to drive?"

"I'm fine." He started the engine before handing his cup to me. "Sorry."

I thought it was cute that he was apologising for me having to hold his coffee due to the lack of cup holders. My head was aching and my jaw felt like I had been in a boxing ring with Anthony Joshua. Hmm, one of my crushes. Sometimes I imagined being in a ring with him, there to fight. He'd raise a fist to punch me, then a look would come over him and he'd stare at me like I was the most delicious thing he had

ever seen. He'd grab me in front of thousands and kiss me and the crowd would howl in delight and applaud. I smiled to myself. I didn't need to fantasize about AJ anymore now I had the man beside me. I glanced at Lucas. Perfection. We were on our second day together. When he dropped me at work tomorrow, maybe that would be the end. Christmas would be over and reality would intrude. Work. Real life. He'd go back to his busy life and possibly have no time for me. Or he'd realise we were incompatible and it was never going to work. I stifled a sigh and looked forward through the windscreen as he pulled onto a roundabout and took the exit for the motorway. If it imploded, then so be it. I'd had two fabulous days I would remember forever.

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Lucas

The central heating was on and the house cosy when we got back after stopping to pick up some things for Alex. I felt how cold his flat was while I waited for him and didn't take my coat off. I felt so bad for him, so sorry that he couldn't have his heating on a timer to welcome him home with warmth the way I do. I heard him cursing from the bedroom.

"What's wrong?" I called.

"I haven't got a clean shirt for tomorrow," he said.

"Bring any washing you need doing. I'll throw it in tonight," I said. "I'll even iron it for you."

He popped his head around the door. "Do you do your own ironing?"

I smiled. "Sometimes." I had a housekeeper who cooked, cleaned and did laundry,

but I had been known to work my own washing machine and dryer from time to time and iron my own shirts. I also cleaned, if the house needed it.

“Impressive,” he said with a smirk. “I thought people like you wouldn’t even know how to put up an ironing board.”

I walked forward, stopping when I was so close to him I could rub my nose against his. “People like me?”

“Yeah. Loaded.”

I shrugged. “I’ve got a few quid. I’m not loaded.”

He snorted and brushed his lips over mine. “Right.” He went back to shoving stuff in a rucksack while I reflected on the electricity that had sizzled through me just then and fought down the urge to push him down on the bed. It was way too cold to get naked. I wanted to get home, get changed into something more comfortable and eat some warm food before I thought about sating my baser desires. I hope he agreed with me, but no way would I push him. We were both injured, him worse than me. That interlude at the services had been a sour note to a perfect Christmas and I cursed those wankers to hell for ruining everything. We should have been heading back to mine to roll between the sheets for hours. Now we might be heading back for a couple of paracetamol and an early night.

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Alex

The Christmas lights on his house were illuminated and a light burned in the hallway and the front window. I guessed he had these things on a timer. Warmth greeted us when he opened the door and ushered me in and my stomach twisted with humiliation

when I compared my freezing cold flat with his palatial snug home. I ached for all I would never have and hated myself for my envy.

We took our shoes off side by side on the bench and slipped our feet into slippers, then he hung our coats and scarves on the rack and beckoned me through to the kitchen. I noticed the presents still under the tree in the hall and said nothing. I sat at the island as I had two nights ago when we came back from the wine bar. Things had changed between us since. He had met my family, we had become physically intimate, and we had been the victims of a hate crime. The latter hadn't been the way I'd wanted our time together to end. If it was ending, I had to be philosophical. A one-night stand had turned into two, but he'd never said he wanted more and neither had I. Should I put my cards on the table or go with the flow and hope for the best? If he wanted to bring me here for one final fuck before never seeing me again, I had to accept that gracefully. Maybe two days with me and dealing with my dad was more than enough, sex or not.

He took my dirty clothes from my rucksack and disappeared around the corner to, I guessed, a utility room. I heard a washer start up before he closed a door.

I eyed him wistfully as he fired up the coffee machine. The bruising on his cheek was starting to look much worse, different hues of blue and purple, while his lip was swollen and crusted with a scab. Guilt pricked at me. I thought of what he had gone through this time last year at José's hands and hated that I had allowed him to get into another violent situation. Why had I let him kiss me in the toilets? Why hadn't I stayed well away from him until we were back in the car? Despite the warmth of the house, I started to feel cold, a tremor seizing me, my mind dwelling on what could have happened, not what had. What if one of those lads had a knife? What if Lucas had been stabbed? What if...

"Hey." Lucas's voice drew me out of my spiral. I had always been my own worst enemy. A champion ruminator, going back over past events until it drove me insane.

Should have, would have, could have. That was me. Always telling myself I should have done this, should have said that, should have, fucking should have .

Lucas was walking around the island to me with his eyebrows drawn together. I tried to turn my face away to hide what must have been an open book to my soul, but he captured my cheek in his palm, drawing me to him, standing close and looking into my eyes. “What’s wrong?”

I shook my head, closing my eyes when they started to well with tears.

“You’re not okay.” It was a statement, not a question.

I tried to speak but thought my voice might come out as a pathetic squeak. In response, he pulled me into his arms, holding me tight. With my head tucked under his chin, he stroked my hair. “It’s all right. I promise. It’s over. Those dicks were all over CCTV. They’ll be caught before they do it to someone else.”

I grabbed him hard around the back, biting my lip hard. Still the words burst from my lips. “I’m sorry.”

He eased me back by my shoulders so he could look at me. His face was one big frown. “What are you sorry for?”

“Getting you into trouble.”

He stared at me for a moment before his face relaxed into concern and tenderness. He stroked my cheek. “Hey, you didn’t do anything. I didn’t choose the best spot to kiss you, but then again, I should be allowed to kiss you wherever I want. I’m sorry. I’m sorry you got hurt. It’s all my fault.” His fingertips travelled over the hair at my temple and I winced at how sore the spot was.



I shook my head. I grasped his hand and brought it to my mouth where I kissed his fingers. I saw his pupils dilate. Then we entwined our fingers and looked at each other, squeezing each other's hand. I swallowed. My voice was small and hoarse when I spoke. "I need you to fuck me."

Lucas

I didn't need asking twice.

I didn't carry him this time but led him upstairs by his hand. In the bedroom, I switched on the bedside lamp. While we'd done it in the dark last time, now we were better acquainted I wanted to see the ecstasy on his face, the flush on his chest when he came. But he looked uneasy as I moved towards him. Did he have body anxiety? I couldn't think why. He was utterly perfect all over. I waited for him to ask me to switch it off. If he wanted me to, I would, but he said nothing, just stood there waiting.

I lifted his jumper over his head and followed that with the T-shirt he wore underneath, while he lifted his arms to help me. I slid my hands over his pecs, fingers lingering on his nipples, which I pinched. Alex drew in his breath. His dick tented his trousers. My heart beat faster at the thought of being inside him again. I stooped to lick his nipples, sucking each one into my mouth while I unfastened him. Alex arched at my touch, moaning as I left each one stiff and wet.

His trousers open, I pushed my hand into the briefs he wore from my own collection, the sight giving me quite a thrill. He moaned and thrust into my hand as I palmed his dick, jerking it inside the tight confines of his underwear. God, the feel of him in my hand made me want to spurt everywhere. I was so desperate to come my balls were aching. I pushed his trousers down, then I started to undress. Getting the hint, he discarded his socks, then dragged down trousers and underwear. He climbed onto the bed naked and with my stomach clenching in excitement, I clambered on after him still wearing my underwear. He pushed me onto my back and I tumbled while he

dragged my trunks down and tossed them aside. Then he crawled over me and licked the pre-cum from the slit of my dick.

I arched, squirming on the bed. “Fuck, Alex.”

He lifted his head and smiled before he slid all the way down my cock until I touched the back of his throat. I gave a soft cry and he dragged back, tongue lashing my shaft and sliding around the head. He moved to my balls, sucking and licking and my toes curled, wanting to come already.

Looking down at him, I said in a strangled voice. “Get the lube out.”

He slid away from me to the bedside drawer and rooted around until he found a condom and the lube. Then he leaned down over me, feathering his tongue over my lips. “Tell me what you want.”

I groaned, grabbing his hips. “I want you to sit on my dick and ride me.”

He gave an excited moan and straddled my hips. “I can do that.” He pushed the lube at me and I squirted some onto my fingers. He leaned towards me as I reached around him. Spreading his cheeks, I touched his entrance, massaging cold gel into it. I was so excited I wasn’t sure how I was going to get into him before I came.

He shuddered when I penetrated him with two fingers. Our lips met in a sloppy, dirty kiss and his dick spurted onto me when I rubbed his prostate. He cried out. “Oh my God!”

I smiled against his mouth. I couldn’t wait to feel him sit down on me, take all of my desperate length inside him. I fumbled around the bed until I located the rubber. Then I tore it open with my teeth. “Put it on,” I whispered, withdrawing my fingers from him. In hindsight it was a bad idea. He shuffled back and started to ease the latex

down my cock. Just the touch of his fingers had me clenching my fists and jaw, wanting to come everywhere. When he smoothed a handful of lube down the latex, I stared down at the sight. My dick had never looked so big and thick against his small hand, glistening with lube, prominent with veins through the rubber. It looked as hard and desperate as I felt, throbbing with the need to get into him. I thought I was going to whimper and start to beg him to put me out of my misery.

He was already breathing hard with excitement when he shifted over me, straddling my hips again, feeling behind himself to guide me home. I felt his entrance give, felt myself sheathed inside tight heat as he sank down on me and sat up tall, fully impaled. I groaned, arching beneath him, my eyes shut, hands gripping his hips and praying for some kind of control.

Then he started to move with slow turns of his pelvis and I gritted my teeth, my heart racing, my legs starting to shake. I loved a man to sit on me and ride me. It had been a very long time. Alex started to move faster and I opened my eyes and looked up at him. He was jerking off as he bounced on my cock, eyes shut, mouth parted and spilling small gasps of pleasure.

“Lucas,” he groaned. “Lucas,” and my heart clenched. I gripped his hips and sat up, pulling him back with me so I could lean against the headboard.

Our mouths collided, tongues entwining and I held him by the arse as I thrust up into him, giving him every inch as he bounced on me.

“Oh God, oh God,” he cried. His face was flushed and dewed with sweat and when I batted his hand away and grabbed his cock myself, I felt how wet it was with pre-cum, and slicked it down the shaft, lubricating my way to give him a nice, smooth jerk-off.

He reached over my shoulders to grab the headboard and it banged against the wall

with our movements while I pressed kisses to his neck, trying my best not to mark him. He was so noisy. Cries, gasps and moans, his body stiffening on mine, his arse clenching my dick. I felt him start to come, his cock swelling in my grip and I let myself go, my world exploding in a shower of fireworks as my orgasm tore through my body, leaving nothing standing in its wake.

I managed to lie us both down. He sprawled on top of me, his chest heaving against mine. His face was hidden against my neck, warm breath feathering over my damp skin, lips brushing my throat. I groaned, holding him hard, never wanting to let go.

Oh God. Oh God. That was ... I couldn't put it into words to myself, never mind him.

I smoothed my hands down his silky spine and felt the light dew of sweat. I kissed his hair. He mumbled something and snuggled deeper into me, hands cradling my head. I felt comforted and loved in a way I never had before. Loved? I felt loved ?

“Oh wow,” he said.

I laughed softly and kissed his temple where the bruise dappled his skin and bloomed into his hair. I think I could say that the troublesome ghost of impotence had been laid to rest and I could stop thinking about that episode in the Bloomsbury hotel.

“I'm not sure I can get up.” But he did, easing free of my embrace, crawling off my body and leaving me cold. He made it as far as my side, then collapsed on his back, giggling.

I rolled onto my side and pulled him to me and we entwined our limbs, kissing slowly. His mouth was so sweet, so soft, so tender. He was so perfect in every way. My deepening feelings for him scared me. It had been forty-eight hours and I was imagining him here with me, for the rest of my life. Hadn't I told myself it had to end? Or more like never start? Why had I asked him to come here? My head ached

with all the negative thoughts swirling around it. Unintentionally, I let out a sigh.

Alex lifted his head. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” I avoided his gaze.

“Come on.”

I gave my head a little shake.

“You’ve changed your mind about wanting to see me again.”

I squeezed my eyes shut for a moment. “I don’t see how it could work between us.”

When Alex spoke his voice was small and wounded. “So why ask me to come home with you then? One for the road?”

“Don’t say that.”

Alex rolled off the bed and disappeared into the bathroom.

Alex

I breathed hard leaning over the sink. Had I stormed off like a petulant child? I couldn't be doing with his mixed messages. He'd said he wanted to see me again. But in the same breath he'd also wanted to leave Cornwall without me last night, hadn't he? Then he'd asked me to come back here and it had been me who had looked for an excuse, not him. My head ached and my stomach was rumbling. Both of us were pushing and pulling. Both of us wanted it to end here but couldn't bear it to, or so it seemed to me.

A light tap came on the door. "Are you okay?"

I cleared my throat. "Yes."

"I'm going to make us some food."

"Okay."

I heard his footsteps retreating and I looked for a cloth and set about cleaning myself up.

Lucas stood at the stove stirring something in a wok when I entered the kitchen wearing my Nightmare before Christmas pyjamas. Lucas smiled. "Stir fry with tofu okay?" he asked.

"Sounds good."

He wore his robe and was bare foot. I was too and I soon noticed the kitchen had underfloor heating. He threw sugar snap peas and baby sweetcorn into the sizzling pan and stirred with a wooden spoon. Then he left the stove to reach a bottle of white wine from the fridge and two glasses from the cupboard. He crossed the kitchen to the table and placed them down, then proceeded to reach out cutlery. I felt bad for hovering there doing nothing, but it wasn't as though I knew my way around his kitchen. He stirred the wok again, then filled a glass jug with water and found two crystal tumblers. This time he placed them on the island and obediently, I took them to the table while he started plating up.

"Sit down," he said.

"Thanks," I said when he put my plate down. I poured us some wine while he started to eat. The food was flavoursome and cooked to perfection, heaped with rice noodles and beansprouts.

We ate and drank in silence until he put his cutlery down with a sigh and took a large gulp of his wine. "It wasn't my intention to hurt or upset you."

I swallowed. "I know."

"I don't... have relationships. It's just the way I am and... I feel already that we're getting too close, too soon and..." he bit his lip, "I want to run away."

My throat was so tight it felt as though I was breathing around a rock. "I understand," I managed to get out.

He rested his hand over mine and squeezed my fingers. "But I like you. A lot. I don't want to hurt you and I don't want to get hurt."

"I know," I said, holding his hand with my eyes stinging with tears. "I know."



“Forgive me,” he said and I saw a film across his sapphire irises that almost made me break down.

I gulped, pushed my chair back and sat on his lap, holding him hard.

We went back to our dinner and didn’t say anything about our future together for the rest of the night. After dessert—delicious vegan ice-cream—we took coffee into the lounge. He lit the log burner and a couple of lamps and we relaxed on the couch while he gave me the remote to browse Netflix. I was too poor to afford anything other than Freeview on my TV, so it was quite a thrill to be let loose on Netflix with carte blanche.

Lucas was quiet at my side. When I cast a glance at him, his eyes were shut. He was exhausted after our long journey yesterday and today, our late night, and then our unfortunate encounter in the gents’ toilets today. I put my hand on his knee where his robe had fallen open. “Okay?” I asked.

His thick lashes lifted. He gave me a sweet smile. “Of course.”

“Do you want to go to bed?”

He shook his head. “Soon. Choose something to watch. Unless you want to go up?”

I did want to go up but felt like a lightweight for saying it. “I’m okay. Want to watch a horror?”

He grinned. “Why not?”

The film was a take-your-brain-out type, thrills and spills, plenty of jumps and gore, just the way I liked it. He and I cuddled up together on the couch with him lying full length and me between his legs with my head on his chest. When had I last cuddled

like this? His hand stroking my hair felt amazing. The warmth and solidity of his body kept me resolutely hard and above all else, I felt... wanted, needed, desired.

Halfway through, I glanced up and saw he had his eyes closed, shadows from the TV flickering over his face. I regarded him for a moment, then stroked his lightly stubbled jaw. "Hey."

He awoke with a rueful smile. I slid up his body so my face was over his. "Sorry," he said.

"No need." I brushed my lips over his.

He caught his breath and I felt it too. The electricity humming between us, the prickle of my skin to feel his body against mine and the ache between my legs. Never had I felt sexual desire for anyone so strongly. His fingers tangled in my hair as he pulled me down and we kissed long and slow, tongues melding and twisting. Then he pushed his hands up my top and I gasped at the feel of his hands on my spine. I sat up to discard the pyjama shirt and fastened my mouth back to his while pulling open his robe. He grabbed me by the arse, kneading my buttocks through my thin trousers, pulling me against his hard-on so we frothed and ground together. I could easily have come in my pyjamas like that. Every time he touched me was a battle to control myself. When he started to ease my trousers down, I yanked the belt of his robe, spreading it open and revealing his hard dick lying against his belly, a pearl drop glistening on the end. I ground my teeth, shrugged out of my pyjamas, then dipped my head to lick his slit, desperate to taste his pre-cum.

He sucked in a breath and grabbed my hair. I feathered my tongue around his cockhead then slid down his shaft until I reached his balls. I tongued them and sucked each one into my mouth, taking my time while I wanked him off with one hand and stroked behind his nuts with the other. I thought about how he'd liked me stimulating his prostate through his taint last night and wondered if he would let me go any

further. I'd love to touch his asshole, put my fingers inside, lick him until he went crazy.

Lucas shivered and let out a groan when my tongue slipped behind his balls, licking at the smooth skin. I pushed his thighs wide apart and pressed kisses to them before going back to that spot, pressing with my tongue before sucking at his balls again. He was getting hot. My hand was slippery with his pre-cum, his dick swelling in my grip. I could bring him off with very little more effort. I wondered if he was carried away enough to let me explore.

"Turn over," I said in a whisper while the film continued to play away to itself.

He opened his eyes, looking down the length of his body at me and not moving.

"I won't do anything you don't want me to do," I said, meaning it. As much as I would love to slide my dick into his tight heat, that wasn't going to happen.

Lucas hesitated before shifting on the couch, turning onto all fours, presenting his tight, muscular arse for my inspection. I sighed, running both hands over the firm globes of his buttocks before lowering my head to kiss the small of his back, easing down, taking my time, until my tongue touched the crack of his arse.

He let out a breath as though he had been holding it. I spread him open with my hands and let my tongue slide between his buttocks, stopping short of touching his hole. My dick was throbbing and I gave it a little stroke, wanting nothing more than to jerk off over his arse, watch my cum splatter his smooth, pale flesh. Lucas dipped his head and shifted his feet apart, the action revealing his entrance to me and making me so hot I could barely think. I clamped my hand around the base of my dick to stop myself coming all over him. When I was sure I was calm, with my heart beating hard in case this was too much to him and I brought back too many unpleasant memories, I feathered my tongue over his hole.

He flinched with a curse and a strangled moan. I waited for a moment, my dick tight in my hand, then did it again, licking his entrance slow and light. I heard his breathing increase, ragged and heavy, and I put the pad of my finger against his hole and rubbed, lubricated by my saliva. His thighs shook and I captured his balls in my mouth, one after the other, sucking before I licked up to his arsehole and set about rimming him.

“Oh my God,” Lucas said on a long groan. I reached under him and found his impossibly hard dick while I rimmed his hole. Up and down and around and around I went, back over his taint, pressing against it, sucking his balls and then back to his tight entrance opening him up with the tip so I could tongue fuck him. Lucas’s sounds of pleasure were unmistakeable. He pushed into my wanking hand and back against my tongue, gasping and swaying on his hands and knees, his body starting to shake.

“Come on,” I said. “Let me feel you come against my tongue.” God he was so wet and loosening up against my mouth. I was sure I could get two wet fingers in there without lube and rub his prostate until he screamed. Just the idea was nearly enough to send me over the edge. I didn’t dare push inside him without permission though.

Lucas looked back over his shoulder. “I’m going to come,” he said breathlessly. “I need you to come with me. Over my arse.”

I groaned and grabbed my dick. I didn’t need asking twice. Wanking him and me off, I continued to lick his delicious hole and spear it with darting jabs, imagining it was my cock thrusting into him, to cream him and leave him leaking my cum.

We were loud. Pants and moans and filthy entreaties from both of us. Then his dick discharged in my hand while his entrance spasmed around my probing tongue and he cried out as he came. I waited until he had lost every drop over my hand before I sat up and placed my cock in the cleft of his beautiful arse, jerking myself to orgasm all over his hole, jets of cum splattering his buttocks, running down onto his balls, while

I sucked at his cum on my hand. The mess I made of him was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. With a groan, I rimmed him again, tasting my own cum and cleaning him up. Then I wiped my left hand down his crack and licked his cum from him too while he continued to gasp and moan.

Lucas's dick was still half hard when he turned over and collapsed on his back and I sucked it gently, gathering the last fluid from the slit before I lay with my face against his belly.

“Fucking hell, Alex,” he said.

I looked up at him with a smile.

Lucas

When I woke up next morning, Alex was already in the ensuite, the sound of running water filtering through the closed door. I lay there for a moment. My dick was hard and I thought about joining him but the closed door was a dead giveaway. If he wanted me in there with him, he would have left it open. I didn't want to be a pushy, sex-crazed, middle-aged bastard just because he'd reawakened my libido.

I went down to the other bathroom and stepped into the shower. There I lubed my dick up with some soap and leaned against the wall with my eyes shut and thought about Alex's tongue in my arse as I jerked off. Fuck, that had been something else. I'd felt deep anxiety when I'd rolled over and bared myself to him, of course I had. Memories of being held down with rough fingers inside me, teeth biting down on my inner thigh, those four men standing around saying they were going to rape me. But Alex wasn't them. His finger against my hole had been gentle and he hadn't tried to push inside. His tongue had been soothing and arousing as he lapped me and worked me open and a part of me had longed for his fingers then, and his dick, pummelling me, driving me into the couch and making me his. I shuddered, moving my hand quicker on my cock. If I was thinking this way, then he was healing me. He was making me think about getting fucked, and that had to be a good thing. I moved my other hand behind me to probe between my buttocks, fluttered one finger over my hole and stroked, pressing. My dick dribbled pre-cum onto my fingers and I spread it down my shaft, moving my hand quicker. I thought about the dildo I had in my bedside drawer which I had used infrequently before the assault, then never again. I imagined I had it in my hand, then I forced a finger into my arse and thought about Alex using his tongue, his fingers, the dildo, and finally his cock, and as my finger went into my body up to the knuckle, I cried out, my dick jerking as I came all over

the tiles.

Back in the bedroom and getting dressed in smart black trousers and a matching shirt (still no Netflix joggers for him yet), I felt ashamed. He was there in my bathroom and I was wanking off over him down the hall. What was wrong with me? He was still in there. Scrubbing me from his skin? I went downstairs and set the coffee machine going before I went into the utility and threw his clothes into the dryer. Then I pulled out a pan and set about breakfast.

Alex was another ten minutes, by which time I had coffee done and was on my way to finishing a full English for us both. It was only nine. I guessed that if he was serving lunch, he might be starting work around eleven. He stopped in the doorway wearing yesterday's jeans and a different sweater, looking hesitant and shy and I saw he was carrying his bag. My heart sank. He was leaving. Had I come on too strong last night? Maybe I had been too loud and embarrassing. Maybe he hadn't wanted to come over my arse as I'd asked him to do. Maybe it was too much and too dirty. But he'd been the one licking his cum—and mine—from my arse, not me. I hadn't forced him, had I? In the cold light of day, I couldn't believe I was that man begging him to cream all over me. The man who'd moaned and gasped with a tongue in my arse.

"I've made breakfast," I said. "Scrambled tofu with black salt, M I kissed his throat and he said, "Will you fuck me with this?"

Oh God, I definitely would. I groaned, pulling away from him to open the lube. He held the toy while I greased the shaft, then he wrapped his legs around me as I slid it across his entrance a few times, lubricating my way. He whimpered as I pressed inside, clinging to me and covering my face with kisses. I traced his Adam's apple with my tongue as I eased the toy right in, feeling him stretch open around the silicone.

"Oh fuck," he moaned. "That's good."

I looked down. I had to see that toy disappearing into him as I worked it. The sight made the pre-cum ooze from my dick. Keeping the dildo in place, I tore open the condom with my teeth. Then, fucking him with the toy, I rolled on the rubber one-handed. He helped me with the last bit, smoothing lube down my shaft, jerking me so I almost came right then and there.

He gasped as I tugged the dildo free and let it drop. I guided myself between his legs and he gripped my shoulders hard, crying out as I penetrated him. God, he was so wet and tight. My first thrust almost sent him skidding across the marble and he clung to me with his legs around my back as I raced for the finish line. His hand moved between our bodies and he jerked himself off, loud moans echoing around the kitchen.

“Fuck,” I grunted. “Oh fuck.” His lips found mine and we kissed hard, tongues entwined as we both tumbled over the edge.

“Lucas,” he cried. “Oh God, Lucas.”

Warm cum spilt over my hand and his arse tightened around me in waves, milking my orgasm from me. I bucked into him, climax tearing through my body, my balls emptying. When I slumped against him, he held me tight, kissing my head.

???

Alex

I got a feeling of déjà vu when I walked back out to the Lamborghini. I guessed this would be my final trip in the supercar. I’d miss the luxury of being driven around like some movie star. We clicked our seatbelts and he started the engine. It was snowing again, fresh flakes falling onto the mostly melted Christmas snowfall. His garden looked so beautiful. Evergreen trees dusted with snow like a postcard, the lights on



the huge spruce at the front like something from a film.

I twisted my hands together nervously in my lap, stomach clenched into knots that this was goodbye, that our magical few days together had ended. Back to reality like it had all been a dream. He put the radio on, some bloke on Radio 4 talking about Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* being a fable for the modern age. I'd always loved that book and the adaptations on TV. How Scrooge's name had entered the English language for a miserable, miserly person with no Christmas cheer and a whole back catalogue of regrets. I glanced over at Lucas's strong profile, noticing again as I had earlier the colourful bruise on his cheekbone, the swelling and split on his lip. I had those regrets. Regrets that I never finished university. Regrets that I hadn't fulfilled my earlier promise. And I'd probably regret watching Lucas walk out of my life until the day I died.

We didn't speak the whole way to the restaurant, a distance of a few miles. The car was warm, humming smoothly below us, cocooning us inside our private world, the same world he and I had been in since Christmas Eve. Now it was all over.

He drew up outside my place of work. Lights twinkled in the window and I saw Max inside at the bar, stacking bottles in the fridge. Lucas shifted into neutral and put the handbrake on, but didn't switch the engine off. It was like that then. Ready for a quick getaway.

I put my hand on the door handle, ready to make a quick, dignified exit before I did something stupid like threw myself into his arms, begged or cried. He kept his hands on the wheel, fingers clenching and unclenching, looking straight forward out of the windscreen.

"Thanks for the lift," I said.

He nodded. Still he didn't look at me. He blinked rapidly, thick lashes veiling his

sapphire eyes.

I took a breath and clicked the door open, then stopped. Nothing ventured nothing gained.

???

Lucas

“Can I get your number?”

I looked at him for a moment, then I looked out of the window. I sat there with my heart beating hard. This was a big step. If I gave him my number, it only suggested one thing. How many times had I decided this couldn't go anywhere? But could I really say no to him? At the moment I wanted him more than the air I breathed.

I bit my lip, then nodded and started to recite. Alex quickly opened his address book and typed. I saw he saved me under Lucas R. Maybe he knew another Lucas. I hoped he didn't. Alex smiled at me. He shoved his phone into his coat pocket and opened the car door. “Bye.”

“Bye,” I said. I waited until he'd walked inside the building without looking back, then I drove away, feeling worse than I'd felt in a very long time. He had my number, he could contact me. Why was I feeling bad? Because I hadn't kissed him? Because I had said bye as though our one-night stand hadn't progressed to three nights? None of it sat easy with me. I didn't want him to feel hurt, or used. I wanted to be back home. Warm and cosy with him lying next to me breathing softly. Instead, I hadn't taken his number, so I was at his mercy, unless I chose to turn up at the restaurant or his flat like a stalker.

Flakes of snow fell thickly against the windscreen and I let them build up rather than

using the wipers. Christmas and my birthday was over for another year with just the dreaded New Year to come. I could carry on alone as I always had been or I could take a chance.

Alex

I felt both deflated and elated as I hurried into the restaurant. I had got his number, but he had hesitated, hadn't he? He hadn't wanted to give it to me and he hadn't said he'd see me again. He didn't want to get involved. We'd just had our goodbye fuck and no way did he want to hear from me again. I would look desperate and stupid if I contacted him. In the foyer, I hesitated with my thumb over his name, intending to delete him from my life. With a scowl, I shoved my phone into my pocket and hurried into the staff room.

Max was polishing glasses behind the bar when I appeared, straightening my bow tie. He did a double take when he saw me. "What the fuck happened to you?"

I'd forgotten about the bruise. It went into the razor cut hair at my temple, my scalp blue and green. Lucas had kissed and touched me there so tenderly this morning. "An altercation," I said.

"Right," he said. "Start setting up, then we're sitting down for a brew and you're going to tell me what you've been up to since Christmas Eve. And if he put that bruise on you, he's a dead man."

I shook my head as I walked away.

We were both drinking filter coffee with a generous splash of cream and Max had rustled up a couple of cheese sandwiches with salad. "Start talking," he said. His eyes were dark beneath as though he'd not had much sleep over Christmas.

“We went out to a bar from here on Christmas Eve,” I said. “Then we went back to his and spent the night. On Christmas Day we went to my parents.”

He gaped at me. “What? Back up. You had a shag then you invited him to Devon?”

I smiled. “Yeah.”

“He must have been really good.”

I blushed and drank some coffee.

“Then what? You stayed over?”

“Yeah.”

“Your mum invited him to stay over?”

“Yeah.”

“Fucking hell! He must be quite some charmer. What about your dad?”

I shrugged. “He wasn’t particularly charming. But he mellowed once he’d beat Lucas at chess.”

Max eyed me. “Then?”

“We came home yesterday.”

“And where does the bruise fit in? He felt like beating you up or you injured yourself while swinging from his chandelier?”

I reddened again. “We ran into a spot of trouble at the services on the way home.”

Max frowned. “What sort of trouble?”

“Some chavs in the toilets. Felt like some Christmas queer-bashing.”

Max paled. He reached for my hand. “Are you okay?”

I nodded, touched by his concern.

“Did you call the police?”

“Yeah.”

“And?”

“They’re having a look at CCTV.”

“And Lucas?”

“Some cuts and bruises. He’s okay. He was my hero. He took them all on.” I smiled.

Max looked satisfied. “Good. And now what?”

I felt the dark cloud descend back over me. I shrugged. “I don’t know. I’ve got his number but... he said it couldn’t work between us.”

“And what do you think?”

“That I want him,” I said in a small voice.

Max sighed. He squeezed my hand.

The lunch service went quickly. We weren't too busy but the work was steady. I checked my phone and then realised I had taken his number but he hadn't taken mine. He couldn't contact me. The onus was on me. But he knew where I worked and where I lived. He could get in touch anytime he wanted to. I sighed, finger hovering over a blank message to him. What did I say? I only saw you two hours ago but I'm texting because I'm a lovesick idiot? When I'd composed half a dozen texts and deleted them all, I shoved my phone on one of the shelves behind the bar so I couldn't keep messing with it.

At the end of lunch when we closed, I was like a lost soul. I didn't want to go home to my cold flat that carried the shadow of him. Max rushed off home to his family and I sat in the darkened restaurant alone with a plate of mushroom stroganoff and a glass of water. I poked around half-heartedly until I realised how delicious it was, just as Lucas had said on Christmas Eve. I devoured it, then grabbed my phone again.

Hi, we weren't too busy. Heading home for a rest.

Delete.

How is the office? Getting lots done?

Delete.

I really enjoyed Christmas this year.

Delete.

This morning was so good. I love your cock in my mouth. And in my bum, obviously.

Delete.

I miss you.

Fucking delete.

I sighed and took my plates back to the kitchen. I'd planned to sit here rather than going home but as I had a couple of hours to kill, what was I going to do other than mindless scrolling and writing texts I would only delete. It would be a torturous time. Better to go home and get stuff done. Although I suspected I would get nothing done.

And I was right. I washed some more shirts, tidied up in the kitchen, then lay down on my bed for a nap. When I arrived back at seven and checked the bookings, my heart sank. He was here. My groper and sex pest. Booked in for seven-thirty with three of his cronies.

Fuck it.

"Have you called him?" Max called as he came out of the kitchen.

I shook my head. "I can't."

"Why not?"

"He's at work."

"I'm sure he won't be at work now."

I didn't say anything.

Bill wore a wedding ring but I had never seen Mrs Bill. I presumed there was a Mrs



Bill as he acted so straight with his friends despite groping my arse whenever he could. Max showed the quartet to their table and I loitered at the bar, avoiding them like the plague. Hopefully Lucas had scared him off any repeat of his licentious behaviour.

They had received their starters when Max cornered me at the bar. “What was going on with Bill on Christmas Eve?”

I reddened. “Nothing.”

“Come on, I’ve got eyes. Lucas was pissed off about something involving him.”

I sighed and threw a bottle of tonic into the glass recycling before adding a slice of lemon to the gin. “He says things to me. Asks me out. Gropes me.”

Max stared at me. “He gropes you?”

“Yeah.”

“How long has this been going on?”

“I don’t know.” I was blushing, looking anywhere but Max.

“Why haven’t you said anything?”

“It’s nothing.”

“I’ll speak to him,” Max said.

I grabbed his arm as he walked away. “Don’t. Please. Lucas warned him off. It’s done.”

Max hesitated. “Are you sure?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I’ll be watching him.”

I was sure I had nothing else to worry about, even as I glanced across the room and saw Bill staring at me with a malevolent gleam in his eye.

The restaurant was hectic till around nine, then it seemed to die a death. Probably people with children who’d had an exhausting Christmas. As last service was at 9.45 though, there was always time for someone to show up. Bill’s table was the last, and they were lingering over coffee, ordering night caps and more wine and generally being rowdy. The chefs scrubbed the kitchen like their lives depended on it and vanished, leaving Max working the bar and me setting tables for the morning. It had been just us all day, Anna on holiday and Liam with his family in Scotland.

I went into the kitchen carrying a tray to stack with supplies for the coffee station. The main lights were off, the damp floor illuminated by the eerie blue strobe of the electric flycatcher on the wall. I put my tray down when I noticed the broken down cardboard boxes leaning against the workbench. I’d put them there earlier to go out to the recycling. I grabbed them and headed down the long, dark corridor past the chefs’ changing room to the door. It was freezing down here, a stink of BO and cheesy socks wafting through the air. I shivered in my thin shirt as I unbolted the door and hefted the boxes out behind me. A wide alleyway contained our bins—paper, glass, plastic and metal recycling, food waste and general waste. The paper recycling was a massive blue thing on four wheels like an American dumpster. I always struggled to get the lid up without it crashing back down immediately. The cold chilled me to the bone as I propped the boxes against the wall and used two hands to heave the lid up.

Shit, straight back down. I tried again, put my back into it. It opened, shook like the

legs of a new-born colt and slammed back down. “For fuck’s sake,” I snarled at it.

As I grabbed it again, a voice behind me said, “You’re not strong enough. Let me help you.”

I froze. Please, no . I turned around slowly. Bill swayed towards me from the kitchen. He’d closed the door behind him and approached with unsteady steps, a big drunk grin plastered on his ugly face.

“You can’t come out here,” I said. “We’re not insured if you injure yourself. Go back inside, please, sir.”

He snorted. “Sir?” His gut wobbled as he laughed. “Where’s your boyfriend tonight?”

“He’s not my boyfriend, just a customer who didn’t like what you were doing.”

“I saw you get into a cab with him.”

I stared at him. I thought Bill had left before Lucas and I on Christmas Eve. He’d been watching? Was he...stalking me?

Bill stepped closer. “Did you fuck him?”

I swallowed. I saw true menace in his eyes and I was afraid. “It’s none of your business what I do when I’m not here. Go back inside.”

He shook his head. “Did you fuck him?”

“I said I’m not going to discuss...” He moved fast for a big man, grabbing me by the hair and slamming my head against the bin. My legs buckled and I fell to the ground.

“Did you fuck him?” he cried, spit spraying my face.

“Yes! Yes, okay, I fucked him!” I yelled. “Jesus Christ.” I rubbed my head, shaking with something more than cold now. There were two ways out. Back through the kitchen or through the bolted gate to the road beyond, both ways currently blocked by Bill. The street outside was quiet but I could probably attract attention by making a noise.

“Was he good?”

I staggered to my feet with my hand braced against the bin. “Yes,” I said. “I’m not interested, Bill. Let me go.”

He moved in close then, reaching into his pocket. I opened my mouth to scream and heard a click. “One more noise,” he said. “If you dare.” I saw the moonlight gleaming on steel.

I gasped. “What the fuck are you doing?”

He showed me the blade. “I brought this with me tonight because I was upset with how you and your boyfriend treated me on Christmas Eve.”

He’d brought it with him to do what? Fucking coward. I refrained from calling him that seeing as he was the one who held the knife.

He lifted the weapon to my throat. “Tell me what he did to you,” he said in a manic whisper, eyes glinting in the dark.

I held my breath, struggling to speak. “He fucked me.”

“Where?”

“In the arse.”

He slapped my head, making me see stars. “I mean where did he fuck you?”

“At his house. In his bed.”

“You’re a dirty little bottom boy, aren’t you? Looking for someone to master you.”

I shook my head.

“Liar.” He drove a fist into my stomach and I doubled over with a groan. “What else did he do to you?”

I panted, winded and gasping. “He...sucked my cock, gave me a rim job.”

“Did you suck him off?”

“Yes.” I straightened up as best I could.

“Did you swallow?”

“Yes.” I thought of Christmas Day at my parents, his dick in my mouth as he rimmed me.

“I saw him drop you off today. Have you been fucking him for the whole of Christmas?”

I closed my eyes. “Yes,” I whispered.

Bill growled. “That must be one sore arse you have.” He pressed the blade harder into my neck. “Unfasten me. Take my dick out.”

“Please,” I said, shaking my head. “Don’t.”

“Final warning,” he said and nicked my throat to make his point. I gasped as I felt the warmth of blood trickle down my neck. Hurriedly, I reached for his belt, unbuckling it, feeling the strain of his dick behind the material as I unbuttoned and unzipped his trousers. He helped me, breathing hard with excitement, shoving his briefs down to free his erection, then forcing my hand around it and gasping like all his dreams had come true when I touched him. “Fuck,” he said. “On your knees.”

He shoved me down, knife still at my throat, holding his cock and jabbing it towards my mouth. I closed my mouth and tried to will myself away. Tried to remember that last time I did this, I’d wanted it so much, wanted Lucas in my mouth, coming down my throat. Now I had this horrible parody of that time together, taken by force in an alleyway.

Alex

I tried not to breathe as Bill forced himself deeper and deeper into my mouth. I felt myself start to panic and choke and I retched and gagged. He drew back, slapped my head and forced himself back inside. “Don’t tell me you didn’t deep throat your rich boyfriend,” he said, “The virgin act doesn’t fool me. Little slut.” He tugged on my hair and thrust. “Take it, take it all, bitch.”

I choked, saliva running down my chin and tears streaming down my face. No matter how I tried to tell myself to just suck, that it was just a blow job and it would be over in a minute, most likely, I still couldn’t take him. His dick wasn’t even that big. On the small side of average really and yet, it felt enormous when he was trying to get it down my throat. I didn’t suck, I just let him fuck my mouth, thrusting, yanking my hair so hard I’m sure it was coming out at the roots and all the time, that cold steel at my neck.

And now Lucas and I had a shared experience. Now I know how he felt when he was pinned to that bed and forced to take a cock down his throat. Now I understood his pain, his trauma, his anguish and always would.

I fumbled in my pocket for my phone, thought about clicking the side buttons to trigger an emergency call. But that would involve seeing the screen, to then swipe it. Lucas would surely come if I called him, but again, I couldn’t do that without looking.

Bill was grunting, muttering filthy entreaties, telling me how good I was at sucking cock. My eyes were streaming so hard my vision was blurred. My knees were in

agony on the cold ground and no matter how I tried to force my throat to relax, I was still choking and gagging. It didn't help to think about how I had done this willingly a few hours ago. How I had done it so easily. How I had wanted and needed it and how I had looked up at Lucas' face and seen the ecstasy on it as I had sucked him off. I thought about raking Bill with my teeth. But he had the knife and could slit my throat in a second. It would be stupid to fight.

"I want to fuck your tight little arse," Bill ground out. "After this. When I've come in your mouth, I'm going to come in your arse." I doubted very much that he had two erections in him and reassured myself that he'd be jabbing at my arse with a limp marshmallow for some time.

My attacker got faster, breathless and moaning, using my mouth, cutting off my air, making my jaw and neck ache until black spots danced in front of my vision and I thought with only relief that I might pass out.

Over the noise of my laboured gasps for breath filling my head, I heard a distant shout. "Hey! Hey!" Then a loud rattle, a clanging of metal, and suddenly Bill jerked away and I could breathe. I sagged onto my knees, sucking in air, lifting my head to stare through blurred eyes as a tall dark shape scaled the locked gate at the end of the alleyway. At the same time, the kitchen door opened and Max stepped out, staring up and down with bewilderment.

Bill laughed as Lucas approached, swiping clumsily at him with his knife. I fell weakly back onto my arse as Lucas charged at him, launching a fist that sent him staggering back so I barely escaped his bulk toppling onto me as I skittered sideways. The knife clattered somewhere beyond me, perhaps going under the bin. Lucas stepped forward, intense eyes glancing down and meeting mine before he dragged Bill up by the collar of his coat, marched him across the alleyway and slammed him against the wall. "What are you doing?" he cried. "What the fuck do you think you're doing, rapist?"



Bill's only response was a low grunt. "He fucking wanted it."

Lucas gave a cry of rage at that and I heard his fist colliding with Bill's face as Max hurried over and helped me to my feet. Wiping my hand over my face to remove saliva, snot and tears, I staggered up, clutching at Max, my gaze on Lucas and Bill.

Sagging against the wall, Bill's eye was already swelling shut and his mouth and nose were bleeding. Lucas punched him in the stomach and Bill started to slither down until Lucas grabbed him and held him upright, shaking him violently. I was afraid he might kill him.

"Lucas," I said and he jerked his head around to look at me, his face pale but with high spots of colour on both cheeks, his fists balled and his body shaking. "Leave it."

"Are you serious?" he asked. "Are you actually serious?"

Max pulled his phone out. "I'll call the police."

"Don't," I said. After yesterday, I couldn't bear the thought of another encounter with the cops.

Lucas puffed out a furious sigh and let go of Bill. When my attacker slid down the wall, Lucas aimed a kick at his balls and stalked away. Max urged me past Bill, stopping to spit on him as the three of us trooped into the kitchen and he secured the door.

In the blue-lit room, he sat me down on one of the chef's little stools they used to climb to the high shelves and knelt before me. "Are you okay?"

I nodded, adrenaline making my limbs shake uncontrollably.

He pressed a tissue to my neck, looking at the cut Bill had made. "I'm going to get you a drink, okay?"

I nodded and Max glanced at Lucas as he left.

Lucas blew out a breath. He stooped over me, cradled my head with the most tender touch anyone other than my mother had used towards me and pressed my face into his chest. I clutched him around the back, breathing in his scent and warmth, and let myself give a few dry sobs before I parcelled this experience away in a box inside my mind.

"I'm sorry," Lucas said. "I'm sorry." And I wasn't sure if he meant sorry this had happened to me or sorry for beating Bill the way he had, or both.

It was only a minute of clinging to him before Max returned holding a glass containing amber liquid. Lucas moved back, keeping his hand on my shoulder. I looked at the drink dubiously because I hated brandy and whiskey and it was not my idea of fun after my ordeal to be made to down vomit-inducing liquor.

"Kahlua," Max said with a smile. "I know you like that shit." I took the glass eagerly and drank the contents in one. The fiery liquid worked its way down my oesophagus, warming my body. It was just what I needed. I managed to climb off the stool after that and the three of us left the kitchen. But not before Max nipped back outside to check Bill had left the alleyway. And he had. Out through the gate, leaving it swinging on its hinges.

Max put a plaster on my neck, saying the cut was a shallow one. He sat Lucas and I at a table on the other side of the bar, then went to have a word with Bill's table. It was clear from their concerned faces and glances in my direction that he had just told them Bill had assaulted me and they had to leave. They got up hurriedly and one of them paid the bill at the bar. Another made to come over to me, but Max called him

back, shook his head, and darting looks at me, the three of them left. Max dimmed the lights, poured us three drinks and joined us at the table.

He sighed. "I have to tell Les," he said. "I'm sure he'll want to tell the police."

I didn't have much to do with the owner and usually felt intimidated in his presence even though he seemed friendly enough. I shook my head. I couldn't bear the thought of having to discuss it with Les and then to detail it to the cops.

"I can't keep it from him," Max said. "It's your choice whether you press charges but I have to tell Les a member of staff was sexually assaulted on his premises. He'll be horrified."

I bit my lip and glanced at Lucas. He squeezed my hand. "It's okay," he said.

"What are you even doing here?" I asked. He had seen my humiliation. He had seen it all. It wasn't all right.

He shrugged. "I was hoping you might have a table for one."

Max laughed, but I didn't.

Lucas

A red mist came down over my eyes when I peered through those gates into the darkness of the alleyway and saw Alex on his knees being violated.

I had left work at seven, eaten some soup my housekeeper had left in the fridge for me and paced my house, feeling its emptiness and reliving every moment of the last three days.

I didn't have Alex's number.

Why hadn't I taken it? Was I going to sit at home waiting for him to call or was I going to give him up as I should? I'd pressed my knuckles into my eyes, groaning, memories flashing through my mind of his smile, his sherry-coloured eyes, the way he laughed, his long elegant body lying beneath mine and the way he sounded when I was inside him and I'd thought to myself I might go insane if I never saw him again.

Which was how I came to be at the restaurant like the worse love-sick Romeo ever, fully prepared to ask for a table for one and sit there the way I had on Christmas Eve.

Anything to see him again.

But instead, I heard muffled sounds from the end of the alleyway and my blood had frozen when I squinted through the gates.

That guy hadn't got the message when I'd warned him off and now he was actually assaulting Alex.

I couldn't breathe or think for the fury sending my blood molten with rage.

I scrambled ungracefully over the gate, ripping my coat on a nail at the top and pounded down the alleyway with murder on my mind.

It was good job both Alex and Max were there and I didn't have the bastard alone because I would have without doubt punched and punched him until there was nothing left of his face.

My anger and loss of control frightened me.

I was still shaking when Alex and Max and I sat down with our drinks.

I understood all too well why Alex didn't want to report it.

Who wanted to discuss with a total stranger in authority that someone had made you suck their cock? I hadn't and Alex didn't want to, but I felt the irony of the situation.

He had wanted me to report my assault and I wanted him to report his, and neither of us were prepared to do it.

Eventually after finishing his drink, Alex pushed his chair back. "I'm going to go home," he said. He didn't look at me. I understood I might not be invited but I wasn't letting him out of my sight until I saw that door close behind him.

"I can drive you," I said.

He nodded. "I'll just get my stuff." I watched him walk across the restaurant and noted his dragging gait, the slump of his shoulders and head, and I ached for him.

We drove back to his place in silence. I'd brought the Hyundai today because I

fancied bringing a drink with me and not needing to cram myself in half to get into the low-slung car. He let me into his flat and I silently acknowledged that I'd done a good job on fixing the front door.

He dropped his bag on the floor, kicked off his shoes, took off his coat, and walked through to the kitchen. I took my shoes off but left my coat on because it was freezing and because I wasn't expecting to be invited to stay. He was filling the kettle at the sink when I went through. I watched the tense lines of his body, the shake of his hands. He took a mug from the cupboard and dropped a tea bag in it. One mug, not two. There was a thermostat under the cupboard at the far end. He turned it up to twenty and I heard the boiler fire up. Thank God.

He turned to look at me and my heart sank at the expression on his face. It was fury, distress and humiliation all rolled into one. I never wanted to see it directed at me again. "Why were you there? You shouldn't have been there." He clenched his fists and the kettle boiled behind him. "You shouldn't have seen."

I stepped forward warily. He was on the edge, a new side to him. "It's okay," I said softly.

His face flushed and his eyes glittered. "It's not okay! It's not o-fucking-kay! You shouldn't have seen what he did to me." He stalked forward and hit me on the chest with a closed fist. "How am I ever going to...? How can I ever..."

I cupped his head. "What?" I asked.

He knocked my hand away. "How can I..." Tears dripped down his cheeks and his voice shook, became a whisper. "You saw. You saw what he did to me."

I pulled him into my arms. He fought me, slapping and hitting, but it was a weak protest and soon he slumped against me, broken sobs muffled in my shoulder. I held

him hard, stroking his head. “It doesn’t matter,” I whispered to him. “It doesn’t matter what I saw. I’m here and I’m not going anywhere.”

He pulled away from me and lurched past me. “I’m going to be sick.”

I found him in the bathroom on his knees, head over the toilet.

I stroked his back as he puked, then I wiped his mouth and nose with toilet roll and gave him a glass of water to rinse out his mouth.

There was some mouthwash on the shelf and I handed him the bottle.

He took a hefty swig, gargled and spat.

His face was white, tear-streaked and blotchy.

He started to pull his clothes off.

I stepped back to the doorway as he turned on the shower, discarded his underwear and stepped naked beneath the spray.

The door of the cubicle was glass.

I stood there feeling like a pervert as he soaped himself feverishly, then scrubbed violently with a cloth, leaving red marks on his skin, crying all the while.

He turned his face up to the shower, filled his mouth with water and spat. When he started to scrub his mouth with the soapy cloth, I decided enough was enough and started to strip.

Naked, I opened the door and bundled him back against the wall. There wasn’t room

to swing a cat in that shower. I pulled the flannel away from him and dropped it, wiped my hand across his mouth to take away any soap residue, then lowered my lips to his.

He gasped and I deepened the kiss, tasting soap and his tears. I took his face in my hands and looked at him. “What I saw makes no difference to how I feel about you. No difference to how I want to kiss you.”

His eyes were red and wide. “But wh-wh-what about...” he stammered.

“What?”

“What about when...”

I stroked his cheeks with my fingertips and my touch started to slow his rapid breathing. “When we’re intimate?”

He bit his lip and nodded.

I ran my thumb over his top lip, then his bottom one, then kissed him again. “When you kiss me, when your dick’s in my mouth, do you think about how many other people I’ve done that to?”

He shook his head, eyes wide.

“So why would I?” I asked him. “Why would I think about anything other than I have your mouth at this moment in time? That I’d like to keep your mouth. I want it on mine. I want it on my body.”

He cut me off with a hard kiss. Then we were grappling fiercely in the confined space, bouncing off the tiles and the door, our hands on each other’s cocks, jerking



hard, our fists bumping. He cried out, head tilted back and I mouthed his throat, covering his neck in kisses, trying to make him see through my actions that I wanted him, that nothing would ever change how much I wanted him, whether we ended up together or not. He was sunk deep into my senses, my skin, my mind, my soul, and what I had witnessed tonight only made me want him more. Made me want to be the one to heal him, to put him back together, to care for him, to make him new again. To wake up next to him, treat him like a king, be the one he came to when the going got tough. Be his everything.

Too much. Too much. But it was too late. I was head over heels with all caution thrown to the wind.

He spurted onto my fingers, body shaking against mine, his teeth snagging my lip and making me groan. I came a few seconds later, adding to the slippery mess between us and we sagged against the wall, still kissing.

The flat had started to warm up by the time we made it out of the bathroom and into his room where he handed me his dressing-gown and dressed himself in pyjamas. It was a little tight and short around the thighs and his grin told me he liked it just fine. He sat me down in front of the TV and he made us both a cup of cardamom and ginger tea, pairing it with a bag of Doritos Chili Heatwave. My favourite. We sat next to each other watching Keanu Reeves in John Wick .

“I like him,” Alex said, crunching a crisp. “I’ve heard he’s a really nice bloke.”

“Me too,” I said.

“Not enough nice people in the world,” he said with a slurp of his tea. “Humanity is really shit.”

I glanced at him. So far our four-day bubble had avoided the world outside. War,

famine, crime, politics and climate change. Stuff that kept me awake and made me despair for the future of our planet. Stuff that kept me from watching the news because it made me want to cry, or often actually did. Especially if it involved children and animals and the broken refugees of war. And now, with his assault, the world outside had shattered our bubble. And showed him the very worst of humanity.

He kept his gaze on mine. I traced his jaw with my fingers. “I know,” I said. “Would you let me try and show you that some of us are not all bad?”

He swallowed. “I already know,” he said in a whisper with his eyes shining. “My knight in shining armour.”

## Page 28

*Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 2:12 am*

One year later

Alex

Gentle waves lapped against the velvet sand.

Overhead, a ripe moon reflected silver in the black water.

This place was so peaceful.

I'd enjoyed my five days in Bali after an unfortunate meeting two days ago, but I missed Lucas as I always did when I worked away.

At least I'd be back for Christmas Eve in two days.

I couldn't wait, despite this paradise I was lucky enough to be spending my time in.

I'd sat in Lucas's office with Max on New Year's Eve.

Lucas had insisted I bring someone with me to the meeting.

He wanted it professional, above board, not the boss giving his boyfriend work.

He had a contract drawn up and there was a lawyer there who went over the minutiae until my head spun.

Later, Lucas was at pains to point out that this work was independent of whatever

happened with us.

No matter how we ended up, the work would be there if I wanted it.

My first photo shoot was at the end of January.

He and I were still so new, tentatively taking steps, feeling each other out (and feeling each other up).

He'd refused to come to the photoshoot.

He said watching me lying on a bed wearing nothing but his new collection of tighty whities would make him so hot under the collar it would send the wrong impression to his colleagues.

No one wanted the CEO walking around the studio with a hard-on.

Photos from that shoot ended up in magazines and on billboards.

I remember stopping in the street, staring up at the lean brunet with the sultry eyes, floppy hair and bulging underwear and thinking, is that me ? I'd got a lot of stick from Max.

He thought I had something shoved down there.

My mum was very proud but hesitantly asked if I would have more clothes on next time. My dad didn't say much. He probably thought Lucas was pimping me out or something.

Modelling for Lucas led to a major agency taking me on and suddenly I was getting work thrown at me and mixing with the sort of people I had only seen on Instagram and adverts for designer brands.

I felt like a fraud when I stood amongst these beautiful people.

A failed university student and waiter with enough neuroses to keep a shrink busy for months.

Imposter syndrome, they call it, and I had it in buckets.

The work started in the UK.

Then I was going to Europe for a couple of days at a time and then it was long haul flights to far-flung destinations I had only dreamed of visiting.

I balked at the very idea.

They wanted me to model clothes in Tokyo and were prepared to pay me thousands.

This was my life now? I hadn't even given up my shifts at the restaurant for fear it would all come crashing down and still picked up a couple a week when I could.

Lucas and I discussed it.

He encouraged me to seize the opportunity to see the world with an added bonus of making money.

It could only be my decision and if I didn't want to go, he would support me no matter what.

So I turned up at the airport at the arse-crack of dawn that day with my years-old shit suitcase and found Lucas waiting there for me.

He had booked the seat next to me on the plane.

I remember I threw myself into his arms in the check-in queue and smothered his face with kisses.

It was only one of the many trips he came on with me.

My strength, my support, the love of my life.

Of course he couldn't always come with me and Bali had been done on my own.

It was also where I'd run into José, as I had always known I would.

???

Lucas

Street lights shone through the cab window as we sped along the dusty road and I reflected on how far both me and Alex had come in the last year.

He was now a supermodel.

He laughed when I, or others, called him that, but it was true.

He was earning an eye-watering amount of money and travelling first class to fabulous destinations.

When I'd seen the finished photos from that first shoot, Alex lounging on a bed with come hither eyes and his package outlined so perfectly in my bestselling range of undies, I could barely breathe.

My secretary had brought a file to my office and when I'd opened to the first picture, I'd caught my breath.

I'd forgotten she was there as I stared, flipping through the photos, my dick getting harder and harder.

Nobody had ever looked so amazing modelling my stuff.

No one .

I was biased, but Alex was the one.

The new face of my brand.

I'd cleared my throat.

"Thanks," I'd said, "that'll be all for now." What I meant was, please leave and close the door so I can jerk off .

My hand wasn't steady as I thumbed my mobile and brought up Alex's number.

When he answered I heard bird cries and distant voices.

"I got the photos," I told him.

"I can't believe my eyes."

He sounded crestfallen when he replied.

"Oh.

Sorry.

I thought I'd done okay.

Do you want me to try again? If not, I don't mind if you get someone else.

You don't have to pay me.

Sorry, I..."

"Shut up," I said.

He did and the line echoed with shock.

"These photos, Alex," my voice was low and aroused, "are the sexiest thing I've ever seen in my life.

I'm not sure I can bear to let anyone else see them." I spread my legs, rubbing the bulge in my trousers.

He laughed nervously. "Really?"

"Yes, really.

I'm sorry to be so crude, but I'm going to have to wank over them in my office.

Right now."

His laugh this time was more like a cackle.

"Oh my God, dude, you're shameless."

I unbuckled my belt.

"You've made me this way." It was true our sex got better and better, but it seemed we were both holding back, rationing our contact to seeing each other once or twice a



week, neither willing to admit that they wanted to spend twenty-four seven with each other for fear of being taken as coming on too strong or worse, being a creepy stalker.

I was smitten though, more than I had been on Christmas Eve if that was even possible.

I wanted him at every moment of every day.

In a lower, more serious voice, he said, “Tell me what you’re doing.”

“I’m unfastening myself,” I replied as I did just that.

This was the first dirty phone call we’d had.

“I’m taking my dick out.

My dick that is so fucking hard because of you.” Alex gave a little moan down the line that shot straight to my groin and I fisted my cock, gave it a few hard tugs.

“Are you wanking off?”

“Yes.”

“I want to do it too, but I’m in the park feeding the ducks.”

I snorted.

“Listen to me then.” My breath hitched as I increased the rhythm of my hand.

“God,” Alex said.

“Did you really like them?”

“You look like an angel,” I replied.

“But a fallen angel.

One who’s about to ravage you and drag you straight to hell.”

“Oh.” He sounded nonplussed.

“Is that good?”

“Oh, God, Alex,” I groaned.

“I’m going to come.” I squeezed my eyes shut, stroking my swollen flesh, wishing he was here, on his knees for me, his sweet mouth around me.

I was never sure what I liked most about sleeping with Alex.

His mouth or his arse or his hands.

All of them were magical.

All of them made me orgasm like I never had in my life before.

My libido was well and truly awakened from a casing of frost and I hoped it never hibernated again.

“Come for me,” he whispered like all the best dirty clichéd books and that was me done.

I came into my hand, making sure to catch it all so I didn’t have to go to my eleven o’clock meeting with cum on my trousers.

“Fuck,” I panted, eyes squeezed shut.

Alex laughed softly.

“I need to go home and rub one out too now.”

I reached for a tissue from the box on my desk.

Never had that box been used for such an illicit thing before.

“Are they really okay?” Alex asked and the uncertainty and hesitation in his voice astounded me, despite the fact he had just heard me wanking over the photos.

“Alex,” I said, cradling the phone between my ear and shoulder as I fastened up, “what we’ve paid you for these isn’t enough.

You’re the most beautiful creature I’ve ever seen in my life and I want...” I stopped.

“What do you want?” he asked after a breath, his voice low and serious.

“I want to be with you.

I want to be your shelter from the storm outside, the one you can turn to when you’re anxious and hurting and afraid.

The one you share your highs and lows with and the one you kiss goodnight.” I took a breath and felt foolish.

My heart was beating hard and it wasn’t from the climax.

“No one’s ever spoken to me like that before,” Alex said so softly his voice was almost lost amongst the sounds of birds and people around him.

“I hope I haven’t scared you.”

“No.

I knew how special you were when I saw you sitting there alone on Christmas Eve.

I asked myself how come nobody else could see it.

Like a light shining from you.

A beacon to guide my way.

A lighthouse steering me away from the rocks.”

Suddenly I had a lump in my throat like a boulder.

Tears stung my eyes and my jaw trembled.

I clenched the phone hard.

Get a grip.

Don’t cry.

“Are you there?”

“I’m here.” My voice sounded strangled.

“Sorry.”

“Don’t be.”

“Could I come over and see you at work? If you’re not too busy.”

“Yes,” I said, the meeting forgotten.

“Come now.”

My secretary had called twenty minutes later.

“Alex Redfern to see you.”

I’d only found out his surname when he’d signed the contract.

I’d tried it in my head and on my tongue.

Then I’d tried it with my own name.

Lucas Redfern.

Lucas Redfern-Rainford .

“Send him in,” I said, getting up from the desk.

Alex opened the door and came inside.

I stepped towards him and we embraced fiercely.

Watching the scenery pass the cab in a blur outside now, I still remembered that day so clearly.

The words he had spoken.

The words I had spoken.

I had stepped up that day.

From the man who was not sure he could take Alex on, to the man who would.

That man was new, bigger, better.

Lucas Rainford 2.0.

And he had carried on getting better because of Alex. For Alex.

Hence why I was here today.

My phone beeped and smiling to myself, I pulled it from my pocket.

It was Adam, What's Apping an Insta link.

Have you seen this?

I opened the app and my smile died.

???

Two days ago

Alex

I recognised him as soon as I saw him.

Arrogant, strutting, brainless.

Bronzed, skinny and Botoxed up to his eyeballs.

Fillers in his lips and cheeks.

Eyebrows tattooed on, guyliner and designer stubble carefully groomed.

My stomach plunged.

I was with some of the other models in the hotel dining room, sitting next to Kayleigh who I'd worked with before and who was a riot.

José was with three other guys, all of them wearing the shortest of shorts and vest tops, with flip-flops showing their horrible hairy toes which definitely wouldn't be included in the final photos.

I'd known I'd eventually bump into him.

Were the men with him the ones who had assaulted Lucas? The ones José had encouraged to rape him? I watched him choose half a grapefruit and some watermelon and wondered if he had an eating disorder like a lot of the models I had met.

I wouldn't go down that path.

I was eating eggs, toast, yoghurt and fruit and intended to wolf the lot down and go back for seconds.

The gang wandered past my table.

José's gaze swept over me then came back to rest on my face, staring, his eyebrows pulled in tight.

I stared back.

What was his fucking problem? He stopped.

“Look who it is,” he said.

“Lucas’s toy boy.”

It was nothing I hadn’t heard before.

I gave less and less of a fuck as time went on.

But when I was confronted by this vile rapist, I took exception to it.

I shoved my chair back and stood.

“I know what you did,” I hissed.

He laughed and glanced at his friends.

“Oh, really?”

We were gathering an audience now.

The rest of the crew and models were looking, along with other guests of the hotel.

It suited me fine to tell them all.

“You raped him,” I said, loud enough for everyone to hear.

“What?” His olive skin had turned pale.

“You heard me.



You and your friends.” I gestured to the other three men who were looking distinctly uneasy and trying to back off.

“You raped him.”

José laughed.

A brittle, hard laugh, but one that didn’t fool me.

I raised my voice, looking around.

“José and his friends pinned Lucas Rainford to a bed in Scotland two years ago and raped him.

They think they got away with it.

They haven’t.”

Now his cronies were white-faced and shaking their heads, while José was still trying to bluster his way out.

“He’s crazy, he’s fucking crazy.

You know who this guy is, right? A gold-digging waiter sucking dick on demand.

Making up lies to hide the real facts.

That Lucas took the four of us to that hotel room and fucked us all one after the other.

Yes, that’s right.” He laughed, his eyes gleaming.

“He’s an absolute pervert.

Some of the stuff he begged us to do to him, you wouldn't believe your ears."

I threw my coffee in his face.

"Shut up! He has the evidence of what you did to him and if it's up to me, he'll go to the police."

José clenched his jaw, dark eyes spitting fire.

"Fucking little rent boy," he spat.

"He needed a real man.

And he got a real man."

I punched him so hard in the face he flew into the breakfast buffet table, smashing plates and scattering pastries and fruit.

A couple of guys from the crew waded in then and it was all over.

José picked himself up and stalked away and his spineless buddies followed him.

I sighed, looking out over the black water and enjoying the warm breeze on my bare arms.

I didn't feel bad that I had confronted José but I knew I should have had the conversation in private.

Nobody needed to know Lucas's business.

However, he'd disappeared after that, the word seeming to be that he had been fired, which was wonderful news.

If I had managed to ruin his life the way he had ruined Lucas's, it was all right by me.

While I still wanted Lucas to go to the police, I was wary about raising the subject with him.

We were dynamite in bed together but he was still tense whenever I got anywhere near anal play with him.

He welcomed a rim job but when I'd tried a couple of times to ease fingers in there, he'd pulled away, shook his head.

I didn't know how or when he was ever going to be over what those men had done to him.

I wasn't active on social media but I'd been told that rumours were circulating about José.

I'd had enough witnesses that it was bound to be the actual facts being shared online, not speculation.

And I had not asked Lucas's permission.

I had spilled his secret and sooner or later he would find out.

While I couldn't wait to get back home to see him, I was dreading it too.

Surely he was going to be angry with me and feel embarrassed and humiliated, as would I in his position.

Imagine if he had shared with a room full of strangers what Bill had done to me in that alleyway and I had read about it online afterwards? I shuddered.

Yes, I wasn't sure how I was going to make this up to him.

Maybe it would be the ruin of us. I didn't want to think about it.

I turned around then as I heard shoes crunching over the damp sand.

A tall man in a white shirt and linen trousers was making his way across the beach to me, silhouetted in the moonlight.

I caught my breath, unable to believe my eyes.

Then I started to run, stumbling on the sand before throwing myself into his arms with a cry.

???

Lucas

I'd flown all the way to Bali to surprise him before the end of his shoot because I couldn't bear to be without him any longer.

But what I'd just seen on Instagram had taken the wind out of my sails.

People were saying that José had raped me.

Alex saw me and came running.

He threw himself into my arms and even though I was angry and upset, I gathered him in close, breathing in the scent of his hair.

Holding him felt like coming home, no matter where we were, as always.

That hadn't changed.

But something had.

He had told someone what had happened to me.

And now I was being talked about online.

I realised with a start that Alex was weeping against my chest.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"I'm sorry.

I wanted to kill him.

I should have killed him.

Please forgive me."

I swallowed the lump in my throat, my anger gone as suddenly as it had appeared.

How could I ever be angry with him? I was just disappointed that the secret between us had been spilled.

He had let me down, I suppose.

I didn't want to feel this way.

I hoped this would be the only time he would ever disappoint me.

I held him tighter and stroked his head.

But I could understand.

He hadn't revealed my secret through any maliciousness.

He had never done anything but be my support, my guide, my rock. The lighthouse he said I was. We guided each other from the rocks. I had missed him the last few days like a part of me had been amputated. My bed was cold without him, my house empty. My one solace had been the black cat Alex had adopted from Battersea Dogs and Cats Home to keep me company while he was away. Gaston was the sweetest, most loving animal you could ever hope for, despite the awful start he had had in life, dumped as a kitten by his owner and fighting his way back from cat flu that had left him close to death. I had never had a pet. I couldn't believe how they could enrich your life. The love I gave back to Gaston was the love he showed me unconditionally. Like Alex.

Alex's chest was hitching with sobs.

"Please forgive me."

I lifted his head to look down into his face.

"I forgive you," I said.

"It's okay."

He swallowed, trying a wan smile that came out more like a grimace.

"Is Gaston okay?"

"He's fine."

"Who's feeding him?"

“Max.” Alex’s smile was more genuine when I said that.

I’d developed a good friendship with Max over the last year, even if he was very protective over Alex.

I searched his eyes.

“What did you do to José?”

“I punched him in his horrible, smug face,” Alex said, looking both proud and fierce.

His words swelled my breast, even though it wasn’t what I wanted.

“Better hope he doesn’t press charges.”

Alex scoffed.

“And have the police come after him for rape? I don’t think so.”

I ran my thumb over his bottom lip.

“How do you fancy Christmas in Hawaii?”

He stared at me. “What?”

“I booked a hotel for the next nine days.

We fly on Christmas Eve.”

He threw himself into my arms again.

“Oh my God, you’re amazing.”

I smiled against his hair.

“Come on, I need a drink.”

???

Alex

I'd left the balcony doors open and we'd probably be eaten alive by mosquitoes.

When I crossed the room to close them, Lucas said, “Leave them.

Let me listen to the sea.”

He loved the ocean so much.

His face lit up like a child at Christmas whenever we travelled somewhere and he caught a glimpse of the sea.

He talked all the time about retiring to the coast, about buying a home in Greece.

I wanted to be right there with him, watching that wonder on his face every day.

He came up behind me and rested a hand on the back of my neck.

His touch was still enough to make me shiver.

Always had been, always would be.

He reached around with both hands and started to unfasten my shirt.

As he slipped it off my shoulders, he pressed his erection against my backside. I



couldn't help the groan that slipped from my throat, my dick going rigid in seconds.

Soft lips caressed my neck and my head fell back against his shoulder.

"I want to be inside you," he murmured.

A rush of pre-cum wet my underwear.

When his hand slid down over my belly and between my legs, I bucked into his touch.

"Please," I said.

He unfastened my trousers.

"You're wet," he said in my ear as he traced the outline of my cock and balls through my damp briefs.

Lucas Rainford briefs of course.

I whimpered.

"I need you."

"Get undressed," he said.

My cock throbbed as I hopped about dragging my clothes off, throwing myself on the bed and hoping he had lube.

We hadn't put the lights on but I could see his silhouette well enough in the dark as he came to me naked, tossing something onto the pillow by my head.

He lowered himself into my arms and we kissed deeply, rubbing our dicks together.

He reached for the thing he'd put on the pillow and keeping his mouth on mine, I felt cold wetness between my legs.

I arched as he rubbed my entrance, teasing me open before spearing me with his finger.

I gasped into his mouth, rocking against him as he added another and fucked me with them.

So good.

So fucking good.

Every touch he gave me lit me on fire. I couldn't get enough of his hands, his mouth, his dick, his beautiful body, the way he fucked me.

I breathed hard as he knelt up and rolled on a rubber.

Lifting my knees, I felt him press against my entrance, so hard and so thick I shuddered with impending ecstasy.

"Oh God," I cried as he slid in to the hilt.

"Lucas, oh God, fuck me."

He kissed the words off my lips, starting to move within me, hard long strokes that completely undid me as only he could.

Nobody had ever fucked me like him before and nobody ever would.

I couldn't breathe for the pleasure swarming through my body and I clutched at him, dragging my nails down his back, bucking against him so he took me deep.

I had no doubt my noisy cries would be heard through the open doors, perhaps filtering down to the terrace bar below, but I didn't much care.

I was a man coming unravelled at the seams and as his thrusts got harder and faster, I was rushing headlong into climax.

I reached for my dick, jerking furiously, wondering if I'd get there before him.

I usually did.

I just couldn't last once his cock was inside me.

The action of him stretching me open sometimes made me come hands-free if we'd had an extended foreplay session. I remembered that memorable occasion when he'd come first. He'd slowed his pace with me still moaning and whimpering below him. Pulling out of me, he'd slid down and put his mouth around my dick and I'd exploded instantly. I loved to see my cum on his lips. He knew that. He liked to kneel at my feet and paint his mouth with my dick, before licking my cum off with slow swipes of his wicked tongue, gaze fixed on mine. He had the best tongue in the world and he had used it on every part of my body.

"Please," I moaned again. "Please."

His hand closed over mine.

We wanked me off between us while we kissed.

"I love you," he said. "Always."

“I love you too,” I said just before I cried out and spurted onto my belly and up my chest.

Lucas growled.

He nailed me hard to the bed with jerky thrusts, groaning as he came.

We collapsed into a sweating heap, our hearts racing against each other’s chests.

???

Lucas

When I slid from the bed, I pulled the sheet up to Alex’s neck to protect him from any ravenous mosquitoes and made my way across the room to the balcony.

Alex was sound asleep but with jetlag kicking in, I wasn’t finding it so easy even though I was shattered.

The hotel was on the beach, the dark waves crashing onto the sand beyond the terrace and swimming pool.

How I loved to be away from England, at one with nature and the ocean.

Tomorrow I needed to go snorkelling.

I couldn’t wait to discover what lay beneath Bali’s enchanted waters.

My body was thrumming with satisfaction but my dick was reawakening.

I wanted to slide back into Alex’s tight, wet heat.

The depth of my love for him frightened me.

But I knew he returned it.

I knew our love was fierce, solid and forever.

Nothing could shake it, let alone break it.

So it didn't matter if people knew what José and his friends had done to me and who knew, maybe one day with Alex's support, I would tell the police, show them the photos and give them my clothes.

And maybe one day he would tell on Bill too.

For now, we carried our scars and embraced them.

They made us who we were—strong, unafraid and resilient.

Now that we had found each other we were united against the world.

THE END