



Bound to Two Bears: Tenth Anniversary Special Edition

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Category: Romance

Description: Newly dumped Carson Davies decides the vacation he'd planned to take his girlfriend on—in hopes of fixing their troubled relationship—is the perfect getaway he needs to clear his head. A few days of solitude, hiking along picturesque Bear Mountain is just what he thinks he needs to move on. But as soon as he arrives, he's shocked by the sensual reaction he has to the two owners. The two male owners. Carson has never been attracted to a man, and he fights the sensation tooth and nail.

Royce and Jared know their mate as soon as he walks in the door of the main lodge. They're ready to claim what's theirs, but know they need to be careful. The man sees himself as straight, but that's the least of their problems. They'll need to show him their true nature, their inner bear, and hope it doesn't send the man packing.

The shifters have just three days before the human is scheduled to go home. In a short span, they've got to show Carson how bound they all are and hope they can seduce the man into surrendering.

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“I ’m not going.”

Carson lifted his gaze from the bag he was packing. Deidre stared at the floor, her shoulders slumped.

“You’re not going?” Carson’s heartbeat escalated, and he tried like hell to keep the irritation from his voice as he voiced the next question. “Why are you doing this?”

“There’s no point dragging it out. We’re done,” Deidre said, her voice low. “We just need to admit it.”

Carson searched his girlfriend’s face—or soon-to-be-ex-girlfriend it seemed—looking for the cause for her sudden change of heart. “You said you wanted to work on us.”

“I’ve changed my mind,” Deidre said, barely able to look Carson in the eye.

He watched her a moment, trying to understand why she was backing out at the very last second. “The cabin was your idea. You’re the one who pressured me to reserve a room before they filled up. You said you wanted to try and fix things. Are we suddenly unfixable?”

Carson wanted to feel angrier, but he couldn’t conjure it. Maybe she was right. He’d sensed their relationship had been fading for months.

Yet he’d wanted to give Deidre another chance. There had once been love between them.

“Why the sudden change?”

Deidre’s face grew red and a wave of awkward energy came from her. “I’ve... met someone.”

Met someone?

Anger finally swept through Carson. It was one thing to grow apart. It was another for her to toss him aside for another man. “Out with the old, in with the new, hmm?”

“Come on, Car. The relationship we had is gone and you know it. I’ve met someone who makes me smile again. He makes me smile like I smiled when I first met you.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?”

“Don’t do this. I hoped we could part as friends,” Deidre said. “There’s no reason for you to feel upset. It’s simply... over. It’s been over for a long time. You know that as well as I do.”

Carson sat on the bed, considering what she’d said.

Where had the sudden anger even come from? Was it the fact he was the dumpee and not the dumper? That was immature and beneath him.

Deidre was right. In the last months, their lives were almost wholly separate. They were more roommates than lovers. He’d told himself it was comfort, not the end. A maturing of their relationship.

He’d lied to himself.

If he was honest, there was a sense of relief down deep. They both deserved more

than what they had together. It was best to just let it die a peaceful death than to fight and make things ugly.

He rose to his feet and continued packing his bag.

“What are you doing?” Diedre asked.

“I paid for a cabin, and I’m not wasting it.”

“You’re still going?”

Carson had been looking forward to getting out of the city. Truth be told, he’d seen the pictures on the inn’s website and knew it was a place he had to see for himself. Bear Mountain looked gorgeous, and he had a reservation waiting with his name on it.

“I think we need some space. I don’t want to say something I’ll later regret.” He jammed his clothes into his bag before glancing up. “When I get back... don’t be here.”

Deidre’s eyes shone a little, but Carson didn’t want to let the emotion get the better of him. She knew how to twist him into knots when she wanted. “I love you, Car. I value our friendship. I don’t want to lose that.”

“Right now, that’s not my main concern,” Carson said as he rose to his feet and tossed the backpack over his shoulder.

His main concern was processing the loss of the future he’d envisioned. He cared about Deidre, he really did. They had always been good friends, even at the end, but in that moment he just wanted to get away from her. Maybe down the road... maybe they could salvage something. But not now.

“Just let me get out of here so you can clear out your stuff in peace.”

“If that’s the way you want it,” Deidre said, her voice low. “Just know I want what’s best for you. And that’s not me. You deserve someone who loves you, bone deep and forever.”

Carson turned his gaze to her. “Yeah. You deserve that, too.” And I know that’s not me . He released a sigh. “Be safe out there in the big, bad world.”

Deidre finally fully met his stare. “You, too. Don’t get eaten by a bear up there on that mountain.”

Carson grinned wryly. “I doubt my week can get much worse.”

Deidre brushed her hand down his arm in a half-hearted slap. “Don’t say that. This might be goodbye... but it’s hello to what’s next.”

Maybe.

Carson leaned in and kissed Deidre’s forehead. She clutched the front of his t-shirt and smiled up at him as he pulled away.

“You’re a good guy, Carson Davies.”

After grabbing his duffel, he headed for the front door, knowing the minute he walked outside, he would be closing the door on that chapter of his life. As the knob clicked behind him, he paused, squeezing his eyes closed.

It was done.

Not with a roar, but a whimper.

The gnawing ache he'd felt for months grew in his chest, and he suddenly recognized what it was.

Loneliness.

Even with Deidre at his side, he'd felt lonely. They'd been kidding themselves to think the relationship could've been rescued. Thankfully she'd admitted it when he'd not been able.

The elevator doors shut behind him and only made the emotions swirling within stronger. Alone inside, he faced the mirrored doors and saw the sadness in his own blue eyes staring back in the reflection.

What happened next?

Carson didn't make a good bachelor. He liked having someone to come home to.

Someone in the bed beside him at night. He liked feeling a sense of belonging to another person, sharing his life.

That was likely the reason he'd remained with Deidre for so long, even when that sense of belonging had faded.

Me. Myself. And I.

It's all I need.

This weekend alone will prove that.

The elevator dinged just before the doors opened to the parking garage. With a deep breath, he stepped out and on toward new adventures.

“All of the guests have arrived, except for one. Last name Davies for the Larchmont Cabin,” Royce shared as he straightened up the desk he seemed chained to as of late.

Staying inside was wearing thin on his soul.

He belonged outdoors, running through the trees, not bound to a hunk of old wood.

“Two occupants and they’re signed up for two wildlife tours.

One tomorrow afternoon and one Sunday morning.

If they don’t show, we won’t have a full booking for either. We may have to cancel them.”

Jared glanced at the lackluster sign-up sheet. Royce knew neither tour had more than three people on the list. If they lost two, there was no reason to keep them open.

“No one cares about hiking the trails anymore. They all come up here to fuck,” Jared said with a smirk. “Our treehuggers seem to be a thing of the past thanks to our little celebrity.”

They’d recently had a B-list actress more famous for her drunken and drugged mishaps than anything she’d done on the silver screen make use of one of their cabins where she’d tried to reconnect with her latest boy toy.

It had been a last-ditch Hail Mary in order to salvage their train wreck of a relationship.

The pair of them had been a handful and the worst guests ever, but once she’d posted videos to TikTok about her experience at the Bear Mountain Inn, their phone had started ringing off the hook. Their business suddenly seemed the go-to for marriage

counseling from her army of fanatics.

Too bad it wasn't the main reason they were open.

And their tour operation was also suffering because of the new business—to the point it could be on its last legs.

“Another couple of weeks like this and we'll have to either let Paul go or find some other work for him,” Jared added.

Royce took his glasses off and tossed them onto the desk. He scrubbed his face and then looked up at Jared. “We're fully booked through the end of the year. I'm sure we can find something for him to do.”

“He knows this mountain better than anyone. For a human, that's saying a lot.”

“He was raised by bears,” Royce said with a wry grin.

“My point is, what do we get him to do? He's not going to be happy cleaning up cabins or playing servant to these folks. I'm barely tolerating them myself. Maybe we need to start shooing away this new brand of guest. They're bad for business.”

“And just how do we determine which guests are which? It's not like we can demand they tell us why they're coming when they make reservations.”

Jared shrugged. “Well, we don't take online reservations for a reason. We could slip it into the conversation, right?”

“This is a momentary blip. Soon, they'll forget all about us, and we'll get back to business as usual. We just need to get through it for now.”

“Have you seen our reviews? They’re all prattling on about this place like it’s Relationship Mecca.

I don’t think it’s going to die down as quickly as you think.

Plus, they’re too fucking close to the valley.

It’s got everyone on edge. The entire den is afraid to shift.

” Jared chuckled, a wicked glint in his eyes.

“Maybe we need to treat a few like shit and get some bad reviews in the mix. A few of these assholes deserve to be taken down a peg or two anyway.”

“No,” Royce said forcefully. “I’ll do nothing to destroy the reputation of my grandparents’ business. I can’t believe you’d suggest that.”

Jared rolled his eyes. “I was kidding .”

Royce glared at him.

He lifted his hands. “Okay, half kidding.”

“The influx of cash isn’t hurting us right now. There are some renovations and upgrades we’ve wanted to do since we took over and this windfall might just about cover it. I say we let it roll for a little while longer—eventually, they’ll forget. They always do.”

The magic of the mountain usually kept humans away—those who didn’t have a drop of bear blood in their veins, at least. That magic was failing them thanks to social media. It never forgot. If only they could wipe all that shit off the internet.

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“In the meantime, Paul can be put to work doing whatever’s needed,” Royce continued. “I noticed some dead limbs near a couple of the cabins that need to be removed before they cause any damage. I noticed them on my way in this morning.”

“I’ve got them on my to-do list. Property maintenance is my job,” Jared snarled.

“Then do it,” Royce snapped back.

“What the fuck is up your ass?” Jared asked.

“I handle the front office shit and guests. You’re supposed to maintain the grounds. If it’s too much work, then use Paul to get it up to snuff.”

Jared let out a low growl.

Royce tried to reel himself in.

Jared’s jaw was set. “We’re equal partners in this business.”

Royce felt his chest puff.

“Then act like it,” he all but roared.

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he wanted to reel them back in, especially seeing the hurt in Jared’s eyes.

Jared crossed his arms over his broad chest. “I’ve been covering all the shit you’re

missing and doing the day-to-day shit. I'm so sorry I can't be in three places at once."

Royce clutched his hands at his sides.

One of the side effects of their place being overrun by humans was they'd been unable to shift in weeks. That made them both grumpy. As time wore on, it was becoming harder and harder to keep his animal side at bay. The arguments between him and Jared had escalated, too.

You always hurt the ones you love.

Jared was his best friend and companion.

As children, they'd been matched as brother bears by their den's alpha—two who would one day be bound together by a third.

They weren't usually at odds with one another, but the perfect storm of too many humans and having to hide who they really were was getting to them both.

Something needed to change.

And fast.

He didn't know how to calm the beast within.

"You're right. I'm sorry," Royce mumbled.

Jared's eyes began to glow golden, emotion high.

"You have no idea all I do around here," he snapped, the raw sound of his voice letting Royce know he was close to a shift.

“Just because this place was your grandparents’ that doesn’t make it more yours than mine.

They left it to both of us, Royce. Both of us .

” Jared moved closer to the door. “I work my ass off every godsdamned day. But if you think you can do things better on your own, maybe I need to let you try. Then you’d see all I really do. ”

Royce clamped down on his bear before it raged and ruined anything more. Jared did work his ass off and Royce well knew it. “We’re both feeling raw. We haven’t shifted in weeks.” He sighed. “I know you work hard. I’m just... on edge.”

Jared’s eyes dimmed and the glow ebbed. He took a deep breath before speaking again. After glancing at the floor a few seconds, he lifted his face back up to Royce. “I’ve felt... off lately. I don’t know if it’s me feeding off you or what.”

Royce leaned back in his chair. “I feel it, too. I don’t know how to describe it.

I feel like my skin’s two sizes too small and I’m ready to lash out.

I assumed it was because we’ve been unable to shift, but I can’t stop thinking something’s about to happen.

I don’t know if it’s good or bad, but it’s coming for us. ”

“I feel it, too,” Jared whispered.

Royce offered Jared a small smile. At least they were both attune to those feelings. It spoke for something.

Jared grinned softly. “The moon’s full tonight. Maybe we can sneak in a night run.”

“Maybe,” Royce said as he closed his ledger.

The bell rung out front, alerting him they had a guest. Royce rose to his feet. “Hopefully that’s our final guest for the weekend. Let’s get them set and we can talk about that run.”

Jared’s smile widened—but he suddenly whipped his head to the side. He lifted a hand, signaling Royce to stop. He scented the air and his eyes grew larger. He sniffed again, and frowned. “Do you smell that?”

Royce inhaled and caught a whiff of something...

odd. Not unpleasant, but unfamiliar. A warm, tingling sensation raced through his entire body, making him feel both exhilarated and apprehensive all at the same moment.

The scent was musky...yet sweet. He inhaled again and felt the same rush through his body.

“What is that?” Jared asked, turning toward the door.

Royce wasn’t sure, but he sure as hell wanted to find out. He stalked out of the back office, passing Jared, and out into the small lobby. A lone man stood at the counter. When he turned to look at Royce...

Something struck Royce like a physical blow.

The air was drawn from his lungs, and he felt a fire low and deep in his gut.

Sweat beaded on his forehead. A roar bubbled up his throat and if he hadn't the clarity of mind to tamp down on the instinct, he would've let loose until the walls and windows rattled.

He knew his eyes were glowing, had to be, from the look of terror on the human's face.

The human's handsome face. His eyes were the same color of the blue sky on a summer's day on the mountain.

His hair was blond with glints the same shade as the golden bits shimmering in the mountain's creek bed under the sun.

The color was matched by the stubble growing on his chin, not yet a beard.

By the warm glow of his skin, he'd spent many a day outdoors, enjoying nature.

His body was fit, too, muscled in all the right places.

Royce noticed the quickening of the man's breath. A glimmer of fear and longing circling in his eyes.

And the sudden tenting of his pants.

Royce's own cock had thickened as he'd laid eyes on the man.

The man looked between them before pulling his backpack higher onto his shoulder. "I think I'm in the wrong place."

He spun and headed for the door.

Royce snapped out of his stupor and raced around the front desk, stepping between the human and the door. “I’m sorry. Our customer service is typically better than this. I’m one of the owners, Royce. How can I help you?”

The man’s gaze swung between him and Jared again.

“You’re here for a reason,” Royce whispered.

“I-I have a reservation.” The man stepped back and kept them both in his eyeline. “Had a reservation. I was stupid for coming up here. I need to go.”

“You drove all the way out here only to turn back now?” Jared asked, stepping closer.

“Yeah, well... it was a beautiful ride. I think that’s all I needed to see. No reason to stay any longer.”

“Reservations are non-refundable. You don’t want to lose what you paid already,” Jared stated, creeping ever closer.

“I’ll take the loss.” The man looked between them again, near panting.

“Are you alright?” Royce asked.

“Your eyes... they were... glowing .” He shook his head. “I saw them glow.”

Royce chuckled, knowing they’d let the human see too much. He hated to lie, but they had to tread lightly. “Glowing? I’m sure it was... just the setting sun coming in the window behind you.”

The man looked over his shoulder at the window. “It’s cloudy.”

“The sun’s been peeking in and out all day,” Jared said, inching up to take the man’s bags. “Here, let me help you with those.”

“The sun?” the human said more to himself than them. He looked to Royce, and then to Jared, before chuckling. “Yeah. It had to be the sun.” He handed his bag to Jared after a couple of heartbeats. “My head’s not on right at the moment. I’m sure it was the sun. It had to be, right?”

“Right,” Jared answered, along with a slow, steady smile.

Royce forced himself behind the desk. He didn’t want anything between him and the human, but they’d already spooked him. He needed to act as normal as possible and quell the raging beast inside—who was still ready to roar.

He had an idea what was happening. Looking at Jared, he caught his eye. Jared’s knowing look told Royce they might be on the same page.

Opening the computer registration system, Royce glanced over the screen.

“We only have one cabin left unclaimed. Party of two.” A shot of jealousy spiked through him at the thought of the man being with someone else.

His mind went back to Jared’s comment earlier about people only coming up to fuck. No one was touching this human.

No one but them.

Royce’s bear was ready to tear whoever it was to shreds.

“That’ll be party of one. I’m came alone,” the man said as he stepped closer to the desk. “Davies is the name the reservation is under. Carson Davies.”

Royce clicked a few keys on his computer, trying to keep a satisfied smile off his lips. Alone. That sounded much better.

“You’re also signed up for a couple of nature hikes. Will you still be interested in those?” he asked, looking up to take another glance at the handsome man.

Carson shook his head. “I’m not in any shape to be around people. Maybe you have a map of the trails? I could go hike on my own.”

“It’s not safe to go hiking alone,” Jared piped up. “We’ve got a lot of bears on the mountain. I could take you on a private hike, if you’d like. No other guests, so you wouldn’t have more than me to deal with.”

“Yeah, maybe,” Carson said offhandedly. He still appeared to be a little off-center.

“Either of us would be more than willing to give you a tour of the mountain,” Royce said, eyeing Jared for a moment.

He turned back and smiled at Carson. “But I do agree about not hiking alone,” Royce said.

“Jared’s right about the bears on this mountain.

They’ve been known to attack humans, Mr. Davies. ”

“You can call me Carson,” the man said, locking gazes with Royce.

Royce felt a wave of heat with that gaze, but then it was gone as quickly as it peeked out.

“Okay... Carson ,” Royce answered, sensing the man finally relaxing a little. After he

had Carson registered, he pulled out the key for the Larchmont Cabin. “I can show you to your cabin.”

“I’ll carry his bags,” Jared offered.

Royce met Jared’s gaze before eyeing Carson.

“Follow me.”

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Carson walked behind the two massive men, spying the glorious scenery around him.

The pines grew twenty, thirty feet into the air, the evergreen branches thick with needles.

In the distance, a beautiful lake shimmered as the sun indeed peeked out and turned the water into a glimmering show.

On the other, the mountains rose into the heavens.

Everything was just as picturesque as they'd shown online, if not better.

Yet his stare kept drifting to the men walking ahead of him instead.

Calling Royce a bear of a man was an understatement. He had to be at least six and a half feet of pure muscle. He had thick, curling dark hair and a thick beard to match—and both only made him appear all the more menacing.

Menacing might not be the right word for it.

Dangerous, but not in the way Carson typically defined danger.

He gazed down at his cock still tenting his pants, confused why he'd gotten hard seconds after the two had appeared in the lobby.

A scent of something had tickled his nose.

It had wrapped around him and captured him within seconds.

He was filled with a desire that felt both right and wrong.

Carson wasn't gay. Wasn't bi. He'd never felt attracted to another man in his life.

Yet... all he could think about was having the two men touch him.

All over.

The desire to kneel at their feet and surrender roared within.

That wasn't him. He pulled the edge of his sweatshirt down to cover his erection.

He didn't feel himself. Hadn't since he'd laid eyes on them. The impulse to flee screamed within.

While the need to stay was even more powerful.

"You truly picked the perfect cabin," Royce said, looking over his shoulder. His hazel gaze roved over Carson's face a moment too long. "It's my personal favorite."

Royce was most definitely checking him out, as was Jared. Two big, hairy gay bears up on Bear Mountain. It was almost cliché. Too bad for them both. Carson was straight as an arrow.

No matter how much he wanted to explore those nig, muscled bodies.

Fuck. Stop it.

Stop looking at their asses.

They led Carson to a large ATV. Jared lowered Carson's bags into the back and Royce climbed behind the wheel.

"Hop on in," Royce said, staring across at him.

Jared slipped onto the backseat, his gaze locked on Carson.

"I thought this place was all about hiking and roughing it?" he asked.

"You'll have plenty of time for hiking this weekend," Royce murmured before flipping on the ATV's engine. He patted the seat beside him.

Carson slid into the seat beside Royce. The man was too big. He took up more than his fair share of the bench seat. Carson tried to keep his thigh from touching Royce's, but as they jostled up the steep dirt and gravel path, the bumps forced Carson against the thick wall of muscle.

Royce put off a ton of heat, too. Carson could feel it seeping into his side.

He noted Royce taking in a deep breath every so often, so he did so himself. The air was clean and fresh. It had been too long since he'd been out of the city, and he wasn't used to no smog. The pine scent was a delight.

"So why did you come alone?"

Carson glanced at his side, thrown by the question. It was a bit personal. So why did he feel the need to answer it?

"My girlfriend and I... we just split up. She'd planned this trip so we could work on us, but it seems we were beyond fixing."

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Jared said from the backseat.

Carson wasn’t so sure the man was. “I probably shouldn’t have come, but there was no point in wasting the trip. I think we both needed a little space, too.”

“Girlfriend, hmm? I assumed you might’ve had a boyfriend,” Royce asked.

“I don’t swing that way,” Carson said, pulling the bottom of his sweatshirt down again to cover the tent in his pants.

“Ahh,” Royce murmured.

“Diedre and I were together nearly five years. Drifted apart. It’s been over for a long while. We just finally admitted it.”

Royce glanced at him before looking back to the path. “Sounds like time for something new. Something different .”

Not your kind of different.

Even as he said the words in his head, he felt his body respond to the thought of something different.

Battling the sensation back, he looked away, trying to get a little control over himself.

“No, I think it’s time to just be alone.

Get my head on straight before I move on with a new woman in my life. ”

Royce glanced at him with a wry smile. “Yep. Perhaps that’s best.”

Indeed it is, buddy. I'm straight.

Super straight.

Straight with a capital S.

Suddenly, Carson wondered whom he was reassuring. The men or himself? He glanced over at Royce, hyperaware of the man's presence beside him. Carefully, he peeked over his shoulder and felt Jared's attention even stronger. That feeling of being drawn, it rubbed him raw. He wasn't attracted to men.

He just wasn't.

Luckily, the pair were quiet the rest of the way up the mountain, which seemed to be really far up.

The temperature dropped the farther they'd driven.

They'd left the early summer behind, and the crisp air held a chill to it.

Royce finally pulled in front of a large cabin after passing multiple offshoot paths.

The one they stopped before was surely too big for just him, or even a couple had Diedre come.

It had to be a cluster of cabins—which wouldn't allow him to be as alone as he wanted to be.

Royce turned off the engine and climbed out as Carson watched him leave. Jared exited, lifting the bags. Carson hated to admit it, but he almost missed the heated bodies close to his.

No. You. Don't.

He glanced at the large cabin, sure there had to be a mistake. "This isn't all for me, is it?" Carson asked.

Royce eyed him. "This is yours . All of it."

Carson glanced at the large log cabin. "This doesn't look like the cabin I signed up for. It definitely looked smaller on your website. Whoever took your pictures did you a disservice."

Royce headed to the door and opened it. Unnerved, Carson followed him, Jared following up at the rear. "I don't need all this," he said, his voice low as he walked into the foyer.

The place was a friggen log-mansion, not plain, rustic cabin.

The inside was beautiful and big enough for a handful of people.

A full chef's kitchen with marble counters and a humungous island hugged one side of the cabin.

Between that and a well-appointed living room stood a table that could seat ten.

The entire back wall of the living space was windows, facing out beyond the trees.

He walked closer and saw a view of the entire valley below. The lake shimmered below, just as blue as the sky above. Mist hung around the tops of the trees, giving the place a mysterious feel. It was stunning. The escape he'd needed.

Yet there was something that didn't feel right.

“There’s some mistake. I absolutely didn’t book this cabin.”

Jared dropped the bags as Royce moved closer to Carson. He pulled out a slip of paper and handed it over. “This is the room you agreed to when you made the reservation. Is that not accurate?”

Carson took the slip and scratched his head. “Royce, you’re definitely undercharging for your cabins.” He smiled and looked around. Why look a gift horse in the mouth? “But you can fix that after I leave.”

Jared chuckled.

“I’ll look into that,” Royce said with a grin. “I’m sure you’ll find yourself at home in no time.”

Carson looked up into the man’s eyes, ensnared.

“The sun’s going down, so I suggest you stay indoors,” Royce murmured.

“The bears...”

Royce nodded, grinning. “The bears.”

A moment of silent desire yawned between them.

Royce closed his eyes for a second before lifting to pin Carson in his gaze.

“All of our cabins have satellite television with plenty of channels. The fridge is stocked, as is the wine cellar downstairs. There’s a game room on the second-floor landing with a pool table and a few video games.

There's also a restaurant down below next to the main office.

Amazing food. They can send dinner up. Their number's on the telephones in the kitchen and bedrooms."

At the word bedroom, Carson's cock twitched.

Royce drew in a long inhale, his eyes going half-lidded.

Carson trembled. He wrapped his arms around himself. "I wasn't prepared for it to be so cool here."

"The elevation," Jared said before stalking across the living room. He pressed a button, and flames erupted in the fireplace.

When he spun, the only heat Carson noticed was in his eyes.

An electricity hung in the air.

Carson's mouth opened to ask them to stay, but the request lodged against the knot in his throat.

"This is... unreal," he finally said.

He wanted them to go so he could clear his mind, but...

He wanted them to stay.

"We'll let you get settled in," Royce said, backing toward the door. He paused with his hand on the knob. "If you need anything, we're just a call away. All you have to do is dial seven."

“Definitely call if you have any problems with the Jacuzzi,” Jared said.

“Jacuzzi?” Carson asked, wide-eyed. That definitely hadn’t been on the website.

“Out on the screened porch out back,” Jared added. “It overlooks the whole valley. Spectacular view.”

Wine cellar? Game room? Screened porch with a Jacuzzi? The place was massive. And he had it all to himself for the long weekend.

All to himself.

Alone.

“Thanks,” he answered.

“Oh, one more thing,” Royce said, stalking closer.

He stopped inches away, his big body invading Carson’s space. Carson looked up into the man’s face, waiting to be swept up and kissed. His lips ached from the need to feel theirs on his.

Royce’s stare captured his.

Confusion swamped him as he felt a massive wave of lust crashing through him.

Damn it, kiss me.

Fuck!

What am I thinking?

“The key,” Royce finally said, lifting his hand and letting the key dangle from two fingers.

With a little hesitation, Carson reached out to take it. His fingertips grazed against Royce’s, and he felt a surge of electricity zip through his body.

“I hope you can find what’s yours while here,” Royce said cryptically before doing an about face and walking out the front door.

Jared sauntered by, staring. “Call if you need anything. Anything at all.”

When the door clicked closed, he nearly jumped.

He was brought back to that feeling of closure when the door had shut behind him, ending one relationship.

Now, it felt as if he was letting an opportunity slip through his fingers. An opportunity for a new beginning.

A new beginning? With two men?

Carson shook his head, his troubling reaction making him feel even more out of sorts.

He palmed his cock, willing it to go down.

The crushing loneliness settled in again soon after, gnawing at him.

Only this time, it was a true physical ache he’d never sensed before.

He rushed to the door and swung it open.

When he'd been in their presence, he hadn't felt it.

The ATV was already gone. He turned and looked over his shoulder at the phone on the kitchen counter. All he had to do was dial seven. But they needed time to get back down to the office. It had taken a while to get to the top of the mountain.

You came here to be alone. Plus, there's the fact that you're not gay. Get your head on straight, man.

Straight with a capital S.

He closed the door and pressed his back against it, taking in the view of the luxury cabin once more. He'd lucked out like a bandit. So— he was alone. Who cared? There was plenty of house to explore to keep him busy.

With a grin, he set out to do just that.

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Jared sat silently behind Royce, not sure what to say. He stared at the cabin getting farther and farther away, the impulse to jump off the back of the ATV and run back to the cabin urging him to move. He didn't. His head was spinning and he needed a moment to calm down.

"Couldn't put him in the Larchmont, hmm?"

Royce grinned as looked over his shoulder. "Why would we put our mate in that shitty cabin?"

Our mate. Jared struggled for his next breath, especially when Carson's scent lingered around them. "It's not shitty."

"For him it is."

Jared eyed Royce as they continued to descend. "So you sensed it, too?"

Royce nodded, never taking his eyes off the gravel road. "I did."

"He's going to figure out he's in our cabin."

"Maybe. Maybe not."

"Dude, I have a pile of dirty laundry at the end of my bed."

Royce snorted. "I can't help it if you're a mess."

Jared was quiet a moment. “What if he finds the secret room?”

Royce shrugged. “We’ll cross that bridge when we get there.”

“Where are we sleeping tonight?” Jared knew the answer, but he wished he’d be sleeping with Carson in his arms.

“The Larchmont,” Royce replied, just as expected.

“We should’ve stayed. At least one of us,” Jared said.

Royce eyed him over his shoulder a second. “He was overwhelmed. He needed to catch his breath.”

So did we.

Jared turned back just as their cabin disappeared from view.

“Plus, we need to finish up and get the night crew prepped,” Royce said. He looked over his shoulder. “Think we can pull someone to cover the desk this weekend?”

“Paul maybe? Since there’s no tour.”

“He hates the front desk and threatened to quit last time we put him in there,” Royce said.

“Toss some of that extra cash his way. It’s worth it.” Carson’s worth it.

Royce murmured in agreement. “We give Carson a wide berth tonight.”

“Is that an order?”

Royce glared over his shoulder. “You know we should.”

“You know, just because you’re going to be the alpha one day doesn’t mean you get to make all of the rules. We’re in this together. We’re both his mates.”

Royce turned his head to the side. “Lower your voice. A human could hear you.”

“All I said was alpha and mate . No human would know what that means. You saying human would likely be more telling than what I said.”

Royce growled under his breath.

“And you still haven’t acknowledged what I said,” Jared snapped.

Royce shook his head. “We are in this together.”

“So act like it!” Jared roared, repeating what Royce had yelled at him earlier that afternoon.

Royce slammed on the brake and spun in the seat to meet Jared’s gaze. “All I did was suggest we leave him be for the evening.”

“You didn’t suggest. You commanded. Just like everything else here in this business we both own. I’m tired of feeling like your employee and not your partner.”

“I know you’re my partner. In everything,” Royce said.

“Yet we’re always at odds, it seems.”

Royce sighed. “Okay, so what do you think we should do tonight? He was skittish and suspicious.”

“Well, putting him in our cabin when he knew damned well it wasn’t the place he’d signed up for didn’t help.”

Royce grinned. “It’s filled with our scent, Jared.”

Jared scoffed, chuckling.

“And I’d already locked up our playroom earlier this morning. I had Fen in there today to clean and I didn’t need him wandering in.”

“My God, I’d have loved to see his face if he had,” Jared said with a wicked grin.

“If anyone knew what we were doing, we could get into trouble,” Royce murmured.

Bear will not lie with bear.

It was a tenet of their den. Brother bears weren’t supposed to fuck one another and the only time they could was with their third between them. It’s the reason they kept separate bedrooms, even if they rarely slept in one of them.

If anyone found out, they could be exiled.

“It’s a fucked-up law,” Jared muttered.

“I agree. One I might be able to change when I’m the den’s alpha. Until then, we have to hide it,” Royce said.

“Maybe that’s why we’re on edge. We’ve been too exhausted with all the extra business to indulge in our playroom.”

“Well, now we can’t,” Royce murmured.

“Which is ironic since I’m suddenly feeling anything but tired,” Jared said, glancing in the direction of their cabin.

“The sun should be setting within the hour. I think that run might be necessary now. Run hard and tire ourselves out. Otherwise, we’re going to end up trying to get him into bed.”

“Sounds a helluva lot better than running through the woods with you,” Jared quipped.

“Fuck you,” Royce replied, smiling.

“If only.”

Royce snickered. “We’ve got to take care with this one. He made sure we knew he’s straight.”

Jared rolled his eyes. “You saw his hard on as well as I did.”

“If sees himself as straight, then we have to tread carefully. If he’s never been with a man, we’ve got our work cut out for us. Slow and steady wins the race.”

“He’s only registered for three days, Royce. There’s no slow to it.” Royce’s staid and steady might ruin their chances.

“Rushing isn’t going to help,” Royce said as he turned and let off the brake.

When they made it back to the office, Jared noticed Daniel heading in for the night shift. He nodded to the man and slipped off the back of the ATV.

“Hiya, guys,” Daniel said. “Reporting for duty.”

“Hey, Daniel,” Royce said, climbing out from behind the wheel. “Everyone’s checked in, so just keep an ear out for the phone. Red’s running room service for the restaurant tonight, and things have been quiet today,” Royce said, rising from his chair.

Jared’s head whipped toward Royce.

Quiet? Today was anything but quiet.

“Sounds good,” Daniel said before heading into the lobby. “Need me to do anything extra tonight?”

“I have a laundry list of things that need to be done, but nothing that can be done from the front desk,” Royce said. “Just don’t fall asleep tonight, okay?”

Daniel grinned. “No promises, but like I told you, I’m a light sleeper. I’ve always grabbed the phone quick.”

“And sounded half-asleep when you said hello,” Royce responded.

Daniel’s smile widened as he slipped behind the counter. “But I took care of their needs, so what’s the difference?”

Royce shook his head. “Daniel, just do as I ask.”

“I’ll try my best, boss. You know, if you got me an X-box back here it would help.”

“He already let you put a television behind the desk. What more do you want?” Jared asked.

Royce leaned over the counter, his eyes glowing. “I gave you an order. I expect you

to follow it.”

The growl in his voice was enough to make Daniel stand up straighter. “Yeah, boss. I’ll stay awake.”

Jared forced himself not to roll his eyes at Royce’s command.

“There is one thing, Daniel,” Jared said.

Both Royce and Daniel turned in his direction.

“If you get a call tonight from our cabin, we’re in the Larchmont. Direct any calls to one of our cell phones.”

Daniel frowned. “Umm... okay?”

“It’s important,” Jared added. “There’s a VIP in our cabin.”

Daniel nodded. “Got it.”

Jared followed Royce out the front door.

“It does get boring as hell working the night shift. I remember you fell asleep all the time when your grandparents were still running things,” Jared said once they were a few yards from the building.

“Yep, and my grandfather jumped my ass even harder than I just jumped Daniel’s.”

Jared marched beside Royce for a few paces. “We don’t have any clothes. No brush. No toothbrush or toothpaste. You really didn’t think this through.”

“We can go down to the valley and pick some up at the store.”

“Or we could sneak up to the cabin and see if Carson wants some company.”

Royce spun to face him, pointing a finger in the middle of Jared’s chest. His eyes glowed bright golden. “Don’t ruin our chances, Jared.”

“Three days, Royce. Three days is all we have to draw him in before he leaves. We have to push.” Jared felt his bear ready to roar. “And what about being careful? You’re seconds away from a shift out in the open.”

Royce spun again and began stalking up the mountain path. Jared watched the man disappear into the woods, knowing he was ready to shift. “Royce!”

They were both on edge, both equally in danger of outing themselves. It was the last thing either of them needed. Royce was wrong, dead wrong. A run wouldn’t be enough to scratch their itch, not now. Not now that they knew they had a mate to claim.

When he heard Royce’s bellowing growl, Jared struggled to keep from shifting in answer to the call. He raced toward the wood, peeling off layers as he neared the edges. As soon as he was hidden in the depths, he transformed into his beast and let the animal take over.

The sun was nearly set when Carson opened the front door and walked out to the narrow front porch.

He’d heard a bear’s growl and for some reason he’d felt compelled to leave the relative safety of the cabin to scope out the danger.

Goosebumps skittered along his flesh when he heard the sound again, followed by a

deeper growl, signaling there was more than one bear nearby.

The fine hairs at the base of his neck rose, alerting him to eminent danger.

Yet at the same time, his body was taut. His cock grew hard again when he heard the bellow come from deep in the woods once more. Sweat beaded on his forehead, a fire burning deep.

What, now I've got a thing for animals, too? What the hell is wrong with me?

Carson heard the sounds grow louder, but instead of walking inside and locking the doors to protect himself, he walked down the stairs and onto the gravel path that had led him up the mountain.

His heartbeat quickened. It felt as if his heart beat against his ribcage.

A shiver rose up his spine the moment he felt something coming.

Coming for him.

He wasn't sure how he knew. He simply felt he was where he belonged at that very moment. Seconds later, a huge bear rushed from the tree line and ran toward Carson.

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Fight or flight... neither seemed to happen. He should run inside, protect himself behind a locked door. Feet frozen, he couldn't move.

The bear, what he could see of it with the full moon casting its glow, was glorious. The beast emanated pure power, its muscled limbs propelling it as it neared. He told himself to move out of its path, but he couldn't.

He wanted it to come closer.

Another bear suddenly broke from the woods a few feet behind, this one just as large as the first, if not bigger. Yet Carson still felt no fear. He was mesmerized by the two creatures, even as they came dangerously close.

The first bear stopped inches from Carson and stared down from his massive height. Carson was nearly six foot, but he had to crane his neck to look up into the ferocious animal staring down at him. It was so close, he could smell the musky scent mixing with the pine and the woods.

It rose up on two legs and blotted out the sky. The beast roared up into the heavens, the sound reverberating through Carson's body.

When it looked back down, he noticed its eyes. Bright gold and glowing. When he turned to the other bear, it had the same glow.

Just like he'd thought he'd seen Royce's and Jared's eyes doing that afternoon.

Is it them? Impossible.

He stood there, transfixed.

His cock was harder than it had ever been before, too. Had he been able to think straight, he would've known how fucked up that was. In that moment, heat and need screamed for him to surrender to the beast. It was all he that went through his mind.

He should've been terrified. He should've felt shame.

Yet he could only stand there gawking at the beauty of the creature.

The beast seemed unsure, almost appearing stunned that Carson hadn't run screaming.

It cocked its head to the side before it settled back down on four paws and lowered its head, sniffing him.

Carson didn't move as the animal's nose pressed against his chest, inhaling his scent.

A paw lifted and brushed against his hard cock. Carson closed his eyes, knowing something had to be wrong with him for feeling desire from the act. He finally took a step back, that lust suddenly feeling too wrong.

Deep in his gut it didn't feel wrong at all.

He couldn't walk away. He felt drawn to the two beasts.

Just like I felt drawn to Royce and Jared earlier today.

What is wrong with me?

The second bear closed the gap between them and sniffed Carson, too, just as the first

had. Carson felt another wave of lust as the animal approached. When the animal licked across his cheek, Carson moaned, and his lids lowered. A wave of need nearly brought him to his knees.

“No!” he shouted, knowing he should feel disgusted. He backed away, stumbling over the bottom step. Carson quickly righted himself and raced up the steps.

The bears didn't move. They stood, watching, as he made his escape. When he finally slammed the door, he could barely breathe. Resting his forehead on the back of the door, he inhaled deeply, willing the shocking desire he felt to wane.

“What the fuck?” he asked aloud, confused by his reaction. Not just with the two bears, but to Royce and Jared earlier as well. Carson spun to face the inside of the cabin, no idea what to do.

Was he having some kind of mental breakdown?

“Sleep. I need sleep,” he told himself, grasping at straws. It had been a long, long drive and he was exhausted.

Bestiality? He wasn't a sicko perv.

He wasn't attracted to animals.

Carson grabbed one of his bags and found the master bedroom he'd spied when he'd toured the cabin. Before sliding between the sheets, he wanted a shower, to make himself feel less dirty. The thoughts that had run through his mind were wrong.

As soon as the water hit his flesh, he relaxed some.

He made quick work of washing the disgust he felt like it was physical dirt, but when

he touched his still rock-hard cock, he knew there would be no sleeping without some relief.

He grabbed the base of his shaft and stroked the soapy flesh.

Working his hand up and down, he thought of anything but the males and the animals he'd encountered since leaving the city.

He pictured a sexy woman in his mind. He saw her lying naked under him.

Closing his eyes, he went with the fantasy.

He slid into her welcoming heat, lowering between her creamy thighs, but the image suddenly shifted. Now he was the one lying on the bed, Royce above, ready to enter him.

A soft moan escaped his lips.

Water sluiced over his body as he was unable to stop his errant, lust-filled thoughts.

In his fantasy, Jared climbed into the bed, and they pulled Carson between them.

Their hands were everywhere, touching every inch of his naked body.

Stroking his cock. Tweaking his nipples.

Kissing and nibbling him. Spreading his ass with thick fingers.

Another moan, deeper and more forceful, left his lips.

His hand quickened over his cock as he fantasized being between the two sexy men.

Being fondled and tempted by them. Within seconds, he came, shooting a thick load onto the shower floor.

His cries reverberated off the tiled walls.

Breathing hard, he watched the remnants of his spunk flowing down the drain as he tried to understand the insane desires swirling within.

Sleep. I need sleep.

Tomorrow will be better.

He turned off the faucet and towel-dried his body before slipping between the silky cotton sheets.

The bed was soft and inviting, but there was a scent there that tickled his nose.

Not a bad aroma, actually. It wrapped around him and finally allowed him to relax.

Carson nestled into the mattress after turning out the light.

The room was quiet.

Too quiet.

He lay there, demanding sleep to come, yet his mind whirled.

Off in the distance, a bear's growl made his heart hitch and speed up. His softened cock began to thicken once more.

I've gone insane.

That's the only answer.

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“He was hard for us, Royce,” Jared growled, kneeling in the tree line near the cabin.

They’d raced up the mountain and back down.

Twice. It hadn’t helped. He’d had pushed himself, trying to run off the heat and need in his body, but it was no use.

Jared knew Royce likely felt the same, but would he do anything about it?

Once again, they lingered outside the cabin, both of them seemingly drawn to the spot. Jared had struggled to shift back to his human form because his inner bear demanded satisfaction.

It demanded their mate.

His eyes still glowed. He could see the radiance on the ground when he looked down at his erect, leaking cock. Knowing his human lusted with such desperation left his beast unsettled. The animal within would not calm. It raged, demanding they take what was theirs.

He’d felt need coming off Carson in waves. The human had felt no fear of them. It had shocked Jared to his core, watching the man stare up, desire darkening his eyes. “He was hard . He wasn’t scared.”

“And then he ran away. Just like I told you, he’s not ready yet. We’re going to scare him away.”

“Damn it, Royce. He’s ready. He’s likely in there now, aching for us. And you want to hold back?”

Royce growled lowly. “We wait.”

“And then we lose this chance? No.”

Jared refused to listen. He rose to his feet and started walking across the road. He only made it a few steps before he felt a hand clamp on his arm.

“I’m your alpha.”

Jared felt his animal rising. “You’re not alpha, yet. And you’re wrong. I won’t lose what’s ours because of you.”

Royce shifted in the blink of an eye. He lifted one of his massive paws and brought it down, but Jared was too fast. Jared rolled to the left, shifting as he moved, and came up fighting. Claws slashing, teeth bared, they fought one another.

Jared fought back instinctively, defending himself. His mind didn’t even have time to contemplate what Royce was doing...

Yet he wouldn’t be denied, either. He’d have their mate, regardless of what Royce commanded. They hadn’t fought in years, and only as children when they had. It had been playful then.

This was anything but playful.

This was war.

With the full moon overhead, Jared fought, fueled both by the need he felt for Carson

and the mounting anger he'd felt toward Royce's imperiousness. The rage pumped within his veins. Slashing his brother bear in the midsection, Royce roared in pain before falling to the ground, limp.

He froze, looking at Royce's still form.

He blinked a few times.

Oh fuck!

What have I done?

Jared hovered over his brother bear, realization filling him with dread.

Royce began to shift back into human form, his wounds apparently severe enough to force the transition.

Jared allowed his bear to fade as well. As soon as he was back in human form, he dropped to his knees and rolled Royce to his back.

The wound pooled blood in Royce's abdomen.

"What have you done?"

The question hadn't come from Royce. Jared looked up to see Carson staring down at them.

"I didn't mean..." I didn't mean to truly hurt him. The words felt as hollow as he sounded. He had meant to hurt Royce. He'd wanted to prove something and there, at his feet, was the result. He'd allowed his anger to overtake him, and his brother bear was paying the price.

Carson pushed Jared out of the way and pulled his t-shirt over his head. Their human used the shirt to apply pressure to the wound. “We’ve got to get him to a hospital.”

“He’ll be fine,” Jared said. “We’ve just got to get him into the cabin so I can clean him up.”

“He’ll bleed out,” Carson cried. “I’ll call 9-1-1.”

“Don’t...” Jared growled. “Things work differently on the mountain.”

Carson frowned. “What? You don’t have 9-1-1?”

They had a clinic that was fully staffed by bear shifters, but that was beside the point. Bears healed quickly. Royce would be fine in a matter of minutes.

Plus the thought of having to admit to anyone what he’d done... the shame of it crept onto his face. They were not going to the clinic.

“He needs medical attention!”

“He’s not human!” Jared shouted back, allowing his eyes to glow. “He just needs to go into the cabin to be cleaned up.”

Carson was silent a moment.

Jared could hear the rapid beating of the man’s heart and knew Carson was struggling to understand what he was seeing.

“This isn’t a dream, is it?”

Jared shook his head.

Carson stared a couple of seconds longer, silent.

“I did see them glowing this afternoon, didn’t I?”

Jarend nodded again. He took a deep breath, waiting for the screaming to come. The running. The mad dash to get away from them.

He was stunned when none of that happened.

“You lift him while I keep pressure on the wound. We work together, okay?” Carson asked as he walked closer once more.

Jared got to his feet and moved to Royce’s other side.

“On three,” Carson said, rising to his feet, but remaining in a crouch and holding on to Royce’s side.

“One. Two. Three.”

Jared lifted Royce into his arms, and the male growled in pain.

“Hurry,” Carson snapped.

They walked as briskly as they could to the porch stairs and gently mounted them before carefully getting Royce through the front door.

Carson had to let go for a few seconds to make it.

Jared took advantage of their separation to rush Royce to their bed.

He lowered his brother bear down into the middle of the bed and stepped back to look

at the damage he'd wrought.

Carson rushed to Royce's side and applied the shirt to the wound. "We've got to stop the bleeding," he cried. "Do you guys have a first aid kit nearby?"

There was no need for first aid. But Carson needed something to occupy his mind while he came to terms with who—and what—they were.

"I think so," Jared answered before rushing to look around.

As quickly as they healed, they had little use for bandages and gauze.

On his third guess, he found one. Of course Mr. Prepared had a first aid kit hidden in the house.

It was covered in a fine layer of dust, but it was there, nonetheless.

After rinsing off the dust in the bathroom sink, Jared ran back to Carson and opened the large red pack on the bed. "What do you need?"

"Sterile gauze? And a lot of it."

Jared opened several packs, handing each new one to Carson as he freed them. The man seemed to know what he was doing. Carson worked briskly around Royce with an air of confidence. He knew he should've told the man that bears heal much faster than humans, but he couldn't stop Carson.

The worry their human displayed said a lot.

Watching him tend to Royce, he saw what kind of mate they'd been paired with. Carson seemed willing to do anything to save Royce. Little did he know that Royce's

wounds would likely heal over rather quickly.

Once they did, Jared was going to be in the middle of a shitstorm unlike anything he'd ever seen.

“The bleeding’s slowing down,” Carson announced. He peeled back the gauze and his eyes grew wide. “Apparently the cuts weren’t as deep as I first thought.”

Jared looked over Carson’s shoulder and saw the once gaping wound was now sealing itself. They were only thin lines, much to Jared’s relief.

Carson relaxed slightly once the emergency appeared contained.

He silently dug through the first aid kit and took out a few items before moving away the blood soaked gauze.

Without a look or a word to Jared, Carson began to clean the wound and cover it with clean gauze.

Jared waited there, knowing there were questions coming.

He could sense them radiating within the human even then.

Five or so minutes passed in silence. Jared helped where he assumed he could, but for the most part, Carson did the work.

“What are the two of you?”

Jared slid off the bed and walked around it, to the other side of the bedroom. He leaned against the wall and stared at Carson.

Carson's gaze drifted to his cock. He averted his gaze, busying himself by cleaning up the mess of bloody gauze and packaging. When he finally looked up and met Jared's stare, he shivered. "Are you going to answer me?"

"Will you believe me?"

"Denying what I've seen tonight would be pointless."

Interesting reaction. Could he be in shock? "We're bear shifters."

Carson stared, his eyes wide. "Were you two the bears I saw earlier tonight?"

Jared nodded, ever watchful of the emotions rolling over Carson's face at the admission.

Carson breathed out a deep breath, almost in what appeared to be relief. "Why were you fighting?"

"We fought because I wanted to claim our mate tonight and he feared we'd scare him away if we pushed too soon," Jared murmured.

Carson stared at him, silent. There was another question that lingered in the air, as if the human knew the reason they fought had been him.

"This fighting isn't normal?"

"No," Jared replied.

Jared captured Carson's stare and held it.

He saw the lust growing in their human's eyes and felt his own body grow tighter

with need.

His bear roared within, demanding he take the spoils of war.

He'd won the fight. That was all his beast knew.

The human part of him knew better. He'd won nothing and had potentially lost all.

“I think you know why we fought.”

Carson's breath caught and his eyes rounded even more, but he quickly hid the shock he'd clearly felt. He stared at Jared a few more seconds, as if scrutinizing an alien. Jared figured that was what he was to Carson, something entirely foreign.

He wanted the lust back in the human's stare and feared it would never return. Not after he'd crossed the line and done the unthinkable.

“You look human now. I'd never know looking at you that you were something more.”

Something more. Jared tamped down on the smile trying to rise to his lips. He hadn't called them freaks. Hadn't called them beasts or monsters. They were something more .

Jared felt a spark of hope at the sound of that.

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“No human can tell, except our human mate.”

Carson narrowed his lids. “You mate with humans?”

“We do. Two bears with one human.”

“And how does a human know you’re bears?”

Jared smiled slightly. “Well, he wouldn’t necessarily know we’re bears. Our mate would be attracted to us, more so than he’d ever been attracted to any other person. They’d become aroused in our presence. They’d even become aroused by us... in our animal form.”

Carson’s face and neck grew a deep shade of red. “That’s ridiculous.”

“It would help explain your reaction earlier,” Jared said softly.

Carson stared at him, shaking his head. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“I’m sure there are a lot of questions running through your mind. Why you feel drawn to us. Why you suddenly have an attraction to two strangers—especially when you identify as straight.”

Carson eyed him. “I’m not your mate.”

It was Jared’s turn to take a deep breath. “You are,” he whispered.

Carson chuckled, shaking his head. “You guys have it way off. You can stop whatever voodoo you’ve got going on here. I’m not gay. I’m not a mate to anyone, let alone two bear... people.”

Jared leaned his head back. “There’s no voodoo. We don’t choose a mate. Fate brings us together when the time is right.”

Carson climbed off the bed and tossed the debris away.

He pulled the sheet up over Royce’s naked, blood-splattered body, neither agreeing nor denying what Jared said.

Once he was done with his nursing of Royce, he leaned back against the opposite wall and looked down at himself.

“I’m covered in his blood. I need to shower.

Can you keep an eye on him without trying to kill him again? ”

Jared cringed and then nodded. The need to push, to force Carson to see the truth roared within him, but Royce’s voice also sounded in his head.

He let the human go without argument. To give him time to think.

As Carson disappeared into the bathroom, he gazed down at his own blood-splattered body.

What the hell had gotten into him to lash out like that?

He lifted his gaze to the bed and felt a wave of shame.

He's never going to forgive me.

Royce's eyelids fluttered and he lifted a hand.

Jared rushed to the side of the bed and saw his brother bear's eyelids trying to lift.
"Royce?"

Royce's eyes soon opened wide, fully glowing. Jared had never been so glad to see those eyes open. Royce growled at Jared and sat up in the bed.

Jared lifted his hands in a sign of surrender. "Be careful. You're still healing."

Royce glanced down at the bandages Carson had so carefully placed. He peeled them back and Jared saw the wounds were only thin pink scars at that point. Royce removed the bandages and then glared up at Jared, rage in his stare.

"I didn't mean for it to get that out of hand," Jared said, lowering his stare. Another wave of shame rolled over him. "I don't know what got into me. I'm sorry."

Royce didn't answer, but his gaze drifted to the bathroom. He looked back at Jared. "No... I'm the one who needs to apologize. I've been a dominant asshole and needed to have my ass kicked."

Jared rested back on his haunches, shocked Royce wasn't mad as hell.

"Had you not pushed, we wouldn't be this close." Royce sat up a bit more, cringing slightly. "I felt his hands all over me... and it was amazing."

"You were awake?"

"No. I was moving in and out of consciousness for most of it. You dug in pretty

deep.”

“I didn’t mean to, Royce. We’ve been arguing and I... I guess I had a lot more pent-up rage than I realized. I let it out and I went too far.”

Royce turned to look at Jared. “Honestly, I think we almost needed that. I don’t feel quite so on edge now.”

Jared snickered. “I don’t either.”

“Who knew a little bloodletting could calm our beasts, hmm?”

Jared chuckled.

Royce met Jared’s gaze. He lifted a hand to caress Jared’s cheek.

“I sometimes forget how strong you are. And how much I need you at my side. My entire life, my father has beat it into my head that I was born to lead. That I needed to be the strongest. That I needed to take control.” He dropped his hand.

“I guess I’m not as strong as I thought I was considering how easily you dropped my ass. ”

“Bottled up anger.”

“That I caused,” Royce whispered.

“If you’d listen more—and discuss major life choices with me—maybe we can avoid this happening again.

” Jared scrubbed his face. “I sensed we needed action. Not restraint. Carson’s too

important to us to let him slip through our fingers.

I tried to tell you that, but you wouldn't listen. It was your way or no way."

"You're right. We need to work together." Royce rubbed his chest. "Next time I don't listen to you, maybe just a solid punch to the jaw instead of tearing a hole in me, hmm?"

Jared rose to his full height fighting a grin. "Depends on how big of an asshole you've been."

Royce tilted his head back and stared up. "I love you. You know that, right? Even when I'm tired and an asshole, I still love you."

Jared stood straighter. It had been too long since Royce had said those words. "Who knew it would take a deadly fight for you to say that."

"It's been that long?"

Jared nodded.

"I'm sorry," Royce murmured.

Jared placed a mock punch to Royce's chin.

Royce growled, but there was no menace in it. "Don't push it. You still owe me for this wound, beta."

"I'll never live it down, I assume."

"Never," Royce said with a slow grin crossing his face. He slowly rose from the bed

and stretched, wincing as he rubbed at his still healing wound. “How about we test your theory and join our mate before he’s done in that shower?”

Jared smiled widely. “We better hurry. He’s been in there awhile already.”

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Carson stood under the warm spray, watching the bloody water slide down the drain. After it had long turned clear, he lingered under the water, his mind a riot. He couldn't move. He kept hearing the words Jared had spoken repeating through his mind.

Our mate would be attracted to us, more so than they'd ever been attracted to any other. They'd become aroused in our presence. They'd even become aroused by us... in our animal form.

At least there was some relief that he wasn't attracted to actual animals but attracted to two men in animal form. That was somehow better than in some stretch of the imagination. But then he kept coming back to being attracted to not one, but two men.

Two bears.

Men who were bears.

Unable to sleep, he'd stood at the front window as if waiting for the bears to return.

When he'd seen the bears racing out of the darkness, he'd stopped breathing for a few seconds.

His body had immediately reacted. Then the bears had fought violently, and he'd rushed to the front door on instinct alone—as if he had any power to stop them.

The minute he'd opened it, both had transformed from massive brown bears into humans right before his eyes.

Under the full moon, one so large and vivid, it had been bright enough to see the whole fight and transformation.

At first, he'd thought it was a dream, or a nightmare even.

But the flood of concern for Royce when he'd watched the bear go down and become a man, he'd rushed into the fray to help.

Any sane person would've run down the mountain and driven as far from there as they could. Any sane person wouldn't be thinking the thoughts he was thinking.

Somehow, he wasn't afraid.

Before Jared had answered his questions, he'd sensed he was where he belonged. When he was with the two of them, the gnawing ache he'd felt for so long disappeared. He felt their pull, the need to be near them. He sensed the attraction, no matter how much he wanted to deny it.

They were his sun and his moon. Gravity brought them into one another's orbit. He couldn't break free, even if he wanted to. The attraction he felt went against everything he knew about who he was as a man, yet he couldn't deny it either.

He was bound to them by some force he could not understand. None of it made any sense, yet at the same time, it made total and complete sense.

The shower door opened. Carson turned to see both men walking into the stall with him. His stare immediately went to Royce's wound, only to see it no more than a set of thin pale lines across his muscled abdomen.

He lifted his gaze to Royce. "How?"

“We heal faster than humans,” Royce answered. “Thank you for your care. I healed even faster thanks to you.”

Carson looked up, into Royce’s molten stare and suddenly realized he was alone with the two of them.

Naked. Both men were rock hard and eyeing Carson like they wanted to devour him.

His gaze traveled lower, unable to deny another peek.

Royce’s cock was a monster, thicker than any Carson had ever seen, not that he’d seen all that many.

Jared was thick, as well, but a bit smaller than Royce.

He yearned to touch them both, explore the thick veins protruding along the surfaces. He wanted to drop to his knees and taste them, learn every inch with his tongue and lips. He wanted to taste their cum in his mouth, swallow it down.

He nearly moaned from the thought alone.

What is wrong with me?

When he looked up, both males’ eyes glowed bright golden.

There was danger in their heated stares, a danger Carson craved but shouldn’t yield to.

He had never been with a man, let alone two.

He lifted his hands to fend them off, when his own traitorous body grew taut and

harder with need. “What are you doing in here?”

Royce stepped a little closer and under the spray. He began to wash off the dried blood on his chest while watching Carson closely. “I needed to wash off, too. I figured there was plenty of room in here.”

Carson swallowed against the knot in his throat, his body trembling with need.

Royce scrubbed his face under the spray and then leveled his gaze at Carson, adding a devastating smile.

Carson leaned back against the cool tiles, trying to calm his raging body, but knew there was no chance of that happening. Both bears could plainly see his desire. He was hard, his cock jutting out, eager for their touch. “You could’ve waited until I was done.”

And then I’d have missed looking at how gorgeous they are.

“You were taking so long, I figured we’d just climb in and share the last of the hot water,” Royce said, his voice deep.

The rich, whiskey sound was almost enough to lure Carson into wanting whatever that moment was about to become.

Royce finished washing off before turning toward Carson.

He reached out and pulled Carson close, before lowering his head.

The touch of Royce’s lips made heat explode within him.

Carson had never kissed a man, but as Royce claimed his mouth, he felt as if he’d

never been truly kissed before.

Royce mastered his mouth, taking what he wanted and leaving nothing untouched.

The man's beard rubbed against his stubble, the firmer feel of masculine lips on his so foreign.

Yet it felt divine. Royce consumed Carson with that kiss, making gay or straight no longer a concern.

It wasn't about gender. It was simply about need. Carson needed and these two bears could satisfy the ache he'd lived with for far too long.

Jared moved closer, too, rinsing off the remnants of Royce's blood before pressing his front to Carson's back.

Sandwiched between the two large, powerful men, he surrendered, letting them take whatever they wanted from him.

He melted against Jared, who licked and kissed his neck and shoulder, while pinching his tight nipples.

Royce's hand trailed down Carson's body and cupped his sack, never pulling away from their heated, savage kiss.

Carson's eyes closed as raw need consumed him. They touched, stroked, and ignited that need with every second that passed. And he could only want more.

Royce pulled his mouth away, and Carson immediately wanted it back.

He opened his eyes and met Royce's heated stare.

The bear worked his hand up and down Carson's hard shaft, knowing exactly how to stroke it.

Carson leaned back against Jared and let his head fall against the bear's chest as they claimed his body.

His eyes closed as he focused on the feel of their hands on him.

"Look at me," Royce demanded.

Carson knew the bear wouldn't be denied. He obeyed the harsh command, locking stares with the man.

"What an obedient mate," Royce purred, a half-smile playing over his lips. "Just how I like a man."

Carson wanted to deny the statement. He wasn't obedient, all while realizing he'd already surrendered to them. There was no fight in him. He wanted the pleasure he sensed they could provide.

When he felt fingers against his anus, he finally found a boundary he wasn't ready to cross.

"Relax," Jared whispered in his ear. "It'll be much easier if you do."

"I've never..."

"I know," Jared whispered in answer to the statement that had died on Carson's lips.

"We'll make sure you're ready for us."

Carson felt another swipe against his ass.

A slippery finger obviously coated with something pressed against the puckered bud.

Royce reclaimed his mouth as the finger slid past the tight nerves.

A pinch of pain made him pull away for a moment, but Royce grabbed his head and forced his lips back.

The kiss helped make the pain fade, his mind returning to the pleasure of Royce's mouth.

Jared's long, thick finger impaled him, the first time anything had ever broached that hole.

He was shocked as the sting receded and transformed into a blossoming indulgence.

Walking the line between pleasure and pain, the feel of Jared's finger slowly slipping in and out of his hole drew a moan from his lips.

"You like that, hmm?" Jared whispered against his ear. "Maybe I need to add another."

Carson tensed, worried about the pain.

"Shhh," Jared hissed at his ear. "You're gonna like this. I promise."

Carson was still unsure and stiffened when he felt the second finger pressing against his anus.

A burning sting made him pull away from Royce's mouth and clench his jaw.

But just as Jared had promised, the pain became pleasure, even greater than before.

Carson calmed in Jared's embrace. After a few moments of gentle, gliding fingers, he pushed back against the thrust, needing more.

Royce reclaimed his mouth, still working his cock.

Carson felt Royce's hard shaft against his abdomen and realized he hadn't been an equal lover.

He pulled from the man's kiss and glanced down their naked bodies and saw the red, angry head rubbing against his stomach.

Hesitantly, he trailed a hand down Royce's broad chest, passing the tightly packed muscles, before coming in contact with the hard flesh.

Carson wrapped a hand around Royce's cock, the heat nearly burning his hand. The bear moaned his name lowly as he moved up the shaft. A pearl of fluid escaped the tip when he drew his fist to the head, and he suddenly wondered what another man's seed tasted like.

His movements were hesitant and unsure, but he liked the feel of Royce in his hand.

"Show me how you like your cock stroked," Royce said, his voice deeper than ever.

"Use me as the guide."

"We don't appear exactly the same," Carson whispered, noticing the thick bulb-like base of Royce's cock.

Being reminded he wasn't with two men, but two bear shifters only raised the heat burning inside him for some reason.

"Other than the knot, we're exactly the same," Royce told him.

“The knot?”

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Royce lowered his larger hand to cover Carson's. He led it down to the rounded base. "The knot."

Carson's gaze locked in on it. "Does it hurt to touch?"

"No," Royce, said. "Touch me there."

When Carson peeked up, Royce's gaze was heavy lidded. He caressed the knot, the feel of it firm, yet supple. "What does it do?"

"It locks us together," Royce said.

Carson let go. "Locks us together?" He frowned. "You mean... like dogs in heat?"

Royce chuckled. He clasped Carson's wrist and moved the hand back to his cock. "Exactly like dogs in heat. And just like them, it's temporary."

Carson eyed Royce's shaft, suddenly wanting to feel that knot inside him.

He bit his lower lip, biting back a moan.

He thought about the touches he liked best and went to work on Royce's shaft.

His lids fluttered closed for a moment before he had to reopen and watch his hand moving over the silken flesh in his grasp.

Carson tightened his grip some and quickened the pace.

“Oh, yeah, Carson. That feels so good.”

Royce mirrored some of the motions and the pace on Carson’s cock, drawing another moan from his lips.

The bear was quick on his feet and the knowledge only added to his sensual assault on Carson’s body.

Once they established a similar rhythm, Royce captured his lips again and continued devouring him.

All the while, Jared speared his ass, increasing the tempo and force.

He was soon pounding against Carson’s virgin hole, yet Carson only wanted more.

He rocked back into the strokes, his body silently demanding another finger.

Jared answered his pleas and added one. The third finger stretched him wider than ever and elicited a cry of pain.

Jared paused, allowing Carson grow accustomed to the feel of the thick intrusion. Once again the pain morphed into pleasure, greater than ever before. The sting of pain still lingered yet it only added to his desire. He pushed back against Jared’s hand and urged the bear to move within him.

Carson groaned when Jared plowed into him with those three thick fingers.

Unbearably stretched, he couldn’t imagine taking any more.

He rocked his hips back harder, the need mounting.

Royce adjusted his touch to account for Carson's movements.

The combined pleasures quickly brought Carson to the edge.

He felt the orgasm racing toward him. Stiffening, he clenched his ass around Jared's fingers and rode the waves of pleasure as they crashed against him.

He came, jetting cum as Royce swallowed his cries of pleasure. Carnality unlike anything he'd ever experienced swelled through him, forcing his gratification even higher. One bear coaxed more cum from him as the other pierced him from behind and forced another orgasm to shatter him completely.

The second orgasm was unlike anything he'd ever experienced.

He didn't shoot seed. It leaked from him as his body violently trembled.

As he came back down from his high, his knees nearly gave out.

He was thankful for the strength of the two men surrounding him.

Jared clasped him around the chest with his free hand and held him aloft as Royce rinsed Carson's cock off in the spray.

As soon as he was cleaned, Jared helped him from the shower and dried him off.

Carson wasn't used to care and attention from another man.

It felt a bit awkward, especially after coming down from his sexual high and the embarrassment of what he'd just done settled in.

He watched as Jared took great pains to dry his body.

When Jared was done, Royce took over, pulling Carson toward the bed.

One look at the bloodstained sheets and Carson froze.

Royce looked over his shoulder and peeked at the bed.

In an instant, Jared drew Carson into the hall.

He paused before a door, the only one that had been locked when Carson had toured the place.

He'd been curious what was inside, but now the interest was growing with the anticipation the door would open. Likely it was nothing special.

“Where’s the key, Royce?”

Royce came down the hallway, still toweling himself dry. “It’s too soon to take him in there.”

Carson eyed the door and then the two men. “What’s in there?” His curiosity piqued even more now that there seemed to be a mystery; he wanted to know more than ever.

“Fun is behind that door,” Jared said with a wicked smile.

Carson eyed Royce, who looked less than amused.

“It’s too soon,” Royce repeated.

“Let him be the judge of that,” Jared replied.

With a huff, Royce reached above the ledge of the doorframe and withdrew the

hidden key. He handed it to Jared, who made a great show of opening the locked door.

Once it opened, Carson looked through the darkened space. Glints of light glittered here and there from the hall beyond, but he couldn't make much out. Jared reached for a switch on the wall, and light emblazoned the room.

A playroom.

BDSM furniture filled the space, from padded spanking benches to a Saint Andrew's Cross. Chains, paddles, and an assortment of sex toys lined shelves on one wall. Carson's gaze didn't know where to land, there was so much to look at.

He'd performed a little light bondage with past lovers, and used a few sex toys in the past, but nothing to that extreme, even though that kind of play did excite him. He often watched BDSM porn when alone but feared asking to incorporate more than a little taste of it in his real life.

Typically he'd fantasized about him using them on his female lovers, not having it turned on him. He wasn't sure what to feel about the flip. From their dominance in the shower, he assumed he would be expected to be the one to yield to them in that room.

The thought excited him, though.

After years of being the dominant partner, of having women lie below him as he'd done most of the work, a small part of him was intrigued by the thought of having the attention focused on him and his needs.

He was so used to giving pleasure, to being the one who wrought havoc on another's flesh, he couldn't be held down and bound without the ability to give and receive.

He walked along the wall of toys and brushed his fingers over a leather flogger, surprised by the softness of the leather.

It likely wouldn't feel so soft against his flesh when wielded by a bearman.

Carson closed his eyes as the image of him bound to one of the benches and his ass flogged nearly pulled a moan from his lips.

Heat flooded his body with an intensity that nearly scared him.

When he was near Royce and Jared, his mind and body took him to places he'd never imagined before.

Suddenly, Jared was behind him, without Carson sensing the approach.

"I'd love to make your ass nice and red."

A shiver raced down Carson's spine. Need heightened within him, even though he'd just come twice. But the room was too overwhelming, as was the desire he felt to surrender to his two bears. "I think Royce was right. This is too much."

Jared stepped closer, brushing his hard cock against Carson's hip. He grabbed Carson's swelling cock and chuckled. "I think it might be just right."

Carson's eyes closed as Jared coaxed his cock back to rigidity. All too quickly he was ready to be satisfied. When he was at full mast, Jared used his shaft to force him to move. Dragging him by the cock, Jared pulled Carson to one of the benches.

"Kneel," Jared commanded.

Carson stared at the bear shifter for a moment, knowing he was at a crossroads.

Either he gave in to the promise of pleasure or he denied the need within.

If he allowed it to happen... he'd likely do things he never thought himself capable of.

He glanced at Royce. They locked gazes. There was enough heat in that stare to engulf him.

Royce's gaze traveled down Carson's body and his tongue flickered out to brush across his lips.

Lips Carson had learned intimately in a kiss to end all kisses.

When that gaze traveled back up, it joined with Carson's again, fueled by fire.

With another look at Jared's equally intense gaze, he knew his answer. Kneeling, he needed to feel the pleasure they offered. He needed to know what the two bears could wring from his body.

Once he was lying on his belly, Jared bound his wrists in soft leather cuffs, capturing him.

Sweat beaded all over his body in anticipation of what was to come.

He trembled ever so slightly, his heart thundering in his chest. When his wrists were in place, the ankles soon followed, making it impossible for Carson to escape.

“Are you ready to feel that flogger now?”

Carson lifted his gaze to answer and caught sight of Royce leaning against the wall in front of him.

His thick, muscled body was tense, his cock hard and extended before him.

One meaty hand ran up and down the length as he watched, observing what Jared was doing to Carson.

Knowing he was being watched only ignited the need.

He captured Royce's stare and nodded his approval to Jared.

"I need to hear yes, Carson."

"Yesss," Carson hissed between clenched teeth.

He teetered on the edge of pain before the flogger ever touched his skin.

His need had multiplied in a matter of seconds.

Spying Royce's desire, and his hand pleasuring himself, excited Carson to no end.

The thick cock sprung from dark springy curls that traveled up in a thin line along the middle of Royce's muscled abs.

A heavy sack hung low behind the shaft, swollen with seed.

He again wondered what the man tasted of and knew he'd soon learn.

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Before the thought barely exited his mind, the flogger came down across both ass cheeks.

A cry of pain was torn from his lips yet he immediately missed the flicker of pain.

He didn't wait long for another as the soft leather stung him across the tops of his thighs, just at the bottom of his cheeks, and he cried out again.

Royce's lust-filled stare caught his as the pain radiated through.

"Is it too much for you, Carson?"

"Another... please," he cried, shame filling him as he demanded more. He wasn't sure why, but he craved the feel of the pain, just as he had when Jared had pierced his asshole and stretched him wide. "Another."

He looked up and captured Royce's stare again as the flogger came back down over his ass. Carson cried out, but not as loud. He soon grew accustomed to the pain, and each subsequent lick of the leather was less and less intense. "Harder!" he cried over his shoulder, needing more.

When he turned back to Royce, the man was walking closer.

Royce knelt and pressed the head of his cock to Carson's mouth.

Without hesitation, he stroked his tongue over the head, capturing the essence he'd been so curious about.

Much like his own salty-sweet flavor, it was intoxicating.

He licked over the crest once more, gathering more of the pre-cum on his tongue before he swallowed most of the head.

As thick as Royce was, it was hard for Carson to take much.

Royce's cock had to be the thickest shaft he'd ever seen.

Jared's was thick and long, but nowhere near as girthy as Royce's.

When he tried to open wider and force another inch into his mouth, he struggled to take it down.

Without his hands, it made it more difficult to manage.

Royce gripped the shaft with one hand and the back of Carson's head with the other and urged him into a steady tempo.

As Jared struck him over and over, he took in more and more of Royce's cock.

He moaned around the shaft as the flogger stung his rear, hopefully adding to Royce's pleasure.

Carson had never sucked a man's cock, and could only do what he knew he liked himself.

From the deep guttural moans and groans Royce made, Carson assumed he was doing well enough.

Jared quickened the flogger over his skin, the strips of leather soon making him raw.

The sting felt so good. When the flogger missed his ass and brushed against his cock and balls swinging from between his legs, he shouted in intense pain. Yet that too ebbed into pleasure after a few moments.

Nearly taking half of Royce's monster cock down his throat, he sucked as hard as he could.

He wished he had his hands free, so he could explore with his fingers and squeeze Royce's heavy sack.

Slowly, he took a little more of Royce into his mouth.

Before long, he had as much as he could take, about three-quarters of the fat shaft down his throat.

The flogging stopped, but he couldn't turn from the cock in his mouth.

A few seconds after his realization, he felt something cold and wet pressed against his anus.

He startled, surprised by the feel, but he soon relaxed into the sensation as Jared pressed a fat finger into his ass, wetting there as well.

Carson sensed what would come next. Jared would stretch him even wider, sliding that big cock inside him. He'd never had a man inside his body, and now he'd have two.

His two.

The finger retreated and soon enough, he felt the broad head pressing against his tight hole. He knew there would be pain. He expected it, even though Jared had prepped

him in the shower. The cock about to enter him was much wider than three fingers. When the tip pierced him, he drew in a breath.

Yet it didn't hurt anywhere near as badly as he'd expected.

There was pain, but it was delicious pain.

The stretching pull as his body opened to welcome Jared inside was intense.

Mixed with the aching of his beaten ass, it was almost too much for him to take.

He had to pull away from Royce's cock to clench his jaw.

Jared was agonizingly slow in his entry, easing into Carson's depths.

Royce's fingers ran through his hair. The bear moved both hands to his shoulders and massaged them lightly, helping to relax him as he took the thick cock into his ass.

When the wide head finally pressed against something inside, he cringed in pain.

But it was a pain that hinted at pleasure.

There was a feeling of satisfaction Carson never knew possible.

Inch by inch, he was penetrated for the first time.

Once he was filled deep, he knew he was finally feeling the completion he'd always desired. He was bound to this man, this bear, their bodies locked together. He never wanted to feel empty again.

Carson looked over his shoulders at Jared. The bear leaned down, never breaking eye

contact, and pressed a kiss to Carson's shoulder. "Are you okay?"

Carson nodded. The thought of speaking now was impossible. There was no way his mouth and tongue would work, not when all he wanted to do was kiss, lick, and suck. He wanted to be possessed by them.

Jared kissed his shoulder again and rose. Carson could almost see where they were bound, the thick end of Jared's cock rising over the swell of his ass. He wished he could see where they were joined, but he'd have to settle for the thick feeling of fullness.

Once he grew accustomed to the feel of the huge shaft in his ass, he looked up at Royce. The bear smiled down, a pleased look on his face. Carson felt his chest tighten, and a pride in pleasing his bear warmed him from the inside out.

He caught Royce's gaze as he swallowed the bear's cock once more. Royce's lids lowered, but never broke the heated stare, watching as Carson's face as he took the man deep.

Jared's strong hands held his hips steady as he slowly began to move inside Carson's ass.

The first plunge stung some, making him wince in pain, but each ensuing stroke grew easier.

Pleasure blossomed from the pain. After a few moments, he was moaning and groaning around the cock in his mouth, his impalement more gratifying than he'd ever imagined.

Jared's motions were smooth and slow, but Carson needed more.

He pushed back against the man, urging him to go faster.

To fuck Carson harder. Jared seemed to understand Carson's need and gave him exactly what he wanted.

The tempo rose quickly, the bear plunging into his body, rocking the three of them from the force.

Carson greedily sucked at the cock in his mouth as he took the hard fucking. His ass was heated and sore, and each thrust only reminded him more of the punishment he'd taken at Jared's hand. That fired his need even higher, knowing he was likely red and marked by the flogger.

He nearly jumped, and likely would have if he'd not been bound, when he felt something cold and wet on his cock.

Jared's hand was on his shaft, lubing him, but for what Carson didn't know.

Moments later, Carson felt something sheathing him.

His eyes rolled back in his head as he felt a masturbator rolled down his length and back up.

While he was fucking and sucking, he was thrusting into the toy in Jared's hand.

The combined sensations proved to be too much.

He was pushed hard against his limits, and he felt another orgasm crash into him out of nowhere.

Carson screamed around Royce's cock as he came into the toy, shooting another thick

load.

Royce followed quickly after, his hands threading through Carson's hair as his body grew taut with need.

With a bellowing cry, Royce's cock spasmed and he erupted into Carson's mouth.

Carson swallowed what he could, but he was unprepared for the amount of cum.

Most leaked from the corners of his mouth and fell down his chin to the floor.

Jared pulled his cock from Carson's ass, but Carson hadn't felt the man come. The cuffs were removed from his ankles, and he saw Jared releasing his wrists as well.

"Are you done?" Carson asked him, sure the man wasn't.

"Roll over," Jared demanded.

Carson obeyed the order and turned over. The bear shifter came back between his thighs and moved Carson's ankles to his shoulders.

"I want to look at you when I come. I want to see that handsome face when you take my seed inside you."

Carson bit back a moan, but it rose more from the look of lust on Jared's face than his words. The bear was close to losing control, Carson was sure of it, and he wanted to see Jared's face when it snapped.

Jared slid back inside him, this time with less pain than the first entry.

He watched as the bear began to move inside him, the sight wholly erotic.

Unfortunately, he still couldn't truly see himself impaled by the cock.

Carson glanced to the ceiling, frustrated, only to see the ceiling was covered in mirrors.

Looking up, he could see Jared's cock sliding into his virgin hole. He could watch as the man thrust into him, the slick, glistening lube making Jared's shaft wet. A tremor moved down his spine at the sight above and if he hadn't just come three times, he'd likely be hard again.

"Look at me," Jared said, his voice low.

"I am," Carson answered, staring up.

Jared paused and glanced up at the ceiling.

"I'm looking at you fuck me. I can see where your big cock is stretching me open with every thrust."

Jared's stare met Carson's in the mirror. "Do you like seeing me fuck you like this?"

Carson nodded.

Royce slid onto the bench and lifted Carson's head onto his lap.

He ran his hands over Carson's chest, flicking and tweaking the nipples while watching the action between the two.

Jared rolled his hips, continuing to stare up at their mirrored doppelgangers.

He grasped Carson's hips and began to quicken the tempo.

He was soon driving hard and deep into Carson's body.

All while Carson watched the erotic image above, locked in an embrace of two sexy bears.

Jared looked back down at the havoc he wrought, watching the real thing as Carson stared at what the man did to him. Watching that fat cock split him apart was the sexiest thing he'd ever witnessed.

Before long, he felt Jared's cock spasming, soon after the bear had begun moving even faster. Jared tensed and then roared, filling Carson's ass with a hot load of cum. He could feel the explosion inside, the cum heating him from the inside out.

When they were done, and both breathing hard, Carson felt exhaustion creeping through his entire body.

After the craziness of the fight, the trauma of trying to save Royce, and then the most amazing fuck session he'd ever had—there was nothing left in him.

His eyelids lowered as if they were weighted down.

Impossible to keep them open, he surrendered to the fatigue, somehow knowing his bears would take care of him.

"Looks like we wore him out," Jared said in a hushed tone. He was unable to keep the pride from his voice.

Royce carefully moved from under Carson's head and moved to the man's side. "Can you go change the sheets? I don't want him in a bloody bed. I'll carry him in once you're done."

Jared nodded and moved quickly to ready the bed for the three of them to share. In no time he had the sheets off and a new set on. He walked back to the playroom.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to take him? Your injury?—”

“Is perfectly fine,” Royce said while lifting Carson into his arms. “Now move out of my way so I can take our mate to bed.”

Jared headed for the bathroom while Royce carried Carson in.

He wet a clean washcloth and brought it to the bed, along with a jar of salve.

Once Carson was in the bed, he wiped away the remnants of their lovemaking before coating the marks on their human’s ass with the salve.

He also added a little along Carson’s anus to soothe him there as well.

Royce had already slid into one side of the bed, awaiting them. When Jared was done, he turned off the light on the nightstand and the two of them curled up against their human.

Never before had Jared felt such a sense of satisfaction.

“You were right,” Royce said in the dark.

The words meant more than Royce could know. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, pain in my ass. Now go to sleep.”

Jared grinned in the dark, at peace.

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The sun had barely risen when Carson's eyelids fluttered open.

He felt a moment of disquiet, not recalling where he was, before he felt the warm, heavy weights on either side of him.

He lifted his head and looked around the room, spying the two bears he was surrounded by.

Their larger, muscular bodies took up most of the huge bed, leaving him pinned between them.

His bladder screaming, he carefully extricated himself, somehow without waking either slumbering shifter.

Pausing at the end of the bed, he scrubbed his hand over his face.

He turned and eyed the pair, the shock of what they'd done the night before making it hard to breathe.

He'd been weak and given in without much of a fight.

His denial meant little now, especially as his cock thickened just looking at the pair of them and remembering what they'd done.

He'd experienced a level of pleasure he'd never expected through kinks he'd never participated in before. The two men had known exactly where to touch, exactly how hard to push. Carson wanted to be pushed even harder the next time.

The next time...

As if it were a foregone conclusion.

He spun and padded barefoot to the bathroom, still sleep weary.

His body ached in unfamiliar places as he walked.

After relieving himself, he washed his hands and glanced into the mirror.

Although he still appeared exactly the same in the reflection, he somehow looked different, too.

A moment of shame hit as he stared at his face.

What have I done?

After a few seconds of self-loathing, he walked to the doorway separating the bedroom from the bathroom.

He leaned on the frame and stared at the two men sleeping.

He wasn't sure he was ready to wade back into the middle of that pile, and thought perhaps it was better if he had some time alone.

He grabbed his backpack and walked out to the living room.

After dropping his bag on the couch, Carson dressed quickly and tugged on his hiking boots.

Carson knew they'd warned him about hiking alone, but from the looks of things, the

only bears he had to fear were the two inside the cabin.

A little space and fresh air was exactly what he needed to clear his head.

Opening the front door as quietly as he could, he escaped into the arms of Mother Nature.

It was gray and chilly. He scented a hint of rain in the crisp, morning air.

Carson tugged his light jacket closer, hoping it would be enough to protect him.

On he walked, higher up the mountain, curious of what he might find along the path.

The pines seemed to grow even denser along the narrow lane, so dense what little daylight there was could barely break through.

It was more like night, the higher he hiked.

There was a stillness to the early morning that suited Carson's needs. He drew in the pine scent as he walked, letting it clear his head somewhat.

No matter how right last night had seemed, he still felt off.

He'd lived his entire life as a straight man.

He'd also lived his entire life assuming that things like shifters didn't exist. Where were other creatures that went bump in the night were actually real?

He had so many questions, yet there hadn't been a right time last night.

The lust he'd felt for them had been so overpowering. He'd completely surrendered

without much thought. The guy who overthought everything had given in without much fight.

Two bears meandered out of the woods just ahead of him on the trail. At first he thought it might be Jared and Royce, but as soon as they caught sight of him, he instantly knew they weren't. Neither were as large as his bears, and Carson wasn't sure how, but he simply knew they weren't his males.

Slowly, he began to back up, unsure if these were real bears or other shifters. Regardless, he was in danger.

Why hadn't he listened?

He trained his gaze on them, watching for any signs they might attack. Praying to the powers of the universe that they didn't.

Don't run.

Don't tempt them to give chase.

He kept slowly backing away, and the two watched without moving. That is until one of them reared up on his hind legs and let out a massive roar. As soon as its forepaws hit the ground, the pair were on the chase, heading straight for Carson.

Carson spun and took off, running down the mountain path.

The gravel was loose in places, and he skidded a few feet.

He struggled with the decline in a few places and had to slow, but he somehow managed to outrun them.

He looked over his shoulder, but only saw one bear.

Carson couldn't stop to look around for the other attacker, so he sped up as fast as his legs could carry him.

The other bear leapt onto the path ahead of Carson, blocking his escape. Carson shifted to the left and began to climb a steep embankment. The bear behind him slashed at his legs. Carson felt the sting as the tips of the animals' claws dug in some—but the strike missed for the most part.

His heart thundered in his chest. Fear unlike anything he'd ever known crushed in around him. Unable to stop, he pushed on, dragging himself up the embankment and onto the next part of the mountain road. He raced higher now, the air getting thinner and burning his lungs.

One bear roared behind him, bellowing in Carson's direction.

Carson looked over his shoulder before rounding a bend and saw the lumbering beast tailing him.

Off in the distance, he saw the other as well.

His legs felt like rubber, but he pushed on the climb, knowing he needed some sort of shelter to get away from the bears.

At the end of the curve, he hit a dead end. He spun to face his attackers and looked for another route of escape. It was all sheer mountain face, and he had no climbing gear in his pack. It sat in his duffel, back in the cabin.

Think, damn it, think!

He searched for an escape as the bear rounded the curve.

He bolted, trying to bypass the beast, but the creature spun at the last second.

It pinned him to the ground. Carson's head smacked the hard ground, knocking the air from his lungs.

That, plus the weight of the bear above him, and he could barely breathe.

There was no way to scream for help. He couldn't summon the oxygen to make one, single sound.

Lungs burning, he tried to drag in air—but it was pointless. It only took a moment for him to feel lightheaded. Another for him to see stars floating before him eyes.

Good. Let me pass out before they maul me to death .

As darkness started to fill his field of vision, he heard a familiar roar in the distance.

Hope filled him, but he wasn't sure if they'd get to him in time.

He fought off the darkness and tried to stay conscious.

His heart thundered in his ears, echoing the fearful beating as he knew the end could soon come for him.

The roar sounded again, and this time, Carson knew it was Royce. A smile came to his lips, even as he fought for air. Even if the creatures killed him, his bears would tear these two to pieces. At least he knew that on the way out.

He'd be avenged.

He didn't want to die. He clung to hope, grasping in desperation as his vision blurred. The thrumming of his heart slowed. His eyelids fluttered closed. He couldn't fight the coming darkness anymore.

And then he sucked in a great burning breath, an involuntary reaction. It hurt beyond belief to take that breath, and his body wracked in pain as he drew in another precious lungful. Coughing came next and he looked around as his vision began to clear.

The bear that had been on top of him lay motionless on the ground, blood pooling around its head. The naked human on his knees pleading with Royce for mercy must've been the other.

The guy couldn't be more than a teenager.

Royce, still in bear form, glowered down at the boy, his claws poised and ready to cause injury.

"We didn't know he was your mate," the young man said, staring up at Royce. "We thought he was one of your guests, wandering around up here on their own. We only wanted to scare him off."

Royce, still in bear form, roared into the teenager's face before swatting the man with one paw. Royce left a thin trail of blood as his claws marked the guy's chest.

Jared, who'd shifted back into his human form and stood naked between Carson and the pair, glared at the guy on his knees. "It didn't look like you were only scaring him away. You were killing him. For sport."

"We weren't killing him," the teenager shouted. "You should be thanking us!"

"Thanking you?" Jared asked, brows knitted together.

Royce roared again, swatting the man once more and drawing new trails of blood. Finally, Royce shifted into human form and punched the guy, knocking him to the ground. “Shift into your bear, godsdamn it! I’ll not fight you as a human.”

The teenager moved back onto his knees. “You’ve wanted us dead for years. Go ahead, Royce. Do it.”

No, no, no...

Carson didn’t want a kid killed because of him—even if they’d taken it too far. He wasn’t sure about the other shifter, but if they were both a couple of kids, they didn’t deserve death.

Royce growled, curling his fists, but didn’t make a move forward.

The teen glared up at Royce. “I swear we didn’t mean to hurt him. Just scare him off!”

Royce’s eyes lit up, and he growled, head raised to the sky. He looked back down at the young man, seething. Carson pushed to his feet, Jared rushing over to help him up. Before Carson could rise to his full height, Jared had him in a bear hug, nuzzling his hair.

“Are you alright?” Jared asked, his voice low.

“I think so,” Carson answered his gaze locked on Royce.

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Withdrawing from Jared's hold, he knew he had to stop the events before things went too far. He brushed some of the pine needles and debris from his body and eyed Royce. "Is he really going to kill him?"

"No one touches our mate. No one."

"But he's just a boy," Carson whispered.

"Boy or no, he broke a cardinal rule. He needs to learn a lesson," Jared spat.

Carson looked toward the other one. "What about the other bear? Is he dead?"

"I'm not sure," Jared answered. "Royce slammed him pretty hard, but these McCreary boys are hard to stop."

Carson looked down at the silent, still bear and decided there had been enough violence for one day. The boy was barely more than a child and deserved a second chance.

It was all his fault. He'd been warned not to hike alone. No another might pay the price for his mistake.

"Don't hurt him, Royce!" Carson called out.

Royce glanced at Carson, and he could see the rage in the man's eyes. He needed to soften it in some way.

“I shouldn’t have come up here alone. You warned me, and I didn’t listen.”

The younger bear shifter nodded and pointed at Carson. “See, he knows he didn’t belong up here.”

Carson noticed the bear was slowly shifting into a human form, blood coating his bruised body. When he looked up, his stare captured Royce’s. “I think they’ve learned their lesson.”

Royce’s gaze pinned Carson. “They don’t touch another’s mate.”

Mate.

Why did that word send tendrils of longing through him? Carson struggled for air, sensing way down deep that he indeed belonged to Royce and Jared... no matter how much he wanted to fight it.

“I’m the injured party here. Does my opinion hold no weight?”

Royce’s jaw worked, rolling side to side. It was clear he wasn’t ready to give in, but clearly Carson’s opinion did matter.

“Take your brother home,” Royce spat toward the boy on his knees, his voice full of gravel. “But if either of you lay one paw on our mate again, I’ll eviscerate you both with my bare hands.”

“I swear we’ll stay away from your human. You’ve got my word.”

“Get out of here!” Royce roared.

The young man rose to his feet, his shoulders slumped as he shuffled over to his

brother. With a quick fireman's haul, he pulled the hurt shifter over his shoulder and disappeared down the mountain trail.

Royce spun to face Carson, anger in his stare.

Carson's gaze dipped to the long, thick cock swaying between Royce's muscular thighs, and he dragged his gaze away.

It was too late. His body had seen and immediately wanted the pleasure that part of the man could provide.

Heat filled his cheeks, his gaze drifting to Jared and the equally impressive cock hanging there.

"What were you thinking coming up here alone?"

Carson turned to fully face Royce, and then Jared. "Last night... was a lot. I needed some time to clear my head." He'd been shown a world he didn't know existed and still wasn't completely sure he believed what he'd witnessed with his own eyes.

"And did you do that? Are you clear now?" Royce asked sarcastically. "I sure hope you are after what you just put us through."

Carson narrowed his stare, ignoring the tightening of his body. "I don't know. I spent most of that time running for my life."

Royce chuckled, but there was no mirth in it. He stalked closer, some of the anger still in his gaze. "You wouldn't have been running if you'd listened to us."

Carson scoffed, shaking his head. "Oh, now I get yelled at, hmm? First it was a child and now a lowly human. Tell me, do you always attack those weaker than you?"

As soon as the words were out of Carson's mouth, he wished he could reel them back in.

All the anger fled from Royce's gaze, his eyes widening. "Attack?"

"That was a bit unnecessary," Jared whispered.

Royce shook his head. "Carson, they nearly killed you. If we hadn't gotten here in time..." He paused and jammed a hand through his hair, letting out a slow breath. "Seeing you struggling to breathe scared me more than anything in my entire life. I didn't attack, I defended."

"I know," Carson whispered under his breath, glancing at the ground. "But this is all new to me. I didn't understand the danger." He lifted his gaze and eyed both of them before his gaze fully settled on Royce. "Now I do. I'm sorry."

Royce grabbed the front of Carson's jacket and dragged him into an embrace. He wrapped his arms so tight around Carson, making it difficult to breathe once more.

He drew in a breath, Royce's masculine scent filling his nose and making it hard to concentrate. He shivered against Royce's heat and strength, fighting the desire to surrender then and there.

All he could see in his mind was going to his knees like the boy and begging Royce and Jared for another type of mercy. Fucking him until the growing ache was gone.

"You scared the hell out of us," Royce said, his voice thick with emotion. "I couldn't imagine losing you before we'd truly claimed you."

Carson let the anger he'd felt drift away.

Royce had only screamed because he'd been afraid.

It felt so unusual to have someone care so much, so quickly.

So deeply. The intensity only seemed to draw Carson in tighter, binding him even closer to the two bears.

After so many passionless years, the strength of emotion dragging them together was potent.

Alluring.

No one had ever wanted him like Royce and Jared seemed to.

Royce leaned back some before lowering his head and capturing Carson's lips. Carson let the bear have him. He sensed Royce needed it after what had just happened. He warred with Royce's tongue and allowed the bear to devour him, leaving him breathless when they finally parted.

His head spun as Royce stepped back, releasing him.

He'd come out here to clear his mind, yet he was as confused as ever.

When they were this close, he wanted them with a ferocity he didn't and couldn't understand.

He needed distance to put it all in some kind of order in his head.

Apparently, he wouldn't get that on the mountain.

Royce turned to Jared. "I've got to get down to the lobby to relieve Daniel. I'll try to

get someone to cover for us for the rest of the day. Until then, can you keep an eye on our mate? I don't want him alone on the mountain."

Yep. Just as I suspected. No alone time.

If Carson was honest with himself, he didn't want to be apart from them. He wasn't in the mood for honesty, though.

Jared eyed Carson. "I won't let him out of my sight."

Heat swept over Carson from the look in Jared's eyes.

Royce hugged him again and brushed his lips over Carson's forehead. "I'll be back as soon as I can."

Carson nodded, unable to answer. The need had been sparked within him and if he spoke, he feared he'd beg Royce to stay.

Once Royce had shifted and raced down the mountain, Jared turned to him. "Want to finish that hike?"

Carson eyed Jared. "If you put some clothes on."

Jared looked down before lifting to meet Carson's gaze. "Don't like my birthday suit?"

Carson scanned the man. Unfortunately, he liked it too much. "Just put some clothes on."

Jared smiled and sauntered closer. "Finding it hard to concentrate?"

Carson rolled his eyes. “Just put some clothes on.”

“If you insist.” Jared strutted down the mountain path a ways before turning to look over his shoulder. “You comin’?”

Carson eyed Jared’s firm ass and his fingers itched to squeeze that tight flesh.

“Yeah, yeah. I’m coming.”

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Jared loved the mountain. He had since he was a boy.

It was but one of the many that surrounded and protected the valley below, but it was the one he'd spent most of his life on.

Showing it to Carson and seeing it through a new set of eyes made him appreciate the beauty surrounding him even more.

He began whistling as they climbed one of the set trails, enjoying the time spent with their new companion.

Looking over his shoulder, he checked that their human was keeping up.

"We need to break off the path up ahead. I've got somewhere special to show you," Jared murmured. He was about to take Carson to one of his favorite spots, one he rarely shared with anyone.

Carson glanced up before looking back down at his footing. "Are you sure we should go off the trail, considering what happened earlier?"

"No one's going to mess with you, not after we made it known you were ours."

"How many other bear shifters live up here?"

"They're all over this valley and in the mountains surrounding it.

We own this mountain, as well as the land around the lake, but there are a handful

who have long-term leases for spots on the opposite side that Royce's grandfather let out to raise the cash to open the inn.

Unfortunately, some of those include assholes like the McCreary family.

Down in the valley, there's a town. It's completely inhabited by bear shifters. ”

“A whole town?”

“We're about a thousand strong, give or take,” Jared replied, turning back to see the look of surprise on Carson's face. “And we're not the only shifters out there. Just one of the many hidden spots filled with them all over the world.”

Carson blinked a few times. “And no one knows what you are here?”

“There are humans here, too. Mates like you, of course. But no, other than our mates, no one else knows. From the outside, we look human. We keep to ourselves and together own the land for miles. The whole county.” Jared paused and turned to Carson. “We need to break off here. Follow me.”

Jared grew excited as they rustled through the pines on the half-assed trail he'd made during his many visits.

As far as he knew, the only other beings who knew of this spot were Royce and Paul, and the three of them had an agreement to keep it a secret.

If too many folks came in, it would ruin the natural beauty.

When they strode through to the clearing, he spun to face Carson. He wanted to see the look on the human's face when he saw what he was sharing.

Carson looked around, pausing to take in the view. His mouth dropped open and his eyes widened as he stared at the sight.

“It’s beautiful,” he breathed.

Jared turned back around and stared at the small waterfall feeding into the large, crystal clear pool.

A mist came up off the water as the cooler upper mountain run-off ended up in the hot spring below, adding to the beauty.

Pines surrounded for privacy, but Jared knew you could nearly see the entire valley from one spot near the waterfall.

“Want to take a swim? It might help those bruises the McCrearys gave you earlier.”

“Isn’t the water ice cold?” Carson asked.

“Near the waterfall, it can get frigid, but along that side is a natural warm spring. Keep closer to the air pockets and you’ll stay plenty warm.” Jared unbuttoned his shirt before sitting on a rock to take off his boots. “I’m going in. I can’t pass up an opportunity while I’m up here.”

Carson appeared to fight a smile. “You just want to get me naked.”

“Oh, that, too,” he answered honestly as he kicked off his jeans. He stared at their human, willing the man to join in. He wouldn’t force. They’d pushed hard the night before and Carson needed space to make his own choices.

That didn’t mean he couldn’t offer temptation, either.

He leveled a wicked grin at Carson, giving the best come hither look.

Finally Carson sighed. He dropped his backpack and began disrobing.

With a smile on his face, Jared dropped the last of his clothing onto the pile and dashed off to jump into the pool.

The warm water greeted him, enveloping his body in soothing comfort.

As he broke the surface, he saw a naked Carson making his way over the smooth rocks at the water's edge.

Seeing his mate bare, his cock already thickening in anticipation, made Jared's shaft harden in response.

Not that he needed much help to get him there.

Carson toed the water and confirmed it was indeed warm. He climbed in, moaning wickedly as the water wrapped around him.

"This is amazing," he said, his lids lowering.

"I'm glad you like it," Jared replied, watching his mate enjoy the water. "So you want to tell me the reason you high-tailed it out of the cabin this morning?"

Carson's face reddened some, and he looked away. "I just needed time to think, like I told you both earlier."

"I know learning you're the mate of two bear shifters can't be easy. You're handling it better than some I've heard of."

One of Carson's eyebrows shot up, and he gazed at Jared. "More like my entire world has flipped upside down. I'm amazed I haven't gone off the deep end." Carson sighed. "I should be, right? I should be freaking out and running away as fast as I can. I don't understand why I'm not."

Jared swam a bit closer. He lifted a hand and pressed his palm against Carson's chest. The rapid beating quickened under his touch. "You sense this is right... don't you?"

Carson met his gaze, heat pooling there.

"Right here," Jared whispered. "You feel it here... how bound we all are."

Carson turned away from Jared, looking out into the trees. "Maybe. I don't know."

"How can you not know after last night?"

Carson slanted his gaze at Jared. "I wonder if last night was a mistake."

Jared felt as if he'd been punched in the gut. "A mistake? You didn't sound like it felt like a mistake as you were screaming in pleasure."

Carson swam away a few feet. "I can't think when you two are this close. All I can think about is fucking. That's why I needed some space this morning."

Jared swam closer. "It's our bond. The closer we are, the stronger it is. Why fight it?"

"In the matter of a day, I've had sex with two men for the first time, learned those men were bear shifters, and been attacked by two other bear shifters. I think I deserve an hour to clear my head. But the two of you are always near. Always. I just need to think."

“If we hadn’t been close this morning, you’d likely be dead.”

Carson grew quiet. “Yet if you hadn’t pushed me last night, maybe I wouldn’t have needed that hike.”

The comment stung. It sounded like something Royce would say. Doubt filled his mind. “Are you telling me you being attacked is our fault?”

“It’s no one’s fault. It just happened. There’s no finger to point. I just need you two to slow down a little.”

“Slow down isn’t in my vocabulary. Not when it comes to you,” Jared said, his voice growing deeper.

Three days. They had three days to claim their mate, and Jared wasn’t pressing the brakes one bit.

He swam closer and pulled Carson into his embrace.

“You’re ours, human. Ours. And I can prove that to you. ”

Jared pressed his lips against Carson’s, ready to bask in the flavor of their mate.

He was sweet, spicy, with a hint of mint and vanilla.

Carson pushed against his chest when the kiss began, but he quickly relaxed in Jared’s arms. Their human slid his hands down and wrapped his arms about Jared’s waist, tugging him even closer.

Deepening the kiss, Jared pushed the human against the smooth rocks lining the pool.

Pinned between him and the rocks, Carson was his passionate prisoner.

Jared took advantage, pressing closer to Carson and rubbing his naked body against their human's.

Carson was soon running his hands over Jared and tugging him closer.

Carson pulled his mouth away. "You're not making this any easier."

"Seems pretty easy to me," Jared drawled, smiling down at their human. He recaptured Carson's lips, trying to quell any more argument. The human just needed to face his desire and their bond, and when he did, then he'd be theirs.

Three days.

Carson slid his hands down and began stroking Jared's cock.

Jared moaned against the human's lips and followed the same train of thought.

He captured Carson's cock in one fist and massaged the length from base to tip and back down.

The water helped buoy their actions, and the heat only fueled the need inside Jared.

"I want to be inside you," Jared whispered against Carson's lips. "I want to connect with you like we did last night."

Carson shook his head. "I don't know."

"Let's see," Jared said, spinning Carson to face the rocks. Jared pressed along the man's back to make him bend and lift his ass. As gently as he could, he pressed a

finger against Carson's anus and he slid in with more ease than the night before.

Carson rose on his toes, hissing.

"Too much?"

"No," Carson mumbled. "It's sore, but that's not too much." Carson paused. "I kind of enjoy... the pain." He lifted both of his hands to his face and scrubbed it. "What the fuck is wrong with me?"

Jared closed his eyes, trying to control his need. He stepped back, putting distance between them.

Carson spun to eye him. "Where are you going?"

Jared smiled, swimming to the edge of the pool.

He searched the smooth rocks until he found the fake.

After opening it, he pulled out the lube they'd stored there for emergencies.

He returned to Carson and pumped a bit into his palm before lifting their mate's ass out of the water to coat the tight hole.

Carson's back arched as he spread the lube, a moan pouring from his lips.

"Prepared, I see," Carson mumbled.

"As any cub scout learns to be," Jared whispered, grinning.

He fed his finger deeper and rhythmically surged in and out, making sure Carson

could handle his touch. Carson soon relaxed around the impalement and began rocking his hips to meet the thrusts. When Carson moaned, Jared added another finger, stretching him wider. Once again the man hissed in pain.

“I’m okay,” Carson said before Jared could ask the question.

“Are you sure?”

“Just keep going,” Carson spat. “You can’t stop now.”

Jared chuckled lightly. “For someone who wanted space, you’re being awfully needy right now.”

Carson looked over his shoulder, his eyes darkened with lust. “You gonna keep running your mouth or are you going to fuck me?”

Heat flooded Jared’s body. His bear rose to the surface, and his eyes began to glow.

“Come on, bear. Show me what you’re made of.”

Jared let out a roar, his incisors lengthening as he felt his animal raging within. Jared claws extended a tiny bit, the tips of his fingers growing dangerous. He reeled them back in, knowing he could hurt their human if he wasn’t careful. “Don’t tempt the beast.”

“Why not?” Carson said over his shoulder. He drew off Jared’s fingers and spun to face Jared. “I want the beast.”

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Carson noticed Jared's eyes glowing even stronger, hinting the beast was coming close to the surface.

He shivered all over, the hint of animal he saw a turn on when he should've likely been running.

He'd laid down a challenge for a reason.

Now he waited to see if the bear would come out to play.

Already Jared's teeth were longer, the incisors sharp as he bared them and growled at Carson.

Heat flooded his body as he watched the partial shift in Jared.

He had no idea why he was luring the animal to come forward.

The words rolled off his tongue without conscious thought.

He couldn't seem to think when the two of them were around; he could only react.

Jared and Royce pushed and he pushed back.

It was a war of wills he felt compelled to play.

His connection to the two of them was more than physical. While that's all it had been so far, he sensed that it was something much deeper. They were too new to him

for it to be anything but carnal, so why not revel in it?

The sensual nature of their connection wouldn't be denied. The longer he was near them, the more he wanted. Jared refused to give him space, and this was the result. Jared pushed and he pushed back... a game they both willingly played.

Jared pushed him roughly against the rock, his hands slightly shaking.

Carson wondered if that was his control on edge, or him holding back his shift.

Either way, it was sexy as hell seeing the shifter nearly lose it.

He wanted to poke the bear even harder and see how far past the limits Carson could take the male.

All while a little voice in the back of his mind asked him if he was insane for doing it.

"You're not going to like what you get if you tempt the beast," Jared warned, his voice deep and guttural.

"Maybe. Maybe not."

"I won't hurt you," Jared snapped, an animalistic tone to his deepening voice. He frowned, his expression softening a bit. "I don't want to hurt you, Carson."

Carson was past caring about being hurt.

The pain mixed with the pleasure last night had been seductive.

He wanted more. His words flowed from his lips without considering his own safety.

He didn't know where the desire for pain came from, but he wasn't in control anymore.

His need for the two bears propelled him here.

“You won't hurt me, no more than I want. No more than I need.”

How he knew that, he wasn't sure—but he knew it soul deep. Jared and Royce would protect him, maybe even from himself. Maybe that's why he pushed.

To test his theory.

How much could he take.

How much would they let him.

Jared growled low in his throat. “You are my responsibility now. My job is to protect you.”

“A job? That's what I am to you?” He shook his head. “I can take care of myself. I'm no man's burden.”

“No burden,” Jared whispered, trailing one claw-like fingernail over his bare shoulder. “But a responsibility I've longed to have.”

“Then give me what I want. I like a little sting.” He smiled as he shivered, Jared's claw moving over his collarbone. “Make me burn, Jared.”

Jared met his gaze with a heated one, holding it a few seconds.

He slowly lowered his lips to Carson's for a kiss unlike any other he'd ever

experienced.

He felt the sharpness of Jared's incisors and ran his tongue along the edge of one tip, scratching his tongue.

A second later, he tasted the tang of his blood as their mouths warred.

Jared reeled back and roared, his head upturned to the sky. He lowered his head, his eyes brightly shining. "You'll be the death of me. Probably all three of us if we're not careful."

"You pushed. I pushed back," Carson said before grabbing the shifter's head and drawing the man's lips back down over his. He kissed Jared with everything in him, sliding one hand down to capture the man's cock once more.

Jared was rock hard and throbbing in Carson's hand. Pre-cum beaded at the tip and he swiped his thumb over it to use as lube.

"Fuck me," he whispered as he leaned back and captured Jared's gaze. "Like last night, facing me."

Carson laid back against the river rocks, smoothed from ages of water pouring over them.

Before Jared rubbed the head of his cock along Carson's anus, he coated himself with a handful of lube.

He added more and spread it along the tight bud, sliding his fingers in once more.

After a few moments of teasing, Jared pushed the head of his cock in, spearing Carson wide open.

The burn was intense, the pain almost too much.

Carson shut his eyes and arched his back to better handle the sensation as Jared slowly slid deeper inside him.

When he bottomed out, Carson felt even fuller than he had the night before for some reason.

He moaned against the sense of fullness and rolled his hips to force Jared to move.

“Slow down,” Jared growled. “I don’t want you hurt.”

“Move!” Carson demanded, rolling his hips.

Jared clamped his hands on Carson’s hips and dug in tight. Carson knew the man was likely bruising him, but he didn’t care. He seemed to like it the rougher he got.

“Slow down,” Jared said, his voice deep. “You’re new to this.”

Carson whimpered, wanting more.

Finally Jared began to move, incremental thrusts that were nowhere near enough to satisfy the need raging in Carson. He fought Jared’s hold on him, but the bear was too damned strong. Jared held him tight and continued the leisurely pace.

As the minutes passed, his passage stretched and accommodated Jared better. Jared quickened his pace, but not enough for Carson’s pleasure.

“Faster,” he cried.

Jared growled low. “Slowly, mate. We go at the pace I choose.”

The bear wrapped his fist around Carson's cock, the lube still coating his palm.

His hand slid up and down the length, mirroring the strokes of his cock.

Carson held on to the edges of the stone he rested on, letting the shifter have his control.

He closed his eyes and enjoyed the feel of Jared inside him, pumping away.

"Is this a private party, or can anyone join?"

Carson lifted his gaze to the side to find Royce standing there naked, and hard. A groan sliced through him as he looked at the other bear. "Good thing you're here. Maybe you can make this one move faster," Carson spat, glaring at Jared.

Jared growled deep in his chest before looking up at Royce, never stopping the thrusting of his hips. "Maybe you can tell this one I refuse to hurt him or his near-virginal ass."

Carson moaned as Jared's dick dove a little deeper, the bear punctuating his statement.

Royce stepped into the water and once it was at chest level, he drifted toward them. He slipped beside Carson, stealing a kiss. He held Carson's legs higher, watching Jared's cock slide in and out.

"Did you get the lube?" Royce asked Jared.

"Yep," Jared said through clenched teeth as he slid back into Carson's ass. He nodded his head to the side. "Over there."

Royce kissed the side of Carson's face before reaching across for the bottle. Carson tilted his head to capture Royce's lips for an all too brief kiss as he passed back.

Royce paused, caressing Carson's cheek and staring down into his eyes. "How's it feel? That big cock driving hard into you?"

"Good," Carson whispered. "I want... I need... more."

Jared quickened his pace a bit, the sound of slapping skin echoing around them, but it still wasn't enough for Carson.

"More!" he demanded.

"Give him what he wants," Royce said to Jared. "Let's see what he's made of."

Jared's eyes glowed bright again as he stared down at Carson. "You asked for it."

Jared went wild, driving hard and fast into Carson's ass.

He bit his lip as he took the forceful fucking, loving every second of it.

Moans slipped from his lips unbidden, especially after Royce took over jerking him off.

Both men were now able to focus wholly on what they were doing to Carson, which was exactly how he wanted it.

He writhed between them as they urged him higher. The slick slide of Jared's cock was overwhelming. But he wanted overwhelming. He wanted to be pushed to the edge. He wanted the bite of pain and to see their animals roaring with life as they fucked him senseless.

Jared stiffened against Carson, a roar bursting from his lips as he came. Carson moaned as his bear filled him, so very close to his own orgasm.

Just... one... more... thrust...

Royce pinched the base of Carson's cock, robbing him of the release.

Carson tried to push Royce's hand away but failed. Royce was too strong.

"Not yet, human."

Carson groaned. Being deprived of his release pissed him off to no end. He'd pushed one bear to give him what he wanted only to have the other deny him of it.

Royce only chuckled against Carson's ear. "I'll make it worth your wait."

Carson held Royce's gaze before glancing down at the thick, veined monster pressed against his hip. Jared was big. Royce was bigger.

Jared withdrew from Carson's body and leaned up to kiss his lips. He leaned back with a smile. "Impudent mate. You'll learn your lesson soon enough."

"Indeed he will," Royce said. "Now get out of my way. You've had his ass twice now. I haven't yet."

Fear flooded Carson at the thought of that monster filling him. Royce snagged the lube bottle and gave his thick shaft a stroke or two. He spread it along his vast length before he stepped into the vacant spot Jared had left behind. Royce pressed between his thighs.

"I don't know if I can handle that much cock," Carson said, staring down at the thick

brand of Royce's shaft.

"You'll be able to handle it. You like it hard and rough, remember?" Royce smeared a little more of the lube along Carson's asshole and penetrated him with a thick finger.

Jared chuckled lightly beside Carson. "Yes, yes he does."

Carson tried to backtrack, even though the finger fucking him felt so incredibly good. "I only said that because I'd had him before. I knew what to expect."

Royce grabbed Carson's thighs and spread him wide. "You'll soon learn what to expect from me as well."

"It'll be easier if you relax," Jared said, snaking a hand around to massage Carson's cock.

The rhythmic movement of Jared's hand did help him calm a little, but he doubted it would be enough to take Royce's girth.

"You're a mate," Royce whispered. "Your body was born for this. For us."

Carson frowned, confused by that statement. Is that why he'd been able to take a cock so easily the night before? He'd anticipated it hurting a lot more, yet it hadn't.

"I won't hurt you," Royce murmured. "If it's too much, we can stop."

Carson looked up at Royce and thought back to Jared's words from earlier.

They would do anything to protect him. That knowledge was enough for Carson to relax a bit.

He instinctively knew his bears would've thrown down their lives for him earlier.

Hurting him wasn't even a consideration, unless it was the delectable pain Carson seemed to enjoy.

Royce caught his stare. "Ready?"

Carson nodded, holding the man's gaze.

Royce pressed the thick head of his cock against Carson's anus and slowly pushed inside.

The sting of pain was there, but nowhere as bad as he'd expected.

Inch by inch, the monster cock filled him and stretched him wide.

It was too much, yet he wanted more. His moans came without end as the bear claimed his body.

The pressure... the fullness... he couldn't describe it. His body was no longer his own. It was theirs.

Only theirs.

The second Royce was balls deep, he came, his orgasm slamming into him from nowhere. Cum shot from his cock and erupted over the side of Jared's fist as the bear milked him. A scream tore from his lips as he rocked against the thick mast filling him.

When the smoke cleared, Royce began to move.

Slowly at first, he fed his huge cock into Carson's ass.

Slickened by the lube, his bear fucked him, grasping his hips and driving deep.

Carson didn't know why he'd been so fearful.

Royce was his, molded for him. Or rather, he felt molded for Royce.

He closed his eyes and raged against the bear, meeting every thrust with one of his own.

Royce's eyes began to glow as he rode Carson hard, pumping his cock faster and faster. His bear moved with abandon, claiming his body with every stroke. They thrashed together as Royce sought his absolution.

His gaze captured Carson's when his body stiffened. He knew what was coming and rushed to meet the next thrust. Carson's bear roared as he came, filling Carson with a second load of cum. Royce continued to rock his hips, emptying himself and giving Carson everything he had.

When he finally stilled, Royce ran his hands over Carson's body, touching every inch he could reach. "I couldn't have asked the gods for more than what they've sent us. You're perfect."

Carson stared up at the huge man and realized the sense of belonging he'd always searched for was right there.

They wanted to cherish him, mind, body, and soul—as long as he was willing. After the pleasures they'd wrought from him, how could he not be?

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Royce held Carson's gaze as he slowly pulled out of their mate's body.

Deep down, he knew they were likely pushing him too hard, too fast, but then Jared was anxious to have everything tied up neatly in a bow by the end of the weekend.

He feared that might not happen. He lifted his gaze to Jared, curious what was shared when he was down the mountain.

He almost asked, but he was ready to have a little alone time with Carson himself.

Maybe he'd be able to see where Carson's head was at if he could get a few minutes without Jared there to push. "Do you mind going down to check on Paul?"

"Paul?" Jared asked, frowning.

"I left him in charge of the desk."

"He has no experience there. Why did you leave him?"

Royce glanced at Jared before staring back down at Carson, a slow smile coming to his lips. "Everyone has checked in for the weekend, and Paul knows enough. Quentin is in the restaurant and could help in a pinch."

"I can't believe you left it in his hands. And I'm the one not serious about the business?"

Royce glowered at Jared. "I wanted some time with our mate, too. You've had yours."

So go check on the guys.”

Jared lifted one brow, but didn't argue with Royce's request. He rinsed off his hands and his cock before climbing from the pool. Royce continued to run his hands over Carson's body as Jared left them alone.

“You don't have to leave your business in less than capable hands on my account.”

Royce frowned. “I've lived fifty-seven years without a mate. Now that I've found him, I don't want to leave him alone.”

“You're fifty-seven?” Carson blinked a few times. “You don't look a day over thirty-five.”

“Bear shifters live longer than humans. We often double a human's average age or more.”

“You can live to be two hundred?”

“Yep. Of course, that depends on the bear and how well he lives.”

“And how well have you lived?” Carson asked, swimming away from Royce a few feet.

“I feel like I've simply... existed. Something has always felt as if it was missing.” Now it no longer felt that way. Carson completed their triad. Royce felt it as clearly as the nose on his face.

“And you think that something missing is me.”

It wasn't a question. More a statement. Which was fine, since Royce agreed with it.

“You are the missing piece. Don’t you feel it?”

Carson was silent as he swam away a little more. He could feel the human putting up a wall between them. The same wall he’d felt this morning. Their mate was confused, assuredly. He likely sensed the bond but fought it.

“Don’t you?” Royce asked again.

Carson glanced at him but didn’t answer. He swam farther, increasing the gap.

Distance wasn’t something Royce wanted. After dipping under the surface, he swam with speed until he could wrap his arms around Carson’s waist. He sprung from the water, lifting Carson, and clutching him tight.

Chest-to-chest and eye-to-eye, he pinned Carson with a glare. He could feel Carson’s feet pressing against his knees. He towered over the man and wasn’t against using his size to get the answer he craved.

“I asked a question.”

Carson’s cheeks darkened and he averted his gaze. “I’ve spent my entire life as a straight man. I also spent it not knowing beings like you existed. You can’t assume I’ll just accept this is... whatever it is.”

“I didn’t ask you that,” Royce murmured, lowering his head to recapture their mate’s stare. When he finally had it, he continued. “I simply asked if you felt the bond. Not if you accepted it.”

“I suppose I feel something,” Carson spat. He narrowed his eyes. “Like a noose around my neck.”

Royce lifted one of his hands to wrap around Carson's slender neck. Carson stiffened under his grasp.

"A noose, hmm? It didn't sound as if you were being forced earlier. You practically begged Jared to fuck you harder... and then demanded I do the same."

Carson swallowed roughly against Royce's hold around his neck. It wasn't tight, but tight enough for Carson to be wary.

"You know I'll never hurt you, right?"

"No, but clearly you'll threaten," Carson murmured.

Royce ran his thumb over Carson's lower lip. "No threat. You claimed our bond was a noose there. I thought you might like to be reminded of what one really feels like."

Carson shivered against him.

"Maybe the next time I slide my cock deep inside you, I'll hold you like this. Tight. And see if that makes you shiver even more."

Carson's eyes went heavy lidded.

"Do you like that idea?" Royce asked, moving his lips within inches of Carson's mouth. "Do you want it rough like that?"

Carson's eyes closed, his trembling coming full-on. When he reopened them, Royce had his answer. Carson wanted it, without a doubt.

"What exactly is expected of a bear's mate?"

Royce smiled, a slow spreading of his lips as he gradually released his hold around Carson's neck. "Not much more than would be expected in any other intimate relationship."

"Such as?"

"You belong here. With us. Be a part of our community here."

"I have a home in the city. I have a job there. A life. I can't just turn my back on all that."

"That life is over now. You belong here," Royce stated.

"That life is over?"

Carson fought Royce's hold until he was let down. "You can't demand I walk away from everything I know just because some cosmic mishap threw us together."

A rumble rose up Royce's throat. "A cosmic mishap? Are you calling this a mistake?"

"Maybe I am," Carson spat, anger contorting his handsome face.

Royce stared Carson down. "After what we've shared, you could so easily walk away and ignore the bond we have?"

"I barely know either of you and you expect me to give up everything I am. You ask too much," Carson climbed from the pool before turning to look at Royce. "Maybe I should just go now, before this gets any more difficult."

Royce stepped closer. "You belong here. Period."

What the fuck was he doing? He'd yelled at Jared not to push too hard and there he was pushing even harder. There had to be a middle ground, but it was as if his mind refused to let those words past his lips.

Carson grabbed his clothes and started pulling items on. "I don't. I'm sorry. I'm leaving before I let you convince me otherwise."

Royce left the pool and pulled Carson close. He pressed his lips against Carson's and immediately felt the man's resistance falter. At first, Carson was stiff in his arms, but he soon melted into Royce's embrace. When Royce pulled back, there was even more confusion in Carson's gaze.

"I know we ask a lot, but we have so much to give in return, Carson." He cupped Carson's cheek and pinned the man with a gaze. "You didn't mention family being left behind."

"I don't have much of that left," Carson mumbled.

"You'd have one here."

Carson stared up at him, a yearning in his eyes. It was gone as fast as it appeared. "I can't think straight when you two are close. I need to go home. I need to be alone. I need to think."

"Think about coming back to us?"

"I don't know. Maybe." He searched Royce's gaze. "Maybe not."

"Can't you stay the rest of the weekend? Give us time to bond?"

"No. Stop pushing!"

Royce lowered his hands and stepped back. He let their human go, even though it was the hardest thing he'd ever done. His chest ached at the thought of Carson leaving them.

"I..." Carson turned, unable to look at Royce. "I might be back."

Royce forced his clothing on his still wet body before following Carson back through the pines and down the mountain path.

Every step back to the cabin felt like a stab to the gut.

He wouldn't force their human to stay against his will. He'd tried it Jared's way and maybe more, and it hadn't worked.

But now what did he have left to do?

Let him go.

The thought caused terror to rip through his entire body.

Let him go and pray he returned.

As the sun set on the mountain, Jared climbed up toward their cabin. Royce sat on the porch, his feet resting on the railing. He drank from a beer bottle, and several empties rested around the bottom of the chair.

"Where's Carson?" Jared asked.

Royce was silent a moment. "Gone."

"Gone? Where?"

“Home.”

Jared felt as if the air was knocked from his lungs. He leaned against the railing for support. “Why has he gone home?”

“We pushed him too far.” Royce shook his head. “I pushed him too far.”

Anger swelled in Jared. “What did you do?”

“He asked what was expected of a bear’s mate. I told him his new home was here, with us, with the other bears. He refused, said he wouldn’t give up the life he knew.”

“And you just let him go?”

“We can’t force him, no matter what you think.”

Jared felt the loss bone deep. “And now what do we do?”

Royce took a drink from his bottle, finishing off the rest of the deep amber liquid. “We wait and see if our mate returns to us. If not... then we go find him.”

The hell we do.

“Once you sober up, we’re going to go collect our mate.”

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Carson opened his apartment door and quietly slipped inside. Once the door closed behind him, he flipped on a light and stared at his place. For some reason, it felt different .

It doesn't feel like home anymore.

The entire drive home, he'd ignored the desire to turn around and go back. It had screamed inside his head, his body aching with every mile put between them.

"I'm armed! Get out of my house!"

Carson frowned until Deidre came running out, a long chef's knife clutched in her palm. She paused when she saw Carson and lowered the knife with a sigh of relief. "You scared the hell out of me. I wasn't expecting anyone."

Carson stood stock still, unable to speak for some reason.

"You're back early." Deidre cocked her head to the side, looking him over. "Are you okay?"

Carson dropped his backpack to the floor and slowly lowered into the nearest chair. His body ached, particularly in one certain spot, but all over. But he'd asked for that... he'd asked it to burn. Only now it did and he wasn't with them for them to make it all feel better.

"Car? You're scaring me again. What's going on?"

“The mountain wasn’t what I expected.”

Deidre placed the knife on an end table and sat down on the coffee table in front of his chair. She spied him for a moment. “You look exhausted.”

“I am .” It had only been a few days but felt like a lifetime. A brand-new life. He scanned the apartment he’d lived in for years... and it felt... wrong. He didn’t belong there.

Deidre grinned wryly. “I missed you.”

Carson harrumphed. “No you didn’t.”

“I did. I really did. As soon as you were out the door, I second-guessed myself. You really are the greatest guy I know. They don’t make them like you anymore.”

Deidre slipped from the table and onto his lap.

Carson stiffened, not expecting her sudden move. “What’re you doing, Deidre?”

Deidre grasped his face with both her hands and lowered her lips to his.

Her touch felt... wrong, too. Carson stiffened, allowing her to kiss him... hoping it would feel more familiar and wipe away all those taboo touches he’d experienced at Royce and Jared’s hands. Only it made him realize how much he craved them and more of those caresses.

He pulled back and stared up at her, incredulous. “You said you were done. That we were done.”

“I was wrong,” she whispered. “I love you, Carson.”

Carson closed his eyes, her words clawing at him. He didn't feel anything for her. Not in the way she wanted, anyway.

Had he ever?

Had she said all those things before he'd left for the mountain, he might've been thrilled. He would've allowed her back in, just because it was easy.

A life with Royce and Jared wouldn't be.

Yet that was where he wanted to be.

Carson looked around the apartment, a home that was no longer a home. Maybe in a few days or a few weeks, he'd forget about the pair waiting for him on the mountain and home would feel like home again. "I'm tired, Deidre. I need a shower and to sleep for two or three days."

"What happened there?"

Carson shook his head. "You'd never believe me."

She rose and offered him a hand. He took it, knowing there would be nothing but sleep for them.

He clung to the memory of what they had, desperate to return to being the same man he'd been just days before.

After turning off the light in the living room, he followed her into their bedroom, one they'd shared for years.

It all felt wrong.

After slipping through the bedroom, he entered the tiny bathroom.

He took off his clothes and started the shower.

Once inside, he washed off the mud and the remnants of the two men who'd been inside him.

When he was done and dried off, he walked out into the bedroom, the half-light coming from the hallway's nightlight.

Carson crawled between his sheets, clad only in a fresh pair of briefs.

Deidre moved closer beside him and cuddled next to him.

"I missed this so much," she whispered, pressing a kiss against his neck.

He didn't respond, just squeezed her arm for a moment. Carson stared up as the lights from passing cars arced into his room and made shadows along the ceilings and walls. Deidre's breathing grew deeper as she drifted into sleep.

The gnawing ache kept him awake. Worse than ever, it ate at him, demanding he satisfy the longing.

As the hours passed, he couldn't find sleep.

His mind kept thinking of the men he left behind.

Of the chance he passed on because he couldn't accept what his heart and soul already did.

He, Royce, and Jared were three pieces of a puzzle, and without them, he wasn't

complete.

Never would be.

Carson awoke the following morning, the feel of a hand sliding up and down his thickening cock.

My bears.

When his eyes fluttered open he realized it wasn't either of them. His head rolled to the side to see a smiling, naked Deidre doing her best to get him hard and ready for her. His underwear was gone. He was just as naked as she was.

"Don't you think this is a little soon?" he asked, his voice barely above a whisper. Her hand no longer felt right on his body. He wanted to shove her away, make her stop touching him.

As soon as he'd realized it was her, and not his shifters, his cock began to deflate. His body apparently wasn't his own anymore.

It was theirs.

An ache settled in his chest as he stared up at the ceiling.

I belong there.

With them.

Deidre ignored his question and was still doing her best to get him hard, quickening her pace when he only grew softer. After a moment, she was hurting him, so he gripped her wrist and forced her to stop.

“I’ve never known you to refuse sex,” she said, her tone and expression showing she felt stung by his denial.

He stared at her and brought her hand up to his lips. He pressed a kiss to the back of it before smiling wanly at her. “You were right all along. We’re done. We have been for a long time. You don’t want me any more than I want you.”

Deidre straddled him and rubbed her wet pussy along his shaft, smearing her juices and her scent on him. The wrong scent. “Does this feel like I don’t want you?”

She leaned down and forced a kiss to his lips. He pushed her back some and broke the kiss. Once they parted, he could see the question in her eyes.

“It’s over, Deidre. It’s over, and we can’t do this.”

“You came to our bed last night. You held me in your arms as we slept. It felt so good to be back in those strong arms. We can do this. We can make it work.”

“What’s with this sudden change?” Just days before she’d said she met someone. Someone who could make her happy. “Where’s this new man of yours? The one who makes you smile?”

She looked away, a pained look on her face. “He was flirting with me to make his ex-girlfriend jealous. When I learned the truth, I realized what I had with you. What I’d let slip through my fingers. I can’t let go of that, Carson. You’re one of the good ones.”

She ran back to me? No. “It’s too late...”

Deidre frowned at him. “Just two days ago, you wanted to work on things up at the cabin. That’s why you came home, isn’t it?”

You couldn't stand to be alone up there...

without me." She smiled as she spread her palms along his chest and rolled her hips, trying to tempt him with a body that, before the weekend, would've robbed him of his sanity.

Deidre had always used sex as a weapon. And he'd always succumbed.

Until now.

He rolled her off him and heard a knock on the door.

"Ignore it," she whispered, trying to pull him close again.

Carson climbed out of bed, glad for the diversion. Deidre wasn't taking no for an answer, but she had to. He wouldn't grow hard for her. For anyone else either, he feared. He'd been claimed, bound to two bears, and he knew it now more than ever.

Why did I leave?

He pulled on his robe before padding to the front door. As he walked, he felt the ache diminish. He rested a palm against the back of the door, suddenly knowing down to his bones his bears were behind it.

The knock came again, and he knew for sure Royce and Jared were there, come to take him home. He whipped opened the door and saw he'd been right. The two glared at him, filling up the entire doorway with their large bodies.

"Hi," he said, his voice cracking. The greeting lacked vigor. He didn't know what to say to them after he'd run away.

“Who is it?” Deidre asked, coming from the bedroom clad only in a little nightie.

Jared growled, and Royce pushed through the door and pinned Carson to the wall. He scented Carson, and rage filled his stare.

“You slept with her?” Royce asked, incredulous.

Jared strode through the front door and slammed it behind him, glaring at Deidre.

“Who are these guys?” Deidre asked, frowning. “Should I call the cops, Carson?”

She lifted the phone, staring between Jared and Royce.

He lifted a hand. “No, don’t call the cops. Everything’s fine.”

“Who are they?” Deidre demanded.

“His husbands,” Jared snapped at her.

“Husbands?” Deidre asked, her gaze flying to Carson’s.

“You didn’t answer my question,” Royce said, pinning Carson with his stare. “You slept with someone else?”

“I didn’t sleep with her. Well, I did sleep with her, but we didn’t have sex.”

“Carson!” Deidre yelled. “What the hell is going on here? Husbands?”

Royce leaned in and scented him again. “Then why do I smell pussy on you?”

“I woke up, and she was on me. I didn’t do anything.”

“Carson, I don’t know what’s going on here, but I’m calling the cops and getting these thugs out of our apartment,” Deidre snapped.

Jared stalked over and ripped the phone from her hand. “Not a good idea.”

Carson knew he needed to defuse the situation, and let his bears know he was theirs. “I know who I belong to.”

Royce’s expression softened a bit as he stared down. Jared turned and caught Carson’s gaze for a moment before he eyed Royce.

Carson ran his hands up Royce’s chest and up to the man’s face. Capturing it, he rose up on his feet to kiss the shifter’s firm lips. Slowly Royce kissed Carson back, taking over the embrace as he wrapped his arms around Carson’s body.

“You’re gay?” Deidre shrieked. “Wait a minute. No. You’re not gay. We lived together for two years, and you’re definitely not gay.”

“It’s not a matter of gender. He belongs to us. We belong to him,” Jared answered her. “You aren’t in the equation.”

Deidre glared at Jared and turned to stare at Carson again. “Carson, what the hell is going on?”

He wanted to be alone with his bears. She was ruining their moment.

“I’m sorry, Deidre. But I met someone. Two someones. This is who I belong with. I know that now.”

Deidre stood there silent, shock covering her face as she stared back at them.

Carson spun to face his mates. “I never should’ve left the mountain.”

“Damned straight you shouldn’t have. Let’s pack your things,” Royce commanded.

Carson smiled, eager to obey.

“You’re just going to leave with these two guys?”

“Well, as you heard—they’re my husbands.”

Without giving her time to argue, Carson headed for the bedroom and pulled on the first items of clothing he found in his drawers.

After dressing and slipping his feet into his trainers, he hauled his luggage from the closet.

He filled it with everything he could think of he’d need for the next couple of weeks.

There was time to come back and shutter the place and give up the apartment later he guessed.

He was in a rush to go home. The extras weren’t important.

“Where the fuck are you going?” Deidre asked, appearing more and more frazzled as she watched him rush around the bedroom. She didn’t understand what was happening. Hell, Carson barely understood it, but he knew this was what he needed to do.

“I’m going to go live on Bear Mountain.”

“With your two lumberjack husbands? Come on, Carson, this isn’t you.”

“Oh, it is me. I learned that over the weekend. I didn’t want it to be true, but coming home, I knew this wasn’t where I belonged. When you touched me, I wanted it to be their hands, not yours.”

Deidre’s mouth opened wide in shock. “You’re not gay, Carson. Not even close. I’ve never seen you look twice at a hot guy. And I’ve tried butt play with you and you refused.”

“I refused... you.”

“Those guys are huge. Trust me, it’s gonna hurt when they fuck you.”

Carson stopped dead in his tracks and turned to face Deidre.

He needed to stop her prattling for good.

“You’re right. I’m not gay. I’ve never been attracted to a man or even considered sleeping with one.

But for those two guys out there, it’s all I can think about.

Jared was right. It’s not about gender. I simply want them . Only them.”

“You go away for two days and walk out on your entire life to go live up on Bear Mountain with two men? I don’t buy it, Carson.”

“I don’t care if you buy it or not. I’m going. And you’re right, it does hurt when two big men fuck your ass. It hurts sooo good.”

Deidre was silent, her eyes wide as she stared at him in shock.

He went back to packing his bag, no time for her questioning his decision. His mind was set. He wouldn't live with the ache of loneliness, the ache those two men seemed to ease.

"I need a place to stay, maybe I could sublet?" Deidre asked after a few minutes of silence.

"Sublet?" Carson asked, pausing and staring at her, feeling a little stunned. "Was this what you trying to get back into my bed was about?"

Deidre shrugged. "Rent is expensive here. I couldn't find anyone who'd let me crash on a couch until I found a roommate. It was you or the street."

"You could've simply asked to share the apartment for a while instead of trying to seduce me.

But then, you always did use your body to get your way.

Unfortunately for you, this time it isn't going to work.

" Carson shook his head, surprised to see this side of her.

"You can stay for thirty days, but after that, you need to find some other schmuck to leech off."

He snapped his suitcase closed after a quick trip into the bathroom for more toiletries. Jared stood at the door and took it from him, after glaring at Deidre one last time. "Ready?" he asked, staring down at Carson.

"In one minute. I need my laptop, PC, and files."

Carson headed down the hallway and into his office.

Quickly dismantling his computer, he put the pieces in an empty crate he pulled from under his desk.

He tossed whatever was important into his laptop bag and tossed it over his shoulder and lifted the crate in his arms. Heading back into the living room, he took one last look around before turning to his bears.

“Carson!” Deidre tried to get his attention one last time.

He ignored her. Staring up at Royce, he smiled. “Take me home.”

Royce grinned widely before lowering to kiss Carson’s lips.

“My pleasure.”

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Royce pulled Carson's car into the parking lot at the base of the mountain.

He glanced over at his sleeping human. Carson had slept the entire way back and as exhausted as he looked, Royce didn't want to wake him.

Their human appeared so peaceful. He cut the engine and heard the gravel sound as Jared pulled their truck into a nearby space.

In an attempt to slowly wake their mate, he brushed a gentle hand through their human's hair. Lowering his head, he captured Carson's lips in a tender kiss.

Carson stirred under him and quickly kissed him back. The embrace heated, the human's tongue slipping into his mouth.

Royce drew back. "Keep that up and I'll take you right here in this car."

"A little public exhibition never hurt anyone," Carson said with a grin.

"Two days ago you were telling me you weren't gay and suddenly you don't mind fucking us in public?"

"It was a joke," Carson said, sliding up straighter in his seat.

The deepening lust darkening their human's eyes made Royce wonder if the man didn't like the idea of being watched. He sure seemed to like it when Royce had watched Jared spank him. "I think you've got a little inner exhibitionist in there."

Carson's face reddened. "So I like to be watched. Sue me."

Royce grinned wider. "I'll have to file that one away for later."

Carson turned his face, hiding a smile.

Royce climbed from the car and grabbed Carson's luggage. He looked over the top of the car and watched Carson as the human pulled his messenger bag out and pulled it across his body. He was still stunned the man had come so easily, without argument.

Jared walked over and stood beside Royce. "So go ahead. Tell me what you want to tell me."

Royce frowned. "What?"

"I was right," Jared said with a grin.

"We were both right."

Jared frowned. "How do you figure that?"

"If I hadn't let Carson go, our human wouldn't have come to the conclusion he did. He wouldn't have felt that ache I know he did. I surely felt it. And if you hadn't pushed to go get him, he might not have had the nerve to come back on his own."

"Or that woman would've gotten her claws into him and finished what she'd started," Jared added. "I guess I'll take a draw."

"You guess?"

"Better than nothing," Jared said before grabbing Carson's computer and rounding

the car. He put an arm around Carson and stared back at Royce. “Why don’t you check in with Paul and I’ll take our mate up to the cabin and wait for you.”

Royce felt his eyes glow for a moment before he forced the beast in him back. He knew what Jared had in mind. His mate had been away from them, found with some woman’s scent on him. They needed to reclaim what was theirs and make their scent the only one on Carson’s flesh.

He nodded. “I’ll be up shortly. You won’t wait long.”

Royce wondered if it was a fool’s errand to even bother checking on the cabins. He didn’t care about the humans in them. He only cared about one human at the moment.

Carson walked through the cabin’s door and turned to Jared. “This isn’t the Larchmont Cabin, is it?”

Jared shut the door and shook his head. He rested the crate on the kitchen’s island and turned toward Carson. “Not even close.”

“Is this your cabin?”

Jared smiled, stalking closer. “Two for two.” He grinned wider. “Now it’s all ours. The three of us—together.”

Carson grinned, pulling his laptop bag from around his body and lowering it to the couch. “I knew this was too good to be true.”

Jared paused, frowning. “How so?”

“I mean, when I first got here. I wasn’t sure how I’d lucked out to be in this cabin for that small of a charge. I was waiting for someone to pop out and say there’d been

some mistake.”

Jared tugged Carson close. “No mistake. This is where you belonged then and this is where you belong now.”

Jared lowered his head and pressed a tentative kiss to Carson’s lips. After a second, he pulled away, his nose wrinkled. “All I can smell is her .”

Grabbing Carson’s wrist, Jared pulled him through the cabin to the master bathroom. When they stopped, Jared let go and lathered up a washcloth in the sink. “Take off your pants.”

“Jeez, no foreplay?”

Jared met Carson’s twinkling gaze and shook his head. “Get naked before I rip your clothes off.”

Carson kicked off his shoes and then dropped the sweatpants he’d tossed on haphazardly. He wore no underwear. It would’ve taken too long.

“Might as well take off the shirt, too,” Jared said with a wicked grin.

Carson drew it over his head and tossed it on top of his pants. “There. You got me naked in record time.”

“Always have to have goals,” Jared said with a smile. He closed in and gripped Carson’s cock through the washcloth and stroked the length several times.

Carson had already been on edge, his cock at half-mast since they’d come to get him. With a few strokes, Jared was successful where Deidre had failed. He was rock hard and ready for his mates in an instant.

Jared lowered his head and captured Carson's lips. When he lifted from the too-brief kiss, Jared shared a lopsided grin.

“You know you'll be punished for running from us, right?”

A tremor moved down Carson's spine at the thought. “Punished?”

Jared spun Carson to face the sink and mirror. “That is, if your ass is in shape for another spanking.”

Carson gripped the edge of the vanity as Jared ran a hand over his ass. The thought of a spanking made Carson's cock even harder. The head dripped pre-cum into the sink. He hoped he was healed enough to take more damage from that steely palm.

“Looks pretty good,” Jared said, his voice deep.

He knelt behind Carson and began to run the washcloth over Carson's ass and then dipped it along Carson's ass and crack.

After he tossed the washcloth on the counter, his lips moved over both cheeks, dropping kisses in random spots, nibbling and biting here and there as well.

Carson's back arched as the man licked him all over.

When he pushed Carson's cheeks apart and spread his tongue along Carson's back hole, a moan fell from his lips.

Another crept from Carson's throat as Jared pressed into the fissure and tongue fucked him.

He held on tight, his grip on the counter white-knuckled as his bear licked him most

intimately.

A hand moved on his cock, pumping along the length as that masterful tongue continued to massage his anus.

“Getting ahead of me once again.”

Carson looked over his shoulder to see Royce standing in the doorway.

“I had to make sure his ass was ready for his punishment,” Jared said, rising to his feet.

Royce closed the gap and came to stop beside Jared. “He does need a good spanking, I’d say.”

“You read my mind,” Jared said with a smile.

Carson turned to face both men. “Quit running your mouths and get on with it.”

Royce grabbed the back of Carson’s head and tugged him close for a quick, heated kiss. “You asked for it.”

Royce slid his fingers into Carson’s short locks and dragged him from the bathroom. It didn’t hurt, not really. The forceful show only fed the need Carson had for rough play. A groan bubbled up his throat as they directed him to the playroom.

Once inside, Royce dragged him over to the spanking bench and forced him down.

His arms were pulled up and his wrists cuffed.

Jared spread his legs and cuffed his ankles to the bottom.

When he was in place, he looked around at the two men, his heart thundering in his chest. He craved the spanking they were about to deliver.

“I think we need to prep that asshole of his before we get to spanking,” Royce announced. He came over seconds later—lube in one hand and a large butt plug in the other.

Jared moved to the wall and searched the spanking implements as Royce coated his ass with lube.

He felt the thick impalement begin to spread him wide as Jared decided on a leather strap.

Carson felt his lids closing of their own volition and a moan rising from his chest. The plug wasn't as large as his bears, but it would help him take them better when the time came.

He rocked his hips as much as he could on the bench, loving the little bit of control he had over the plug. It pulled ever so slightly out of him and back in when he clenched his ass tight.

Jared walked over, testing the leather strap against his palm. The echoing sound it made gave Carson goose bumps. They skittered all over his body in anticipation of the first lick across his flesh.

“You ready for your punishment?” Jared asked, a little growl in his voice.

“Yesss,” Carson hissed, more than ready.

The leather came down on him and he screamed with both torment and pleasure. Each strike Jared laid made him ride the line between both emotions, though the

pleasure was greater. As his bear paused between the strikes, the pain blossomed into a throbbing heat, burning Carson from the inside out.

Sweat coated his body by the third strike. By the fifth, he trembled all over. Throughout, his ass was red and raw, aching for the satisfaction to come.

“My turn,” Royce announced.

Carson looked over his shoulder at the two bears exchanging the strap. Royce twisted to face Carson’s backside and met his gaze. “My turn to heat up this red bottom.”

Carson moaned before Royce’s strap ever hit him. When it did, he saw stars behind his eyes, the pain delicious. Where Jared held back, Royce toed over the line, hitting him just a little harder. It was just what Carson needed. Another cry came, as the next strike was even stronger than the last.

Royce paused and ran a comforting hand over the tormented skin. “I’m not sure you have more left in you,” he murmured.

“Yes! Please. Another,” Carson cried.

Royce caught his stare as he looked over his shoulder at the bear. “One more.”

Carson’s eyes closed, and he groaned. One more wasn’t enough. Nowhere near enough.

Royce took his time, running his hand over Carson’s cheeks. Finally he rose and walked a circle around Carson bound to the bench, slapping his palm with the strap.

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“Please,” Carson begged. “Give me more.”

“If you insist,” Royce answered and gave him the final blow.

Carson’s body grew taut, and an orgasm blasted through him. His hips jerked uncontrollably as the release took hold. A scream came from his lips as his seed shot onto the leather below him. Someone quickly gripped his shaft, milking him and drawing the rest of his cum from him.

He leaned his forehead on the leather pad he was lying across, breathing hard. Not one of them had really touched him to make him come. The only thing that had truly caressed him was the touch of the strap on his ass.

Before his heart came back down to normal, he felt his wrists and ankles being freed. He looked up to see Royce working at his hands and knew Jared was behind him. Once they were completely removed, he rose on shaking legs.

Jared wrapped an arm around his waist. “Let’s go to bed.”

Propelled back to the bedroom they’d shared, he was coaxed onto the bed.

He was thankful to get off his shaking legs, and he rested in the middle of the huge mattress, turning to watch as his two bears disrobed.

Piece by piece they exposed their massive, muscular frames, and their hard cocks, ready to drive into his body.

Already he felt his cock coming back to life. He was insatiable when they were around.

They climbed onto the bed and spread out on either side of him.

“It’s time to fully claim you,” Royce announced, his voice strained.

He looked up into Royce’s eyes, curious. “I haven’t been already?”

“We both have to be inside you for you to truly be ours,” Jared answered.

“Royce was in my mouth, and you were in my ass. You were both inside me.”

Royce reached between Carson’s thighs and tugged on the plug. “Here. We both have to be inside you here.”

Carson’s eyes widened. Royce was already nearly too big. And Jared wasn’t small. How could possibly he take them both? “I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

“It’ll be just fine,” Jared said as he pulled the plug out of Carson’s ass. “Remember... you were born for this.”

Carson wasn’t so sure. He didn’t want to be torn apart. “Born for this, hmm? Does that mean I have an anal superpower?”

“Something like that,” Jared whispered, a hint of a smile on his lips.

“Really?” Carson asked.

Jared nodded.

Royce cupped his cheek. “Have we hurt you yet? Any more than you could take?”

Carson stared up into his mate’s eyes. Of course they hadn’t. They’d gone to extremes to protect him, even from himself. He took a deep breath. “If I say stop, we stop.”

Both bears nodded in agreement.

Carson relaxed, but only by fractions.

Royce rolled onto his back and pulled Carson into his lap. Straddling Royce, Carson could feel the thick brand of his bear’s cock pressing against his ass. Their eyes met. The heat in Royce’s gaze lit the irises up, the glow intense.

There was something else there, too. Reverence. He sensed their need to join with him wasn’t simply physical. It was sacred. Not only was he giving himself to them... they were giving themselves to him.

The bond they shared would be made physical.

Carson struggled for air, the weight of what was about to happen hitting him full in the chest. “This... claiming...”

“Is forever,” Jared murmured.

Carson held Jared’s gaze.

“But... we barely know one another,” Carson said, stating the obvious even though he knew it didn’t matter. He was theirs. They were his. What point would it be to fight that?

“Do you want to wait?” Royce asked, fear shining in his eyes.

Carson knew they probably should. He was being stupid running in head-first, but nothing in his life had felt as right as they did. “No. I don’t want to wait.”

The sense of relief that filled the room was as potent as the scent of need. Royce grabbed the base of his cock and slowly pressed the tip into Carson’s ass. Carson moaned and slowly sank down the length, amazed at how easy it was for him to take Royce’s monster cock.

He was born for it, though... as they’d said.

His own cock was already hard again, thick and ready for gratification. Gratification he knew they were the only ones to give.

Royce ran his thick thumb over Carson’s lower lip as he surged up into Carson’s ass. Carson sucked the thumb into his mouth as he stared down at his lover. He released it with a pop and a grin. “You two make me feel alive. Maybe for the first time in my life.”

“Hold that thought,” Jared said as he climbed behind Carson. He pressed his cock against Carson’s hole while Royce paused to allow the double entry.

Carson stiffened, awaiting the pain. Jared’s cockhead gradually stretched him wider, a slow burn threatening to overwhelm him. While it hurt, it wasn’t more than he could handle. As Jared surged fully inside, he felt nothing but utter pleasure.

The fullness was more than he’d anticipated.

Their cocks were hot brands inside him, molding his body to theirs.

He'd never felt pleasure anything like it.

Having both his bears impaling him was more than he could have imagined.

Indulgence tore through his body and at the first hesitant stroke of their cocks, he came again.

The orgasm slammed through him, forcing a cry from his lips, the sound echoing around them.

Royce grabbed Carson's cock and stroked up the tip, urging the last bit of his seed from his body. He collapsed onto Royce's chest, breathing with difficulty. Royce caressed his head with a gentle hand.

"You okay?"

"More than okay," he said, his voice low and breathy.

Royce chuckled, and the smile he gave when Carson looked up shattered him. He wanted to see that satisfied smile for the rest of his days.

When his two bears moved inside him, it was as if they'd done it time and time again, a slow dance they'd perfected without him.

He didn't want to imagine the males who'd come before him, the ones who'd helped his shifters learn how to do it just right.

He didn't care. They were his now, and no one else's.

They quickened the pace, hurtling toward their own releases, using Carson's body as the vessel of their lusts. He took it all, and craved even more.

Faster they moved, driving into Carson, their bodies writhing together.

They fit perfectly, bound together in lust. First Royce stiffened below Carson, his face a contorted mask of pure desire.

He roared, shaking the walls, as he came.

Carson could feel the heated seed filling him and that seemed to push Jared higher as well.

Jared's body grew taut as he increased the pace. With a deep growl, he erupted inside, but Royce quickly pulled Carson off the other bear's cock before he was done.

"You were supposed to pull out," Royce snapped at Jared.

"I'm sorry. I lost myself in him."

Carson looked between the two. "Why does it matter if he came in me? He's come in me before."

Royce looked down into Carson's face. "There's a lot you don't know about bear shifters. One of us can come in your ass at a time. But only one."

Carson frowned. "Will I turn into a gremlin if you both come in me? No showering after midnight? What?"

"No, but you could get pregnant," Royce answered.

Carson laughed out loud. "Pregnant? Yeah right. I don't have that kind of plumbing."

"Bear shifters don't need human female plumbing, as you call it." Royce shifted

under Carson. “Hopefully I got you off him in time.”

Carson looked between the two. “You’re kidding, right? This is some kind of joke. Welcome to Bear Mountain; be careful we don’t impregnate you. Funny stuff.”

Royce looked at him squarely. “No joke. There’s room in there to grow a shifter,” he said, pointing at Carson’s abdomen. “We can have a child with either sex, as long as both bears of the triad inseminate you at the same time.”

Carson looked to Jared, who’d been quiet through the conversation. “It’s a joke, right?”

Jared shook his head. “I’m sorry, but it’s not. I should’ve pulled out. I got carried away. You felt too good.”

As he stared at how serious both men were Carson realized it wasn’t a joke.

He looked down to his abdomen, panic filling him.

He’d never really had serious thoughts of family and children before.

He’d always assumed he’d become a father at some point, but not that a child would come from his own body.

An image of him fat and round with their baby came to him and he had to chuckle.

They had to be messing with him... but even if they weren’t, did it really matter where a baby grew?

One thought did terrify him. “So where’s it come out?”

Royce chuckled. “Basically the equivalent of a C-section.”

“I’ll be cut into?”

“And healed very quickly,” Jared answered.

“And you didn’t think to tell me this beforehand? What other secrets are out there waiting for me to find them?”

“They aren’t secrets in our world,” Royce said. “We don’t really keep a checklist to what we need to share.”

Here was yet one more thing he’d have to come to accept about being a bear’s mate. How many more would come?

Something inside him told him it wouldn’t be so bad to be the one to carry their shifter babies. Not that they were ready yet, at least. He needed time to get to know the two men he was bound to. Why shouldn’t they have a family if they chose to one day?

“What comes, comes, I guess,” he said, staring at Jared. “If I’m in, I’m in, right?”

Jared leaned down and kissed Carson’s lips. “One day. We’ll have a family one day, when we’re ready. Once we’ve had our time together and we’re all on the same page.”

“Although I wouldn’t be sad to see you swollen with our offspring sooner than later,” Royce added, laying a hand on Carson’s stomach.

Carson stared down at that hand, wondering if he’d get his wish. Hopefully he had time to come to terms with that decision and not have it dropped in his lap like their

bond. "I suppose we'll find out soon enough."

Royce glared at Jared. "And next time, you pull out if it's your turn."

Jared put his hands up. "Promise."

The two bears moved Carson into their arms and wrapped their bodies around him. He let thoughts of children go from his mind. There was no reason to worry about it now. He'd freak out later if and when he learned the news.

And his bears would be there to make things right, he knew it.

Carson closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep, surrounded by his mates, safe and warm in their arms.

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Six months later...

Carson surveyed the screen in his new office, set up in the cabin by Royce.

He was right in the thick of things, his graphic design business back up and running months before.

Fortunately for him, he could work from anywhere since the majority of his business was done online.

He'd sometimes met clients in the city before the move, but now that was impossible.

Fortunately, they'd all gotten pretty handy with Zoom over the years.

He ran a hand over his expanding middle.

Humans would freak out if they saw him rounded with child.

Hell, he still freaked out a little when he saw his own reflection.

Carson still wasn't completely confident about the baby to come, or his role in all this, but life happened.

He was where he belonged, with the bears that were his, and they'd have their family sooner rather than later.

"Knock, knock. Feeding time for the little monster in there," Jared announced,

coming through the door with a plate and glass in hand. He settled both on the desk beside Carson and leaned on the edge, waiting for Carson to take a bite.

“I really wish you’d stop calling the baby ‘the monster’.”

Jared grinned widely. “You’ve got a little shifter in there. There’s plenty of humans who’d call that a monster.”

“I’m not one of those humans,” Carson snapped.

Jared leaned in. “Just eat and feed that child of ours.”

Carson grabbed the sandwich, knowing full well Red had likely made it in the restaurant versus Jared or Royce cooking. It was nearly pointless for them to have the chef’s kitchen in the cabin as little as it was used. “You’re going to get me fat.”

“We’ll work it off you after the baby comes,” Jared replied with a wink.

Royce strode through the door, plate and cup in hand. “I told you I was bringing him lunch today,” Royce snapped at Jared.

“No, tomorrow’s your day.”

Carson shook his head as he took another bite of his sandwich.

Each of them did their best to slightly outdo the other.

At times it was comical. At others, it was a pain in his ass.

Either way, he had come to enjoy how the two males took care of him, even if he struggled to admit it.

His entire life, he'd been told to man up.

To be a man. To not show emotion. Overcoming that was hard sometimes.

Especially when he felt so many emotions for the two of them.

Especially when he'd fallen in love with his two bears.

Royce and Jared had no problem showing Carson how they felt.

Every action they made, every look, every touch, every smile, and every caring, considerate thing they did showed how much they loved him.

Carson felt as if he was lacking in that department.

He struggled with accepting that attention and showing just how much their love meant to him.

Royce lowered the plate of mac and cheese on the desk, and Carson's mouth watered.

He ditched the sandwich and start munching on Royce's plate.

"I'm going to be six hundred pounds by the end of this pregnancy.

" He scooped more of the mac and cheese into his mouth.

"You've really got to stop this before I explode. "

"Mac and cheese is one of his favorites," Royce said, smiling widely at Jared, clearly assuming he'd won.

“Yeah, but a turkey on whole wheat is healthier for him and won’t make him fat,” Jared said near Carson’s ear.

Carson groaned and put the plate down and picked up his sandwich. “Get out of here, the both of you, and let me get back to work. I’ve got to finish up this preliminary design by tomorrow if I want to make the deadline.”

Royce rounded the desk and lowered a kiss to Carson’s lips, one hand going out to rub Carson’s expanded stomach. “I only check in on you because I love you.”

Carson grinned up at his mate. “I know.” He reminded himself to not hold back. “I love you, too.”

Royce stood a little straighter, a look of surprise on his face.

A slow smile spread across his face before he leaned down and pressed his lips to Carson’s again.

This time, the kiss held more heat. More hunger.

Carson felt his body respond to that heat, his cock thickening. Would he never have enough?

When Royce finally drew away, Carson almost felt dazed.

“Me, three,” Jared said and added his kiss and tummy rub. Carson held the man’s head close and kissed him back hungrily.

“Keep that up and I’m not going anywhere,” Jared said with a wolfish smile.

Jared got a hold on his lust and shook his head. “Later. After I get this work done.”

“I’ll hold you to it,” Jared said with a grin before they both headed out of the door and left him alone.

Two minutes later, he glanced at the door, already missing his bears. He rubbed his stomach. “Your two other fathers are going to be the death of me.” He snatched the mac and cheese and started wolfing it down, ravenous. “Death by mac and cheese. What a way to go.”

The End

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FROM ECHO AND THE HOMICIDAL SEA PANDA

The night Echo Fisher first encountered the orca hadn't felt especially remarkable—besides witnessing the largest, brightest full moon he'd ever seen over the water.

After stopping his boat at the coordinates he'd found in his grandfather's journal, Echo stood on the bow, the gentle lapping of waves a familiar comfort.

A chill, early spring breeze swept over the surface, tossing his shoulder length hair around his face.

Gathering courage, he peeled the tie wrapped around his wrist off and secured the loose waves into a single ponytail at the nape of his neck. That moon was a sign. A sign that it was do or die. It would provide a little more illumination for his dark deed.

He dragged his gaze away from the moon, reminding himself he was there to work, not gawk.

With shaking hands, he tossed his phone into a lockbox on the back of the boat and then scanned the horizon one last time for signs of company.

At that late hour, he didn't expect any, but he'd crossed into enemy territory just before he'd reached that spot.

If he was caught... well, he didn't want to think about being caught.

That wasn't an option.

Cool, salty air washed over his body as he removed his clothing.

His stomach churned, fear making it harder to concentrate.

Once he was bare, he took one last glimpse at that glorious moon and the calm sea around him, then quickly dove over the side.

He barely made a splash as he broke the surface.

The minute he was in the water, pleasure flowed through him.

He shifted into his dolphin form, the transformation only taking seconds.

It had been too long since he'd been out that deep for a swim, but there was no time to truly indulge himself. He quickly sped toward the ocean floor.

The longest Echo had ever held his breath underwater was twenty minutes, so there was little time to spare.

If he didn't find the entrance to the underwater cave system his grandfather had written about, he'd have to resurface and dive again.

Over and over. Until he either found it or was too exhausted to continue trying.

His first attempt was a bust. With lungs burning, he raced for the surface.

The second he broke through, he dragged in a desperate breath through his blowhole.

Pausing at the surface a minute to rest his lungs, he contemplated checking the maps

again, but he knew he'd spent enough hours triangulating the position and was sure he had it right.

He dove again. Once at depth, he used his echolocation to search the sea bottom, hunting for clues.

He found no signs of an entrance. Nothing hidden under the sediment.

Fear kept him from using too many clicks. He could be overheard and attract notice. But how the hell was he going to find anything with limited echolocation?

After another resurfacing, the doubts emerged.

Perhaps he lacked the skill to find it on his own.

Maybe it wasn't even out there in the first place.

Echo shifted back into human form and hung onto the boat's metal ladder, one arm wrapped around the bottom tread to allow him rest. Staring up at the moon, he weighed his options.

He had an X on the map, had confirmed the location, and had spent weeks watching the waters.

Out there or not— skilled enough or not —he'd put in too much time and attention to give up an hour into the search.

No matter the danger he was in being in orca waters.

He scanned the surface, sure he'd see a big, black dorsal poking out of the water—but there was nothing.

After a deep breath and renewed conviction, he dove into the water again and shifted.

And realized he was swimming right between two great whites.

Panic slammed into him. He spun, swimming with every ounce of strength he had.

Racing for the surface, he eyed the shadowy outline of his boat.

With a last-minute burst, he leapt for the boat, hoping to hurdle out of the water—and out of danger—but a stab of searing pain in his fluke prevented his jump.

The agony caused his blowhole to expand for a second, releasing precious air from his lungs.

Fat bubbles rose above him. He had precious little time to get to the surface for another breath or he'd never breathe again.

He watched in horror as the surface grew farther away. One of the sharks had him by a small corner of his fluke and dragged him deeper and deeper.

The other shark could've easily opened its massive, gaping maul and cut him in half with razor-sharp teeth. Why it didn't, Echo would later question. In the throes of terror, his mind was laser-focused on survival, not questioning why he wasn't being eaten yet.

His heart slammed against his ribcage, lungs burning, as the great white swam at speed. Echo used every ounce of strength to kick his tail, fighting for his freedom. Air thinned, and his vision blurred.

He had minutes to live.

Echo gave one last massive kick and tore his fluke from the shark's mouth. Blinding pain nearly made his blowhole spasm again, but if he lost any more air, he was a goner for sure. Blood filled the water around him, adding more temptation for the sharks.

Wounded, he propelled himself toward that grand, glorious moon, praying he could outrun two great whites with a damaged fluke all while knowing his chances were nil.

He was as good as dead.

The sharks were bigger, faster, and stronger. Focusing ahead, he could see the outline of his boat and willed himself every ounce of strength to make it. He had the tiniest chance but that transformed into no chance the second a shadow sped between him and his boat.

An orca.

Barreling down on him.

Echo sensed it would be the last thing he ever saw.

Either the sharks would get him... or the killer whale would.

I'm done for...

The orca's speed was terrifying. Echo whipped out of the way at the last second, changing trajectory to avoid a head-on collision. The orca never changed course. He bypassed Echo...

And attacked one of the great whites.

Echo blinked a few times, shocked, but his straining lungs didn't allow him to linger long. He took his golden opportunity and raced toward that massive moon looking down on him. After he reached the surface, his blowhole opened, and he gasped for air.

After a few breaths, he eyed his boat, knowing he should get the hell out of there—yet, idiot that he was, he was too curious to see what was going on below.

One orca was no match for two great whites.

He spun, keeping his blowhole above the surface, and sent out a few clicks of his echolocation to find them in the dark waters.

Both sharks were swimming in giant circles—seemingly to get the massive orca off their tails.

They weren't fighting? But why?

Great whites were predators, and there were two of them. Even at a size disadvantage, they'd easily gang up on the orca and tear it to shreds if they'd wanted to.

What came next would forever be imprinted in Echo's brain.

The orca caught up to one of them and plowed into it, flipping it onto its back—which caused the creature to go into a state of tonic immobility, unable to move. Echo had read about it but had never seen it firsthand. Though, as a general rule, he stayed as far away from great whites as possible.

Echo's blood turned cold as he watched an apex predator go to work.

While the great white lay frozen, the orca eviscerated the shark with almost surgical precision.

He tore out the liver and swallowed it in one gulp.

He'd heard stories of orcas hunting great whites for their livers, but he'd been sure they were pure fantasy.

Great whites were too powerful as predators—but he was witnessing it himself.

And he couldn't seem to look away.

Suddenly realizing the other shark had vanished, Echo sent more clicks, ensuring it hadn't circled back and come up behind him. The only thing he found was the carcass of the dismembered great white swaying lifeless in the water, blood pouring from its underside.

And the orca swimming his way.

Echo froze, an odd sensation spreading through his body. A part of him didn't want to move. He wanted to meet his hero and offer thanks. The orca swam with such grace for a massive creature. It was terrifyingly beautiful to see so close up.

So close up...

Did he have a death wish?

He swam closer to the ladder but paused to give one look back. The orca wasn't traveling at speed. Not like it had before. It didn't appear to be on the attack—or perhaps Echo appeared easy pickings compared to slaughtering a great white.

Easy work. Light effort.

Get in the boat and leave before he catches up!

Logically, Echo knew he needed to get the fuck out of there. How many of their kind had orcas slaughtered over the years? Countless numbers, both wild and shifter. Yet something prevented him from moving.

A thrumming in his veins. An ache in his belly.

A whisper in the back of his mind.

Surrender.

When the panic grew loud enough to break the trance-like hold the orca had on him, he shifted and climbed up and out in the nick of time. The orca surfaced and quickly went back under, the motion causing the boat to list heavily to one side. Echo lowered his core and rode the wave.

Seconds later, the orca leapt out of the water, high enough that it arced over his small boat and back into the water on the other side—Free Willy style.

The jump had to have been at least twenty feet in the air if not more.

Water drenched Echo and the inside of the boat—water that had poured off the orca's massive body.

A massive body that could easily capsize his tiny boat.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:25 am

Echo leapt to the controls and started the engine.

As soon as it roared to life, he shoved the throttle forward, pushing until he got near top speed, all while knowing an adult orca could easily keep pace with his old, tired, little sixteen-footer.

He trembled, the image of that shark being eviscerated replaying in his mind over and over.

He wouldn't be the orca's next victim if he had any say about the matter.

If he had to guess, the orca had been at least thirty feet long, one of the biggest Echo had ever seen—not that he'd seen many up close. Dolphinkind steered clear of their cousins, the orca, for good reason.

They didn't want to end up like that shark.

Echo looked over his shoulder and didn't see any signs of being followed—that was, until a massive black dorsal fin emerged from the surface.

He pushed the boat faster, not sure his ancient engine could handle it for long.

It had to, though. Echo needed to get back to dolphin waters where he'd be safe, though if he were honest with himself, safe was an illusion.

If the orca wanted to follow him, it would.

He'd have to hope it would follow the treaty— when he hadn't —and turn back instead.

He got his boat up to twenty miles an hour, but it wasn't enough. Orcas swam upwards of thirty-five and could hold that pace for hours. As if proving that very fact, the beast leapt over his boat again, toying with him.

As soon as Echo crossed the boundary, he whipped a head over his shoulder, begging for his ordeal to be over.

The orca followed him across it.

Fuck.

Dry land was his only hope. Echo's heart nearly beat out of his chest. The second he rounded the outcropping of rock marking the entrance into the bay, he saw the lights of Dolphin Bay in the distance. He choked back a sob. Smoke erupted from his engine, but he couldn't slow down.

He came into the harbor at too high a speed and nearly sideswiped another boat docked in the outer row of slips.

Coming into his, he hit the wooden pier and heard the crunch of wood and fiberglass.

He vaulted from the boat without tethering it and ran for shore—his long hair wrapped around his neck and dripping icy water down his naked back.

The second his feet were on solid ground, he spun. The massive dorsal fin sat unmoving in the water near his boat. He gasped for air, his heart pumping so fast he was sure it might explode.

Leave...

Please...

A few more seconds passed before the orca turned and swam away.

Echo watched until he saw it leave the harbor and then fell to his knees when his legs went out from under him.

He collapsed onto the gravel, the rocks cutting into his bare bottom and the backs of his legs.

The pain barely registered. Nor had the pain from the wound on his foot.

His adrenalin was pumping so thick and heavy he probably wouldn't have felt a gunshot blast to the chest.

He leaned over, pitching the contents of his stomach across the dead grass nearby.

Gasping for air when he was done, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

He crawled away from the rocks and the vomit and dropped onto the grass there, allowing himself to breathe.

The moon stared down at him, but from much higher in the sky, it seemed.

The drama was over, and it no longer cared about him and his trespasses.

Echo wasn't sure how long he lay there, naked and shaking, attempting to control himself and his emotions.

It took longer than it should have. He'd known coming face-to-face with an orca had been a possibility when he'd crossed their barrier.

Why had it stunned him so much for it to actually happen?

Maybe because it killed a great white shark in less than thirty seconds, the voice inside his head replied.

He scanned the bloody wound on his foot, glad to see it was already slowly stitching itself up. Thank heavens for rapid shifter healing, but he would need to clean it before the gash fully closed or he risked a nasty scar remaining. By morning, the wound would likely be gone.

The memory of the shark attack would not.

Echo limped back to his boat and boarded. He collected his wet clothing. After wringing them out, he dressed, still unsure if he was safe. He surveyed the surface while he drew the wet things over him. There were no signs of company.

Once he'd tied up the boat, he grabbed his maps and his grandfather's journal along with his phone and backpack.

Thankfully none of those had gotten soaking wet, as they'd been in the lockbox.

He gave one last look over his shoulder before he stepped onto the dock.

It wobbled a bit under his feet, and he knew there was likely a massive repair bill coming—for both the slip and his boat.

Even with that massive full moon, it wasn't bright enough to get a good look at the damage.

Truth be told, he was too exhausted to care in that moment.

He wanted a shower and his bed—and hopefully sleep, which he wasn't sure he'd

get. He'd worry about repairs and broken treaties once he woke up.

Echo paused for one last glance out over the water, thankful he'd get the chance to wake up to a new day.