



Going Deep (Fitting In Book 3)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: Gray, Jack, and Mason's story continues...

Gray 's feelings for his partners run deeper than he ever thought possible. He's learned to be romantic at home, but at work, he's still a big tough cop nobody wants to cross.

He's assigned to solve the murders of several young women, but after days with no suspects and no motive, his confidence takes a hit. Every dead end, every day that goes by, adds to the urgency he feels to find the killer.

Gray desperately needs a break. He excels at taking care of his men, in bed and out, but when it comes to accepting comfort in return, he shuts down.

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Gray rolled his shoulders, trying to release some tension. He'd had a hell of a last few months on the job. After arresting a piece-of-shit drug dealer, he'd spent weeks defending himself from the fucker's accusations of police brutality—yes, Gray had manhandled him, but that was because he tried to fucking stab Gray after swearing that all he wanted to do was talk. Finally, Gray had been cleared of all wrongdoing, and yesterday, the man, Mitchell Benson, was convicted and given twenty years in prison, the strictest allowable sentence for his crimes.

While Benson's shenanigans functioned as a backdrop, Gray had tried to work himself out from under a heavy caseload. He'd spent the last several days chasing down dead ends in an investigation into a young—as in underage—sex worker's murder. So far, no one he'd talked to would even admit to knowing her, and they sure as fuck hadn't given him any information that might lead to a conviction. Every time he thought about the girl, he remembered Nancy, a young girl he'd failed to help a long time ago. Sometimes being a cop was fucking depressing.

“Gray, it's time. Let's go.” Lieutenant Thornton appeared by his desk. Gray had been so mired in frustration he hadn't even noticed the lieutenant.

He sighed and closed the file he'd been looking at. As if the week hadn't been bad enough, now he had to attend a press conference. His captain, with the sadistically gleeful approval of Thornton, had decided Gray should be the new face of Durham PD. Gray wanted to tell Captain Russell to go fuck herself, but sadly, that was out of the question.

“I've got to go to the restroom first,” Gray said as he removed his suit jacket from the back of his chair.

His lieutenant wagged a finger at him. “No escaping out the window. I’ll make sure someone’s watching.”

Gray wanted to wipe the smirk off Thornton’s face. Of course, if Gray thought running away would work, he just might try it, not that he could fit through the tiny men’s room window.

After Gray finished at the urinal, he glanced at himself in the mirror and straightened his tie. His boyfriends, Jack and Mason, had helped him pick out the suit he was wearing, the nicest one he’d ever owned. He’d grumped his way through the shopping trip, but he had to admit he looked good—strong, confident, exactly the image the captain wanted him to show.

Their chief—in cahoots with the mayor’s office—had gotten the idea that the police force should be proactive about PR. Gray had no desire to be put in the spotlight, even if they needed to give the community something positive to focus on. No matter what Captain Russell thought, Gray wasn’t sure a big gay bear was what people wanted to see in a cop. But after the captain had given him a well-prepped speech on the police force embracing all people—his gay ass included—she’d requested Gray participate in what was to become a weekly briefing with several specially chosen local reporters. Obviously, the “request” was simply an order phrased more nicely than usual.

Thornton banged on the door. “Gray, quit primping and get your ass out here.”

Hopefully he wouldn’t disappoint his superiors. No matter how much he hated being made a poster boy, he was willing to suffer if it would help with the department’s image.

He took a final breath and walked through the door. Thornton led him to a classroom that had been turned into a “briefing” room. Several cameramen were setting up, and

four perfectly coiffed reporters were waiting for him at the front of the room.

Their captain caught up to them as they were about to enter.

“Time to go in?” Thornton asked.

She nodded and looked at Gray. “Sit at the back until it’s your turn, and don’t draw attention to yourself.”

Right. At six four with a linebacker’s build, Gray drew attention to himself wherever he went. It doesn’t hurt that you are also hot as fuck. He heard Jack’s words in his head and fought the urge to grin. “Yes, ma’am.”

The chief spoke, and Gray tried to focus on his words, but the voice in Gray’s head saying don’t screw this up drowned out everything else.

A female Vice detective he recognized but didn’t really know fielded questions for several minutes. Then he was up. He walked down the aisle between the seats and moved behind the podium, hoping to God no one could tell how nervous he was.

“You must be feeling good now that the man who accused you of excessive force is behind bars,” a reporter stated.

Gray froze for a few seconds as flashes assaulted his eyes. “I...” Fuck. Say something intelligent. “I have the utmost respect for Judge Halsey, and I believe she weighed the facts and made the best possible decision.”

“But you must’ve been thrilled to see him get the maximum penalty?”

“I hoped to see justice served, and I believe it has been.”

Another reporter waved his hand wildly, and their PR representative acknowledged him.

“Surely after Benson’s accusations, you feel vindicated that he’s going to spend a long time in prison.”

“Again, my goal as a member of the police department is to bring criminals to justice. I brought him in, and the court system took it from there.” Gray fought not to show his disgust for the platitudes he was spouting.

“So you would have been okay with a decision for a lighter sentence?” a woman in a sensible gray suit asked.

“That’s not my call.”

“But surely you’re pleased with today’s verdict,” a woman with hair pulled back in a severe bun said. If Gray remembered correctly, she worked for Raleigh’s largest newspaper.

“I’m pleased any time a guilty man is taken off the streets by our justice system.”

“But considering your history with?—”

Didn’t they get that he wasn’t going to give them what they wanted? “My personal opinion isn’t what matters. The jury found him guilty, not me.”

“But I bet?—”

Captain Russell stepped in front of the podium. “I’m sorry, that’s all the questions we have time for. Detective Sadler has cases to get back to.”

Russell and Thornton walked out with Gray as the chief gave a few closing remarks. Gray had been instructed to leave immediately so the reporters couldn't hound him after the official press conference ended.

"See. I told you things would go well," Russell said.

Gray didn't like the satisfied look on her face. Not that he'd wanted to screw up, but having done well, he'd keep getting put in front of the cameras.

"All I did was give a bunch of pat answers. What was the point?"

Russell raised her brows, and Gray realized how pissed off he sounded.

"Sorry, ma'am."

She nodded. "Apology accepted." Then she turned to head back into the conference room.

Thornton eyed Gray for a moment, then his expression relaxed. "I guess that's a fair question."

"It is," Gray agreed.

"Russell wanted a statement out there and what you said was perfect. You refused to put the attention on police getting revenge on criminals who go after us."

Gray nodded. As stupid as it had sounded to him when he was up at the podium, Gray hadn't said anything that was wholly untrue—if the captain had asked that of him, for him to go against what he believed in, then he would have refused no matter what it meant.

Yes, he was glad to see Benson going to prison, but he also believed in the justice system, or at least, the system as it was meant to be. He wanted the guilty to go to jail, the innocent to go free, and the streets to be safer. Jack always said Gray was a closet romantic, that he'd have made a perfect Old West sheriff, but he just wanted to do right by people.

After the press conference, Gray did his best to follow up on a few leads, but as soon as he could get away with it, he grabbed his jacket and his messenger bag and headed for the elevator, praying no one would try to stop him.

He wished he had a solid lead on the murder case, but overall it had been a good day and it was going to be an even better night. It had been far too long since both Jack and Mason had been home for the evening. He intended to take full advantage of it.

After he started his truck, he texted them both. Heading home early. Need me to pick up dinner?

Made lasagna, Jack responded. We need to keep up our strength.

Mmm. His favorite dinner. Damn right we do.

Gray let himself imagine all the things he wanted to do to his men later. Restrain them. Spank them. Fucking torment them until none of the three of them could stand it any longer. How long had it been since they'd focused on pleasure all fucking night? Way too long. Maybe they'd fuck first and eat dinner later. He threw the truck in reverse and backed out of his spot, hoping he wouldn't hit any traffic on the way home.

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Gray unlocked the door and pushed it open, expecting Jack and Mason to be in the kitchen. He sucked in his breath at what he saw. Apparently they were as impatient as he was. Mason was naked, on the couch on all fours. Jack knelt behind him, still wearing shorts and a T-shirt, like he'd just returned from the gym. He had Mason's ass cheeks spread, and his expression said he was starving, and Mason was a gourmet meal.

"What the hell are you doing?" Gray growled in mock anger, knowing they'd both expect that reaction. They were taunting him, asking to be punished, and he was more than happy to give them what they craved.

"Getting him ready for you," Jack answered before burying his face in Mason's ass. Gray couldn't see the details, but Mason's moans made it clear exactly what Jack was up to.

"We thought this was what you needed after a hard day on the job," Mason said between gasps. "Fuck, Jack!" he shouted, shaking his head back and forth. Gray could see the tension in his arms. He knew well how amazing it felt to have Jack use his tongue to open up his ass. Mason was fighting like mad not to come. Time to make that struggle even harder.

Gray unzipped his pants. The sound must have alerted Mason to what was happening, because he looked up, eyes wide. "Open up," Gray ordered as he pulled his cock out.

Jack paused to watch. "Get a cock ring," Gray told him. "Then eat his ass until he's doing his best to beg for more even though my cock is down his throat."

Jack scrambled off the couch and raced down the hall toward the office/playroom. Gray fought the urge to laugh at his eagerness and held on to the look of arrogant dominance Mason got off on.

He gripped Mason's chin in one hand and tilted his head up. With his other hand, he held his cock and rubbed it over Mason's lips. "Take me all the way down. I want you to choke on it."

Mason whimpered. His eyes were huge. He was so beautiful it made Gray shiver. Mason loved submitting, loved it when Gray got rough with him, but he also loved cuddling afterward. Gray needed all that tonight, the rough and the soft. Though he might not be willing to admit the latter, at least not in words.

Mason slid his tongue along the underside of Gray's cock and looked at him pleadingly. Gray pushed in a little bit, teasing him, making him wait. Then, without warning, he shoved his cock deep. Mason fought it for a few seconds as he tried to adjust to the invasion. Then, oh holy God, he started doing something fucking amazing that involved both humming and sucking. He relaxed his entire body and shifted into the perfect position to take Gray all the way down. When Mason's face was pressed against Gray's pubic bone, Gray slid a hand into his hair and held him there as long as he dared. When he let Mason go, Mason gasped for air.

"That was good, boy." Gray stroked the side of his face. "Now suck me like you mean it."

"Yes, sir." Mason's voice was hoarse, but there was a wonder in his eyes that let Gray know he wanted this as much as Gray did.

Jack had returned, but he hadn't followed Gray's instructions. He was simply sitting on the couch watching Gray and Mason while stroking his cock.

“Are you asking for a spanking?” Gray managed to keep his voice steady, despite the fact that Mason was doing things to his dick that made him want to cry out in pleasure.

Jack held his gaze, but he didn’t stop touching himself.

Gray growled. “Get your hand off your fucking cock and don’t touch it again unless I give you permission. You’ll pay for this later.”

Jack smiled, the little brat. “Yes, sir.”

“You’re asking for me to go hard on you.”

Jack ran his teeth over his bottom lip and gave Gray a mock innocent stare.

“Put the ring on Mason now and get back to opening him up with your tongue. If you touch yourself or give your cock any friction at all”—Jack wasn’t above rubbing off on the couch while he ate Mason’s ass—“then you won’t come tonight. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.” The sass was gone from Jack’s voice, replaced by quiet submission.

Mason shuddered when Jack snapped the ring around him, but he didn’t stop sucking Gray’s cock. Gray held still and let him do the work, enjoying the sight of Jack sloppily licking and tonguing Mason’s asshole. He could watch them all day. Maybe that’s what he would do, watch them with each other before punishing Jack.

Gray leaned forward and slid a hand through Jack’s hair. “Do you need me to hurt you later, Jack?”

Jack pulled away from Mason long enough to answer. “Yes, please, sir.”

Jack loved having his ass seriously reddened, and for far too long, Gray had let work keep him from taking time for a thorough punishment session.

Gray's train of thought derailed as Mason sucked him harder and fondled his balls. He'd not been given permission to touch Gray, but it felt too damn good to call him on it.

He held the sides of Mason's head firmly and thrust hard into his mouth. Mason took it, tensing at first and then giving into Gray's thorough face fucking. Mason needed to serve him as much as Jack needed the pain of a sore ass. Gray wanted to pleasure them, to care for them.

"I'm going to come down your throat, boy," Gray warned. "I need to take the edge off because this is going to be a long night. You got that?" Mason nodded, looking up at him with wide eyes.

Gray pulled back, letting his cock fall from Mason's mouth. "Turn over."

Jack sat back so Mason could move. Gray helped Mason position himself with his head hanging over the arm of the couch, perfect position to take him all the way down.

"Don't move," Gray ordered. He gave Jack a pointed look. Jack stroked Mason's thighs and teased his balls, which were dark with restrained need. Jack understood that Mason needed contact while Gray walked away. He'd already sunk deep into his submissive role.

Gray hurried to the playroom and quickly found the plug he'd been searching for—a medium-sized one with a wicked thuddy vibration. When he returned, he handed it to Jack along with some lube.

“Get that seated inside him while I fuck his face.”

“Yes, sir,” Jack answered, eager this time.

Mason tried to sit up so he could see what Jack about to stick up his ass, but Gray pushed him back down with a grip on his shoulders. “Don’t fucking move or you’ll get your ass reddened just like Jack’s. Since your mouth will be filled to bursting, smack the side of the couch if you need me to stop.”

Mason didn’t respond.

“Did you hear me, boy?”

“Yeah.” The word was barely audible.

Gray gripped Mason’s hair and tugged hard. “Answer me properly.”

“Y-yes, sir.”

Had Gray gone too far? “Mason, are you okay?”

Mason nodded. “Yes. Yes, sir. I am.”

His clearer response made Gray feel better. He was in a fucking vicious mood tonight—too much tension that had been waiting weeks to be released. He’d fucked them in this mood plenty of times, though, and they had their safewords. He trusted them to let him know if they needed to stop.

Mason opened his mouth in invitation, and Gray drove into him, wanting exactly what he offered. He needed to use Mason, to fuck deep into his throat, to not worry if it hurt or if he gagged on Gray’s cock. Gray knew Mason could take it. Not just take

it, but love it.

As he used Mason's mouth, he watched Jack working the plug into him. Jack wasn't being slow or gentle, he was fucking Mason hard with it, and Mason was trying to both pull away and get more at the same time. Mason writhed between the two of them, his cock deeply red. He was so fucking turned on, Gray wondered if he'd come despite the ring. If he did, Gray could punish him for it. That thought was so hot, he almost wished Mason would let go. Gray would enjoy spanking them both. Even the most vanilla sex was amazing with Jack and Mason, but this... this was what they all needed. They all felt so fucking connected to each other when Jack and Mason surrendered to him.

He relished the feel of Mason's slick throat around his cock. Mason was so good. He stayed relaxed and took it all, never once fighting Gray. Gray stroked his face. "So good, so fucking obedient." He pulled all the way out, wanting to see Mason's face.

Mason looked up at him, and Gray saw the joy in his eyes. Mason reached for Gray's cock, trying to pull him back, desperate for more. Gray didn't give it, though. He glanced at Jack working the plug in and out and decided Mason needed things turned up a notch. "Put the plug in all the way and leave it there."

Jack drove it in and Mason jerked, clutching the sides of the couch with his hand. It was amazing that he could handle what Jack and Gray were doing to him without being tied down. He deserved a reward. Gray would have to think of something for later.

Mason held still, tension evident in his grip and the way his feet curled against the couch cushions. He was waiting, expecting something more from Gray. So Gray would make him wait.

"I'm going to come and you're going to swallow it all. You got that?"

Mason nodded frantically.

“Jack, turn it on.”

Jack smiled wickedly and tapped the end of the plug.

Mason gasped and writhed as if trying to escape the intensity of the sensation. Jack fiddled with the base, and Gray was sure he was angling it so it would lay against Mason’s sweet spot.

Gray pushed back into Mason’s mouth, and Mason sputtered around him. Undeterred, he drove deeper, letting Mason gag, seeing if he would push Gray away. He didn’t. He took Gray’s full length.

“That’s right, take it all. You’re such a good boy. You want to come, don’t you?”

Mason nodded when Gray pulled out.

“Later,” he whispered, “in Jack’s ass.”

Jack gasped. Gray gave him a hard look. “Sit back. Hands behind you. No touching. And don’t you dare take your eyes off us.”

“Y-yes, sir.” Jack’s sass and swagger were all gone.

“You ready, Mason? Ready to be rewarded?”

Mason didn’t answer. He looked like he was floating, deep in subspace.

Gray laid a hand over his throat and squeezed lightly. “I’m waiting.”

“Y-yes, sir.”

“Better. Now open up.” Gray was so close. He couldn’t hold out much longer. He thrust into Mason, leaving his hand against his throat, wanting to feel the action of those muscles from inside and out. He fucked Mason’s mouth, in and out, faster, harder. Mason started to struggle.

Jack watched them, eyes wide, desperate.

“You want me to use you too, don’t you?”

Jack nodded. “Yes, oh God, yes.”

“You’ll get your turn.”

Gray’s balls tightened and heat surged through his groin. “Take it, Mason. Fucking take it.” He drove in once more and flooded Mason’s throat with his come.

Mason clawed the couch as he sputtered and swallowed frantically.

“You’re so fucking gorgeous.” Jack’s voice was ragged as if he were close to coming himself.

When Gray pulled out, Mason sucked in air over and over. Gray petted his head, stroking his sweaty hair off his face. “Jack, turn the vibration off.”

Jack obeyed.

“Better?” Gray asked Mason.

“A-a little.”

Gray smiled at him. “You are so good, so very good. You want to come now?”

“P-please.” Mason sounded like he hadn’t quite come back to them.

“When you’re ready, sit up. I want you to fuck Jack like you’re trying to split him open, like he deserves to be punished.”

“I...”

“You can do that for me because it’s what I want.”

It was asking a lot of Mason to go from relaxed submissive, passively taking Gray’s cock down his throat, to fucking Jack, but Gray knew he could do it.

“Do this for me and you’ll get to choose a reward.”

“Yes, sir,” Mason said, his voice less foggy now.

“Jack, get on your knees, head down on the carpet, ass in the air. Mason, I want you to fuck him, and I don’t want you to give him any mercy.”

Mason rolled off the couch onto the floor. His legs were shaking, and Gray wondered if he could hold back his orgasm long enough to even enter Jack. “Leave the ring on until he’s good and open. I’ll tell you when to take it off.”

Mason picked up the lube, but Gray took it from him. He coated two fingers and drove them into Jack’s ass, no gentleness or warning.

“Fuck!” Jack yelped, trying to pull away.

“Open for me,” Gray snarled.

Within seconds, Jack was pushing back against his hand. When he was satisfied that Jack was slicked up enough, Gray turned to Mason. “Fuck him now.”

Mason glanced at the lube and then at his cock.

“He’s slick enough. Besides, he wants it to hurt.”

Jack nodded frantically. “Please.”

Mason moved into position behind Jack. Gray was glad he’d given into the urge to let Mason suck him to completion because he doubted he could watch this without coming. In fact, he’d love to come all over both of them as they fucked. His cock was already getting hard again, but he was going to wait.

Mason drove into Jack, surprising Gray with his force. Jack cried out, hands digging into the carpet.

“Good job, boy. Now don’t slow down.”

Mason fucked Jack relentlessly.

“Perfect. Fucking perfect. Give it to him.”

Jack mumbled a litany of cuss words and pleas.

“Take the ring off, Mason. Fill him full of cum.”

Mason’s fingers fumbled, and Gray was about to help him, but he got the ring loose, tossed it aside, and pushed back into Jack. Gray doubted he’d last more than few seconds. Would Jack come? Gray hadn’t forbidden it, but he hadn’t given him permission either.

He'd see what happened. It would be the perfect excuse to beat Jack's ass, not that Gray needed one. It just made the game more fun.

“Fuck, Jack! So fucking good. I—” Mason threw his head back and drove all the way in, shuddering through his climax. Jack broke then, reaching for his cock and jerking himself off. In seconds, he was shooting his load right onto the carpet. Oh yeah, that deserved some serious punishment.

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Jack collapsed on the floor, and Mason rolled onto his back and stared at the ceiling, chest rising and falling rapidly. “Oh fuck.”

Oh fuck is right. “Jack, did you have permission to come?” Gray asked.

Jack turned his head toward Gray, still lying on his stomach on the floor. “No, sir.”

“You came on the rug.”

“I... I’ll clean it, sir.”

“Damn right you will, and then I’m going to beat your ass.”

“Yes, sir.” Jack tried to look contrite, but Gray realized this was what he’d been after all along.

“Get to work,” Gray snapped. “When the rug is clean, put that cock ring on yourself and get in position on the spanking bench.”

Gray turned away from him—knowing he would fucking hate being ignored—and squatted next to Mason. “I’m going to help you to the couch in the playroom.”

Mason opened his eyes and smiled at Gray. “That was fucking amazing.”

“Yes, it was.”

“What are you going to do to Jack?” He loved watching Jack get punished.

“You’ll see. I want you to drink some water and rest. Then you’ll be able to help him take what I intend to give.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Because I’m going to make sure Jack can’t sit down comfortably for days.”

Gray ignored Jack’s gasp, as if the bastard hadn’t known what was coming.

He scooped Mason up, loving his squeak of surprise. “You’re too wobbly for walking just yet.”

He deposited his lover on the couch in their “office.” Jack had retrieved cleaning supplies and was scrubbing the carpet.

After getting water for Mason and insisting he drink it, Gray found their most wicked flogger. He pulled the spanking bench out of the closet and positioned it for Jack. When he heard Jack walking down the hall, he took a menacing pose by the bench, flogger in hand.

Jack’s eyes widened when he entered. “I?—”

“You don’t speak. You don’t move. You don’t do anything but what I tell you to do. You’ve displeased me.”

Jack looked down and a shudder ran over him, which made Gray’s cock harden even more. He was glad he’d kept his pants on, even if they were painfully tight. He didn’t need the temptation of getting himself off before he was ready.

He glanced at Mason as Jack positioned himself on the bench. “Are you okay, boy?”

“Yes, sir,” Mason said.

“When you’ve finished the water and you’re steady, come and kneel by his head.”

Mason nodded. “Yes, sir.”

Without speaking to Jack or giving him any extra touches, Gray snapped cuffs around his wrist and ankles. Then he laid a hand at the base of Jack’s spine. “I’m going to deliver your punishment now, and I won’t go easy. Do you remember your safeword?”

Jack nodded.

“I expect a verbal answer.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good. Use it if you need it.”

“Yes, sir.”

Gray slapped the flogger against Jack’s ass, and Jack jerked, tugging at his bonds. “Fuck!”

“Stings, doesn’t it?” Before Jack could answer, Gray spanked him again, bringing the tassels down on the opposite cheek.

Jack struggled harder, but Gray didn’t stop. He let the blows rain down, one after another, until Jack began accepting the pain and calmed, reaching for the blows instead of trying to get away. His ass was bright red, and Gray knew it would be hot to the touch.

Mason left the couch and knelt by Jack as instructed. He stroked Jack's shoulders and reminded him to breathe. They were so fucking gorgeous together.

Gray paused and caressed Jack's ass with the smooth tassels. Then he let his fingers take the same path, needing to feel the heat he'd created.

Jack moaned and pushed into his touch.

"Like that, do you? Want more?"

"Yes, sir." Jack's voice was low and breathy.

"Good," Gray said. He went back to slapping the flogger against Jack, lightly, then harder, moving down to the back of his thighs, leaving him unable to predict where the next blow would land or how much it would sting.

Mason speared his hand through Jack's hair, holding his head to the bench. With his other hand, he caressed Jack's arm soothingly.

"You want to suck Mason's cock while I punish you?" Gray asked.

Jack nodded frantically.

"Then show me how much you need this. Stop holding back. I want to hear you shout, cry, tell me what it's doing to you."

"Graaaaay."

"Are you arguing with me?"

"N-no, sir."

“Good.” He swished the flogger over Jack’s ass. “What’s your safeword?” He needed to check in. Jack was holding his cries in more than Gray would have expected, even considering the fact that Gray hadn’t given him the slow buildup he was used to.

Jack hadn’t replied. He seemed lost in gazing at Mason.

“Tell me your safeword, now.”

Jack swallowed visibly, and Mason caressed his face.

“Apple pie,” Jack said.

“Good. The next swings will all be hard.”

“Yes, sir. Please. I... I need it.”

Gray hit him hard, forcing a whine from him.

“Is that what you need?” Gray studied Jack’s ass. He was really going to feel this later.

“Yes. God, yes!”

Gray kept going and Jack took it, moving with Gray’s blows, eyes closed, hand holding Mason’s. He’d found whatever he needed to be able to take Gray’s harshness. Gray increased his pace, and Jack’s breath came faster too. He whined, moaned, and then when Gray smacked him hard right on top of a welt, he cried out, a beautiful sound.

“Mason, give him your cock.”

Jack sucked him down eagerly, and Gray slowed his blows and lowered their intensity.

“Five more,” he warned. He counted them off as Jack sucked greedily on Mason.

“Mason, that’s enough,” Gray said when he was done.

Mason pulled his cock from Jack’s lips, but Gray could see his reluctance.

“Get the lube,” Gray ordered him. “Open your ass and get yourself ready. I’m going to fuck you both.”

Mason’s eyes widened.

“It’s the only prep you’ll get. I want you slicked up and on your hands and knees right here.” He pointed to a place on the floor beside the spanking bench.

Gray turned to Jack and slid a hand up and down his spine. “You with me, baby?”

“Mmmm.”

“Jack?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I’m going to fuck you now.” Gray’s cock was so hard he didn’t know how he’d waited this long to be in Jack’s ass.

Gray unzipped his pants, shoved them down, and kicked out of them. Then he grabbed the lube from Mason, who was busy finger fucking himself—damn, that was distracting. Gray slicked his cock and forced himself to focus on Jack. He laid his

free hand on Jack's red ass, kneading the sore flesh until Jack whimpered.

"You want to come now?"

"Yes, sir. Please."

"You deserve it for being so good." Gray leaned over Jack and whispered close to his ear, "Watch Mason."

Jack opened his eyes. Mason smiled as he pushed three fingers into his ass.

"Turn around, let Jack get a better look."

Mason bent over with his ass not far from Jack's face.

Jack groaned as Mason's fingers went deep. "I... I..."

Gray massaged his spine. "You need your ass stretched?"

Jack nodded.

"Your cock is so hard. You feel like it's going to explode, don't you?"

"I... yeah."

"Enough, Mason. Now you wait your turn."

Mason obeyed, but he stared at Gray with his mouth hanging open. Gray considered telling him to face the wall, but he'd been good too, and it would only make it harder for him to wait if he watched Gray fuck Jack.

“Get ready,” he said as he spread Jack’s ass cheeks. “This won’t be gentle either.”

“Please,” Jack begged.

Gray drove into him, all the way in one harsh stroke. Jack stiffened and held himself still. “Gray, I... I need...”

“You need to come?”

Jack nodded frantically.

“Not yet. You’ll hold out because I want you to.”

Gray drove in again then pulled back slowly. Again and again he repeated the pattern, rough push in, slow drag out.

Jack was shouting his name, cursing him. Mason panted and fucked the air he was so desperate.

Gray reached under Jack, released his cock ring, and stroked Jack’s shaft. “Come for me.”

Jack did, almost immediately. His ass clenched around Gray’s cock. His body spasmed and jet after jet of cum covered Gray’s hand.

Finally, Jack slumped against the bench. Gray pulled out, dizzy and so close to coming he had to squeeze the base of his cock hard enough to hurt to hold himself back, but he was determined to bury himself in Mason first.

“Are you okay?” he asked Jack.

Jack nodded. "Mason ..." he paused for breath. "Needs you."

"And I need him too," Gray growled.

He positioned himself behind Mason and drove in just as hard as he had with Jack. Mason cried out and bucked against him. "Take it, boy. I know you can."

"Fuck!"

"Yes, I'm going to fuck you so hard. I want you to feel it for a fucking week."

"Yes! Fuck, yes."

Gray didn't give Mason any mercy, not even the gentle withdrawal he'd used on Jack. He was too close to the edge to do anything slow. He worked to find the angle that would send Mason over the edge as quickly as possible.

Seconds later, Mason shuddered. "I... I'm going to come."

"Do it."

As Mason's ass squeezed his cock, the edges of Gray's vision darkened. He couldn't hold off any longer. He pulled out and shot, covering Mason's back in ropes of spunk before collapsing over Mason and bringing them both to the floor.

Gray forced himself to move as soon as he thought he could without passing out. He crawled over to Jack so he could unfasten the cuffs holding his wrists and ankles. He helped Jack off the bench and let him curl up on the floor with Mason.

Gray was exhausted. Damn, those two could wear him out. He stumbled to the cabinet and found the salve for Jack's ass. Then he got bottles of water from the mini

fridge. He held water out to each of them and got fuzzy zoned-out smiles in return. “Drink it.”

Mason uncapped his and took a few sips, but Jack stared at the bottle like he’d never seen one before. He really was still floating. Gray uncapped it for him and lifted Jack’s head with one hand while bringing the water to his lips. He drank a few sips and then pushed Gray’s hand out of the way, taking the bottle himself. When he’d had enough, Gray tapped his ass lightly, making him flinch. “Turn over.”

Jack obeyed, and Gray took in the sight. There was nothing like Jack all red and utterly drained. Gray coated his hands with the healing salve and began working it into Jack’s legs and buttocks. Jack moaned under his touch, and Mason cuddled against him.

“Feels good,” Jack murmured.

Gray smiled. Jack always loved feeling what they’d done for days afterward. When Gray was done caring for Jack’s ass, he forced himself to stand. Otherwise they’d all end up sleeping on the floor, never having eaten dinner.

He held out his hand to Mason, who was nowhere near as out of it as Jack. Gray pulled Mason to his feet and gave him another water. “Are you up to reheating the lasagna?”

He nodded. “Jack kept it in the oven on warm, so it won’t take long.”

Gray looked down at Jack, who’d curled on his side with a goofy grin on his face, and realized how much he’d been taking the two of them for granted. “I...”

“What’s wrong?” Mason asked.

Gray shook his head, afraid he'd get overly emotional if he said anything else.
"Nothing. Just... tired."

Mason snorted. "I should think so."

He slapped Mason's ass. "Go get dinner."

"Yes, sir." His tone was mocking now, nothing like the soft-voiced submissive he'd just been. Gray was so lucky to have found men who enjoyed surrendering to him in bed but were equals elsewhere. They were exactly what he needed.

He knelt next to Jack. "Baby, you need to eat before you fall asleep. I'm going to help you up, okay?"

"Mmmm."

"Jack." He laid a hand on his shoulder.

"'M fine."

"Are you sure?" Had he gone too far?

"Gray, I wanted this. I didn't want you to stop."

Gray didn't usually second-guess himself so much, but lately work had him feeling incompetent. He might still look like he had it all together, but that was an act.

Mason stepped back into the room. Had he sensed that Gray was about to have a meltdown or was he just wondering what was taking so long?

"Gray, I could feel how much you wanted us all to have what we needed," he said.

“I’m sure Jack could too. It’s been too long. I... We...” Mason glanced at Jack. “We were worried that... You hadn’t seemed...”

“I love you,” Gray said. He should say more, but he didn’t know how. And he was afraid if he did, he might lose it completely, let all his walls fall. After what they’d just done, Jack and Mason needed him to be strong. They needed him to care for them.

He helped Jack to his feet. “Come on, let’s have dinner.”

Jack glanced at Mason again. Gray knew they were silently communicating about him and he fucking hated it.

“If you need to talk to us—about your cases, Benson’s trial, the press conference, anything else—you will right?” Mason asked.

Gray knew that no matter how fucking much he hated it. If he held things in, it not only affected him, but also his relationship with Jack and Mason. But they were okay for now, weren’t they? They’d all just pleased each other half to death. Jack assured him he hadn’t crossed a line. Right now, that was enough. He didn’t want to fucking talk about Benson and his shit, Russell making him the big gay poster boy for the department, or a young girl whose brutal murder was being dismissed because she made a living with her body. “I don’t want to think about anything. I just want to eat and get some sleep.”

“Okay, but later, tomorrow, next week, anytime, you know you can talk to us, right?” Jack asked, seeming more with it now.

“Yeah, I know.” And he did. They would listen. They wouldn’t patronize him or dismiss his concerns. But he’d rather ignore it, because forcing himself to get the words out, to admit all the things that were making him feel like an incompetent mess

rather than the sexy in-control Dom they wanted, was too painful.

Mason served them lasagna. Jack had to eat his standing up, which earned him a good deal of teasing from Mason. By the time they finished, Gray felt lighter, less awkward. He pulled both his lovers to him and held them, breathing in their scents: sweat, sex, lasagna, and something unique to each of them. Fucking them was amazing, but just holding them was damn good too.

“Shower, then bed,” he ordered.

“Bossy,” Jack accused.

“Damn right.”

If they hadn't all been exhausted, the shower could have turned into much more than simply a way to get clean, but as it was, they were quick and efficient. Gray applied more salve to Jack's ass and then sent them to bed while he hung up the towels and brushed his teeth.

When he entered the bedroom, Jack was lying on his stomach, obviously not wanting his sore ass to touch the mattress. Mason pulled the covers over them, but Jack winced and Mason carefully lifted them off.

“Turn on your side,” Gray told him. “You know you can't sleep without covers.”

Jack whimpered but he moved eventually. Mason covered him up and snuggled close to Jack as Gray joined them. He wanted to spoon Jack, but he knew Jack's ass was too sore, so he just moved close and kissed his shoulder. Mason opened his eyes and smiled at Gray. Gray raised up and kissed him too.

Jack fell asleep almost immediately, and Mason was soon breathing evenly as well.

Gray was exhausted but sleep wouldn't come. He propped himself up on his elbow and watched these two men who meant so much to him. He didn't know how he'd have stayed sane during his first year as a detective if it weren't for them.

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Just as Gray started to doze off, his phone buzzed. Please don't be trouble. Very reluctantly, he rolled over, careful not to jostle Jack. He checked the screen: Thornton. Hoping to sound coherent, he answered the call. "Sadler."

"We got a new case and it might be connected to your dead prostitute."

"Yeah?" Gray asked, trying to wake up enough to process what Thornton was telling him.

"A young woman's body has been found at the scene of a house fire. The fire marshal's initial investigation indicates she didn't die in the fire. The neighbor who called the fire in noticed a woman getting out of a car a few hours before. He knew the driver who dropped her off because he uses the same car service. The driver was easy enough to track, and since the service's app requires a picture, we got a visual on the girl. Her name is Danielle Mossy."

"Fuck." Gray dragged himself from the warm bed and fumbled around for his pants.

"Yeah, that's about right," Thornton said. "A bit of digging showed that she's got a record. She's been picked up for prostitution twice under the name of Sugar Snow. And here's the clincher. She is—was—connected to Billy Andreas."

Andreas was one of the biggest crime bosses in the city. Word had it the sex side of his business specialized in "nice" girls who'd gotten desperate. He was well connected and had never been convicted.

"Are we sure Danielle Mossy is the vic?" Gray asked, cradling the phone against his

shoulder as he pulled his pants on.

Thornton sighed. “No. The neighbor never saw her leave. Apparently he spent a good deal of time watching—must be a nosy son of a bitch—but I doubt he had his eye on the house every second. No one else in the area saw her at all.”

“So, she doesn’t live there, and no one else was at the house?” That was sure interesting as fuck.

“Right. The house was empty other than the one body.”

“How old is she?”

Thornton sighed. “Sixteen.”

Gray’s stomach twisted. His other vic had just turned seventeen a week before she was killed. “Where?”

Gray grabbed a shirt from the closet as Thornton rattled off the address. “You want me to meet you there?”

“Yes. I want us to get a look as soon as we can. The scene’s already been under investigation for too long to be fresh. No telling what we’ve lost.”

“Right. I’m on my way.”

Jack didn’t stir, but Mason raised up as Gray ended the call.

“Work?” he asked.

Gray nodded as he finished dressing. “I’m sorry,” he whispered.

“Me too.”

Gray glanced at Jack, but before he could say anything, Mason read his thoughts. “Don’t worry. I’ll make sure he takes more ibuprofen in the morning if you’re not back.”

“I hope to God I will be, but we got a suspicious death at a fire. It might be related to one of my other cases.”

Mason nodded. “Be careful.” Gray started to protest, but Mason held up his hand. “I know you always are, but I have to say it.”

“And I have to grumble.”

Mason smiled. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Those words now came naturally; something Gray never thought would happen. Jack and Mason were turning him into a sap, and he didn’t even care.

Of course Thornton beat him there, but his drive was shorter. Gray ran a hand through his hair, trying to make it lie down as he parked the car. He relaxed a bit when he saw Thornton talking to Bryce, a friend who used to bartend with Mason. Bryce was new to the fire marshal’s office, but he was thorough, top of his class coming through the Police Academy. They’d lucked out to have him at the scene.

Bryce glanced up and waved Gray over.

“So what’s up?” Gray asked as he joined Thornton and Bryce.

Bryce motioned for them to walk with him. “No way was the vic killed in this fire.”

They stepped into the building, wincing at the smell, which was bad enough outside and grew much worse as they worked their way slowly toward the back of the house.

“Where did the fire start?” Thornton asked.

Bryce pointed toward the kitchen. “Here. It initially looked as if the coffeepot was to blame, but once we started investigating, it was obvious that a trail of accelerant had been spread from the kitchen toward this bedroom.” He indicated the door they were entering.

A body lay on the floor, burned beyond recognition.

“The victim was positioned to look as though she was trying to crawl to safety,” Bryce explained. “Our perp is smarter than most arsonists trying to cover up a murder. Usually the body is just dumped.”

Gray fought his gag reflex. He’d been on the job enough years that not too much bothered him, but he’d rarely been confronted with bodies from a fire, and just thinking of what such a death would be like was enough to sicken him. “What makes you think she wasn’t killed in the fire?” he asked, needing to distract himself.

“See the charring on the wall here?” Bryce pointed to the wall above the bed next to the victim. “That indicates that the fire spread from here.” He pointed to the side of the bed where the victim lay. “But that wall”—he pointed to the other side of the room—“is closest to the origin point of the fire. If the fire came from the kitchen and traveled across the room, then the area where the victim is would have the least damage.”

Gray looked at the room. Now it seemed obvious the fire hadn’t traveled from one

side to the other, and if it only had one source, it would have. “So you think she was killed and then the perp burned the body?”

Bryce nodded. “I would bet the ME will find a cause of death that has nothing to do with the fire.”

Gray glanced at the body and imagined the ordeal the young woman might have gone through, assuming it was Danielle. He would find her killer and make sure the bastard paid. “If we’re lucky and it is connected, the cause of death will be the same.”

Thornton nodded. He started to speak, but his phone rang. He talked briefly, then ended the call. “Crime scene techs are here. They’ll go over the room before the body is moved. Let’s go talk to the witnesses.”

Gray was more than happy to get out of that room. He didn’t know how Bryce handled his job, but he was thankful for his competence.

Gray, Thornton, and the uniformed officers who’d come to the scene questioned all the onlookers, but by the time they finished, they didn’t know any more than they had before they’d begun. The neighbor who called 911 confirmed he’d seen a woman matching Danielle’s description enter the house around midnight. He’d not seen her or anyone else leave.

Thornton had officers working to locate the homeowner, who’d been identified as Chris Whittaker. None of the neighbors had any ideas where he was, why Danielle had come to his house, or who would have let her in if she didn’t have a key. From what the collective group knew about Whittaker, he lived alone and rarely did anything but go to work. There was no car at the house, but the neighbor who’d called in the fire had seen Whittaker’s car being towed earlier that week. Apparently he’d been in a minor accident.

Gray looked at his watch. It was five AM. It would be a while before they learned anything about the evidence being collected from the house. Gray was considering going home to try to get a few more hours sleep when Bryce approached him.

“You want to grab some breakfast?” he asked.

“I was thinking about going back to bed.”

Bryce frowned. “You really think you could sleep after this?”

Gray shook his head. The adrenaline rush of jumping out of bed in the middle of the night and the gruesome scene had him too on edge. Besides, he’d likely wake Jack and Mason, and they had been up later than they should since they both had to work today.

“Nah. I’m in as long as there’s bacon.” Rather than being queasy after what he’d seen, he needed comfort food. “Bacon, eggs, grits, and a fuckload of coffee.”

“Let’s go to Louie’s,” Bryce said. “I need a pile of hash browns all the way.”

“Deal.”

Gray had fallen in love with Louie’s diner when he and Jack were first partnered. Uniformed officers ate free on the night shift and were served complimentary coffee any time of day. The deal was good for the diner’s security and excellent for Gray and Jack, who’d frequently worked nights. Depending on who was serving him, his meal was often still comped now that he was a detective. Uniform or not, he was fucking intimidating no matter how rough the late night crowd got, and so was Bryce.

At five in the morning, Louie’s was fairly quiet. The post-bar crowd had mostly filtered out, though a few still lingered.

“So how’ve you been?” Bryce asked.

Gray exhaled slowly.

“That good, huh?”

Gray laughed. “It’s been a long couple of months.”

“Yeah, same here.”

“Work?”

Bryce nodded. “Things with Matt and Toby are good if that’s what you’re asking.”

“Good.”

Bryce watched Gray. He seemed to be waiting for something.

Finally, Gray got it. “You want to know about Jack and Mason, I guess.”

“They’re still putting up with you, apparently.”

Gray scowled. “Fuck yes, they are.”

Bryce laughed. “Big of them.”

“Yeah, well... Like I said, it’s been a rough few months.”

“The Benson trial had to be hard for you.”

Gray nodded. “But it’s over. I just want to forget about it.”

“I saw the press conference. You looked good up there.”

Gray rolled his eyes. “I just said what I had to.”

“But you looked calm, controlled. I knew you didn’t want to be up there, but it didn’t show.”

“Thanks, I guess, but I don’t want to be the DPD poster boy.”

“You make a good one, though.” Bryce winked. Fucking flirt.

“Watch out, or I’ll see if I can get you in the limelight too.”

“Ha! I’ll be lucky to just get through the next few months and prove myself.”

“Looks like you did a damn good job tonight.”

“Thanks.”

Gray could tell his compliment really meant a lot to Bryce. “It’s because you had a hardass teacher.” Gray had taught a few of Bryce’s classes at the Academy.

Bryce rolled his eyes.

The waitress brought their food then, and they tucked in. A few minutes later, Gray’s phone buzzed. What now?

He pulled it out of his pocket, expecting it to be Thornton. Instead, it was a text from Jack on the family thread with Mason.

Missed you when I woke up.

I miss you too. Got called in right after you went to sleep.

Back soon?Mason this time.

I wish.

A heart emoji appeared next. Then two more from Mason. If Gray hadn't known he was head over heels for Jack and Mason, the fact that sending hearts to each other didn't register as absurd would have clued him in. Keeping the phone where Bryce couldn't see, he sent back a few hearts of his own.

“Work?”

“No. Jack and Mason.”

“Aww, they text you together.”

Heat rushed into Gray's face. “Sometimes.”

“It's okay. I already know you're crazy about each other.”

Gray rolled his eyes and checked the time. “I better get going. I need to see if we've gotten closer to finding the homeowner.”

“You could go home and take a ‘nap.’ I bet your boys miss you.”

Gray raised his brows. “I could say the same to you.”

“True.”

“I might as well just stay up and hope I can leave at a reasonable time tonight.”

“Good luck with that.”

They left a hefty tip for the waitress and headed out.

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When Gray got to the station, Whittaker had just been located at his twenty-four-hour gym. He was being brought in for questioning any minute, and Gray was downing another cup—he'd lost count what one he was on—of the sludge the station referred to as coffee. It wouldn't look good to fall asleep during an interview.

Whittaker was rumpled and looked like he was wafting in that hell between wired on coffee and crashing hard. If the story he gave the cops was true—he'd worked second shift, gone to a midnight movie, then gone to the gym—he couldn't have been at his home when Danielle died.

Maybe his story was true and maybe it wasn't. Gray hadn't heard anything to explain why an underage girl with a record showed up at his house. He wasn't in the mood to play around or make things easy. Too much was at stake. He'd gone in circles for weeks on his murder case and found no motive beyond the girl's profession, which he wasn't buying. There was no weapon, and worst of all, no suspects. It was a fucking mess. If this was connected, he had a chance of finding at least a few pieces of the puzzle. This fucker was going to spill any information he had.

The ID wasn't in on the vic yet, but all evidence pointed to it being Danielle. If this fucker had killed her...

Rage at the thought gathered inside Gray. Whittaker better hope he had an explanation for her presence at his house that didn't involve him fucking her. Gray needed answers fast. Whittaker would be getting all bad cop with no good one to help him.

Gray shut the door of the interrogation room firmly behind him, deliberately not

looking at Whittaker as he slumped, face in his hands, at the table. After pacing the room for several seconds, letting the tension build, Gray slapped a folder down dramatically like he was playing a cop on TV. He opened it and pulled out two photos, one of Danielle a year ago, smiling, dressed in a sweater and jeans, looking like a happy teenage girl, and one of the burned body.

“You see this.” Gray tapped the grotesque picture from the murder. “This is what Danielle’s been reduced to. I want to know what she was doing in your house, why you weren’t there, and whether you burned her to a crisp.”

“Wh-what?” the man stammered. “I... I would never. I...”

He looked green. Gray considered grabbing the trash can. The last thing he wanted to do was clean up vomit. If the man was faking his horror, he was damn good.

“She was at your house last night.” Whether or not the body was hers, the neighbor had seen Danielle enter Whittaker’s house.

The man shook his head.

“A driver dropped her off there. A neighbor saw her go in.”

“I was at work.”

“And then at the movies. And then working out. Busy night.”

Whittaker’s nostrils flared, and he fisted his hands. Gray had succeeded in getting him angry. He wanted the man’s emotions running hot, because he’d be a hell of a lot more likely to give himself away like that. “My house just burned down, and now you’re accusing me of murder?”

“I’m asking you to tell me what this young woman”—Gray tapped on the photo—“was doing at your house.”

“I told you I don’t know.”

“You didn’t go home to meet her?”

“I work second shift. I like to stay up after I get off and sleep during the day. I gave the officers my ticket stub from the theater, and they found me at the gym so they know I was there. You can verify that I was never home.”

“We’re working on that. How well did you know this young woman?”

“I told you I didn’t know she was at my house.”

He looked away and started to fidget with his cuff. He was lying. Gray was certain of it. “At this point, if you cooperate and give me the information I need, I’m going to assume you thought she was eighteen and that you realize solving her murder is what matters most to me.” The words nearly stuck in Gray’s throat. The fucking asshole might have hired a teenage girl, but if he wasn’t the killer, Gray needed to find whoever was.

“I didn’t kill her.”

“What was she doing at your house?”

“I don’t know. How many times are you going to ask me that?” He was shouting now, face red with anger.

“Men your age aren’t often acquainted with teenage women who’ve been arrested for prostitution unless they’re the johns. So tell me how you know her.”

“I don’t know this girl. Look, I’ve got to figure out what the hell I’m going to do now that my house is gone.”

“And I’ve got to figure out who murdered a teenager.”

“I can’t help you.”

Gray slapped the folder closed. “That remains to be seen.”

He went silent for a few moments, studying Whittaker. The man’s horror at the pictures had seemed real, as had his anger. But his responses were too scripted somehow, like he was saying what was expected. Maybe that was nerves. It wasn’t easy for anyone to act naturally during an interrogation.

Thornton knocked and then leaned into the room. “I need to see you for a moment.”

Before stepping out of the room, Gray looked at Whittaker. “We’re not done.”

“You find out what the girl was doing there?” Thornton asked.

Gray shook his head. “He claims he doesn’t know.”

Thornton took a sip of coffee. Gray wasn’t sure he’d ever seen the man without a cup in his hands. “Damn. His statement checks out, by the way.”

“All of it?”

Thornton nodded. “He clocked out of work at 11:00. His movie ticket was purchased online. One of the employees at the theater remembers seeing him because he raised a stink about the cost of a large popcorn relative to a small. We can even verify that he took the bus to the theater from work since his car is in the shop.”

“There wasn’t time for him to go home before showing up at the gym?”

“No, he says he left the movie and walked to his gym. He would have arrived around two thirty. He scanned his card at 2:32 and the woman at the desk remembers him entering. She said he often comes in between eleven and three.”

“What the fuck is up with people going to the gym at 2:30 in the morning?”

Thornton glanced down at his belly. “I sure as hell don’t know.”

Gray smiled for the first time in hours.

“We’ve got to cut him loose but I’d say we keep our eye on him. Because none of this makes any sense.”

“I’ll try to find out if there’s anyone who’d want to set him up. Are we looking into connections with Andreas and with the other vic?”

Thornton nodded. “I thought of that. If this guy didn’t kill her, there’s still got to be a reason why it was done at his house.”

“Could it be as simple as framing him because he was a former client?”

“It’s a sloppy as hell job if that’s what it is.”

Gray nodded. “Sure is.”

“Go talk to him. See if you can learn anything else, then head home and get some sleep.”

“Sir, I can?—”

“Go home.”

“Yes, sir.”

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Gray hadn't realized how tired he was until he had to deal with construction traffic around Duke East campus. He didn't have the focus to dodge idiot students who thought it was a good idea to step out in front of his car or to weave around all the construction barricades that had been there for-fucking-ever. He longed to crawl into bed, but if he did, he wouldn't sleep well that night and the cycle of exhaustion would go on.

Food and TV. That was the next best thing to sleep. He glanced at the time as he entered the house. Just past noon. He'd ignored Thornton's directive and stayed several more hours looking for something that might connect his current case to the previous one, but he was basically beating his head against the wall. Jack's shift would end at five. Mason was in his last semester to complete his chemistry degree, and Gray vaguely remembered him mentioning something about a study group. Gray pulled out his phone and looked back at the texts they'd exchanged earlier. Study group at three. Not supposed to last too long. So he'd probably be home around the same time as Jack.

Gray took a quick shower and dressed in sweats and a T-shirt, then pulled the pan of lasagna from the night before out of the fridge. A civilized person would cut a square and heat it, but he wasn't feeling very civilized after no sleep, a murder scene, and still no leads. He grabbed a fork from a drawer, opened a bottle of beer, and carried the lot to the coffee table.

He scrolled through one of their streaming services, hoping for something good and mindless. Rush Hour 3. That would do just fine. He dug into the lasagna and continued forking it into his mouth until he'd polished off the whole pan. He considered getting another beer, but the idea of leaving the couch felt too vigorous.

He settled on his side, propped up on pillows, and relaxed for the first time since he'd fucked Jack and Mason senseless the night before. A few seconds later, his eyes drifted closed. He tried to force them open but they didn't want to go. He'd just rest them for a moment; that wouldn't do any harm.

A few seconds later, a loud explosion from the TV made him stir. Don't go to sleep. He sat up, but soon he'd convinced himself it was okay to lie down again. He could just rest his eyes a few more minutes.

"Gray. Gray! Wake up!"

"Huh? What's wrong?"

Gray tried to sit up and nearly fell off the couch, forgetting he wasn't in bed. "Did I fall asleep? What time is it?"

Mason snickered as he watched Gray from where he perched on the edge of the coffee table. "You were asleep and drooling when I got in."

Gray rubbed his eyes, trying to fully wake up.

"Did you seriously eat all the rest of the lasagna?" Mason asked.

Lasagna? Had he eaten lasagna or only dreamed it?" "Um... yeah."

"Wow."

"I was hungry."

"Apparently you were sleepy too," Jack said. Gray hadn't even realized Jack was there. He really had been deeply asleep.

“I was up all night,” he said in his defense.

“Poor baby,” Jack said. “When did you get home?”

“Around noon.”

Jack settled beside him on the couch and laid a hand on Gray’s leg. “Want to tell us about it? The call that got you out of bed?”

“A body was found in a house fire, a sixteen-year-old girl, another sex worker. Both girls worked for Andreas, at least according to rumor.”

“Fuck.” Mason looked slightly green.

“Don’t think about it. It was horrible, but I’m going to find the bastard who did this.”

Mason sat on the couch arm on Gray’s other side. “I’m glad you came home and got some rest.”

“Thornton made me leave. He said I wasn’t any good to him if I was a fucking zombie.”

“You’d been up way over twenty-four hours, and the night before last you got maybe three hours of sleep. You also had quite a workout last night.” Jack grinned.

Gray couldn’t help but return Jack’s smile. “I didn’t want to fuck up my sleep cycle, so I was watching a movie.”

“Uh-huh.” Mason nodded.

“I couldn’t have slept that long. Wait, why are you both home? What time is it?”

“A little before six.”

“What the fuck?”

“We let you sleep for a half an hour after we got home, but we have something we want to talk to you about.”

Did Mason sound nervous or was that Gray’s imagination? “What kind of something?”

“Valentine’s plans.”

Gray groaned. He loved his men, but he didn’t need a stupid cheesy holiday to show it. He had a nice toy closet instead.

“We’ve got a surprise for you,” Jack said.

Oh fuck, Gray hated surprises even more than Valentine’s Day.

Jack shook his head. “Don’t make that face.”

“What face?” He’d really tried to keep a neutral expression.

“The what-have-you-done-now face.”

“I wasn’t?—”

Jack’s glare silenced him.

“Okay, fine. Just tell me what you’ve done.”

“Since I’ve got next weekend off and Mason can get coverage, we rented a cabin in the mountains so we could all get away.”

A cabin. In the mountains. Gray’s heart started pounding. “No!”

Mason’s eyes widened. “Look, I know we should probably have talked about it, but?—”

Gray hadn’t meant to sound so vehement, but, traveling to the mountains brought back memories. They were memories he didn’t want to dredge up, not right now when he was already dealing with memories of Nancy, who reminded him too much of the girls in these cases he was working on. What could he say that sounded reasonable? “I don’t want to drive in the snow. We might get stuck and?—”

Jack frowned. “This cabin is perfect. There’s a hot tub, and it’s only twenty minutes from Asheville so we can go out to dinner or a bar and then come back to our cozy cabin. Did I mention that the hot tub is on a very private deck?”

“I am not fucking you outside in February.”

Jack dismissed his protest with a wave of his hand. “The water is warm. We’ll be fine.”

Gray glared at him. “No.” He didn’t want to go at all and he sure as hell didn’t want to freeze his ass off. “Every time I go on a vacation, something disastrous happens. Can’t we just take the weekend off and fuck at home?”

Mason shook his head. “Come on, Gray. It will be fun.”

No, it wouldn’t. He hadn’t been to the mountain since he was twelve, but even Jack didn’t know about what happened back then.

“This cabin has a nice comfy king beds just like ours,” Mason said.

“We have a perfectly fine bed here.”

“But the cabin has two of them,” Jack pointed out. “One for fucking and one for sleeping.”

“And we could go snow tubing,” Mason added.

Jack nodded. “And try some cool restaurants.”

Ugh. They were tag teaming him. “It’s a five-hour drive.”

“Four and a half,” Mason insisted.

Gray shook his head. “Fine. We can go. Unless I haven’t made progress on this case, then?—”

“We’ll have to reschedule,” Jack said. “But hopefully you’ll have it solved.”

Yeah, that would be great. “It would help if I had any good fucking leads.”

“Do you want to talk it through?”

Gray shook his head. “Not now. But...” No, he was just going to get all fucked up if he talked about how the case was weighing on him or if he let himself think about Nancy. Her story hadn’t ended any happier than the two women whose bodies he’d seen.

Mason leaned over and kissed the top of Gray’s head. “It’s hard because they’re kids, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, that’s part of it. That and... Nobody gives a damn about them because they were sex workers, but people do a lot of things when they’re desperate. These girls were still human, no matter what they did.”

Jack nodded. “Yeah, they were, and you’re going to see justice done for them.”

“You’re such a good man, Gray,” Mason said as he ran his fingers through Gray’s hair.

“I—”

“Don’t protest,” Jack said. “You are, and it’s part of why we love you.”

“You’re also wicked, and we love you for that too,” Mason added.

Mason cupped Gray’s face and turned him for a kiss. As Mason’s tongue made a lazy exploration of his mouth, Jack slid from the couch and knelt before him. Gray opened his legs, encouraging Jack to settle between them. If they’d asked him, Gray would’ve said he was too tired for anything but cuddling and watching a movie. Now his cock was trying to convince him he was very wrong.

Gray tightened his grip on Mason and deepened the kiss, letting Mason know he’d had enough of slow. Jack unfastened Gray’s pants and nuzzled his cock. Mason did some unzipping of his own and repositioned himself, slinging a leg over Gray, and offering his cock for Gray to suck. No way in hell was Gray going to refuse him. Jack had Gray’s dick out now and was lapping the head as Gray gripped Mason’s hip in one hand and used the other to guide Mason’s cock into his mouth. Jesus, he tasted good. Gray loved the way the thick flesh filled his mouth, the way Mason wasn’t shy like he would’ve been at one time.

Gray was on sensation overload as Jack sucked him hard and fast while working a

hand between Gray's legs to tease his ass. As Jack's finger brushed over Gray's hole, Gray moaned around Mason's cock, and Mason's gasp told him just how much he enjoyed the vibration.

"So fucking good," Mason murmured.

Gray grabbed Mason's ass and pulled him in, letting him know he was ready for Mason to get rough.

Jack pushed a finger into Gray's ass, and that plus Mason's dick driving down his throat was enough to send Gray over the edge. He reached for Jack, sliding a hand into his hair and thrusting deeper into his mouth. Seconds later he was coming, and Jack took it all, swallowing rapidly like he was desperate for Gray's cum. Mason pulled back, letting Gray enjoy the orgasm.

"Get each other off," Gray ordered when he could speak. "I want to watch."

Mason climbed off the couch and pulled Jack to his feet. He licked his palm and then wrapped a hand around both their cocks. Jack thrust into his hand, and Mason increased his speed as Jack pulled him in for a kiss.

Gray couldn't take his eyes off them. Soon Jack had covered Mason's hand with his own. Gray sensed that they were seconds from coming. Jack used his free hand to pinch one of Mason's nipples, tugging and twisting. That did it. Mason cried out, the sound muffled against Jack's mouth as he shot hard and with a punch of his hips. Fucking fuck! Jack went over too, and Mason held tight to him, his cum mingling with Mason's and making a sticky mess.

Mason ran a hand up his chest and started to bring it to his mouth, but Jack grabbed his wrist and sucked his fingers clean.

“Fuck.” The word slipped from Gray’s mouth.

“Good show?” Jack asked.

“Fuck, yeah. I seriously thought I was too tired to do more than watch a movie.”

“I’m glad you weren’t,” Mason said.

“Yeah, me too.” Gray had needed that.

“You ready to go back to sleep?”

Gray should’ve been, because even with the long nap, he was running on a deficit. He hadn’t slept well in days, but he didn’t feel sleepy like he usually did after coming. Instead, he felt energized.

“I’m good for a while. You want to show me these cabins you’re enamored of?” Surely he could manage to go to the mountains and forget the past. He could make new memories with his partners, even if downtime made him fucking twitchy.

“Really? You want to see?” Mason asked. He looked so eager.

“Yes.”

After they cleaned themselves up, Jack pulled out his laptop and brought up the website for the cabins. They might look rustic on the outside, but inside they were like a luxury hotel. Maybe this wouldn’t be so bad after all. It certainly wasn’t anything like the place he’d stayed as a kid.

“That’s a fancy kitchen,” he observed. “Are you going to cook for us, Jack?”

Jack raised a brow. “This is supposed to be a vacation.”

Gray pouted, knowing Jack was only joking. He loved to cook.

“Wait, what?” Mason looked horrified. “You promised me bacon and chocolate chip pancakes.”

Jack elbowed him. “We could have kept him going for a bit.”

Mason laughed. “You sounded so serious.”

“I’ll make breakfast at least.”

“And caramel popcorn,” Gray insisted.

“Don’t push your luck.”

Cuddling in a mountain cabin in the middle of winter, watching movies with Jack’s amazing caramel popcorn. That couldn’t be too bad, could it? “Surely it won’t be as bad as the Florida trip.”

“What Florida trip?” Mason asked.

Gray groaned. “It was fucking awful. Don’t make me relive it.”

Mason rolled his eyes. “Like you can throw out a line like that and not expect me to want the full story.”

“A few months before we met you, Gray and I drove to Florida to go to the beach,” Jack explained. “I’d been bitching at him to take a trip with me, and I chose Ft. Lauderdale because it’s supposed to be full of eye candy.”

Mason frowned. "I can't see Gray clubbing in Ft. Lauderdale or even being able to enjoy the beach anywhere so..."

"Lurid?"

Mason nodded.

"Neither can I," Gray said.

Jack just laughed. "It's not his scene but he indulged me. It was raining when we got there."

Gray raised a brow. "Raining? It was a fucking torrent. You'd have thought a hurricane was coming in."

"But I insisted on going out after a day of being stuck in the hotel," Jack said.

Gray thought back to that day. Now it was funny, but it had been terrifying. "The road flooded right in front of us. I got out to scout ahead and see if we could make it to the next turnoff. Then a fucking alligator came out of nowhere."

"A what?" Mason's eyes went wide, and he made a strangled sound like he was holding back a laugh.

Jack didn't hold back his laughter. "He was a big fucker."

"Tell me you wrestled it, tossed it back into the swamp, and then fucked Jack right there." Mason looked so eager for that to be true.

Mason's comment made Jack laugh so hard tears rolled down his face. "That would have been fucking perfect, but he ran like hell."

“You’re asking for another spanking.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Jack said.

Gray would get his revenge. “You just wait.”

Mason whistled. “Somebody’s in trouble.”

Gray looked at him and tried to ignore Jack, who still hadn’t settled down. “I did what any reasonable person would do. I walked to the car, got back in, and backed up until we couldn’t see him anymore. Then I got the hell back to the hotel, checked out, and drove home.”

“Actually, we drove to Savannah and had a lovely time there,” Jack said.

“See?” Gray said. “My vacations don’t go well.”

“That was one incident,” Jack said.

“And it was all your fault. You can start making this up to me by making some caramel popcorn. Just thinking about it makes me want some.”

“You ate half a pan of lasagna,” Jack reminded him.

“That was hours ago.”

Jack glared at him.

“The cabins are amazing. We’ll have a lovely time. Now surely I’ve earned the rest of Rush Hour 3 with some popcorn.”

“You want a reward for agreeing to rent a cabin?” Jack did a good job of looking incredulous.

“I think that sounds fair,” Mason said.

Jack glared at him. “You just want some popcorn for yourself.”

“Hell, yeah.”

“I had a really sucky morning,” Gray pointed out.

“Yeah, you did,” Jack said. “Fine, you win.”

Mason moved behind Gray and massaged his shoulders. Gray closed his eyes and let himself enjoy it. Mason’s hands were like magic. “You really should’ve gone to massage school.”

“So you’d have your own personal masseur?”

“Of course.”

The rest of the evening passed in salty, sugary, snuggly bliss.

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The next day, Gray called one of his street contacts trying to find out the latest word on Billy Andreas. But there wasn't anything except the usual: you cross him, you die. Nothing about underage sex workers and no one was saying shit about the fact that two women connected to him had been found dead. People were too scared to talk.

Gray was still trying to find a motive. If Andreas had killed these women, or rather, had them killed—it wasn't likely he'd do his own dirty work—there had to be a reason. Did they cross him? Did they try to leave? Were there more vics the cops didn't know about? If Andreas had done it, he had to be making a statement. Who was the target audience? By the end of the day, Gray was no closer to an answer and neither was Thornton.

Jack had begged Gray to meet him at Nathan's after work since Mason was bartending that night. The last thing Gray wanted to do was socialize. There'd be cops and firefighters there who'd want to chat about what was becoming a high-profile case. The Hooker Killer, they were calling it, of all the tacky-as-fuck names. Maybe he could just growl at anyone who came near and scare them away. He had to admit a drink or six sounded good, though. Maybe he'd just have Mason bring him a bottle.

He circled the block a few times, and he was about to abuse the privilege of his police hang tag when he finally found a spot he could stuff his SUV into. When he opened the door of Nathan's, cloying warmth hit him. The bar was packed. As fucking cold as it was outside, he'd be wanting that crisp, cold air before long.

Jack waved him over to the bar. He was on a stool, but there weren't any free around him. Then the man next to Jack stood, and Gray realized it was Toby, one of Bryce's

boyfriends.

“I was saving it for you,” he said.

Gray forced himself to smile. “Thanks.”

“Long day?” Toby asked.

“Fuck, yes.”

“Looks like you need a drink and a kiss from your man. Actually, I’m sure you need more than that, but there are decency laws.” He winked. “I’d better get back to Matt.”

“Tell him we said hi,” Jack said.

Gray gave a halfhearted wave. Toby was the one person he knew who needed to be spanked more than Jack.

Mason flashed Gray a smile from the other end of the bar. Once he’d taken care of several other customers, he set a double whiskey on the rocks on the bar. Gray loved that Mason knew exactly what Gray wanted. He was tempted to down it in one go and get an immediate refill. Instead, he took a large sip. He could be a responsible adult for at least a little while longer.

Jack leaned close, resting a hand on his shoulder. “If you need to get trashed, it’s fine. Mason can drive your car home, or we can get it tomorrow.”

Gray sighed. “It will only make tomorrow worse.”

“We’ll take care of you.”

“I don’t want you to have to.”

Jack narrowed his eyes. “We don’t have to. We want to. You don’t always have to be the one in control.”

Gray understood that in theory. In practice, not so much.

Before Jack could say more, Huck came over to talk to them. He’d been assigned to be Jack’s partner after Gray became a detective. Jack had been nervous as hell about working with someone new, but Huck had turned out to be perfect: he needed Jack’s experience to guide him, he didn’t give a fuck that Jack was gay, and he got Jack’s sense of humor.

“Did he con you into playing in the tournament?” Huck asked, referring to the basketball fundraiser Jack had helped organize for the youth shelter where he volunteered.

Gray shook his head. “He tried. I’ll be selling tickets.”

“So you’ll see me humiliate myself.”

“That bad, huh?” Gray asked.

Huck nodded. “My team’s going to hate me. How is it that I can pass the firearms test, but I can’t get a ball into a basket?”

Jack laughed. “I’ve wondered that myself.”

“Well, you’ll see me in action tomorrow.”

Jack gave him an evil grin. “I’m looking forward to it.”

Huck ordered a drink and waved to them as he headed toward the game room.

“I can’t get wasted,” Gray complained. “The fundraiser is tomorrow.”

“There’s nothing complicated about taking tickets.”

Gray scowled at him. “I have to be able to stand up to do it.”

“You’re such an old man.” Jack signaled to Mason. When Mason looked toward them, Jack pointed to Gray’s drink and mouthed “another.”

When Gray had finished his second drink, he was good and buzzed. “You feel like having me beat your ass at foosball?” he asked Jack.

“I’m thinking I’ve got the advantage since I’ve only had two beers.”

“We’ll see.”

Jack leaned in close. “Win or lose, I’m happy. I always love for you to beat my ass.”

Jack’s words shot right to Gray’s cock. He leaned in close, lips brushing Jack’s ear. “Keep that up, and I might have to drag you out back.”

Jack flashed a grin and slid from his stool. He knew Gray would never fuck him at Nathan’s, but what he’d do when they got home remained to be seen.

They played several rounds of foosball, and Gray watched while Jack and Huck played a few games of pool against Toby and Matt. Bryce was on duty, but he’d said he might join them later. At that point, the crowd had died down, the early people leaving and the truly late-night crowd not there yet. Huck headed out, saying he was going home.

“You think he’s really going to bed alone, or he is cruising?” Gray asked.

“Cruising,” Toby said definitively. “But is it men or women?”

Jack frowned. “I haven’t figured that out yet. Maybe both.”

“At the same time?” Toby asked.

“That’s an interesting thought. Why not?”

“Why not indeed?” Matt concluded.

The four of them found a table and polished off a few more rounds of drinks. Toby started sharing his favorite Only Fans pages in an attempt to distract Jack and Gray from suggesting a rematch at pool. He was way too pleased with his current lead. By the time Mason got a break and was able to join them, the Only Fans discussion had led to a conversation about kinks that Gray would never have participated in sober. With nearly a bottle’s worth of whiskey in him, though, he was happy to share—not all—but enough of his secrets.

Just as Mason sat down, Toby said, “So what about fisting? You ever done it?”

“Not yet,” Gray answered.

Jack choked on a sip of beer, but Gray just smiled. God, he was drunk.

Gray glanced at Mason. His face was bright pink, and he was looking at his glass of water like it was the most interesting thing he’d ever seen.

“We haven’t,” Toby said. “But if Bryce really... Nah, I don’t think I could. So you guys think you might try it sometime?” Toby seemed oblivious to how much he was

embarrassing Jack and Mason. How many drinks had he had?

“I... um... I think...” Mason’s face was flaming red.

Gray laid a hand on his arm. “Look at what Toby was just showing us.”

Mason looked apprehensive but also fucking relieved. Gray knew he was interested, and not just a little bit, but he wasn’t going to let Toby embarrass him. Teasing was fine, but this was too personal.

Mason smiled when he saw what was on Toby’s screen. It was just a short video of two guys kissing, but it was incredibly hot. “Wow.”

“Yeah,” Toby said. “Kissing can be fucking hot.”

“It sure can,” Mason said. “The way those guys are touching. The obvious anticipation. I mean I like to see dirty fucking as much as the next guy, but something about that...”

Gray nodded. “Yeah. I agree.”

Jack looked like he couldn’t believe Gray had said that.

“What?” Gray said. “I like kissing.”

Jack smiled. “You’re fucking good at it too.”

Heat filled Gray’s face. Apparently Jack could embarrass him even when he was drunk.

Matt looked at Toby as if he’d like to indulge in some of that porn-quality kissing

right then.

“You ready to go?” Toby asked.

“Uh-oh, I think someone’s going to get fucked,” Jack said.

“He’s not the only one,” Gray added, looking right at Mason.

“I think my break’s over.” Mason slid from the booth, but Gray grabbed his arm before he could get away.

“I’m looking forward to quitting time,” Gray said, needing only a look to make sure Mason knew exactly why.

When Mason finished work at two, neither Gray nor Jack was in any shape to drive. They left Jack’s car where it was since it was parked in the lot by the bar. Mason put his bike in the back of Gray’s SUV, and with a lot of bitching about big trucks and how men just bought them to compensate for other lacks—which he obviously knew to be untrue since he’d had Gray’s fat cock up his ass too many times to count—he maneuvered Gray’s car out of the tight parking spot.

Jack was sloppy drunk, and he giggled and pawed at both of them on the way home. As soon as they got in the door, he tried to pull Mason to him for a kiss, then lost his balance, fell against the door, and had to grab Mason’s coat to steady himself. “I want your mouth on me,” he said in a stage whisper, obviously wanting Gray to hear.

“Get naked, then get on the bed,” Gray ordered.

Jack pushed away from the wall. It took him a few tries, but finally he pulled off his shirt and flung it away from him, dissolving in a fit of giggles when it landed on a lamp.

Mason looked at Gray, who was fighting a laugh of his own. “Get your damn pants off,” Gray said, barely able to keep his voice stern.

“What about you?” Jack asked. “Why are you dressed?”

Gray should reprimand him for his sass, but the whiskey flowing through his veins made it easy not to care. He started working on his shirt, but the fucking buttons wouldn’t cooperate. How the hell was he supposed to get his shirt off when they wouldn’t go through their damn holes?

“Need help?” Mason asked.

Gray pushed Mason’s hand away. He could do this himself. Maybe he’d just rip the buttons right off.

Mason took hold of his shirt again. “Let me get this off you. I want you both naked and all over me.”

Gray smiled. “Yeah, I want that too.” He relaxed and let Mason strip him.

“Mmm,” Mason said. “I like you like this. Pliant. Easy.”

The fuck he was. Gray growled and cupped the back of his head, holding him still while he flicked his tongue across the roof of his mouth, making Mason squirm.

When he finally broke the kiss, they were both panting, and Jack was watching them, eyes wide, hand working his cock.

“Come on.” Mason took both their hands. “I want to do this in bed.”

The three of them fell onto the mattress in a heap. Jack turned on his back and rested

against the pillows. Mason settled between his legs and took Jack's cock into his mouth. He didn't go slow, didn't tease. He just swallowed it down, and Gray fucking loved the sound his actions pulled from Jack.

"Suck him hard. I want to hear him whimper. I want him begging you." Gray had gone from loose and relaxed—at least for him—to wired and so fucking horny. He couldn't get the image of Mason blushing during the fisting conversation out of his head.

Mason hummed around Jack's cock, and Jack bucked, thrusting deep into Mason's mouth.

Mason lifted his ass invitingly. Gray had every intention of taking him up on that offer. He pulled Mason's cheeks apart and bent until Mason gasped, letting Gray know he could feel Gray's breath against his flesh.

"You like that?"

Mason whined around Jack's cock.

Gray licked him then, and Mason pushed back, begging for more with his body. "I'm going to open you up, eat you until you think you can't stand it, and then flip you over and fuck the hell out of you. Now make Jack come while my tongue's up your ass."

Jack gasped loudly, interrupting Gray. Gray smiled at him, and Jack licked his lips, his hands tightening visibly in Mason's hair.

"Don't you dare come yourself, Mason. You got that?"

Mason raised up just enough to speak. "Yes, sir."

“More,” Jack demanded.

Gray slapped Mason’s ass. “Give him what he wants.”

Mason lowered his head until he was pressed against Jack’s body. Jack bucked, and Gray grabbed his hips and pushed them back down. “Stay still and let him work you.”

“Can’t,” Jack protested.

“Yes, you can.” Gray glared at him, and Jack sank into the mattress. He wouldn’t be able to hold still long, but he would try.

Gray tongue-fucked Mason until he was a quivering mess. Jack was cussing, begging, obviously fucking close to losing it. Mason was close too, Gray was sure of it. He wrapped a hand around Mason’s cock, squeezing tight. Mason was going to wait for Gray.

“Mason, please! Oh fuck! Yes! Yes!” Jack shouted.

Gray sat back, wanting to watch Jack come. Jack gripped Mason’s head tightly, but Mason didn’t fight it. Without the stimulation from Gray, he relaxed and simply took. When Jack began to whimper, Mason pulled back.

“Sensitive?” Gray asked.

“God, yes.”

“Turn over, Mason.” Gray’s voice was scratchy with restrained need.

Jack watched them, eager even though he’d just come. “Are you going to fuck him now?” he asked, his words slurred, as if the blowjob had made him drunker.

“Eventually,” Gray answered. He felt more sober now, better able to concentrate, and he intended to spend some more time concentrating on Mason’s ass. He pushed Mason’s legs up and open. “Hold them there.”

Mason sucked in his breath like he hadn’t expected Gray to be so harsh. Gray hadn’t expected it either, but the idea of Mason opening to him, letting him...

Jack handed him the lube, and Gray loved that he hadn’t needed to ask. He slicked his fingers and drove two of them into Mason.

“Fuck!” Mason shouted, tipping his head back.

“You complaining, boy?”

“N-no.”

“Good.”

He added another finger, but he went slowly this time, letting Mason feel the stretch and get used to it with slow, easy in and out movements. Then Gray opened his fingers, pressing against the sides of Mason’s passage. Mason whimpered, and Gray noticed that his knuckles were white where he held his legs. “You okay?”

“Yes, sir. Please.”

“Please what?”

“More.” Gray curled his fingers so they brushed Mason’s prostate, and Mason gasped. “Oh my fucking God.”

“Don’t come. Not yet.”

“I... I won’t.” He was so adorable, getting all flustered after expecting a simple hard fuck.

“Jack, hold his legs before he hurts himself. I want him wide open. Mason, put your hands over your head and don’t hold anything in. I want to know what you’re feeling.”

“I... need... I need more, please.”

Gray glanced at Jack, and Jack raised his brows in a question. Gray shook his head. No way was he going to fist Mason when he’d been drinking, and no way was he going to do it when they hadn’t talked more about it. But he was going to make Mason think about how good it could be.

He pulled his fingers out and dribbled more lube along Mason’s crack. Mason watched, uncertainty in his eyes. Gray slid both his thumbs into Mason’s ass, stretching him until he was panting. This time when Gray pulled out, he asked, “You okay? I want to play a little more.”

Mason nodded. “Yeah.”

Gray glanced at Jack, wanting to gauge his reactions. His eyes were dark, and he held his bottom lip between his teeth. “Watching you is so... Fuck, I need to come again.”

Gray looked back at Mason, assessing him, letting Mason see how turned on he was.

Mason licked his lips. “Are you... are you going to?”

Gray shook his head. “Not now. Not without talking about it, but just imagine if I were.”

Mason sucked in his breath. “Yeah, I am. I... I want you to.”

Gray teased Mason’s hole with the tips of his fingers. “I know what you want. I know what a dirty boy you are. Soon I’m going to give you what you need. I’ll have my whole hand inside you, and you’ll beg for it.”

Mason’s cheeks reddened, but he never took his eyes off Gray. “Please.”

Gray smiled. Part of him wished they could try it tonight, but the rest of him knew the anticipation would make it even better.

“Kiss him, Jack. He might need a bit of a distraction.”

Gray nearly lost himself watching them. Seeing how they both surrendered so deeply into a kiss was nearly as good as kissing them himself.

Remembering why he’d told Jack to distract Mason, Gray added even more lube and then slid his fingers back into Mason’s warm, tight ass. This time he tucked his pinkie tight beside his other digits and pushed deep enough to give Mason just that little bit more stretch.

Mason tensed but kept kissing Jack.

Gray gave Mason just a little bit more, sliding in until the first knuckle of his pinkie touched the stretched rim of Mason’s ass. They’d gone this far once before. Mason hadn’t been sure how much more he wanted then, so Gray had decided to wait until he asked for more, but his reaction to Toby’s question was clear.

“More?” Gray asked. Mason’s ass clenched around his hand as he pushed in just a touch more.

Mason licked his lips and wiggled like he wanted to take more, but Gray began to pull out slowly. “Later, I promise. I’ll give you more.”

“God yes,” Jack whispered against Mason’s ear. “I want to see him buried to the wrist in you.”

Mason shuddered. Gray repositioned himself, teasing Mason’s stretched entrance with the tip of his cock. “You want me to fuck you now? Fill you with my cock instead?”

Mason whimpered. He was so ready Gray easily slid all the way in with one stroke. “You can come anytime you’re ready, boy.”

“Fuck,” Mason groaned. He wrapped his legs around Gray, trying to drag him even deeper, reaching up for him. “I want it! I want it all.”

“Take it.” Gray fucked him hard and deep while Jack reached between them and worked Mason’s cock. It was almost too good, and Gray and Mason both came in no time. Jack had been stroking himself with his other hand. He glanced at Gray. Gray nodded. Jack rose up on his knees, hand moving faster until he came, shooting all over Mason’s torso.

Mason grinned up at him. “You fucking love that, don’t you? Making a mess of me.” He forced the words out between labored breaths.

Jack winked. “It’s how I like you best, covered in cum, willing, open.”

“And I like you best with your ass bright red.”

Jack closed his eyes and moaned. “Fuck, yes.”

“Brats, both of you,” Gray said, swatting Jack’s ass as he stood. “Come on. Let’s shower.”

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It was close to four AM by the time they were clean and dry, but none of them wanted to sleep. Gray was mostly sober now and starting to feel headachy. Jack was in a similar state, and he declared that they all needed food, so they ended up in the kitchen eating bowls of ice cream and drinking tall glasses of water that Mason insisted would make the next day go much more smoothly.

“So you really want Gray to fist you?” Jack asked, voice filled with awe.

Mason spewed water onto the table. “Fuck.”

Jack grinned. “Watching you two tonight was one of the hottest things ever. Seeing Gray open you up like that. I know he’s done it before, but... Wow.”

Mason smiled, his face nearly as red as it had been at Nathan’s. But here with just the three of them, Gray knew he could push. “He loves having both of us inside, doesn’t he, Jack? He loves the way we stretch his ass good and wide.”

Jack nodded. “Yeah, and it feels so good.”

Gray glanced at Mason. “It’s good fucking Jack like that too, isn’t it?”

Mason nodded. “Yeah, so good.”

Jack and Mason had both taken two cocks up their ass on several occasions. Every time Gray had found it an amazing experience, but he’d also worried about hurting them. “I want to be sure I won’t hurt you. We have to go slow, and you have to do exactly what I say.”

Mason nodded. "I would. I do. I'd need..."

He looked away. Gray reached out and took hold of his chin, turning him back. "Tell me. Look me in the eye and tell me."

"I'd need you to be in charge, completely in charge. If I didn't surrender, let myself go, I don't think I could take it."

Gray nodded. "I'll be there for you in any way you need, but you have to remember that you can stop any time if it's too much."

Mason nodded. "Yeah, I trust you."

Gray was awed at how very deep that trust ran. Allowing him to do something so risky was an honor. The way Mason had looked at him, eyes begging for more when he had all four of Gray's fingers in him, had made Gray feel both powerful and loved. It was nearly overwhelming.

"I'd suck your cock while he stretched you," Jack said. He glanced at Gray as if asking permission, and Gray nodded.

"I'd love to see Mason caught between the burn in his ass and the pleasure of your wicked mouth."

Jack focused on Mason. "I'd suck you until you were sure you'd never be able to hold back, and then Gray would open you up and you'd come with his whole fucking hand buried in you."

"Fuck!" Gray and Mason said at nearly the same time.

"At the cabin," Mason murmured.

“Huh?” Jack asked.

“That’s when we could do it, when we’re at the cabin. It could be our Valentine’s celebration.”

That was a Valentine’s Day Gray could get behind, or rather, into.

“This Valentine’s Day”—Jack spoke in a commercial announcer voice—“forget the flowers and chocolates. Instead, give your love a thick, hard fist. Valentine’s will never be the same again.” He dissolved in giggles as he finished, apparently not as sobered up as Gray had thought.

Mason rolled his eyes. “We should never let him drink again.”

Gray nodded. “Agreed.”

“Whaaat?” Jack asked, barely able to speak for laughing. “You know it’s funny.”

“Don’t you have a fundraiser to run later this morning?” Mason asked.

Jack dropped his head back and groaned. “Oh God. I’m fucked, aren’t I?”

Gray glanced at the clock. “Should we just stay up at this point?”

Mason shook his head. “Nope, we can get four solid hours of sleep. That’s well worth it.”

“Come on,” Gray said, standing and stretching. As tired as he’d be for the fundraiser, he was glad he’d let Jack drag him to Nathan’s last night. The three of them needed more time for teasing, sharing, confessing, and loving each other. Maybe the cabin trip was exactly what they needed after all.

The fundraiser was a huge success. Despite being tired and hungover, Jack charmed everyone as usual. Huck tripped over the ball, managed to shoot it out from under his hand while dribbling, and generally served as good-natured comic relief. And Henry, the young man Jack had been mentoring for a little over a year, gave a moving speech with Jack standing beside him, supporting him all the way.

Gray spent the rest of the weekend lazing around, watching movies with Jack and Mason, playing sexual-favor poker—stripping seemed far too tame. He forced himself to go to the gym each day, and he spent several hours going over the information for his murder cases. Evidence from the ME suggested the perp was the same. Danielle had died of stab wounds before being burned. But Gray had still gotten absolutely nowhere.

Once he was back at work on Monday, the week dragged. If he could just figure out the fucking motive, he'd have something to go on. The only suspects he had were Whittaker and Andreas, but both had what appeared to be solid alibis. Was the killer making a statement to Andreas, a statement against prostitution, trying to start a turf war, or what? Were the killings actually related or just a coincidence?

On Thursday, one of Gray's informants with connections to Andreas contacted him, saying he had some information. Gray agreed to meet him for lunch in Chapel Hill, far from Andreas's turf.

When Gray arrived, Vandal, the only name he knew the man by, was drinking a large coffee.

A waitress approached before Gray had a chance to say anything other than hello. She handed Gray a menu and took his order for a sweet tea. "You want some food?" he asked Vandal. "I'm buying."

The man grimaced. "I'm not sure I can eat."

Gray didn't like that. Vandal had never turned down free food before. "Talk to me."

Vandal glanced toward a nearby table where their waitress was talking with other customers. "After you order."

Gray didn't push. The waitress returned with Gray's tea. "Did you make a decision?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'll take the smothered pork chops with mashed potatoes and broccoli casserole for my sides."

"You got it." She gave him an appreciative smile before turning to Vandal. "For you, sir?"

"I..."

"Just order something," Gray insisted.

Vandal glanced down at the menu. "I'll just have some apple bread pudding."

The waitress smiled. "Good choice. I might have that for lunch myself."

Gray raised a brow after she walked away.

"Sweets go down easier," Vandal said.

Gray had no argument for that. "So what have you got for me?"

Vandal glanced around the room as if he thought some of his colleagues might be hiding out, spying on him. "You didn't hear this from me."

"I haven't heard anything yet." Gray hoped to God the guy wasn't wasting his time.

Vandal glared at him but he still looked scared to death.

“Has that ever been a problem with any information you’ve given me?”

Vandal shook his head. “This girl contacted me. I don’t know her name.”

Gray was certain Vandal was lying, but as of yet there was no need to call him on it.

“This girl who talked to me says someone is after Andreas.”

“Competition? Someone wanting his business?”

Vandal shook his head. “No, revenge. Something about Billy’s—Andreas’s—wife. Something personal.”

“Is that why this person is killing Billy’s girls?”

“Yeah. To get to him off balance. That’s what this girl says anyway.”

There might be something there Gray could work with. “I need her name.”

“I-I told you I don’t know it.”

“Does this girl work for Andreas like the ones who were killed?”

Vandal nodded.

Gray needed an angle, something that might make him crack. Vandal seemed to be a decent person at heart. “You’re worried about this girl.”

“No. Yes. Fuck, I’m worried about all of them. If what she told me is true, there will

be more deaths.”

Gray hoped to God he could find this asshole before that prediction came true. “I need a name or a number to contact her, something.”

“I’ll try to get her to call you. I’ll do my best, but that’s all I can do. I swore I wouldn’t tell anyone.”

“Why did she talk to you? Did she want you to help?”

Vandal looked away and fiddled with his napkin. “Maybe. I don’t know.”

Another lie.

“I want to help, man. But this is all I can do.” Vandal pushed his chair back and stood. “I gotta go.”

He was out of the door lightning fast. Gray considered going after him, but he wasn’t sure it would help. Maybe he could charge Vandal with obstructing a murder investigation, but he wasn’t sure that would stick and he’d lose any chance of Vandal’s help in the future. He’d just have to try to figure out the girl’s identity on his own.

The waitress brought their food. “Where’s your friend?”

“He had to leave suddenly, but don’t worry, I’ll eat his bread pudding.”

She winked at him. “You won’t be sorry.”

And he wasn’t. He was only sorry he’d gotten just enough information to tease him but nothing to actually answer any of his questions.

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Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 7:55 am

Gray was running. The woods were dark. Where was his dad? Somewhere on the path ahead? No, his dad wasn't there anymore. He was long gone. Wasn't he?

A scream. A young girl's scream. Not another one, please not another one, I've got to stop him, got to get there in time.

He ran faster, but he didn't seem to be getting anywhere, the woods didn't change. Then he saw a shadowy figure, a man with a hoodie and... a knife? "Dad?"

The man looked at him, but his face was all shadow as if there were nothing under his hood.

The girl screamed again. Suddenly she was right in front of the man.

"Nancy?" Gray called.

She didn't answer. She just kept screaming. The man raised his knife.

"No!" Gray shouted, but he couldn't move. He wasn't running anymore. He was rooted to the spot.

"Help me!" the girl screamed.

Gray sat up gasping. The room was dark. He looked from side to side. No one was there except Mason, who was soundly sleeping. Jack was out working the night shift. Gray kicked the tangled sheets from his legs, shivering as he stood though he was covered in sweat. He fought the urge to search the house as if the murderer and

Nancy were there. Or maybe his father.

He shook his head, wanting the images to go away. A dream. That's all it was. Why had his father been mixed up in it, though? Because of the cabin. The woods in his dream were the ones surrounding the campsite where he'd vacationed with his parents.

You had no idea what to do then either. Just like you don't know how to find the killer now.

Fuck. Shut the fuck up. He wanted to scream at the voice in his head, the one that wrecked his confidence. But the voice was right, wasn't it? He hadn't known what to do when he was twelve and found out his father was a piece of shit, and he had yet to figure out a way to prevent more young women from being murdered. He felt so fucking helpless, just like in his dream. All he'd done for the last week was run in place. He had to find the girl Vandal had told him about or find Vandal and shake him until he talked.

He glanced at himself in the mirror over the sink. He looked like shit, and he was doing a shit job. How the fuck could he leave and go on a vacation, a vacation where he would probably just have more nightmares? He'd have to tell Jack and Mason they needed to cancel.

And then he'd have to pretend he didn't feel relieved.

Gray turned over and rubbed his eyes, trying to pull himself from sleep. He had that weighted feeling where the bed seemed to suck him in, and getting up was more of a fight than he was up for. It had taken forever for him to fall back asleep after his nightmare. Now he wished he'd just stayed up.

He grabbed his phone and turned it on to see the time. The light from the screen stung

his eyes. He blinked a few times and then the numbers registered: 8:03.

Fuck! He was late. Just what he needed.

He heard Mason stirring in the kitchen. Why the hell hadn't Mason woken him? By the time he hurried through his shower, dressed, and started looking around for his computer bag—where the hell had he left it?—Jack was coming in the door.

“Gray, what are you still doing here?”

“Good question. Ask Mason since he didn't bother waking me,” Gray snapped.

Mason looked up from his bowl of cereal. “How was I supposed to know you expected a wakeup call?”

“Because I have to be at work at eight.” There was his bag, by the TV.

“I figured you were going in late,” Mason said.

“Right, with two unsolved murders and more maybe to come, I thought I'd just sleep in.”

Jack tossed his backpack on a chair. “I had a shit night. I really don't need this.”

“Yeah, neither do I. What I need is to get to work and find a fucking motive or a fucking suspect or something to solve this fucking case, but since I haven't, I won't be able to go on our little trip.”

“What?” Jack said.

“I can't go on vacation when lives are on the line.”

“Wait, I don’t?—”

“Just cancel the reservation.”

“It’s not for another week,” Mason said.

“So sorry murder doesn’t work on your timeline.”

Mason recoiled as if he’d been physically struck.

“You’re just trying to make an excuse.” Jack’s face was red with anger, his fists balled at his side. “You never wanted to go.”

His anger pushed at Gray, calling him to strike back. “Yeah, because I have a job to do.” Gray slammed the door behind him and immediately wished he had the courage to open it back up and apologize. What the fuck was he doing? The dream had really fucked him up.

Go in there and tell them you love them. Tell them the whole fucking story.

But he didn’t. He was already late and... he was a fucking coward.

Gray had spent the morning trying to determine the identity of the young woman who’d told Vandal her secrets. But all he had to go on was arrest records and rumors about “Billy’s girls.” He’d called and texted Vandal and gotten no response. He’d even sent uniforms to check his typical haunts, but they hadn’t had any luck.

His mind wandered as he stared at his notes. The girls who died were probably a lot like Nancy. Most of them probably felt like they didn’t have any other choice, like no one would help them. Until Gray was assigned to the first murder, he hadn’t thought about Nancy in years. He knew that, realistically, there wasn’t much he could have

done for her, especially without any adults on his side, but he still felt like he'd failed her. He wouldn't fail these girls, neither the dead ones who needed justice nor the living ones who were potential victims.

He startled when his phone rang. Bryce's name showed on the screen. He slid his thumb to answer. "What's up?"

"I wanted to give a heads-up," Bryce said. "A call has gone out for a fire, a big one, at Billy Andreas's compound."

"Oh fuck. Do you know any details, whether anyone is suspected to be inside?"

"Nope, just the location."

"Okay. I'd better go. Thanks."

He wasn't going to make it home for dinner. Not like he'd knew what the fuck to say to Jack and Mason anyway. Jack had the night off if Gray remembered correctly. He and Mason would have plenty of time to talk about how much of an ass Gray had been.

As he headed to Thornton's office, he sent Mason a text. Fire at Andreas house. Home late. That would have to do for now.

When Gray and Thornton pulled up at the scene half an hour later, the flames were out, but smoke still rose into the darkening sky. They got out of the car, flashed their badges at the uniformed officers who were keeping onlookers back, and crossed the barrier.

Thornton approached the chief, waiting while he talked into his radio. When he looked their way, Thornton said, "What can you tell us?"

The man frowned. “We’re trying to keep this quiet for now, but we’ve got four bodies in there. One might be Andreas himself.”

“And the others, any idea who they are?”

He shook his head. “They’re too badly burned to ID, but one body is most likely an adult male. The others are smaller, possibly older kids.”

The lunch Gray had eaten hastily formed a lump in his stomach. His phone buzzed, interrupting his morbid thoughts. It was Vandal.

He pointed to his phone. “It’s an informant. I’ve got to take it.”

Thornton nodded.

“Is it true? Did Andreas’s house just burn down?” Vandal asked as soon as Gray answered.

“Part of it’s still standing, but yeah.” It wasn’t like the fire could be kept secret. News crews had been on the scene since before he’d arrived.

“Was Billy there? Was anyone else?”

“I can’t discuss that.”

There was a long pause. Gray was worried Vandal would hang up, but finally, he said, “It’s like Jenna said, this guy is out for revenge on Billy.”

“Jenna. So that’s her name.”

“Um... yeah. She’s going to call you. You’ve got to listen to her.”

Gray tensed. He needed to keep Vandal on the line. “I’ll call her now if you’ll give me her number.”

“Can’t do that. But she’ll call you. I promise.”

“Just give me her contact information. You know me. I won’t share it.”

Vandal ended the call.

Gray called back, but Vandal didn’t answer.

Bryce and his supervisor from the fire marshal’s office walked Gray and Thornton through the scene and explained their observations. Based on what he could tell from a visual, the victims had been dead before the fire started. They wouldn’t know for sure, though, until CSIs swept the scene and the ME got a look at the bodies.

A ring found next to the largest body indicated that it was Andreas. But there weren’t any obvious clues to help them identify the others.

Gray hadn’t gotten sick at a crime scene since he was a rookie, but the sight—and smell—of what was most likely the remains of three young girls did him in.

As he tried to recover his equilibrium, he wracked his brain for an explanation. Gray could understand Andreas being murdered; there were plenty of reasons for someone wanting him dead. But how could someone believe these girls deserved such a fate? Had the girls witnessed something? Was it punishment for their sins? As if the sins of those who pushed them toward such a life weren’t worse.

“You don’t look so good,” Bryce said when Gray stepped out of the structure with Thornton.

Gray grimaced. “It will be a while before I’m over that.”

“Yeah, that was a hard one.”

Gray glanced toward the crime scene tape where the street was full of onlookers. “What a circus.”

“Did you ride in with Thornton?” Bryce asked.

“Yeah.”

“You want me to give you a ride?”

Gray nodded. No matter what Captain Russell might have to say, he was not talking to the fucking media hounds tonight. What he really wanted to do was go home, pretend he’d never had a fight with Jack and Mason, and drink himself into oblivion. Of course, if Jenna actually did call, then he’d need to be sober. After what he’d seen, he wasn’t going to sleep, at least not peacefully, not even if he downed a whole bottle of whiskey.

When Bryce had negotiated his way through the crowd, he said, “Which way? I can take you home, back to the precinct, or we could get a drink?”

Gray should just go home, but he hadn’t gotten any braver since that morning. Next to the media, the thing he wanted to avoid most was groveling to his partners.

Not wanting to run into a crowd of people they knew, Gray and Bryce avoided Nathan’s and went to Undertow, where Gray agreed that some bacon-wrapped dates were just what he needed despite his stomach’s reaction to the crime scene.

Gray got their beers while Bryce found a table.

“Sunday is Toby’s birthday. He wants to have some people over. If you and the guys are free, he’d love to have you there.”

“Yeah, that sounds good. If I’m not working. I’ve got to find a direction on this case.” Before Bryce could respond, Gray’s phone buzzed. He pulled it from his holster and glanced at it. Jack. He couldn’t deal with him now. He stopped the phone from ringing and put it back on his belt.

“Nothing urgent?” Bryce asked.

“It’s just Jack. I’ll talk to him later when I get home.”

Bryce’s look was far too knowing. “What’s wrong?”

Gray tried for an are-you-kidding-me expression. “The body count on my cases is up to six. I’ve got no solid leads. The guy everyone hoped to pin the first two murders on is now dead, and I just had to see four charred bodies.”

Bryce wasn’t the least ruffled by Gray’s tirade. “That’s not what I meant.”

“You aren’t trying to get me to talk about my love life, are you? If I’d known this was girl-talk hour, I would’ve gone back to the precinct.”

“Do you need to talk?”

“What’s with you? I used to count on you not to get mushy on me.”

Bryce laughed at him. The bastard. “Ah, as defensive as always. And I hate to remind you that you’re the one who forced me to see how much I love Toby and Matt.”

Gray scowled. “That was an aberration. I was clearly having an off day.”

“Uh-huh.”

“I’m supposed to go on a trip with them next weekend. And now...”

“They’ll understand about the case.”

“You’d think.” That wasn’t fair. He’d been an ass about it. If he’d waited and talked to them when none of them were pissed off or in a rush, things would’ve gone much better. “I didn’t want to go to start with.”

Bryce nodded, obviously getting it now. “Ah.”

“I had a good reason.”

Bryce took a slow sip of his beer, watching Gray the whole time. “But something’s still bothering you.”

Gray should have gone back to the precinct. “Since when did you become a fucking shrink?”

“Since I worked on my communication skills like you told me to.”

“Never listen to me. I’m usually just saying shit.”

“You don’t have to talk. We can just drink and try not to think too hard about the shit we just saw.”

“Asshole.”

Bryce just grinned.

“I took a trip to the mountains with my family when I was twelve, and... things didn’t go well. I haven’t been back since.”

Bryce nodded. He must have sensed that he shouldn’t push for details.

“Jack and Mason will know I didn’t make up the fire, as if I’d wish for that kind of excuse.”

“But...”

Fuck, Bryce was perceptive. “They’ll still be disappointed, and I was kind of an ass this morning.”

“Kind of?”

Gray chose to ignore that. “This has been a shitty week. I can’t solve this case and now there are more bodies and I feel like it’s all my fault.”

Bryce didn’t piss him off by trying to reassure him. He just waited for Gray to continue.

“And now I pushed Jack and Mason away when what I really want to do is take care of them, not disappoint them.” God, he sounded like a whiny fool.

“So why are you here instead of home apologizing?”

Gray took a long, slow breath, then let it out. “Because I’m an idiot.”

Gray’s phone buzzed. Maybe it was Jack again. Instead, he saw a text from an unknown number. This is Jenna. Meet me. Park on Orange. Picnic hut.

“It’s my informant. I need to go.”

Bryce nodded. “I’ll drive you to your car. Do you have backup?”

“No. She’ll run if she thinks anyone else is involved.”

“Gray.”

“I’ll be fine. I’ve got to talk to her now.”

“Jack and Mason would prefer you alive so they can get an apology.”

Gray wanted to fucking punch Bryce, but he was right. So instead, he pulled out his phone as he settled into the passenger seat of Bryce’s truck and called Thornton.

He answered on the first ring and Gray explained the situation. “The informant I’ve been waiting on called. I’m meeting her at the picnic hut in the park on Orange Ave. If she sees anyone else, she’ll take off.”

“Stall for fifteen. I’ll have someone in place.”

“Thanks.”

“If she’s legit, get everything you can. I just met with the ME. The larger body was Andreas. The others were all girls, probably all sixteen years old or less.”

“Fucking fuck.” Gray didn’t care what it took. They had to stop this killer.

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Gray texted Jack and Mason when he got in the car. Meeting an informant. Home ASAP. I love you. I'm sorry.

A few seconds later, his phone vibrated. He glanced at it at the next red light. It was Mason. We love you too. Be careful.

A few seconds later another buzz. Stay safe. That came from Jack.

After Gray parked one street over from Orange Park, he sent a return message. I have backup. Don't worry.

He took a deep breath and checked his gun, even as he prayed he wouldn't need it.

He approached the picnic hut from the side with the most tree cover. At first, he didn't see anyone around. The cold had probably deterred any teens who might've used the park as a make-out spot.

Just as he reached the hut, he saw a figure approaching. Jenna?

He held himself still, ready to react if necessary but as the person came closer, he could see that it was a young woman. She couldn't have been over five feet tall. When she moved into the light of a streetlamp, he could see her face better. He guessed she was sixteen or seventeen.

When he took a step toward her, she pulled a gun from her pocket. "Stay back."

Fuck, now it didn't matter that he had backup. She could drop him faster than anyone

could react.

Stay calm. Talk to her. You're good at this.

Not as good as Jack.

Good enough.

"I'm not going to hurt you."

"You're not going to take me in either."

"I just want to hear what you have to say." That he wanted to get her into protective custody wasn't something he needed to mention, not with a gun pointed at him and her hand shaking.

"I give you my word I won't touch you. You can put that down."

She shook her head. "Listen and don't talk."

Gray did as he was told. He had no intention of dying without setting things right with Jack and Mason.

"Andreas's wife died in a car crash six months ago."

Gray wanted to explain that he knew all about it, but he stayed quiet. Andreas's deals had gotten more violent since then and he'd behaved more irrationally.

"There's a man. I don't know his name. He's tall, fit, mousy brown hair. He's not hot or anything, but he's not ugly either. His eyes, they're just blank like there's nothing there. But there is. Rage. So much rage. He loved her."

“Loved who?” Gray risked the question.

Jenna huffed. “Andreas’s wife. Aren’t you listening? He’s known her his whole life, says he always loved her.”

“Who did he say this to? You?”

She shook her head. “I just listened. You learn a lot if you listen.”

Gray nodded. If she’d been working for Andreas, Gray was sure that was true.

“He was talking to Billy, then Billy stormed out and this man took Lisa. She’d been talking to Billy when the man came in.”

Gray had so many questions—was Lisa the first girl who’d been murdered? Why did he take Lisa but not Jenna? Gray stayed silent, though. He was afraid he’d spook Jenna if he interrupted.

“I snuck out and followed him.” Tears began to roll down her face and she sniffed, trying to hold them back.

Gray wanted to comfort her, but he knew that was out of the question.

“The man took her to the park, to the place where she was found.” That answered Gray’s first question. “He told her she had to die, that we all had to die. He said Billy took his love from him and corrupted her, having her around all us whores. He said she wasn’t a slut like we were and that Billy had turned her.”

Love gone wrong. That motive hadn’t even been on Gray’s list.

Jenna was crying freely now, and Gray ached for her. “I wanted to stop him. I meant

to stop him, but I froze. My legs wouldn't work. I... I couldn't move. I thought he would..."

Gray could only imagine how terrified she'd been. He wanted to say something to make her feel better, but he needed her to keep talking, and nothing he could say would take her pain away.

"The fucker stabbed her." Anger cut through her grief. "The knife went right up into her chest. Her eyes went wide and she bled all over the place. Then she was dead, just like that. The blood was dark, so dark, blacker than the night."

She looked at Gray then, and he nodded, letting her know he'd heard her.

"I couldn't save her."

"He would have hurt you too," Gray said.

"I ran. I just ran back to Billy and didn't say anything."

"You could have come to us, to the police." Gray knew the words were stupid as soon as they were out of his mouth.

Jenna shook her head violently and her gun wavered. Gray held up his hands and took a step back.

"Police don't care about us. They just want to bust us. They don't care that we can't survive without selling ourselves. At least Billy... He never hurt us, never even made us fuck anyone."

Gray hated just how much of her anger at the authorities was deserved. "So are you saying...?" How could he ask what he wanted to without offending her?

“None of us fucked men, okay? Billy only pretended we did so no one would think he was soft. Marcy, his wife, she took care of us. We did work for him—entering data in spreadsheets, other office work and cleaning his house—but we didn’t do nothing illegal.”

Gray doubted the figures in those spreadsheets represented any legal earnings, but data entry was a far cry from underage prostitution. How had Andreas managed to hide this rather philanthropic effort?

“Do you believe this same man killed Andreas and the other girls that were at his house?”

She nodded. “I’m sure of it.”

“What about Danielle?”

“She’d left. She didn’t want to be in debt to Billy. She said she was going to earn enough to be on her own.”

“Do you think the same man killed her?”

“Probably. If he wants us all dead, I doubt he’d care that she’d left.”

Gray’s mind buzzed with questions. Had the killer tracked her to Whittaker’s? Or was she contacted by the killer and told to meet him there? Was he connected with Whittaker somehow and wanted him to take the blame? “Did anyone else hear what the man said to Andreas?”

“Why? Because no one’s going to believe a teenage whore?”

She was all too right. Even if she’d never sold herself, no one would believe that

now. “The more witnesses there are, the more solid the case, no matter who those witnesses are.”

“I wanted to ask Billy a question, but when I saw the man, I hid behind the door.”

That explained why she wasn’t taken. “If I showed you a picture of the man, would you recognize him?”

She nodded.

“Could you describe him to an artist?”

She waved the gun around again. “I’m not letting you take me anywhere.”

“I need your help to catch this man.”

“I can’t let you take me. I can’t be penned up.” Her voice shook and so did her hand.

“Were you penned up some other time?”

Tears began to fall again. “I can’t talk about that. I don’t ever talk about that.”

Gray held up his hand. “All right. You don’t have to. Where are you going to go now that Andreas is dead?”

“That’s none of your business.”

“Like you said, not everyone is as good to work for as he was. I could help you find a place to stay.”

“No, I’m fine where I am.”

“I need you to talk to an artist so we can get a sketch. I’ll also show you some pictures of Andreas’s associates. That’s all. I’m not going to arrest you.”

Her gun hand was shaking even more now. “This man didn’t work for Billy. He hated Billy, hated everything he did.”

“Do you think the man will kill again, or is it over because Andreas is dead?”

She shook her head. “He said we all have to die. That’s why I have to keep hiding. I’m leaving now, and you need to stay right there. I don’t want to have to hurt you.”

“At least let me ask a few more questions.”

She shook her head. “I’ve been out too long. They could be tracking me. I’ll call you. Meet you again later.”

“I can protect you. If you come with me, I’ll find a safe house for you. You won’t be in a cell, I swear it.” Gray took a tentative step toward her.

Her aim steadied. “Don’t move. I mean it.”

“I want to help you.”

“You seem all right, but I don’t want anyone’s help.” She backed out of the picnic hut.

Gray contemplated his chances of getting her gun and neither of them getting hurt. They were slim, so he had to let her go.

As soon as she turned and started to run, he dialed his backup. “Jenna is on the run and she has information we need. She’s in dark clothes just leaving the park on the

Orange Avenue side. She's armed with a handgun. Do not use force. Do not spook her."

He took off after her then. She didn't have much of a lead, but she seemed to have completely disappeared. Finally, he saw a flicker of movement a few houses down the road from the park entrance. The figure disappeared into a side yard.

He ran, trying to be quiet, not wanting her to hear his feet hitting the pavement. By the time he got there, she was gone. He looked for a few more minutes, but neither he nor the patrol officers who'd come as backup saw her again. Eventually, he was left with nothing to do but pray she'd call him again and go see if he could manage not to fuck things up worse at home.

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The house was dark and quiet when Gray put his key in the lock. He couldn't possibly be lucky enough to find Mason and Jack asleep so he could just slip into bed and postpone arguing until morning. He tried not to make a sound as he put his bag down and laid his coat over the back of the couch. He needed a shower, which might wake them, but after being at the crime scene, he smelled of smoke, and while he'd watched Jenna wave her gun around, he'd been dripping sweat. He was way too gross to get into bed.

When he reached their bedroom door, he realized Jack and Mason weren't asleep after all. They were cuddled in bed watching a movie.

"Um, hi," Gray said. "I need a shower."

Mason made a face. "Yeah, you do."

Jack motioned toward the bathroom. "Go."

Gray wasn't sure he could handle being yelled at after being held at gunpoint then losing his witness, but he'd almost rather that than the emotionless reception he was getting.

He glanced back at the two of them as he shut the door. They were so cozy all snuggled up. An ugly sensation of jealousy flexed itself inside him. They were so peaceful, so relaxed, so together. And he was on the outside looking in.

Gray knew he was being unfair. There'd been plenty of times he'd cuddled with one of them like that when the other one was gone, but those times seemed far away.

He turned on the water, making it as hot as he could stand it. Then he scrubbed himself, washing his hair three times before he was satisfied it didn't smell of smoke anymore. Finally, knowing he couldn't hide in there forever, he cut the water off and dried himself.

When he stepped out of the bathroom, Jack turned the TV off. "I'm guessing after the fire at Andreas's house, our trip really is off."

Gray sighed. "Yeah, I think so."

Jack and Mason looked so fucking disappointed. Anger and fear warred inside Gray, making him stupid. "Why don't you two just go?"

Gray watched as Mason's expression went from shock to rage. "What the fuck?"

"I'll be working nonstop until we catch this killer, so just go."

"You think we're going to take this trip without you? What are you saying, Gray?" Jack looked hurt, and Gray felt it in his chest. He needed to apologize and to exorcise this jealousy and fear, but he didn't know how.

"I'm saying I don't want to get in your way."

"Get in our—what is wrong with you? This trip was supposed to be special, supposed to be about all of us being together."

Gray looked away. "Yeah, I know."

"Do you? Do you really?"

Gray didn't want to fight, not really. He wanted to just hold them. "I had a bad night,

okay? There were four fucking bodies in that house, Andreas and three teenage girls. I had to stand there and look at them. Then I went to meet a witness, a girl who doesn't look more than sixteen, and she held a fucking gun on me."

"Fuck, Gray." Mason's anger seemed to melt away.

Jack pulled back the covers. "Get in the fucking bed right now."

Mason scooted over, making room in between them.

Thank God they weren't pushing him away. "I'm sorry. I don't know what..."

"You're scared."

"N—yes." Gray hated admitting it.

Jack pulled Gray to him as he settled in the bed. Mason turned out the light and snuggled up on the other side of Gray. Did he really deserve these men who were so understanding? "I'm an ass."

"Yeah, but we love you," Jack said.

"I love you too. I... I'm a fucking mess right now."

"This case would be hard on anybody, but for you..."

"Is there something I don't know about?" Mason asked.

Gray had forgotten Mason didn't know about Nancy.

"You want me to tell the story?" Jack asked, stroking Gray's chest.

“No, I can do it.” The dark made it easier. And as hard as it was, it was in the past, even if this case made the memories more potent. “When I was fifteen, a girl I knew, or sort of knew, was killed by someone who’d paid her for sex. I eventually found out that her name was Nancy Miller?—”

“Oh, Gray.” Mason laced his fingers through Gray’s.

“She worked a street corner near a housing project on my side of town. I’d seen people taunt her when she hung out by a convenience store during the day. I felt sorry for her. The store owner would run her off, but she kept coming back. One day when I was in the store buying a drink and some candy for myself, I got some snacks and a drink for her too. She thought I wanted to hire her. When I insisted that I didn’t, she looked at me like she couldn’t figure me out, like there had to be something I wanted from her. I wondered if anyone had ever been kind to her.”

Jack and Mason listened in silence, but Gray could feel the tension in the room.

“She was killed the next day. I saw it on the news that morning while I was getting ready for school. I remember blurting out ‘I just saw her yesterday’ to my mother. She just shook her head and said Nancy shouldn’t have been selling herself.”

“And the fucker who murdered her shouldn’t have been paying for it or killing her,” Mason said.

“I couldn’t believe my mom thought it was her fault, but I didn’t argue. I followed the story, though. It came out that she was a runaway. Her foster family was still taking money despite having ‘lost track’ of her.”

“Some people are such shit,” Jack said.

Mason nodded.

“Yeah, sometimes I wonder if I’ve met too many shitty people.” Gray sighed.

Mason brushed a kiss across Gray’s temple. It was amazing how much that simple gesture did to make him feel better.

“The girl I met tonight, the witness, she didn’t look a thing like Nancy. But I know she’s hurting just as much, and I... I don’t know if I can protect her either. She ran from me. What if she never contacts me again? What if...?” Gray squeezed his eyes shut, trying to hold back the stinging tears that were right there ready to fall.

“It’s okay to let go,” Mason said, pulling Gray into his arms. “It won’t make you any less strong.”

Gray knew that in his head, but he’d taught himself to be tough, to hold it all in.

“Just fucking cry already,” Jack said, wrapping his arms around Gray from the other side.

The dam began to crack. One tear, two. And that was it, he was shaking, crying for Nancy, for the other girls who weren’t coming back, for Jenna because the odds weren’t in her favor.

“I’ve got to fucking solve this,” he shouted as grief shifted to anger.

Jack slid his hand up and down Gray’s back. “You can’t take all the responsi?—”

“Fuck yes I can.”

“No.” Mason’s voice was harsh, and it startled Gray. “You are so fucking good at controlling things in bed. I never even imagined how much I could want what you do to me, but that does not mean you have to control everything in your whole fucking

life. Not at home. Not at work. You aren't the only one involved with this case, and you shouldn't shoulder it alone. Jack and I are here for you. It's about fucking time for you to rely on us for once."

Jack looked as surprised by Mason's speech as Gray was. It wasn't that Mason never got angry. He did, at them as well as others, but usually he was the one trying to calm everyone down when emotions were running high.

"I don't like that I..."

"Need us?" Jack asked.

"That sounds so fucking stupid."

"Because it is. We need you and you need us, and that's how it should be," Mason declared.

Agree with him. You know he's right, Gray's conscience told him.

"Gray, we're worried about you," Jack said, his voice low and soft.

"I'm fine."

"The fuck you are." Mason pulled him down for a kiss, as if wanting to temper his cutting tone. It started gentle, but quickly turned rough, demanding, angry. Gray let Mason assault his mouth. In fact, he fucking loved it, because anger was something he could work with. Maybe one day he'd figure out how to handle softer emotions like a fucking grown-up, but right now this was exactly what he needed.

Mason pulled back and Gray gave him the look that always got him hard, a look of arrogant dominance, a look that said Mason was in a lot of fucking trouble. "I want

you in the middle of this bed on your back right fucking now.”

Gray moved so Mason could position himself as asked, but Mason hesitated. For just a second, Gray thought he’d done the wrong thing and Mason was still truly angry, then Mason licked his lips. “Yes, sir.”

“What are you going to do to him?” Jack asked.

“Edge him until he’s losing his fucking mind.” That was one of Mason’s favorite kinks.

Jack grinned. “That’s just what he needs. He’s worried about you, about us. He needs something to take his mind off of it.”

“Yeah. He’s right, though.”

Mason made a strangled noise.

“Did you just agree with us?” Jack asked.

“Never. Now go get some rope to tie our boy up.”

Jack saluted. “Yes, sir.”

Mason shimmied on the bed. “Mmmm, rope.”

Gray scowled at him. “I don’t need two cheeky boys to deal with.”

“Yes. You do.”

He did, and thank God he had ones that put up with his shit.

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“Put your arms over your head,” Gray ordered Mason when Jack returned. “If you’re good, your legs stay free. If not, I’ll get a spreader bar.” He turned to Jack. “Tie his wrists.”

“With pleasure.”

Mason sank his teeth into his lower lip and whimpered. Gray stepped closer. He reached down and pinched both of Mason’s nipples, making him gasp. Then he waited for sensation to subside and let Mason concentrate on Jack tying his wrists to the bed.

Jack secured one wrist, but before he wrapped the rope around the other, he nuzzled the pulse point and then flicked his tongue across it, making Mason jerk.

Gray watched, utterly mesmerized. His cock was so hard he’d need to take the edge off before he could play with Mason the way he wanted to. When Jack had Mason fully tied, Gray took his arm and pulled him away from the bed. “Go get a few ice packs,” he whispered.

Jack’s eyes sparkled. “Yes, sir.”

“When you get back, I want your ass.”

Jack’s quick intake of breath showed his surprise. “Y-you do?”

“Yes, I want him to watch. Now go.”

Jack scurried out of the room, and Gray turned back to Mason, who looked a little nervous about what they were planning.

Gray sat on the side of the bed and wrapped his hand around Mason's cock. "What do you want?"

"I..."

"Answer me, boy." Gray squeezed him with a firm grip and slid his hand over the head just the way Mason loved it.

"I want to come." The answer was raw, honest.

But Gray was still going to deny him. He gave Mason an evil grin. "I just bet you do. That's why you're going to have to wait a very long time."

"Oh fuck" was Mason's reply.

"Jack is going to use his mouth on you—your cock, your balls, your ass—while I fuck him good and deep." Gray let Mason go and worked his own cock instead. Mason watched him, eyes never leaving Gray's hand. "I'm going to fill Jack up, make him come, but you... It's going to be a very long night for you."

Mason whimpered and lifted his hips, begging for more attention. Gray laughed.

"Jack!" Gray had heard him return and knew he'd been watching the show. "Get on the bed on your knees, get to work on him."

Jack wasted no time obeying. He had his ass in the air and his head down licking Mason's balls in under a second.

“Tease him, draw it out. We want him to go fucking insane.”

“Yes, sir,” Jack murmured against Mason.

Gray slicked his cock. He pulled Jack’s ass cheeks apart and brushed his thumbs over Jack’s hole. Jack pushed back wantonly, but Gray kept teasing him, never pushing far inside. Finally, Jack swallowed Mason’s cock. Gray lined his own cock up and drove into Jack, causing him to choke on Mason.

Jack pulled off Mason to catch his breath. “Fuck, Gray.”

“Keep using your mouth on him, make him beg, make him fight you, because otherwise I’m going to stop fucking you, and I don’t think that’s what you want.” Gray squeezed Jack’s hips as he pulled out slowly.

Jack whimpered, “Please.”

Mason pulled on his bonds and worked his hips, trying to get Jack to suck him. Finally, Jack bent over him again. Gray stayed still while Jack licked Mason’s cock, then sucked on his balls. Then he gave Jack slow, careful strokes. Jack didn’t complain, and he didn’t stop teasing Mason. Gray couldn’t see everything he was doing, but he knew Jack well enough to guess what he was up to, especially when he pushed at Mason’s thighs, opening him wider, pushing his hips upward so he could lick his ass.

Gray looked at Mason. His eyes were squeezed shut and his hands gripped the bed rails so hard Gray wondered if he were trying to snap them in two. “Boy, open your eyes and look at me.”

Mason obeyed.

“You want to force Jack to give you more, don’t you? You want to hold his head and thrust into his mouth.”

“Y-yes, sir.”

Gray smiled. “I know you do, but keeping you from getting what you want pleases me. You want to please me, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir.”

Gray smiled at him. “You’re good at that, boy.”

Gray loved that Mason got off on giving him what he wanted, that their needs matched each other’s so perfectly.

Gray looked down at Jack again. He was toying with Mason, never taking his cock into his mouth or penetrating his ass, but giving him enough stimulation to make Mason squirm, literally and figuratively. Gray picked up his pace, fucking Jack harder now, and Jack met every stroke. “Jack’s working hard. Maybe I should reward him. What do you think, boy? Should I let him come?”

Mason looked pained. “I…”

“You don’t like that, do you? Him coming without you.”

“Please,” Mason begged.

“Please what, boy?”

“I… I don’t know. I want… I want to please you.”

“You do, and you will. Now tell Jack what you want.”

“Suck me, Jack. God, please.”

Jack did. Gray held Jack’s hips tight as he slammed into him, fucking him hard and rough while Jack sucked Mason vigorously.

Mason gasped and writhed. Gray was sure he was right on the edge.

“Jack! Do not let him come.”

Jack pulled back, and Mason bucked his hips, trying to shove his cock into Jack’s mouth, but Jack kept his hips pinned to the mattress.

“Don’t stop. Please don’t,” Mason begged.

Jack glanced back at Gray. “Do you trust me?”

“Yes,” Gray answered. Jack knew how to hold Mason right on the brink as well as Gray did. Gray pulled out and rolled to his side. “I want to watch.”

Jack took Mason in his mouth again, and in seconds Mason was panting, murmuring nonsense, begging. “Jack. So hot. Please. Your mouth. Oh my fucking God!”

Jack wrapped his hand around the base of Mason’s cock and sat back.

“No!” Mason jerked his hands, fighting the cuffs.

“Ice him,” Gray ordered.

Jack kept his grip on Mason’s cock as he reached over the side of the bed. The lid of

the cooler Jack had brought from the kitchen thumped to the floor. Jack picked up one of the packs, the flexible kind that would fit around a sprained ankle. He let go of Mason and laid the ice over his cock and balls.

“Holy fuck!” Mason shouted. Jack had to hold the pack in place as Mason writhed.

Gray took hold of Mason’s shoulders and pushed them down. He didn’t want Mason to hurt his wrists. “We can put you on the spanking bench or get a spreader bar. We’re nowhere near done.”

Mason looked at him, eyes wide.

“Tell me what you need to help you obey.”

“N-nothing.”

Gray slapped the side of his ass.

Mason swallowed hard. “Spreader bar. Please, sir.”

“That’s better, boy. There’s nothing wrong with accepting what I offer. Jack, get what we need. Once he’s all set up, I want your ass again.”

Jack headed for the playroom on wobbly legs, but he returned quickly with a long spreader bar that would keep Mason’s ankles far apart. Working together, Gray and Jack locked the cuffs around Mason’s ankles, then removed the ice from his cock. It was soft now, but Gray knew it would be hard again very soon, ready to start another climb.

Jack looked at Gray once he’d finished. Gray grabbed Jack’s arm and tugged him off the bed, moved him into the position he wanted him in, and pushed him down with a

hand in the middle of his back. Jack arched his back, obviously knowing what Gray wanted. Gray drove in and fucked Jack hard and fast, working to get the angle where his cock would drag over Jack's sweet spot.

Gray slid an arm under Jack and lifted. "Up. I want Mason to see you come."

Jack pushed up until he supported himself on his arms. After a few awkward attempts, Gray managed to get him to standing, his own knees deeply bent to keep fucking him.

"Get yourself off, Jack. Now." Gray didn't want to wait much longer.

Jack obeyed, and in almost no time, he was shooting jets of cum. Mason watched, hips moving up and down as he fucked the air, chest rising and falling rapidly with sharp breaths.

Gray pulled out and pushed Jack back down. Then he wrapped a hand around his cock. He was so fucking close, and Mason's eyes were glued to him. "Watch boy, watch me come all over him."

"Mmm." Jack sighed happily and pushed his ass up.

Gray slapped it. "Little show-off."

Faster, faster, and then he was there. "Yes!" He milked every drop of cum from his dick, then laid his hands on Jack's ass. Slowly, working deep into his muscles, he slid his hands up Jack's back, rubbing the sticky fluid in. When Gray was done, Jack rolled over on his back and took Gray's hands in his, lapping at them until he'd licked them clean.

Precum had pooled on Mason's belly and he was so hard his cock rose up like it was

straining for the friction he clearly craved. It wouldn't take long to have him right back where Gray wanted him.

"Don't move," he ordered. Then he gave an evil laugh. "Oh yeah, you can't."

Jack giggled, still high from his climax.

Mason scowled. "Bastard."

"Make him regret that," Gray ordered Jack as he left the room to grab a butt plug.

When Gray returned, Jack was bent over Mason, mouth hovering over his cock, fingers tormenting his nipples, pinching, flicking, slapping. Gray hung in the doorway and watched as Jack kept it up until Mason was shifting from side to side, trying to escape his touch and begging him to stop.

"Enough," Gray said.

Jack sat back on his heels, a pouty expression on his face.

"You'll get to torture him more in a minute, but first, his ass needs some attention."

Gray held up the plug so Mason could see.

"Oh God, no," Mason said.

"Are you complaining, boy?"

"N-no, sir. I... I didn't mean to." Mason looked desperate.

"Tell me what you're feeling. You're free to say anything you want."

Mason glanced at Jack and then back to Gray. “How much longer? I need to come so badly. It... it hurts I’m so... I don’t think I can hold back.”

“Twice more.”

“Fuck!”

“Jack and I will help you. I want to watch you struggle. Just think how hard you’ll come when it’s done.”

“Mmm. It will be delicious,” Jack added.

“I’m going to fuck you when it’s over,” Gray said. “Will you do this for me?”

Mason nodded. “Yes, sir.”

“Good.” Gray slicked the plug thoroughly and eased it in. Mason gasped. Gray hadn’t stretched him at all and he knew it hurt, but that burn would help Mason hold off for a few more minutes.

Gray slid the plug in farther, going slowly. Mason squeezed his eyes shut.

“Do you need time to adjust?”

Mason shook his head. “No. I want it. All of it.”

Gray pushed it deeper. He waited until the tension in Mason’s legs relaxed to start fucking him with it. Mason bucked under him, fighting the spreader as he tried to close his legs and escape. But Gray kept it up until Mason was so close, his balls high and tight. Then he pulled it out and Mason gasped.

“No. God, no. Don’t you dare stop. I can’t—” He froze and looked at Gray as he realized what he’d said. “I mean...”

Gray stroked his thigh and smiled. “It’s okay. I’m asking a lot of you.”

Mason’s face was damp with sweat. A drop rolled down his chest and onto the sheet.

“No ice this time,” Gray said. “We’re just going to wait a bit.”

Gray watched while Jack brushed Mason’s hair from his face and stroked his cheek soothingly. “Breathe with me,” he encouraged. He laid a hand on Mason’s chest. “Inhale.” Mason did. Jack paused. “Okay, exhale.” Mason followed Jack’s instructions until they were breathing in sync. Jack talked to him then, just chatting about dinners he’d planned for the shelter, random funny things from his workday, nothing important. Eventually, Mason’s cock softened.

That was Gray’s signal. Without warning, he pushed the dildo back in.

“Fuck!” Mason yelled.

“Yes. Once more with this, then a real fuck where you get to come. You can take it. I know you can.”

“Yes, sir.” His voice was ragged and desperate, and Gray fucking loved it.

“Jack, give him a distraction.”

Jack straddled Mason. “Suck me.”

As Mason obeyed, slurping noisily at Jack’s dick, Gray felt him relax. He pushed the dildo in farther. Mason tensed again, but he didn’t struggle and he didn’t stop sucking

Jack.

“Good boy,” Jack said, cupping his face. “Now take me deeper.”

Mason tried to obey, the bonds and the position making it hard for him. Gray slid the dildo in and out, fucking Mason with it until he was rising up to meet the strokes and whining around Jack’s dick.

“Jack, that’s enough.” Jack pulled off him and Gray smiled at the sight of Mason’s red puffy lips. “You love that, don’t you, having his dick in your mouth?”

“Yes, sir.” Mason was breathing so hard it was difficult for him to speak.

“You’re close, aren’t you? You feel your climax gathering in your balls. You want to shoot, want to let go.”

“Oh God, Gray. I?—”

Gray yanked the dildo from his body and squeezed the base of Mason’s cock. As Mason cursed him, he tossed the dildo on a towel and Jack handed him an ice pack.

Mason shook his head. “No. No, please!”

Jack leaned down and kissed him, swallowing any further protests, but Mason still jolted when Gray laid the ice on his cock. “Fucking fuck that hurts,” Mason said when Jack ended the kiss.

“I bet,” Gray said. “But you’re such a good boy. Once you’ve calmed down, I’m going to fuck you and you’ll get to come.”

Jack talked to him again, calming him until Gray decided he’d come down enough to

last more than a second once Gray's dick was inside him.

Gray tossed the ice pack back into the cooler and lubed his cock. He released Mason from the spreader bar and nodded to Jack to untie Mason's hands. "Hold on," he warned. "This is going to be hard and fast."

Mason wrapped his legs around Gray as soon as Gray was in position, holding him like he would never let him go. Gray kissed him as he sank all the way into his ass in one stroke.

"Need you. Love you," Mason said against his lips.

"Yes, baby, me too."

Gray fucked him without mercy, and before he knew it, Mason was crying out, long and loud. His ass clenched Gray's dick, squeezing him so tight Gray lost control. He drove in once more, barely able to move due to Mason's tight hold, but that was all it took. He filled Mason's ass as Mason continued to pump his cum out between them.

"Fucking hell that's hot," Jack said, and Gray heard the sound of Jack working his cock.

"Gonna take care of you too," he murmured, but Jack was already shouting and Gray turned his head to see him come. Mason even caught some with his tongue. Fucking amazing.

Mason flopped on the bed, and Jack landed beside him. When Gray could move, he pulled out of Mason and rolled over. "You okay?"

"Mmmhmm," Mason murmured.

“That was amazing,” Jack said.

“God, yes,” Mason agreed. “I didn’t think I’d survive for a few minutes there, but oh my God, I think I had an out of body experience when I finally came.”

Gray laughed and so did Jack. They snuggled up against each other, none of them bothered by the fact that they were sweat-soaked and covered in cum. Gray had no intention of moving until morning. He needed to be right where he was, wrapped up in his amazing partners.

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The next morning Gray woke to the smell of coffee and bacon. Next to a blowjob, that was his very favorite way to start the day, and with two men in his life, he occasionally had the pleasure of both methods in one day. This morning, though, Mason was still sound asleep, as he ought to be after what Gray had put him through the night before.

Gray kissed Mason's temple, then slid from the bed. He was going to have to go in to work after breakfast, so he showered and dressed. By then Mason was stirring. Jack handed Gray coffee without attempting conversation until Gray had drained most of the cup. "Awake now?"

"Give me bacon and I might be."

Jack grinned. Mason entered the kitchen a few moments later in plaid sleep pants and nothing else. The chilly air had pebbled his nipples. Gray wanted to suck them to warm them up, but that would lead to other things, which would lead to Gray being late for work.

Mason accepted coffee from Jack. Then Jack waved them both toward the table.

They ate in silence for the most part, none of them fully awake. When he'd polished off everything on his plate, Gray sighed. He needed to go, but he would so much rather spend the rest of the day loving his boyfriends instead of thinking about what would drive someone to cruelly kill teenagers.

"You okay?" Jack asked, laying a hand over Gray's.

Gray nodded, then shook his head. “No, but I’ve got to get to work whether I am or not.”

“Before you leave, what about rescheduling our trip?”

“What?” The question caught Gray by surprise, though it shouldn’t have.

“I’ve got to call and let the rental place know we’re not coming.”

“Um...” The nightmare Gray’d had came flooding back.

“This case isn’t going to last forever,” Jack said.

“I know. It’s just...”

“Gray, why don’t you just tell us what’s bothering you,” Mason asked as he walked to the kitchen to put his plate in the dishwasher.

Gray glanced at the clock. “I’ll call the rental place, okay, and I’ll find out what they have available in the next few weeks, but I’ve really got to get to work, and I can’t think about this right now.”

Jack looked so disappointed. Gray was fucking up again.

“It’s okay,” Mason said. “I guess now’s not the time to whine about a vacation.”

Jack nodded. “Yeah, I’m sorry.” He stood and wrapped his arms around Gray.

“We just want to take care of you,” Mason said, making it a three-way hug.

Gray shook his head. “You shouldn’t have to.”

“Gray, this is a relationship,” Jack admonished. “That means there’s give and take. You get to be the one who needs help just like we do.”

Gray frowned. “I don’t like that.” He sounded like a fucking pouty child. What was wrong with him?

Jack rolled his eyes. “Of course you don’t.” He gave Gray a gentle kiss. “Now get going.”

Mason kissed Gray too, just a brief brush of lips, but their unconditional love was enough to give Gray the strength to face the day.

Gray and Thornton had been over all the evidence again and again. They’d considered every angle they could come up with, searched Andreas’s wife’s past, studied all his contacts, checked any footage they could find of people entering his home office over the last few weeks. They couldn’t find a single connection with someone from his wife’s past.

They had men out looking for Jenna. Where would she go? If only Gray could figure that out. He’d tried to contact Vandal but had no luck. He hoped the man was still alive.

A few days ago, Gray had thought having a motive would lead them right to the killer. Now they had both a motive and a suspect, but they couldn’t fucking find him.

Suddenly, as Gray stared at the Post-it notes and printouts filling the board in front of him, something clicked: the vague description Jenna had given him of a tall, fit man with brown hair. Could it be? He raced to a computer, not wanting to say anything until he’d checked.

He motioned Thornton over. “Whittaker matches the description Jenna gave me, and

he was in school with Andreas's wife all the way back to third grade. Same college too."

"What about his alibi?"

There's got to be an explanation. Could someone be lying for him?" "What was the time of death?"

Thornton flipped through a file. "Between one and two."

"While he was at the fucking movie."

"I bet he left the theater after buying popcorn, probably used a side door. I bet his car was fixed and parked at the theater. Why didn't we think about that?"

"We know now," Thornton said. "I'll get us a warrant, and we'll track the son of a bitch down."

Close. They were so fucking close. They'd tracked Whittaker to a coffee shop. He'd been there an hour ago according to the staff they'd questioned. Now they just needed to trace his steps since then. Gray and Thornton had split up so they could cover more ground. Each of them had a couple of patrol officers with them in case they found Whittaker and he tried to run.

Gray's phone rang. He pulled it out expecting it to be Thornton checking in.

At first he didn't recognize the number, then he realized it was Jenna.

"Where are you?" he asked. "We've ID'd the suspect."

"He's after me." She sounded terrified.

“Where are you?”

“I—” She screamed, a piercing sound of terror.

“Jenna? Jenna?”

The line went dead. “Fuck!”

He called Karen, his favorite computer forensics expert. “I need a trace on the last call to my phone as fast as you can get it.”

“I’m on it. I’ll call you back.”

Next he dialed Thornton. “Jenna just called. He’s got her. Karen’s tracing the call.”

“Where are you?”

Gray told him.

“I’ll meet you there with the car.”

A few seconds later, Karen called. “I got it.” She gave him the address. “It’s close to where you are now. Another property owned by Andreas, or at least owned by the holding company he bought his other house under.”

“Thank you. You may have saved my informant’s life.”

“No, you will. Now go get her.”

Thornton pulled up soon after Gray ended the call. “The call came from another house Andreas owned over on Burton Street,” Gray said as he sat in the passenger

seat.

Thornton rattled off orders to the officers who were with them, then took off.

En route, word came that there was no one at Andreas's condo, though there were signs of a struggle. It looked like Jenna had been forced into a vehicle.

"Ideas?" Thornton asked.

"He'd need privacy."

Thornton called Karen. "What's close to the location you gave Sadler? Is there an unoccupied structure nearby?"

Thornton called out locations as she listed them. Unrented office space. A home that was for sale.

"Whittaker's house," Gray said. "It's still a crime scene. I bet he thinks we wouldn't look for him there, and it would give him a thrill."

Thornton peeled away from the curb and set the siren blaring. Gray had to hang on to the armrest to keep from being having his brains rattled.

As he drove like a maniac, Thornton shouted into the radio, sending officers to all the locations Karen had listed.

Jenna couldn't have long. Gray prayed he was right about where she was or that someone else would find her. Please don't let her be another body he had to examine.

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When they pulled up, siren silent now, they saw Whittaker's white car parked on the street, a dent still in the rear panel. "Arrogant son of a bitch. He's not even trying to hide."

"He doesn't know we're onto him," Thornton said. "Probably thinks he'll get away with this like he has the others."

"No fucking way. How are we going in?" Gray asked.

Thornton inclined his head toward the side yard. "Around back."

They exited their vehicle after Thornton gave orders to their backup.

They moved silently to the back door. Thornton motioned for Gray to cover the right side when he opened the door.

It was too damaged for the lock to hold. The kitchen was nothing but a burned-out shell so it was easy to see that no one was there.

The living room was also clear, but the mess there indicated someone had been in a struggle. Had Jenna fought Whittaker as he dragged her inside?

"Bedroom," Gray mouthed and pointed toward the hall.

Thornton nodded and signaled for Gray to go first.

He moved carefully, back to the wall, as he listened. He heard a muffled sound, a

footstep, then another. He eased down the hallway to the first door on the right. When he kicked it open, gun raised, he thought he was prepared for what he'd see.

He was wrong.

Whittaker had Jenna bound. She lay curled on the floor, duct tape over her mouth. Blood had soaked through her clothing in several places. Whittaker had a long knife in his hand and the tip lay against her throat.

One move, and she'd be dead before Gray could do anything about it. Jenna was conscious, pale and shaking. She looked at Gray briefly, then closed her eyes. Blood dripped down her neck where Whittaker pressed the knife against her skin.

No way could Gray drop Whittaker without Jenna dying too.

"So you finally figured it out?" Whittaker asked.

"Did I?"

Gray heard Thornton move behind him and signaled for him to back down.

"You don't have to hurt her," Gray said.

"I do. I have to hurt them all."

"No. You aren't hurting anyone else no matter what I have to do to stop you. Why do you think the girls deserve to die?"

"You know why."

"Humor me. Tell me what they've done." Gray needed time. If he could keep the man

talking, maybe he could figure out a way to save Jenna.

Whittaker shook his head. “No games. Put your weapons on the floor and kick them to me. You shouldn’t have helped these sluts. Now you have to stay with me.”

Gray considered his options. His best hope of getting Jenna and himself out alive was to go along with the man for now. His lieutenant was there, right outside the door. He kept his distance from Whittaker as he tossed his service weapon and his backup gun on the floor and sent them sliding.

“Now take a seat.” Whittaker took Gray’s service weapon—leaving the backup lying where it was—and waved it toward a chair. He kept the knife against Jenna’s throat, but he couldn’t stay in that position forever, especially if he were going to tie Gray up.

“Hands behind your back,” he ordered.

Gray apparently didn’t move fast enough. Whittaker pressed the knife deeper into Jenna’s flesh. Gray’s stomach threatened to revolt as he watched blood run down her pale throat. Their chances of making it out alive weren’t good. What if he couldn’t save them?

You can’t be responsible for everything. Mason’s words taunted him. He didn’t want to die. He needed to see his men again, to go on that fucking vacation with them.

A noise drew Whittaker’s attention to the window. He moved away from Jenna but kept Gray’s gun trained on him.

“You’ve got a team out there.”

At first, Gray thought the words were in his head, reminding him that he wasn’t alone

in this. Then he realized Whittaker had spoken.

“You’re going to talk to them for me,” Whittaker said.

“Okay. Whatever you need. I’m going to cooperate. I want to keep Jenna safe.” Gray knew that nothing would keep her safe if something wasn’t done quickly to stop Whittaker. He wasn’t going to let Jenna or Gray go.

With his gun to Gray’s head, Whittaker zip-tied Gray’s wrists together behind his back, yanking the tie viciously tight. His hands would be numb in no time. He gave Gray’s ankles the same treatment and then pulled Gray’s phone from his holster and held it out.

“Tell the cops out there to leave now.”

Gray looked up at him. “I can’t dial.”

Whittaker ignored him. How much of a grip on reality did he still have? He was certainly handling this more sloppily than the other crimes. How had he managed to elude them for such a long time? However Whittaker had done it, Gray might not have much time left to regret accepting Whittaker’s alibi.

“They need to bring me the rest of the girls. Once I do away with them, I can let you go.”

“I don’t think?—”

Whittaker pressed the gun to Gray’s temple. “I could kill you now.”

Movement caught Gray’s attention. Jenna had almost worked one of her hands loose. Keep Whittaker talking. Keep him focused on you.

“But then you wouldn’t have anyone to talk to the cops. I’ll do my best to persuade them. I want to live.”

“Of course you do. You’re not stupid enough to sacrifice yourself for some slut.”

Gray’s phone started ringing then; so much for him needing to dial.

Whittaker showed him the screen. “Is it them? The other cops?”

Gray nodded. It was Thornton.

“You say only what I tell you to. Tell them I want the other girls. Tell them I’ll kill you otherwise.”

Whittaker answered the call and pressed the phone to Gray’s ear.

Before Thornton said anything, Gray did as he was told. “Whittaker wants the rest of the girls who worked for Andreas brought here. He’ll kill me if he doesn’t get them.”

As Gray expected, Thornton didn’t respond to his statement. Keeping his voice low, he said, “I’ve got a SWAT team moving into position. Hold tight. Try to keep him away from Jenna where we can get a line of sight on him.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Any chance he’ll negotiate this, let it end any other way?”

“No, sir.”

The call ended.

Whittaker grabbed the phone. “What did he say?”

“He’s working on it. He wants to save me.”

“Of course he does. He’s smart enough to know what’s of value. That the corrupt must die. That the world must be purged.”

Jenna’s arm was a few inches too short to reach Gray’s backup weapon from her position. She wiggled, trying to scoot across on the floor. The sound drew Whittaker’s attention.

He turned and saw her trying to get to the gun. He kicked out and Gray heard the crunch of Jenna’s ribs. As Jenna curled in on herself, Whittaker grabbed for the gun. Gray watched as though time had slowed down. Whittaker fingers closed around the metal and then his brains splattered on the floor and he collapsed.

Jenna screamed.

Gray turned to the window, where a neat hole from a sniper’s rifle had punctured the glass. Thornton’s team had come through. It was over.

For several seconds Gray remained frozen, staring at Whittaker’s corpse. Then the world seemed to move again. He struggled against his bonds.

“It’s okay,” he said as much to himself as to Jenna. “He’s dead. It’s going to be okay.”

He didn’t know if she could hear him over her own screaming. The sound would stay with him forever.

Cops rushed the room. Gray didn’t know when he’d ever been happier to see

someone he could trust. An officer cut him loose and another bent over Jenna, loosening her bonds and trying to calm her.

Gray moved to her side as soon as he was free. "It's okay. I'm here to help. I'm going to take you to the paramedics."

Despite his soothing tone, she fought the officer's efforts to lift her.

"Let me take her. She knows me," Gray said.

The officer nodded and backed away.

"Jenna, it's Gray. You're safe now. I swear it."

She struggled for a few more seconds, then relaxed against him, finally seeming to accept that she was safe. He vaguely registered that one of the officers was checking Whittaker for a pulse. No way in hell did he have one, not when he was missing a good part of his head.

Gray just hoped to God he wouldn't keep seeing Whittaker die again and again in his dreams. He remained kneeling by Jenna.

She glanced up at him. "You're shaking too."

Was he? Yeah, he guessed he was. He nodded, not trusting himself to speak right then. He needed someone to hold him, to comfort him, but it would be hours before he could get home to Jack and Mason. He hoped he could hold it together until then. He should let them know he was okay before they saw all this on the news, but he didn't know where his phone was and Jenna was bleeding on him.

Jenna whimpered when he lifted her to carry her to where the paramedics were

waiting. She clung to him, tears streaking her bloodstained face, when he tried to set her down.

“Stay with me. Please,” she begged.

“Of course.” Gray sat her down and held her hand, nodding to the paramedics. “Multiple stab wounds and broken ribs. I’m not sure about anything else.”

A few minutes later, they had her hooked up to an IV to replenish her fluids and a woman was stitching up the wound in her side, the worst of the gashes he’d seen. The paramedics determined she’d lost a lot of blood, but she didn’t have any serious damage. Whittaker had been careful, working her over in a way that wouldn’t kill her before he was ready.

But if Gray hadn’t found her... The world wavered before him. Fuck. Even sitting down he was dizzy.

One of the paramedics laid a hand on his shoulder. “We should take a look at you.”

He shook his head. “I’m fine. He didn’t touch me.”

“You’re pale and shaking. I think you’re in shock.”

Gray snarled at him. “I said I was fine.”

The man wrapped a blanket around him anyway and turned his attention back to Jenna. She was fading as pain meds and exhaustion hit her, but she still clasped Gray’s hand tightly.

Was he in shock? No, the world looked a bit fuzzy, and he couldn’t keep his hands from shaking—the one Jenna wasn’t clasping at least—but he was holding it

together. He just needed to get through the debrief and get home. He brushed the hair off Jenna's face, and she gave him a goofy smile. She was safe for now, but what would happen to her? He would have to make sure she was well taken care of.

For the first time since Gray had stepped into Whittaker's bedroom, he became aware of the world around him: the buzz of people talking, news vans, reporters with cameras, onlookers crowding the barricades surrounding the house.

Had Jack and Mason seen the news? Did they know he was okay? Hopefully, they knew only Whittaker had been killed.

Gray scanned the crowd. To his right, Thornton was talking to two of the members of the SWAT team. When he saw Gray watching him, Thornton broke away and headed toward him. "You up to giving me a play-by-play?"

Jenna's grip had slackened in his hand as the pain meds put her to sleep. "She didn't want me to leave her."

"We need to take her to the hospital," one of the paramedics said.

Gray frowned. "She'll panic when she wakes up alone."

"I've got an idea," Thornton said. "Let's call Andy. Maybe he can be there for her and explain that you sent him."

Andy ran the youth shelter where Jack volunteered. He'd know how to talk to Jenna, and maybe she could get a spot at the shelter once she was discharged.

"Why didn't I think of that?"

"Because you've been through hell."

“Not compared to...” He gestured toward Jenna.

“Gray, you were held at gunpoint by a psycho and”—he gestured toward Gray’s clothing—“you’ve got Jenna’s blood all over you. Even the most stoic of us wouldn’t weather that easily.”

Gray considered his words. “I am a bit shaken up.”

Thornton rolled his eyes. “You’re white as a ghost.”

“Here.” One of the paramedics handed Gray a bottle of water and a chocolate bar. “At least rehydrate and get some sugar in you.”

“Okay.” No reason to fight that suggestion. He drained half the water and took a bite of chocolate as he listened to Thornton talk to Andy.

“I appreciate it, and so does Gray... I know... Yes... That would be fantastic.”

Thornton hung up. “Andy’s going to head to Durham Regional in the next half hour. If Jenna’s awake, he’ll talk to her. He’ll also connect with her assigned social worker and get the paperwork started to get her a spot at Bull City Youth Center.”

Relief rushed over Gray. Andy was one of the kindest, hardest-working people he knew. When Jack had been struggling to recover emotionally from being shot, Andy had done wonders for him by assigning him to be Henry’s mentor.

“You ready to talk now?” Thornton asked.

Gray nodded. But when he let go of Jenna’s hand and stood, the world wavered.

Thornton took his arm. “Sit back down.”

“No, I’m fine. I just need a second.”

“Yeah, right. Let’s see if we can get you to the car without you falling over.”

An officer ran up to them before they’d gotten through the crowd. “Is this yours, Detective?”

It was Gray’s phone. “Yeah. It’s not needed for evidence?”

The officer shook his head.

Gray stared at his phone for a second. He wanted to call Jack and Mason right then. Instead, he shoved the phone into his pocket.

Thornton made a disgusted sound. “Would you stop trying to be so fucking tough and just call them?”

Gray gave Thornton a sideways glance. When it came to tough...

“Almost getting killed gets you a lot of leeway,” the lieutenant said.

Gray called Jack, knowing he’d likely be home.

“Gray? You’re all right?” Jack sound so relieved.

“I’m here too,” Mason yelled in the background.

“I’m fine. It’ll be a while before I’m home. I just...”

“You damn well better get home as fast as you can and expect to be held for a long time,” Mason said, obviously still listening in.

“I... That would be great.”

“What about the girl?” Jack asked.

“She’ll make it. Andy is going to the hospital to see her. If you?—”

“I’ll call him now.”

“Okay, gotta go.”

“We love you.”

“Yeah. Me too.” Even after facing down death, he couldn’t bring himself to say those words in front of his colleagues. He doubted he ever would, but Jack and Mason knew, and he’d sure as hell show them when he got home.

“You look a little better,” Thornton told him.

“It’s the chocolate.”

He huffed. “Sure it is.”

When they got back to the precinct, Gray went over the details of what happened. He told his story to Thornton and to Captain Russell and then he told it again. Then he filled out more paperwork than anyone should ever have to face. Finally, when he was sure he was going to drop from exhaustion and adrenaline crash, Thornton told him he could go home.

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Mason pulled the door open before Gray reached it. "It's Gray," he yelled into the house, then threw his arms around him. "God, it's good to see you."

Gray managed to maneuver them over the threshold. He kicked the door closed behind him and dropped his bag to the floor.

Suddenly, Jack was there too, and they were all wrapped around each other.

"You're okay," Jack said in between kisses. "You're really okay."

"I said I was."

"Yeah but you'd say that if you were half dead," Jack complained.

Fair enough. He would. As the enormity of the evening hit him, he grew dizzy. and the world went fuzzy around the edges.

"Gray? Gray are you all right?" Mason's voice sounded far away.

Gray remembered taking a step, sinking toward the couch and then nothing until he heard Mason calling his name and felt something cold-as-fuck against his face.

Jack and Mason loomed over him. "Did you just fucking faint?" Jack asked.

"No." Gray pushed at Jack's chest to get him out of the way, then sat up.

Jack sat on the edge of the coffee table and glared at him. "The hell you didn't."

Gray scowled at him. “I’m fine.”

“Gray...”

Had he really fainted? Fuck. “The paramedics said I was in shock, but I didn’t have time to?—”

“So you just what, went back to the precinct and did paperwork? You’re lucky you didn’t fall on your face there.”

“I was fine until... Until it all came back just now.” The edges of his vision started to go dark again.

“Lie down,” Jack ordered.

Gray pushed Jack’s arm away. “I said I was okay.” He took the cold cloth and rubbed it over his neck.

“Fuck if we’re going to believe you after you passed out,” Mason said. “You really think you can pull that shit with us?”

Gray exhaled. “Fine. I’m not okay. I’m shaky and scared, and I feel like I might be sick. I can’t stop seeing what happened. It’s playing over and over like a movie in my head.”

“A sniper took Whittaker out? Is that right?” Mason asked. “That’s what they’re saying on TV.”

Gray nodded. “Yeah. He was reaching for a gun. He was going to kill Jenna. I was tied up and couldn’t do anything to save her. Then his head exploded. I can’t stop seeing it, and I feel like I still have Jenna’s blood on me even after I showered at the

precinct.”

Mason looked slightly sick himself. But Jack nodded. “Can you make it to the bed?”

“Yes, I’m not a fucking invalid.”

Jack raised a brow. “You almost ended up facedown on the floor. That seems pretty damn close.”

“But you caught me,” Gray said. He realized how thankful he was for that. For all the times they’d caught him, figuratively and literally.

Mason stroked Gray’s cheek, his eyes shiny with tears. “We could have lost you.”

“I... yeah,” Gray said.

“I want you on the bed,” Jack said, command in his voice.

Gray looked up. He understood what Jack wanted, what Jack thought Gray needed. Was he going to let Jack take charge?

Mason laid a hand on his thigh. “Will you please let us take care of you?”

“Get on the fucking bed.” Jack had none of Mason’s gentleness for him tonight.

Gray glared at him.

“Don’t try to intimidate me.”

Gray didn’t even argue when Mason took one arm and Jack the other, because he was unsteady as fuck. Even after Jack had been shot, Gray hadn’t been this shaky. At least

not right away. The adrenaline kept pumping through him that day, until he'd collapsed against the side of Jack's hospital bed.

When they reached the bedroom, Gray started to climb on the bed, but Jack shook his head. "Sit on the end." Then he glanced at Mason "Strip him."

Mason sucked in his breath.

Gray forced himself to sit still while Mason bent over him and pushed up the T-shirt he put on after his shower. He wanted to run his hands through Mason's hair, then slide them down his back and cup his ass. God, he was so fucking hot. Gray breathed deep and Mason smelled so good, slightly sweaty like he'd been working out but also sweet like a cinnamon roll.

Cinnamon rolls? Gray took another slow breath. The house smelled like cinnamon rolls. He looked up at Jack. "Did you make..." The words cinnamon rolls never came out because Mason knelt and cupped Gray's cock. Just like that, he was hard as hell and ready to go.

Mason grinned. "I think he's recovering."

"I thought you were undressing me, not teasing me."

Jack laughed. "Yes, he certainly is more like himself."

Gray growled at him.

"Gray, tell me if I'm wrong, if this isn't what you need."

Jack wasn't wrong, and it was ridiculous for Gray to fight what he craved. While he loved taking charge in bed, doling out punishment and torment that would make Jack

and Mason writhe with pleasure, there were times when he needed to be the one who was held down and fucked. He shook his head. “You’re not wrong. I want to be fucked and I—” He looked down at Mason and then back at Jack. “I want you to tie me up.”

Jack’s eyes widened. “Are you sure? Did Whittaker...?”

Gray nodded. “Yeah, he restrained me, but having you do it instead will help. I need to be restrained by someone who loves me to help erase the memory.”

Jack kissed him gently, and Mason nuzzled the crease of his thigh. “Then that’s what you’ll get as long as you swear you’ll tell us immediately if you need to be freed.”

Gray didn’t think he would, but he understood Jack’s hesitation. “I swear.”

Gray lifted his hips so Mason could slide his sweats and boxers over his ass. Mason stared at Gray’s exposed cock, lust clear in his eyes, but he didn’t touch it, and he sure as fuck didn’t take it down his throat like Gray wanted. It was all Gray could do to keep from ordering him to.

Gray glanced up. Jack was grinning at him, obviously understanding how hard waiting was for him. “I’m making the decisions tonight,” Jack said. “That will be easier for you once we’ve got you tied up.”

Mason tapped one of Gray’s legs, and Gray lifted it so Mason could remove his shoe and sock. He did the same on the other side. Gray was fully naked now but Jack and Mason were still in their shorts and T-shirts, which made him feel way too exposed.

Mason stood then, so close their bodies were almost touching. Gray’s cock reached for him, desperate for friction.

Gray turned to look at Jack, and Jack cupped his cheek, stroking it with his thumb. “You can do this because you want to... and we want to give you what you need, just like always.”

“Always,” Mason echoed when Gray looked back at him.

“Mason, go get some rope,” Jack ordered.

“And a cock ring?” Mason asked, a wicked note in his voice.

“Oh yes, that too.”

Gray made a strangled noise. His mind fought against the plan for him to be stretched out, tied, unable to come, but his cock was semi-hard, interested but wary. Exhaustion and the occasional flashes of fear were keeping him from being able to relax. But he felt more himself than when he’d walked in the door. Jack and Mason would be able to make him forget the hell he’d been through, at least for a little while.

“Stop thinking so much. I can see you doing it,” Jack said.

Gray sighed. “I’ll try.”

“Don’t try, just let go and trust us.”

Mason returned with lengths of black rope. “Arms over your head,” he commanded, not waiting for Jack to say anything.

Gray glared at him.

“You’re not going to make this easy, are you?” Jack asked.

“Did you really think I would?”

Jack smiled. “Not for a second.”

Gray reached for the headboard and wrapped his hands around two of the thick wooden slats. They’d bought the bed for its sturdiness and it hadn’t let them down yet.

Mason straddled Gray and ran his hands up Gray’s arms. His touch was firm, sensuous, and reassuring. When he reached Gray’s wrists, he flicked his finger over the pulse points, and Gray sucked his breath in. How was such a simple touch so arousing? He looked down and Mason’s cock was right there, pressing against his thin exercise shorts. Gray could easily break Mason’s hold and pull his hips forward so he could taste that lovely cock.

“Don’t even think about it,” Jack said.

Gray scowled. “Are you a fucking mind reader now?”

“When it comes to you, yes. You make it easy.”

Mason chuckled as he wrapped the rope around Gray’s right wrist, binding him. Gray tensed and closed his eyes, willing his body to relax as Mason secured his other wrist.

Mason leaned forward as he worked, his cock nearly brushing Gray’s lips. But he sat back before Gray could have a taste.

“Are you okay?” he asked, laying a hand on Gray’s chest.

“Yes.” The word came out embarrassingly breathy. Gray didn’t mean to sound so weak, but he was. He only pretended to be otherwise. Most of the time he was scared

to death.

“Whatever you’re thinking, stop it,” Jack said.

“I’m not?—”

“Gray.” Mason’s tone held a warning. Gray gave in, ending his protest.

More rope in hand, Mason settled himself between Gray’s legs, facing his feet. As he leaned over to loop the rope through the footboard, he stuck his ass out, taunting Gray.

Jack spanked Mason, but he just groaned and wiggled, begging for more.

“Be careful what you wish for,” Jack said.

Mason ignored him and took hold of Gray’s ankle, lifting his ass even more. He brushed his lips over the circular bone of Gray’s ankle, then ran his tongue down along his arch. Gray fought the urge to tear his foot from Mason’s grasp. “Fuck, that’s... fuck!”

“Wow, you already can’t talk, and you’re not even completely restrained yet,” Jack said.

Gray would’ve flipped him off if his hands weren’t tied. “Bastard.”

“Oh, I’m going to be a hell of a lot worse than this before we’re done.”

Gray was sure he would be. As Mason tied his other ankle, he tried not to think too much about the fact that he was at their mercy, unable to move away from any touch.

Jack ran a hand over Mason's ass. Then he grabbed his waistband, pulled his shorts down, and turned to look at Gray. "Is this what you want?"

Gray licked his lips but refused to answer.

Mason wiggled until he was positioned so Jack could push his shorts all the way down.

"I want it," Jack said. He licked one of Mason's cheeks and pushed a finger into his ass. Gray bit his lip, knowing Jack wanted to hear his reaction. He wasn't going to make a fucking sound.

Mason pushed back, trying to take more, and Jack slapped his ass again. "Not now. Finish trussing him up."

Jack looked back at Gray. "You sure this isn't what you want?" He skimmed his fingers over Mason's hole. "Don't you want his ass stretched around your cock? Or maybe around your whole hand?"

Mason gasped, and Gray nearly bit through his lip holding in a groan.

"I know you do. Too bad we have other plans for you tonight."

Mason secured Gray's other ankle and climbed off the end of the bed. Jack moved behind him, circling his waist with one arm, pinning him in place. With his free hand, he pumped Mason's cock.

Mason moaned and thrust into Jack's grip. Gray watched them, but instead of feeling jealous this time, he felt special. They were putting on a show just for him, giving him pleasure. Is this how they felt when he topped them?

Jack let go of Mason's cock after a few moments. He slid his hand into Mason's hair and pulled his head to the side so he could whisper in his ear. They both watched Gray while they shared whatever kinky secret was making Mason's eyes go wide. Then Jack let Mason go and they climbed onto the bed, looking like cats stalking prey.

Gray pulled on the ropes, testing his bonds.

Jack shook his head. "You're not going anywhere. You're going to sink into the mattress and lie still while we give you what you need."

"What I need is your cock inside me, and Mason's ass swallowing my cock."

Jack shook his head. "But that's not what you need."

Gray growled. The little bastard.

"Close your eyes. And no peeking or I'll blindfold you," Jack threatened.

"The fuck you will."

"Don't tempt me."

Gray hissed as Jack skimmed his fingers over the tip of his cock.

"He's so fucking sensitive, isn't he, Mason?"

"Yessss." Mason's voice was low, sultry, and even sexier when Gray couldn't see.

"Blindfold me," he said, surprising even himself.

“You’re sure?” Mason asked.

Gray looked from one of them to the other. “Yes. I want to concentrate on what I feel and hear, but you have to promise to talk to me.”

Mason nodded. “We can do that.”

Gray closed his eyes again. He heard one of them leave, probably to get a blindfold. It must have been Jack, because Mason bent over him. Gray could tell it was him by his smell. He flicked his tongue over Gray’s ear. And Gray shivered. “That fucking tickles!”

Mason laughed. “I love how you get goose bumps when I do that.”

“Asshole,” Gray complained.

Mason ignored him. He kissed Gray’s neck, then wrapped a hand around Gray’s cock, sliding it slowly up and down.

“Stop that,” Jack ordered when he returned.

“But he feels so good.” Mason tightened his grip, and Gray fought the need to push into his hand.

“Mason,” Jack warned.

“Fine.” Mason’s pouty tone made Gray smile.

“I said tease him, not jerk him off.”

Mason huffed. “I wasn’t going to let him come.”

“He’s excellent at getting you to do what he wants.”

“You too,” Mason taunted.

“Yeah, he makes a man want to please him.”

Heat filled Gray’s cheeks as Jack tied the blindfold. Was that really how they saw him?

“What should we do with him now that he can’t see what’s coming?” Mason asked in a stage whisper.

He heard movement and whispers. Jack was speaking, but Gray couldn’t make out what he was saying. Then the bed dipped on either side of him and he felt the brush of one of their legs against his—Jack’s if he had to guess. They caressed him, hands and mouths working over his chest, up his arms, along his neck, down his legs, even over his feet, which he’d never thought were an erogenous zone until Mason went to work on him with tongue and teeth scraping over his arch.

He tensed as Jack flicked his thumb over one of his nipples while he ran his tongue along Gray’s jaw. It was like they intended to activate every nerve in his body. Mason sucked one of Gray’s toes in his mouth, and Gray gave a muffled shout, the first sound he’d made. Jack pinched his nipple and arched up, yanking on the ropes.

“Enough,” Gray said.

Jack laid a hand on his chest over his wildly beating heart. “Really?”

Gray took a breath and tried to sort through the thoughts in his head, mostly dark erotic images of payback. Did he really want this to end? “No.”

“Good.” Jack’s voice was a purr. “We’re far from done with you.”

He went back to tormenting Gray. Then, slowly, both men worked their way toward Gray’s cock, which was so fucking hard it was all Gray could do to keep his hips still. Precum pooled warm and sticky on his abdomen.

Jack nipped at his hipbone and Gray jerked, trying to escape. But Mason took a firm hold on his hips and Gray forced himself not to fight the hold, because Mason was bending low, his warm breath rushing across Gray’s cock. Gray squeezed his hands into fists. Relax. Don’t fight it. They’ll give you what you need.

Mason didn’t touch his cock, though. Instead, he nuzzled Gray’s balls and licked at the skin behind them. Gray moaned. He wasn’t going to beg. Fuck no, he wasn’t.

“What do you want, Gray?” Jack asked.

“You know what I want, you fucking bastard.”

“No. You’re going to have to tell me.” Jack’s breath was warm against Gray’s cock.

“I want your mouth on my fucking cock. I want to fucking choke you with it.”

Jack chuckled. Then he sucked on the tip, fucking the slit with his tongue before pulling back. “Too bad. I’d rather you suck mine.”

Gray growled. If he sucked Jack, would Mason would give him what he needed?

Jack brushed Gray’s lips with the tip of his cock and Gray opened for him, letting him thrust deep, sucking and licking until Jack was gasping for breath. He kept it up, using his best techniques, wanting to push Jack into losing control. It would serve him right.

Mason toyed with Gray's balls for a few moments longer. Then he slid his fingers along Gray's crack and pushed inside him as he sucked Gray's sac. Gray nearly choked around Jack's cock. Fuck that felt good. Mason kept finger-fucking Gray as Gray sucked Jack. Jack was close. He was sure of it.

"You want this, Gray?" Jack asked. "You want me to come down your throat?"

Gray nodded. He did, desperately. As Mason speared his ass, Gray pushed down, trying to get Mason's fingers deeper. Gray wanted nothing more than to make Jack spill, to feel the hot splash of his cum in his throat.

Seconds later he got his wish. Jack cried out and thrust against him. Gray swallowed every drop.

When Jack let his cock fall from Gray's mouth, he was barely able to talk through his labored breaths. "That was. Wow. I'm... impressed. I think... You deserve a reward."

Mason had stopped toying with Gray when Jack came, probably wanting to watch.

Gray heard whispering again and what sounded like slicked-up fingers opening someone's ass. Was Jack going to fuck Mason and make Gray watch or, worse, just listen? That couldn't be considered a reward.

Before he had a chance to protest, Mason straddled him and reached for his cock. Gray sucked in his breath. The sensation of a hand on him after being denied for so long was so fucking intense. A few strokes, and he'd come.

But Mason gave more than that. He started to sink down over Gray's cock. From the way it felt, he had to be facing the end of the bed, reverse cowboy style.

“Don’t move,” Jack said.

“I fucking can’t.”

“Not you. Mason.”

Jack pulled the blindfold off, and Gray nearly came right then. He could see Mason’s ass stretched around his cock as he lowered himself the rest of the way.

“Fuck!”

“He looks good like that, doesn’t he?”

“Why the fuck have we never done this before?”

“I have no idea,” Jack said. Gray glanced at him. He looked as enraptured as Gray was.

Mason rose slowly. Gray sucked in his breath, his full attention riveted on Mason. He hated that he couldn’t grab Mason’s hips and shove him down, but the restraints made every sensation sharper.

Jack kissed Gray, a full assault on his mouth, tasting, biting, consuming him as Mason worked himself on Gray’s cock, moving with agonizing slowness.

When Jack finally pulled away, his lips were red and glistening. He smiled at Gray and walked to the end of the bed, where he took Mason’s chin in his hand and tilted his face up. Mason sank all the way down and stayed there, waiting.

Gray shifted, unable to help himself. After a few seconds, he’d had all he could take. “Move, or I’m going to rip this headboard in half.” He jerked on his bonds, and the

bed creaked ominously.

Jack laughed at him. The fucking bastard. “Be patient.”

“Suck me,” Jack ordered Mason. Gray heard Mason’s quick intake of breath. Jack moved forward, positioning himself so Mason could take him if he leaned forward. The position displayed Mason’s stretched ass obscenely but meant he couldn’t take as much of Gray’s cock.

Gray growled. “Need more.”

“This is all you get.” Jack watched him, though his eyelids fluttered when Mason sucked him all the way down. Gray’s gaze moved back and forth from the sight of his cock disappearing into Mason to Jack’s look of intense lust.

“Are you close?” Jack asked him.

“Yes. God, yes.”

“Then it’s my turn.” He stepped back and Mason rose up. Gray barely suppressed a whine when his cock slipped from Mason’s body.

“You better be planning to do something about this,” Gray said, looking down at his aching cock.

“Oh I am,” Jack said. He glanced at Mason. “Undo his ankles.” Mason moved slowly, his own cock red and jutting.

Was Jack going to deny Mason the right to get off?

Mason rubbed Gray’s ankles once they were freed from the restraints. Mason’s hands

were warm and—despite Gray’s desperation to get off—comforting.

Jack moved between Gray’s legs and pushed them wide as Gray drew his knees up. Mason handed him the lube. Jack teased Gray’s crack with a few slick fingers. “Are you ready?”

Gray was. He didn’t need any fucking prep. “Fuck yes. Quit talking and put your dick in me already.”

Mason laughed as he knelt on the bed next to them, hand sliding lazily on his cock.

“Should we free his hands?” Jack asked.

Mason pretended to consider the question.

“Fuck yes,” Gray said.

“Really?” Jack asked. “Or do you want me to fuck you while you can’t touch me?”

Did Gray want that, to be taken while he was unable to touch, unable to control anything, unable to jerk himself off? “Leave them.”

Jack smiled. “Good choice.”

Jack opened him up, slick fingers probing deep, brushing Gray’s sweet spot, and making him struggle to get more.

“Fuck me now!”

Jack ignored him, keeping up the teasing for a few more seconds. Then his cock was there, pushing in. Gray welcomed the burn since it might keep him from shooting in

two seconds. He didn't think he was even going to need his hand to get off after all they'd put him through.

Jack gave him time to adjust, but once those stretched muscles eased, Jack fucked him mercilessly, deep and fast. Mason's hand was nearly a blur as he worked his own cock.

"Can you come like this, with no hands?" Jack asked, seeming to barely get the words out.

"I... I'm not sure. I..."

Jack pulled out and took both their cocks in his hand, working them together.

"Holy fuck!" Gray shouted.

"Mason, are you close?"

"Fuck, yes!"

"Come on me," Gray begged. He was desperate to be covered in Mason's come, in Jack's, in his own. He wanted to be a sticky fucking mess.

Jack's grip was tight, his hand warm. Gray was so fucking close. Right there. "Fuck."

He shot, spurting over Jack's hand. Jack followed seconds later and then Mason.

Before Gray had come down from the high of climax, Mason was freeing one of his hands and Jack the other. They rubbed his wrists, and Gray kept his eyes closed as he floated on the aftershocks of pleasure.

“You okay?” Mason asked.

Gray nodded, or at least, he meant to. He was so tired he wasn’t quite sure. Mason and Jack curled up next to him, but he had only a hazy awareness of their bodies against his before he fell asleep.

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Gray woke hours later. He was starving—he'd never eaten dinner—not to mention stiff and sticky, but he hated to disturb Jack and Mason by getting up to eat and shower.

“Go get some cinnamon rolls,” Jack whispered in his ear a few moments later.

“What?” He rolled over to look at Jack. “I thought you were asleep.”

“I heard your stomach growl. That would wake anyone. Grab a sandwich too while you're at it.”

“Okay.”

Jack kissed him. “Just come back to us.”

Against the wishes of his stomach, Gray decided to shower first. The warm water was like heaven soaking into his tired, sore muscles.

Jack and Mason had temporarily banished Gray's thoughts of Whittaker, but as soothing as the shower was, it couldn't keep him from replaying the night. What if Thornton hadn't gotten people in place in time? What if Whittaker hadn't wanted to toy with them?

He knew better than to go down that path. What-ifs weren't allowed when you were a cop. But this case... Jenna was just a kid. All the vics were, except Andreas. He'd ordered men killed, sold illegal weapons, fucked up so many lives, but even he didn't deserve his fate, not when he had enough decency in him to protect Jenna and the

others.

He dried himself vigorously, wishing he could shed his anger like the water droplets from the shower. Then he headed to the kitchen and stood in front of the fridge shivering. He hadn't wanted to disturb Jack again by rummaging around for clothes. He shouldn't have worried, though, because, by the time he'd put a sandwich together, both Jack and Mason had joined him. Jack stuck the cinnamon rolls in the oven to warm and began pulling more sandwich fixings from the fridge, while Mason went to get Gray some sleep pants and a T-shirt.

Mason made a sound of disgust when he returned. "Cranberry horseradish mustard at one AM? Really?"

Jack had a bit of condiment obsession.

Mason went for good old peanut butter on white bread. "I'll never sleep after something that heavy." He gestured toward the stacked roast beef sandwiches Jack and Gray were consuming.

"I don't think I'll sleep any more no matter what I eat," Gray said.

Jack leaned over and kissed his head. The gesture should've felt ridiculous. He wasn't a kid after all. Instead, it was comforting, warm and homey.

These two men were home to him. A home where he felt secure, something he'd never been before. The night was quiet, and he felt like he could say anything into that silence without being judged. "I have a confession to make."

Jack made a dramatic face of shock. "You have a foot fetish and were afraid to tell us?"

Gray rolled his eyes.

“Are you into lingerie?” Mason asked. “Have you got a large collection of shocking pink panties, and you decided it was time to reveal it? Not that I’d mind.”

Gray tried to wrap his brain around that comment. “What?”

Jack smiled wickedly at Mason. “I’m filing that away for later. You’re a font of revealing information lately. Speaking of which, Gray still owes you?—”

“Stop,” Gray commanded. Once they got going, he was never going to get a chance to talk. If he didn’t say this now, he might chicken out and that wasn’t acceptable, not when he’d already been too much of a coward to talk about it before.

Jack and Mason watched him, Mason with an assessing look, Jack slightly wary.

“I never canceled our cabin reservations.”

“You didn’t?” Mason’s surprise was obvious.

Jack set his sandwich down. “I’m sorry. I was an ass to you about it, and you really weren’t hoping for a way out, were you?”

Gray wanted to simply agree with him but he had to be completely honest. “I was—am—going to go, but I wasn’t looking forward to it like you two were.”

“And now?”

“Now, I want to spend time with you, and I’m happy to do that wherever. I’m not really opposed to vacations. I…” Gray knew he had to start the story now or he never would. “You know that my dad left when I was twelve, and I never saw him again.”

Mason nodded.

“What you don’t know is that the summer before I was in fifth grade, my dad borrowed a camper from a friend and suggested we go on a family trip—something he’d never done before. My mom and I had gone places a few times and I’d gone to my grandparents’ farm, but that was it.”

“That sucks,” Jack said.

Gray shrugged. “I didn’t really want to go anywhere if he was going to be there. We drove up to Fontana Lake in the Nantahala Forest. I figured I’d be bored to death the whole time since I wasn’t able to take a friend, and my parents would likely spend the week arguing. The drive there wasn’t bad, though. My parents didn’t fight like usual. They were actually laughing with each other. I started to think that things might change, that maybe things would get better.”

Jack had pulled the cinnamon rolls from the oven and put them on plates for everyone. Gray paused, needing an infusion of sugar to bolster his confidence to keep going.

“You want to tell us more?” Mason asked.

Gray nodded. “The first night my dad and I gathered wood and built a fire, then my parents made dinner together. I found the most perfect sticks for roasting marshmallows. We made s’mores and Dad told ghost stories by the light of the fire. We made plans for hiking the next day and swimming in the lake. I thought it was going to be the best week ever, just like a family vacation should be, like the trips my friends talked about.”

Gray paused to take another bite of cinnamon roll. He’d started talking, and the story had poured out, but now he thought he sounded pathetic. How was he still not over

something that happened more than twenty-five years ago? Shame turned his stomach. He put the pastry down and rose from the table.

Neither Jack nor Mason said anything as he poured himself a measure of whiskey and drained it. But eventually, Mason came up behind him and laid a hand on his back.

Gray took a breath, then turned to face them. "I feel like an idiot."

Jack gave him a soft smile. "You're allowed to have feelings, you know? The stoic dom role is fun in the playroom, but we like all sides of you."

Mason slid a hand down Gray's abdomen and brushed over his cock. "That's right. This isn't the only thing we're after."

Gray laughed. Trust Mason and Jack to know exactly what to say. "Thanks."

"Just being honest," Mason said.

"That helps. Knowing you care."

Jack snuggled in with them. "We love our big cuddly bear."

Gray flipped Jack off.

"Do you want to tell the rest of the story?" Mason asked.

Gray nodded. "Yeah. But maybe in bed in the dark would be easier."

When they were settled, he started talking again. "Later that night, as I struggled to fall asleep on the camper's couch bed, I heard the door swing open. I assumed it was just one of my parents checking the fire or maybe my dad going outside for a smoke.

Then I heard the crunch of footsteps like someone was walking away from our camper. So I did what any stupid kid would do. I followed my dad.”

Gray took a deep breath and enjoyed the feel of Mason’s fingers combing through his hair.

“My dad stopped at a trailer on the other side of the campground. Before he could knock, a woman opened the door. She was naked.”

“Oh shit,” Mason said.

“It was actually one of the first times I thought I might be gay. Here I was, confronted by a young—probably not much over twenty—woman who was in excellent shape, but I wasn’t the least bit interested in her.”

“You were probably in shock,” Jack said.

“Yeah. I don’t know what I should have done, definitely not what I did, which was sit there waiting. I heard them panting and cussing. I heard the bed squeak, and I knew what they were doing. I don’t know how long my dad was in there, but when he finally came out, he nearly tripped over me and yell, “Gray? What the fuck are you doing out of bed?”

I told him I’d heard him. I meant that I’d heard him get up, but he thought I was talking about hearing him with the woman. He grabbed me and shook me. ‘Don’t you dare tell your mother.’”

“That son of a bitch,” Jack said. “How dare he.”

Gray held up a hand. “He was a fucking asshole, but just let me finish. He walked away after that. He didn’t ask me to follow, didn’t say a word. Eventually, I slunk

back to our camper and did exactly what he said. I didn't tell my mother. I didn't mention it in any way. All week, I knew that our time together as a family was fake. I had to pretend to get along with my dad, pretend to be happy. Every night I heard him leave, I wondered how the fuck my mom didn't hear him. Sleeping pills was the conclusion I came to later."

Mason snuggled in tighter, and Gray wrapped an arm around him, letting him rest his head on Gray's chest.

"The night before we were supposed to go back home, my dad left the camper, and I peeked out my window, watching him walk away. He had a big bag with him. I wondered why. The next morning, the woman's RV was gone, and so was he. He never came back, and my mom was never the same. I've always wondered whether saying something would have changed anything."

Jack and Mason hugged him tight.

"So, anyway. That's why I hate vacations."

"Oh, Gray," Jack said. "That's... God, that sucks. I'm sorry we pushed. No wonder you didn't want to go to the mountains."

"I should've just told you, but I was too fucking stubborn."

"We know now," Mason said.

Jack kissed Gray's temple. "We do. And if you want to go somewhere else or just stay home, all you have to do is tell us."

Gray shook his head. "I'm not that kid anymore. That week shouldn't color the rest of my fucking life. We're going to the cabin you picked out, and we're going to enjoy

it.”

“Does that mean we get to spend most of the time in bed?” Mason asked.

Gray smiled. “That sounds good to me.”

Jack laughed. “All I really want is for us to have some uninterrupted time together. Time to just enjoy each other.”

Mason sat up and looked at Gray and then at Jack. “A cozy cabin? Some toys? A hot tub? Just the three of us? How could we not enjoy that?”

“And don’t forget, I have plans for your ass,” Gray said, looking at Mason.

Mason shivered. “I can’t wait.”

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Gray did end up sleeping, held by both his boyfriends. He woke once from a dream in which he was running, pushing himself to move faster, to find Jenna, to save her from the man who was chasing her with a bloody knife in his hand.

He must have called out, because Jack shook him awake and Mason burrowed against his chest. He held the two of them, and they didn't say anything. They didn't need to.

When they were all out of bed the next morning, Jack called Andy. Gray could barely wait until he'd hung up to start firing questions at him. "How is Jenna? Is she going to get a place with Andy? Does he have space?"

Jack was beaming, which had to mean things were good. "She's fine. Awake and wanting to see you. Yes, once the stacks of forms are filled out, and the official approval is made, Jenna should have a place with Andy. He doesn't see any obvious barriers to that working, but you know how slow that process is. He's in paperwork hell right now."

"I thought he said the shelter was full," Mason said.

Jack nodded. "It was, but it turns out a spot has opened up."

Gray could tell Jack was excited about more than just Jenna having a place to go. "What's up?"

"I'm not supposed to know, so keep this to yourselves for now. Henry is getting an apartment. He's saved enough, and he's just made the deposit. I'm so happy for him. He's planning to tell me next time we get together."

“That’s fantastic!” Mason said.

Gray smiled. “He’s got to be thrilled.”

Jack nodded. “Andy says he’s going to keep tutoring shelter kids and helping with the cooking classes. I’m so excited for him.”

Gray was excited too, but he was impatient to see Jenna. “Do y’all want to come to the hospital with me?”

“Absolutely,” Jack said and Mason grabbed his coat.

When Gray got to the hospital, Andy explained that Jenna wouldn’t talk to him, the nurses, her doctor, or her social worker. Physically, though, Jenna was doing great, even the worst of her wounds was healing nicely.

“You told Jack she’d asked for me.”

“She wrote your name down and pointed to it. I think you’re the only one she’ll talk to.”

Gray hated thinking of her there alone and scared. “Why didn’t you call me last night?”

“She was sedated, and you needed to rest.”

Gray frowned. “I would’ve come anyway.”

“I know. That’s why I didn’t call.”

Gray glanced at Jack. “You knew, didn’t you?”

Andy took his arm. “Come on. Let’s go see her.”

Gray glared at Jack, but he let Andy lead him toward Jenna’s room. Truly, he hadn’t been in any shape to help her the night before. Still, he should have been told.

So you’d insist on spending the night at the hospital?

Gray bit back a growl. Even his conscience was against him.

Andy stopped at the door to Jenna’s room. “Before you go in?—”

“Don’t tell me she’s fragile or to be careful with her. She fought her way loose when she’d been stabbed multiple times and was bleeding all over the floor. She was going for the gun Whittaker had taken from me. She was trying to save me.”

Andy raised a brow. “I don’t think she’s fragile.”

Damn.Gray closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “I’m sorry. I’m?—”

“Understandably protective and on edge.”

“Yes. That.” Why the fuck was Andy always so reasonable?

“I hope she’ll talk to you. I want her to be comfortable with me, but I know that will take time.”

Gray nodded, then knocked on the door of Jenna’s room, which was open an inch or two. “Jenna? It’s Gray. Can I come in?” No response. “If you don’t feel like speaking, just tap on something, and I’ll leave.”

“You’re the only one I want to see,” she said.

Gray's relief at hearing her voice had him sagging against the doorframe. He took a slow breath and then entered the room.

He smiled when he saw Jenna with color in her cheeks. "You look much better than the last time I saw you."

"I look like shit, but at least I'm not dead." She had that sharp, sarcastic tone back too.

"Same here."

"You look good like you always do. It's no wonder you've got two men fawning over you."

Gray raised his brows. "How do you know about that?"

"Andy told me."

"Did he now?"

She rolled her eyes. "He said he knew you because your boyfriend worked with him at the shelter. When I didn't respond, he thought he had to keep talking, and he told me how awesome the three of you were, as if that wasn't obvious. Then he told me about Henry. He said he'd bring him by today."

At least it didn't sound like she resented Andy too much.

"But you only wanted to talk to me?"

"Yeah. Stubborn, aren't I?"

“That’s a good thing. It helped you survive.”

She shrugged. “I guess.”

Gray wanted to hug her, but he wasn’t sure how she would take that, so he simply said, “Thank you.”

“For what? Dragging you into this?” Jenna asked.

“For trusting me and doing all you could to save me.”

“I wanted to save myself too, you know?”

Gray didn’t say any more. He sensed that getting too sentimental would piss her off.

Her expression softened, and tears gathered in her eyes. “Dammit! I should be thanking you.”

Time to change the subject. “Andy’s a good guy. You should talk to him. And yes, my boyfriend, Jack, works with him. He’s part of the youth task force.”

Jenna looked away and wiped at her eyes. “I don’t want to go to a shelter.”

“I get it.”

She started to protest, but he held up his hand.

“I was in foster care for a while. My mom... She OD’d. My dad had run off, and she basically checked out. I was so mad. I wanted to stay on my own, but the family I was placed with were kind and I got real food and security for a bit.”

“Is that why you became a cop, because things were rough for you? Are you a crusader for us downtrodden wretches?”

Gray laughed. “Not exactly. I got to be friends with the resource officer in my high school after he caught me stealing.”

Her eyes widened. “Really?”

“Yeah. Give Andy a chance and Henry too. He’s been at the shelter for a year or so, and he’s awesome. He won’t talk down to you or try to tell you what to do. He can be blunt, but he’s not?—”

“A condescending asshole converted by the system.”

Gray smiled. “Right. Is there anyone out there who’ll be looking for you?”

She frowned. “Like parents, you mean?”

“Or someone who’ll want to silence you for what you know about Andreas?”

She shook her head. “We were kept away from most of Billy’s business associates, so I don’t think so.”

“What about your parents?”

“My mom never wanted me, and I don’t think she knows who my dad is.”

Someone knocked on the door. “Hi. It’s Andy. I wanted to let you know Henry’s on his way.”

They heard the sound of Andy’s footsteps retreating. “I’ll talk to him now,” Jenna

said. "I just... I needed to see you first. I don't know why."

"You do not have to explain. Do you need me to stay while you talk to Andy and Henry?"

She shook her head. "No, I don't want to upset you."

"Upset me?"

"You know, make you relive it all." She was trying to protect him.

"I can handle it."

She rolled her eyes. "You were shaking afterward."

"You remember that?"

She nodded. "And you get this tightness in your face when you're thinking about it."

Damn, she was perceptive. "You don't have to talk to Andy about it."

"I have to tell him something for the fucking paperwork."

Gray smiled. She was going to be just fine. "You do what's best for you. I'll be in the lobby if you need me."

Gray found Mason sipping a soda and staring out a window. He followed Mason's line of sight and saw Jack wrapping Henry in a huge hug. Jack was so excited he lifted the younger man off the ground and spun him around.

"I guess Henry told him," Gray said.

“Ya think?” They both laughed. Then Mason laid a hand on Gray’s shoulder. “How’s Jenna?”

“Talking now. She’s tough, and I think she’ll be all right. She agreed to see Andy and Henry.”

“Good.” Mason checked his watch. “I’m supposed to head to work, but I can call out if you need me to.”

“No, I’m fine.”

Mason studied him for a few seconds. “Okay. Call me if you need something.”

Gray nodded. “I will.”

“Promise?”

“Yes, I promise. Now get.”

“I’ll probably see Toby at Nathan’s. We’re going to his party tonight, right?”

Gray had forgotten about the party. He wanted to hide at home after the previous night’s ordeal, but he’d eventually have to appear in public again. “Yeah, we are.”

“Okay, I guess I’ll see you there.”

They hugged goodbye, and Mason headed for his car.

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Gray went home, intending to veg for the rest of the day. Jack was working second shift that evening, but he and Huck would head to Toby's party once they were done with their shift. Mason was working until nine. So Gray had plenty of time for a Fast and Furious marathon and a few gallons of ice cream. He wondered if there was any bacon left from breakfast. Ice cream topped with bacon sounded good.

He might work up the energy to take a run later. He hadn't been keeping up with his usual exercise regimen for the last week. He fucking hated running, but he wasn't about to go to the gym. Too many people there who'd want to ask him all about his hostage experience. He wouldn't be able to avoid talking about it that night, but at least Bryce, Toby, and Matt understood not to ask too many questions. Some people, on the other hand, had no respect for privacy and thought they had a right to all the gory details.

He settled on the couch with a container of Rocky Road—to hell with getting a bowl. He intended to eat every bite anyway, then tackle the fudge brownie. He deserved it.

He'd just turned on the TV when Mason texted him. Check out the paper.

Gray sighed. What the fuck was up now? He pulled up the paper's website. Fucking fuck. Someone had leaked Andreas's true involvement. He was now being called the Gangster with a Heart. Great. What other details of the case were out there?

He shut his browser window, deciding he was better off not knowing. He was just going to sit, watch one of his favorite movies, and put the whole case out of his mind. Less than five minutes later, his phone rang. He glanced at it: Captain Russell. He couldn't ignore her.

“Sadler.”

“You’ve seen the paper?”

No point in denying it. “Yes.”

“We need some damage control before people start looking for the good in every criminal. We need to make sure it’s clear who Andreas really was, both sides of him. I need you here ASAP for a press conference. Dress nicely.”

So instead of hiding from the world, watching cars blow up and eating comfort food, he was wearing a jacket and tie, was likely to miss lunch, and was going to have to face a room of reporters.

Fuck.

Fortunately, he got through the questions with less pain than he expected. For once, the briefing from the PR liaison had been more useful than irritating. He was about to head for his car when Captain Russell stopped him.

“You need to be here at five tomorrow to prep for a live interview with WKLK.”

Gray blinked. “I must have misunderstood you, ma’am.”

“You’re being interviewed.”

“On live TV?”

“Yes.”

She was holding something back, he could tell. There was something else and he was

going to hate it. “This is for the local news?”

“Yes, for the human interest piece they always do at the end.”

Yep. He hated it. “Human interest? With perky-as-fuck Mindy?”

“They’ve already reported every detail they can about the killings and you being taken hostage. They want the real you, the man behind the badge.”

“No.”

She raised a brow.

He took a deep breath. He didn’t really want to get fired, did he? “I’m fine with talking about the job. I do not want to talk about my personal life.”

“Then avoid her questions. You’re great at that.” She turned to walk away.

“Captain, I?—”

She looked exasperated when she turned to face him. “This comes from the chief. We need you to look good on there. We want you to be the hero, not Andreas, no matter what he did for a few girls.”

Gray didn’t want to be a hero. He wanted to do his job and be left alone. “I really don’t have a choice here, do I?”

She shook her head. “Trust me, our PR people picked the best of the interview options.”

He thought about how human-interest reporter Mindy Walker giggled through every

segment on WKLK and shuddered. He'd hate to imagine what the much-worse options were. "Fine. I'll be there."

"Good, I look forward to seeing the piece."

He made a fist to keep from flipping her off.

He texted Mason and Jack to let them know about the hell he was being forced into.

Poor baby. Mason texted back.

Don't you dare show this at Nathan's.

LOL! Everyone will want to see you all dressed up and heroic.

Gray growled. Is there a fuck-off emoji?

Later, after finally getting some quality time with the TV and a gallon of ice cream, Gray grabbed his coat to head to Toby's birthday party. He didn't want to go. He wanted to stay home and fuck Jack and Mason until he could forget about the interview coming up the next day, but he knew they were expecting him to show up.

The road in front of Bryce, Matt, and Toby's house was crowded with cars. So much for his hope that this would be a small party.

Mason was walking toward the house as Gray pulled into a spot on a side street. Gray waved him toward the car, and he slid into the passenger seat. "What would I have to promise you to lure you back home?"

"Jack already warned me you might try to get out of this."

Gray huffed. “How did he know?”

“You’re all worked up about the interview, and when do you ever want to go to parties?”

“We could go home, and I could fulfill your very special request.” Gray pitched his voice low and gravelly, the way he knew Mason liked it.

Mason looked away, as if having to work to resist him. “You’re not fisting me tonight.”

“Are you so sure?”

“We’re saving it for our trip to the cabin, remember?”

That was a much better plan, but Gray was desperate. “I’m more than ready.”

Mason glared at him. “It’s Toby’s birthday, and we’re not going to miss it.”

“I do not want to talk about Whittaker.”

“Then don’t.”

Gray sighed. “I also don’t want to spend the evening dodging questions. I’ll have to do enough of that tomorrow.”

“You might find the party more fun than you expect.”

“It won’t be more fun than being home where no one asks asinine questions, and I get to fuck you.”

Mason grinned. “There’ll be time for fucking later. We could even play interviewer and interviewee.”

Gray glared at him, but he just laughed.

“Right now, though, we’re going to get out of the car and go see Toby.”

Music thumped through the house, though it wasn’t as crowded as Gray had feared. Mason settled with Matt and Toby for what looked like some kind of Xbox tournament/drinking game. Gray wandered into the kitchen and found Bryce mixing cocktails.

“Toby looks like he’s having fun.”

“As long as he can hold the high score, he will be. Not that I think he will last long since he’s probably had about four of these.” Bryce indicated the margaritas he was making.

“I’m surprised he can keep up at all.”

“It helps that the others are also drunk.”

Gray peeked around the doorframe into the living room. “Looks like Mason has the controls now, and he’s sober.”

Bryce grinned. “Toby’s in trouble, then. Mason’s an expert even when he’s drunk.”

Gray nodded. Mason seemed to have superhuman abilities when it came to gaming.

“How are you?” Bryce asked.

Gray shrugged.

“That’s about how I figured.”

“I just want to put the whole thing with Whittaker behind me, but I had to do a press conference this afternoon, and now I’m going to be on the news tomorrow. As the fucking human interest piece.”

Bryce grinned, not even trying to hide his amusement.

“It’s humiliating and no telling what kind of personal questions Miss Perky is going to ask me.”

“You’ve got a talent for answering without answering.”

He rolled his eyes. “That’s what Captain Russell said.”

“I imagine Jack and Mason would agree too.”

“Asshole.”

Bryce handed him a drink. Whiskey on the rocks. At least the man knew what he liked.

“I suck at talking to people,” Gray said after downing half the liquid in one go.

“You’re not as bad at it as you think. Look what you did for Jenna.”

Gray shook his head. “That’s different.”

“Is it? You talk to suspects and victims and you’re damn good at it.”

“Are you working on a psychology degree?”

Bryce rolled his eyes. “Hardly, but I get why the department wants to focus on you instead of Andreas.”

“Am I really the one to do that?”

“Would Captain Russell put you out there if you weren’t?”

“I guess not.” They had their differences, but she was a good leader.

“Then quit whining. Ignore the questions you don’t want to answer and make the department proud.”

Gray raised his brows. “You sound like you’re auditioning for a cop drama.”

Bryce shook his head. “On a TV show, they’d never send the gruff bear for the interview. They’d send someone like?”

“Jack.” They both said his name at the same time, then clinked glasses.

“You’ll also be doing something good for all the gay cops out there,” Bryce said, serious tone returning.

Gray sighed. “I need another drink.”

Bryce obliged him, filling his glass.

Gray had wanted to be out, to be able to be himself. Now he was going to get a chance to do it on TV.

“I still hate the idea of being the ‘face of the department’.”

Bryce nodded. “I get that, but you’re good at it. You manage to come across as honest and trustworthy. You’re the protector everyone wants on their side.”

“But I just want to solve my cases. I don’t want to be some media star.”

“All I wanted to do was fight fires. Keep people safe. Rescue people who needed someone to save them. Then I realized I was good at investigating, at solving the puzzle of how a fire started, and guessing at the pieces that weren’t obvious at first. I resisted that. I told myself I wasn’t a cop.”

“You’re damn good at what you do,” Gray insisted.

“Yeah, I am. Sometimes our gifts aren’t what we expect or what think we want.”

Gray polished off his second drink. “I might have to hate you now.”

Bryce smiled. “Go right ahead.”

At five the next day, instead of being home nagging Jack to work faster as he made his famous lasagna, Gray was in an interrogation room, wearing a suit that itched and shoes that pinched the fuck out of his feet. As if that weren’t enough to piss him off, a woman who looked like she hadn’t eaten so much as a bite of lasagna—or much of anything else—in her whole life was putting makeup on him. It was all he could do not to growl at her. But at least he hadn’t had to film the segment at the TV station. Here in his element, he’d handle it better.

Finally, after what felt like hours, she deemed him presentable, and he was escorted to his own fucking desk where a bossy ginger told him how to position himself and where to look once the cameras—which seemed to be everywhere—rolled.

After another long wait, the vivacious, giggly Mindy entered. Dear God, she was even more cheerful in person than she was on the air.

Several people fussed over her for a few minutes and then, thank God, they were ready to begin.

The cameraman held up his fingers. “Three. Two. One. And we’re on the air.”

Mindy patted her hair and flipped it away from her face. “Hello everyone. I’m at Precinct Seven of the Durham Police Department to talk to local hero Detective Gray Sadler.” Giggle. Giggle.

Gray took a deep breath. He could do this. The segment only lasted a few minutes.

“Detective Sadler, you look so strong and brave in all the clips I’ve seen from the day you were taken hostage. And I must say you look quite good in person as well.” Was she really going to flirt with him during the interview? “Were you scared at all that day?” Giggle giggle.

More laughter? Hostage situations were apparently quite humorous. “Of course I was scared. Anyone in their right mind would be, but I wanted to stay alive and so did the young woman Whittaker held.” They had not yet released any details about Jenna’s identity.

Tee-hee. “What were you thinking as you rushed in to save the hostage?”

Did she seriously laugh at everything? “I thought, as I do anytime I’m in the field, that it was my job to get her out alive and keep the situation from escalating.”

“Were you aware then that she was actually being protected by Mr. Andreas?”

He avoided the direct question. “While Mr. Andreas provided a home for these young women, and they were not engaged in any acts of prostitution. They did assist him with other tasks that furthered his drug deals and illegal weapons sales. The man wasn’t a saint by any means.”

“So you wouldn’t say he was a hero?”

At least she’d stopped the incessant giggling now. “I’d say he was a man who made a choice to help someone he could’ve hurt.”

“Would you consider yourself a hero?”

Gray dodged that too. “I’m a cop who takes his job seriously.”

“And what does doing your job mean to you?”

“To protect the people of this city and to bring those who break the law to justice.”

“One final question. What is it like to be out as a gay man while serving on the police force?” Giggle.

Obviously that deserved some laughter. “I suspect it’s much like it is to be a straight cop since we do the same job in the same way.”

“Surely you’ve faced prejudice, though. How have you dealt with it?”

“By doing my job and showing everyone that my personal life doesn’t affect my ability to uphold the law in any way.”

“Speaking of your personal life...”

Gray could see the sparkle in her eyes. This wasn't going to be a question he'd like.

"I'm here to talk about my police work. Like I've said, my personal life isn't something I bring with me to the job." He made sure his tone indicated he wouldn't bend.

She didn't push, thank God; maybe she didn't want an on-air argument during a feel-good piece. "Then maybe tell our viewers whether you feel a personal interest in helping victims?"

That he could handle. "I have an interest in helping anyone whose life or well-being is threatened. It doesn't matter whether they are a prostitute or an accountant or a factory worker. Everyone deserves to live their lives without fear inspired by men like Whittaker."

The producer signaled that they had to end things.

"Thank you for your time, Detective Sadler."

"You're welcome." He supposed he should thank her, but he was trying to stay sincere.

The cameraman signaled that they were off the air.

Mindy giggled again. "Off the record. Do you really have two boyfriends?"

"Off the record, I still don't answer personal questions."

She grinned. "I'll take that as a yes."

"You can take it however you want." He really wanted to get out of there.

The producer saved him. “Mindy, we need to get back to the studio.”

She looked annoyed but followed him toward the door.

Gray found a bathroom and washed the makeup off his face. He looked a bit red and scrubbed, but he felt much better. And now he was free.

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During the next week, Gray gave interviews to another television reporter and three local newspapers. He even received a call from a national gay men's magazine. He told them he'd consider their request. A few months ago, he would've said no to such a thing immediately. He might not have even been civil about it. Now he'd accepted that he somehow had a talent for talking to reporters: grumpy, closed-off, need-to-control-things bastard that he was. He didn't get why people wanted to see and hear him, at least not outside of the bedroom, but they did. Bryce was right, damn him. The people watching him apparently saw something different than he saw in himself. He might as well embrace it.

He'd packed what he needed for the trip to the mountains before leaving that morning, but he had to put in a half day at the precinct while Jack and Mason got a bit more sleep. Both had worked late the night before. He'd even gotten one of the other detectives to give him a ride so they could pick him up from the precinct when they were ready.

The morning dragged by with tedious computer searches and paperwork to file before vacation. Finally, Gray checked the clock and saw that it was late enough for him to get away with packing up. He couldn't believe he was actually excited about going on vacation. He was in such a good mood he might even let Mason drive.

He considered that idea for a few more seconds. Maybe not. He was a control freak and Mason and Jack liked him that way.

Gray was already waiting in the parking lot when Mason texted that he and Jack were leaving the house. He had no intention of being held back by some last-minute emergency.

As he waited, he tried to absorb what had happened over the last few weeks. He'd been through hell, but he was going to enjoy his weekend, and he wasn't going to put pressure on himself to make it perfect. He'd be with Jack and Mason. That was all that mattered. He thought about the gifts he had for them in his suitcase. They were cheesy as fuck but hopefully they'd also be a lot of fun.

When Mason drove up, Gray gestured for him to get in back. He rolled his eyes but complied. If Gray had to go on a road trip, no way in hell was he sitting anywhere but behind the wheel.

They made good time, stopping only when Jack or Mason bitched at him, saying they were going to wet the seats if he didn't let them go to the bathroom.

By dinnertime, they were in Asheville, where Jack insisted they stop at a place he'd found when researching restaurants, Sparky's Hot Chicken. Jack had a love affair with spicy chicken sandwiches that bordered on kinky. Gray's mind started to wander, imagining where they could go with that... Nope. Even he wouldn't go there.

"I'm hitting the restroom," Gray said as soon as they entered. "Order me something big."

Jack narrowed his eyes. "Did you eat lunch?"

"Um... from the vending machine."

Jack rolled his eyes.

"At least he's actually taking a piss," Mason said. "Instead of going on about his bladder of steel."

Gray scowled, but Jack just laughed and motioned him toward the restrooms. "We'll

order for you.”

Jack and Mason had ordered at the counter and were heading toward a table when Gray returned to the dining area. Jack handed him a beer, and he took a long, refreshing sip.

“So what are our plans for tonight?” Mason asked. “Are we going to try out some local bars or head right to our cabin?”

Before Gray could answer, Jack said, “I thought I might do some baking. I’ve got a few things to try out for you but?—”

“We’re going to the cabin as soon as we eat and baking can wait for tomorrow. Cake for breakfast works for me,” Gray declared.

“How do you know I’m making cake?”

“Because you packed that ridiculous heart-shaped pan.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “It’s cute. And the kids at the center loved the heart cakes.”

They sure had. Gray had actually gone with Jack to a fucking Valentine’s party full of teenagers, but Jenna was there and so was Henry. It was a special occasion. Not that Gray enjoyed the cheesy games they played. Not at all. Sure he’d won a round of darts, and Jenna had smiled like the kid she still was when he gave her the bear he’d won as a prize, but that was irrelevant.

Gray glanced at Mason, and he rolled his eyes.

Jack snorted. “Go ahead and laugh. I bet you’ll like the cake.”

“I will.” Gray wasn’t going to give him any more grief. It was fucking cute, and he didn’t give a damn what shape Jack’s cake was in. It would taste good.

“So no chance of checking out the bar Elizabeth told me about or that hipster cocktail place tonight?” Mason asked.

Was he taunting Gray? Surely he knew what Gray had planned for him. “I do not need some organic herbal cocktail shit. And no. I told you we’re going to the cabin as soon as we...”

A waitress arrived with their food. Gray smiled when he saw two enormous chicken breasts coated in a spicy rub plus mac and cheese and coleslaw on his plate.

Jack and Mason both had a sandwich and fries.

Jack glanced at Mason. “Gray’s pronouncement sounded rather definite.”

Mason nodded. “It did. Ominous too.”

“You won’t be laughing later.” Gray gave Mason a threatening glare.

Mason grinned at him and whispered, “My ass is already feeling it.”

“Good.” Gray wanted to build the anticipation, have them both hopped up by the time they arrived at the cabin, which was another twenty minutes up into the mountains.

They had reservations the following night at Granite, another restaurant Jack had chosen. All Gray knew was that they were supposed to have amazing steaks, which was good enough for him. Having special plans for tomorrow meant that tonight they’d stay in and celebrate with the presents he had for them.

For the next few minutes, they concentrated on eating. The chicken was as good, maybe better, than Jack had promised. Gray wondered if he should order more for the road, but as soon as they finished, Mason and Jack shooed him toward the car, obviously eager to get moving.

“What’s the rush?” he asked once he was seated behind the wheel.

“You really have to ask?”

He smiled. “No, I just want to hear you say it.”

“We want our surprise!” Jack was practically bouncing.

“I just bet you do,” Gray said. “I wonder if you can guess what it is or how I’m going to use it on you.”

“A new flogger?” Mason asked. They’d been talking about getting one with thinner tassels that would bring a harsher sting.

“I’m not telling, but it’s fun to hear you guess.”

“Nipple clamps.” Jack’s idea. “The vibrating ones we saw online.”

“Maaaaybe.”

“Dammit, Gray. Now I’m horny as fuck,” Mason protested.

Gray was enjoying this. “Is it hard to sit still, thinking about what I’m going to do to your ass? Because you might not know what the surprise is, but you know what we’re going to do after that.”

“Oh fuck,” Mason muttered.

Gray held up his hand and rubbed his fingers against one another. “All of this up inside you.”

“God, Gray,” Jack protested. “I’m going have to jerk off right here in the fucking car if you don’t stop.”

Gray chuckled. “I’m going to let Mason fuck you to take the edge off.”

Jack pressed the heel of his hand on his cock, which was straining against his worn jeans.

“Both of you, hands by your sides.”

“Gray,” Mason whined.

Jack kept rubbing his cock slowly, up and down.

“You’re distracting me. Keep it up, and I won’t let you come when he fucks you.”

Jack groaned. “God, Gray, you’re so fucking hot when you talk like that. I’m going to take you on a vacation every fucking weekend if it will be like this.”

Gray smiled. He might just like this vacation deal after all. “So far so good. Of course, this cabin might actually be a rat-infested shack.”

“Then we’ll get a hotel.” Jack wasn’t the least bit ruffled.

“Fuck, a tent’s good enough,” Mason declared.

Gray shook his head. “No way will you be able to lie on the hard ground after what I’m going to do to you tonight.” Gray glanced in the rearview mirror long enough to see Mason shiver, then put his eyes back on the road. The turns were starting to get sharp.

“Are you going to tell us more about what you want?” Mason asked.

“You really do want to be tormented, don’t you?”

“It will pass the time.”

“Painfully, but okay.”

By the time they arrived at the cabin, Mason was having a lot of trouble sitting still and Jack’s hands were squeezed into fists.

Gray had barely put the car in park at the rental office before Jack had the door open and was running up the steps. He practically leapt back into the car a few moments later. “I’ve got the key. Turn right up here at the fork. We’re in the second one on the right.”

Gray drove even more slowly than the narrow gravel road called for. Jack glanced back at Mason. “He’s doing this on purpose, isn’t he?”

“Fuck yes, but you know you love it.”

Jack sighed. “I know no such thing.”

Gray bit his lip to keep from laughing. This was going to be a great night.

He pulled up in front of the cabin, which looked exactly as it had online. “Grab your

bags. Unlock the door, and as soon as you get inside, start stripping.”

“What?” Mason asked.

“You heard me.”

“But—”

“Are you questioning me, boy?”

Mason shook his head. “No, sir.”

“Are you really starting this now?” Jack asked.

“Are you going to do as you’re told or take the consequences?”

“I... Damn, you’re fucking amazing,” Jack declared. He opened his door and practically fell out into the driveway.

“Try not to hurt yourself. We won’t have nearly as much fun, then.”

They didn’t often fall into their Dom/sub roles outside of the house, but when they did, things always got explosive. Of course with Mason and Jack, things were usually explosive. No one could have convinced Gray of it before he met Jack, but having a man you cared deeply for submit to you was so much hotter than when you were both just in it for the sex. Just thinking of Mason and the deep trust he had in Gray made him feel honored, not to mention horny as fuck. He could hardly believe they were going to try fisting.

Gray took his time before going in. He walked around the cabin and checked out at the porch on the back side, which faced a gorgeous mountain view and did in fact

have a very private hot tub on it. Then he cleaned the car of the candy wrappers and Coke bottles Jack insisted they couldn't live without during the drive. Finally, he lifted his suitcase out of the car. He hoped he'd given them time to obey his orders, because no matter how much Jack might have protested, Gray was certain they all wanted the same thing he did.

When he opened the door of the cabin, the sight in front of him took his breath. Jack and Mason knelt on a plush carpet in front of the sofa. They shivered as the cold breeze from the open door skittered over them.

They'd moved the coffee table aside to give plenty of room for whatever Gray might order them to do. They were both looking down, hands clasped behind their backs, the perfect picture of submission.

Gray's heart pounded. He wanted to order them both to face the couch, pull out his cock, and fuck them each in turn until they all lost their minds. But that wasn't tonight's game.

Calmly, as if they weren't even there, he unzipped his suitcase and pulled out the two gift bags inside. "You followed those orders beautifully. Now I have something for each of you."

They both looked up and he handed them the bags. What would they think of his gift?

Mason's hand shook as he tried to release the staple holding down the folded top of the bag, until finally he just ripped it. Gray could tell he wasn't sure what he was looking at initially. And he knew from Mason's face exactly when Mason figured it out.

Jack held up his gift, letting it dangle from a finger by the handle. "Did you get the same thing?" he asked Mason. Then he glanced between Mason and Gray as if he

wasn't sure what he held was real.

Mason pulled his present out of the bag so they could compare. It was identical to Jack's except it was magenta instead of red.

Jack ran his hands over his, still looking uncertain. "Are these really...?"

"Fucking heart-shaped anal beads?" Mason asked.

Heat rushed to Gray's cheeks as he nodded. Had he gone too far?

Mason toyed with his as Jack had done. It was made of a series of graduated hearts arranged point up in a row from small to quite large and fat. It had a handle at the end, also heart-shaped.

Jack sputtered. "You had the nerve to make fun of my heart-shaped cake. And then you give us these?"

"Go ahead and make fun of them," Gray said. "I promise you won't be laughing once I get these in you."

"Fuck," Jack said, his eyes widening.

"They might be cheesy, but you'll feel them just as well as regular ones, maybe better."

Mason grinned. "I like that you decided Valentine's Day is worth celebrating after all."

"Think you'll still feel that way when they're in your ass?"

Mason fondled the thickest of the magenta hearts. “Yes, sir. I do.”

They were about to find out. “Turn around and brace yourself on the couch.”

“We’re going to try them out now?” Jack asked.

Gray loved the look of shock on his face. He didn’t surprise Jack all that often anymore. “Are you trying to get spanked?”

“B-but we haven’t even unpacked.”

“You’re going to do that after I put these in.”

Jack sucked in a breath. “What? While they’re inside us?”

Gray smiled. “Yes, exactly.”

Jack glanced at Mason, who was already in position. His gaze ran down Mason’s body to his pert ass, which Mason had stuck out wantonly.

“Are you going to make me wait?” Gray asked.

“No, sir,” Jack replied.

“Good, because after you’ve unpacked, I’ve got some plans you’re going to love.”

Gray had made sure to pack the lube where it was easily accessible. He grabbed it and moved toward his lovers.

Gray sat on the couch, watching as Jack and Mason moved around the cabin. He’d made them leave their suitcases in the entryway so he could watch them carry things

back and forth. The heart-shaped handles jiggled where they hung from Jack and Mason's asses. The toys had looked cheesy in the store, but now they looked sexy as fuck. The thought of how they must feel, how every movement would increase Mason's and Jack's awareness of being stuffed with the little—and not so little—hearts had Gray growing restless to get on with the night.

Every once in a while, Jack or Mason would gasp or shift like they were trying to escape a too-intense sensation. Gray had never thought he was into domestic service kink, but he was sure as hell enjoying watching his men work for him like this.

Mason squatted down to remove the last of his belongings from his suitcase and sucked in his breath. Gray could just imagine the hearts pressing on his prostate. Mason's head hung down. He flexed his hand on his thigh.

“Is there a problem?” Gray asked, deliberately using a chilly tone.

Mason shook his head. “No... I just...”

“Needed a minute?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You've had long enough. Get moving.”

Mason winced. “I... I don't?—”

“Look at me, boy.”

Mason did. Gray held up his hand and slowly raised each of his fingers. “You're going to have every one of these in you later. You'll be damn glad those hearts have been stretching you out.”

Mason licked his lips.

“Go on.” Gray gestured toward the bedroom.

Jack had paused on his way back to the suitcases so he could watch Mason. He had a tight grip on the back of one of the chairs at the kitchen bar.

“Did you need something, Jack?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What might that be?”

“Your cock.”

“It’s Mason’s cock you’re going to get tonight.”

Gray focused on Mason as he said the words, and Mason’s eyes widened.

“Y-you still want me to fuck him?”

“After you finish unpacking. And Jack, you’re going to help me get him ready and then help him take what I have for him.” Gray held up his hand again and ran his other hand over it, forming his fingers into a circle as if he were sliding one hand into the other.

Mason stared, and his mouth dropped open. “I...”

“Yes?” Gray asked.

“I want that. I want to open up like that for you.”

“I know you do. And it’s going to be good, but we’re going to take it slow.”

Gray knew Jack and Mason were both still surprised he’d jumped right to a scene as soon as they arrived. But he worried that if they waited too long, Mason might dwell on it too much and overthink it. Gray was the only one who needed to think. Mason just needed to feel.

“You’re not done.” Gray waved toward the luggage. Jack grabbed the last things from his suitcase, and Mason finally headed toward the bedroom, his steps short and stilted as he tried to reduce the sensations.

Jack walked quickly, and Gray enjoyed the sight of the heart handle bouncing as he moved. He grabbed the lube and one of the towels that were stacked on the counter along with information about the cabin. Then he followed them to the bedroom. He’d waited long enough.

“Hands on the end of the bed, asses out,” he ordered as he spread the towel on the floor.

Both men scrambled to obey. He couldn’t resist taking hold of both handles, tugging just a bit, and then pushing them back in. In seconds, both men were thrusting back, trying to get more from him. Mason hung his head down as if trying to concentrate on what he was feeling, but Jack peeked over his shoulder at Gray.

“Watch,” Gray said. He tugged on Mason’s handle until the largest heart came all the way out.

“So fucking hot,” Jack said, his voice low and breathy.

Gray pushed the heart back in and Mason whimpered. “They’re going to stay in while you fuck Jack. I’m going to get him ready for you now.”

Jack made a strangled noise as Gray gave the handle of his strand a sharp pull and the largest heat popped free. “Fuck!”

Gray tugged twice more and the line of hearts came all the way out of Jack’s body. Jack started to climb on the bed, but Gray grabbed his hips. “Stay right there. Mason, he’s all yours.”

Mason stood and his eyes widened as the beads moved inside him. He moved behind Jack and Gray lubed his cock for him using slow, lingering strokes that had him thrusting into Gray’s hand. Gray slapped Mason’s ass when he was done. “Don’t be gentle with him. He needs a good, solid fuck.”

“I do!” Jack agreed.

Mason drove in hard enough to make Jack yelp. Apparently taking Gray at his word, he continued to fuck Jack fast and hard, until Jack was begging, barely able to catch his breath. Gray couldn’t help himself. He unzipped his pants and started jerking off as he watched. Seeing the heart sticking out of Mason waving up and down as Mason drove into Jack’s ass was too hot for words.

“Gray.” Jack looked around at him. “I want to suck you. Want to be between you two.”

Gray was up on the bed in seconds, positioning himself so Jack could have his cock and Mason’s too. Jack took him down all the way. Holy God, he was good at sucking cock. He had Gray right on the edge in no time.

“Need to come, sir. Please,” Mason begged.

“Do it. Fill his ass while I come down his throat.”

Jack moaned around Gray and reached beneath himself to stroke his own cock. Gray didn't complain. He wanted Jack to come. They all needed this first orgasm so they could relax and go slow.

“Come for me, both of you,” he demanded.

Mason gave Jack a few more harsh strokes, then his face contorted as he froze and cried out.

Jack made a strangled sound around Gray's cock, and his body tensed as he came too.

They were so fucking amazing, and they were his. Gray pushed deeper, and Jack let him, taking his cock to the root and looking up at Gray. That did it. Gray went over the edge, shooting his load into Jack's mouth. Despite trying to recover from his own orgasm, Jack took every drop. Then all three men collapsed onto the bed.

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Gray started to drift to sleep, but he fought the urge. He had a lot more planned for his men, especially Mason.

He needn't have worried about drifting off, though. Mason saw to it that Gray wasn't going to forget what he'd promised. He turned on his side and laid a hand on Gray's chest. Gray opened his eyes and Mason bent to kiss him.

Just as things were going from sweet to I'm-ready-to-start-round-two, Mason stiffened and pulled back. Gray opened his eyes to see Jack, impish grin on his face, toying with the plug Mason still wore.

"Enough," Gray commanded. "Mason, lie on your back and spread your legs."

Mason did as he was told.

"Remember, any time you need to stop for a break or for good, use your safe word. You do not have to go any further than you want to."

Mason nodded. "I know, but I want to know how it feels."

"Jack, distract him for a bit."

Mason's cock was already semi-hard. Gray loved that just the thought of what they were going to do had him perking up moments after he'd climaxed. He watched as Jack bent over Mason and toyed with his nipples, making Mason squirm and clamp his teeth into his lower lip. Mason clutched at Jack, trying to force his head down.

“Arms above your head,” Gray growled.

Mason gave him a pleading look.

“This is about surrender.”

He nodded slowly. “Yes, sir.”

Mason reached up and clutched a pillow. Gray wondered if they’d owe the cabin owners a new one by the time they were done.

Jack sucked on one of Mason’s nipples, leaving it deeply red. Then he shifted positions to take the other hard nub into his mouth. When he’d reddened it too and left teeth marks around the edge, he worked his way down Mason’s chest and abdomen and turned his attention to Mason’s balls, sucking them into his mouth.

Jack glanced at Gray. “You like the show?”

Dammit! Gray had gotten distracted. “Fuck yes. You using your mouth is one of my favorite things.”

Jack chose that moment to start sucking Mason’s cock, and Mason’s hips shot off the bed. He gasped and tugged on the pillow so hard Gray couldn’t believe it held together.

Trying to focus again, Gray drizzled lube along Mason’s crack and teased the edge of his hole. Then he grasped the heart-shaped handle and pulled, keeping steady pressure until each of the “beads” slid from his body.

“Fucking fuck!” Mason shouted.

Jack grabbed Mason’s hips and shoved them to the mattress as he continued to suck

and tease. Gray could watch him all day, but Mason wasn't going to be allowed to come again until Gray was inside him.

“Enough, Jack.”

Jack sat back, but he looked disappointed.

“Move behind him so he can lean against you.” The position raised Mason up so he could see exactly what Gray was doing.

At first, Gray simply slipped two fingers into Mason. He was already well stretched from wearing the hearts—those had certainly turned out to be a fantastic purchase. Gray had gotten a few other ideas at the shop where he bought them. Maybe those would work out just as well in the future.

Mason glanced down and Jack took hold of his hands, pinning them against his chest. “Let's watch. I can't wait to see this.”

Mason nodded and licked his lips as Gray worked his fingers in and out a few times. He used lazy, slow strokes, but beads of sweat rolled down Mason's chest, and Gray realized he was holding his breath.

“Breathe.”

“I...”

“I'll stop.”

Mason took a long, slow breath, coached by Jack.

“Are you okay?” Jack asked in a soft, calm voice.

“Yeah, I just...”

“You’ve had Gray’s fingers in you before,” Jack said. “This is nothing new. You know where this is going, and you know you can stop it anytime.”

“I’m nervous.”

“Of course you are. I bet Gray’s a bit nervous too.”

Gray wanted to deny it, but that wouldn’t help. “Yeah, I am. Do you want to stop?”

Mason shook his head. “No, I want this.”

Gray nodded. He slid his fingers out, then pushed back in with three this time. Jack made sure Mason breathed steadily. Soon he was lifting his hips, asking for more.

Gray added a generous amount of lube and slipped all four fingers into Mason. He worked them in and out very slowly. They’d gotten this far twice before, and both times Mason had seemed interested in more.

“Do you still want more of this?” Gray asked, pressing just a little deeper as Mason’s ass clenched tightly around him.

Mason groaned. “Y-yes.”

Jack contorted himself so he could kiss Mason. Gray poured more lube over his hand and added his thumb, pushing in several inches more, almost to the widest part of his hand.

Mason’s eyes were wide, and he was biting his lower lip so hard Gray expected to see blood. “More?”

Mason whimpered and nodded.

“Suck him, Jack.”

Jack did as Gray said, sucking him until Mason was alternately fucking up into Jack’s mouth and bearing down on Gray’s hand. Gray couldn’t believe how wide he’d stretched him. It seemed impossible.

“Please, Gray. Please. I need it all.”

“Jack, stop now. Just hold him.”

Jack returned to his previous position, and Mason took his hands, squeezing them.

Gray couldn’t believe he was really about to do this. “Watch.”

Mason looked down and his eyes widened. “Oh my God! It hurts, but it’s so incredible. I’m so fucking full so?—”

Gray pushed just that little bit more until the thickest part of his hand moved past the tight ring of Mason’s hole.

Mason froze.

“Breathe,” Gray ordered.

“I... Fuck. I...”

“Mason?”

“I could come just from... so full.”

Mason seemed in danger of hyperventilating. “Jack, help him breathe.”

As Jack did, Gray pulled out just a little and then pushed back in. Mason’s ass clamped his hand so tight he almost couldn’t stand it, but he was sure Mason was feeling a hell of a lot more pain than he was. He poured even more lube on his hand until everything was so slick he was sliding easily in and out. Slowly. Carefully.

Mason’s cock was so hard it stood up off his abdomen, and he’d dripped a puddle of precum onto himself.

“Do you want Jack to bring you off?” Gray asked.

Mason nodded.

Jack took Mason’s cock into his mouth, and within seconds, Mason was shooting his load, his ass clamping so hard around Gray’s hand that he thought it might break some bones.

“Fuck!” Mason shouted. “Fuck, it’s amazing!”

Gray couldn’t believe how good it felt to know Mason trusted him that much. He was fucking amazing. As Mason began to come down from his orgasm, Gray said, “I’m pulling out. Brace yourself.”

Jack moved up Mason’s body and offered Mason his cock. Mason started to suck and Gray pulled his hand all the way out. Mason gasped around Jack’s cock but kept going. Gray was so close. He’d almost come when Mason did. So he took his cock in his hand and worked himself, one stroke, two, three, and he was shooting all over Mason, not that he could get much messier.

Jack followed seconds later, coming with a hoarse shout.

Gray watched as Mason's throat worked around him.

"Shower," Gray said when he could speak. His voice was rough, not nearly as steady as he'd intended.

Mason rose onto his elbows and then flopped back down. "Dizzy."

"Let's help him, Jack."

Jack took one arm and Gray the other. They helped Mason stumble to the shower where Gray washed him and checked out his ass. No bleeding, no tearing, just swelling as to be expected.

He cradled Mason back against him as Jack washed his front. "How do you feel?"

"Floaty."

"How's your ass?"

He groaned.

Gray's confidence wavered. "I..."

"Gray, I'm fine. That was so much better than I even imagined."

See. No need to worry. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. Can we please go to bed now?"

Jack looked up, an exaggerated expression of shock on his face. "Haven't you had enough?"

Mason flipped him off and Gray smiled. “As tired as I am, I’m not sure I can sleep. That brought on quite an adrenaline rush.”

Once they were all clean and dry, they snuggled in bed, Mason moved gingerly, but he swore he was fine.

“I just don’t want to have truly hurt you,” Gray said.

“Gray, I had your whole hand inside me, I’m going to be sore.”

“Let’s watch a movie,” Jack suggested. “It will help Gray focus on something other than asking you about your ass every two seconds.”

“Good idea.” Mason took the remote and scrolled through channels. He stopped on Vin Diesel’s xXx. “Perfect.”

“Stop thinking Prague Police and start thinking Playstation,” they all chorused.

“That is just the best line,” Mason said, looking as happy as Gray had ever seen him.

Gray smiled too, because in that moment, he felt like the luckiest man on earth.

The next evening, after a long soak in the hot tub, they dressed in their best clothes. Gray didn’t even grumble about it. Jack looked so fucking edible in the new gray suit he’d worn when speaking to a state congressional committee about the youth task force. And Mason had chosen a green dress shirt that made his eyes look dreamy—not that Gray would admit to such a sappy thought.

If Gray hadn’t been so focused on what he wanted to say to the two of them, he’d have been tempted to drag them to the men’s room and fuck them in a stall. It was a good thing his mind was more romantically occupied, because the restaurant Jack had chosen was not that kind of establishment.

“Why didn’t you tell me this place was so fancy?” he asked Jack. “I’ll probably use the wrong fork and embarrass everyone.”

Jack rolled his eyes. “Neither of us cares.”

“I’m just glad the seats are nice and cushy,” Mason said.

Gray felt heat rushing to his face. “Are you?—?”

“I’m fine.”

Jack hid his laughter behind his menu.

Gray couldn’t decide what to order so he took the server’s recommendation and ordered the apple cider steak. It was orgasmically delicious, as were Jack’s scallops and Mason’s filet.

Gray insisted they order dessert even though Jack said he couldn’t eat another bite. But when the server set down the sampler platter they’d chosen to share, Gray was nervous as fuck and not sure he could eat either. It was time to say what he’d planned. “Planned” as in decided last night while he lay awake watching the last of xXx with Jack and Mason sleeping beside him. What if they didn’t feel the same way? What if...?

He laid a hand on Jack’s wrist, stopping him from cutting the cheesecake into thirds. “I need to say something.”

Mason frowned, obviously feeling the seriousness of the moment. “Yes?”

“It’s not anything bad. At least, I don’t think you’ll think so. I don’t think so.”

“Gray, what’s wrong?” Mason asked.

Gray shook his head. This wasn't going well. "Nothing's wrong."

Jack patted the hand that still lay on his arm. "For God's sake, Gray, just say it."

He took a deep breath. "Okay. I know we can't do this officially, not even now that gay marriage is legal, but I want... I mean... Will you two fucking marry me?"

Jack sputtered.

Mason's eyes went wide and then he laughed. "That is so you to ask like that. All I can say back is fuck yeah."

They both looked at Jack. "Fuck yeah," he said. "Now can we try this cheesecake?"

"That's it? We're just going to eat cheesecake now?" Gray tried to look incredulous, but really he was relieved.

Mason shrugged. "Yeah. Why not? We all belong to each other, right? And marriage would just be a declaration of that among friends."

Jack nodded.

"You mean you've thought about it before? About us getting married or something approximating it?"

They both nodded.

"And you didn't say anything?"

"I didn't think..." Jack's words trailed off, and he looked down at the dessert platter.

"Me either," Mason said.

“Well, you were wrong. I do want to. We’ll set a date later, because right now I’m going to eat cheesecake.” Gray’s appetite was back in full force.

The cheesecake was amazing as were all the other desserts. After they cleaned the platter and paid their bill, they went back to the cabin and sealed their declaration with gentle lovemaking.

When they could drag their tired bodies from the bed, Gray, Jack, and Mason crept onto the deck, shivering in the frigid night air before they sank into the hot tub. When all three of them were submerged in the water, Gray clicked off the flashlight he’d used to guide their way. The night was pitch black around them, the only sounds the occasional murmurs from vacationers in other cabins and the hooting of a distant owl. Gray tipped his head back against the rim of the tub and let the water ease his sore muscles.

Just as Gray was wondering if he could stay awake, Jack laid a hand on his thigh and spoke. “Should we go for a big wedding?”

Gray sputtered, but before he could respond, Mason said, “I think so, something outside. Could we get it together by May or early June, do you think?”

“I’m sure we could,” Jack said. “We’ll need to contact a lot of people, though: a caterer, a florist, a photographer, someone to officiate. I bet Toby’s sister would help us; she loves planning things.”

Gray opened his eyes, wishing he could see the expressions on Jack’s and Mason’s faces, because he hoped to God they were kidding. “You’re joking, right?”

“What? No,” Jack answered.

Gray had never intended to get involved in some crazy scheme for a big gay threeway wedding. “I thought we’d see a lawyer, get some papers drawn up to give us certain

protections—the closest we can come to marriage—and then we’d say vows in front of a few friends and...”

“Go home and fuck?” Jack asked.

Gray felt his face heat even more than it had from steam surrounding them. “I’m not going to get away without having a big ass party, am I?”

“No.”

He groaned. “What was I thinking?”

“That you love us,” Mason said.

“That you want everyone to know it,” Jack added.

They were right. Gray loved them enough to suffer through wedding plans for them, maybe even to enjoy the ceremony and reception. It was going to be one hell of a spring.

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