



Little Did We Know (The Mclean Tales #1)

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Category: Romance

Description: The Mclean Tales #1 ? BDSM ? Friendship ? Found Family ? Humor ? Origin Story

At Mclean House, everyone knows about the eight founding members.

If you need help with anything in the community, you send them a message or approach them at the house.

Lucas is the kind Daddy Dom with patience for days, Macklin the funny switch who sure knows how to switch sides as well, and Greer is the primal Master with a huge heart and a devil on his shoulder.

Colt has that devil on his shoulder too, actually.

Lucian, another Master, is into high protocol and creative punishments.

Penelope loves to host events and runs a tight ship.

Last but definitely not least, the men who came up with the idea to start a community.

River and Reese are the scary, sadistic twin brothers—until you get to know them and see the sweethearts under the ink, of course.

The eight founders find their happily ever afters in the Game Series, but this book isn't about that.

It's about what happened before.

The story very few know so far.

How they met, how they became friends, and how they started exploring together.

So let's go back to the beginning.

It's a cold night in Baltimore, and Lucas is about to catch the scowl of someone at an event where he feels completely out of place.

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Lucas West

This was...new.

I cleared my throat and looked around the club, a stark contrast to any of the kink events I'd visited so far.

This was so underground . Literally. A massive basement designed to keep screams contained.

A proper BDSM club with a bar at the center and the walls lined with stalls and furniture I'd never seen in real life.

Baltimore had a wild kink scene, that was for sure.

I'd wanted to see pain-play, and it looked like I was going to experience a whole lot of it.

I was still figuring out how to get a bit of that pain for myself without making people think I was submissive. Or a masochist who wanted to get beatings. I just wanted to get fucked roughly when I bottomed.

I approached the bar, hoping I came off as assertive enough, and remembered the advice I'd seen online. Walk with purpose. So much advice. Do this, do that, act that way, "look Daddy-like." It was dizzying.

What was Daddy-like anyway?

Christ, I wasn't sure I fit in here. If the industrial music pounding its heavy bass through me wasn't enough, the specific trend in clothes did it.

I wasn't part of leather culture, nor could I pull off latex, piercings, or harnesses.

Moreover, I didn't fucking want to. So...so be it.

I'd be the odd man out in jeans and a shirt.

I walked past a big man holding his boy on a leash, both wearing leather, and the sub barked playfully at me.

I felt my mouth twist. He was cute. He reminded me of Joey. We'd made no sense together, but he'd introduced me to Daddykink last year. Something had just clicked, more so than when I'd backpacked in Amsterdam and stumbled into a BDSM club.

Ever since, I'd been on a quest. I wanted to find a Little and start exploring relationships.

I could admit I was hungry for something deeper than casual hookups, at the same time as I wasn't particularly interested in settling down anytime soon.

Part of me was still hoping I'd wake up and discover I was a switch.

It would be so much easier to find a Top who could rail me mercilessly if I also submitted.

But it did nothing for me—except irritate me.

When a Dom tried to get bossy, I automatically pushed back in annoyance.

When I got to the bar, I ordered a beer, and the bartender actually stamped the top of my hand.

What the fuck?

I eyed the smeared ink.

No play without supervision.

Because of one beer?

Oh, whatever. Safety was important, of course. Drinking and playing didn't go hand in hand, in my experience. But one beer... If I could drive, I could play.

...without supervision.

Way to make me feel like a child. I might be dreading turning thirty, which was still a few years away, but I wasn't a damn kid.

Sitting down on a stool, I glanced around the club and the mostly occupied scening stalls. It was only nine o'clock, but it seemed everyone had arrived already.

As I sipped my beer, I tried to estimate who was new and who was an established member of this community. This entire evening was supposed to be a "get to know us" kind of event, where everyone was welcome to join.

A handful of shy guys lingered along the walls, a sight that always struck something in me.

But it would feel weird if I, as the newbie in this case, walked over in an attempt to make them feel welcome and included.

I didn't know anyone here. I'd talked to two members in the chat room, merely to confirm my attendance, and that was all.

Someone came up next to me and ordered a drink, and I turned my head to see a very handsome guy my age.

Maybe a few years older. Cutting features, one of those bad-boy-looking guys.

He looked the way I'd felt when he received a stamp on his hand.

He studied the ink with a frown on his face, and his forehead wrinkled.

"What the ever-lovin' fuck," he muttered, the music almost drowning out his voice.

He must've sensed my attention on him, because he turned to me and smashed his lips together.

He wasn't happy. "First they tell you rubbers are mandatory even if you're in an established relationship, then they throw the no-asphyxiation rule in your face, and now I can't have a drink without a babysitter if I wanna play?"

I smirked. "I take it you're as new to this community as I am."

He lifted his brows, one of which had a scar that looked fresh. "New and not stickin' around. What bullshit is this?"

Oh, it wasn't that bad. They were just...covering their asses, I supposed. I'd attended events where certain types of play were prohibited due to the risks.

"I wouldn't know," I replied. "A discussion thread led me to a chat room, and suddenly, I was signing up for an event in Baltimore."

He hmpf'd and accepted his drink, then promptly paid with a crumpled ten-dollar bill.

"I can start a tab if you want," the bartender said over the music.

"Yeah, no thanks—I'm good." The guy took a sip of his drink, and he wasn't impressed by that either. "How difficult can it be to find a kink community that doesn't suffocate you with rules? And while we're at it—safe, sane, and consensual? One person's sane is another's fuckin' bonkers."

I chuckled. Maybe he had a point.

"Anyway." He wiped his hand on his jeans before extending it to me. "I'm Reese."

I shook his hand. "Lucas West."

"Good to meet you, Lucas West," he said. "You enjoy your night. If we get on the road now, I reckon my brother and I can make it back to DC and the sadomaso event in Logan before they stop lettin' people in."

Whoa, what? I perked up. "There's an event for sadomasochists in DC tonight? I thought I looked all over." DC could be a frustrating jungle, because I heard of so many places, but they were difficult to find if you didn't know where to look.

Reese nodded with a dip of his chin. "First and third Saturday of every month at a gay club."

Please take me with you! I wanted to shout.

"Would you mind giving me the name of the place?" I asked instead. The prospect of finding something so much closer to where I lived was almost too good to be true.

Reese quirked a faint smirk and gave me a brief once-over. “You into pain?”

Oh hell. I hoped he wasn’t eyeing me as a potential masochist—or Sadist, for that matter.

“I’m not a Sadist, nor a masochist,” I replied firmly. “It’s just been a while since I bottomed, and I prefer rough play. My hope is to make friends and maybe find play partners—but when push comes to shove, my core kink, I think, is Daddy/Little Boy. I haven’t explored much, to be honest.”

He nodded slowly, then finished his drink in one gulp. “Well, you’re welcome to join us if you want.”

Was he...

Did he think I was a sub?

Did he mean anything by that invitation, or was he just offering for me to tag along?

Oh, screw it. I wanted to make more friends. I needed that. I only knew three fellow kinksters, and two of them were moving to Boston soon. I was itching to be a part of a community.

“I’d love to,” I said. “I drove here, but I wouldn’t mind following you and your brother.”

It was interesting to me that Reese went to kink events with his brother. Unless it was another type of dynamic.

“Cool. I’ll just go drag River away from that scene over there.” He pointed toward a few stalls, and I immediately did a double take. No need to ask any questions about

their relation, because that guy was a carbon copy of Reese. They were twins. “See you out front in five?” Reese asked.

I nodded dumbly. I needed to process what was happening. So I was going back to DC with two complete strangers, after I’d committed to being here and seeing what Baltimore had to offer.

All right, then.

* * *

Reese’s brother left an impression without saying a word to me. The briefest of introductions had been handled by Reese, and River had nodded once, eyed me quickly, then headed for their car.

I had the name and address of the club we were going to, and maybe that was a good thing. Being able to go there by myself, in the safety of my own vehicle, and not be locked down by a pair of twin brothers who screamed trouble.

For one, Reese’s scar. For two, Reese drove like a maniac. For three, River was sporting a black eye and a busted lip.

If that was the result of their pain-play, I was going to arrive at this club and immediately find new people to get to know.

The drive gave me roughly an hour to think things through, but I wasn’t too worried. I’d heard of the club before; I just had no idea they hosted BDSM crowds too. Either way, it was bound to be packed, so I was sure I could lose the twins if they struck me as unsafe.

* * *

Perhaps I wouldn't have to lose the twins. Halfway to DC, they lost me. Reese drove way too fast, so that was that.

By the time I arrived in Logan—and found parking three blocks away—I was cutting it close to not being allowed in. Reese had said something about them closing the doors at eleven.

I blew out a breath and wiped my forehead, and I spotted the twins' car near the club entrance. A black sedan with tinted windows in the back.

It was a nice car.

“Lucas West!”

Oh. I looked up and spotted Reese at the door.

He smirked and jerked his chin, signaling for me to step on it.

I was going to be smooth and subtly let him know I was a Dom. Just in case he had plans to beat the crap out of me.

On the other hand, if he wanted the rough part of just topping me...I would probably not say no... Maybe. I hadn't decided. He was awfully hot, despite not being my type.

Reese said something to the bouncer, who nodded and stepped aside so I could enter.

“It's on the third floor,” Reese told me. “What took you so long?”

“The speed limit,” I answered on autopilot.

He laughed. “You’re funny, Lucas West.”

I suppressed a chuckle as he placed a hand on my back. “Why do you feel the need to say my last name?”

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“So that I’ll remember it,” he said. He gestured for me to take the steps first—this long, fairly narrow, purple-painted set of stairs leading up to flashing lights and pounding music.

We had to stop halfway up because a large group of guys was descending.

And Reese picked that moment to step right behind me, one step down, and put his hands on my hips.

He spoke in my ear next, and I went rigid.

“If I end up fuckin’ the daylights outta you, I’ll lose one of the names, though.”

Fuckin’ the daylights...

A slow shudder rolled through me, and I swallowed hard as desire flared up.

* * *

I didn’t know if it was a deliberate move or if Reese—and his brother—was just in high demand, but by their leaving my side fairly quickly, they gave me a moment to think and observe.

The energy at this place was so different. People were laughing, dancing, scening, and talking. It was a regular nightclub, with the added spice of half a dozen stations where Sadists could go to town on screaming masochists.

With a beer in my hand, I watched Reese and River whip and paddle a younger guy who obviously knew the twins.

The playtime was nonsexual and yet electric and full of chemistry.

But the latter didn't come from the bottom as much as I picked it up from the brothers.

How they communicated and co-topped without saying much—at least verbally.

Instead, I saw it in their body language.

Reese had taken off his hoodie, revealing plenty of tattoos along his rib cage, chest, and neck.

He had a bandage above his hip too. At one point, River touched the spot, to which Reese nodded and reached for a bottle of water.

He wiped sweat off his face, then smacked the ass of the sub and said something.

I didn't hear the sub's response, though it led to another round of beating.

This time, it was River with a shorter single-tail whip, and the crowd made plenty of space for him to move. Including two spotters in the back, who made sure no one ended up in the danger zone.

Why couldn't I look away?

I should be mingling or flirting.

“We'll be back in a bit,” was all Reese had said earlier.

Another man stepped out of the crowd and squatted down in front of the masochist, pressing their foreheads together, and I realized he was the masochist's partner.

The older man signaled to Reese after a moment, and the twins eased off and earned applause from the audience. Even in the darkness and the flashing lights, I could see the red streaks along the maso's back.

My goodness. I would've needed a ride to the nearest hospital after such a beating, but the masochist was clearly in a wonderful mood. His Dom helped him up, and he was grinning through his tears.

It further confirmed that this level of sadomasochism wasn't my thing.

While someone wiped down the bench-type contraption the masochist had been strapped to, Reese and River spoke to the guy and his Dom. I took the opportunity to order another beer, and during that time, I spotted at least six couples flat-out fucking on the dance floor.

Maybe this kind of event wasn't my thing either, but I did hope to find other people here to befriend.

After paying for my beer, I went to find an empty table, and I sat down in a small booth to people-watch and consider my options.

Before I went home tonight, I wanted to at least make contact with someone else.

I wasn't the only one who was here alone tonight, so perhaps I could approach one of the guys at the bar.

Whether they were Doms or subs didn't matter.

I'd discovered my interest in bondage last year by shadowing a Domme for a weekend event.

Unfortunately, she rarely ventured outside her lesbian community, but we did meet up for brunch every now and then.

When I sought out the twins again, I noticed they were heading my way, and I sat a little straighter. Shouldn't they be balls deep in aftercare?

They exchanged a few words, after which River made a beeline for the bar.

Reese was in a good mood. He sat down across from me and tossed his hoodie on the table.

"It ain't perfect, but this place beats Baltimore, doesn't it?"

I smiled politely. "Jury's still out." The music was louder here, and the atmosphere was wild. I wouldn't say disorganized, but...too clubby. People were coming and going; there was movement everywhere. I couldn't imagine subs finding peacefulness in a scene here, which I admitted to Reese.

He chuckled and inclined his head. "It is more casual," he conceded. "Nothin' too risky happens here. But there are plenty of Sadists and masos to get to know."

I lifted my brows and gestured to the station they'd occupied. "That play was casual?"

He grinned. "With li'l Mattie? Hell yeah. You should see the play he's used to. He'll look like he just took a beatin' from a wreckin' ball."

Good Christ.

“He’s our sure thing,” he went on. “If River and I need to let off some steam, we give his Dom a call. We go back a couple years. We’ll get to exercise a paddle or two, and then we meet up for breakfast the mornin’ after.”

Huh. “So you don’t play with them beyond the pain?”

He shook his head and scratched his bicep absently. “Nah. We haven’t really found a way to combine pain and sex with a bottom yet. Can’t say sex is a priority either. We’re here to explore sadism.”

On that, I could relate. So far, sex had been fairly separate for me as well. The times I’d found a sub to tie up, the focus had been on rope and safety. Sex had entered the picture if the bottom wanted to spend the night with me or something like that.

“That don’t mean we’ll turn down the opportunity to have a sub between us for a hookup,” he added with a smirk. The implication was so clear that I didn’t have to ask. My plans for the night had just changed—if that was what I wanted.

Additionally, it would appear he and his brother played together even in the bedroom when they had someone between them.

That was...bizarrely sexy.

“I’m dominant,” I felt the need to say.

Reese’s smile widened. “Even better. A Dom who needs to get fucked? Do you struggle with that bit?”

I narrowed my eyes. “Only if the other guy—or guys—think they can boss me around. And for the record, Doms can be bottoms too.”

He chuckled and leaned back in his seat.

“I know.” He lifted his gaze to something behind me—or someone, rather—and it was River returning with two bottles of beer.

Reese scooted farther in, and River sat down next to him.

“Lucas West here is a Dom who occasionally needs to get fucked like a savage.”

For chrissakes!

“Really.” River hitched his brows at me and took a swig of his beer. “Does he beg?”

Okay, that one got me. Annoyance tore through me, and I instantly considered calling it a night.

I could still drive after two beers, and I hadn’t finished this one anyway.

My plan had been to nurse it for a while.

My actual plan—and the whole reason I’d chosen to drive—was because I’d thought I’d be in Baltimore.

“He fucking does not,” I stated. “He’s not that interested either.”

River smiled faintly, his expression just cocky enough to let me know he didn’t believe me.

Neither did Reese. “So you don’t wanna take us back to your place?”

Actually...when it put it that way, not even a little.

“I don’t know anything about you,” I pointed out. “I’m afraid my apartment is only open to people whose cuts and bruises I’m certain don’t come from a robbery gone wrong or a run-in with a local drug cartel.”

River flashed a genuine grin but said nothing.

Reese, on the other hand... He laughed and said, “That’s fair.

We’d take you back to our place if we didn’t have plans in the mornin’.

First an early breakfast with Mattie and Trent, and then we got work.

” He paused and nodded at River’s face. “The decorations on our faces ain’t excitin’. We’re into martial arts.”

I didn’t know what to do with that information. He could be full of shit—and so could anyone I invited to my place. Not that there’d been that many one-nighters I’d had to worry about.

I decided to take a lighter route. “Are you the fuck-and-duck type of dudes who sneak out, or do you at least leave a note in the morning?”

Reese seemed surprised by that, but he still chuckled, and he scratched his nose. “We’re not animals, Lucas West. I probably would’ve woken you up and said we’ll meet up next time we’re in town, but I can write it on a note if you want.”

Mildly reassuring. Either way, I wasn’t too worried. I really wanted to get laid, and however they left in the morning was their business. I knew what I was getting myself into.

I took a swig of my beer. “Let’s get out of here.”

Reese smiled. “Fantastic. Let’s exchange numbers in case we lose you to the speed limit.”

* * *

Admittedly, walking through my garage at home with River and Reese in tow made me more alert.

They’d snagged the last spot for guests, and the moment they’d stepped out of their car, I’d sensed a shift in the air.

They exuded a predatory energy, though thankfully without the stranger-danger worry that I might end up on the news as a missing person.

I had no idea how this was going to play out, if one or both wanted to get involved, but one thing was certain. I was gonna get fucked, and something told me I’d feel it tomorrow.

In the elevator, I felt the need to address something. I cleared my throat, locking eyes with River briefly in the mirror. He stood behind me, leaning casually against the wall. Frustratingly unreadable.

I shifted my gaze to Reese next to me. “In Baltimore, you expressed your aversion to protection.”

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He tilted his head, pensive. “No, I expressed my aversion to unnecessary rules. How I fuck someone is up to me and whoever I’m drillin’ my cock into.” He flashed a smirk and clapped me on the shoulder as the elevator dinged and slowed to a stop. “Don’t worry, Lucas West. You’re safe with us.”

Heh.

He stepped out first.

I swallowed and fidgeted with my keys, and my stomach tightened with anticipation and nerves.

River was next, and he paused next to me. “But if we can fuck your tight throat without rubbers in the way, we’d prefer that.”

Jesus.

Shock tore through me at the same time as my mouth fucking watered. It was the longest sentence he’d spoken to me, and he’d chosen his words well.

I found the right key and picked up the pace, suddenly more eager to have a one-night stand than to find new friends. I could find friends tomorrow. Friends were everywhere.

I let the twins enter first, and a plan formed in my head. Get them a drink, excuse yourself... I needed a quick trip to the bathroom.

My apartment was by no means large, but I loved it. Past the hallway, it opened up to the kitchen and then the living room behind it, the space bright and open.

As soon as I switched on the lights, Reese let out a low whistle and walked farther in.

“So this is what a place looks like if you actually decorate it,” he mused. “We should try that, Riv.”

I wasn’t sure my place was the best inspiration for that. My walls were bare, because I didn’t have the tools to drill into brick. But I had bookcases and shelves with stuff.

River frowned. “We have furniture.”

“So does a furniture store,” Reese retorted. “Doesn’t make it a home.”

I smiled to myself and walked behind the kitchen bar that separated the area from the living room. “Would you like something to drink?”

Reese looked interested. “What do you have?”

I opened my freezer. “Gin, vodka, white rum.” I had more in my liquor cabinet, but none of it was cold.

Then the fridge. “Ginger ale, orange juice, tonic water, and Coke.” I made room for him to peruse.

“Feel free to play bartender. I need to go to the bathroom. There are snacks in that cupboard too.”

“I like snacks,” he said with a nod.

He was in luck. I went through periods of obsession with chips...

* * *

The twins had made themselves at home by the time I returned some ten minutes later.

Not only had they figured out how my old stereo worked and put on some bluesy rock—a CD I was fairly sure belonged to my dad—but they'd gotten comfortable on the couch with drinks, snacks, and...

Well, Reese had stripped down to boxer briefs and was currently fist-deep in a bag of cashews.

The sight was so comical that it washed away any traces of surprise. Then again, did I have anything to be surprised about? We all knew where this night was going, and if I could, uh, make myself presentable with my bathroom routine, Reese shedding some clothes was nothing.

Still. This was weird. And funny.

Reese grinned when he spotted me. "Hey, gorgeous. Did you get your asshole prettied up for us?"

I stopped short, and it felt like he'd dumped a bucket of cold water over me. Water or embarrassment. Or defiance—or anger!

Who the fuck was this guy?!

I made eye contact with River. "Is he always like this?"

He shrugged a little and took a swig of whatever drink he'd mixed. "More or less. It's how he digs for information. It ain't subtle, but it's effective."

Information about what? And how exactly? Through shock value?

"If there's information you want about me, you could start a conversation and ask," I pointed out. "It's how normal people get to know each other."

River chuckled quietly. "Not sure we know what's normal."

"Fuck normal," Reese said bluntly. "Besides, we know plenty about you already. A lot can be said about someone who's got not only a record player but a CD player and an iPod."

"He was looking at my entertainment unit."

"Yearbooks on display too—you probably had a childhood filled with fond memories. Picture of your parents, I assume. Happy family. No siblings, right? Your mother helped you decorate your apartment, but you're not clueless around interior design."

"You know what you like. Should I go on?"

Um.

"He's just parrotin' shit I observed while you were in the bathroom," River stated. He wore a face of slight disapproval for his brother. "All you did was point out the yearbooks."

"So what?" Reese smiled. "We're a team. You do the work, and I present it."

River rolled his eyes.

I felt my mouth twitch. I didn't know what it was about these guys, but they were certainly...interesting.

I sat down in the chair across from them and poured a gin and tonic. They'd even filled a bowl with ice and wedged up a lemon, which provided me with some information too.

“What else does my apartment say about me?” I asked curiously.

River's eyes sparked with interest, and he didn't waste time letting his gaze wander.

From the entertainment unit, where I kept everything related to music and movies, to the shelves, where I only had a few smaller paintings.

A friend from college had painted them, and if she ever made it big, I might get rich.

But the main reason I'd bought them was because of the DC theme.

She painted parks, monuments, and architecture in watercolor.

Next, River's gaze slid to my liquor cabinet.

“Mind sharing some info about you ?” I wondered. “All I know is you're twin brothers, you enjoy martial arts, you're Sadists, and you don't half-ass your gin and tonic.”

Reese side-eyed his brother. “Ain't much to divulge. River works in IT, and I'm his babysitter.”

“Since when does that job require babysitting?” I questioned.

Reese shrugged and tossed another few cashews into his mouth. “Company policy. We usually work in third-world countries, so we gotta be safe.”

Ah. I supposed that made sense. Reese definitely fit the bill of someone working in security, even though there really was no telling them apart. Aside from some tattoos. River had a few; Reese had a few. I was sure the abs Reese had put on display were highly visible under River’s tee too.

“There ain’t a whole lot else to know about us,” Reese said. “We work too much. We’re savin’ up to buy a house. We’re tryin’ to find our way in kink.”

I noticed how everything was we with these two. They shared a lifestyle, a sexuality, they lived together, worked together...

“Oh, and I have a lifelong struggle to get my brother to eat anything other than ramen unless I cook,” he added. “Fucker’s obsessed. If I’m not around, he’s nukin’ noodle cups twenty-four seven.”

I grinned. That was funny—and endearing.

“You leave my ramen alone,” River said absently. He was still busy observing my living room and kitchen.

“I can’t say I’m very useful in the kitchen either,” I admitted. “I recycle the same six or seven dishes—with the exception of appetizers. I like to put together apps and tapas when I have friends over for dinner.”

Reese cocked his head. “You’re social and outgoing, I take it?”

I weighed my response but ended up nodding a little. “Sure. My current problem is finding friends in the BDSM world. I have plenty of vanilla friends with whom I share less and less, the more I explore kink. I really wanna be part of a community.”

He inclined his head. “Same issue for us. Tough to find the right crowd.”

It truly was. Many communities were heavily into a specific kink or lifestyle, such as the leather community, the bondage enthusiasts, and the sadomasochists.

It was natural for us to be drawn to others who shared our passions, at least in the smaller circles of friends.

The larger communities were more diverse, but they could still be incredibly cliquey.

“Where are you from?” Reese asked me.

I opened my mouth to respond, but River beat me to it.

“Maryland.” He pointed to a picture from my graduation next to my yearbooks. It revealed my high school’s name in the background. “Presumably Bethesda.”

I smirked a little. “Great find.” I faced Reese again. “I moved here for college. I stayed with my grandmother a lot—she lived in Georgetown. What about you?”

“All over the South, pretty much,” Reese said. “But in the end, I guess Virginia Beach has been the main home base.” He paused. “I really like DC, though.”

River smiled faintly. “So does Lucas.”

I grinned. “Okay, share the rest of your findings.”

He cocked his head a little. “How old are you?”

“Twenty-five,” I said automatically.

He lifted his brows, then eyed the yearbooks.

I swallowed.

Um.

He raked his teeth over his bottom lip and shook his head slowly. “We can discuss that you’re a shit liar who probably says you’re younger because you don’t feel entirely accomplished enough for your age, or...we can be over the chitchat.”

I blinked, and the heat of embarrassment bled across my face. How the fuck did I respond to th?—

“Come here.” River took a big swig from his drink, then rose to his feet. “Age is just a number and all that nonsense.”

I didn’t know why I complied. Maybe because I was desperate to leave the past thirty seconds behind me, and he seemed to have a new topic ready for us.

Something about River reeled me in, and I was rounding the coffee table before I knew it.

“I think you want low thunder before that first strike of lightnin’,” he said quietly.

The words settled like syrup and flowed through me in a sluggish wave that gave me goose bumps.

The moment I was within reach, he hooked a finger into my pants and tugged me closer, and then he leaned in and covered my mouth with his own.

A shiver ripped through me, and I just stood there completely immobile.

He kissed me sensually, with his hands following—his warm hands, long fingers, and firm touch.

He slipped his hands underneath my shirt and raised goose bumps all over my back.

Fuck me.

I hadn't expected how insanely erotic he would be.

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I shivered again and finally made my body work.

Kissing him back had happened on autopilot, but now I could finally get my arms around him too.

Our tongues met unhurriedly, and we tilted our heads at the same time for better access.

The kiss deepened, and I cupped his face in my hands and felt the stubble across his jaw. Sweet Jesus, he was good.

He was right. I was so over the chitchat.

He took the first step in undoing my jeans, and it kick-started my sense of urgency. I wanted more. I wanted his cock in my mouth as soon as possible.

I dropped my hands and tugged off his T-shirt first, and the next kiss was hungrier from the instant our lips touched. He kissed me forcefully, deeply, and unbuttoned my shirt.

I yanked at his belt and tossed it on the floor before I unzipped his jeans.

I sucked in a breath when I felt Reese behind me, and he made sure I lost the last of my clothes, all while he kissed my neck. Personally, I didn't have the patience. Once River's jeans and boxer briefs were past his hips, I dropped to my knees and immediately sucked him into my mouth.

He drew in a breath and pushed his fingers into my hair.

I peered up at him, and the sight was something else. His incredible body—he had a pronounced V and visible abs, sexy ink, and exuded strength, yet not in a loud way. He wasn't some beefcake from the gym. He was a swimmer or a runner or... He liked martial arts, right?

The way he closed his eyes and tipped his head back as he let the pleasure wash over him was my all-time favorite in any man. I fucking loved to suck cock. I loved to see what it did to my partner, I loved the taste, I loved the tension, and I craved the reward of a job well done.

He was thick and rock hard, and I sucked him for all I was worth.

Every spurt of pre-come made my mouth water for more.

For as talkative as Reese had been so far this evening, he didn't say much anymore. Or anything at all—and both twins struck me as sensualists all of a sudden. They just wanted to be in the moment and feel everything.

Reese kneeled behind me, and I felt his lips between my shoulder blades. Then his hands slipped around me—wait, just one of them. The other slid down to my ass instead, and I let out a loud moan around River's cock as I felt Reese's fingers brush over my opening.

He was the strike of lightning. He slicked up two fingers, then pushed them inside me in one firm motion, and I clenched around him. At the same time, he gripped my cock and stroked me slowly.

I was trapped between them, and it felt fantastically filthy.

I couldn't help it, but the thought of being taken roughly by these twin brothers was going to make my showers more interesting in the near future.

More than that, the memory of them taking me, because it had to fucking happen. I wanted both of them.

River gripped my hair tighter and slid his cock deeper, until he pushed at my throat. "That's it," he exhaled. "He's a real cocksucker, brother. You love this, don't you?"

I hummed around him and sucked at the tip, then took him all the way in again and swallowed around the head.

He clenched his jaw and groaned under his breath.

"He's got an ass made for fuckin' too," Reese murmured.

He added a third finger, and it was enough to steal the last of my composure. It was their damn fault. I was gonna turn into a greedy cock slut.

I pushed back against Reese's fingers, reveling in the burn.

The pleasure heated me up too fast, and I got desperate. River wasn't fucking my mouth, and that bothered me. I tried to move faster, but?—

"And that's enough," he grunted, pulling away from me. "Jesus. Where's your bed?"

Oh, fucking finally.

I stood up and wiped my mouth. "Follow me." Heart thundering, skin flushed, and ass ready to be filled, I turned toward my bedroom and managed two steps before Reese was there to pull me back against his body.

Holy fuck.

“Not so fast. I wanna enjoy the journey.” With that said, he spun me around and kissed me hard, and his hands went to my ass.

Desire shot through me, and I locked my arms around his neck and poured myself into the kiss. I felt him hard against me, and he pulled us flush against each other.

I registered that I was taking steps backward, toward my bedroom, but I was in no way leading them anywhere.

They were the ones taking me, and for once, I was happy to follow.

For a moment, I was completely surrounded by them.

I felt their hands and mouths everywhere, and I moaned as I slowly but surely lost my breath.

River hauled me backward and kissed my neck, with his cock pressing between my ass cheeks, and Reese kissed his way down my throat...

before we sort of met in a messy kiss over my shoulder.

Wait, I was kissing... Fuck. One of them. Both of them. First one, then the other.

It got darker—the only indication that we’d entered my bedroom—and then we were tumbling down onto my bed.

River and Reese worked like a well-oiled machine and didn’t exchange any words as they had their way with me.

I ended up on all fours at the center of the mattress, condom wrappers were being torn open—or one of them, at least—and River kneeled behind me while Reese appeared in front of me.

He had a hard cock waiting for me, and he eased a single finger under my chin.

I looked up at him.

The smirk on his face screamed of trouble. “No means more. No means harder. You wanna stop? Pinch my thigh. Okay? The color system works too.”

I nodded jerkily, so fucking turned on that I didn’t know what to do with myself.

“I want you to look at me now,” he murmured. “I wanna see every second of this.”

Every second of what? Oh my God, never mind. River pressed the head of his cock against my ass and started pushing in, and I wanted to screw my eyes shut. Fuck me, fuck me, fuck me.

“There we go. Take all of him,” Reese whispered. He stroked his cock unhurriedly, right in front of my face. “We’re gonna make you hurt in the best goddamn way possible.”

“Hnngh.” I swallowed dryly and planted my forehead against Reese’s upper thigh.

River went all in, literally, and the fire spread rapidly.

Reese combed his fingers through my hair in a weirdly intimate gesture, but I caught on quick.

He got off on contrasts, white against black, rough with gentle...

Right after, he gripped my hair tightly and pulled me to his cock, forcing it down my throat, and it was on from there.

I was in fucking heaven.

River was done with the low thunder, and he came at me much like his brother did. They fucked me mercilessly in punishing thrusts, both pushing in at the same time from different ends, causing burning pain to shoot through me.

It was the absolute worst timing for intrusive thoughts. Although, they were called intrusive for a reason.

What kind of Little could give me this in the future? Even though I didn't bottom often, when I did, this was exactly how I craved it. Savage, painful, and overwhelming. Yet, my type was anything but savage. I was drawn to playful sweethearts.

Reese saved me from my thoughts by burying his cock deeper down my throat, and I choked on him.

He groaned.

River's breathing picked up, as did his thrusts.

I swam in panic-tinted lust—until I came up for air. I panted breathlessly but dove for Reese's cock once more, and I could only hope we'd be at it all night. At least a second round later on. I needed it.

When River wrapped his skilled fingers around my cock and picked up the pace further, I lost my grasp on time and what was real. I rolled around in the filth and got off on how roughly they chased their orgasms.

My lungs burned. Black spots filled my vision.

It wasn't long before I was losing my battle. The sensations rushing through me stole the last air out of my lungs and catapulted me into the abyss. Or maybe it was River who pushed me off the cliff. Either way, I was fucking soaring and coming harder than I had in a long time.

Reese let me come up for air just until he deemed I'd ridden the last wave of my orgasm, and then he was coming down my throat.

I swallowed and gagged, swallowed and choked. Fucking hell, I needed to breathe .

Had River even gotten off? He was slowing down, so I hoped he had.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” Reese panted.

He pulled out from my mouth and fell back against the headboard, breathing almost as heavily as I was.

“I need a water break,” River said hoarsely.

Reese blew out a breath. “Pizza. I need pizza. Then we're switchin' places.”

Lord, don't have mercy on me, thank you. We were going again. After pizza.

* * *

I woke up the next morning, sore as fucking hell, with the sunshine pouring into my bedroom.

Make it stop.

I squinted and rolled over, for some reason immediately aware of my two guests being gone. Probably because it'd been a tight fit with three grown men in a queen bed.

What was—oh. True to his word, Reese had left a note. It was attached to my alarm clock.

Let's meet up again, West.

You'll hear from us when we're back in town.

I mustered a drowsy smile before I rolled out of bed to close the blinds.

I was not done sleeping.

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

You are now friends with Nap Oleon

You are now friends with Drivein Rain

I scratched my head, wondering who was River and who was Reese, but my confusion didn't last for long. One of them was quick to send me a private message.

Hey, West. As promised, we got Facebook just for you.

We don't use our real names, and that goes for anyplace online.

If you're wondering who I am, I'm the one who can drive in the rain, unlike any other person in this forsaken town, and I railed your throat pretty damn good the first time we met. Then I took your ass.

I smashed my lips together and scowled at my computer screen.

Reese, that fucker.

For the record, I could drive just fine in the rain.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

A few months later

Reese Tenley

Christmas in July just wasn't my thing, even when the celebration took place at a kink party—and I loved Christmas. Granted, I looked hot as fuck in a Santa hat, but even I had limits.

This party was weird. Some rich guy West knew hosted it in his giant backyard, and everyone was required to wear a Christmas-related decoration or outfit. Hence my hat—and River's two Sharpie'd ornaments on his hand that just looked like a pair of balls. He'd drawn them on the way over here.

That was where Christmas ended. The cocktails were flowing and ranged in hues of pink, blue, and orange. The pool was packed with men in skimpy briefs in bright colors. The food ...

River returned from the buffet with two paper plates and a scowl.

I'd snagged us a high-top table close to the bar. Because of course this guy had his own tiki bar.

"This is some bullshit," Riv muttered. "Only an insane person would cut their pizza into squares."

"Or someone from Chicago."

“We’re sayin’ the same thing.”

I grinned and took a swig from my beer. My brother was pissy today. He blamed jet lag. We’d just come back from six weeks in Mali.

I’d promised West we’d show up, though. We’d had to cancel the last event he’d found for us, and I didn’t want that guy to slip through our fingers.

Lucas West was social, easygoing, evidently attracted subs like nothing else, and he was seriously good in the sack.

River and I would benefit from having him as a friend.

West was currently surrounded by a gaggle of subs on the other side of the pool.

If I ever convinced River to start a kink community with me, West was going to play a key role in recruiting members.

We’d only met up twice before today, and the second time had settled things for me.

I mean, the first time had been about something else.

He’d had a goal—he’d wanted to get laid.

Plus, the theme had been sadism. The second event, however...

Way too soft for River and me, yet it’d shown a side of West that intrigued me.

I could see the Daddy Dom in him now. He wasn’t particularly interested in taking things further with many of them, but he was naturally nurturing, kind, and patient around subs on the Little spectrum. And boy, did they love him.

I could learn a thing or two from him. 'Cause I was interested in exploring Daddykink too.

I just didn't know how to handle that kind of submissive.

One of them had run up to me earlier to offer me a drink, and I'd felt awkward and stiff.

I didn't know what to say—I was wired to punch the daylights out of someone for smiling that widely, because it usually meant that person had the upper hand.

The look of triumph meant your opponent had been defeated, not just that you were fucking happy.

I continued drinking my beer and observing the crowd.

Some fifty people were here, all enjoying the snack buffet, the pool, the open bar, and a few games.

It was Doms against subs in the pool, a spanking contest on the porch, and naked wrestling in a large makeshift sandbox.

Beach sand, meet a bare ass. All with the grand view of a pricey Tudor-esque McMansion.

Two masochists were going at it on the sand-filled tarp, and a dozen or so kinksters were enjoying the show. Personally, I preferred to watch the audience, not the circus.

Meanwhile, River was going to town on his pile of pizza squares.

I snatched a mozzarella stick and took a bite.

“You seem to like your pizza squares a whole lot,” I mentioned. Aside from the fact that he was still scowling.

“The shape doesn’t make them less tasty,” he bit out.

Jesus.

“You need to get laid, brother.”

“I need to sleep ,” he corrected.

I shrugged and let it go, ’cause West was on his way over with another kind of smile on his face. He was curious.

His Christmas outfit consisted of regular slacks and a button-down—too hot for the summer—and he’d donned a pair of antlers.

“What’s the verdict, guys?” he asked as he reached us. “It’s a nice party, isn’t it?”

I mean...it was nice I could walk around in my boxer briefs, but the Santa hat was starting to itch. In fact, I removed it and wiped sweat off my forehead, then finished my mozzarella stick.

“I’m enjoyin’ the people-watching,” I said, chewing. “You’re certainly popular.”

Life went on when we weren’t around. On the way over here today, West had mentioned he’d joined a community and everything.

“You could be too, if you didn’t lurk in the shadows,” he pointed out teasingly.

I grinned a little and pinched a few fries next. They felt kinda limp.

Didn't taste great either.

"You're on the prowl," River noted.

West tilted his head. "Am I?"

River nodded once and bit into another slice—square—of pizza. "I noticed that about you. You're not enjoyin' the journey. You just wanna find someone and get settled. Eager beaver."

Nice. A little afternoon profiling when he was dead on his feet and lacked the ability to ease into things.

I elbowed him. "You don't spring that shit on people."

He frowned.

West knitted his brows. "I don't agree with that. I'm far from ready to settle down."

That one got River going again. With his mouth full. "I didn't mean it's gotta be Prince Charming. But you wanna be settled, even if it's a playtime dynamic."

I suppressed a sigh and glanced over at the sandbox again. Poor Lucas West. River was right; I'd observed the same thing, but you didn't fucking say it to someone you weren't close to. At least, not yet. I wasn't gonna let my brother push the guy away. I liked him.

West and River went back and forth for a while, and I eyed the two masochists cranking things up in the sand.

I'd located their Doms, who stood along the sidelines cheering them on, and they had

some friends there too.

One of the masochists threw himself toward the other, causing a bunch of sand to fly at the audience.

They laughed and brushed it off, all happy and highly entertained—except one dude.

I watched him force a smile before he turned away to brush his hands over his face.

I cocked my head. Something was off with his demeanor. He wasn't annoyed by the sand. It was something else. He tensed up and rubbed a fist at his chest, and he screwed his eyes shut.

He's military.

I stood straighter and registered his high-and-tight haircut, his posture, and what he wore.

Jeans and a tee, a Santa hat tucked into his back pocket, hands balled into fists—he was trying to regain control.

Everything about him screamed battle, and as I watched a group of partygoers walk closer, I felt the need to intervene.

If he had PTSD or something, there was no way of knowing how he'd react to surprise.

Someone bumping into him by accident could set him off, whether he fell into panic or rage.

"I'll be right back," I said, leaving River and West to their little eager-beaver debate.

That guy was losing his fight fast; I could see from halfway across the backyard that he was starting to hyperventilate, and he staggered toward the rosebushes below the high porch.

I picked up the pace and strode past the brat brigade cheering for the sand wrestlers.

Once he was within reach, I positioned myself in front of him. “Let’s get you some privacy, buddy. I’m gonna put my hand on your back and steer you to the side of the house, okay?”

He tensed up further and wouldn’t open his eyes, but he managed a quick nod as he sucked in a sharp breath.

I slipped a hand to his lower back and got him to move. The short end of the house was only some ten meters away, with plenty of trees and bushes.

“We’re almost there,” I said, cupping his elbow too. “What branch are you in? You’re not on deployment. You’re home.”

He coughed and clenched his jaw, and he went back to rubbing at his chest.

I ushered him behind a large thicket of conifers before I put my hands on his shoulders. I didn’t know why, but something told me he needed to be grounded rather than given more personal space.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

He was a big guy, taller than me by at least two or three inches, and he had the muscles to go with it. Maybe a little older than me too.

He swallowed and coughed again. “G-Greer.”

“Okay, Greer—you havin’ a flashback?”

He nodded jerkily.

“Active duty?”

Another nod.

“I want you to hold your breath, Greer,” I told him. “Just hold it. It’ll shift your focus.”

He hauled in another breath.

“That’s great.” I rubbed his shoulders firmly.

“You don’t strike me as Navy or Air Force, so I’m gonna guess Army or Marines.

Another guess—you’re seein’ desert or mountain terrain everywhere.

” He reacted when he was sprayed with beach sand.

“No matter. You’re outside DC right now.

Plenty of cute guys in the pool. You smell the grass?

Can you hear the sprinklers just turned on next door? ”

He exhaled harshly and scrubbed his hands over his face.

“One more breath, Greer,” I coaxed. “A deep breath—hold it. And if you can, let it out slowly when you need to.”

He was getting there.

I rubbed his arms next, keeping my touch firm and measured. “That’s it. You’re at a pool party with a ridiculous Christmas theme. There’s a cold beer with your name on it as soon as you’re up for it.”

A breath gusted out of him, and he pinched the bridge of his nose. “This is f-fuckin’ stupid.”

Oh boy. He was not going down that road on my watch.

“I know,” I replied. “Who the fuck uses sprinklers in the middle of the day?”

He huffed and took a step back. “I’m okay. I’ll be okay.” He swallowed and hung his head, and his hands ended up low on his hips. “Fuckin’ hell.”

I folded my arms over my chest and kept watching him. I wasn’t leaving until he felt okay. But he was heading in the right direction, so that was good.

He let out a long breath and tried to relax. He rolled his shoulders a bit and loosened his stance.

“Want me to go get you somethin’ to drink?” I asked.

He shook his head. “Maybe later. Thanks.”

“No problem.”

He inhaled deeply through his nose and tilted his head up, eyes closed. The sun shone down on him.

“I’ve been lucky,” he said, his voice warm but hoarse. “I haven’t had a nightmare since my first deployment. But every now and then—fuck, it’s like I’m right back there.”

I got it. The flashbacks could suck ass.

A while later, he was back in control. He blinked and glanced around us, then met my gaze. He was definitely tired.

“You seem to know what you’re doin’.”

I offered a one-shoulder shrug. “I know my way around flashbacks.”

He nodded with a dip of his chin. “You still in?”

“Oh no, I got out.” Kind of. Technically. I extended my hand. “I’m Reese.”

“Nice to meet you.” He shook my hand. “I appreciate you gettin’ me outta there.”

“Anytime.” I scratched my bicep absently. “Do you have a partner here you want me to go get, or...?”

“Nah. I was supposed to come here with a buddy, but he had to cancel,” he answered. “I don’t think I’ll stick around much longer. Watchin’ brats get sand up their asses is only fun for so long. I was hoping there’d be more for Sadists here.”

Dude. Tell me about it.

“I feel you. The majority of the events I go to are a disappointment in that area,” I said.

“But we gotta keep lookin’, right?” I nodded toward the backyard, not quite ready to let him go yet.

“Come grab a beer with me. I’ll introduce you to my brother and a buddy of ours. We’re lurkin’ in the back.”

He only hesitated for a quick beat, and I couldn’t blame him. But we could probably shield him from social interaction if that’s what he worried about. Then he could head out and get some rest when I knew he was in a better mood.

“A beer doesn’t sound bad,” he answered.

“Fantastic. Where are you stationed, by the way?” I assumed he was home on leave or something like that.

“I just left South Carolina,” he replied. “Started my three-year-stint as a DI in ’04, but the place was a shitshow and I was transferred back so we could head overseas.” In other words, he was a Marine. “Things have settled down a bit now, thankfully.”

I nodded in understanding. “But you’re not from the South originally, am I right?” There was no mistaking the New York accent, though he’d definitely been influenced by his time in South Carolina.

It was kinda hot. I couldn’t lie.

“Brooklyn, born and raised.”

There we go.

“Excellent,” I said. “You can bitch about the shape of the pizza here with my brother. He’s thoroughly offended they cut the pies into squares.”

Greer frowned. “That’s messed up. Squares? For real?”

I smiled.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

You are now friends with Greer Finlay

“Hey, tell him to add me too,” Riv said. “He’s interestin’.”

“Sure,” I said, as we walked into work. “He did mention possibly starting a new account, though. He’s not sure he wants kink friends where he interacts with his nieces and nephews.”

“Makes sense. Unlike your handle. The people who can’t drive in this area are from Maryland. Your name would cause a bigger reaction there.”

They drove like idiots, sure. But I was convinced, nonetheless. “Leave the profiling of drivers to me, Napoleon.”

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

A few weeks later

River Tenley

“West is seeing someone.”

“All right.” I yawned and put out my smoke.

Why did people host kink events so fucking late? I was tired. I’d been on my feet all goddamn day, and I wanted to take it easy. Instead, we were heading into a fucking nightclub. At some point. The line was long.

“It’s a girl.”

What? I furrowed my brow. Lucas was dating a woman?

Reese lifted his eyebrows. “Yeah.”

“I thought he was...”

“He is. He says it’s nonsexual.”

Huh.

I scratched my forehead. A nonsexual dynamic with a woman.

I mean...I guessed it made sense, presuming they had a kink they wanted to explore

together that didn't require intimacy on that level.

Which, I supposed, included most lifestyle kinks at the end of the day.

To me, sex was an afterthought when Reese and I explored.

We were so focused on sadism that we exclusively looked for masochists, whether we were attracted to them or not.

As long as we clicked with the part that needed pain for whatever reason.

"Is it a Daddykink thing?" I wondered.

"Yeah."

The line started moving again, and we got three steps closer to the entrance.

"Whatever works for him," I said. "I guess it's a good kink for a nonsexual route. It'd be harder to base a dynamic in sadomasochism."

You could only beat someone for so long, or administer some other brand of pain, before the playtime ended. But with a Daddy/Little relationship, or D/s, the dynamic could bleed into one's everyday life until there were no more hours left.

"I don't know. Sounds kinda weird to me," Reese said.

I side-eyed him.

He met my gaze. "What?"

Seriously?

“Well, I’m glad you only stick to normal dynamics,” I replied.

He rolled his eyes. “Whatever. We’ll meet the perfectly normal duo inside.”

I scratched my nose, reckoning it was a decent moment to ask about another new buddy of ours.

“Did Lucas invite Greer too?”

“I doubt it.” Reese peered up the line, presumably estimating when it would be our turn to head in. “Last time I messaged with Greer, he was getting ready for another deployment.”

Ah. That sucked. I wanted to get to know him better. My first impression of him had kinda reeled me in. He was steadfast, experienced, funny, hotter than hell, and his sadistic brain was something else. He wanted pushback from his masos, which I’d never really considered the way he’d described it.

“Why?” Reese cocked his head and eyed me. “You asked about him the other week too.”

I shrugged. “I wanna know more about him. He’s the first Sadist we’ve come across I like.”

I also had a new fantasy that included him.

Reese pursed his lips and nodded once. “Yeah, he’s cool. I’ll shoot him a message and ask when he’ll visit next time.”

If he was being deployed, it sure as fuck wouldn’t be anytime soon. But he was stationed in North Carolina now, so if he had a weekend off, it was a quick trip.

“Good Christ, is this line even moving?” someone asked behind us.

Reese and I looked over our shoulders to find a guy our age, or thereabouts, getting increasingly impatient.

“We’ll be lucky if we get in at this point,” Reese responded. “You here for the demo too?”

He could strike up a conversation with just about anyone.

The guy inclined his head.

He looked like he’d come straight here from a fancy-ass office.

While he and Reese bonded over hating lines and the cold, I brought out my phone and sent Lucas a message.

Hey. How packed is it in there? We have about ten people ahead of us in the line.

I could be at home now. Resting. Reading. Preparing for tomorrow’s briefing. Eating. But nope. This was my Friday. Just standing outside, in a line that wouldn’t move, half listening to Reese chat up some guy who introduced himself as Lucian Leroux .

Was he a vampire?

Did he only come out at night?

It should be investigated.

“We’re at capacity! Sorry, folks!”

Oh, what the fuck?

A collective groan and a string of complaints rang out along the line, and Reese cursed and craned his neck to see the front. I only saw someone ducking back inside, and then people started dispersing while bitching about their evening being ruined.

It wasn't ruined. I was going home.

"We gave it a try. I'm hungry," I told Reese, side-eyeing Lucian Leroux. "Let's get somethin' garlicky."

My brother sighed, annoyed. "Uh, all right. You don't wanna hit up that other event where?—"

"I wanna go home," I stated. "Tonight wasn't meant to be. Let it go."

Lucian chuckled and ran a hand through his hair. "Evidently not for me either. Enjoy your weekend, guys." With that, he nodded and took off, and Reese offered an absent goodbye while he pulled out his phone.

"Lemme shoot West a message. Then we can go."

Thank fuck.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

Lucas West tagged you in a photo

I squinted at the blurry photo, extra glad we hadn't been let in last night. Christ. The club had been packed, not that Lucas had suffered. He was wearing a big smile as he stood next to the girl I assumed was his Little—and a bunch of other people who were laughing, drinking, and dancing.

You missed out last night!

“Ugh. Hardly.” I returned my phone to my nightstand and rolled over. I wasn't ready to get up—wait. Was Reese in the kitchen? I heard some clanking. “Bro! Shut up!”

“So you don't want bacon and pancakes?” he hollered back.

Goddammit. I buried my face in the pillow.

I wanted bacon and pancakes.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

A year and some change later

Greer Finlay

D C did have a great kink scene. I had friends in the area. I'd been coming here for events for years already—but could I picture myself living here?

I tossed my duffel on the bed and eyed my shitty motel room.

This was my brother's fault. Ben and I were supposed to open our branch in South Carolina, not here.

Goddammit. As much as we loved being close to our family, we'd both spent time down south after high school, and we'd fallen for Charleston and Savannah.

I'd worked in Charleston for a few years, and Ben had gone to school in Savannah.

And even though the plan had been to return home to Brooklyn at some point, once we'd decided to open our business together, all of us, Angus had floated the idea that we didn't all have to be in the same location.

He and Cullen were more rooted in New York, so it made sense for them to stay.

Ben was gonna help Angus get the company off the ground, and once Cullen, Kyle, and I left the service, we'd join them.

Then last week, Ben had dropped the bombshell. He'd met someone in DC. She was

fucking pregnant.

I checked my watch. A quick dinner with him in an hour, and then I'd stop by the Master I gave him a subtle once-over as I drank from my beer. He was damn sexy, this polished suit guy. "I have a couple more years on Uncle Sam's payroll. Then we'll see."

Understanding flashed in Lucian's eyes, and he nodded with a dip of his chin. "I wondered. You military guys stand out. Where are you stationed?"

"North Carolina—Lejeune—but I'm headin' to Florida soon," I answered. "We don't get corporate credit cards, just your hard-earned tax dollars." The moment the last word left me, someone did a testing, testing into the microphone onstage, so that halted our conversation.

We both turned that way.

"I want to hear more," Lucian said, clapping me on the back. "Another beer or two after the demos?"

"I'm in."

* * *

The following week, my last Friday in town for now, I decided that Lucian and I were going to become fantastic friends, partly because he showed up outside the steakhouse fifteen minutes early, like I did.

"Good to see you again, man." I shook his hand.

"You too, Greer."

I wasted no time, 'cause I wanted input. Every input I could find. I showed him my phone. More accurately, the listing my mother had sent me. She'd lovingly added, "It's too far away from home, but at least it's not Charleston. Which I don't think you can afford anyway, sweets."

Thanks, Ma.

"How stupid do I have to be to buy this?"

Lucian tilted his head and scanned the page.

He was a money guy. He might know.

"How long has it been on the market?" he asked, taking the phone from me. He scrolled a bit.

"Four months," I replied. "My brother thinks I should get it, but this ain't New York. Winchester's a solid hour and a half away from here."

We were wired to look past any dump in New York, because the money was in the land. But as mentioned, this wasn't Park Slope or Williamsburg. Or even Bay Ridge, for that matter.

"It'll be one hell of a commute if you do open your business here," Lucian responded and handed back my phone. "It's the age-old battle between time and money. It's a nice property, despite the renovations required."

Yeah. A lot of renovations. The house was one storm away from collapsing. But I wasn't strapped for time, and I had some money saved up. Plus, it came with a solid chunk of land.

“A house that size, with the land, could set you back upward of a million in this area,” he went on. “I think the only downsides are, as mentioned, the commute you’d face in the future—expenses for gas, three hours on the road every day...”

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The three hours on the road didn't bother me. I was a multitasker with a headset, and I could get shit done on my way to work. I could talk to Ma, my sisters-in-law, my nieces and nephews—and I liked listening to the radio.

When Cullen was overseas, I was Peyton's emotional support animal. We talked a lot. Despite that she was a vegan. Out of my two sisters-in-law, she was in the top two.

"Another thing you might want to ask yourself," Lucian continued. "If this is the type of home you want, do you think you can get something similar nearby?"

"Sure," I answered. "If I become someone with a high-paying job and sell my soul to a bank. I'll need to steal a rich guy's credit score too."

He grinned ruefully. "It's only getting worse, to boot. This is an expensive area to live in."

He didn't have to tell me. Ben was currently trying to find a condo with his pregnant girlfriend, and they'd already expanded their search field. The listings he'd sent me were insane.

"Then maybe Winchester's where it's at for me." I raked my teeth across my bottom lip and eyed the screen. "I'll leave it up to faith. If the house is still on the market when I get back from Florida, I'll reach out to the listing agent."

"Don't wait too long," he advised. "Even the fixer-uppers get snatched up eventually."

It sure as fuck wasn't true in my case. Nobody had snatched me up.

"Does that apply to mentally banged-up jarheads too?" I asked.

He laughed. "Do you need an ego boost?"

I mean...

"From you? Sure."

He shook his head in amusement. "Are all Marines flirts?"

"Yes. It's in our creed."

He found that funny too. I was a funny guy.

I checked my watch. "They should be here any minute."

But in my world, the Tenley twins were late. We were supposed to meet up soon.

"Let's wait inside. I'm freezin' my balls off out hea." I walked over to the door and opened it, letting him enter first.

I was fairly certain he and the Tenleys would get along. That was my plan with introducing them, to have a group of buddies to meet up with whenever I was in town. Which, let's be honest, looked like it was going to become a permanent situation soon enough.

I'd texted Lucas too, but he was working late. Something about a promo campaign for his old man's business.

* * *

By the time River and Reese showed up in matching leather jackets and black eyes, Lucian and I had been seated in our booth, and we had received our first beers.

“What the hell, boys? Did you get mugged on the way over?”

River— No, wait. That was Reese. Reese snorted and shrugged out of his jacket. “A mugging would’ve been entertaining, at least. We got beat up by a Krav Maga whiz the other day.”

Ah. I’d heard they were into martial arts, but I wasn’t convinced it was just a hobby of theirs. Reese had a way about him, and not just from when he’d saved my ass from embarrassing myself at a Christmas party in the middle of summer.

“At least you’re here—even if you’re late,” I said.

River checked the time and furrowed his brow. “Five minutes late. That’s nothin’.”

“It’s twenty minutes,” I told him. Then I proceeded with intros before anyone could correct me. “This is Lucian. Lucian, River and Reese.”

Lucian cocked his head.

“Reese has more ink if you need somethin’ to tell ’em apart.” I threw that out there.

“No, that’s... I recognize you,” Lucian said to them. “Have we met before?”

Reese looked like he was trying to solve a painful math problem.

River beat him to it. “It’s the vampire,” he blurted out.

I lifted my brows.

“Pardon?” Lucian cocked his brows too.

“Yeah, we stood in line at some club together.” River snapped his fingers, seemingly pleased he’d figured it out, and he sat down next to me. “I think it was your name—what’s your last name? It made you sound like a vampire.”

Oh—I figured it out, and I couldn’t help but chuckle. His last name was Leroux, right? That was the last name I’d seen on his corporate credit card. Goddamn, River had a point.

“Leroux,” Lucian responded, a little miffed. “I remember now too. Your brother seemed nice, and you had your face buried in your phone.”

River smiled. “That’s me. I use it to avoid talkin’ to people. It’s effective.”

I snorted.

Reese sat down next to Lucian and eyed him. “Okay, it rings a bell. Not the vampire shit, but I think I remember you.”

“Let’s not dismiss my theory so fast,” River said. “We’ve only ever seen this guy after dark.”

I cracked up.

Lucian’s mouth twitched, though he held on to his look of disgruntled...ness. “If you wish to get bitten, just say the word.”

Reese found that funny, but he was soon distracted by his phone.

River was just pleased. “Have at it. As luck would have it, I had a shit-ton of garlic in my spaghetti for lunch.”

That earned me a look from Lucian that practically screamed, “And you thought it was a good idea for me to meet these people?”

My bad.

“That’s not luck,” Reese muttered, eyes glued to his phone. “It’s laziness and lack of knowledge of other flavors.”

“Fuck off, it’s brilliant,” River swore. “Spaghetti, butter, and garlic.” He thought that deserved a chef’s kiss, and I was inclined to agree. It sounded great. Throw some meatballs and sausage in there, too.

“Yeah, whatever.” Reese pocketed his phone again. “West sent us his love. He doesn’t want us to have too much fun without him.”

West, as in... “As in, Lucas?” I asked, to which he nodded. “I invited him. He seems like a social butterfly.”

“Yeah, he’s great. Way better at icebreakers than my brother, that’s for sure.” He nodded at River.

I chuckled. “Maybe Lucian can prove he’s not a vampire. I’m sure they serve somethin’ with garlic in this joint.” I nudged River with my elbow. “What else is there? A vampire can’t enter your home without an invitation, right?”

River sucked his teeth.

“Perhaps you’d rather see my crypt,” Lucian said. “It has a poker table.”

What a fantastic segue.

“I vote for that,” I said. “We actually talked about this earlier. Instead of wasting our money at a bar all evening, are you boys up for a night in? Frankly, I’m reaching my limit of loud places for one week.”

The twins looked at each other and shrugged.

“Sounds great to me,” Reese said. “I like poker.”

“And I’ve reached my limit of loud places for all eternity,” River added. “I’m in.”

Thank fuck. I was suddenly looking forward to this evening even more.

It’d been a long week, and socializing was starting to feel like a chore when all you did was introduce yourself to new people and hope you had something in common with them, all while struggling to hear them over the music and a mild case of tinnitus.

* * *

Around the time our food arrived, Lucian and the twin brothers had covered the basics. Profession, which side of the river they lived on, small talk about current events, and whether they were part of any community here.

None of us was.

“Yeah, West tried to recruit us to his new community, but...” Reese shook his head and bit into a sauce-drenched wing. “We met precisely two people there that we liked—who just attended as guests, by the way. Plus, there’s very little sadism going on.”

“You mean Max and Reid?” River asked, seemingly to make sure.

Reese nodded in confirmation and reached for the wing sauce. He evidently wanted more.

I was ready to get a hotel room with my steak. An actual hotel room, like three or four stars. Even the butter-soaked, roasted green beans were incredible.

“So, is M/s your whole thing, or do you have other core kinks?” Reese asked Lucian.

Lucian had ordered the same steak, but he’d opted for the baked potato, and I was trying to keep my envy to myself.

He didn’t have water quals and a combat diving course to dread. I did.

“That’s pretty much it,” he replied. “I love sensation play too, though. Particularly temperature play and wax play.”

Reese looked interested. “I saw a wax play demo once. Beautiful as fuck—but who has the patience? Those wax melts didn’t get very hot either. I held one in my hand, and that almost did the trick.”

“Well, there are different kinds,” Lucian reasoned. “I’ll have to add that I do possess that patience.” He smirked a little. “I’ll happily start with melts that only require body temperature—and then work my way up to the candles that sting and burn when you pour the wax.”

I chewed and swallowed. “That’s how I feel about bondage. The artsy kind. Yeah, it’s stunning to see the final result, but I once wasted four hours watching a couple tie up their sub, who fucking fell asleep onstage.”

I'd seen other kinds too, of course. Most of them were an impressive workout, especially for the rope bottom.

Lucian smiled and reached for his beer. "What do you have patience for, then?"

"Torture," River responded, almost as if he had no control of his answer. Like it just fell out. "All kinds of mental torture. Mental sadism, mindfucks, behavioral conditioning, fear play..."

The guy spoke my language.

"What River said," I replied, cutting another piece of my steak. "I reckon what it boils down to for me is... I want my partner to be my toy. I don't care much for playrooms filled with implements and kink furniture. With some exceptions, of course. They offer a nice extra spice every now and then."

Lucian nodded slowly, pensive. "I suppose that's how I separate the lifestyle from specific playtime. It's my hope to enter a twenty-four-seven kind of dynamic one day, and it's not as if I'm interested in using toys every hour of the day. They'd be like extra hobbies."

My mouth was full of food, so I could only nod and point my fork at him, 'cause he was dead-on. That was how I viewed it too.

"I'm not sure we're the lifestyle kind of guys," Reese said thoughtfully. He was watching his brother. "Granted, our jobs don't allow for any deeper relationships—we travel too much—but it's mostly been one session after another, nothing that bleeds into everyday life."

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River went for another rib and sucked some glaze off his finger. “I don’t know—you wanna explore Daddykink. That’ll be a lifestyle thing, right?”

“I guess. I go back and forth with that,” Reese said. “I’m not sure there’s a Little out there I can click with. Most of the time, it just feels weird when I see ’em runnin’ around at events.”

I found them charming as fuck, at least those who were also brats and masos, but it was one of those fetishes I wanted to observe from afar.

I wasn’t a Daddy whatsoever; I just loved to beat up mouthy little brats.

We riled each other up with constant teasing and testing the waters. It was an addictive push and pull.

Lucian tilted his head, visibly curious. “Do you and River play together?”

“We co-top,” Reese confirmed. “Our ma used to joke that we share a brain, and...”

River snorted. “I got 80% of it.”

Oh-ho! I chuckled.

Reese didn’t miss a beat. “You’re not very self-sufficient for havin’ the biggest chunk of it, are you?”

River scowled and shut his trap.

Lucian and I exchanged a grin. I didn't know if he had siblings, but this was like coming home. My brothers and I were always at one another.

"Either way, it sounds fascinating with the co-topping," Lucian said. "If you ever host a demo together, I'd like a front-row seat."

"Count me in," I said. "One of my first ventures into kink—it was actually the first time I came to DC—I watched two cousins demonstrate interrogation with their partner, and it was heady as fuck. They had a connection that went so far beyond verbal communication."

Lucian looked intrigued.

Reese hummed and finished another wing, and he exchanged a brief glance with River. "We've hosted a couple—when I convince his antisocial ass to join me. But, uh..." He cleared his throat and shrugged. "A lot of people obviously think it's strange seein' us together in that atmosphere."

Understandable, I guessed, but...fuck it. "Youse're consenting adults. Others can fuck right off."

"Agreed." Lucian inclined his head. "It seems, even in a culture of the unconventional—with kink, alternative lifestyles, relationship dynamics that defy social norms—we're incredibly judgmental at times."

Reese seemed to lose some tension in his shoulders, so I hoped that meant he knew he had nothing to worry about in our company.

"To the unconventional," I said, raising my beer.

* * *

Lucian didn't live far from the steakhouse, so we decided to walk.

He and Reese were immersed in a conversation some ten feet behind River and me; last time I'd overheard a portion of it, they'd been discussing punishments. Lucian appeared to have a creative knack for it, without calling himself a Sadist.

River and I were talking DC—and Winchester; I'd shown him the listing.

I wanted his "antisocial" take on my moving there.

I was far from antisocial, but at the same time, I really didn't want to live smack-dab in the middle of a larger city.

I'd grown up that way. My whole life had come with a touch of shoebox.

It'd actually been an upgrade to get to the barracks in the service.

Not only was I used to sharing everything with others, but I'd been free of my brother's terrorizing.

Mainly, Cullen's. He and I could go at each other like archenemies, even though we'd always have each other's backs.

"Fellas, you can take the next left across the street," Lucian called.

I looked back and acknowledged what he'd said. "Aye-aye."

"...but it's not like we wanna stay there forever," River was saying. "It's close to work. That's the one perk. But in the future, we want a house with a bunch of hedges and trees to shut out the rest of the world. I don't like the feelin' of staying on top of each other."

“Exactly how I feel,” I said. “I want a piece of land too, where I can grow food and keep chickens.”

“Sounds nice,” he commented. “In other words, you should definitely call the listing agent in Winchester.”

I should. I was going to.

* * *

Lucian’s place was hella nice. He lived in an older building, with high ceilings and wooden floors, and it was highly possible he’d hired a decorator when moving in.

The living room looked like a page straight out of Upper-Class Bachelor Living .

Everything was in dark blue, brown leather, and oak.

Two big couches, big TV, big fireplace, bookcases filled with books on economy and...

whatever. His liquor cabinet would impress any bartender, and he hadn’t been lying about the poker table. It stood in the corner, beckoning us.

We just had to wait a while. Lucas had texted to say he was done for the night, so he was on his way over.

“Make yourselves comfortable, gentlemen,” Lucian said. “There’re mixers and ice in the kitchen.” He opened the cabinet and grabbed a nice bottle of whiskey.

I had my eyes on a bottle of bourbon instead, the very kind I wanted mixed with Coke.

River and I collected our poisons and headed for the kitchen, where he stupidly convinced me to start with a shot of vodka.

Sadly, a Marine rarely said no.

I threw it back and made a face—and I looked forward to the reward. Being away from bars and clubs relaxed me, and I was hoping for a good buzz to enhance the happy.

“The vampire’s loaded,” River muttered. He was eyeing the black marble countertops and the appliances that looked brand-new.

I grinned lazily and leaned against the island.

Meanwhile, someone put on music in the living room, and classic rock flowed through the place.

I felt good. Relaxed and comfortable.

“One more for the road.” River poured two more shots. “Don’t make me drink alone.”

I chuckled. Fine. One more wasn’t going to hurt.

I downed it quickly, then put my shot glass in the sink.

While we prepared our next drinks, I asked if he and Reese had anything scheduled, kink-wise, in the near future. I’d be back in approximately nine weeks for a quick weekend, so if he knew of any events...

“Afraid not,” he said, adding ginger ale to his vodka.

Lucian had lemon and lime on the counter too.

“We’re headin’ out soon. We’ll be going back and forth between Bangladesh, Laos, and DC a lot over the next year, so if I find myself at home on a weekend, I won’t set foot in a club.

” He threw me a quick glance. “But text us when you’re in town. If we’re home, we’ll meet up.”

I nodded once and topped off my drink with half a Coke. “I didn’t know there was such a high demand for American IT guys in Bangladesh and Laos.”

“True, they usually come to our universities instead to learn all our tech,” he said, not missing a beat.

“But yeah. This is gonna be big. They don’t have the infrastructure to handle organized crime, especially now when everything’s getting more digital.

Who needs a courier when you can send encrypted messages, you know?

They have some ground forces, but their tech belongs in the eighties. ”

I side-eyed him. What he said made sense—perfect sense, actually, and I wasn’t unfamiliar with joint operations to crack down on organized crime, which obviously included people who worked in IT and so on.

There was just something about River and Reese that made me believe there was more to what they were divulging.

Something other than an IT guy with a security escort for “just in case” scenarios since they often traveled to third-world countries.

River finished his bartending by squeezing some lime juice into his drink. “I wanna see Lucian’s coffin. He didn’t offer us a grand tour, and that’s what I’d like to call suspicious behavior from a polite guy like Lucian Leroux.”

I grinned and shook my head. “What’s this obsession with vampires about?”

“It’s my attempt at being funny,” he deadpanned.

I laughed. “All right, vampire hunter. Let’s take a grand tour without the guide.”

“Aces. But, for the record, I prefer vampire slayer.”

“Okay, Buffy.” I took a swig of my drink and followed him out of the kitchen, and he veered right, down a hall.

The bathroom was...a bathroom.

Across the hall was Lucian’s bedroom, and River and I stopped in the doorway.

Hot damn. That was a big bed. Dark colors in here too, green and burgundy, and—was that a camera? Yup. He had a nice camera on a tripod in the corner.

“Someone shoots homemade porn.” River had spotted the setup as well. “That’s hot. Good camera too.” He walked over there to inspect. “I kinda wish Reese and I had footage of when we hooked up with Lucas.”

They’d hooked up? Huh.

“Is he a switch or...?” I just knew he was a Daddy Dom. A damn sweet one, at that.

“Nah,” River responded. “Just an occasional bottom who likes it rough.” He looked

back at me. “It wouldn’t surprise me if he’s got hopes for tonight.”

Oh really.

I took another sip of my drink, and it was impossible to keep my mind from considering possibilities.

I hadn’t gotten laid in a while... Long enough for me to eye everyone with interest. Okay, not everyone; I was frustratingly picky, even for one-night stands, but at this point, I wouldn’t turn down anyone in this condo.

The twins were obscenely sexy, same with Lucian, who had a polished air about him that I wanted to mess up with a rough round in the sack, and Lucas ticked tons of boxes too.

His dominance was quieter but nevertheless there, and he was one of those men who...

How should I put it... I wanted to see how far his patience extended by pushing buttons.

He reminded me of Sloan in that regard. Not that I wanted him. He was my best friend, despite that he usually canceled on me.

“You’re interested.” River smirked at me.

I let out a chuckle and finished my drink. The booze was working its way through my system. My tongue already felt looser, and I didn’t hesitate to be honest.

“We’re basically standing in a porn scene, and you’re tellin’ me an occasional bottom might show up with hopes,” I said. “Fuck poker.”

Speak of the devil...

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We heard Reese and Lucian greet someone on the other side of the apartment, and it could only be Lucas.

River grinned and started making his way back, taking in his surroundings while he walked and sipped his drink. The shelves, the flat-screen, the fancy chesterfield chair...

He cleared his throat when he was just a couple feet away. “What if someone else wanted to bend over for you?”

I lifted my brows. Was he referring to himself? Because sign me the fuck up. That would be a hot fantasy come true.

I leaned against the doorframe and set down my glass on a side table. “Then he should step right up and lay one on me.”

He raked his teeth across his bottom lip, then mirrored my move and set down his glass.

He didn’t hesitate either. He closed the distance between us and cupped the back of my neck, just a fraction of a second before he covered my mouth with his own.

I smiled a little and kissed him back, and a slow shudder pushed desire through me.

My hands ended up low on his hips, and I angled myself to deepen the kiss.

I wanted to taste the drink on his tongue.

He had sharp features and the right amount of stubble, and that slight rasping sound when his chin brushed against mine turned me on further.

“Tell me what you like.” I kissed him again, and he hummed and swept his tongue around mine.

“You wanna read my terms of abuse?”

I grinned quickly, then spun him around and pushed him up against the wall. He groaned into the next kiss, and I squeezed his ass.

“Yeah, that’s me. I’m a sucker for the fine print.”

He pulled in a breath and gave me access as I kissed my way down his neck. He smelled fucking incredible.

“Just fuck me hard and let the others watch,” he exhaled. “I want it on film. In that bed over there.”

God-fucking-dammit, I had to pace myself. Everything he said went straight to my cock, and I was ready to go.

“The whole world can watch, for all I care. You won’t notice them.” I got his mouth once more and kissed him deeply, but our time was running out for the moment. I could hear voices coming down the hall. They were probably wondering where we were.

I stole one more kiss before I eased back a few inches, and I saw the hunger in his eyes. His eyelids looked heavy. Fuck me, he was sexy.

Since he was in no rush to compose himself, I didn’t try either. I just stepped back

some more and scrubbed a hand over my jaw, and then Reese appeared in the doorway. With Lucas and Lucian.

Reese smirked knowingly.

“Why are you hiding in here—oh.” Lucas got it now too, and he grinned. “Hey, Greer.”

“Lucas.” I chuckled under my breath and righted my shirt.

“What’re y’all standin’ around here for?” River muttered, adjusting his cock. “Let’s go have a drink.” He grabbed his empty glass and ducked out.

Lucian smirked a little too. “Sadly, whatever you did is the most action my bedroom’s seen in a while.”

I clapped him on the shoulder. “We ain’t done yet, my friend.”

“Far from it.” Reese eyed Lucas before shifting his gaze to Lucian. “River’s been hoping for a night with Greer for over a year, so let’s see if you and I can put a dent in West.”

I laughed. A year, though? I was gonna have to dig for answers straight from River on that one.

Lucas actually blushed.

Lucian looked a bit stunned.

* * *

I didn't know if Lucian caught on quick, or if... Actually, nobody could fake that chemistry.

Back in the living room, with bottles, glasses, mixers, and a bucket of ice on the table, Lucian shared a couch with Lucas and Reese, and he had no problems connecting with any of them.

River and I learned that Lucian and Lucas had run into each other at an event a couple of years ago, and they'd spent some time chatting in a group of other kinksters—but it hadn't been enough for them to exchange numbers.

Something told me that would change after tonight. The three were animatedly debating about bondage and D/s, getting along swimmingly.

The music didn't hurt. Reese had appointed himself the DJ, and he'd taken charge of Lucian's iPod. He'd proclaimed that Lucian had the biggest music library he'd ever seen, and he'd been cranking slow rock with heavy, seductive, bluesy notes ever since.

River and I were on the other couch, and I was waiting for the right moment to ask him if he'd really thought about hooking up with me for a year.

He took a swig of his drink and leaned closer to me. "Pay attention to what Reese is doin'," he said for only me to hear.

I cocked my head and observed the trio, with Reese sitting in the left corner with more distance between him and Lucas than Lucas and Lucian had.

Reese was chill. Smiling, talking, drinking, laughing...

He was claiming that shackles beat rope any day of the week, to which Lucas and

Lucian argued how wrong he was.

I rested my ankle across my knee and sipped my drink.

Maybe I was too drunk to do puzzles. You didn't fucking call in a grunt to get the paperwork done.

What was weird about Reese's standpoint?

Not only did I share it, but I'd heard it before—we'd touched on this at dinner.

He and I were Team Instant Gratification when it came to physical play. Or the tools we used.

Instant gratification was a big stretch, but compared to the riggers who spent hours tying up their bunny? Jesus.

River leaned in again. "He's making sure Lucas and Lucian are on the same side of the argument. He did something similar when they discussed public play."

Huh. And Reese was doing this to...speed along the process of tonight? To make Lucian and Lucas friends faster? Or to get us all into the bedroom quicker?

"Your brother doesn't strike me as desperate or impatient," I replied.

River shrugged and slid lower in his seat. "He's not. He just wants to ensure there's good chemistry."

What a deviant fuck.

I grinned into my glass and finished my drink.

Then I shook my head and chuckled.

“What?” River smiled, drunk and curious.

“You’re not an IT guy,” I said.

His smile didn’t go anywhere. “Yes, I am.”

“No, you’re fuckin’ not.” I dipped down and nipped at his ear. “My guess? The Army spat youse out somehow, and you went private instead.”

He shivered, and I draped an arm along the top of the couch so I could stay close.

“What do you mean?” He tilted his head up and kissed my jaw. “It’s a private company.”

He knew damn well I meant a private military agency. But whatever. If they wanted to be secretive about their careers, that was their choice. I wasn’t a snitch, nor did I push. Not for that kind of information anyway.

“Fair enough.” I grazed my lips along his cheek and slipped my fingers into his hair. “Let’s talk about how you’ve wanted my cock for over a year instead.”

The lust in his gorgeous green eyes came back in full force, and I returned our glasses to the table.

“What’s there to talk about?” he murmured. “You left on a stupid fuckin’ deployment, so I had to wait.”

That much was clear. “You’re vers, then?”

He shrugged with one shoulder. “Yes and no? It’s practically unheard of I find someone I wanna bottom for.”

But it happened? “But it’s happened before?” I squeezed his thigh and rubbed him higher up.

He bit his lip. “With one other guy. Are you a fuckin’ cocktease?”

I grinned faintly and planted an openmouthed kiss below his ear. “Hardly. I’m determining how far we can go while the others are still discussing rope.”

River didn’t respond verbally, but he did reach up and kiss me, and he readjusted himself in his seat so he could get more access to me.

There was no hesitation this time either.

We started making out right there on the couch, and I wasn’t sure I could push the pause button again.

I was sufficiently intoxicated and turned on.

River Tenley was a fine-ass kisser, greedy and passionate but not pushy or uncontrollable.

I palmed his cock through his jeans, and he nodded minutely while we kissed. He was as ready as I was.

After a moment, I noticed the living room had gone quiet, so I looked over to the other couch when River kissed my neck. Reese was alone, and he was staring right at us as he sipped his whiskey.

“There’s room for more, buddy,” I murmured, unable to keep the lust outta my voice.

He shook his head slowly. “This is for the voyeur in me. I don’t wanna miss a second.”

Goddamn. My cock strained in my jeans, and I had half a mind to drag River with me into the bedroom right fucking now.

“Where are the other two?” River moaned.

I grabbed his jaw and kissed him again, and our tongues met with more urgency and shallower breaths.

“In the kitchen,” I heard Reese say.

Well, then. They better step on it if they wanted to ramp this up, because I was done. I wanted us horizontal within a minute.

“I have a rubber burning a hole in my wallet,” I said, ending the kiss. “I want you on that bed.”

“Thank fuck.” River scrubbed a hand over his mouth and was off the couch in a second. “Cameraman, you ready?”

“More than.” Reese got up too. “Are you good with unprotected for blow jobs, Greer?”

“More than, to quote you.” I grunted and rose to my feet, my knee giving me some hassle. Certain battlefield souvenirs took time to heal.

We made our way out of the living room, and just when we passed the kitchen, it

became clear that tonight was gonna be fucking good. Lucian had Lucas caged in against the island, and they were making out teasingly, as if the moment had just gone from flirting to kissing.

Lucas shook his head at whatever Lucian said and locked his arms around Lucian's neck.

"I don't think I'm getting my perfectly mixed Manhattan, as promised," Reese muttered under his breath.

I grinned and followed River into the bedroom, then promptly got rid of my shirt and undid my jeans.

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River closed the distance between us in a heartbeat, and we fell right into it again. We kissed hungrily, and I pulled his tee over his head. Fuck me—wait just a moment. I grasped his shoulders, swallowed dryly, heart pounding, and felt the need to stare a hot second.

Jesus Christ, he was pure filth. I wanted my tongue all over that V and those abs.

“Don’t keep me waitin’, Finlay.” He unzipped his jeans and pushed them down.

“Lemme look.” I let go of him and sat down on the foot of the bed. “Strip.”

“Heh.” He smirked, though I detected an ounce of awkwardness. He didn’t like being in the spotlight—I knew that—but give a man a break. If you looked like that and threw yourself at me, you better accept some eye-fucking too.

I parted my legs and tugged him closer.

Reese moved the camera to the corner of the bed, and it was impossible to miss the bulge in his jeans.

I loved how fucking dirty the brothers were. So uninhibited. Magical.

A beat later, before I could barely register it, I had pulled down River’s boxer briefs and sucked his hard cock into my mouth.

“Fuck.” He exhaled sharply and tensed up, and he slipped his fingers through my hair.

I took all of him, feeling him against the back of my throat, and hollowed out my cheeks as I pulled back. This was gonna be quick, and I had no intention of letting him get off just yet.

I swirled my tongue around him, getting that first taste of pre-come, and I hummed and swallowed.

“Pushing record now,” Reese murmured. “Fuckin’ hell, you’re hot together.”

I tuned him out, wanting all my focus on River. The way he tensed up over and over, and how quickly his breathing turned shallow, told me everything I needed to know. Maybe we needed a quick fuck first, to get that out of the way, and then we could take our time.

“Jesus fuck,” he groaned.

I eased back. “Get on all fours for me.”

He nodded quickly, trembling a little.

I stood up and retrieved my wallet before I pushed down my jeans and skivvies.

It was my turn to tense up when I noticed Reese. Christ, they were going to try to kill me. He came over and took the rubber from me, and before I knew it, he kissed me. He didn’t stop either. He parted his lips, and I?—

“Fuck him hard,” he said. “No fingers or anythin’ first either. Just get that big cock buried.” Then he deepened the kiss and rolled the condom onto my cock.

I shuddered, starting to get dizzy. My chest heaved. “Hard is all I got at this point.” I barely recognized my own voice.

Reese didn't have to tell me he got off on watching. I could see it clear as day in his eyes.

Maybe I didn't have to tune him out. Maybe this would be even hotter if I viewed him as an active participant.

I climbed onto the bed and decided right then and there that I needed a quick release too, because I didn't want this night to be over in a fast fuck. I wanted us to go at it for hours.

I rubbed my hands over River's sexy ass and guided the head of my cock to his hole.

My mouth watered. After this, I wanted him in the shower. I wanted to eat him out and drive him batshit before I took him again.

I pushed forward in unhurried, short thrusts, taking him inch by inch, and he clenched down around me and hissed.

"Push back, sweetheart," I murmured huskily. "I'm not stopping."

He let out a groan and forced himself back on my cock, and I couldn't help myself. I buried my cock balls deep and let the pleasure wash over me. He was so damn tight, and I couldn't stop staring at us. The way his ass stretched around me—it was so fucking hot.

And this was only the beginning.

* * *

I didn't take River in the shower, but I did get him revved up.

He was on me like a Band-Aid as soon as we returned to the bed, and I wouldn't want it any other way. When my back hit the mattress, he ripped the towel from me and swallowed my cock.

I drew a long breath and folded an arm under my head.

What a goddamn night this was turning into. And what a fucking view.

Lucas was a cockslut. Reese and Lucian were currently taking turns railing him, and he kept demanding more , deeper , harder , faster .

I pushed myself up on my elbows, and the pleasure was sharp and instant the second River sucked on my balls. I pulled up a knee too, giving him all the access he needed.

“I think he needs to be choked out.” Reese pulled out from Lucas, discarded his condom, and got in front of Lucas instead.

Those first few seconds when you only tasted the rubber were never pleasant, not that Lucas seemed to give a shit.

“There we go.” Reese controlled every movement and started fucking Lucas's throat.

I sucked in a breath, momentarily stunned by the sight. Lucian fucking Lucas hard from behind, euphoria written all over them both, and Reese drilling his cock into Lucas's mouth until spit and pre-come trickled down his chin.

Yeah, I was ready to go again.

River knew it too. He crawled up my body, and he met me in a kiss that screamed need.

“I only have one more rubber.” I spoke into the kiss.

“I have one too.” He pressed his cock against mine and kissed me like he was trying to drug me. Frankly, he was succeeding. He seduced me with teasing flicks and swirls of his tongue until my lungs burned for air.

* * *

I couldn’t stop kissing him, evidently. Covering his body with my own, with one hand gripping the headboard, I pounded my cock into River’s ass and kissed every inch of him I could reach.

His mouth, his jaw, his neck, his sternum—fuck, his neck.

I sank my teeth into it, and he cursed and dug his heels into my ass cheeks.

“I’m close,” he gritted out.

“Soon,” I said, out of breath.

Fuck.

I swallowed against the dryness in my throat and picked up the pace. I peered down between us too, to see him stroke himself harder.

I was starting to feel bad for Lucas, though. Reese and Lucian had reared their sadistic heads and were busy trying to get Lucas to beg.

It wasn’t working.

“I’ve never met a man who can make me beg,” he panted. “I’d rather walk out of here

right now, so get with the fucking program and let me come.”

Reese let out a whistle, which didn't really work. He was too breathless. But he did cut Lucas some slack. As did Lucian. They poured all their attention into Lucas and drove him bonkers with lust, until Reese was coming.

I side-eyed them as River sucked on my neck and moaned against my flesh.

I shivered violently.

When it was Lucian's turn, Reese came around the front once more, and he removed the condom.

“Clean my cock, hon.”

Lucas didn't hesitate. He sucked the come off Reese's cock, and it seemed to be Lucas's undoing. His moans mingled with Lucian's, and the scene was so hot that I had to look away.

The air reeked of sex in the best fucking way, and a single deep breath threatened to set me off.

“Almost there,” I whispered into a kiss.

Just then, River went rigid and screwed his eyes shut, and I looked down instinctively as he started coming. Come shot out of his cock in three bursts, splattering against his abs, and it was my undoing too.

I slammed my cock as deep into him as I could, and I just let go. The bliss was forceful and overpowering, shooting through me in currents. Somewhere in the background, I heard Lucian's groan as he got off, a sound that reverberated through

the room and prolonged my orgasm.

Goddamn, goddamn, goddamn.

Every part of me protested. I wasn't fucking twenty anymore.

Lucian better not expect us to leave anytime soon.

I wasn't sure I could get my legs to work.

"I'm fucking done," I panted.

I swallowed and forced myself to pull out of River; otherwise, he would've become a stamp when I collapsed on top of him.

Instead, I went down next to him, and then it was silent.

Almost. The only thing I heard was heavy breathing from all of us.

Lucian collapsed along the foot of the bed.

Reese slouched against the headboard. Lucas almost face-planted against my chest, and River was half dead to my right.

Reese blew out a heavy breath. "I'm ordering Chinese. Anybody game?"

"God yes," Lucian breathed.

I managed to raise a hand for a beat.

"Sign me up." River stretched out and groaned. "I need another shower."

I was fairly certain we all did.

* * *

“Where does he get the fuckin’ energy?” River whispered.

I didn’t fucking know.

From the moment our food had arrived, Lucas had been on a ramble. While the rest of us sat against the headboard and struggled to lift our forks—or chopsticks—to shovel food into our pieholes, Lucas was seated at the center of the mattress, barely touching his food, because he was talking nonstop.

He might be going through an extremely early midlife crisis.

He wasn’t even thirty!

“...and I don’t think I’m asking too much,” he was saying. “I’m out there every damn weekend, and I still have more vanilla friends than kinky people in my life. One of my highlights of the week—you know what that is? Playing badminton with my cousin.”

I stared at him and chewed on a fried shrimp.

Three-second rule. I’d initially dropped it on my cock, making me realize Lucian and River had covered up with their towels for a reason.

“I sincerely hope that’s not the case this week,” Reese drawled.

Lucian and I laughed tiredly. So tiredly. With the come-stained bedspread gone, I just wanted to crawl under the covers and sleep.

“Well, no.” Lucas grew sheepish. “I mean, of course not. But this isn’t exactly a common occurrence for me. Last time I got to feel this way—hell, that was when I first met you guys.” He waved a chopstick at Reese and River. “Why is it so hard to connect with other kinksters?”

I scratched my forehead.

“Aren’t you part of a community?” River asked.

“I am !” Lucas exclaimed. “But members come and go, we don’t meet up often enough, and it’s always a new nightclub.”

We were all sick of the clubs.

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He deflated with a heavy sigh and poked at his stir-fry. “I’m sorry. I’ll shut up. I’ll be much happier if I just accept that I’ll be the last to fall in love, and I’ll probably still be working for my dad in twenty years.”

Wow.

“Jesus wept,” River muttered with his mouth full of food.

I coughed to suppress a stupid laugh. Lucas clearly needed us to be his friends, not to be dicks who poked fun.

Reese leaned forward and eyed the rest of us. “I don’t know about y’all, but this is my favorite pillow talk ever.”

Lucian did the coughing this time, whereas I failed and cracked up alongside River.

“Oh yeah, laugh at my misery!” Lucas glared.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake!” Reese groaned through a laugh and literally pounced on the pity party.

He narrowly escaped getting stir-fry all over himself and covered Lucas’s body with his own.

“You’re way too fuckin’ young to be this whiny.

You have a good job, amazing friends who will fuck the daylights outta you, food on

the table, family, and a fantastic little ass. Quit your mopin’.”

I grinned and shoveled more food into my mouth.

Excellent midnight entertainment.

“It doesn’t matter if I get lucky every day for the rest of my life,” Lucian said. “This will still be the most action my bed’s ever seen.”

I chuckled and glanced over at him. “Aren’t you glad I introduced you to these misfits?”

He smiled. “I am, actually.”

* * *

It was a fun night but maybe not the most restful one. The first time I woke up, wedged between River and Lucas, the latter was trying to keep quiet because Reese was blowing him.

I merely rolled over and threw a leg over River’s hip.

The next time, I threw a bleary glance at the alarm clock and saw it was almost four thirty. And two men were getting out of bed.

“Way too early,” I grumbled, face half buried in the pillow.

One of them—River, he leaned over and pressed a quick kiss to my cheek. “I sleep better in my own bed. Text me when you get back from Florida.”

“Mm,” I grunted.

The Tenleys walked out of the darkness and into the dimly lit hallway.

I had way more space now, 'cause Lucas and Lucian were a heap of body parts on the other side of the bed, so I spread out good and proper, and I fell asleep once more.

* * *

I yawned and rubbed at my eyes.

Did I know how to clear a bedroom or what?

I pushed myself up and squinted.

I was alone, at least in here, but I heard the telltale sounds of coffee being made.

My stomach growled too.

All right, fun's over. I groaned and stretched out before I forced myself to roll out of bed, and I picked up my clothes from last night.

No headache, so that was a plus.

I couldn't find my boxer briefs, so I free-balled it and zipped up my jeans carefully. Then I put on my shirt and trailed into the bathroom.

Was Lucas still here?

Once I'd relieved myself and freshened up, I found Lucian in the kitchen. He was suited up, not a hair out of place—he must've showered again. But the traces from last night were etched into his expression. The man could definitely use another hour or two of sleep.

“Mornin’,” I yawned.

“Good morning.” He yawned too. “It was unbelievably difficult getting out of bed.”

“So why did you?” I slumped down on a stool at the island.

“I couldn’t really fall back asleep after Lucas left,” he replied tiredly. “He left around nine.”

I checked my watch—oh hell. It was almost eleven now. I had to get on the road soon.

“You should’ve woken me up, man,” I said, feeling bad. “I’ve hogged your bed and half your day now.”

He chuckled. “Nonsense. Besides, I had a lovely view every time I walked past my bedroom.”

Well, hey.

I grinned lazily.

The coffee was done, so Lucian poured two mugs and asked if I wanted anything in mine.

“Black is probably my best bet now,” I replied. “I have eight hours on the road to look forward to.” I’d spend the night at a friend’s place in Charleston and then another eight hours tomorrow to get to Panama City.

“I do not envy you.” Lucian slid my coffee across the island.

“Thank you.” I took a tentative sip and felt the rich taste work its way through me like a drug. Precisely what I needed.

Fucking hell. This was good coffee.

“So, last night was...”

“Fun.”

“Wild. I can’t remember the last time I hooked up with someone right after meeting them, but...” He let out a breath and sipped his coffee. “Damn, did I need it.”

I quirked a grin.

“I’m actually meeting up with Lucas for lunch next week,” he mentioned. “I’m not sure he’ll be successful at recruiting me to his community?—”

“What, after that rave review he gave last night?” I laughed.

He chuckled and tipped his mug at me. “Exactly. But it’d be nice to have more friends to attend events with. And I’m guessing I can’t count on you for the next foreseeable future...?”

Unfortunately not.

“I get better benefits if I do twelve years, and I’m gonna need all the money I can get my hands on if I’m renovating a house,” I admitted. “So I have a while to go. But hopefully, I’ve seen my last desert.”

The bad news was, my ma was gonna take credit because she prayed on this every night.

“I do hope you stay safe.” Lucian shook his head. “That should give Lucas some perspective after his harangue last night about how awful his life is.”

I chuckled. “Eh. We all go through shit.” From my experience with Lucas, he was anything but ungrateful.

He was entitled to a rough patch here and there too, particularly if he’d been struggling with managing his own expectations and dreams. I knew something about that.

“I’ve wanted a family of my own for as long as I’ve been old enough to vote, but life doesn’t give a fuck about what you want sometimes. ”

“A family, as in—you want children?” Lucian appeared to think that was baffling.

I felt my forehead wrinkle, and I smiled, confused. “Yeah? Is that weird?”

“No, I—I suppose not.” He furrowed his brow. “I guess I don’t run in circles where many friends are interested in that life.”

“Ah, the power gays with money who—what are they called?”

He laughed. “You mean the DINKs?”

That was the one. Double income, no kids.

I snapped my fingers. “There we go. I dated someone like that—didn’t last long. I brought up kids, and he took off faster than a Realtor can come in his pants when a DINK couple wants to find a townhouse.”

He shook his head in amusement. “I do know plenty of those.”

Shocking. “Yeah, that was never me.” I smiled to myself, thinking of how I’d grown up.

Money had always been tight, but we’d never suffered.

Full house, rowdy boys, Ma yelling and waving around her wooden spoon, Pop hollerin’ for everyone to shut the fuck up when the news came on...

The plastic on the couch only came off for holidays—and when Princess Diana died.

Damn, did Ma mourn with her girlfriends.

I released a breath and shook my head, clearing it. I could miss my family later. “I’mma get outta your hair, my man. We’ll meet up next time I’m in town?”

“I sure hope so. And you stay safe in Florida. It’s full of Floridians.”

“I’m more concerned about the sailors,” I joked. “Eight weeks on a Navy base, have mercy on my soul.” I rose from my seat and finished my coffee. “What’s your plan for the day?”

He blew out a breath. “I have a late lunch with a woman I hardly know outside kink. I mean—I’ve known her a few years, but I wouldn’t say we’re friends ...

It’s strange, really. The moment we met at a party, we were like two peas in a pod, but the one time we met up for coffee, it felt...

awkward and forced. I’m pretty sure she sees me as a stuck-up snob too. ”

I lifted my brows. “Then why are you meeting up with her?”

“We ended up volunteering to host the same demo at an upcoming event on ceremonial behaviors in kink, so the organizer asked us to work as a team.”

Ceremonial behaviors—what the fuck. “Is that some Gor shit?”

He opened his mouth to respond, only to shut it and weigh his answer.

“At the end of the day, doesn’t a lot of M/s inspiration come from that universe?”

This is obviously a modern twist that’s already traveled through subcultures to wash off the non-con aspects.

In short, it’s a class on poses, kneeling, and commands. ”

Huh. That sounded like something I’d be interested in. “I’ll pick your brain about this next time,” I said. “I wanna know more.” Once I’d left the mug in the sink, I passed him and gave him a big smooch on the cheek. “Thanks for last night, buddy. Can’t wait to see the footage.”

He smirked and shook his head at me. “Have fun in Florida, Marine.”

Oorah.

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Lucian Leroux is now friends with Drivein Rain

Lucian Leroux is now friends with Nap Oleon

Lucian Leroux is now friends with Lucas West

I nodded in satisfaction. Things were coming together. Next time I was in town, I'd have a group of friends waiting for me. A lot safer than having singles scattered about, especially since many were partnered up and had become pros at canceling last minute.

I pocketed my phone, and then it was finally my turn to order.

Hello, Waffle House.

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The day after

Penelope Darling

Where was this pompous bastard? He thought the world revolved around him, didn't he?

I folded my arms over my chest and peered out the window. Holiday shoppers were going to take over the streets soon. The weather was already crap. And this fucking guy didn't know how to use a watch.

What the hell was it with Lucian Leroux?

When we saw each other at kink parties, it was so damn easy to talk to him.

Not because he was remotely funny, but because we had so much in common.

The same kinks, similar traits we were drawn to; only, him with men and me with women.

We liked to participate in event planning and demos.

We were natural leaders. But the instant the proverbial lights came back on, the party was over, and it was time to part ways, something about him just screamed superiority and arrogance.

If he didn't get here in the next five minutes, I was gonna?—

Goddammit. I saw him walking in. He spoke briefly with the hostess before he spotted me.

He'd spent more than a few minutes in the rain.

I almost smiled, because it was so unlike him.

I'd never seen him out of sorts. He never spoke out of turn, he never laughed too loud, he never said anything inappropriate, I wasn't sure he even had a sense of humor, and he was just so...

so...so stiff. Except for right now, when he looked like he was coming out of a car wash without the car.

First and last time I let him pick the restaurant too. It was so sterile and bright and lifeless in here.

"I apologize, Penelope," he said, pulling out his chair. "My car didn't start, and it took forever to get a cab in this weather."

"No problem, Lucian." I smiled politely.

He exhaled and loosened his tie, then picked up his menu. "Does anything look good? I've never been here before, but I've had several clients raving about the place."

I cleared my throat and opened my menu too. "Well, there's the \$30 tuna salad that's served inside a lemon. Or maybe you'd be more interested in the \$45 chestnut ravioli with walnuts and honey?"

"Chestnut rav..." He trailed off and made a face as he scanned the menu. "What on earth is all this?"

I'd rather ask who his clients were. Snobs like him, I bet. He worked in finance, if I remembered correctly. Frankly, we never talked about vanilla life.

Lucian looked and looked, as if more items would magically appear on the two pages, but after a moment, I wasn't sure he was actually paying attention.

If anything, he was miles away in his head—though, he recovered eventually.

He glanced out the window instead. His jaw ticked.

He released a breath, and I could practically feel the tension rolling off him.

He wasn't comfortable. He wanted to be anywhere but here.

This was the opposite of the man I'd call a dear kink friend. And how crazy was it that I could genuinely look forward to seeing him at events and then my skin would almost crawl at the thought of meeting up for lunch?

"I'll have to apologize again," he said, clearing his throat. "I got three hours of sleep last night, I have no idea what's wrong with my car, I'm tired as fuck, I'm hungover, and all I want right now is to put on sweatpants and order the greasiest pizza I can find."

I blinked.

He wanted what?

He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. "A burger would work too."

Right.

What?

“Do you...want to reschedule?” I was so busy processing his uncomposed outburst that it made me a little slow on the uptake. But fuck it, I was impressed. There was something real underneath the suit, wasn’t there?

“Oh, I—I suppose that was unclear,” he said, frowning. “And it just occurred to me that you might not be comfortable moving this meeting to my place. We can reschedule. I’d just need an hour or so to go back home and change, and then?—”

“We can go to your place,” I said. Just because I wasn’t a big fan of arrogant men didn’t mean I felt unsafe with him.

On the contrary, I’d always felt relaxed in his presence.

Well, in a kink setting. To be honest, I didn’t know what the fuck to think about the vanilla version of him anymore.

“But you gotta promise me you’ll wear sweats. And pizza’s on you.”

The relief was instant in Lucian’s eyes. “I’ll pay for the cab so you can get home later too. Thank you, Pen?—”

“I have my truck,” I chuckled. “Let’s go, pussycat. You need to get dry.”

I was more than happy to get out of this pretentious place, without having anything to pay for.

“Are we sure about that nickname?” he asked.

I looked back at him and smiled. “It suits you.”

“Wonderful.”

Oh, lighten up, suit.

* * *

“Did your truck’s shock absorbers fall off at some point?”

Pompous.

“Don’t shit-talk Nelson,” I said, making a turn. “He’s been around longer than you have.”

“I believe you.” He literally clutched the seat when I drove over another speed bump.

“Sooo, how’s life?” I actually didn’t wanna know, but I had to save my old truck from being bullied.

“Good.”

Awesome.

“Yours?” he asked.

“Great.”

This was why we were better off as kink friends. I could probably list all his partners and the kinks he’d explored with each one, but don’t ask me what his middle name was or if he owned a pet.

I guessed I’d find out the latter in a moment.

“Do you own a white cat?” I wondered.

He looked at me, so I made sure to keep my eyes on the road.

That was important.

“That’s a villain’s pet,” he said.

“Oh, is it?” Yikes. He was onto me.

He huffed and glanced out the window instead. “Yesterday, I was accused of being a vampire. Today, I’m a Bond villain.” He turned my way again. “Is there something about me?”

Hold on, who’d accused him of being a vampire, and why was that so funny?

“You know what? Never mind. It’s been pointed out before that I’m rigid and boring.”

Aw. Well, now I felt bad. I was just teasing him—mostly. “Who told you that?”

“My best friend,” he grumbled. “Pardon me for not wanting to go bungee jumping and swimming with sharks.”

Oof. A lot to unpack there. I cleared my throat and tapped my fingernails along the wheel. Traffic up ahead—this might take a moment. Was everyone out today? In this weather?

“I’m sorry about the cat comment, Lucian.”

He shook his head. “It’s fine. I know I...I don’t reveal much about myself, so people

see the suit—and suits are dreadfully boring and/or pricks.”

Ten points for self-awareness?

I still felt bad, though. And I hadn’t been entirely fair.

“It’s true in a way,” I replied carefully. “I don’t know you well enough to form a real opinion—outside kink events anyway. So yeah, I see the finance guy who becomes a bit stiff when the party’s over.”

He sighed. “Because I never know what to say. That time I asked you out for coffee, it didn’t go very well.”

I winced. He was right, but that wasn’t all on him. I’d been so awkward. In the light of day, I’d hesitated, and I hadn’t believed we’d have much in common outside the communities we sometimes stumbled upon each other in.

“I felt super weird that day,” I admitted. “Maybe a little hungover too. Like you are today, maybe?”

He snorted softly. “Today was supposed to be great—because last night was...something else.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah,” he sighed. “And one of the guys I met—I’m fairly sure he no longer believes I’m a vampire.”

I chuckled and checked the rearview. “One of the guys? Sounds like there was a line.”

“Oh, not like that. Except...” He shifted in his seat, causing the leather to squeak.
“Well, kind of like that.”

What the hell? He’d clearly had fun and he’d brought it up, so it was a bad time to go all vague on me.

“Did you go to a kink party?” I guessed. “Took part in a group-play scene?”

“It wasn’t a party. A new friend was introducing me to even newer friends, and then we went back to my place and...yeah.”

I grinned. Maybe he wasn’t so uptight after all. “Whatever this is, I like it,” I said, gesturing to him. “You’re fumbling.”

In my periphery, I saw how he narrowed his eyes at me. “You like it when I fumble?”

“Sort of!” I had to be honest. “You always come off as so polished, Lucian. Like every word is rehearsed—and within kink, maybe that’s because you know what you’re talking about.

You’re not reckless, and you do your homework, which is great.

But this right here—” I pointed between us and stepped on the gas.

“This feels more real than any conversation we’ve had at the end of an event when it’s time to go home and you don’t know how to wrap things up.”

I paused to let things settle—and to get past a poor group of road workers who’d been called in on a Saturday. I hated this intersection.

“I’m just saying,” I went on. “I wanna get to know the hungover guy who’s craving sweats and pizza and, by the sound of things, got himself lost in an orgy last night.

He sounds way more interesting than the closed-off suit who takes me to a restaurant recommended to him by strangers. How does that sound?”

“It sounds like you’re drawn to people who don’t have their shit together,” he replied dryly.

I laughed. That was actually funny.

“Perfection is boring, pussycat. Give me all the cracks and dents.”

His mouth twitched, as if he were hiding a smile and kind of failing.

It made me happy.

Maybe there was hope for him after all.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

You are now friends with Lucian Leroux

About damn time. I'd sent the request two days ago, but judging by his online activity, he wasn't on Facebook a whole lot.

I opened up a new message and sent him the joke I'd seen the other day.

Hey, money guy! Do you know the best way to make a small fortune on the stock market? Start off with a big fortune.

At least he hadn't turned off notifications. He responded fairly quickly.

I remember giving that joke a chuckle the first time I heard it in the '90s. I feel the need to let you know that I never asked my parents for a sister. :) How's your day?

"Pffft." First of all, he should be so lucky to view me as a sister at some point. Second, that joke was brilliant.

I'll make sure the joke is about wet cats the next time so you can relate. My day is incredibly Monday for being a Thursday. But I'm looking forward to the event tomorrow. I just have to suffer through four meetings and probably no lunch.

I walked out of my office, hoping I had enough time to visit the vending machines next to the break room on my way to my boss's office.

Lucian responded again.

You have to eat, Penelope. You can think about wet pussy later.

I laughed to myself and tapped out a quick reply.

You're asking for the impossible. (Stopping at a vending machine now!)

I bought myself a luxurious lunch—an apple and a chocolate bar, and I'd have to wash the gross wax coating from the apple later. Chocolate now, fruit later.

Just outside my boss's office, I saw Lucian's last response, and I could only grin. Both sweet and funny—who'd'a thunk it?

Damn lesbians. (That's not enough. Don't make me order you something, because I will.)

Six months later

Lucian Leroux

“O h, there he is!” Reese flashed his signature grin and stood up.

“Good to see you again, my friend. How was Bangladesh?” I shook his hand firmly, and his tan didn’t escape my notice. “Knowing you, you have no tan lines.”

He laughed and sat down again, and he alerted the server. “I’m afraid I never got any vacation time over there. Thanks for meetin’ up with me, by the way.”

I waved that off, happy to help.

We ordered first, and Reese already knew what he wanted. Without an abundance of experience with Lebanese food, I just got what he ordered, and he swore by the bread, the hummus, and the lamb skewers.

It seemed like a nice place, comfortable and laid-back, with a modern twist of industrial mingling with all the rugs and paintings. Dark, rich colors.

Penelope might like it.

“So you wanted me to look over something?” I asked.

“Oh yeah.” Reese retrieved a rolled-up stack of...something...from his leather jacket. “Here. We have the highest bid so far, but we wanted professional eyes on it before

we closed the deal.”

I lifted my eyebrows and unrolled the printouts.

Well, hell. He and River were buying a house?

It was a big house. An estate, rather. An old Victorian with three stories and a damn tower.

Definitely run-down, though not as bad as Greer’s ranch.

On the outside, at least. I scanned the details; it was a big chunk of land too—wait. This was in Mclean?

“This is in Mclean,” I felt the need to point out.

“I know.” He grinned.

All right, just so we were on the same page here.

I flipped to the next printout, and it was the beginning of a series of black-and-white photos of the interior.

The server returned with our drinks as I perused the images, and I thanked her absent-mindedly. Goodness, was anything intact in the house?

“You know I don’t work in real estate,” I said.

Although, I had enough knowledge to know this was a prime location worth every penny.

The floors across the downstairs needed to be torn out, and one of the twins—or their agent—had made notes in the margin about the place requiring new electricity and plumbing.

“Didn’t you mention helping others invest in real estate, though?”

I inclined my head. “I did. But if you don’t mind, I’ll have a colleague look this over at our Georgetown office.

” I returned to the information page. “That’s a lot of acres—of farmland, to boot.

I’m not well-versed in the zoning permits you might need if you plan on living here.

Can it even be rezoned? It doesn’t look residential on the inside.

” There was a freaking ballroom, for starters.

Actually, Penelope would know more too. She was a civil engineer and worked in city planning.

“It used to be the stomping grounds of some kind of society run by a rich couple,” he replied. “Then the husband died, and the wife let it all go. Never set foot in the place again. Nothing’s happened there the past twenty-five years. We don’t plan on living there permanently.”

“Because you’ll be working around the clock to afford the mortgage?” I cocked a brow at him. He called himself a security guy, one who worked exclusively at River’s side. River, in turn, worked in IT, and while there was money in that field, it wasn’t Mclean money.

Reese just smirked in response, so I moved on.

“Why on earth would someone let a big property like this just sit for so many years? Have they heard of property taxes?”

He shrugged. “The wife refused to sell is all I know. Now she’s dead, so...”

The children wanted a payday, I assumed. Fair enough.

“I’ll be happy to let a colleague look it over,” I repeated. “I’m driving over to the other office later today anyway.” Truthfully, I didn’t know enough on the matter.

“But you reckon it’s worth it?” he asked.

I flicked the details one more glance. “How many bidders were there?”

“Five, initially. We’re down to two now—or just us. We’re waiting for a response.”

I nodded in acknowledgment. “And how far above asking price?”

“Only thirty K. We expected it to go higher, to be honest. River dug around a little, and he’s guessing that whoever buys that kind of place wants to tear it down and rebuild something new.”

Undoubtedly. There wasn’t much to save. The second floor looked like it was ready to collapse.

“Considering there’s farmland attached to it, I’m not too surprised it hasn’t gone for higher,” I said. “But yes, I would say this is a good investment. The location alone is... I mean, it’s Mclean.”

Reese smiled. “Fantastic. Just what I wanted to hear.”

I returned the papers to him and had to admit I was curious. “So, what’s the plan?”

“Buddy, you will be privy to that very soon, and we won’t take no for an answer,” he answered. “I’mma talk to West first. I need his two cents on the matter, and then we’re gonna call you and Greer.”

In other words, it was kink-related. It had to be.

Were they opening a kink club in that place?

Was that financially possible?

Well, the opening was always possible. Running it, however... Making it survive ...

“By the way, did you see Luke’s Facebook post today?”

I shook my head.

Reese clearly felt the need to show me. He pulled out his phone and opened the app, then showed me the screen.

I leaned forward and read it.

Getting caught in a storm in Richmond gets five stars. No sarcasm.

I leaned back again. “I take it he’s on his way home from his work trip.” I hadn’t spoken to him in a couple weeks, because he’d been swamped with work and getting ready for a trip down south.

“What would make you give anythin’ in Richmond five stars?” Reese pressed.

I furrowed my brow. “A five-star hotel?”

He chuckled and pocketed his phone. “Boy got laid.” He looked at something over my head, so I guessed our food was here.

I was hungry.

I also hoped Reese was right. Lucas had been moping a bit more than usual lately.

The food did look delicious, and the scents of grilled lamb and garlic caused my stomach to tighten with hunger.

“Try the bread,” Reese coaxed. “If it’s good enough, maybe I can convince you to come with me to that Big/Little event mid-June.”

Oh, absolutely not. No way. “No bread in the world is that magical,” I told him, breaking off a piece. “I still have scars from last time.”

I didn’t know why he wanted to go back either.

We’d both hightailed it out of there after seeing those Littles.

Bless them with all the sparkles and crayons they could dream of—and zero kink-shaming—but we’d not read the fine print on that newsletter.

The vast majority of them were into heavy regression play, and the event had been aptly named The Playground.

Because that was how the place had been treated.

“Oh, come on, man,” Reese groaned. “It’s completely different this time. I promised

to take Ivy, and she's there for the pain."

He should've led with that, but I wasn't convinced.

We adored little Ivy, but I was so far from a Daddy Dom. I didn't belong in such a place when it was exclusive to Bigs and Littles.

"Go with River," I said. "Where is he anyway?"

"He's workin'." Reese scowled to himself and chewed on a mouthful of lamb. "Some friend you are."

I puckered my lips at him.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

Lucas West is now friends with Colt Carter

Was there a way to avoid seeing the people Lucas became friends with? He was incredibly social, and half the content I saw on Facebook came from him.

On that note, I should reach out to him about my dinner on Saturday.

KC had obviously canceled on me, which I refused to get pissy about. I knew why he'd done it. I knew he didn't want to meet any of my friends if they were involved in kink, though he'd never admit to it.

I opened up my conversation with Lucas and sent him a message.

Welcome home, friend. How was the South? Just a friendly reminder about my dinner on Saturday. You'll be my social glue, so don't you dare cancel on me.

Every now and then, I joined him in one of his two communities, and although several of them were very nice, they were mainly Lucas's friends. Without him there, I'd become the person Penelope couldn't stand once more.

Lucas replied within seconds.

Hell no, I'll be there! The South was surprisingly amazing. At least one part of it. What can I bring?

Just himself. I already had the food and alcohol covered. All the alcohol.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

A few weeks later

Reese Tenley

I remembered a time when I'd thought Lucas sharing a kink dynamic with a girl was strange as fuck. But eventually, I'd met Ivy, and... Honestly, now I couldn't picture my social life without her.

She'd essentially turned into our "sure thing." When River and I needed to blow off some steam and didn't have the energy to hunt down another masochist, Ivy was there for us. She was fun, bratty as hell, strong, ballsy, intelligent, and had a high threshold for pain. She'd become a friend.

I had half a mind to ask her to be part of the core group of the community River and I were hopefully starting soon, but I knew her work hours.

The girl was what, twenty-four? And she was already stressed out.

No, she'd definitely become a member, but I wasn't going to add to that stress by giving her responsibilities in the start-up.

River had pointed out I was protective of her, and he wasn't wrong. Weird as it was, she was the first person who'd made me stop doubting I had a Daddy Dom in me.

I really wanted to explore that more.

But I also wanted to punish her for leaving my side five minutes after we arrived at

the event.

She had begged me to come with her. She had begged me to be her “barrier.” And now, she was gone. She’d spotted a handful of brat friends and said she’d see me later.

I ran a hand through my hair and leaned against the bar.

I’d found a spot at the very end, and I’d stay here and nurse my beer until Ivy either deemed me worthy of her company again, or she was ready to go home.

I took a swig and scanned the crowd, wondering if August was here. Ivy had a crush on him but, for some reason, refused to approach him. I couldn’t very well introduce her either; I’d never spoken a word to the guy. I’d just heard Ivy ramble about him.

A lot.

She had tons of friends, and there was no shortage of play partners either, so I hoped she’d recruit some of them to our future slice of kinky heaven in Mclean.

It was finally gonna happen. One work assignment with Emerson in Berlin had convinced River. We’d seen what we wanted for ourselves. No more of these fucking theme nights at regular clubs, no events in somebody’s living room.

The estate in Mclean was ours.

We estimated we’d need twelve to eighteen months for renovations and upgrades, and then we could open the doors.

I spotted Ivy on the dance floor with her friends, and she waved excitedly to me.

I smiled and tipped my bottle in her direction.

She was so funny at times. One minute, she was balls to the wall and feared no one.

Then...the instant River and I switched on the sadism, she eep'd her way out of there and became too shy to talk to us.

Not that it stopped her from showing up and asking for more in the end.

It just required a great deal of warm-up and catching up.

The latter was on us. Maybe one day, River and I would walk away from Hillcroft and never look back. Fuck, I hoped so. But for now, we had to settle for work coming first. Which included extended trips overseas and not seeing our friends for weeks or months.

That was why we couldn't start our community on our own. We needed that core group to keep the ball rolling when we were out of town?—

“Or you can back the fuck off,” I heard someone snap over the music. “Do I look like a Little to you? I’m also seriously taken and not one bit interested.”

I eyed the young guy glaring at another just a few feet away, and the taller of the two flashed his hands in surrender before he disappeared into the crowd.

The snapper huffed and faced the bar, looking like he needed a minute to pull himself together.

He'd had a long day, I reckoned.

I finished my beer and set the bottle on the bartop.

The snapper looked my way and hesitated for a beat before he moved closer. “Apologies in advance for a possibly stupid question, but sadomasochism was mentioned on the event board online, and so far, I’ve only seen light spanking between a Daddy and his boy. Am I missing something?”

He’d fallen into the same trap as many of us before him.

“Unless it’s a strict theme, organizers put too many kinks on the list in order to attract more guests,” I replied. “So tonight is Bigs and Littles of all kinds, including regression-players, masos, diaper lovers...and so on.”

He scowled a little and looked out over the dance crowd.

The sides were lined with simple equipment and seating areas, where kinksters could enjoy some lighter sessions on furniture that could be packed up easily. Sorry to say, but there was nothing sexy about a portable X-cross or sawhorse.

The snapper faced me again. “My Master’s in the middle of a work deadline, so he sent me out to get inspiration. Do you happen to know any events this weekend that cater more to Sadists and masochists?”

I blew out a breath, thinking. I’d seen something in the DC Kink group on Facebook, but it was usually hit or miss in that crowd.

“Are you on FetLife?” I asked.

He shook his head. “I’m still kinda new. Between studies and Master’s schedule, we haven’t explored as much as we would’ve liked yet.”

Understandable. Life always got in the way of things.

“Are you part of a community?” he asked.

I shook my head. “Never found one that suited me. That’s why a few friends and I are starting our own.”

He perked up. “Really? When?”

I chuckled and rested an elbow on the bartop. “It’ll probably be a year or so before we can accept members. We bought a house that needs to be renovated from top to bottom first.”

“Wait, like—a house for the community?”

I inclined my head. “Three floors of playrooms, club area, and guest rooms. There’s a private forest too, for takedowns and shit.”

“Oh my God.” Judging by the excitement in his eyes, he was impressed. “Do you need any help? Because that sounds fucking incredible.”

I grinned. He was sweet, and I kind of soaked up his excitement. We were gonna need it when renovations started and the money began flying out the window.

“I reckon a sweet subbie like you should keep focusin’ on your studies and your Master,” I replied. “But of course you’re welcome to join once we’re finished.”

He scrunched his nose. “First of all, I’m a switch till the day I die. Second of all, I have way more time than my Owner does.”

A switch till the day he died, huh? Cute.

“I’m Macklin, by the way.” He stuck out his hand and stood a little taller.

“Reese.” I shook his hand. “Aren’t you a little young?”

He knitted his brows together. “I’m twenty-one. I’m also a chef, sort of, and I’m real scrappy. I’ve read a lot about BDSM, and I swear I wanna dedicate my life to this.”

Boy, this wasn’t a job interview.

“And you’re in your first kink dynamic,” I guessed.

He weighed his response. “Kinda, but we’ve been together three years.”

Oh. Hell, that was a lot longer than River and I had ever lasted. I reckoned our top score at the moment was four months, and we’d been out of the country for half that time.

“I’ll tell you what,” I said. “I’m off on a work trip soon, but when I come back, I want you to meet my brother. He and I bought the house together.”

At the end of the day, switch or not, he was his Master’s sub, and it couldn’t hurt to have a sub’s take on things during this journey. So far, we only had Tops on the dominant side.

“Your actual brother?” Macklin pressed. “Either way, I’m so down. Can we exchange numbers? Or are you on Facebook?”

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

Macklin Day is now friends with Napoleon

Macklin Day is now friends with Lucas West

Yeah, so maybe. Maybe, maybe.

Macklin had passed the River test, and West seemed to like the kid too.

They were both on board with my suggestion too, that we might actually need a sub's perspective in the creation of our community. Otherwise, it was easy to forget things that felt foreign to the rest of us.

We just had to wait and see. Greer had been all in from the moment I'd called him to tell him about our idea, but he hadn't been here in a while, and we wouldn't be seeing him until October. Until then, I wasn't making any decisions about who else might join us.

Same went for Lucian. I knew he wanted to start this community with us, but he was on the fence for work reasons. He worked a lot. He was busy climbing the career ladder.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

Four months later

Macklin Day

Someday, maybe, Master would have time for me. Someday.

I checked the rearview mirror, and nobody could see I'd been crying.

Nobody could hear me scream out here either, if these guys turned out to be murderers.

This was great.

I climbed out of the car, thankful it'd stopped raining at least, and I looked at the massive house that was ready to fall apart.

If I were to venture a guess, the most valuable features right now were the three cars I'd parked next to on the front lawn.

I couldn't help but wonder what the hell those guys were getting themselves into. All while...I really needed this. I wanted them to accept me so I could help out and become part of something worth fighting for. And...if...if Walker and I didn't make it, I'd have something to fall back on.

We had to make it. I wasn't sure I could live without him.

But a guy had to be smart, right? I needed friends—and I liked Reese and Lucas a lot.

River scared me a bit.

Today, I'd meet Greer Finlay too. From what I'd learned, he was a Marine who spent what little free time he had in this area. He'd bought a house here somewhere too.

Figuring the men were inside already, I walked across the rain-soaked lawn and reached the rickety porch steps, and?—

A sharp whistle halted my next step, and I looked toward the side of the house.

“Hey, kid.” It was probably Reese. Possibly. “Come with me. There’s a big hole in the floor on the other side of the front door.”

Oh.

Suddenly, I was glad I was up-to-date on my tetanus shot. At least, I thought I was. I should probably look that up.

“Hi, Sir.” I plastered a smile on my face and met up with the Tenley—okay, it was Reese. I didn’t wanna assume. I’d already mixed them up the first time I’d met River.

“How are ya? Where’s Walker?”

Excellent question. “I’m good. He had to work.” It wasn’t a complete lie.

Despite having met Lucas and the Tenleys for drinks once—and getting along with them—Walker called them my friends since I was the one hoping to become part of this community start-up. In short, he’d taken himself out of the equation, allowing him to work instead.

“How are you?” I asked in return.

“I’m fantastic.” He smiled, gesturing for me to go ahead of him alongside the house. “Welcome to our kinky mansion. It ain’t much at the moment, but it should be less of a deathtrap in a few months. First stage of renovations begins next week.”

“What’s the first step?” I asked curiously. Yikes, I sidestepped a big mud puddle.

“Oh, you know. Make sure it stands.”

That was a good first goal. Yes.

We reached the other side, and it was like being transported to what’d once been a gorgeous garden. It was big too. Past the empty pool—which probably needed more than a little tender loving—the lawn slanted down until you reached a forest.

This place had been beautiful once. An old French bistro chair was tipped over in the grass, having lost most of its white paint. Now it was mainly rusty brown.

“Watch your step here.” Reese climbed up the step to an ancient veranda. “We’re gonna replace all this. Wood’s rotten.”

Great!

I was careful to walk in his exact footsteps, and I followed him inside the house through a door that had a big crack in the window.

Oh, musty. Musty, musty smell.

“Here, we’ll want big sliding doors eventually,” he continued.

Whoa. I looked around the ginormous room and was once more pulled back in time.

Wallpaper was peeling off the walls, an old chandelier hung in the high ceiling—and one probably shouldn't walk below it—and the wooden floors were cracked in places or missing completely.

Someone had yellow-taped a narrow path through the room, so hopefully it was safe to cross there.

“What's that over there?” I pointed to a set of doors on the other side of the room, and that whole structure looked all weird. Like, they were interior rooms without windows...?

“Yeah, uh...we don't really understand what the previous owners had in mind here,” Reese chuckled. “This used to be completely open, like a big ballroom. We'll probably use those areas for storage. River guessed one of them was a cigar room, but there's one upstairs too, so...” He shrugged.

Fair enough.

“Come on. I'll introduce you to our resident fixer,” he said, clapping me on the shoulder. “River and I are leaning toward throwing money at every problem and letting a contractor take over, but Greer believes we can fix this up ourselves once the major work is done.”

“Define major,” I mumbled and followed him. Not one step outside the yellow tape.

Reese let out a low laugh. “In short, we ain't taking on any load-bearing structures on our own.”

Good call.

We survived the trek across the room, and then we ended up in a grand foyer or

hallway—it used to be grand, anyway—and sure enough, there was the huge hole in the floor.

The big staircase was still beautiful, though.

Everything here just needed love.

I could totally picture myself spending weekends here to give this estate a new golden era.

We walked down another hall, and I heard voices. I heard Lucas, in particular. And Reese slowed down when we reached a very wide doorway leading to the kitchen.

Oh boy. Big kitchen and big, big Marine.

“Hello, Macklin.” Lucas smiled at me.

“Hi, Sir.” I smiled back. Where was River lurking?

“So this is the young whippersnapper,” Reese said. “Macklin, Greer. Greer, Macklin.”

We met halfway and shook hands.

“Good to meet’chu, kid.” Holy crap, did he have a firm handshake. “I hear you wanna board our crazy train.”

I grinned. “Fingers crossed.”

“We’re only hesitant because he’s too young to already be stressed out,” Lucas explained. “Not only is he in school, but he works full time?—”

“Actually, it’s more like 75%,” I corrected. “You shouldn’t always listen to what my Master says.”

“Even so,” he hedged. “You have a lot on your plate, Macklin. Walker wasn’t exaggerating about that.”

Greer folded his arms over his chest and glanced between Lucas and me. “Can he vote?”

“Of course I can,” I said. “I’m twenty-one.”

He shrugged. “Then you can make your own decisions.”

I really liked Greer.

“Plus, we need the manpower,” Reese added. He looked to me. “We want you to meet Lucian. Lucas and I are having dinner with him in a couple of weeks to discuss some details. We think he’ll join us once he has a better idea of our plan. You and Walker could tag along.”

“I’ll be there,” I was quick to say. And damn it, I was going to convince Master to make time.

Reese was about to say something else, but the second Tenley waltzed in with his eyes glued to his phone.

“Did you get lost, brother?” Reese asked.

“If I did, it was on purpose,” River muttered, lifting his gaze to the others. Not me yet. He hadn’t spotted me. “Lucas, do you have some news you wanna share?”

Lucas tilted his head. “News...?”

“I mean, we kinda knew somethin’ was goin’ on,” River continued. “The few times you’ve met someone, you haven’t been able to keep your trap shut for a second.” He held up his phone. “Yet, you haven’t told us anythin’ about this Air Force guy you’re apparently in a relationship with.”

“What?” Reese grabbed the phone.

Lucas turned a little sheepish but hid it fairly well. “It’s complicated.”

“No, it’s not,” Reese said. “Because that’s an option. You can list yourself as complicated with someone on Facebook, but this just says—as of fuckin’ yesterday—that you’re in a relationship with a Colt Carter.”

I withheld my snickering, because I didn’t want the show to end. Hell, make me some popcorn, please!

“An airman?” Greer looked a little grossed out. “Aim higher, Lucas. You can do so much better.”

This was too funny! And if this was the banter they shared, I so wanted to belong.

“Oh, knock it off,” Lucas said. “It’s complicated because he’s been on deployment. We met in Richmond before the summer—twenty-four freaking hours, and I can’t get him out of my head. And apparently, he can’t stop thinking about me either, so we decided to go for it.”

Aw, that was sweet!

“You’ve been stressin’ about somethin’ this week,” River noted.

Lucas scoffed and folded his arms over his chest. “I’m learning that’s what happens when you worry about someone overseas. He’s going to give me gray hair before he comes home next spring.”

“Is he a Little?” Greer furrowed his brow.

Lucas cleared his throat. “Uh, no. He’s an arrogant, loud, dominant, and sadistic pilot from Texas. He drives me crazy already.”

“I’ll be damned.” Greer smiled. “What kind of pilot?”

“I have a better question.” Reese walked over to him, with a big smile on his face too, and threw an arm around Lucas’s shoulders. “Does he make you beg, West?”

I pinched my lips together as Lucas pushed Reese off him.

“Fuck me, he does,” Reese laughed. “This is serious . Oh man, I can’t wait to meet this guy.”

I couldn’t wait to be part of this. I fucking couldn’t. They had to let me join them.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

You are now friends with Greer Finlay

I was one step closer.

This was going to work. Lucas and Reese might worry about my workload, but they liked me. Greer was on my side too.

I grinned to myself and returned to working on my presentation. My kitchen was my classroom, and I was going to impress everyone with my fried shrimp with chipotle aioli and black bao sliders.

That following March

Colt Carter

“...and in the end, we couldn’t say no,” Luke said, turning onto the dirt road.

“Macklin was in, Lucian was in, and then Penelope followed after Reese flew into a fit of rage about paperwork. He literally came out of the house and kicked a stack of documents—like a football—and papers flew everywhere while he cursed about rezoning and liquor permits.”

That sounded like something I could do too. Fucking red tape.

“But this Penelope chick—she knows all about that?” I guessed.

“Pretty much. She works in city planning,” he said. “She’s very funny. The dynamic between her and Lucian will crack you up. He can be somewhat reserved—but always nice,” he added. “And then she came along as his ball-busting sister.”

I knew a thing or two about the annoying effects of baby sisters.

All right, then. I was up to speed, I was fairly sure.

Maybe I was a teensy bit nervous to meet his friends, but I couldn’t say I was worried. I just wanted to make a good impression and fit in. I mean, the idea was fantastic. To run a community from an actual physical location—what a luxury.

The house came into view soon enough, and I leaned forward in my seat.

Fucking hell, this was gonna be good. The place was bigger than I'd anticipated.

"I thought you said it had peelin' off yellow and green paint," I said.

"It used to. When Reese and River first got the keys, every previous shade was seemingly peeling off the walls. It's been yellow, pastel green, and light blue, as far as we know. But now..." He smiled to himself and pulled in next to a truck.

Now the house was black, and the outside appeared to be finished.

I remembered Luke had told me they'd started replacing rotten boards earlier this year, but I didn't know they were done.

Made sense, though. Finish the exterior so the inside was protected from leaks and weather damage.

I unbuckled my seat belt and climbed out of the car, and I took a deep breath.

Yeah, I could see this in my future. We hadn't worked out the logistics yet, and I wanted to be closer to Luke than Langley, but...we'd make it work. I did get time off, and I could picture us spending a lot of time working on this place together.

"We haven't painted the shutters yet—or that, uh...the...the panels that go around," Luke pointed out. "We're gonna replace all the windows first, and that's evidently not cheap."

I smirked at my dork. "Do you mean the framing and the casing?"

He shot me a look. "I'm sorry I'm not fluent in carpenter."

I laughed and pulled him to me, and I smooched his temple. “Don’t worry, darlin’. You have me now, and I clearly know everythin’.”

He smacked my chest and failed to hide his amusement. “Arrogant bastard.”

Goddamn, he was gorgeous. I was still riding a wave of relief and euphoria at being home again, and now I had him. He was mine. All fucking mine.

“An arrogant bastard you professed your love for.” I kissed his nose.

He hummed and kissed me. “Don’t make me regret it, Captain. I’ll call your mother.”

Our sugary-sweet moment ended abruptly—not because he threatened me, but because someone came running out of the house, screaming. And that had to be the young kid. Macklin. I’d put faces to most names, thanks to Facebook. By most, I meant everyone except the Tenleys and Greer Finlay.

“What on earth?” Luke straightened.

“Don’t fucking follow me, you sadistic prick!” Macklin yelled. It was as if he didn’t see us; he just ran past all the cars. He was sweaty, too, and covered in sawdust.

Another guy came out of the front door, and Luke told me it was Greer.

He was holding something.

“Don’t be such a baby, Mack!” Greer hollered. “This is a good snake! You want it in your garden!”

“I don’t have a garden!” Macklin shouted back. “Just get that thing away from me!”

I grinned.

“Oh, come on,” Greer laughed, trailing down the porch steps. “It’s our official mascot now. He needs a name.”

Macklin stomped his foot and snarled. “ Or , both you and that nope rope can go to hell!”

This was gonna be fun.

Greer was still sufficiently amused as he lowered the snake among the rosebushes, and Luke grabbed my hand and nudged me toward the house. Time for introductions, I reckoned.

“ God .” Macklin blew out a harsh breath and shuddered. “I can’t believe there are freaks who actually collect those monsters.”

I threw him a smirk over my shoulder, and he seemed ready to acknowledge my presence now.

“I see you there, Lucas’s man. I swear I’m polite—when I’m not freaking out.”

I chuckled. “I didn’t mind this show one bit.”

“I get it, you’re a Sadist,” he huffed. “Lucas already told us.”

Aw, my man was talking me up to his buddies.

Greer was next. He brushed his hands off his utility pants and flashed a hot grin.

“At long last, we meet the only man who’s made Lucas beg,” he said.

I coughed around a laugh and side-eyed Luke. Only man, huh?

“For chrissakes, Greer,” he chastised. “His ego is already the size of this house.”

“It can always grow bigger.” I smiled and shook Greer’s hand. “Nice to finally meet you, Marine. If you want an apology in writing for me bein’ an airman, just lemme know your favorite color crayon.”

“Oh-ho! Right in the heart!” Greer laughed and threw Luke a look. “I see you’ve been talking about us.”

“Well, I’ve been told my pillow talk is excellent,” he responded smoothly. “I had to give him a proper briefing.”

He hadn’t skimmed on the details either. Except for when I’d curiously asked how many of his friends he’d slept with. He’d turned red and thrown the aforementioned pillow in my face.

It’d required some orgasm denial to get him to admit to having been with River, Reese, and Lucian.

The front door opened again, and there was no question about who they were. One twin was quick to grin, and the other grew more pensive. So, Reese and River Tenley, wearing sawdusted jeans and ratty tees.

“Just what we need, another Sadist.” Reese jogged down the steps and stuck out his hand. “Good to meet you, Colt. I’m Reese.”

“Good to meet you too, man.” I shook his hand firmly. “I have ten days before I gotta get back to Langley, so put me to work.”

I shook hands with River too.

“Music to my ears,” Reese replied. “But we’re thinkin’...throw some burgers on the grill first? We have a shit-ton of stories about Lucas to share with you.”

“I swear to Christ!” Luke exclaimed.

Greer cracked up. “Let’s start with the time he whined in his Chinese food about how he’d be the last of us to meet someone.”

Oh, this was gold already. Pure fucking gold.

I threw an arm around Luke’s shoulders and kissed the side of his head. “I wanna hear every story.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” he muttered.

“Can I first get the story about how there are absolutely no more snakes inside the house?” Macklin hollered.

Reese was already back inside, but he had no problem raising his voice. “We don’t give spoilers in this house, subbie!”

“I’m a switch!” was Macklin’s argument.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

You are now friends with Macklin Day

You are now friends with Greer Finlay

You are now friends with Drivein Rain

You have a friend request from Lucian Leroux

Lucas West tagged you in a photo

You have a friend request from Nap Oleon

You have a friend request from Penelope Darling

I smiled sleepily, approved the requests, then went to the photo Luke had uploaded.

Fuck yeah.

My man is home where he belongs.

I fucking was. And that was a great picture of us, just chilling on the front porch at Mclean. Me with my arm around him, and him with a dopey smile aimed at me.

“Come back to bed, darlin’,” I called. “We’re not done.”

“Be there in a minute! I’m ordering breakfast.”

I yawned and stretched out across the mattress. Breakfast sounded great.

Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:19 am

A couple months later

Reese Tenley

“Can everyone come here and approve their profiles?” I hollered, repositioning the laptop across my lap. “West needs them so he can finalize the website. Oh, and pizza’s here!”

Since I was severely injured, I couldn’t move from the couch.

We’d bought said couch—and three others—at two yard sales, and they were currently positioned in the middle of our future club area.

River and I had spent a few nights here already.

But we had to get shit sorted before the fall.

We opened our doors on Halloween, and though the second and third floors would be restricted, we believed the downstairs would be enough to get us started.

Ivy was working the crowds all over DC, and Macklin was good at spreading the word too.

The most important thing was that our club area was finished. And the changing room and the hallway. The rest would come later—when we could fucking afford it. Man, was this house draining our bank account.

What were savings?

We needed members signing up. We needed the membership fees.

Our goal was for the whole house to be finished next year.

Lucian was first to trail into the club area, and I pointed at the pizza boxes on the old coffee table we'd bought too. He was bizarrely hot in holey jeans and a T-shirt.

"I can't reach," I grunted.

"If you remove your feet from the table and the laptop from your lap, you'll reach the pizza, my friend."

"Yeah, but you're here now, and I'm hurt," I explained. "Pity me, Leroux."

"Oh, I do. I promise." He chuckled and flipped open the top box, and he graciously extended a slice to me.

Awesome.

Macklin skidded in on his socks shortly after. "The floor is so freaking gorgeous and shiny here."

Yeah, yeah, it was fabulous.

"Come read your profile, sweetheart," I said, chewing.

Lucian was already behind the couch and reading over my shoulder. "Uh. Please change the part about my having to be convinced. I come off as a raging workaholic here."

Oh, so we were removing facts. Got it.

I trapped the slice between my teeth and wrote the opposite. Lucian Leroux jumped right in without hesitation.

Macklin was pleased with his intro, probably because I hadn't tinkered with his first draft much. I'd just fixed a typo.

Lucas and Colt joined us next, and they were happy with their profiles too. They gave me their green lights before joining Lucian and Macklin around the table and tearing into the pizza.

"Don't forget we need to leave early tonight," West said.

"I know, I know." I chewed on another mouthful of pizza. "You need enough time to fuck twice before he returns to base. I'm not new here."

"Why are you always so blunt?" he grated out. "Colt's exactly the same."

"And you love him, so that must mean you want me to continue," I stated.

Penelope and Greer wandered in, sweaty and covered in paint.

"Before next summer, we need AC and the pool fixed," Pen said. "I'm so over this heat."

"Amen, girl," I agreed. River was gonna pick up more fans tomorrow.

Greer hummed as he read his profile text. "Can you say we met up or somethin' instead? I'd prefer to keep my service out of it."

"No problem." I crammed the last of my slice into my mouth, wiped the grease off

my fingers somewhat, and tapped away on the keys, deleting the bit about my calling him on base. “We met up for a beer or two, I told you about my idea to start Mclean, and you were on board immediately.”

“And that part’s not untrue,” he said. “We’ll keep the nitty-gritty between just you and me.”

I grinned and looked up at him over my shoulder. “You mean the fact that you were actually on the shitter when I called you?”

“Between you, me...and the others here.”

Colt, Lucian, and Pen laughed, and Greer smacked me upside the head.

“Harsh!” I rubbed the spot. “I’m already injured, man.”

“You stubbed your fuckin’ toe,” he shot back. “I’d think a badass security guard such as yourself could handle a bit more.”

I flipped him off.

“He’s nervous.” Oh great, my brother had arrived with his endless wisdom. “That’s why he’s actin’ like a whiny baby.”

“Why are you nervous?” Lucas sat up straighter, instantly jumping to concern. That was how he was. “Is it... I mean, is it because of what we’re doing?”

Well.

Of-fucking-course it was!

What if nobody signed up?

Okay, that was a stretch. We had our initial twenty friends and acquaintances itching to become members, most of them because Ivy had raved about the “new, bold, wild community called Mclean House that has their own estate.” But twenty membership fees wouldn’t get us far.

My brother and I had a five-year plan. This place had to pay for itself by then. Five years. Lucian had done the math for us.

In the meantime, River and I didn’t mind shelling out the money. This was our dream. Okay, my dream. But he loved me, so it was his dream too. We weren’t retiring anytime soon, and money was good. And then...after those five years...?

It wasn’t all about the money either. Each and every one of us put in invaluable work here, from manual labor to making calls, from doing calculations to reading up on all the shit we had to learn. The list went on for days.

“This is gonna work, hon.” Greer sat down next to me and nodded firmly. “I’m not sayin’ it’s gonna be all sunshine and roses, but I believe in the concept. Most kinksters we run into wish something like this existed.”

West nodded. “Think about how many of us recommend BDSM cruises to our friends—kink-friendly vacation rentals, and clubs that are 100% about kink. And Mclean House will have all that and more—with the playrooms, the guest rooms...”

I nodded minutely.

Macklin chewed on his pizza and tilted his head. “Are we sure about the name?”

Excuse me?

“House Mclean sounds cool too,” he added.

I blanched. House Mclean? I hadn't even considered that.

"We already bought our domain, and the website design is finished," Lucas answered.

"Mclean House sounds better," Colt said firmly.

I nodded again. Yeah. Mclean House sounded way better. Yeah.

"House Mclean..." River snorted quietly. "What kind of name is that?"

Macklin shook his head in amusement. "Forget I said anything."

Yup, I was planning to.

So, yeah. Mclean House. Five years. We weren't even halfway through the renovations, and we'd barely considered what needed to be done outside the house. We all wanted that swimming pool restored, and Colt was talking about a big deck out back and...

We had a lot to do.

Five years.

Holy shit.

Glancing around the room as we devoured the pizzas, I could tell that nobody was bullshitting about believing in the idea, but was that enough? I was fairly sure I detected at least a little nervousness in Lucian, West, and Macklin too.

We wanted this to work out. We wanted this to be our kinky future.

But little did we know just how much Mclean House would change our lives.