



Nugget (Unlocked Mates #10)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: Stryker

One of the best hackers in the world, Stryker knows how to get what he wants and get away. Getting kidnapped and imprisoned by a coven of evil witches was a complication he hadn't prepared for. Luckily, being rescued by Dean the mage and his familiar Noah brings Stryker into the paranormal world and introduces him to the hot mechanic, Gavin, that playfully fulfills Stryker's very sexy fantasy.

Stryker is closer than Gavin knows, and Stryker has no plans to stop his stalking, and getting what he wants. Until the tables get turned on him and he finds out who is really in charge.

Gavin

Having a masked stalker has added some much-needed spice to Gavin's boring existence. He knows that Stryker is close by and Gavin is determined to finally capture him for some real-life fun. Changing the rules of the game, Gavin gets up close and personal with the boy, finding the special connection he's been searching for, and Stryker brings more than trouble and excitement to Gavin's life. That is until Gavin's past rolls into town, hot on the trail of the boy that Gavin has claimed as his own.

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Gavin

Jerking out of a deep sleep, Gavin gasped as a hand closed around his mouth.

“Shh,” his older brother hissed. “Don’t make a sound.”

Gavin nodded with Leo’s hand still covering his mouth.

“I need you to hide,” Leo whispered.

Immediately Gavin shook his head. He didn’t want to be alone. Not if they were coming.

“Dad already left. I need to catch up with him.”

“Mama,” Gavin murmured behind Leo’s hand.

“She went to check on Grandma and Grandpa. I told her you’d be good and hide for us. Please, Gavin.”

“Okay.” They had been practicing this for months. It could be another drill, only the terror on Leo’s face told Gavin otherwise.

“You have to hurry.” Leo pushed Gavin from his small, padded mat. “Don’t look back. Just go.”

Gavin was shaking with fear. This wasn’t like the other times.

Leo pulled Gavin into a rough hug. “Remember that no matter what you hear, you need to stay hidden.”

Clinging to his brother, Gavin nodded. “Okay.”

“Go now.” Leo pushed Gavin away.

Gavin quietly crept across the floor of their one-bedroom cabin. He and Leo shared the padded mat to sleep with his parents in the small bed against the wall. They used to have a house. A big house with lots of land to run across and swings and all kinds of stuff to play with. Gavin missed his toys. They’d had to leave them behind though. Leave everything behind. One bag to hold clothing and food had been all Gavin had been allowed to carry.

He glanced over his shoulder, but Leo had already disappeared into the darkness.

They didn’t use lights in the small cabin. Sometimes his mom would light candles, but she wasn’t there to do that for him. Gavin had gotten good at using his other senses. He was still too young to shift but Gavin could see really good.

Gavin easily found the floorboard that was loose and pulled it up. Making his body as small as possible, Gavin barely fit through the small hole his father had made for him. He quickly replaced the board above his head, sighing as it snapped into place.

The tunnel was dark but Gavin had crawled through it numerous times for practice. It had been fun betting his brother that Gavin could get through the tunnel that opened up into the dense forest on the other side of town. He was not having fun this time.

Huddled into a tight ball, Gavin could do nothing but wait.

Hopefully his brother or one of his parents would soon call out to him that it was safe

to come up. Gavin threaded his fingers together and hoped with all his heart.

He jerked at the first loud boom. Covering his mouth with his hand, Gavin couldn't make a sound. Leo had told him that sound was guns. Humans liked to use guns on their kind. It'll be okay, he chanted in his head. Father is fast, Leo is feisty, Mom promised she would never leave me. Even as the big booms drew closer, Gavin told himself it would be okay.

There were screams.

Tears started to fall from his eyes, but Gavin still didn't make a sound.

More big booms. More screams.

Gavin didn't dare move.

Wood splintered above his head.

Jerking upright in bed, Gavin grasped at his heart. Nightmare. It was just a nightmare. He wasn't that small child hidden away as his entire world was torn apart and burned.

He quickly scrambled from bed when his stomach rolled with nausea.

Standing naked, Gavin stared out of the bedroom window.

Home. Safe.

The big house was right in front of him. Dark but everyone inside was safely tucked into bed. Safe. His family wouldn't be taken from him ever again.

The shaking didn't stop though. Even as Gavin ran his hands roughly down his face,

his entire body shook. He needed to get out. Fresh air. Gavin lumbered across the room but paused in front of the laptop that sat open facing his bed. It had become a little game between him and Stryker. Stryker loved to watch him and Gavin didn't mind giving the boy a show. He prayed that with the late hour, Stryker was asleep and hadn't noticed the nightmare or how shaken up Gavin was. No one knew about the terror-filled dreams that had started to plague him the last few months.

He almost closed the lid of the laptop but couldn't bring himself to do it. Instead, Gavin quickly strolled out of the bedroom and straight to the front door.

Gavin pulled the door open to step outside onto his front deck.

Sucking deep pulls of the night air into his lungs, Gavin pushed the fear from the dream down where it belonged. Anywhere but right there with him. Gavin didn't think about that time. Ever. Refused to even talk about it. It was long ago. He'd hoped with the years that passed, he would forget, that the memories would fade. They did not. The nightmares had eased but the recent interaction with human hunters and evil mages had brought all those memories back to the surface.

Axel was allowing Gavin to read through the old journals and anything that they came across that dealt with the great hunt.

He snorted. There was nothing great about the humans that had hunted down innocent shifters because they'd been afraid. Entire species had been wiped out. As far as Gavin knew, he was the last of his kind.

Angrily, Gavin shook away his thoughts once again.

He wasn't going to do this.

Wouldn't allow those memories to haunt him.

Home. He was home. The only reason he was even reading over everything they could find was to make sure that his new family never faced the fate that had ripped Gavin's blood relatives from his arms. Looking to the right, Gavin smiled at the cabin beside his. Levi and Mason had moved in as soon as it had been completed. The human was getting more comfortable being surrounded by the non-humans in the family but still struggled with the number of them there was. The solution was to keep them close but give Mason the space he needed. Mason's old ranger cabin was now being utilized by his twin, Jason, who'd mated with the demon, Tristan.

Gavin had moved into the next cabin finished. He loved his family, but they were all mated. The number of times he stepped into a room to find a couple or two entwined was just too often. He sought out his own space for peace of mind.

He turned his head to the left. More cabins had been completed. To his left, the cabin belonged to Rainier, River, and Anton. They didn't stay in the human realm often when they could just portal back and forth to the fae realm, but the cabin was there when they wanted it. With the work continuing on the property and River in charge of the construction crews, he often snuck away for an hour or two with his mates during the day.

Two more cabins stood finished. Beside Rainier, River, and Anton's was Lucifer and his two mates' place. Dean had taken Cary on as an apprentice learning magic, so the trio was often visiting. It only seemed right to offer them a place to settle when they wanted.

The final cabin remained unclaimed.

Axel and Bryce, Drake and Lawson, Nate, Craig, and Bo, along with Shawn, Sam, Trevor, Ansley, Logan, Dean and Noah all decided to stay in the big house. There was plenty of room for them.

Across the yard on the opposite side of the big house, the construction had already begun for their hell residents. Five more cabins were being worked on. Seb and Ash, Adam, and Mal, even Atom and Ari would all have homes in the human realm. The extra cabins could house Adam's minions or any other friends that they invited.

Their small little group had grown over the years.

Real friendships, found family, love, and respect had made their pack stronger. That was why Gavin was so obsessed with keeping everyone safe. He'd lost everything once. Never again. He'd never allow anything like that to happen again.

Feeling steadier, Gavin stepped off his deck and onto the thick, lush yard. Still stark naked, he sauntered away from his cabin and out into the clearing behind. Standing in the middle of the clearing, Gavin called for the transformation.

Lightning arced across the black sky before a rumble shook the ground.

Holding his arms up, Gavin tilted his head back as the rain began to softly fall and calmness filled him. He stood like that for several moments then started to run, faster and faster until he leaped into the air.

His shift was fast. Gavin hadn't even begun falling back to the earth before he transformed into his huge thunderbird.

More lightning streaked through the sky.

He'd spend the rest of the night circling over his home and watching over those he loved.

* * * * *

Stryker

It was raining. Again. When he first researched this area, and he always did research before everything he did, Stryker hadn't seen anything about the constant and unusual sudden thunderstorms. Cursing behind his helmet, Stryker had to slow his bike down.

The gravel road that led through the state park wasn't built for motorcycles.

He'd just run out to pick up a little snacky-snack. Cheeto puffs, a chocolate bar, and an energy drink. The same thing every night. Even the older woman that worked behind the counter had started to tease him about his nightly purchases. The little mom-and-pop convenience store was located outside the entrance of the state park and open twenty-four hours. Stryker was thankful for them. Not that he couldn't buy groceries if he wanted—he just didn't want to. As long as he had a snacky-snack and a freezer full of nuggies, Stryker was in heaven.

Hunching his shoulders, Stryker was thankful that the rain had at least waited until he was nearly home. If the RV that he'd acquired could be called home. It suited Stryker's needs so he was happy enough with it and impressed with the size and modern features. He'd come across the RV by chance in one of the accounts that Stryker had found online. Okay, he'd broken into the secure server. It had just been there for the taking. Not that anyone would ever know it was him. He was that good. Unless you counted those damn witches that had caught him. Stryker didn't count them. They'd totally cheated by using magic!

Of course, remembering the witches led him to reflect about meeting the mage and familiar who'd rescued him and introduced him to Stryker's current obsession. Gavin. The hot older man that Stryker might be, was totally, stalking. He'd even stolen, borrowed, the RV so that he could set up at the state park not far from Gavin's little town.

Thinking about Gavin had Stryker increasing his speed on the bike. When he'd left to make his nightly snack run, Gavin had been sound asleep in his big bed all naked and yummy. Gavin knew that Stryker was watching even if they both pretended that the other didn't know.

Thank fuck Gavin was embracing this little game. He was so much fun!

Eventually Stryker would either grow bored and move on or he'd finally take the playing into real life. If there was anyone who could push Stryker from his self-imposed solitary life, it would be the hot Papi that Stryker craved.

Pulling up next to his RV, Stryker turned off the bike after parking it under the canopy he'd attached to the side of the large vehicle. He rushed inside, shaking off the rain from his body. He dumped the helmet then yanked his soaking T-shirt over his head.

He'd just tossed the plastic bag with his treats on the makeshift desk when he noticed that Gavin's bed was empty.

"No!" Stryker wailed. Dropping down in his chair, Stryker began to type on his keyboard.

Where did he go? Damn it! Stryker growled in the back of his throat as he checked all the other cameras around the property.

Stryker wasn't certain whether the rest of Gavin's friend group knew that he'd hacked into their security system so he could utilize the cameras. The newer cabins he didn't have access to, but Stryker doubted Gavin would be in any of them.

Nothing. Gavin wasn't in the kitchen or in any of the common rooms of the big house.

“Where did you go, Papi?” Stryker murmured.

Not finding Gavin anywhere inside, Stryker switched to rewinding the feed to follow Gavin’s previous movements. Yes! Got him leaving the bed. Stryker sent the video back another ten seconds then hit Play. He was so good at this stalking game!

His delight immediately fled as he watched Gavin thrash on the bed.

Fuck! He’d been having a nightmare. Again. Stryker had no idea what bad dreams chased after Gavin, but Stryker wanted to make everything better. Not that he knew how to do that quite yet. Or how to even approach Gavin if he decided to. As far as Gavin knew, Stryker was still in the small apartment that he’d been squatting in when they’d first spoken.

Not that Stryker planned to share that little nugget of wisdom with anyone. What he did and when he did it was no one’s business but his own.

Stryker’s life mission was to fuck over everyone and anyone. Corporations? They had too much power and way too much money. If Stryker helped himself to a little of that money, who could blame him? He donated to every worthy, according to him, charity and cause that he found. Child cancer research, LBGTQIA support, whatever caught his attention. He was a prince like that! He cackled. Not sure Gavin or his family would think of him that way. They were a bunch of do-gooders. Wanting to protect the world and shit like that. Obviously, they didn’t know that the world was out to fuck all of them over.

Stryker tracked Gavin to the front of his cabin before losing him.

Damn it! Stryker was going to have to go back out into the forest and set up some game cameras or something. He hated missing out on anything. That was just unacceptable.

The rain started to fall harder against the windows of his RV and Stryker scowled. Fucking rain. Giving up until Gavin showed up on Stryker's cameras again, Stryker rose to peel the wet jeans off.

He tossed the damp clothing onto the couch before stripping out of his underwear as well. Stryker was chilled to the bone. The spot he was currently paying a monthly fee for in the state park came with water and electricity so he could take a shower, but Stryker hated to miss Gavin's return.

Just where had he disappeared to? Had he gone to one of the portals? Stryker hadn't gone past the boundaries of the state park since he knew that Dean had placed a magical ward. The more he learned about magic, the more Stryker grew bitter that he was just a lowly human. Not that being human made him lowly. No, that was just how his life cards had been laid out for him.

Instead of attending college where he could learn to use his brilliance for good, Stryker was forced to use his natural talents in order to survive. Well, after the start he'd had at life, he deserved a little something-something extra. At least that was what Stryker told himself.

He never stole from anyone that would miss the money. If he ran across someone in trouble, then Stryker was the first to help. If they were people that Stryker deemed worthy. Which meant that they weren't rich assholes.

Stryker pulled a pair of sweatpants and a hoodie from the pile of clean clothes close by. He didn't bother with underwear this time. Hopefully when Gavin returned, he would be naked and feel like giving Stryker a show. Oh yeah, Stryker still needed to figure out if Gavin had used a portal to get away from him. That was a complication he hadn't solved yet.

The portals were too close to the big house, making it difficult for Stryker to place his

sneaky cameras. He didn't want anyone to know he was in town yet. Dean probably wouldn't help him either. Dean was all lovey-dovey with his new boyfriend. Not that Stryker could blame him. Dean's partner was a shifter, so he often had to get naked as well. And Stryker might have caught sight of Logan's tanned muscular frame a time or two. Innocently of course. Stryker only had eyes for one man but he sure the hell could admire hot male bodies when they were constantly flashing him.

He sighed. Best decision ever to follow Dean and Noah to town. At first Stryker had just wanted to repay the favor he owed for Dean literally saving his life. Stryker did not like owing anyone for any reason.

A ding sounded from his laptop before Stryker had worked out how to deal with his disappearing Papi issue. He shifted his mind from stalking to where an alert was blinking.

Stryker cackled. "Come on, man! You are not going to find me or my new home. What do you even need it for? You have plenty of money to buy a new RV."

His fingers flew over the keyboard in an old familiar soothing rhythm. This was what he did. Someone got a little too close to finding him and Stryker led them in the opposite direction. He did have to give the guy credit. For some reason he really wanted to track down the RV that Stryker had stolen, uh, borrowed. He'd totally give it back when he was done with it!

Stryker had disabled the cameras from the storage center the RV had been sitting all alone in before he'd even gone near it. Once Stryker had seen the asset in the government agent's intel, it had been too perfect to pass up. He'd needed a vehicle to drive down to where Dean and Noah were living, and with a state park close by, camping in luxury suited him well.

Besides, Stryker had seen this agent's portfolio, and he didn't even utilize the fun

toys that he owned. Stryker had solely been tempted to take the guy's motorcycle as well, but he did have his own that he'd had for over a decade and didn't want to part with it. His bike along with his laptop were the only things that Stryker gave a damn about.

"Really, fucker? A private eye?" Stryker shook his head. A private detective wasn't going to have any more luck than this man did. Stryker was not going to be found that easily. Still, if the asshole wanted to waste the money then Stryker could at least make the chase fun. Maybe a few well-placed false information tags would amuse him and help get the detective busy. The guy hadn't even gone to the cops to report the RV stolen. What was wrong with him? Not that a report to the cops would do any good when Stryker was tucked far away and had already changed out the license plates. As long as no one looked too closely, he would be fine. If someone did start asking questions, Stryker would hit the road. There was nothing to keep him there but a debt and his own curiosity about the attractive man that Stryker was dying to learn more about.

At least he had a task to keep him busy until he spotted Gavin again.

With that happy thought in mind, Stryker started a game with a detective Aaron Johnson on behalf of one special agent Cummings.

He dropped a few well-placed clues, making sure not to make things too complicated. Stryker didn't know how smart this private dick was but didn't have a lot of faith in him. He chuckled to himself. There were so many jokes to make about a private detective.

Working on the three monitors in front of him, Stryker hummed as he typed. He got his programs running before bouncing from his chair. He popped a handful of frozen chicken nuggets into the air fryer then grabbed his bag of snacks. Just another night of being awesome and fucking with the man!

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Gavin

Stepping from the front of his shop, Gavin looked both ways before he crossed the street. Their little town had changed a lot over the years since they'd first claimed the territory for their family. Axel's power had grown with every member of the family that had been added. It didn't matter if it was a shifter, paranormal, or human. Axel's power came from him collecting family, his treasures.

Gavin's own connection to the land thrummed under his chest. This was home. His to protect.

He nodded as he passed the residents of their town. They knew him, his chosen family, even without having a clue about the paranormal. At one time their family had been careful to keep to themselves and away from the humans but over the last several years their presence had helped the community.

Starting businesses and helping the town thrive was important to them all.

Gavin grabbed the handle of the diner's door and swung it open. He stepped inside and smiled at the greetings. Gavin returned hellos as he made his way to the booth where Levi was waiting. They were having lunch in town, both on their lunch breaks, to spend some time catching up.

Gavin missed hanging out with Levi. He didn't blame Levi for spending time with his mate but Gavin being the only one unmated left him on his own more often than not. Not that Gavin wasn't keeping himself entertained with his own little stalker. There was no other word for Stryker. He was totally stalking Gavin and Gavin loved every

minute of the game they'd started.

He looked around the diner before sliding into the booth across from Levi. If the place had cameras, there was no doubt that Stryker would be watching.

Slouching in his seat, Gavin spread his legs, giving his cock more room as just the thought of Stryker watching him made him hard.

Levi smirked. "What's going on?"

Gavin gave a small shake of his head. He hadn't told anyone else that Stryker had become Gavin's naughty little stalker. His family would be concerned. Gavin didn't want them worrying about him when Gavin was having the time of his life.

Stryker might be inside Gavin's networks, but the boy had no idea how good old-fashioned, down and dirty, real hands-on searching felt. Gavin was almost certain that Stryker was much closer than he was pretending to be. The boy just couldn't stay away. Gavin could feel it. He knew that Stryker was somewhere just out of reach.

"Gav!" Levi nudged his foot under the table.

Gavin jumped.

Levi nodded toward the waitress standing at the end of their table.

"My apologies," Gavin told his favorite waitress. "Got lost in my head."

"It's fine, hon." She waved her hand. "What will you have?"

"Iced tea and a burger with fries, please," Gavin ordered.

“Iced tea and a club sandwich, please,” Levi added.

“Coming right up,” their waitress, Sally, said before hurrying off.

“So, what’s on your mind?” Levi asked.

“Nothing much,” Gavin replied easily.

Levi snorted. “It sure has been raining a lot at night. Mason says that the state park hasn’t been this green and healthy in years.”

Gavin sighed. “I’ve just been stretching my wings.”

“Every night? For two weeks?” Levi questioned.

“Yes.” Gavin didn’t really feel like explaining himself, but he owed Levi something. Levi was one of his best friends and if he was worried, so were the rest of the family.

“Just tell me that you’re okay,” Levi pleaded softly.

Gavin smiled at his friend. “I’m okay. Dealing with the coven and all the talk about the hunt brought back some memories.” He ran a hand roughly down his face. “The nightmares came back.”

“Fuck, man,” Levi spat. “What can I do?”

“I’m dealing with it,” Gavin responded.

“Let us help you,” Levi begged.

Shit! Gavin hated this. He despised being weak. The nightmares were some bullshit

trauma he should have outgrown years ago. He wasn't the only being who'd suffered during the hunt. Many species had been wiped out, not just his own family. "I don't know how anyone can help."

"I get it," Levi said quietly. "But if there's something—"

"I'll let you know," Gavin promised. He wasn't being completely honest with his friend. One thing helped. The masked troublemaker that constantly watched him at least took Gavin's mind away from his past.

"Here you go, boys," Sally said, dropping off their drinks. "Your food will be out soon."

"Thanks," he and Levi said in unison.

Gavin's phone chimed and he dug into his pocket to pull out the sleek device. A text message waited, and he thumbed it open.

What's for lunch, Papi?

So the boy was watching. Gavin quickly responded before setting his phone face down on the table.

Me, if you ever get off your ass and come find me.

That should force Stryker to make a move. Gavin was becoming impatient with their game. Or lack of movement. He expected more from Stryker. Hadn't Gavin enticed the boy enough to come out in the open? The boy had disappeared from the small apartment he'd been staying in after Dean and Noah had rescued him.

It had taken just one late-night flight to track down where the boy had been. That was

why Gavin suspected that Stryker was close.

His phone chimed but Gavin ignored it as he caught up with Levi. Levi entertained him with stories of his mate's twin brother who'd mated to a demon. Gavin wanted to check his messages, but he resisted. It would drive Stryker crazy knowing that he was purposely being ignored.

When his phone chimed three more times in a row, Levi lifted a brow.

"Ignore it," Gavin demanded.

"Stryker?" Levi asked.

Gavin narrowed his eyes.

"Do you really think that we don't know he's stalking you?" Levi questioned.

"How?"

"Magic," Levi quipped.

"Magic?" Gavin repeated.

"Dean's made sure that we're protected. With Lucifer's help no one can get to us by coming at us physically or electronically. Stryker's been in the network of our home security and all our businesses," Levi said.

"Why hasn't anyone stopped him?"

Levi shrugged. "He's just watching. Dean trusts him. We figured it didn't hurt to have an extra pair of eyes. Not if they're on our side."

“There isn’t much of a threat to watch out for,” Gavin pointed out.

“The coven and hunters might be gone but that doesn’t mean that no one else will come after us,” Levi said.

“We can’t live in fear,” Gavin told him.

“We’re not. We’re just ensuring the safety of our family.”

“And we trust the masked biker hacker?” Gavin asked.

“We trust him. You want to fuck him,” Levi replied. He smirked before draining half his iced tea.

“I—” Gavin coughed.

“Want to fuck him,” Levi repeated.

“I don’t even know what he looks like.” It wasn’t a denial, but Gavin hoped it worked.

Levi laughed. “You do know that argument doesn’t work with me. I was in love with Mason when all I knew about him was from talking on a dating app.”

“Mason was your mate,” Gavin pointed out.

“Okay, dude.”

“What? It’s true.”

“Noah and Dean have assured us that Stryker’s attractive. Not that I think it matters

to you,” Levi teased. “He intrigues you.”

“He’s a little brat that needs to be put over someone’s knee,” Gavin growled.

“Someone’s or yours?”

Gavin’s phone chimed two more times.

“Persistent little thing,” Levi commented.

Gavin picked up his glass. “I’ll teach him patience yet.”

“Yeah, good luck with that.” Levi laughed.

“So, everyone knows?” Gavin asked.

“About your stalker? Yeah.”

“No one has said anything to me.” There was a question in that sentence. Gavin’s family was nosy after all. The boys wouldn’t be behaving unless it had been an order from their alpha.

“I’m not the only one that has noticed the recent increase in rain.”

“I’m fine,” Gavin insisted.

“Good. Because it’s family dinner night and the boys have been dying to get you alone. I’d expect them to corner you no matter what Axel says.”

“Fun times,” Gavin deadpanned.

* * * * *

Stryker

He was not jealous! Stryker was not jealous that he was sitting coped up in his amazing RV while Gavin and his friends were cooking steaks, drinking beer, and having a great time.

Stryker didn't need friends.

He was better off on his own.

Having friends meant that someone was close enough to put a knife in your back. Stryker had learned at an early age that it didn't matter if the person was family or claimed to be a friend—if given the chance, everyone only looked out for themselves.

Still watching from the camera above the back door, Stryker couldn't help but scowl as Gavin relaxed in a deck chair while sipping on a beer.

Gavin was wearing another pair of those indecent jeans that he seemed to enjoy provoking Stryker with. The rips and tears showed off all that toned tanned skin that Gavin liked to flash Stryker glimpses of. Fuck! Gavin was hot as hell. The black tank that he wore had stretched to one side, revealing one dark nipple.

Would it be bad if he jerked off for the third time in a day?

Stryker was dying to have Gavin's attention on him and only him. Stryker was the one that should be making Gavin laugh and smile.

It didn't help that Gavin still hadn't returned any of Stryker's text messages.

Fifteen messages since Gavin had sent the one that had Stryker nearly riding his bike into town and tracking down his Papi. Fifteen unanswered messages. Fuck! The fucker knew what he was doing to Stryker.

Even reclining on that chair, Gavin was taunting him.

The asshole wasn't wearing underwear. Stryker just knew it. He'd seen Gavin dress enough time in those jeans to see where every naked inch of him was. If Stryker were there, he could slip a hand inside one of those tears and touch Gavin.

Pushing his chair from the desk, Stryker rose to stomp to the freezer.

"Nuggies!" Stryker said. "You've never let me down. You don't tease me. Just give me nourishment and yumminess." He grabbed the half-open bag then slammed the freezer door shut.

He couldn't help glancing back at his monitors as he dumped the nuggets into the basket of the air fryer. He didn't need steak. Or beer. Or whatever else Drake, the amazing chef of the family, was cooking up. He had nuggies and an air fryer. He was a God in the RV world.

Air fryers were so cool! Better than nuking his nuggies in the microwave where they would be soggy, and didn't take as long as they did in the oven. The RV had come with the air fryer, so it had been the first one that Stryker had ever used. He was totally taking the air fryer with him when he gave the RV back to that dumbass agent.

Although if the government agent and his private dick didn't get on the ball then Stryker might not return the RV at all. They were annoying him. He'd left plenty of breadcrumbs for them to follow but they hadn't made a move.

Returning to his desk, Stryker plopped back down into the chair.

Gavin was still sipping on that beer. Axel, Levi, and Drake were all hanging out with him. Boring. Stryker left Gavin's fine form on one monitor while moving another camera to the monitor beside it.

The boys of the family were climbing on that giant playset that was in front of the deck. That sort of looked fun. Not that Stryker wanted to play with the other boys. He was fine where he was. Watching.

It had taken Stryker a few days to figure out the dynamic of the friend group. At first, he'd been worried that Dean and Noah had somehow found themselves in the middle of a paranormal harem or something. Not that Stryker couldn't see why that would appeal to someone since the men were hot as fuck. Slowly, Stryker had realized that the friends were more like family.

There were couples and throuples in the group, but they were all committed to their partners. Mates. They called themselves mates. Their dynamics were interesting, loving, and Stryker was still not jealous. Damn it, he might be a little jealous.

Stryker didn't want to dress in diapers or drink out of a bottle, had no desire to wear a puppy tail, or anything like that. There was an appeal that he recognized but Stryker was pretty sure he'd make a horrible little or pup. Stryker couldn't keep his mouth closed when needed. It was a whole thing. He did love watching the more dominant partners care for and spoil their boys.

The more submissive partners were doted on whether they were little, puppy, bratty, or just submissive. Loved. Cared for. They were given attention without even having to ask for it. That must be addicting, to have found someone who loved them that much.

Watching from his safe little spot in the RV, Stryker wished for once in his life to be a part of something like the men he observed.

Not that Stryker expected that they'd accept him.

No one ever did.

He wouldn't find love there like the other men. Stryker hadn't even been loved by the people who had brought him into this world. Or the ones that had been paid to raise him. There was just something about him that was...unlovable.

The beeping of the air fryer yanked him from those terrible thoughts.

Stryker jumped up to grab a paper plate and dumped his nuggies on it. He grabbed ketchup from the fridge and added some to the plate. The perfect balanced meal of yummy nuggies. Of course it was better with an ice-cold coke.

Returning to the desk, he began to munch away as Drake called the family to the table for their dinner.

He snorted. The family. Like they were mafia or something. Which maybe they were for all Stryker knew. They were a powerful group of paranormal and humans. They pretty much ran the entire town. The businesses opened helped fund the community. Until Gavin and his family had come, the town had been dying off. Now as an in between the state park and university, the town thrived. Mafia, maybe.

Stryker finished off his nuggies before eyeing the freezer. There were another three bags inside. Maybe just a few more nuggies.

* * * * *

Gavin

He ignored the laptop open on his desk as Gavin slowly pulled his shirt over his head.

Gavin knew, could practically feel the eyes watching him. Stryker was there. He was always there.

Gavin turned and faced the laptop camera then threw the shirt into the corner of the room. He sat on the edge of the mattress, staring directly at the camera before picking up his phone.

Purposely he scrolled through the messages he'd received earlier from his little stalker.

Get off my ass?

Or get off on my ass?

I do have a fantastic ass!

Want to see it?

(Picture of Stryker's ass in form-fitting black pants)

The first five messages were amusing.

Gavin kept scrolling.

Why are you ignoring me?

Stop smiling at Levi!

Are you talking about me?

You are, aren't you?

If you answered my messages, you could be talking to me!!!

Gavin could just imagine how frustrated Stryker had gotten. He was the type that needed attention on him all the time. Leaning back on one elbow, Gavin went to the spicy texts.

Levi already has a mate.

He doesn't want your fine bod, but I do.

Will you give me a show tonight? Like you did a couple nights ago? Strip for me?

Come on, Papi! Show me the goods.

You know you want to.

Gavin finally replied to the text chain.

Show me your face.

He hit send before returning his gaze to the laptop.

The chime from his phone came a second later.

Gavin glanced at it.

Show me your cock!

Oh, so the boy was feeling feisty, was he?

Gavin rose. Making sure that his entire torso would be in the shot, he flicked the

button on his jeans open. Slowly he drew the zipper down. Pushing open the edges of his jeans, he showed his little stalker that he wasn't wearing any underwear.

His phone chimed.

More!

Demanding little shit. Gavin turned away from the camera then pushed the jeans past the swell of his ass.

Yes, Papi! Turn back around.

He hid his smile as he read the message. The boy wanted more? Gavin shifted slightly to the side. Where his form would be in profile. Wrapping a hand around the base of his shaft, Gavin gave himself a firm stroke.

His phone chimed.

Let me see!

Oh no, that was not how this was going to work. Gavin closed his free hand around the phone as he stroked himself faster. And faster. Precome leaked from the tip of his cock and he collected the juices before smearing them down his shaft.

Please! Papi! Let me see!

That was better. Gavin liked the begging. It wasn't enough. Not yet. Gavin replied with one hand.

Not until I see. Show me your face or no more seeing me.

He released his cock before reaching over and typing in the command that would take down the entire network. A hard reboot. It would take several hours for everything to come back online. Gavin had no doubt that Stryker would be able to worm his way back inside, but the wait would kill him.

Fucker!

You kicked me out!!

You're going to pay for this!

Chuckling, Gavin sent one last text.

Show me your face.

He pressed send before turning off the phone.

Now let's see how the boy responded. Anticipation burned through his core. It was time to turn the tables on his little stalker. It had been fun, but Gavin was taking the game to the next level. In person.

Gavin left the bedroom and strolled through the cabin. He pushed his jeans down and kicked them off. Opening the front door, he sauntered out onto the deck. It was late enough that no one else should be up and moving around. And if they were, everyone had already seen him naked a thousand times. Maybe not erect and hard and wanting but Stryker did that to him.

He stepped onto the lush grass.

There was moisture in the air. A storm brewing overhead. Just like the one inside him. The weather matching the array of emotions that Gavin was hesitant to name.

There was a connection with Stryker. Was it all in his head, his heart, or was there something more going on? Was it finally his turn?

Did Stryker mean more to Gavin than he'd expected?

Had fate finally smiled on Gavin?

Gavin was almost afraid to find the answers he needed.

He was no coward though.

It was time for the final stage of this game that he and Stryker were playing. And there was a very good chance that Gavin was playing off a different set of rules than Stryker. Gavin was playing for keeps.

Gavin had an idea of just where his little stalker was hiding. He'd been thinking about it. Hard to think about anything else. It was time to make his nightly flight and track down his wayward boy.

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Stryker

If this fucker was going to mess with Stryker's fun then Stryker would just change tactics. He didn't need his computers. Okay, he did. Stryker really hated to be cut off from his entire lifeline. Computers were his thing and Gavin knew that.

Well, surprise-surprise, Stryker wasn't going to let Gavin get away with anything. Staying on the opposite side of the street, Stryker watched Gavin walk into Dean's bakery.

If Stryker was in front of his computer, he would not only be able to see inside the bakery but also hear what Gavin said to make Noah laugh. Noah was his friend first. The little familiar was hilarious and kind of a troublemaker himself. He'd also been more than happy to answer all Stryker's questions about the paranormal world.

Pulling out his phone, Stryker texted Gavin.

One, two, I'm coming for you!

There! Let's see what Gavin thought about that text message. Stryker had warned him that he would pay.

Inside the bakery, Gavin pulled out his cell phone and glanced at the screen. He didn't even respond. Just said something to Noah before shoving the device into his back pocket.

Stryker growled.

That was not how to play the game. It was no fun if Gavin wasn't a little worried about what Stryker was going to do.

He sent the next text.

Three, four, better lock the door!

Stryker smirked. He was a master thief. Sure, this expertise was more in computers, but computers also ran security systems. He'd get to Gavin then make the other man do what Stryker wanted. No more teasing!

Dean came from the back kitchen and exchanged a fist bump with Gavin. Of course Logan wasn't far from his mate's side.

Stryker might not understand the connection between mates, but it was obvious that there was something that drew them together. Even after Gavin was done with him, forcing Stryker to move on, Stryker was pleased with all the new information that he'd picked up from his observing of the paranormal family. No matter where Stryker ended up, he'd know what to look for when it came to spotting paranormal creatures. Not that Stryker could do that quite yet, but he was learning the quirks of a paranormal.

Maybe he'd find a nice beach house to hole up in. At least until summer was closer and those homes were utilized more.

He'd learned at an early age how to tell when a house was empty. What signs to look for, how and where to listen to conversations about upcoming vacations, and so on. Stryker might not have ever had a place of his own, but he'd only slept on the street a handful of times. Having questionable morals helped.

Living in the gray areas of life could be interesting. At least when he wasn't being

ignored. Stryker really hated being ignored. Gavin had figured Stryker out pretty well but there was no way that Gavin was aware just how close Stryker was.

Gavin had taken a mug of something, probably coffee, and sat his fine ass at a table in front of the large window. Stryker had the perfect view of Gavin but that also put him at risk of being spotted. Stryker wore his custom black utility pants, an old, faded band T-shirt, with a black cap pulled down low on his forehead. He couldn't wear his favorite Call of Duty mask out in the open. That he had to save for video calls. The street wasn't busy but they were in the heart of town and people both walked and drove past every few minutes.

And Gavin was still ignoring Stryker's messages as he sat there casually sipping from his mug.

Ugh! This guy was impossible!

Stryker was reaching for his phone when one of his alerts went off. He slipped farther into the alley before he pulled his cell out and clicked his own link. Ha! Maybe Gavin didn't want to play with him but it seemed that the private dick the RV-owning government agent had hired was finally trying to do his damn job.

"Security cameras?" Stryker muttered. He'd wiped the storage facilities cameras and had already checked that the surrounding six blocks didn't have anything on him either. Luckily, most businesses didn't keep footage more than a month at a time so they didn't have to pay for extra space on their network. The private dick was just wasting time. This wasn't even difficult! Stryker had really been hoping for a worthy opponent.

He reset his alerts and added a few misdirection just in case the private dick had any common sense before stuffing his cell back in his front pocket. Stryker peeked back around the corner of the building he was hiding behind, but Gavin was gone.

“Son of a bitch!” he muttered. This wasn’t fair. Fucker had to head into his shop. Gavin was always working. Not that Stryker minded watching Gavin getting sweaty and dirty working on bikes, but Gavin had reset that network too. The man didn’t miss a thing when he was trying to prove a point.

Stryker knew what Gavin wanted. His face. It wasn’t like Stryker was embarrassed even. He was an attractive guy if he said so himself. And he did! His black hair was a little longer than how Stryker preferred it but Stryker hadn’t had time to find a place to get it cut. His light gray eyes had gotten him some attention in the past. He didn’t currently have any blemishes or pimples. He could show Gavin his face. Stryker just wanted to make Gavin work for it. He could have at least given Stryker a few more shows before making the demand. Plus, as soon as Gavin got what he wanted, he would grow bored with Stryker, just like everyone else.

As long as Stryker remained a mystery, Gavin would play with him.

That was all Stryker wanted. To have fun. And Gavin had been fun until he’d pulled this little stunt.

It wouldn’t be long until Stryker was back behind his computer and was the one running the game.

Pulling his hat lower on his face, Stryker headed down the street to get closer to Gavin’s garage. A little in-person stalking before Stryker retreated back to his safe space where he could watch from a distance. He needed to come up with a plan to fuck with Gavin.

* * * * *

Gavin

It would set a bad precedent if Gavin grinned or laughed at the messages coming in from Stryker. Leaving his network offline at the garage was really messing with the boy.

Fresh out of the shower Gavin wrapped a towel around his waist before walking into his bedroom. Gavin glanced at the closed laptop on his desk. Stryker had no idea that Gavin had done his own stalking. He knew exactly where the boy was hiding. The expensive RV didn't fit in with the other campers inside the state park. Gavin had spotted the vehicle a few days ago and it was still there. A little favor from Mason gave Gavin a copy of the rental agreement for the space. Thirty-day permit. Was that how long Stryker was planning on staying around or would he renew it? Gavin had questions. Like where Stryker had gotten the RV in the first place.

Gavin hadn't been able to get close enough to the RV to get a vin number but the license plates were fake.

That was totally Stryker's M.O.

If the boy had stolen the RV, Gavin would make him return it. If he'd bought it, with funds that hadn't been his, Gavin would again make the boy give it back.

Dressing in black pants, shirt, and his beat-up black boots, Gavin chose his clothing with one purpose in mind. It was time for the hunter to become the hunted. Gavin had a few tricks up his sleeve. The boy had no idea what or who was coming for him.

It was past midnight. From Gavin's lurking, he hadn't figured out when Stryker slept. The lights were always on in the RV. The boy had to sleep, right? Except Stryker always seemed to be online to message him.

Leaving his phone behind, Gavin slipped out of his cabin. He couldn't have Stryker tracking him. Gavin was almost certain that Stryker would have either found a

workaround to the network being down or something that Gavin hadn't even thought of. Gavin wasn't an expert in technology. Truthfully, a lot of the advancements irritated him.

Gavin was old-school. He enjoyed getting his hands dirty and putting in a hard day of work. He left things like accounting, scheduling, and advertising to the other members of his family. Gavin just wanted to work on bikes.

When he thought about it, he and Stryker couldn't be more different from each other. Gavin was all about protecting his family and living his life in peace. He wasn't a fan of changes or unexpected trouble. Stryker was pure chaos and actually enjoyed messing with people. Stealing money from the witch coven could have been the end of the boy. Stryker was lucky that the witches hadn't gotten around to sacrificing him. The boy just shrugged and took the newly gained paranormal knowledge in stride. Who did that? A crazy person! But why did Gavin want some of Stryker's madness in his life? Was he really that bored?

Okay, being surrounded by mated couples and throuples was enough to drive anyone a little nuts. Gavin had been at loose ends until Stryker had decided that he liked calling him Papi and texting him dirty messages. Levi had been right when they'd had lunch. Gavin was intrigued by Stryker. The boy hadn't hidden the fact that he thought Gavin was hot. Gavin enjoyed not having to guess what Stryker was thinking. The boy was very happy to share every thought that popped up in the brilliant head of his. And Gavin had no doubts that Stryker was brilliant. Too smart for his own good.

He took a short cut from the trees that lined their property heading toward the state park. Gavin hadn't shared his plan with the rest of the family. The boys would probably appreciate Gavin's imagination, but Gavin wasn't ready for the teasing quite yet.

Making the trek through the forest always reminded Gavin of the horrible events that had cost him his entire birth family. The secret passage that his father had built in that old rundown cabin had led Gavin away from danger, but he'd been so very alone. Gavin had sat in the middle of those woods for three days. Scared, crying, and hungry, but Gavin had stayed for three very long days. Until he realized that no one was coming for him. His family would have shown up by the end of the third day if they were still alive. Gavin had shaken as he curled up in a ball and wept. In the morning he'd started to walk. And walk. And walk.

He'd kept to himself. His father's teachings of how to shift and hunt for food had kept him alive. His brother had shown him how to use every survival skill they'd picked up. His mom had shown him how to sew and repair things.

For years Gavin stayed in abandoned homes, old shifter towns that had nearly been burned to the ground, or in caves hidden away from humans. Gavin had thrived being on his own. A decade passed before he noticed. He picked up supplies where he could. He constantly talked to his brother and parents, hoping that they were watching him from heaven. That they would be proud of him and how he survived.

He'd been a loner longer than Gavin had been part of his birth family.

Even when he'd first met Axel and Nate, Gavin hadn't expected much from them. They'd shared a meal or two, exchanged information and discussed rumors but Gavin was intent on going on his way. To return to wandering the world with only what he could carry.

The world around him had changed time and time again.

People forgot about paranormal creatures but that didn't mean Gavin was safe. He'd witnessed wars, slavery, horrible things that happened to and were caused by humans. Humans that Gavin had sworn to forever stay away from.

Fate had other plans for Gavin.

He'd run into Axel over the next decade until Gavin began to trust the dragon shifter. Sometimes Nate would be with him and sometimes someone else. The paranormal beings seemed to seek Axel out. Gavin hadn't understood it then. Not when Axel and he were younger. Axel might have always been an alpha, born that way, but it was harder to pick up when they'd been young men.

Somehow without Gavin realizing it, he'd started to look forward to running into Axel. Gavin hadn't been looking for family. He hadn't expected anything. Still that was what he'd gotten, wasn't it? Family. A chance to make a real life. A reason to stop running away.

Gavin stopped to rest his hand on one of the large oaks. Adam had given the roots a burst of nourishment, helping the struggling tree. They all needed a little assistance occasionally. He'd needed it. Now Gavin was in the position to help others. To make sure that Stryker stayed out of trouble. At least for as long as Stryker was around Gavin and his family.

Giving the tree trunk one last pat, Gavin restarted his journey away from his cabin to the center of the state park.

They hadn't had any trouble in the last few months, but Axel still preferred for them to stay within the family land where they were more protected. With each newly added member of their family, the protection and abilities had grown. Axel, Gavin, and the others' biggest worry was ensuring the boys would always be safe. Stryker might not be family but being outside the property lines he was still more at risk, and Gavin didn't like that.

Not that Gavin would tell Stryker that.

Stryker had already said many times that he could take care of himself when Gavin mentioned any concerns. Stryker might be a genius but he wasn't just dealing with pissed-off humans any longer. The paranormal community had more of a reach than local humans did. Stryker was now part of their world. He should understand that after his interaction with the witches that had imprisoned the boy.

Another ten minutes of walking off-path and Gavin reached the small round cleared area that led to the RV parking slots. Visitors to the state park could choose to bring a vehicle with access to electricity and water sites or camp in a tent. The camping areas were monitored by rangers and cameras. It didn't surprise Gavin that Stryker had picked the RV slot farthest from the entrance where he would have the most privacy. Usually that was the last spot taken since it was an inconvenience for the visitors that wanted to take advantage of what the state park and surrounding areas offered.

Staying hidden by the trees, Gavin crouched to settle in and wait.

If Stryker kept to his nightly routine, he would be leaving to ride his bike to the only twenty-four-hour store in town. The boy would pick up a bag of chips, candy bar, and energy drink. The same thing every single night. Sometimes the candy bar might be a different brand but not the chips or energy drink.

Gavin would have twenty minutes to get inside the RV and leave his clue.

Each night when the boy left, he already wore his helmet before jumping onto his motorcycle. Gavin still hadn't gotten a good look at him. By this point Gavin had to admit that Levi was right. It didn't matter what Stryker looked like, Gavin was too intrigued to walk away. Although Noah was always quick to share how attractive Stryker was in what Noah claimed was a typical 'bad boy' look. Gavin didn't have the nerve to ask since the boys always sighed heavily as they nodded. Gavin would just find out for himself.

Just as Gavin predicted, the door to the large gray and black RV opened and a dark figure stepped out. Stryker didn't stop and look around or anything. That disappointed Gavin. The boy should always search his surroundings. Most likely Stryker relied on his cameras for his safety. He should also know that camera feeds could be tampered with. Not that Gavin had that ability but he needed to have a very serious conversation with Stryker later.

With his enhanced sight, Gavin had the perfect view when Stryker bent over to check something on his bike. The black utility pants hugged Stryker's ass, making Gavin's mouth water. He nearly stepped from his hiding place. The plan. Gavin needed to stick with the plan. He wanted to make sure that Stryker enjoyed the game as much as he did. Gavin was changing the rules.

Stryker swung his leg over the bike before turning on the engine. The bike rumbled in the dark of the night before the boy revved the engine and took off. Gavin waited.

The sound of the bike echoed around the trees.

Anticipation crawled up his spine.

Either Gavin was going to get his hands on Stryker before the morning light or this game between them would come to an end. He was betting that Stryker would fall right into his trap.

He set the timer on his watch.

Gavin was certain that Stryker would have cameras and security on his RV and hoped he wasn't disappointed. The next part of the game wouldn't be any fun if Gavin didn't watch.

By the time the engine was too far to hear, Gavin was finding it hard to stay in place.

His timer alerted him and Gavin moved. Stryker would just be getting to the small store.

Carefully stepping out of the trees, Gavin headed right to the RV door.

Unlocked.

What the fuck was wrong with the boy?

Who didn't lock their door in a public RV park?

Shaking his head, Gavin opened the door and climbed the three steps. He walked in and looked around.

Curtains blocked Gavin's view of the driver and passenger seat. Not that Gavin cared about that. The kitchen table had been turned into a makeshift desk.

He strolled closer to peer at the monitor showing his own face.

Yes, his boy would get an up-close look at Gavin in his place. Gavin waved.

If Stryker had a live feed connected, he would get the notification and probably haul ass back. That meant that Gavin had less than ten or fifteen minutes. He was certain that it wouldn't take Stryker the full twenty minutes to return.

The RV was nice. Done in shades of gray, black, and blues. High-quality appliances that appeared brand new. The kitchen was spotless other than the empty cans of energy drinks in the sink.

Being nosy, Gavin began to open cabinets and drawers. Nothing unexpected. Everything was in a proper place. The boy probably didn't even use the dishes. In the

fridge he found a case of coke and several more energy drinks. The freezer was filled with bags of frozen chicken nuggets. Fuck! This boy needed a keeper in the worst way.

He checked the rest of the RV quickly. The bathroom showed that it was used. The bed was unmade. Clothes were scattered from the desk to the bedroom.

Gavin snorted. Stryker needed to pick up the place but it wasn't what Gavin would consider dirty. Just messy. He returned to the desk and winked at the monitor before he picked up a sharpie and an empty Cheeto puff bag. He tore the bag open and wrote his message.

I'm waiting for you. You have ten minutes to find me.

He dropped the marker before setting the bag in the middle of the keyboard. He turned toward the door before getting an idea. Gavin yanked the shirt over his head and dropped the piece of clothing on Stryker's chair. A little gift for his stalker.

Gavin hightailed it from the RV before Stryker returned.

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Stryker

The fucker was in his place.

Stryker stared at his phone as Gavin waved at the monitor. This might be the best thing that ever happened to Stryker. So Papi wanted to play? Let the games begin.

He stuffed his bag of snacky-snacks under his shirt before he jumped back onto his bike. He revved the engine and took off. Gavin was up to something. Other than going through Stryker's personal space. How had Gavin found him?

Stryker knew he hadn't done anything to give himself away.

There was no fucking chance of that!

Damn it, how had Stryker messed up?

Barreling down the small-town road on his bike, Stryker didn't know how to feel. Gavin had tracked him down and that was kind of sexy. It was also worrisome if Stryker was losing his touch. Had he lost his touch? Was spending his time stalking Gavin screwing with his brilliance? Nah, that was impossible. He wasn't losing anything. Gavin was just better than Stryker had anticipated.

Gavin was truly a worthy opponent.

Stryker cackled under his helmet.

This might not be the game that Stryker had laid out but he was nothing if not adaptable.

Gavin turned the tables on him. Stryker was about to upheave Gavin's world upside down.

He made the turn into the entrance of the state park too fast. His rear tire slipped and spun but Stryker was able to correct his mistake. He pulled back on the throttle. It wouldn't do him any good if he wrecked out. Stryker needed to return to his RV in one piece.

Stryker had to slow down even more when he reached the campground parking. There were families all around him and Stryker didn't hurt the innocent. Ever. It killed him but Stryker maneuvered his bike back in front of the RV.

He shut off the bike and put down the stand before jumping from it.

Stryker raced to his door and up the steps. He pushed the door open and started to search his place for Gavin. He'd half expected Gavin to be in his bed or something outrageous like that. Admittedly that was more of a Stryker move but it would have been cool.

Gavin was not there.

However, he had totally made his presence known.

Stryker picked up the black T-shirt off his chair and grinned. He was already getting his Papi out of his clothes. Score! He noticed the note.

Ten minutes? Ten minutes until what?

And was it really a challenge to find the his prey? Stryker didn't even bother to sit. Bending over the keyboard, he searched the security cameras until he spotted Gavin leaving his RV. Shirtless.

Gavin headed back into the woods.

Toward his home.

Haha, fucker! Stryker knew where he was headed.

He ripped the helmet off his head. Reaching into a drawer to his left, Stryker grabbed his favorite mask. His Call of Duty ghost mask. Perfect.

Stryker pulled the mask on before he headed for the door. He grabbed a flashlight he'd found during his initial search of the RV.

It was time to take the game into real life.

He had some hunting to do.

* * * * *

Gavin

He dropped his right boot.

His right sock.

Every few feet Gavin was leaving a piece of himself behind so that his little stalker wouldn't get too lost in the dark woods.

Gavin yanked his left boot off and tossed it onto his makeshift trail. He didn't need the help since he had paranormal sight but if the boy didn't grab a light, he'd be screwed. Gavin really hoped that Stryker was playing along. He wasn't an expert at any of this. He'd just hoped to lure Stryker out of hiding.

After a dozen steps, he dropped his left sock.

Gavin only had one last piece of clothing, but he was close to the spot that he'd picked out.

He stepped over the log that told him that he was in the right place.

Shucking his jeans off, Gavin laid them over the log.

Now all he had to do was wait.

If he were better at the whole camera thing, he'd have set up something so he could watch Stryker scrambling to get to him. Gavin had waited just inside the tree line until Stryker had pulled up, way too fast, on his bike. Gavin had set the timer on his watch a minute after Stryker had entered the RV.

Four minutes to go.

Would the boy make it?

Did Stryker even want to?

What if Stryker didn't come? Or was late?

After going through all this, Gavin had to hold on to hope.

He picked up the labored breathing of a human close by.

Gavin's cock hardened.

This was it.

He was about to get what he'd been waiting on.

It took everything in him to remain leaning back against the trunk of the tree. Gavin had to show the patience that he was known for. Stryker was coming to him. The plan was working. The game was real.

* * * * *

Stryker

This fucker was brilliant.

Stryker picked up each discarded article of clothing that had been left for him. Gavin was indeed changing the rules of the game. Stryker was not going to complain. He had been watching Gavin for so long that he was actually nervous to be tracking him down. In real life.

Would Gavin be disappointed with him? Did Stryker want to test his theory that once Gavin had him, Stryker would be sent packing? It was too late to turn back now.

Running the flashlight over the log in front of him, Stryker spotted the jeans just lying there.

Gavin was close.

Stryker could practically feel eyes on him.

He swiped the light from side to side.

His breath caught as he illuminated the sexy naked form leaning against the tree.

Gavin barked out a laugh. "A mask? Really, boy?"

Stryker added the rest of the clothes he'd picked up to where the jeans rested. "Well, Papi. You didn't show me your cock before. And I asked so nicely."

"It's okay, boy," Gavin said as he pushed off the tree. "I'll show you whatever you want now that you found me."

Fuck! This was hot! "So, I get my reward?"

"Reward?" Gavin asked. He was closer. So much closer but too far still.

"I followed your rules," Stryker said.

"Just like the good boy you are," Gavin praised.

Stryker snorted. He was not and had never been a good boy one day in his life.

"You don't like me calling you that?"

"It's not true," Stryker admitted. How Stryker felt about that...well, that was pretty confusing so he would ignore it.

"Which part? The good or the boy?"

Behind his mask, Stryker was grinning. “You can call me boy. I have no intention of stopping calling you Papi. Hopefully as you’re buried deep inside me.” Stryker really hoped that was happening soon.

“You’re a bit overdressed for this party,” Gavin told him. He was so much closer. Almost close enough to touch.

“Am I?” he taunted. “What are you going to do about that, Papi?”

“Undress,” Gavin ordered, voice hard.

Oh yeah. Stryker was totally into this part of the game.

“What if I’m shy?”

Gavin grasped the base of his cock. “Isn’t this what you wanted?”

His knees went weak. Stryker really wanted that gorgeous cock inside him. Mouth or ass. He wasn’t picky.

“Or do you really just want to watch?” Gavin gave himself a few strokes.

A whimper escaped before Stryker could hold it in.

“That’s not what you want though, is it?” Gavin asked. He knew. They both knew that Gavin knew. Just another part of the game. Gavin’s cock looked so good in his own hand, but it would look better if it were Stryker touching him.

Stryker shook his head. He couldn’t even get the words out.

“Undress,” Gavin repeated.

They were really doing this. He was doing this. Stryker reached for his mask. This was it.

“Oh no, my little nugget. Keep the mask on.”

Nugget? What the fuck did that mean? Stryker hesitated.

“Boots first,” Gavin demanded.

O...kay. With a shrug, Stryker bent to unlace his boots.

Gavin moved. Stepped behind him.

Was he staring at Stryker’s ass? Hmm, Stryker could work with that.

“Slowly,” Gavin told him. “You’re going to give me a show this time.”

“Whatever you want, Papi,” Stryker quipped.

“Watch your mouth, boy.” There was a growl at the end of Gavin’s words. “Don’t make promises that you might not be able to keep.”

Stryker had to swallow hard. He was still bent over. Gavin was proving to be more than a worthy game player. Everything he said, the tone, it was just perfect. Exactly what Stryker had been fantasizing about.

Maybe it wasn’t Stryker’s game after all. Stryker had thought that he’d been the one in charge of his interactions between him and Gavin. But had he? Thinking back, Stryker had to admit that Gavin had been keeping him on his toes from the very beginning.

Gavin had given Stryker little glimpses of what Stryker had asked for. Gavin had set the tone of the text messages. Gavin was the one to set his laptop facing the bed to tease Stryker. Realization hit that he wasn't the one in charge.

"We can slow down." Gavin's palm pressed against his lower back.

"No," Stryker whispered. "This is perfect."

"Do you need help?"

Did he? Stryker nodded.

"Good boy," Gavin murmured.

Stryker shivered. Why did he like those two words?

"I've got you." Gavin ran his palm down the curve of Stryker's ass before the light touch left him. He walked around to kneel in front of Stryker.

Was it the blood rushing to his head from being bent over or was it Gavin's proximity that was making him lightheaded?

Stryker looked at Gavin, meeting the dark gaze, and gulped.

Gavin smiled. He finished unlacing the boot that Stryker had started. A tap to his foot and Stryker lifted it. Gavin removed the boot and sock. He started with the second boot. They repeated the steps until Stryker was standing barefoot on the damp forest soil.

"Do you need a safe word?" Gavin asked softly.

“No!” Stryker’s voice echoed around them.

Gavin chuckled. “That was very certain. You have no idea what I plan on doing to you.”

That was the point! “Please.”

“Oh, my little nugget. You are perfect.” Gavin leaned forward, pressing his nose against Stryker’s stomach. He breathed deep.

Stryker was really glad that he’d taken a long shower that afternoon after returning from his in-person stalking mission. He had expected to be sniffed after all. Before Stryker could react, Gavin pulled back then reached for the button of Stryker’s pants.

His cock was already so hard. There was no way that Gavin wouldn’t have noticed. Stryker didn’t know whether he should pull away or push toward Gavin so he didn’t do anything. He stood there as Gavin unbuttoned Stryker’s pants before he slowly lowered the zipper.

Gavin tugged the pants down Stryker’s legs and to his ankles.

He stepped out of his pants, leaving him in a pair of tight black briefs and his black T-shirt and mask.

Once again Gavin bent forward and sniffed Stryker. This time in the crease of his leg. So close that Gavin’s cheek brushed against his aching dick.

Stryker gasped. He had to fist his hands to keep from reaching for Gavin.

“You smell so good,” Gavin breathed out.

The words caused Stryker to shudder hard. “Please—”

“Remember the first time that you touched yourself for me?” Gavin whispered.

“Right after you and your friends took out the entire coven,” Stryker said. “It was on a Zoom call.”

“You were in that shitty old apartment at a desk in your mask, this mask, with your pants open,” Gavin added.

“I was so hard for you,” Stryker confessed. “You were so bossy.”

“And you were such a brat.” Gavin smiled again. “Just my type.” He tugged on Stryker’s briefs, revealing his hard cock.

“You must like brats,” Stryker teased.

“Maybe.” Gavin wrapped his hand around Stryker’s shaft. “Maybe I do.”

Stryker pushed his hips forward.

“That doesn’t mean that you’re in charge of this game.”

Stryker nodded. “Was I ever in charge?”

“No, boy. It was fun to let you think you were,” Gavin said.

“It is fun,” Stryker agreed.

“Don’t worry.” Gavin stroked him. “We’re not done yet.”

Stryker didn't want to think about what would happen when Gavin was done with him. He was tired. Stryker was always on the run. Moving from place to place. Always alone. It hadn't been an issue until he'd seen how close Gavin and his friends were.

"Attention on me," Gavin ordered. His fingers tightened around the base of Stryker's dick.

"You have all my attention," Stryker promised.

"Take your shirt off," Gavin told him.

"Mask?"

"No, you wanted it on," Gavin replied. "Leave it on."

Maybe Stryker didn't want to leave it on any longer. Maybe just maybe he was ready to show himself to Gavin. He also wanted to be a good boy for the other man. He craved to hear those two words again.

Stryker carefully pulled his T-shirt up his torso then removed it. He allowed the garment to float to the forest floor.

Now they were both naked. Well, except for the mask. Stryker's final barrier between him and Gavin.

"Such a good boy for me," Gavin praised.

"Yes!" Stryker hissed.

"You like that?" Gavin jerked his cock faster. "Being my good boy?"

“Yes!”

“Then here is your first treat.” Gavin closed his lips around the tip of Stryker’s cock and sucked.

Stryker about lost his mind.

He grabbed hold of Gavin’s shoulders to keep his knees from buckling.

Running his tongue under the head of Stryker’s cock, Gavin then sucked him deep. Took Stryker’s shaft to the back of his throat.

Stryker managed to babble out something. Encouragement? Protest?

Gavin kept sucking. Adding a twist of his fingers and stroking along with every time he pulled back. Stryker had been hard before but now he was desperate. This was better than any other blowjob that he’d ever received.

“I can’t—” Stryker gasped.

Gavin pulled away to peer up at Stryker from his knees. “You gonna come for me, boy?”

“Please!”

“You can come,” Gavin told him.

“I want you to fuck me!” Stryker wanted to shove his dick back in Gavin’s mouth. He wanted Gavin’s cock inside him. He wanted everything!

“Oh, my little nugget. I’m going to fuck you. Don’t you worry about that. First you

are going to come for me like a good boy.” Gavin took Stryker’s cock back in his mouth and swallowed hard.

Dropping his head back, Stryker shouted out his release to the trees that surrounded them.

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Gavin

He drank down every drop of seed that Stryker released into his mouth. Gavin was riding a high on his mate's scent. His mate. Gavin had wondered. Levi had made vague suggestions. The hope had started to grow. Now Gavin knew.

Stryker was his.

Panting above him, Stryker was digging his fingers into Gavin's shoulders while trying to catch his breath.

Gavin wrapped his fingers around Stryker's wrists as he rose.

He kept hold of Stryker to lead him over the fallen log where Gavin had left his jeans.

"What?" Stryker asked. He blinked around in confusion. It was adorable. The boy was obviously cum-drunk.

Gavin cupped his face. The cotton mask under his fingers was soft but not as soft as Stryker's skin. "I'm not done with you, boy."

"O...okay." Stryker nodded. "That's...that's good."

Watching Stryker's face, Gavin leaned down. He couldn't wait any longer. Slowly he peeled the bottom of the mask from Stryker's neck until he was uncovering the boy's lips.

“I’m going to kiss you,” Gavin warned.

A puff of breath escaped through Stryker’s lips before he swallowed hard. “I might not be good at it. I don’t kiss often.”

A rush of pure possession washed over Gavin. “You’ll never kiss anyone else ever again.” To prove his point, Gavin captured Stryker’s mouth with his own.

He kissed the boy hard. Under their feet the ground rumbled. Gavin dropped his hands to Stryker’s ass, yanking him close. Above them the sky became alive with loud rolling thunder and bursts of bright lightning.

Gavin put all his pent-up emotions into the kiss. He would wipe out every other memory that Stryker had of kissing anyone who wasn’t him.

Stryker did not disappoint Gavin with his reaction. He shoved his tongue inside Gavin’s mouth while clawing at Gavin’s bare shoulders. Gavin held the boy close as he fucked his tongue in and out of Stryker’s mouth. The boy was his. Gavin was claiming Stryker one body part at a time.

He had to pull away when Stryker attempted to climb up his body. Leaning back, Gavin grinned at Stryker’s lower half of his face revealed only.

“I’m not done yet,” Gavin reminded his boy. And Stryker was all his.

Stryker whined but released his firm hold on Gavin’s shoulders.

Gavin gave Stryker’s ass one last squeeze. He reached back up to peel the mask up high on Stryker’s face. Gavin brushed his lips over every new inch that he revealed. Over Stryker’s cheeks, on the tip of his nose, between his eyes, and finally right in the center of Stryker’s forehead.

His boy was gorgeous.

High cheekbones, a turned-up little nose, beautiful gray eyes.

Stryker was...well, striking.

The mask hadn't been needed but Gavin was sort of glad that he was one of the few people that was able to see the boy's face.

"Beautiful baby," Gavin murmured before kissing him again.

Stryker pushed against Gavin's chest. His hard cock brushing Gavin's thigh. "You're killing me," Stryker whined. "I need you to touch me!"

Gavin chuckled. "I am touching you."

"More!" Stryker demanded.

"You aren't making the rules, remember?"

Stryker huffed then nodded. "Sorry."

Cupping the back of Stryker's neck, Gavin smiled at him. "Noting to be sorry about. I've made you wait long enough tonight. It's not nearly as long as you've made me wait though."

Stryker laughed. He grabbed hold of Gavin's upper arms. "I'm not even a little sorry if this is what I get."

Gavin was pleased to see his sassy boy was back with him. "Now I get to have my fun. Over the log. Show me that tight ass you've been teasing me with."

Stryker broke away from him and turned. He gave a little shimmy, shaking his ass at Gavin, before planting his hands beside Gavin's jeans.

Stepping up behind his boy, Gavin ran his palms down Stryker's back to his ass. Gavin might be a little obsessed. He had been dying to get his hands on Stryker's ass since he'd gotten that first peek. Gavin might never stop touching Stryker.

"Are you just going to paw at me or do something more?" Stryker questioned, pushing back into Gavin's touch.

"Keep taunting me, my little nugget," Gavin said. "I have all night long."

Stryker moaned. "You remember that I'm human, right? Pretty sure I can't go all night long."

How cute. Like Stryker had a choice. "You will if I tell you that you will." Reaching around, Gavin grasped Stryker's hard dick. "Look at this. You're all ready for round two."

Stryker shuddered. "Is round two happening soon?"

"Patience, boy." Gavin stroked Stryker one time. Just once to show that he was in charge.

"Papi, please!"

Fuck! Gavin loved hearing that word from Stryker's lips. Maybe he could speed things up just a little.

He grabbed his jeans to dig out the tube of travel lube he'd stuffed inside his pocket earlier. As paranormal Gavin didn't need to use condoms, but he still needed

Stryker's consent. It was important that Stryker knew while the risks of Gavin taking him bare that Stryker had a choice. Even with the game playing Stryker would always have a choice.

"I can't give or catch any human diseases to you. I'll use a condom if you want," Gavin said.

Stryker spotted the lube and laughed. "We don't need a condom. Noah already told me that. I just want you. Want to feel you inside me. I guess I'm happy that you seem prepared?"

"For you," Gavin replied. "Always prepared for you." Using his teeth, he ripped the top off the tube. He squeezed some onto his fingers then ran those digits between Stryker's cheeks.

"Yes," Stryker hissed. "Finally."

Gavin swallowed his laugh. He teased Stryker's hole, circling, taunting, but never quite pushing his finger inside. He used the lube to wet the opening while holding Stryker open with one hand.

Stryker's hole glistened as Gavin added more and more lube.

Eventually Stryker began to understand that Gavin was going to torture him. He tried to push back, to force penetration, but Gavin had expected that.

"Fucker!" Stryker whined.

Gavin smacked the cheek he wasn't holding. His lubed fingers left a mark across the flesh. "That's not how we ask for what we want."

“Fuck me!” Stryker demanded.

Gavin smacked him again. “Who’s in charge here?”

“You!” Stryker squirmed. “Now fuck me!”

“Try again,” Gavin ordered.

“Please fuck me! Please.”

Gavin pressed the tip of his finger against Stryker’s hole. His own cock ached. He needed just as much as the boy did. He wanted to fuck Stryker more than Stryker needed him. Gavin also wanted to make sure this first time, their first time, was everything that they’d been teasing each other with.

There would be more firsts for them. This one was special. Stryker was a runner. Gavin had no doubts about that. Gavin planned on keeping the boy too exhausted to even consider leaving him.

“You said I was a good boy,” Stryker said suddenly. “Prove it!”

Stryker was his good boy. He was also a little brat that needed to be reminded who he belonged to. Of who was in charge. Gavin pressed his finger harder against Stryker’s hole.

“Beg,” Gavin told him.

“Please, please, please,” Stryker chanted. “I need you.”

“Such pretty words coming from your mouth,” Gavin praised. He slid his finger inside.

Stryker groaned, the sound echoing around them.

“This what you want?” Gavin slowly pushed his finger deep then pulled it back.

“More.”

Gavin withdrew his finger completely.

“No! I’m sorry. Please don’t stop.” Stryker shook. His entire body was taut.

Gavin grasped his cock, smearing the remaining lube over his shaft. He dropped the tube to pick up later before returning his fingers to Stryker’s hole. This time he wasn’t gentle. He plunged two fingers in deep without warning.

Stryker rose onto his tiptoes before pushing back. “Fuck! Papi!”

“Ride my fingers,” Gavin ordered. “Get yourself open so you can take my dick.”

Stryker went wild under him. He rocked himself as Gavin spread his fingers wide. Gavin added a third digit, making sure that Stryker was taking all of them to ensure he wouldn’t hurt him.

Lightning lit the entire sky above them. The canopy of leaves blocked out most of it but Gavin didn’t need any light to see. Soft rain fell as Gavin positioned the tip of his shaft at Stryker’s entrance.

Gavin held on firmly to Stryker’s hips pushing inside.

Even with the prep Stryker was tight.

He had to move his hips, working himself in and out, loosening Stryker to take all of

him. Gavin had to bite his lip as he called on his patience. He would never hurt Stryker. Not his boy. His mate. It was too important. Stryker was too important.

“I can take it,” Stryker said. “Give it to me.”

Gavin tightened his hold. He gave a powerful thrust. “This what you want?”

Stryker shouted.

He drew his hips back before Gavin powered forward again.

Lightning arced above them again.

The ground shook with a rumble.

Rain began to fall faster and harder.

Everything from inside Gavin reflected in nature around them.

As Gavin started to ride Stryker hard, he closed his eyes and threw his head back. He plunged deep, making sure that he pegged Stryker’s prostate with every thrust.

Stryker met him each and every time.

They were making their own electricity. The connection between them alive.

Mates.

Forever.

Family.

Gavin's entire body was alive. Almost like he felt right before shifting. Not that he planned on turning into his firebird right then. No, Gavin was claiming his mate.

He grasped Stryker's cock and jerked him with each thrust of his hips.

Opening his mouth, he yelled out his release as Stryker covered his palm with his own seed.

* * * * *

Stryker

Gavin pulled out of him gently, but Stryker already missed him. Of being filled. He tried to capture Gavin's arm, but Gavin was turning Stryker over and helped him sit on the log.

Gavin dropped to his knees in front of Stryker. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

The caring tone almost undid him.

"Baby?"

Stryker shook his head quickly. He needed to find the words that were stuck in the back of his dry throat. It was very important that he got this out. He cleared his throat. "That was perfect. You were perfect."

Cupping his face, Gavin pushed closer to kiss Stryker.

Mmm, Stryker really loved being kissed by Gavin. He hadn't been lying when he said that he probably wasn't good at kissing. Bar bathroom hookups weren't really the atmosphere that encouraged such intimacy. And kissing was intimate. At least to

Stryker.

He had no problem finding a partner for a quick hand job, blowjob, or on the rare occasion, a fuck. Stryker had never been in a relationship in his entire life. Not that he was expecting anything more with Gavin. He wanted, ached, for more, but Stryker wouldn't expect it.

Keeping one foot out the door always made things easier when Stryker wore out his welcome.

Gavin had ruined him.

Stryker would never be able to get the feel of Gavin's hands, of his cock, of everything they shared from his mind.

In one night, Gavin had shown Stryker something he'd been missing his entire life. A connection to another person.

He whined as Gavin broke the kiss.

"It's okay," Gavin soothed. He rubbed his hands down Stryker's arms. "I'm still not done with you. We need to take this inside though. It's too cold to stay out here. And now we're both soaked."

Stryker blinked as he tried to gather his thoughts. Gavin wanted more?

"How about I make us a snack, you can wash up, then I'll take you back to bed?"

That sounded like heaven to Stryker. "My RV is close." Stryker waved his hand in the direction he thought he'd come from. He was too tired to really care.

“I think we need more than just chicken nuggets.”

Stryker popped his head up. “You went through my freezer?”

Gavin grunted as he rose. “And you wouldn’t have?”

“Chicken nuggies are the best!” Stryker claimed. It was very important that Gavin understood that. Stryker might sacrifice a lot to have some more time with Gavin but he was not going to give up his nuggies.

“I’m surprised you haven’t turned into a chicken nugget if that’s all you eat,” Gavin told him.

Wait a damn minute! “Is that why you called me nugget?”

Gavin offered his hand.

Stryker slipped his palm inside Gavin’s hold and allowed Gavin to help him up off the log. “Well?” He was curious after all.

“Does it matter?”

“I can think of a hundred other things you can call me,” Stryker argued.

“Brat?” Gavin offered.

Stryker grinned. “Sure.”

“Baby?”

He snorted. “Whatever floats your boat, Papi.”

“How about my good boy?” Gavin suggested.

He froze. Even if Stryker wanted to hide his reaction, there was no way that he could when Gavin said those two words.

“I think you like that,” Gavin said.

“I...”

“I think you really like being my good boy,” Gavin told him with a smirk.

Stryker shook his head. “Anyone who has ever met me will tell you that I’m anything but good. Evil, maybe. Wrong.”

“There’s nothing wrong with you,” Gavin replied.

Was this guy serious? “I know we just had some really great sex, but you’ve lost your mind. Do you even remember how we met?”

“I’m not talking about being morally good,” Gavin responded. “I’m under no illusions about what you do. You steal. You take.”

“Never from anyone who doesn’t deserve it!”

“I know that too.” Gavin wrapped an arm around his waist, pulling Stryker closer.

It didn’t even occur to Stryker to resist until he was already being held by Gavin. “I’m not a good boy.” That was really the only thing he knew to say.

“It’s okay to just be my good boy,” Gavin told him. He lifted Stryker off his feet. Literally picked him up and started to carry him away.

“Hey!” Stryker wrapped his arms and legs around Gavin. “What are you doing?”

“I’m taking you back to the cabin,” Gavin said. “I already told you that I’d let you wash up while I made us some food. And the next time I’m buried deep inside you it will be in bed.”

Did Stryker really want to argue with that plan? “What about our stuff?”

“I’ll pick it up later,” Gavin replied. “No one will mess with it.”

It was too much of an effort to care really. Stryker laid his head on Gavin’s shoulder. “I can’t believe you’re carrying me. This is ridiculous.”

Gavin’s warm chuckle brushed across his neck. “I don’t want you to step on any sticks or something sharp.”

“You’re barefoot too,” Stryker pointed out.

“Shifter,” Gavin reminded him.

Well shit. Stryker hadn’t been thinking about that. Not that Stryker gave a damn that the man who’d just given him the best fucking of his life wasn’t exactly human. It wasn’t like humans had ever been kind to Stryker in the first place.

“Oh yeah, my big bad paranormal Papi,” Stryker teased. It was getting harder to keep his eyes open. Stryker was warm, Gavin giving off enough heat to sink into him, and even though both of their bodies were slick from the rain, Stryker couldn’t care less.

There was something to this being carried thing.

In his stalking, uh watching, Stryker had seen some of the other guys being carried by

their partners. Stryker hadn't really understood and had believed that it was something the more submissive partners wanted. Stryker got it now.

Gavin's full attention was on him as he was intent on getting Stryker somewhere warm. Gavin spoke quietly but the words didn't matter to Stryker. Not when he felt safe for the first time in his life.

They passed out of the tree line and onto the property that Stryker had seen from his cameras. As soon as Gavin stepped onto the lush grass, an electric jolt traveled up Stryker's spine.

"That's the magic ward," Gavin said. "You get used to it."

Stryker nodded. He'd suspected that was magic along the property. From what Stryker had gathered, Dean was one of the most powerful mages in the country. At least according to Noah. After Stryker's interaction with the witches, he should probably be terrified of being surrounded by the paranormal. Instead, Stryker finally allowed his eyes to drift closed as Gavin carried him across the yard.

* * * * *

Gavin

Ushering Stryker into the hot bathtub, Gavin was glad he'd listened to River about making the space more modern and spa-like. Gavin hadn't needed fancy, but River had insisted that he knew what the perfect bathroom would look like. All the extra-special features that were a must have.

Gavin had laughed at all the little things River had insisted were the perfect indulgence. Of course, Gavin hadn't known that he would be helping his mate into that extravagant tub.

Stryker moaned as his foot sank into the water.

“Good?” Gavin questioned. He wanted everything perfect for his boy.

“It’s perfect.” Stryker held on to Gavin as he sank down. “This is nicer than I expected. I couldn’t really see anything from the cameras at the angle I had.”

“River designed it,” Gavin admitted. “I just let him do what he wanted.”

“River,” Stryker repeated. “Which one is that?”

“In charge of the construction here. Shawn owns the company, but River’s his right-hand man and manages our property. He’s a twin but Sebastian lives in the hell realm with his mate.”

“Who’s River’s mate?”

“Anton, who’s Axel’s younger brother, and Rainier, the king of the fae realm.”

Stryker’s eyes widened. “I think I missed something.”

Gavin crouched next to the tub. “There is only so much that you can learn from watching.”

“Hey! I talk to some of the guys too.”

“But even they will only reveal so much. They might like you, trust you on some level, but—”

“But I’m not one of you,” Stryker said.

“That isn’t what I was going to say.” Gavin hated the pain he’d heard in those words. Stryker was a master at pretending he didn’t care about people. It was obvious that Stryker cared more than he wanted people to believe. He’d kept tabs on Dean and Noah after they’d saved Stryker’s life.

“It’s true though,” Stryker argued.

“I don’t think it is.” The steam from the hot water made the air in the bathroom moist and warm. The protective side of him was pleased that his boy, his mate, was safe and relaxing in a hot tub. That Gavin was caring for him. Being a good mate.

“What?” Stryker’s face was flushed from the heat.

“I’m disagreeing that you’re not one of us,” Gavin told him.

Stryker snorted. “Sure, the human criminal fits right in with all you paranormals trying to save the world.”

Is that what the boy thought? “We’re not trying to save the world. Just our little piece of it.”

“It’s a nice little piece,” Stryker commented.

“We like it,” Gavin agreed.

“It rains more than I expected.”

Yeah, Gavin was going to have to explain more about his gifts and the entire paranormal world. Stryker thought he knew things. The boy didn’t. He had just enough information to get himself into trouble with.

“Are you hungry? I promised to make us some food,” Gavin offered.

“Well,” Stryker drawled. “If you stayed, are you going to remain out of the tub, or do you plan on getting in with me?”

Gavin chuckled. The boy did have a good idea. He rose. “I could join you if you’re sure you aren’t hungry.”

“There’s plenty of time for food. We’re not on a deadline, are we?”

“No, we’re not.” Gavin stepped closer to the tub. They had forever if Stryker would just stay without a fight. Gavin expected a fight.

“Pity you’re already naked. I wouldn’t mind getting another show.”

“You can have all the shows you want,” Gavin vowed. “Lean forward.”

Stryker grinned as he sat forward.

Gavin stepped into the tub before he sank down behind Stryker. Again, he was going to have to give River credit for this huge tub where they both fit. He pulled Stryker back to lean against his chest.

Stryker snorted. “Never shared a bath with someone before. It’s...nice.”

It was. He ran his hand down the center of Stryker’s chest. “And I like being able to touch you.”

Stryker placed his hands on Gavin’s thighs. “I get to touch you too.”

“All you want,” Gavin said. He had never been in the tub with another person before

either. This felt right though. Perfect. He cupped some of the water to drip it over one of Stryker's nipples.

Stryker gasped, his fingers tightening on Gavin's flesh, all while pushing back against Gavin's quickly growing dick.

Maybe he should have looked at making baths sexy before.

Gavin did it again. This time allowing his fingers to brush over Stryker's pert nub.

The boy shook for him.

Gavin really liked that. Lowering his head, Gavin sucked on the back of Stryker's neck.

"Gavin." Stryker moaned out his name.

"Maybe I need to help you work up an appetite," Gavin teased. He nipped at the bruised skin.

"I..." Stryker panted. "Whatever you want."

That was right. Gavin was in charge and the sooner that Stryker accepted that, the easier it would be to keep him close.

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Stryker

He was fucked out.

Literally.

Rolling over in Gavin's big comfortable bed, Stryker's entire body was sore and humming with leftover pleasure. Had Gavin gotten six or was it seven orgasms out of him? Stryker didn't even know. He did know that he was not pleased waking up alone in bed. He'd thought better of Gavin.

He sat up, letting the soft blanket pool in his lap. He peered around the room, stopping his gaze on the open laptop.

Things looked different from this angle.

The room appeared larger. More open. Decorated in soft blues and greens, the space had a warm and welcoming feeling. Stryker quite liked it. He'd like it a whole lot better if the man he'd been watching in that very room was actually there with him.

Wait! Was that bacon?

Stryker grinned.

He totally smelled bacon.

The bedroom door opened and Gavin walked in, carrying a tray. "Awake?"

“I could be,” Stryker quipped, “if that’s coffee and bacon.”

“Eggs, pancakes, bacon, and orange juice,” Gavin said.

“No coffee?”

“No.”

“Energy drink?”

“Absolutely not.” Gavin strolled over to place the tray over Stryker’s lap.

“Oh, come on!” Stryker whined. “I need caffeine.”

Gavin sat on the mattress by Stryker’s feet. “Eat all that and drink your juice. We might be able to negotiate some coffee later.”

Leaning forward, Stryker offered his lips to Gavin.

Gavin’s features flashed in surprise before he kissed Stryker. Stryker slipped his tongue inside Gavin’s mouth, not allowing the kiss to be brief. He sucked on Gavin’s tongue before pulling back.

“I knew it! You had coffee!” Stryker accused.

“I did.” Gavin smirked. “I also don’t live off energy drinks, chicken nuggets, chips, and candy.”

Stryker snorted as he leaned back against the headboard. He couldn’t even argue. Picking up the fork, Stryker was dying to get something in his stomach. The sandwiches that Gavin had made after their shared sexy bath seemed like they’d been

days ago.

Gavin didn't say a word as Stryker stuffed his face with all the food on the plate. And it was good. Much better than anything Stryker had eaten lately. Not that Stryker would ever give up his chicken nuggies but it was nice to be eating something different. He could have driven to one of the closest towns to get some restaurant food since he hadn't wanted to be spotted in town.

Huh. Draining half of the juice, Stryker realized that he wasn't going to have to hide any longer.

He could go to the bakery that Dean owned, try the food at the diner Gavin frequented for lunch—he might even be invited for dinner at the big house. Glancing up, he jerked, noticing how close Gavin was watching him.

Stryker wiped his mouth with the napkin that had been under his fork. "What?"

"I'm a little surprised that you were still here when you woke alone."

Then why the fuck had Gavin left him alone? With a door closed even. "Was it a test?"

Gavin shrugged. "Honestly? I'm not sure."

The food he'd eaten sat like lead in his stomach. "Did you want me to be gone?"

"Absolutely not," Gavin replied quickly. "I was fully prepared to chase you down. Again."

That would have been fun. He shifted and the twinge in his ass let Stryker know that while they would be doing that again, he did need a bit of a break first.

“Hurting?” Gavin asked as he picked up the tray.

Did nothing get past Gavin? “I’m fine.”

Setting the tray down on the dresser, Gavin turned back to him with a frown. “That’s not what I asked.”

Stryker shook his head. “I’m fine.”

With a laugh, Gavin grabbed Stryker out from the bed.

The blanket got caught between them for a brief moment before Gavin carried Stryker from the room.

“Hey!” Stryker shouted. He wrapped his arms around Gavin’s neck. “Here we go with the carrying again.” Not that Stryker really minded. He actually found it comforting. Weird, right? Being carried by another adult.

“All you had to do was tell me the truth,” Gavin admonished. He walked into the bathroom before setting Stryker on the counter.

“I did tell you the truth. I’m fine!”

Gavin started the shower on before turning back toward him. “You must be sore. That’s all you had to say.”

Okay, Stryker was all into the protective Daddy vibe that Gavin was giving off, but he was not made of glass. “Listen, Papi—”

“No!” Gavin growled out as he cupped Stryker’s face. “You listen. I was rough with you last night. We both enjoyed it. I’m not apologizing. But I will take care of you.”

Stryker ran his tongue over his teeth. "I've been taking care of myself for a long time. I've also been fucked before. I don't need...all this." He waved his hand toward the shower.

"I'm not really concerned with what you think you need or don't need."

Stryker snorted. "Really? That was kind of an asshole thing to say."

Gavin grinned. "Are you saying that doesn't turn you on?"

"You know it does," Stryker admitted.

"And I didn't say I didn't care about you. I said I didn't care what you think you need. I decide what you need now."

Stryker barked out a laugh. "You decide?"

"Isn't that why you've been calling me Papi all those times?" Gavin asked. "Because I'm someone that you can trust to make decisions for you?"

"I call you Papi because it's hot," Stryker replied. He didn't want to even think about having someone else make decisions for him. That never ended well for Stryker.

"And because you're curious." Gavin started to strip off his clothes.

Stryker wasn't even trying to hide that he was watching the other man. He liked getting a show. And he was already naked anyway. "Curious?" he asked half-heartedly.

"About the whole Daddy, or Papi, thing. You've been watching the other boys around here. There's no way you're not curious. You have a very curious nature."

Stryker shrugged as Gavin stood in front of him naked now. “I like watching.”

“Oh! I know that.” Gavin laughed. “But you’re still curious.”

“Maybe.” Stryker looked away. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Fine.” Gavin picked him up again. “Let’s take a shower. We can go back to your place and grab some of your stuff before returning here. We have some things to discuss.”

“Alright.” Stryker let Gavin carry him into the shower. It wasn’t like he could really argue.

The hot water cascaded down his back and Stryker groaned. With every muscle that ached the water soothed him. Stryker hadn’t lied when he’d said that the bathroom surprised him. Hell, the entire cabin was nicer than Stryker had been able to see. The construction crews that Stryker had been watching were good. Very good.

The bathroom though. That was pure indulgence.

“Who did you say designed this bathroom?” he asked.

Gavin turned him around before grabbing shampoo off the shelf. “River insisted on some upgrades for me. He hoped one day I would be bringing my mate here and didn’t want to have to remodel after they put so much work into the place.”

The word mate made Stryker stiffen against his will.

That’s right. Gavin had a mate out there somewhere. Just another reminder that Stryker didn’t belong there. One day, maybe even as Stryker watched, Gavin would find his special person.

Maybe that was what Gavin wanted to talk to him about. Why he said that they had things to discuss. Gavin would want to make sure that Stryker understood that he was nothing. That a mate would be more important. They were surrounded by mated pairs and throuples after all. Mates seemed to take precedence over anything else with this group.

Stryker would go back to his RV. Back to his stalking from a distance. He didn't need to be told that he wasn't wanted. That Gavin and his time was limited. He'd just finish watching out for his new friends before hitting the road. That was what Stryker did best after all.

Okay, he was going to at least enjoy this shower and maybe have another sexy encounter with Gavin. Gavin's fingers massaging his scalp felt amazing.

"Hey!" Gavin turned him. "What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing much," Stryker quipped. "Just wondering if you were going to massage anything else for me."

Gavin chuckled. "If you play your cards right I might. Can you be a good boy for me?"

Stryker shuddered. "Fuck!"

* * * * *

Gavin

He could see the signs.

Stryker was going to tell Gavin to fuck off. Or run off.

The boy was playing his part well, but Gavin could see his mind whirling.

It was past time for Gavin to make his confession, but he wanted Stryker back in his cabin first. Not in this probably stolen RV that wasn't a real home. A home with people who cared about him and a place to learn how to be happy.

Gavin stuffed his hands in the pocket of his faded jeans as Stryker rushed from the door of the RV to his laptop.

Without even sitting, Stryker began to furiously type on his keyboard.

"Come on," Stryker murmured. "Show me what you've got."

Gavin had no idea what the rolling screen of letters and numbers meant. "What are you doing?"

"Making sure some of my...projects are still going."

Projects? Yeah, that sounded suspicious to Gavin. "Work?"

Stryker didn't even glance his way. "Sure. Let's call it that."

Gavin sighed. This was why he worried about Stryker. The boy was into shit that Gavin had no clue about. He couldn't imagine living with his life on the line all the time. All Gavin had ever wanted was a home and his family back. He had that now. Gavin had only been missing one thing. His special person. A mate. His mate. Gavin's perfect match.

The boy that was standing in that RV, who had probably already forgotten Gavin was there.

He strolled down the narrow aisle toward the back room. Gavin grabbed the black backpack from the floor. It was empty but not for long. He started to stuff clothes from the end of the bed inside. Gavin jammed anything that might look important to the boy inside.

Not that Stryker seemed to have a whole lot.

Gavin didn't know what the boy did with the money he'd taken but it wasn't being spent on anything Gavin could see. Not unless Stryker had really bought the RV instead of stealing it. Maybe Gavin had been wrong after all.

He made a stop in the bathroom then returned to where Stryker was still muttering to himself as he typed.

"Is there anything else you want?"

Stryker turned his head. "Huh?"

Gavin shook the backpack at him. "Did I miss anything?"

"For what?" Stryker straightened. "What are you doing?"

"Grabbing you a few things," Gavin reminded. "To take back to my place."

Stryker waved his hand. "Don't worry about it. It's fine."

"Fine," Gavin repeated. "What's fine?"

Stryker huffed. "Look, I get it. You want to have the talk. I've heard it all before. Just go. I'm fine here. I'll take off in a few days."

Gavin had been right. He was surprised and he shouldn't be pissed. "Grab what you want, Stryker."

"I have everything I could ever want." Stryker waved his hand around. "That's what this is. Just go."

"You have ten seconds to grab what you want," Gavin warned.

"What the fuck, man!" Stryker yelled. "We had our fun and now it's over. I'm good here."

"Five seconds," Gavin gritted out.

"Whatever." Stryker turned his back on Gavin.

Fucking turned his back. Like Stryker didn't give a damn about him. Like everything they'd shared the previous night and that morning meant nothing.

Gavin grabbed Stryker's shoulder before yanking him back.

Stryker's back hit his chest and Gavin dropped the backpack. He grasped Stryker's chin, forcing the boy to look at him as Gavin leaned forward. "You aren't listening to me."

"Fuck!" Stryker gasped. "You have my attention now."

"I see that I'm going to have to take a more hands-on approach with you in the future." Gavin lowered his mouth to the side of Stryker's neck and sucked. He sucked hard. He was going to leave a mark until he could leave the permanent mark that burned in his soul.

Stryker cried out but was pushing himself back against Gavin. Stryker's ass nestling Gavin's cock.

Still sucking, Gavin reached around and started to undo Stryker's pants. He stuffed his hand inside Stryker's briefs to grasp his hard cock.

Stryker was moaning already. Dripping. Gavin's good boy.

Gavin removed his mouth from Stryker's neck. "Push down your pants and underwear. Show me what belongs to me."

"Fuck!" Stryker hurriedly pushed at his clothing.

"Good boy." Gavin stroked Stryker in reward.

"Please!" Stryker pushed into his hold.

"What nine orgasms aren't enough? You need more? What a greedy boy."

"Nine?" Stryker panted out.

"Did you lose count nugget?" Gavin taunted. He firmed his fingers. Squeezed good and hard.

"Yes!" Stryker hissed.

Gavin chuckled into the boy's ear. "I think I should make you earn number ten." The boy had tried to get rid of him after all. Maybe a little punishment was in order.

"But—"

Gavin released his grip and stepped back. He had to grab Stryker's shoulders to keep him upright. "If you want number ten, then you'll be a good boy for me."

Stryker nodded.

"Pull up your pants," Gavin ordered.

"What?"

"Pull up your pants," Gavin repeated. He waited until Stryker complied.

The boy's eyes were glazed over as Gavin turned him.

"Is there anything you need?"

"My laptop," Stryker said. "I'm never away from it this long."

"Grab it. Hurry."

Stryker scrambled to comply.

Gavin picked up the backpack he'd dropped. Once Stryker had the laptop in his hands, Gavin grabbed the boy and tossed him over his shoulder.

"Hey! Wait!" Stryker reached for something, even managed to stuff it into the backpack on Gavin's other shoulder.

"I gave you all the time you get." The game was turning more serious. Who was he kidding? The game was over. Gavin was playing for keeps. Stryker was all his.

"I can walk," Stryker told him. Not that he was putting up any resistance at all.

Gavin smacked his ass. "I can still feel how hard you are. Don't act like you aren't enjoying this."

Stryker gave a little wiggle. His erection rubbing against Gavin's shoulder. "You know I could probably get myself off this way before we get back to your place."

Little shit! "If you do, I'll make sure you don't come for the next twenty-four hours. I'll lock your pretty little cock up and tease you for hours."

Stryker huffed and stopped moving. "I totally believe you'd do that."

Good! The boy was learning.

* * * * *

Stryker

Ha-ha, sucker! Stryker snuck the energy drink he'd stuffed inside his backpack earlier when Gavin had grabbed him.

Gavin had insisted it was time for them to talk but a phone call from his shop interrupted them before they could get started. That gave Stryker a few minutes to figure out how to play this. He wasn't going to get out of this conversation, no matter how hard he tried. Gavin knew exactly how to handle him.

Frustrating really.

Stryker just needed some caffeine in his system to deal with the stubborn man.

He slipped the can into his pocket before glancing around. Gavin was still on the phone so his attention was elsewhere, although Stryker was learning that Gavin could

multitask with the best of them.

Bathroom! Snickering, he made his way toward the door only a few steps away.

Gavin's head came up, his dark eyes watching Stryker. Always watching. Hmm, Stryker should totally get Gavin to help him stalk his targets. The man did not miss a thing. Except Gavin was all about protecting the world and shit. If Stryker was going to stick around, then he needed to change that. Stryker's new goal was to corrupt Gavin to the dark side. Hey! They had energy drinks, Cheeto puffs, and candy. Who wouldn't want to be on the dark side?

Stryker pointed to the bathroom, receiving a nod as Gavin continued his phone call.

Yeah, Gavin might think he was in charge since he was all bossy and shit, but Stryker wasn't a meek boy. Closing the door behind him, Stryker had to admit that he really loved the bathroom. It was just so soothing and comfortable. He lifted himself up onto the long vanity after pulling his can from his pocket. His drink was warm which sucked but Stryker really needed the hit of caffeine.

Movement outside the bathroom window caught his attention.

Who was that? Was someone slinking around the cabin? Oh, hell no!

Setting his can down beside him, Stryker peered out the window, but no one was there. He unlatched the lock before pushing the window up. Stryker stuck his entire head out, checking out the area.

Huh, no one was there but it was quite nice outside.

He grabbed his energy drink again before Stryker shimmied his way out of the window. Stryker left the window open so he could hear if Gavin knocked on the door

or came to check on him. Crouching down against the outside of the cabin, Stryker popped open the tab of his can.

Stryker took a long drink, wincing with the bitter warm liquid. Yeah, energy drinks really sucked when they weren't cold. They actually always sucked. More of an acquired taste.

Tapping caught his attention and Stryker glanced up quickly.

A young man waved to him from the window of the cabin in front of him. It was one of the twins. The one that had designed the bathroom that Stryker loved. River. Stryker loved putting faces to names. River sounded awesome. And a little crazy. They should totally be friends. Stryker shrugged and waved back.

The guy laughed before he opened the window. He leaned out with a wide smile on his face. "Who are you hiding from?"

Stryker showed him the can in his hand.

"Gotcha! I'm River," he greeted before sticking his head out the window. "Hurry! Come on!"

Pushing off the side of the cabin, Stryker crab-walked forward.

"Dude!" River laughed. "What are you doing?"

"Being sneaky." The duh was implied.

"Cool! I love being sneaky." River glanced around. "No one's watching. Just get in here."

“You want me to climb through the window?”

“Dude,” River mocked. “I just saw you climb out of a bathroom window. At least this is an office.”

Well, that was kind of a good point. Reaching River, Stryker handed him the can before he scrambled up the wall and hoisted himself inside.

River slammed the window shut then dropped down out of sight. “This is hot.” He handed Stryker the can back.

“It was in my backpack,” Stryker explained. He took another sip and winced.

“Come on.” River crawled on his hands and knees toward the door.

Stryker followed until they were out of the office.

River helped Stryker to his feet before he stole the can from Stryker. Stryker followed River down the hall to the kitchen. River went to the fridge and opened one of the bottom drawers. He moved aside several packages of deli meats and cheeses before pulling out two new cans of the same brand of energy drinks.

“Score!” Stryker cheered.

“I take my lunches here.” River passed Stryker an ice-cold can. “Rainier doesn’t like me drinking this shit, so I have to hide it. Anton doesn’t really care one way or another, but he’d tattle on me if he thought it would win him brownie points.” River explained all this with a fond smile on his face.

“Anton is Axel’s brother, right?” That was what Gavin had told him. Stryker was still learning how everyone connected. He knew a lot from his stalking, but the deeper

connections were more complicated.

River slurped up his drink then nodded. “Yeah, I’ve been mated to both of them for a while now.”

That was right. They were a throuple, along with another mated trio. Crazy shit. Mates and all that. What would it be like to have two mates? Hell, Stryker couldn’t even keep one man around. For more than a few weeks anyway. He expected to be around these guys for about a week or so until Stryker was ready to hit the road.

Gavin was obviously not done with him. Not after that caveman move in the RV but he wouldn’t be keeping Stryker forever. Stryker didn’t need forever.

“So...” River grinned. “You’re the masked biker hacker.”

“Well not really masked at the moment.” Stryker pointed at his face.

“But you are a hacker?”

Stryker shrugged. As much as he liked all the men there, Stryker couldn’t go around telling them all his secrets.

“And a bit of a brat?” River bounced on the tips of his toes.

Stryker laughed. “Why?”

“Oh, man! I need to get back at my brother,” River shared. He cackled while rubbing his hands together. “Seb. He’s the smart one. Loves making spreadsheets and shit. Can’t live without his computer. I could really use your help.”

Stryker found himself grinning along. He lifted his energy drink. “I think you and I

are going to be very good friends.” He already planned to keep in contact with Dean, Noah, and some of the others. River would fit right in with Stryker’s new buddies.

River clanked his can against Stryker’s. “The best.”

“Stryker?”

Shit! Stryker hurried to down the remainder of his drink before he shoved the can at River and started back to the office he’d entered through.

“Dude,” River drawled. “That will just look more suspicious. Go out the front door like a normal person.”

“Yeah, good idea!” Look at his new bestie watching out for him already.

“Hey! Have you seen Stryker?” Gavin’s voice came clearly from outside the cabin. River must have another window open somewhere in the cabin.

“I don’t know who Stryker is, but I saw River help someone crawl through the window a few minutes ago.”

And Stryker didn’t know who Gavin was talking to, but he was a total narc.

River groaned. “Anton has no chill. Come on.”

Stryker followed behind River. It wasn’t like he had much of a choice. It appeared that they were busted. The door opened from the outside as River and Stryker reached the entry.

Gavin strode in followed by an attractive and clearly upset young man that Stryker recognized was Anton.

“What are you two doing?” Gavin demanded.

“Nothing!” Stryker and River said at the same time.

Gavin grunted. “Real convincing.”

“Why are you sneaking men into the house?” Anton asked quietly.

“Oh, baby.” River pulled Anton hard against his chest. “It’s not a stranger. It’s Gavin’s...friend.”

“Then why isn’t he with Gavin?” Anton peered up at Stryker with a deadly look. “If he’s Gavin’s friend.”

Well, he wasn’t making friends there. It would probably be a bad idea to mention how cute Anton was when he was huffy and annoyed. Yeah, probably a really bad idea. But Stryker both wanted to mess with Anton and protect him. Weird. He wasn’t the protective type. Never had been.

“And why are you crawling out of the bathroom window?” Gavin demanded.

“Who me?” Stryker batted his lashes at Gavin. His innocent face had a chance of getting him out of trouble. Maybe. Hopefully. His fast fingers and being able to hack any system were his real solutions. He couldn’t hack into Gavin though. That would be a cool trick if he could!

“Anton, look at me.” River cupped Anton’s face, forcing his compliance. “Baby, you know that I love you and Rainier. What’s this about?”

Stryker glanced over at Gavin. Away from the intimate scene, feeling bad for upsetting Anton. Although it hadn’t even been his idea. River had invited him in.

“Nothing,” Anton snapped. He tried to pull away, but River wasn’t having any of that.

“Nope!” River squeezed Anton tight against his chest wrapping both arms around Anton’s back. “I get that you are upset but we will not have the return of asshole Anton.”

Anton huffed. “Let me go.”

“Sure,” River drawled. “I’ll let you go and call Rainier to deal with you.”

“What?” Anton gasped. “That’s...that’s not fair.”

“Then talk to me,” River demanded.

Dropping his head on River’s shoulder, Anton mumbled something too low for Stryker to hear. Stryker grew uneasy, realizing that he was already causing trouble. He hadn’t even meant to! There was no way that Gavin was going to want Stryker to remain around his family. Stryker could never do anything right. He was always a problem.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t catch that baby. What did you say?” River asked Anton.

Stryker wanted to escape the awkward scene, but he’d have to pass the couple and Gavin. Gavin wasn’t saying a word. Just standing with his back to the wall with his arms crossed over his chest.

“I didn’t like seeing you sneaking someone into the house,” Anton whispered.

River nodded. “I won’t do it again.”

Anton's head snapped up. "What?"

"This is why you need to talk to me or Rainier instead of just closing off. If you don't like when I do something, then I won't do it."

Anton wiggled in River's arms. "Even if it's stupid? I know you wouldn't cheat on me or Rainier. I'm just being—"

"My mate," River cut him off. "And you are my mate. How you feel is important. Remember we'll tell you every day how much we love you. You're perfect for me and Rainier."

"Okay," Anton said with a sigh. "I love you too."

River hugged him hard before looking up at Stryker. He winked, easing some of Stryker's anxiety. He'd just wanted his stupid energy drink and now look what had happened.

Gavin grunted before he crossed the room. Stryker had to push down the jealousy when Gavin kissed the top of Anton's head. "You are important, Anton. Never forget that." He turned to Stryker. "Let's go."

"Wait!" Anton grabbed Gavin's arm. "Hi, Stryker. It's nice to meet you. I didn't mean to be rude."

Stryker grinned at the little dude. Little being the key word. He'd been watching long enough to know that the littles in the family had big feelings. "I think we're going to be great friends Anton. It's nice to meet you too."

"Really?" Anton's entire demeanor brightened in front of Stryker's eyes.

“Really,” Stryker replied sincerely. “And I like that you’re protective over your mates. If anyone fucks with you, just let me know.” Stryker would fuck with them back. Harder.

“Okay!” Anton looked up at River. “I have a new friend.”

“Yes, you do.” River kissed his cheek. “Everyone can see how awesome you are.”

Stryker loved how the men in this family loved one another unapologetically.

Gavin sighed. “Everything okay here now?”

“Everything is good,” Anton said. “I have a new friend. I have to go tell everyone else!” He kissed River quickly before he darted for the front door.

“Damn, he’s quick,” Stryker commented.

Gavin turned to them. “What were you really doing?”

“Nothing!” Stryker lifted his hands up to show he wasn’t holding anything.

“I wanted to meet your new man,” River said.

“I don’t believe either of you,” Gavin said. “And I don’t think the two of you should be spending time alone together.”

“Why not?” River cocked his hip and posed. “Jealous?”

“Boy,” Gavin growled. “I will call your Daddy and have him put you over his knee. And it won’t be one of those fun spankings either.”

“You wouldn’t!” River gave a fake gasp.

Stryker snorted. His new bestie was a riot.

Gavin turned to Stryker. “And you...”

“I’m just trying to get to know your friends. I mean, you carried me all the way here. Twice. Obviously, you wanted River to be my new BFF.”

Gavin’s eyes narrowed. “You are both terrible liars and nothing but trouble.” He closed his fingers around Stryker’s upper arm. “And I mean it. You two aren’t allowed to hang out without supervision.”

Stryker grinned. “Whatever you say, Papi.”

Gavin turned before he threw Stryker over his shoulder.

At this point Stryker wasn’t even surprised. Although, in Stryker’s opinion, the first time he’d been carried by Gavin had been the best. This caveman move was sexy though.

“We still need to talk,” Gavin told him.

“Fine!” Stryker lifted his hand to wave at his new bestie.

“You two have fun. Don’t forget to close the windows or the entire yard will hear you.”

“That never stops you,” Gavin called back as he stepped onto the porch.

“I like an audience,” River quipped back. “Haven’t you seen my men? They’re hot as

fuck!”

Oh yeah. Stryker really did like River. He totally needed to find out how River wanted to prank his brother. That sounded like some real fun.

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Gavin

He dropped Stryker onto the chair at the table in front of the plate of food that he'd prepared before going to look for the boy.

"When did you make this?" Stryker asked, picking up his fork.

"Do you even realize how long you were gone?"

"No?" Stryker paused with the fork up to his mouth. "It couldn't have been that long."

Gavin sat across from him and pulled his own plate closer. "Why don't I fill in some missing pieces about my family while we eat."

"Your family?"

Gavin waved his fork to indicate the property. "My family. That's what we call ourselves."

Stryker took a bite of the chicken salad that Gavin had stolen from the main house earlier. "Well some of the guys are related but not all of you."

"Chosen family," Gavin provided.

"Okay, go on."

“You know about each couple, I assume,” Gavin said.

“I know enough,” Stryker replied.

“Or you think you do,” Gavin responded with a smirk. “You can only learn so much from watching.”

“I just had that thought. So, tell me.”

“Axel and Anton come from what we affectionately call dragon land. There aren’t many dragons still around. We’ve had trouble with Axel’s father. He’s currently in the custody of the paranormal council for attacking Anton.”

“The paranormal council? Who’s that?” Stryker leaned forward as excitement flashed on his face. “And how many is not many dragons? Like, would I ever meet another one? Have I met another one?”

Gavin had him. Stryker was intrigued and keeping the boy’s attention was vital to the end game. “I doubt you have ever or will ever meet another dragon shifter. They don’t leave their land. And now that Axel’s father is gone, they’ve found peace for the first time in decades.”

“You’ve been there?” Stryker pushed his plate away. Luckily, it was empty, and the boy had gotten something more than an energy drink in his system. Yeah, Gavin had seen the boy try to sneak off with that.

“I accompanied Axel, Bryce, Anton, River, and Rainier when they went back a few months ago.”

“Holy shit! That’s awesome.”

“Axel has been collecting us since he became an adult. He left home, left everything behind, to become the alpha he was meant to be. And to get away from his father. Nate was one of the first shifters he came across.”

“The little guy that wears onesies?”

Gavin snorted. “That little guy was a sniper in the military and is still one of the best shots in the world.”

“Fuck me!”

They were really going to have to work on Stryker’s bad language if he was going to hang out with the other boys. “He’s mated to Craig and Bo.”

“The bear shifter and dog. They also disappear into the woods quite often. Portal? Noah told me about those.”

Dog? Gavin nearly choked on his last bite of food. He took a long drink of his water. “Bo is the Alpha of the hellhounds.”

“Hellhounds!” Stryker’s voice rose.

That wasn’t fear he heard. “He has his own pack but oversees all the hellhounds. Craig owns the BDSM club in town. That’s where they all met.”

“Good security. Craig knows what he’s doing,” Stryker stated.

“I’ll pass that along. Nate is a little. He has PTSD from his time in the military, and it helps calm him.”

“Bryce and Anton are littles too. And Lawson is a pup? He’s cute chasing a ball but

he and Drake need to learn to shut their curtains.”

“They don’t mind who sees,” Gavin shared. He’d walked in on Drake and Lawson too many times to count. “When Bo showed up, Craig shifted at the club, revealing himself to Lawson, River, and Seb. That was when Drake realized Lawson was his mate. He brought all three into the family.”

Stryker rested his chin on his fist as he watched Gavin closely. “Go on. Please!”

“That was around the time that Anton showed up. At the request of his father.”

“The one in the paranormal council’s custody?”

“Yes. River didn’t want anything to do with Anton when he first arrived.”

“Why not? Even if Anton isn’t my type, the man is attractive.”

“He was also a complete asshole. Under his father’s thumb. It took time for us to really get to know him. For him to trust us.”

“He obviously trusts you now,” Stryker said. “And is an adorable little.”

“That’s a little newer for him. Being little fits him though. River and Anton were dating when Rainier showed up and changed everything for them.”

“The fae king,” Stryker said. “I’ve only seen him once.”

“He spends most of his time in his own realm. He is a king and the fae outnumber both humans and shifters. He is a very busy being. River comes through the portal every day to work. He’ll bring Anton to hang out with the boys or Anton stays with Rainier.”

“And you’ve been to that realm as well?”

“Yes, several times. It’s beautiful.”

“Then why does River come here to work? I imagine being mated to the king must have some perks.”

“River works because he wants to work. Just like the rest of us,” Gavin said. “Forever is a long time to be doing nothing. Also, Shawn hired River before he was mated. Trusted him. Gave him a chance to run his own crew. To be his second. It means something to River.”

“Shawn is the panther?”

“That’s Trevor, who’s mated to Ansley, the author,” Gavin corrected. “Shawn is the wolf shifter. His mate is Sam, who owns the bookstore.”

“Sam wears the bowties,” Stryker said. “Ansley is a little as well, right?”

“Yes. Sam and Ansley are best friends.”

“They work a lot,” Stryker said. “But their mates are properly protective. I approve.”

“I’m sure they’ll love to hear that,” Gavin replied as he rolled his eyes. Both Shawn and Trevor were overprotective of their mates. They didn’t need any more encouragement. Sam and Ansley weren’t going to be happy.

“But not as protective as the ones that portal in and don’t live here. River and Lawson’s brother has a mate that scares me. And let me tell you, I’m not easily scared. Noah won’t tell me much about them though.”

Gavin nodded. He could understand. "Ash is a reaper."

"Reaper?"

"He takes the souls of the recently deceased for judgment. When there's a particularly bad person, the hellhounds help. He isn't a being that I would ever cross. So whatever River tries to rope you into, I would think twice."

Stryker pressed his lips together.

So, River had said something to his boy. Gavin wasn't surprised. "Seb also has his very own hellhound pup as protection, so keep that in mind."

"Let me guess. You've been to hell too?"

"I have. It's quite nice there. Seb and Ash live on one plane but Adam and his mate, Mal, live closer to the core."

"Mal?" Stryker frowned. "He was with you all when I first saw you. Adam is the bouncing guy who kept trying to make everyone into his minion?"

"Adam is a riot, and he collects minions like Axel collects family. Do not become one of his minions." Gavin felt like saying that was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. This was not going to end well.

Stryker hummed without making a commitment to what Gavin said.

"I mean it," Gavin warned. "Several of the demons have already become Adam's minion, including Tristan, and that demon is pure trouble."

Stryker cackled. "I like him already."

This was a mistake. Gavin had been sharing about the different people and personalities in the family to make Stryker feel more comfortable, but Gavin was already regretting this. He had the very bad feeling that Stryker was going to befriend the troublemakers in the family. Where was Bryce when Gavin needed him?

“Go on.” Stryker waved his wrist. “This is awesome. Tell me more about Tristan.”

“Tristan’s mate is human, but he’s also crazy. Don’t get too close to Tristan. Jason is Levi’s mate’s twin.”

“The park ranger and the gargoyle. Now that’s a hot couple! Why haven’t I met this twin, Jason?”

Gavin was going to let the comment about Mason and Levi go. Stryker was just trying to make him jealous. Or did he really think they were that hot? Gavin was hot. He knew it too. “They don’t live on the property. They are either in hell or stay in the old ranger’s station that used to belong to Mason before he moved in with Levi.”

“Fine. That’s so boring though.”

“Boring can be good,” Gavin replied. “Very good. It means no trouble.”

“Papi,” Stryker drawled. “Trouble is exciting. Gets the blood pumping.”

Gavin lifted a brow. “That’s what you’re going with? You do realize that I am quite aware how Dean found you.”

Stryker grinned. “That’s not fair. They were witches!”

“You are very lucky that was the first time you came across a paranormal,” Gavin pointed out.

“Okay, I’ll give you that. I wouldn’t have found you if I hadn’t been rescued.”

The boy wasn’t wrong. “It could have been the end for you.”

Stryker rolled his eyes. Seriously rolled his eyes at Gavin. “This is where the lecture starts.”

“Lecture?” Was Gavin planning on giving him a lecture? He might.

“I shouldn’t hack, blah blah blah, I shouldn’t steal, blah blah blah, it’s wrong.”

“More blah blah blah?” Gavin guessed.

“Exactly!”

“Do you take anything seriously?”

“Why would I?” Stryker leaned closer.

“Because I am trying to discuss something very serious with you.”

“I thought you were just telling me about your family,” Stryker said.

“Why do you think I’m telling you all this?”

“To get rid of me.”

“To...what?”

Stryker sighed. “I’ve had this talk before.”

“This talk?” Gavin didn’t understand. “You haven’t known about the paranormal world long.”

“Not that talk,” Stryker said. “The morning-after talk. Where you send me on my way.”

“I’m not sending you anywhere,” Gavin promised.

Stryker shook his head. “We both know that this is temporary. You’ll find your mate one day. Hearing more about your family, I’m pretty sure it will be someday soon.”

“You’re right.” Gavin slid from his chair to walk around the table. He crouched next to Gavin. “In fact, I already have.”

Stryker’s eyes widened. “Then what the fuck are you doing here with me?”

They really needed to work on his language. Gavin took a deep breath as he grasped Stryker’s hand in his. “Because you are my mate.”

Stryker stared at him.

Gavin gave Stryker’s hand a squeeze. “Did you hear me?”

Stryker blinked.

“I knew the moment I stepped inside your RV. Your scent told me everything I needed to know. Although, honestly, I was pretty sure before that,” Gavin confessed.

“I...you...”

“Mates,” Gavin repeated.

“You...”

Gavin nodded. “You are my mate.”

Stryker yanked his hand away as he jumped from the chair.

Gavin leapt to his feet and held his hands up. “Stryker—”

“No,” Stryker shouted. “Don’t say it again!”

Okay, that was not the reaction that he expected. “What?”

“No!” Stryker pointed a finger at him. “Not another word.”

Gavin opened his mouth then immediately closed it. Stryker looked scared. Not mad. Just terrified. “Str—”

“No!” He gripped his hair with his fists.

“I need you to calm down,” Gavin said softly.

“Don’t you fucking dare tell me to calm down!”

“I wasn’t,” Gavin tried.

“Just stop talking!” Stryker yelled.

Well shit. Now what?

Stryker started to pace. “Mates? This can’t be happening. This wasn’t part of the plan. The game. Now everything is all messed up. I’ll ruin everything. I always do.”

The more Stryker muttered and paced, the more Gavin grew concerned.

“I need to think about this,” Stryker whispered. “I need to think!”

“I...”

Stryker whirled. “I need to think.”

“Okay.” Gavin needed to give his mate time. He could understand that. Had Stryker not really thought this was possible? Their connection had been there from the beginning. Stryker had to know that something was drawing them together. That had been Gavin’s first clue.

Stryker headed toward the door.

“Where are you going?”

“To think!” Stryker replied. “I need a moment!”

“Wait!” Gavin called.

Stryker stopped before reaching the door. He didn’t turn but at least he was listening.

“There is more we need to discuss,” Gavin said. “Please don’t take off.”

Stryker shook his head.

“Please. It’s not safe. There’s more you need to know. At least let me finish telling you about the paranormal.”

Stryker’s shoulders stiffened. “I can take care of myself.”

Fuck! Gavin stepped closer, watching Stryker's body in case the boy did run. He stopped before reaching Stryker. Didn't touch him. "Please. I don't want you to get hurt."

"I thought the threat was gone," Stryker questioned softly.

"It is as far as we know," Gavin admitted.

"Okay." Stryker reached for the doorknob. "I just need to think. I won't leave the property."

"I'll be here when you're ready to talk," Gavin told him.

"Thanks."

* * * * *

Stryker

"Psst!" Stryker called out to River.

River froze where he was passing by the tree Stryker was hiding behind. Noah turned his head and spotted Stryker then nudged River. River glanced around then quickly made his way over to where Stryker was.

"What are you doing?" River asked crouching down beside him.

Leaning against the tree, Stryker shrugged. "Hiding." Or that was what he'd been doing for the last hour. Now he was bored. Although he wasn't ready to return to Gavin to talk...he didn't want to talk about mates. Stryker still hadn't decided what to do.

Noah plopped on his butt right next to him. “Whatcha hiding from?”

“Gavin,” Stryker confessed.

“Why are you hiding from Gavin?” River asked calmly.

Stryker wanted to be calm. He wished he could just take the news that Gavin had shared, smile, and jump on board. That was not going to happen though. Not when Stryker knew this would change everything. It was going to be a disaster. There was literally nothing in his life that Stryker hadn’t fucked up.

Noah sighed before he grabbed Stryker’s hand. Stryker squeezed Noah’s fingers. He was glad that both Noah and Dean had found family there but that didn’t mean that Stryker deserved the same. He was not a good person!

“Gavin told you that you’re his mate,” Noah guessed.

“You knew!” Stryker whispered in betrayal.

Noah shrugged. River moved to sit beside him. Their shoulders brushing.

“We guessed. It’s kind of obvious when one of the paranormals finds their special person. Gavin isn’t the touchy-feely type. He’s always sort of held himself back from the group. Not with you though. He can’t take his eyes off you,” River told him. “And he threw you over his shoulder. That was hot. I’m so gonna make Rainier carry me like that to bed later.”

“I think he’s wrong,” Stryker shared.

River shook his head. “No, you don’t.”

No, he didn't. Stryker didn't think that Gavin was wrong. He was terrified that Gavin was right.

"It's okay to be scared," River said. "I was."

"I am not scared," Stryker denied.

"Yes, you are." Noah tapped the side of his nose. "Don't forget that I can smell your emotions."

"Fucking shifters," Stryker muttered.

"I am fucking a shifter and it's awesome," River quipped. "So is being fucked by my fae king."

Stryker gasped. "You can portal to the fae realm."

River rolled his eyes. "Duh, I'm like a prince there or something."

Still gripping Noah's hand hard, Stryker grasped River's with his free hand. "Take me."

"What?"

This was the perfect solution. "Take me to fae land!"

"It's not really fae land," River said with a frown. "It's—"

"Dude!" Stryker knew this was a great idea. "Just take me."

Noah and River exchanged a look over his head.

“And stop that,” Stryker ordered. “I just need a few hours to think. I can’t do that here. Not with all the happy couples. I need some time on my own. I promised Gavin I wouldn’t leave the property though.”

“Technically the portal is on the property,” River pointed out.

“I just need a few hours,” Stryker said. He didn’t want to disappoint Gavin. Not like he’d done to everyone else in his life. Maybe there was something to this mate thing, because just the thought of disappointing Gavin had his stomach aching.

“I understand,” Noah said.

River groaned. “I’m going to get in so much trouble for this.”

That was right. Stryker slumped. It wasn’t fair to ask this of River. They were just barely friends. River didn’t owe him anything. “Never mind.”

River laughed. “Oh! I’m so going to take you. I even have the perfect place for you to get your time alone. I’m just going to get into trouble.” He winked. “I like trouble. And it’s been a while since I’ve seen Rainier pissed off.”

Stryker turned to look at his crazy friend. “Really?”

River shrugged. “Sure. I like to keep Rainier on his toes. And Anton will lovingly kiss my bruised ass for me.”

Noah laughed. “Gavin is right. You two together is crazy. I love it!” He clapped his hands.

“So, you won’t tattle on us?” Stryker asked.

“I’ve totally got your backs. If anyone asks, I’ll tell them that you’re hanging out in River’s cabin and want to be alone,” Noah said.

“We are going to cause so much chaos!” River cackled.

That sounded like fun. River and Noah were both great to be around. The three of them...yes to all the chaos. And some of the others that Gavin had spent the afternoon telling him about. Stryker would totally make a good minion. Stryker just needed some time to get his thoughts in order.

“Just wait until you meet the pixies!” River announced. “They love to cause trouble. Well, except for Fabian. That little pixie is wrapped around Anton’s finger, so don’t trust him. The others though...they’ll help us.”

Stryker climbed to his feet before he helped River and Noah up. He knew that Gavin would be hunting for him soon. The other man had agreed to give Stryker time to think. The look in his eyes had also warned that it wouldn’t be a lot of time. Stryker needed to go now.

“We have to go,” River said.

“Yeah,” Noah agreed. “I can hear Logan saying that he’s heading for a nap under his tree. He’ll know we’re here. And as much as I love Logan, he’ll tell Dean what’s going on.”

“Come on!” River tugged on Stryker’s arm. “We need to use the portal before we get caught.”

Stryker followed behind River but paused to glance back at Noah. The familiar was rubbing his hands together while grinning. Looked like Stryker had another BFF. Maybe he really could be friends with these guys. If he accepted what Gavin was

offering.

There were a lot of ifs floating around in his head.

And as much as Stryker didn't want to admit, there was some hope floating around as well, making his palms sweaty and his stomach turn. Hope was a fickle bitch after all.

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Gavin

It had been three hours. Gavin had paced his cabin, cleaned the entire space, and even made room for the few of Stryker's possession that they'd brought over. Now he was at a loss for what to do.

Should he hunt the boy down?

Or give him more time?

How much more time did Stryker need?

Gavin should probably at least check on him. Maybe bring him a drink? That would be what any good mate would do. Although Gavin was not going to take Stryker an energy drink, no matter how much the boy would probably appreciate it.

He grabbed a cold bottle of water then turned toward the door.

The knock sounded before Gavin reached it.

"Thank fuck!" Gavin murmured with relief. He set the bottle of water down on the side table before answering.

"You don't have to knock...Rainier? River?"

Rainier was scowling. He also had River by the back of his neck. "We might have an issue."

Gavin looked from Rainier to River. “What did you boys do?”

“I’ll never tell!” River replied with a pout.

“Boy!” Rainier shook him.

“But I’m not a snitch!” River whined.

“You have five seconds,” Rainier warned.

River huffed.

“What is going on?” Gavin demanded. He didn’t have time for this.

“River returned to our realm a couple of hours ago. Only for a short time,” Rainier said. “But he didn’t go alone.”

Fuck! “Where is Stryker?”

“He won’t tell me,” Rainier shook him again.

“I promised!” Stryker argued.

“And you dragged Noah into this mess with you,” Rainier said.

“I’m pretty sure Noah jumped in all alone.”

Gavin turned to see Dean dragging Noah across the lawn. What now?

“Noah!” Stryker shouted. “You told?”

“I didn’t mean to!” Noah told him. “I was FaceTiming with Cary. I knew he’d get a kick out of the story. Logan overheard me and told Dean!”

“Noah!” River screeched.

“Hey! How did Rainier find out?” Noah asked.

River flushed. “He surprised me and Anton with a visit and we...needed to use the cabin. I got distracted. I forgot I told Anton not to go inside because Stryker was supposed to be hiding in there. Anton forgot too. At least until after when he got embarrassed about being seen by Stryker. Anton didn’t want his new friend to think bad about him.”

He got busted because you were horny?” Noah accused.

“Hey! You got busted by talking too much! At least I got laid.”

“I don’t want to get laid!” Noah yelled. “Asexual, dude!”

Bringing his fingers to his mouth, Gavin gave a sharp whistle.

All four men on the porch winced.

“Where is my mate?”

“Stryker’s your mate?” Dean asked surprised. “Really?”

“Yes, I told him this afternoon. He said he needed some time. I was giving him that time. I guess that was when your familiar and River kidnapped him.”

“We didn’t kidnap him!” Noah and River said in unison.

“He said he needed to think. I just fulfilled his wish. Stryker promised not to leave the property,” River said.

“You took him to another realm,” Gavin pointed out. He was really trying to control his temper. At least he knew Stryker was safe. Well probably safe. There was no telling with River and Noah. This was why Gavin had been worried.

“True,” River said. “I left the pixies to watch over him!”

“The pixies?” Rainier growled. “They’re as mischievous as you!”

“But they’ll watch out for him.”

Gavin shook his head. “Where is he?” he demanded.

River swallowed hard. “Uh, fae land.”

“Fae land?” Rainier repeated.

“That was what Stryker called it,” Noah offered.

This was ridiculous! “Take me to my mate!” Gavin ordered.

“I’ll take you,” Rainier said. He shook River. “He wasn’t at the house. Where is he?”

River huffed. “Behind the waterfall.”

Rainier shoved River down the steps. “Go wait for me with Anton. I will be back after I drop off Gavin.”

“And you.” Dean pushed Noah toward the house. “Let’s go give Lucifer a call. You

want to talk to Cary so bad, then you can spend time with him.”

“Oh man! Luci is going to give me his disappointed face,” Noah whined.

“And probably a lecture,” Dean agreed.

Gavin turned to Rainier. “Can you please take me to my mate?”

“Come on.” Rainier waved toward the woods. Where the portal to the fae realm was located. “I’m sorry about this.”

“I knew Stryker and River together were going to be trouble. I just thought we’d have more time to come up with a plan to keep them under control.”

Rainier laughed. “I like River on the naughty side. This is crossing a line though.”

“Don’t be too hard on him. Stryker can be very convincing,” Gavin said.

“He’ll be punished. And I’m sure he’ll enjoy every minute of it.”

“Good.” He chuckled. Gavin had his own plan for his boy.

“If I open the portal, you can enter. Go through the house and ask Gerald if you need anything. You can shift and find the waterfall?”

“I’m good once you open the portal,” Gavin promised. His entire focus was getting to his mate. If Stryker was scared enough to go to another realm, Gavin had a lot more explaining to do.

Stryker had a choice. Gavin should have explained that better. Stryker could refuse their mating. Hell, they had time. They could date and get to know each other. Just

because they were meant to be didn't mean there weren't other options.

“Good luck with your mate.” Rainier gripped his shoulder before opening the portal.”

“Thanks, man.” Gavin stepped through his side of the portal. When he stepped out, he was standing in the long hallway of Rainier's upstairs.

Gerald slid out of the shadows in front of him. “Master Gavin! I wasn't expecting you. I have just pulled a fresh fruit pie from the oven. If I recall, you also enjoy black coffee?”

Gavin grinned. “Thank you for the offer, Gerald. Rainier opened the portal. It seems that River snuck my future mate into the realm.”

“That boy.” Gerald smiled wide. “He does keep our king on his toes.”

“That he does,” Gavin agreed.

“I believe the pixies have been taking your mate fruit from the garden,” Gerald told him. “I knew they were up to something.”

“I'm glad he's being taken care of. I'll just slip out and shift to collect him.”

“Very good. Please let me know if you need any assistance.”

Gavin smiled at Rainier's butler. “I appreciate it.”

Gerald led the way down the stairs and through the kitchen. He held the door open, allowing Gavin to exit. Gavin stepped out to the backyard. If someone would call the outside of the property a yard.

The fae realm was filled with intense colors. Brighter than the human world.

The flowers and plants bigger.

Everything just a little more sharper.

It was an amazing place. Gavin would have loved to have been the one to bring his mate to this realm. To take Stryker flying. Show Stryker the good part of the paranormal world.

There were times when Gavin got lost in the past. When all he could remember was tragedy and pain. That wasn't what the paranormal community stood for though.

They were survivors. Centuries of adversity and threats making the ones that were still alive stronger. Family meant something when you'd lost everything.

Gavin had been struggling. He'd just needed the reminder.

This reminder.

He'd worked hard to rebuild the life that was stolen from him.

Gavin ditched his clothes quickly, leaving them on a chair at the edge of the yard. He strode forward to the clearing that he knew wasn't far. Once he reached his destination, Gavin held his arms up to the sky.

The power inside him started to build.

Across the purple sky, lightning streaked. A rumble shook under his feet. Gavin took off at a run. He leapt and called on his shift.

He flapped his large wings once, twice. He dipped before rising into the air.

The magic of the realm pulsed down his spine.

Gavin did a few wide circles above the clearing then the house. He could feel the moisture in the air, could smell the waterfall not far away, and headed in the direction of his mate.

* * * * *

Stryker

“Thanks, buddy!” Stryker accepted another bright red apple. He added the piece to the stack. “I really do have enough to eat. I appreciate it but I don’t need anything else.”

The little red-orange pixie chattered, spraying some sort of glitter over him.

Stryker grinned. The pixies were awesome. River had been right about that. He’d been there for a few hours, plenty of time to think, but all Stryker had figured out was that he missed Gavin and his new friends. The fae land was beautiful but he wished Gavin was there to share the experience with him.

Even though he’d spent years on his own, this felt different. He was different.

He was the mate to an amazing, smart, protective shifter. Stryker was the special person that a paranormal spent their entire lives searching for. Was he really willing to give up his future because he was afraid? And it really did come down to Stryker being scared.

If the people that had given birth to him or were supposed to care for him hadn’t

wanted him around, why would Gavin? Except, Gavin had found Stryker, had looked for him, and turned the table on him.

Hadn't Gavin been unlike anyone Stryker had ever met before?

Fuck! Stryker might have screwed everything up. He'd run. Just like he always did. And now he was stuck in a strange land until someone came for him. River had a few hours left on his shift in the human realm. Stryker was now dependent on someone else and that irritated him.

The waterfall in front of him was loud.

Stryker had been tucked into a cave behind the waterfall and away from view. Even with the roar of the water coming down, Stryker heard the rumble of thunder. Damn it! He did not know how a storm in fae land was going to affect him.

The pixies chattered before they made a mad dash for the exit. Leaving him behind.

"Hey!" Stryker jumped to his feet to follow them out. "Come back!"

The sky still appeared clear without any rain falling. Stryker peered around. Interesting.

He spotted a large creature flying for him.

The beast was magnificent.

Stryker couldn't tear his gaze away. He didn't know the creatures in this strange land, but that giant bird creature did seem sort of familiar. And he was getting closer. Stryker stepped back into the cave as lightning flashed in front of him.

He blinked and Gavin flew out of the sky, landing in front of him.

“What the fuck?” Stryker screeched.

“Hello, boy,” Gavin replied.

Damn, his man was hot. And naked. Why was he naked?

“Surprised?”

He should be. “Who caved first? River or Noah?”

“They both got busted about the same time. You need better conspirators.”

Stryker shrugged. “It was sort of a last-minute plan.”

“I get that,” Gavin said.

“Are you mad?” Stryker wasn’t nervous. Not at all. He was a grown man that could make his own decisions.

“I’m not mad,” Gavin replied. “Not even that surprised. I really thought you’d go for the bike.”

“I promised not to leave the property,” Stryker pointed out.

Gavin shook his head. “You went to another realm!”

Wow, maybe Gavin was mad at him. “But technically I didn’t leave the property. Smart, right?”

“Smart?” Gavin repeated. “You’re in a strange realm, all alone, hiding from me.”

“I’m not hiding,” Stryker argued. “I just needed to think.”

“Did you? Think? Figure anything out?”

Stryker grinned. “You really want to have this conversation while you’re naked?”

“I had to leave my clothes behind when I shifted.”

“The bird!”

“Thunderbird,” Gavin said.

“You were beautiful!” Stryker was so excited. “Can I go flying with you?”

“Would you like that?” Gavin asked.

“I would love that. It has to be like flying down the interstate on my bike!”

“Just how fast do you drive that bike?” Gavin questioned.

“Fast?” Stryker stalled. “I wouldn’t speed.”

“Little liar,” Gavin said amused. He held out his hand to Stryker.

Stryker let Gavin pull him in close.

“Seriously, did you have time to think?” Gavin asked.

“I did.”

“And?”

Stryker sighed. “I don’t have all the answers. Not yet.”

“Can you answer me just one thing?”

“Sure.” Stryker hoped he could.

“Will you stick around long enough to give us a chance?” Gavin asked.

“You mean not run away,” Stryker corrected.

“Exactly. We don’t have to decide anything right away. There’s time to get to know each other better,” Gavin said.

“We’re mates,” Stryker reminded him.

Gavin chuckled. “I’m aware of that.”

“Isn’t the whole purpose of finding your special person to mate with them?” Stryker asked.

“The purpose is finding that special person.” Gavin drew Stryker back into the cave. “Just finding them.” He sat, pulling Stryker into his lap.

This was not a position that Stryker ever complained about being in. “Noah filled me in on the curse that kept the paranormal from finding their mates.”

Gavin nodded. “It wasn’t always like that. My parents were fated mates.”

“Your parents? Like your real family?”

“Yeah, my birth family. My parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. I even had a brother.”

“You said had?”

“We were hunted to extinction. I’m the last of my kind,” Gavin said softly.

Being alone in the world? That was something that Stryker was all too familiar with.
“I’m sorry for your loss.”

“I was young. Very young. And I have my family now. A family that I think you might also need,” Gavin said.

“Need?” Stryker scoffed.

Gavin cupped his face. “It’s okay to lean on someone. To trust others to have your back.”

Stryker leaned forward, closing the distance between their lips. He appreciated the words, but Stryker wasn’t ready for that big of a leap. To make such a big commitment. He also had no plan to let Gavin go.

In his time alone thinking, he did figure out that he still wanted Gavin.

Gavin was the only person who’d ever intrigued Stryker enough to make him want to take a chance. Not that he was ready yet.

Stryker gripped the back of Gavin’s neck as Gavin deepened the kiss.

He leaned against Gavin’s strong body giving into the need inside him. Stryker chased Gavin’s tongue, needing more until he had to rip his mouth away to breathe.

“It’s okay. You don’t have to admit to anything. To tell me what you’re not ready to share yet,” Gavin said. He turned, laying Stryker down on the floor of the cave.

Stryker peered up at Gavin. How did he know?

“You don’t have to say anything at all,” Gavin said before he kissed Stryker again.

Spreading his legs, Stryker loved having Gavin settle over him.

The coolness from the cave floor sunk into his back but Gavin was burning hot over him. Gavin rubbed his cock against Stryker’s cloth-covered dick. It was so unfair that Gavin was gloriously naked and Stryker wasn’t.

He pushed up hard. “Please!”

“You want something?”

“I want you to fuck me!” Stryker demanded.

“No lube,” Gavin said as he rolled his hips. “Had to leave everything behind to track you down.”

Stryker huffed. Then why had Gavin gotten him worked up? Was this punishment? Fuck! Beautiful, sexy, fucking asshole. “But—”

“But I guess you didn’t run away, technically, so you should get a reward.”

Stryker was all for rewards. He bucked his hips again. “Yeah?”

Gavin smirked then slid down Stryker’s body. He unbuttoned Stryker’s pants before pulling the zipper down. Stryker’s erection made an indecent bulge in his underwear.

“What’s this?” Gavin asked. He pushed down Stryker’s pants and underwear. Stryker lifted his hips, but Gavin only pushed his pants down to his knees.

“It’s a hard dick!” Stryker felt like screaming. “Now touch it!”

“Patience,” Gavin admonished. “I’ve only gotten started.”

“Started?” Stryker swallowed hard. What did he mean?

Gavin hummed. Wrapping his fingers around the base of Stryker’s cock, he looked up and met Stryker’s gaze. “I’ve been thinking.”

“Thinking?” Thinking was overrated when there was so much more fun to have.

“I need to come up with a plan to keep you from getting bored.” Gavin licked the tip of his shaft.

Stryker jerked. “I’m not bored now.”

“I can’t be buried inside you twenty-four hours a day,” Gavin said.

That sounded like an awesome plan to Stryker.

“And your mouth can only be wrapped around my dick so much.”

“I do like to have my mouth busy,” Stryker argued.

Gavin gave a quick suck then popped off Stryker’s cock.

Stryker kicked his foot against the floor. “Come on!”

“We’re negotiating,” Gavin replied. He licked up Stryker’s shaft.

“Fuck!” Stryker shouted. “I’ll do whatever you want! Just suck me.”

Gavin chuckled. His breath tickled over Stryker’s slit. “That’s a very dangerous thing to say.”

“Please!” Stryker begged.

“I guess we can finish this conversation later. When you’re able to focus better,” Gavin told him.

Stryker opened his mouth to speak but gurgled when Gavin finally, finally, took his cock all the way down to the back of his throat. Gavin sucked him down, came back up, then down again.

His eyes rolled back as Gavin didn’t give him any time to adjust to the fast and frantic pace he set. Stryker couldn’t keep up. Gavin was literally sucking every thought from his mind.

He didn’t care what Gavin wanted. Stryker would give Gavin anything if he’d just let Stryker come. He wanted to come! Stryker sobbed out in frustration when the tingling started, but Gavin lifted his head.

“Just one more question,” Gavin said. His fingers firm around Stryker holding off Stryker’s orgasm.

Oh, Gavin was going to pay for this. Stryker would get his revenge. After he got to come! “What?”

“Who is my good boy?”

Stryker tried to reply. He wanted to. Gavin took Stryker's cock back in his mouth and that was all Stryker could think about. He yelled as Gavin brought him to climax.

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Stryker

“No!” he shouted. “No! You fucking fuck fuckhead!”

“Jeez! We really need to work on your language.”

Stryker glanced up from the screen for a quick moment. He couldn't get distracted by Gavin being all hot and sexy while making them dinner. Damn! In nothing but a pair of faded and torn jeans Gavin was the poster boy for a yummy silver Daddy.

They'd showered together once they'd returned to Gavin's cabin before fucking once Stryker had found the lube in a drawer of the bedroom. Now freshly clean and hungry, Stryker had decided to check in on his programs. That was when he'd seen the alerts. The alerts he'd missed while hiding in the fae land. Shit!

Gavin lifted a brow. “Is there a problem?”

Damn! He had gotten distracted. “This fucker is better than I gave him credit for.”

“The fucking fuck fuckhead?” Gavin asked.

Okay, that had been a lot of fucks in one sentence. “Yes!”

Gavin moved a pan off the stove and walked over to stand behind Stryker.

Stryker couldn't help the way that his shoulders stiffened. It had been hard enough to log on in the middle of the kitchen with Gavin so close, but now Gavin was looking

at what Stryker was doing.

“I’ll be honest. I don’t know what any of that means,” Gavin said.

That wasn’t the relief it should have been. “I’ll take care of it.” He typed commands, hoping to backtrack. At least enough to throw off that fucking fuck fuckhead private dick off his trail. How? How had this even happened. Stryker hadn’t been away from his laptop that long. It seemed the private dick hadn’t needed long at all.

“Take care of what?” Gavin questioned.

“Nothing.” He kept typing. Aaron Johnson, the private detective, had to have gotten help from another hacker. There was no way that he’d manage to piggyback off Stryker’s network without help.

Stryker was going to find out who helped the PI and that damn agent and he was going to—

He slid across the kitchen as Gavin yanked the chair back.

Stryker grunted as the back of the chair hit the far wall. Gavin crouched in front of him. He snapped his fingers in front of Stryker’s face.

Stryker scowled. “What? I’m busy.”

“What did you do?” Gavin demanded.

“Nothing!” Stryker threw his hands up. “I’m just working.”

“Working on what? I thought you worked for yourself.”

“I do!” He did not have time for this.

“And?”

“Someone I was tracking is now tracking me,” Stryker told him. That would have to be enough of an explanation.

“Why were you tracking them?”

Damn it! “Because I felt like it.”

“You’re after money. It’s always about the money. You told me that once.”

He wasn’t going to be able to focus until he confessed. “I might have borrowed the RV that I drove here.” Stryker grinned. “It was just sitting in a storage center. No one was using it!”

“So, you stole it,” Gavin said.

“I borrowed it. I’ll give it back!”

“Yes, you will.” Gavin shook his head. “Who did you steal it from? Someone dangerous?”

“Not dangerous,” Stryker lied.

Gavin narrowed his eyes.

“He’s not a killer or anything like that,” Stryker informed him.

“Who is he,” Gavin demanded.

Stryker just knew that Gavin was going to be mad.

“Stryker,” Gavin growled out.

“He’s nobody. Just an agent with the federal government.”

Gavin stiffened. “A federal agent? What agency?”

Stryker frowned. “I don’t actually know. It didn’t come up. Huh. That’s weird, isn’t it.”

Gavin blinked slowly.

“In my defense, I’ve been a bit distracted.” It was sort of Gavin’s fault. If Stryker had more time before needing to get to Gavin, then he could have dug a little deeper into the agent.

“And this agent is on your trail?” Gavin asked.

“Technically the private detective he hired is on my trail. I can fix it though!” Stryker assisted.

“A private detective? And he’s looking for you?”

“Yeah...” Stryker needed this conversation to end.

“And you’re going to do what?” Gavin asked.

“Lead him in the opposite direction.” It had worked for him in the past.

“All he wants is the RV?” Gavin questioned.

“Sure.” At least that was all that Stryker was going to agree to.

“So, we need to get rid of the RV. Put it someplace he can retrieve it?”

That might work. “Then I can leave him a message where he can find it.”

Gavin nodded before he rose. He pulled his cell phone from his back pocket.

“What are you—”

Gavin held up one finger.

Stryker opened his mouth, but Gavin turned and walked to where he’d been preparing dinner. Stryker did not like being ignored.

“I have a job for you and your mate,” Gavin said into the phone.

“Who are you talking to?” Stryker demanded. He could clean up his own mess.

“I bet. I think you’ll like this one. I need you to get an RV somewhere away from the property.”

Stryker hadn’t technically agreed to giving up the RV yet.

“That’s the thing. I need you to avoid a private detective and the federal agent that hired him to find his missing RV.”

Stryker stood from the chair before picking it up and returning to sit in front of his laptop. If Gavin was going to ignore him then Stryker would get back to work.

Gavin’s warm chuckle filled the kitchen. “I thought you’d like that challenge. Can

you come up tonight?”

Opening a map on his laptop, Stryker began to search other state parks or RV parks where the vehicle could be dropped off. He needed somewhere close but not too close.

Gavin strolled back over to once again lean over Stryker’s shoulder. Stryker was totally going to have to break him of that habit. No one looked over his shoulder. Not when he was working.

“I’ll find a place. Just come to my cabin when you two get here. Thanks.” He hung up the phone before grabbing the back of Stryker’s neck.

“I can fix this myself,” Stryker said. He didn’t want to admit that he was glad Gavin was taking control of the situation. Stryker could fix everything but that also meant having to leave Gavin, even if it was for a short time.

He didn’t want to leave Gavin.

Not yet.

Stryker didn’t know what to think about the whole mating thing, but Gavin had promised that they had time.

“I’m sure you can. But answer me this, could you do it without leaving?”

Gavin read him right. It was almost irritating. Kind of sexy. “I need to dump the RV before they find it here,” Stryker admitted.

“Then Jason and Tristan will leave with the RV tonight,” Gavin said. “You need to find a location where they can leave the RV in the same condition that you stole it

in.”

“Borrowed,” Stryker corrected.

Gavin snorted.

“Jason and Tristan?” Stryker had to think about who that was. “Oh! Mason’s twin?”

“Yes, and his mate is a demon named Tristan,” Gavin said. “They’re both as big of troublemakers as you. They’ll have some fun. They love being on the road. They’ll be up soon. Find them a location.”

“Up?” Stryker asked as he started to research the site close by.

“They live in hell. When they’re in this realm, they stay in Mason’s old cabin.”

“That’s right.” Stryker remembered Gavin telling him that when they were talking about all the mates. “And they’ll help? What do they want in return?” He had money. He could pay them.

“They want the adventure. Tristan gets bored in hell and loves to come up to this realm. Especially if there’s food involved.”

“A demon obsessed with human food?” Stryker worried for his chicken nugget stash in the freezer. He needed to grab those bags.

“And Jason likes to indulge his mate.”

“All they need is the promise of food?” Stryker questioned.

“It didn’t hurt that they would be outrunning a federal agent and his hired thug, as

Jason put it.”

These were totally Stryker’s type of people. And he thought they were all good guys. They weren’t so squeaky clean as Stryker had thought. Stryker might have been so obsessed with Gavin that he allowed his focus to be too much on Gavin and not enough on those around him.

Stryker had enjoyed watching the members of Gavin’s family but hadn’t learned enough about them.

Hope bloomed in his chest.

Was this what Stryker had been waiting for?

Could he really find a home here?

He looked up at Gavin. Really looked at him. This man, paranormal, whatever, wanted Stryker. Even before he knew that they were mates. He’d rolled his eyes and teased Stryker but never once demanded that Stryker changed. Even now he was taking charge to ensure Stryker’s safety.

“Kiss me,” Stryker ordered.

Gavin lifted a brow. “Excuse me?”

“I want you to kiss me,” Stryker told him.

Gavin leaned down, pressing his lips against Stryker’s. Stryker opened, allowing Gavin’s tongue to invade his mouth. Stryker sucked on Gavin’s tongue. Mmm, he liked this.

Too soon, Gavin was pulling away. “Find us a location,” Gavin said. “I need to come up with some sort of dessert for Tristan. He has a bit of a sweet tooth.”

“Fine.” Stryker sighed dramatically. “I want my chicken nuggets out of the freezer though.”

Gavin snorted. “We’ll rescue your nuggets.”

They had better. Stryker had even paid for those bags of deliciousness.

* * * * *

Gavin

Shaking his head, Gavin was even more certain he should have kept Stryker away from Jason and Tristan. Tristan was licking the plate of brownies that Drake had whipped up for them, but Jason and Stryker were too excited, discussing some of Stryker’s more risky jobs. And hell. Why was Stryker so interested in hell?

“The big question is, how do I become a hell minion?” Stryker asked Jason.

Jason cackled.

“No!” Gavin said immediately.

Both Stryker and Jason looked at him in surprise like they’d forgotten he was there.

Gavin gave them a finger wave. “Sitting right here.”

“Of course, Papi!” Stryker smirked. “I would never try to become a hell minion.”

“I heard you,” Gavin reminded him. This boy. He wanted to laugh. Stryker was going to keep Gavin on his toes. The years of loneliness seemed to have disappeared, and he hadn’t even mated with Stryker yet.

Gavin had always known that he wouldn’t be happy with a sweet and compliant partner. He needed to be challenged. Stryker was perfect for him. Gavin had spent so long cursing the fates and now he had to admit that they knew exactly what they were doing.

It was a good thing that Gavin was fully prepared for the trouble that Stryker would bring his way.

He sent his text message.

“I think you need to check your hearing, old man,” Stryker quipped. “I obviously asked how to avoid becoming a hell minion.”

“And,” Jason added, “I obviously did not text Adam to tell him that he had a new minion to introduce into the family.”

Gavin set his phone on top of the table. “And I didn’t just text Mal to have him keep Adam busy. We both know how distractible that boy is. Especially when it comes to his Daddy.”

“Damn it!” Jason laughed.

Stryker pushed out his bottom lip. “I don’t get to become a minion?”

“I also messaged Ash and Atom to loop them in. There will be no sneaking off to the hell realm,” Gavin told them. He was not a novice to the antics of the boys in this family.

Jason shrugged at Stryker. “I tried.”

Stryker huffed.

Gavin was feeling pretty smug.

“Although,” Jason said, “Levi does go to hell a few times a week to help train the demons. Maybe I could—”

“Already let Mason know. Your brother promised to thwart any plans that you all come up with,” Gavin replied. Yeah, he was good.

“Mason is such a goody-goody,” Jason said in disgust.

“Levi will never go against his mate’s wishes. You won’t find any help there,” Tristan said as he glanced around the kitchen. “Is there pie?”

“Oh! I almost forgot. Mason wants you to bring back some jerky from the place by the river that you stopped by last time where you found that jelly you liked so much. He said you’d know what he meant,” Gavin said.

“Yes!” Tristan danced in his chair. “They had the best jelly. Like forty different types. There was fruity, and spicy, and—”

Jason groaned. “Damn it! I spent like three hundred dollars last time because Tris wanted everything.”

“It was so good!” Tristan exclaimed.

Gavin winked at Stryker when he caught the boy’s gaze. He had this in the bag. Stryker might be slippery, but Gavin didn’t need computer programs. He had

instincts. Plus, several years of dealing with the boys in this family.

Tristan jumped to his feet. “We should get on the road! Remember that diner we stopped at that were famous for their homemade ice-cream shakes? We can stop there. It’s on the way!”

Jason climbed to his feet. “Sorry, Stryker. I’ve got a mission to complete and a mate to fill with human food.”

“It’s fine.” Stryker waved his hand. “I’m sure River or Noah—”

“River is grounded to the fae realm and Noah is visiting Lucifer for the week,” Gavin supplied.

Stryker turned and stared at him. “Are you serious? How did you do all this?”

Gavin smirked. “You really wanted to grab those bags of chicken nuggets. I had time.”

“I got my bike and stuff too,” Stryker reminded. It hadn’t all been about his nuggies. Or the energy drinks.

“You did,” Gavin said. “Oh, did I remember to tell you that I gave the energy drinks to Craig for his club?”

“You stole my energy drinks?” Stryker asked in disbelief.

His boy was right. Fucking with people was fun. Better when it was his little troublemaker. “Borrowed,” Gavin retorted.

“Borr—”

“I think that’s our cue to leave, mate,” Jason said, standing.

“Food!” Tristan jumped up.

“We’re doing a favor for Gavin and Stryker. Dropping off the RV. Then we get food,” Jason said.

“Of course, mate,” Tristan agreed happily. He raced over to Jason and picked him up then threw him over his shoulder. “Work then food!”

They were gone before Stryker could thank them.

There was one more person he needed to show his appreciation for. Stryker rose to cross over to where Gavin was slouching in his chair. Gavin watched him but there was a little smirk on his lips that turned Stryker on. Gavin turned, keeping Stryker in his sight. Perfect.

“I appreciate your help.” Stryker stepped between Gavin’s legs.

“It might take time, but you’ll eventually realize that you can trust me. Us.”

Stryker nodded. “Even if you did prove to be a little sneaky.” He sank to his knees as he placed his palms on Gavin’s thighs.

“I have to be able to keep up with my boy,” Gavin replied. His breathing picked up. He was just as turned on.

“I am a bit much. I’ve been told that enough times.” Stryker licked his lips, delighting when Gavin’s nostrils flared and his pupils dilated.

“Not too much. The perfect amount,” Gavin assured him.

Stryker loved that Gavin could read him so well. “That just leaves the question of how to thank you.”

Gavin leaned forward and cupped his face. “You don’t ever have to show me anything. I’d do anything for you.”

“What if I want to show you how much I appreciate you? Maybe that would make me feel better.”

“I am all about making you feel good.” Gavin sat back.

Stryker ran his hands up Gavin’s thighs. “You know that I can tell you're not wearing any underwear. You do love to tease me.”

“You seem to enjoy it when I wear these jeans. You always taunted me until I gave you a show.”

“They’re indecent,” Stryker replied. “I love them.”

Gavin smirked.

“How about you open them up and prove to me that you aren’t wearing anything under. Just in case I’m wrong,” Stryker requested.

“Whatever my good boy wants,” Gavin drawled.

Fuck! Stryker loved hearing those words. And Gavin knew it.

Gavin unbuttoned his jeans before he slowly lowered the zipper. Stryker had to swallow back a whimper when Gavin’s hands remained blocking his sight.

“Show me,” he pleaded.

Folding back the ends of his jeans, Gavin revealed his erection.

“Take it out,” Stryker demanded. Gavin’s cock was so beautiful. Big and thick with a large vein running down the length.

“You want to suck me?” Gavin drew his shaft from his pants, holding himself around the base.

“I do.” He was dying for it.

“If you want a reward, you’re going to do it my way,” Gavin said.

Even about to get a blowjob, Gavin was still so bossy. That was so hot. He nodded.

“Wrap your lips around the crown,” Gavin told him.

Leaning forward, Stryker breathed in Gavin’s muscular scent before complying. Closing his lips around the tip of Gavin’s shaft while breathing through his nose.

Gavin threaded his fingers into Stryker’s hair. “Suck me, gently.”

Okay, Stryker could do that. He slowly sucked on Gavin’s shaft, and it wasn’t long until he was rewarded with a burst of flavor on his tongue.

“Take more,” Gavin encouraged.

Stryker drew back and swallowed then returned to lavish attention to Gavin’s dick. This time he slid more of Gavin’s cock into his mouth. Gavin allowed him to bob a few times before he tightened the fingers he had in Stryker’s hair. “Stop.”

He immediately stopped.

“Suck. Don’t move. Just suck.”

Saliva dripped from the corner of his mouth and Stryker swallowed then sucked. It was harder this time. With half of Gavin’s length in his mouth.

“Stay there,” Gavin ordered. He slowly pumped his hips. “Suck!”

Oh! A sexy new game!

Gavin held on firmly to Stryker’s hair as he thrust into Stryker’s mouth, telling Stryker when to suck. There was nothing Stryker needed to do other than obey. Closing his eyes, Stryker was able to concentrate on the feelings growing inside him.

This was more than just giving a random man a blowjob. Gavin cared about him. Even as he barked out the word suck, he was also praising Stryker. Telling Stryker what a good boy he was and what a good job he was doing.

So, maybe Stryker was kinkier than he thought.

Because there was nothing compared to the pride and happiness that filled him as Gavin spoke softly to him.

“Such a good boy for me. Open your throat. That’s it. You are doing so well. Suck, boy. That’s it. Good,” Gavin repeated over and over.

Even as hard as his cock was, the rest of Stryker’s body was relaxed and floaty.

He didn’t even have to think about what to do when Gavin ordered him to suck. It was almost as if his mind was connecting to Gavin instead of his own body.

This was heaven.

“I’m going to come now. I want you to swallow it down like the good boy you are,” Gavin murmured.

Whatever Gavin wanted. Anything.

“Now, boy,” Gavin said.

Stryker swallowed as cum filled his mouth. He drank it down while his own cock pulsed and he filled his underwear without ever being touched.

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Gavin

“You’ve got it,” Leo said grinning at Gavin.

Gavin beamed at his brother. It felt good to have Leo proud of him. Gavin had been struggling as he learnt to build a fire, but he finally got it. He’d made a fire with nothing more than what they’d found in the woods. “But why do I have to learn if you already know how?” Gavin asked.

Leo patted his back. “We’re a team. It’s important to know everything I do just in case I’m busy or something.”

Gavin didn’t know what to think about that.

A lot had been going on lately.

They’d had to leave their nice big house behind with all his toys. His mom and dad would whisper to each other anytime Gavin was in the room. They thought he didn’t hear them or what anyone else said. Gavin did hear though. He was getting really good at sneaking around like Leo showed him.

Not that Gavin would tell Leo. His brother was hiding things from him too.

Hunters.

The word was said with fear.

Gavin might be young but he knew they were running from something. Why else would everyone in his family from grandparents to aunts and uncles have packed up and moved with them?

If it was these hunters that everyone feared then Gavin vowed to learn how to fight them. Leo and Dad wanted Gavin to learn how to survive off the land. It was boring stuff that was awfully hard. Gavin wanted to fight! He'd been practicing when he snuck away from his family.

He was getting faster too.

Even though he was too young to shift, Gavin wanted to be an asset. He wanted to make his family proud.

A loud snap came from farther in the woods and Leo stiffened.

"What—" Gavin started.

Leo slipped his hand over Gavin's mouth. "Shh."

Gavin nodded and Leo removed his palm.

Gavin strained to hear what was happening. His senses weren't as good as Leo's but Gavin had been practicing. Leo's eyes widened before he whispered 'run!'

He pushed off the log he'd been sitting on. Leo was beside him, urging Gavin to run faster. He tried. Gavin wanted to be able to keep up with his brother, but Leo's legs were longer.

"We need to get back to the cabin," Leo told him. He wasn't even breathing hard.

Gavin was. He couldn't catch his breath.

Did the hunters find them?

Were his mom and dad okay?

What about his grandparents? They were too old to run!

"Leo?" Gavin panted out as he leapt over a big branch.

"Everything's fine. We just need to get home. It's late."

Gavin could smell his brother's fear.

Fear stank. It was foul and made Gavin's stomach hurt.

He'd run faster! Gavin could do it! He needed to get to his family. Run! he told his little legs. Run fast!

"Gavin!"

He sat up in bed, clutching his chest, and he panted, trying to catch his breath. Stryker was holding on to his arm with his nails digging into Gavin's flesh.

"Fuck, man!" Stryker released him to run his hand roughly over his face.

"Are you okay?" Gavin asked.

Stryker dropped his hand to glare at Gavin. "I'm fine. You were the one thrashing in bed."

The nightmare. Damn it, Gavin had hoped that he'd move past this. "I'm sorry I woke you." He moved to get out of bed, but Stryker grabbed the wrist he'd braced on the mattress. "Where are you going?"

"I'll let you get back to sleep."

"Where are you going to go?" Stryker demanded.

"I just need some air," Gavin said. He was doing his best not to show how much the dream had affected him.

"Okay." Stryker rolled out of bed.

"What are you doing?" Gavin knew the nightmare was still messing with him when he just stared stupidly at Stryker.

"Well, Papi, you need air. Let's go get some." Stryker bent to grab a pair of shorts off the floor.

"You can go back to sleep," Gavin offered.

Stryker yanked the shorts over his hips. "Or we can get some air."

Shaking his head, Gavin climbed off the bed. He wasn't in a place to argue with the boy.

"Come on," Stryker coaxed. He grabbed the top blanket from the bed. "I saw a pretty comfortable-looking rocker on your porch. I'll sit in your lap and cuddle while you tell me about the dream."

"You want to cuddle?" Gavin asked in disbelief.

“Hey! I can totally cuddle.” Stryker smirked. “I think.”

Gavin laughed, catching himself off guard. Usually, he spent hours in the air after a nightmare, but that meant leaving Stryker. And he was already feeling better. Just seeing Stryker sleepily drag the blanket from the room helped.

“Come on, Papi,” Stryker said. “I’ll even let you give me a few kisses to make sure you’re feeling better.”

Little brat. Gavin followed behind though as Stryker strode to the front door. Stryker had been calling him Papi more since their scene in the kitchen earlier. Gavin hadn’t meant for things to play out that way, but Stryker had submitted beautifully for him. Which led Gavin to believe that the nightmare wouldn’t plague him. He’d been wrong.

Stryker opened the front door, allowing the cool night breeze inside. Gavin shivered but it wasn’t from the cold. His overly heated skin pebbled though. Stryker threw the blanket over his shoulders before gesturing Gavin out the door.

Gavin sauntered forward and paused in front of Stryker to place a gentle kiss on his lips. The boy had promised him kisses after all.

He drew back and winked before stepping outside and onto the deck.

The wind brushed over his naked form as Gavin stood peering out at the property in front of him. Another reminder that he wasn’t alone. His chosen family was there.

Gavin had kept the nightmares to himself although according to Levi, the family was worried about him. He hadn’t wanted to share with them his past trauma but maybe it wouldn’t be too bad to talk about it with Stryker. His mate.

Decision made, Gavin turned.

Stryker sat on the arm of the chair, watching Gavin with a sweet look on his face.

Gavin walked over and sat in the chair that Bo had custom made for all the cabins. “Bo made this chair,” he informed his boy.

“The hellhound alpha?”

“He makes custom furniture,” Gavin shared. He pulled Stryker into his lap and fixed the blanket to make sure that Stryker was covered. “These chairs are special though.”

Stryker ran his hand over the arm he’d been sitting on. Bo had carved the image of a thunderbird into the wood. “What makes these so special?”

“The wood is from hell. It looks like the oaks of our world, thanks to Adam’s abilities, but it originated from hell.”

“That’s pretty cool,” Stryker commented.

“It means that it’s fireproof.”

Stryker’s eyes widened. “Really?” He looked back at the chair with renewed interest.

“All the cabins have been made with the same material. Add in a little magic and we never have to worry about being burned out of our homes.”

“Is that a concern?” Stryker asked.

“It was when I was a kid,” Gavin told him. “The hunters would set fire to the homes of the paranormal creatures they were hunting. Once the paranormals tried to escape,

they would run right to the people trying to kill them.”

“Fuck,” Stryker spat.

“It didn’t matter if it was women or children. Predator or prey. The paranormal weren’t people to the hunters.”

“And you went through this? I remember you saying something about the hunters when we were tracking the coven,” Stryker said.

“I was young but yes. My family was small, but we were close. When rumors began to spread about the attacks, my parents moved all of us from our homes. We hid out in an old farmhouse in a town that was close to some woods.”

“You had to leave your homes?”

Gavin nodded. “It was good that we did. When I went back, there was nothing left.” His entire childhood house had been burned to the ground. Gavin had tried to scavenge and luckily his grandma had a cellar of canned food, but it had nearly broken Gavin. It had been about a year after he’d been the sole survivor.

“You had to see that?” Stryker asked. “I’m sorry.” He kissed Gavin’s chin.

“Thanks.” Gavin did not want to reflect on that time in his life. He was trying to explain without falling into a flashback. “It was only material things, but it hurt. To see my childhood toys burned to ashes. The pictures of my family. The pillows my grandma made. I didn’t understand how anyone could be so cruel. Why they would do that. Even after it was a fire that had taken us out.”

“Not all of you,” Stryker pointed out.

“My father made an escape path under the floorboards that was only big enough for me,” Gavin explained. “I could hide there and if need be crawl out to an exit into the woods.”

“By yourself?”

“I was the only one unable to shift. I hadn’t hit puberty yet. They needed a way for me to hide.”

“Huh, I hadn’t even thought about if you could shift from birth or not.”

“It’s different per shifter species.”

“There’s so much I still don’t know. This paranormal shit just keeps getting more and more interesting.”

“If someone was writing a book then it could go on forever,” Stryker mused.

“Maybe someone will.”

“So, if you couldn’t shift like everyone else than you needed a way to run,” Stryker said.

“The plan was for me to go into the woods. Wait. I did that but no one ever came for me.”

“They were killed? All of them?”

Gavin swallowed hard then nodded. “My parents, my grandparents, my brother, aunts, uncles, and cousins. That was when I became the last of my kind.”

Stryker's eyes filled.

Gavin was shocked by the unusual show of emotion.

"It's okay." He grasped Stryker's hand.

"You were just a child. Alone. Afraid."

Ah, so that hit close to home. Gavin didn't know Stryker's full story, but he'd put enough of their conversations and things that Stryker said when he was bragging about his hacking to know that he'd been failed by those who should have protected him.

"My father and brother made sure I knew how to survive. My mother and grandma showed me other life lessons. Each member of my family made certain to teach me whatever skills they knew. I was the most well-trained child in all the realms."

"They wanted you to be prepared."

"I think they knew," Gavin admitted.

"Knew what?"

"That we wouldn't be able to outrun the hunters. No matter how far we went. Eventually the hunters would catch us. Our days were numbered."

Stryker hissed. "I don't know what would be harder? Knowing there was nothing you could do to keep the ones you loved safe or being the one left behind."

Gavin had asked himself that same question for decades. Would it have been better to die with his family? "I chose to live."

“I’m glad you did,” Stryker said.

“Me too.”

“If I’d been there, I would have fried every electronic they owned. They would have been powerless against my masterful hacking.”

Gavin chuckled. “You do realize this was before the internet, right?”

“Wow,” Stryker drawled. “You really are an old man.”

Gavin pinched Stryker’s side. His hands were under the blanket, but it was all he could reach.

“Now tell me how you hunted the hunters,” Stryker demanded with a little bounce.

“What makes you think I did?” Gavin asked.

“Really?” Stryker rolled his eyes. “You’re my Papi! Of course you hunted them down. They killed your family.”

“I did,” Gavin revealed. “It was after I met Axel. I’d just turned twenty-five.”

“You met Axel that long ago?”

Gavin peered around the property in front of him. “There was nothing but wilderness here. Axel had a connection to this land. He wasn’t an alpha yet, but he knew this was where he was meant to be.”

“That’s so cool! Tell me more. And I want all the gory details! Did Axel help?”

“Not at first,” Gavin said. “We shared a few meals while camping out in the forest. I didn’t realize at the time that I also felt a connection with the land here. I thought it was just being around another paranormal. One as old as I was.”

“So, you were on a solo mission?”

“I’d seen the devastation that the hunters left behind. They wiped out entire species,” Gavin said. “They needed to be stopped.”

“And you stopped them.”

“I played my part. I’d been living in the woods for so long that some of the other paranormal creatures had banded together. I missed the bloodiest of the battles but there were a few dozen groups that had scattered.”

“Like Mason and Jason’s family,” Stryker said.

“Yeah, their great- great-great-grandfather. Their family spent generations sharing the secret of paranormal creatures. Learning to hunt us. They were both smart and determined. The worst of the worst.”

Stryker snorted. “Humans have proven to be the cruelest of creatures.”

“Time and time again,” Gavin agreed. “I hated humans for a very long time.”

“I still hate humans,” Stryker told him.

Gavin grinned. “It didn’t matter if they were hunters or not. I never thought I would trust a human until I met up with Axel once again.”

“But wasn’t it just the paranormal of you at first?” Stryker asked.

“Axel never restricted his protection to just our kind. If a human needed help, he would help,” Gavin said.

“The ultimate alpha,” Stryker quipped.

“He really is,” Gavin agreed.

“I’m glad you found him.”

“I think the fates played a hand in it,” Gavin shared.

“Like they had a hand in us?” Stryker questioned.

“There was a reason that you were captured by the witches,” Gavin said. “That Dean and Noah were there to rescue you. It might have taken a long time, but the fates made sure we met. The rest is up to us.”

The smile fell from Stryker’s face.

“What is it?”

“Can I hate the fates a little even if I’m glad they put us together?”

“I do,” Gavin assured him. “I think it’s okay.”

Stryker closed his eyes before he nodded. He opened his eyes to look up at Gavin.

“Okay.” He leaned forward to hover in front of Gavin. “Thank you for telling me.”

“It was easier than I thought,” Gavin told him. “You make me feel...”

“Feel?” Stryker asked when Gavin didn’t continue.

“Just feel. You make me feel when I haven’t in too long.”

Stryker nodded. “You make me want.”

“Want what, boy?”

Stryker shrugged. “Everything”

What an amazing, complicated, and sweet young man. Gavin imagined not many saw this side of Stryker. Just like Gavin was certain that no one had ever seen Stryker’s submission before either. “I want to give you everything.”

Stryker began to close the distance between their lips. “I think I promised you kisses.”

“You did indeed.” Their lips were only a breath apart.

“We can start with kisses,” Stryker said. “Then maybe you can fuck me.”

Gavin chuckled. “What if I want to keep you out here with me? Maybe I’m not done getting air.”

“Who said we had to go inside?” Stryker countered.

Gavin ran his hand from Stryker’s side to the front of his shorts. “I’m going to have to start carrying lube everywhere I go.”

Stryker laughed. He wiggled and squirmed before his hand came out of the blanket as he held up a travel package of lube.

Gavin plucked it from his fingers. “Where did you get this?”

“I grabbed it when I picked up my things. I didn’t only have a freezer full of nuggets,” Stryker said.

“Well then, boy,” Gavin said. “I think you need to get rid of those shorts and come ride my cock.”

“Yes, Papi,” Stryker breathed out.

* * * * *

Stryker

Rolling over in bed, Stryker was surprised to find that he wasn’t alone. Pleasantly surprised. Gavin lay on his back with an arm thrown over his head. His naked chest moved in a rhythmic up and down as he breathed deeply in sleep.

It was so different than watching from his monitor.

Better because he could reach out and touch. As a matter of fact, Stryker would do just that. Lying on his side, Stryker placed his palm over Gavin’s right pec. Under his hand, Gavin’s heart was a steady beat. His skin was warm.

And Stryker didn’t need to only touch with his hands either.

Leaning over, Stryker took the chance to run the tip of his tongue across Gavin’s left nipple.

In his sleep, Gavin moaned.

Ha! Stryker liked that response. So he did it again.

There was a hint of sweat from their earlier antics. Gavin had fucked Stryker so good that Stryker had passed out on Gavin's chest. He hadn't woken until Gavin carried him to bed. Carried again. Gavin seemed to like to do that and Stryker was not going to complain.

Scooting lower, Stryker pushed the sheet down Gavin's body to reveal his stomach. Abs. Gavin had real, sexy, firm abs. Perfect for Stryker's tongue to play with.

He licked from ab to ab as he saw Gavin's erection growing under the sheet.

Mmm, something else for him to lick.

Stryker lowered the sheet even more, stopping when it reached Gavin's upper thighs. And right in front of his face was Gavin's big thick cock. Yummy! Maybe even better than a handful of chicken nuggets from the air fryer.

Oh! Stryker needed to introduce Gavin to the air fryer that he kept from the RV. Maybe he would do that after a little morning appetizer. Stryker wrapped his fingers around Gavin's cock before bringing it to his mouth.

"You know how to suck me," Gavin murmured. "Get to it."

Stryker peered up. "Yeah?"

"Yes, do it."

Stryker stroked Gavin. "Are you sure? You were just sound asleep."

"Someone woke me up by drooling all over me," Gavin said.

"I wasn't drooling! I was licking!"

“Then lick my cock before you put it in your mouth,” Gavin ordered.

He did love when Gavin got all bossy. Stryker licked Gavin from the base of his cock to the tip. He twirled his tongue around the head before sucking down half of Gavin’s dick.

Gavin thrust up, shoving the rest of his length deep.

Stryker gagged but that wasn’t enough to have him stop. He pulled up and caught himself before he dove back down. This time Gavin’s cock hit the back of his throat. He gagged again as his eyes watered.

“Such a good boy.” Gavin gripped his hair as he started to thrust again. “You’re doing so well. Come on, boy, take me down that tight throat of yours.”

That same floating as the night before began to fill him.

Giving up control, Stryker relaxed and let Gavin use him.

“That’s it.” Gavin plunged deep. “Perfect. Such a good boy.”

Stryker’s hard cock pulsed along with each thrust of Gavin’s hips. What a fucking way to wake up! This was going into the plus side of his mental list for mating.

Stryker

“Hello, friends!”

Stryker turned from where he’d been leaning against the tree with Lawson and Sam. He loved getting to know the other men in the family. Even if Stryker’s new bestie and other troublemaking friend had been conveniently missing from family breakfast, Stryker wasn’t short of new friends.

“That’s Adam,” Lawson said nudging him.

“Adam? From hell?” Stryker asked.

“Technically, I was from here first. Well actually, I was from the fae realm, but I came here then went to hell.” Adam plopped down in front of him. “And I got a text message that I need to come meet my new minion.”

“Yes!” Stryker pumped his fist in the air. “I’m going to make the best minion ever!”

Adam grinned and nodded. “Dark forces tried to keep us away but alas I am here to claim you!”

“Dark forces?” Lawson repeated. “Are you talking about your mate?”

“Of course I am!” Adam said. “He distracted me with his sexiness! It was evil! Evil, I tell you!”

“I bet you enjoyed every second of it,” Sam accused.

“Well of course I did,” Adam admitted. “He is a master of everything he does.”

Stryker grinned. Oh! He had so many new besties! “This is awesome!”

Adam bounced. “It is! So here is the plan. I’m going to steal—”

“Borrow,” Stryker corrected. The s word should never be said.

“Okay, right. I’m going to borrow you and we’re going to take a little trip to hell. It is the most awesome place ever and you need to meet the other minions.”

“How many minions do you have now?” Sam asked.

“Not enough! My sexy beast of a mate is stubborn and keeps trying to tell me no. Me! Like he can really tell me no,” Adam said.

Stryker loved how over-the-top Adam was. “What about Gavin? He ran to town and said he’d be back in an hour or so.”

Adam beamed. “That’s where these two come in.”

Sam sighed. “How did I get roped into this again?”

“You ate the cheesecake that my Daddy made for me!” Lawson exclaimed.

“It was so good,” Sam whined.

“And now you owe me,” Lawson declared.

“Fine!”

Stryker leaned closer to Sam. “It was that good?”

“White chocolate raspberry,” Sam said with a nod. “It was that good.”

Lawson scowled. “Jerk.”

“I heard that Drake promised to make Tristan a pie when he and Jason got back from their little errand,” Adam said.

Sam grinned. “Really? I love pie!”

“Dessert thief!” Lawson accused.

“Guilty,” Sam singsonged.

“Anyway, Lawson and Sam will run interference if Gavin beats us back. We’re just going to pop down to hell and meet some new friends. I’ll have you back in a jiffy.”

“I’m totally in!” Stryker said.

“Take my hands,” Adam said as he held out his palms up.

Stryker placed his hands over Adam’s. Adam closed his fingers around Stryker’s then gave an exaggerated blink.

The ground disappeared under him and Stryker opened his mouth to scream before he landed on his feet in the middle of another world. They were on a hill overlooking what could be called a neighborhood. The streets were made of red dirt that glittered under the weird sky.

He blinked. “Hell?” he asked with excitement. While it didn’t exactly look like the hell from his imagination, it was hot, very hot.

“Welcome to my home!” Adam waved an arm around. “This is the core. One of the many planes of this realm. Seb and Ash and other friends live on another plane but this one is the best because it’s where I live with my sexy mate. Also, Lucifer has a private plane, but you must be invited to go there. Although Gage is trying to make it where we can visit whenever we want. There was a little issue with one of Lucifer’s brothers, so it hasn’t happened yet.”

Wow, Stryker was nearly speechless.

And Lucifer. Stryker had seen him on the cameras. He was hot. And his mates were adorable. Stryker hoped they liked him. He really didn’t want to end up in hell for accidentally insulting him or something. Not that Stryker planned on being rude but sometimes he forgot to think before he spoke.

“Now, my very busy mate is at work, so we have just enough time to introduce you to my favorite minions. Hand.”

Adam grabbed his hand. He gave another exaggerated blink, and they stood in front of a large black stone home. The sand under his feet now was silver with white pavers. Tall wide green trees lined the property. The neighboring house was some distance away, but the trees helped to make the space even larger.

“This is gorgeous,” Stryker breathed out. He was in hell! Wow, his life had changed so much in the last year. He was surrounded by paranormal and fantasy. When he was younger, left and abandoned, he’d found books in the local library that held epic adventures with magical creatures.

Stryker’s escape had first come in the form of books, then he’d found his first laptop

and joined the gaming community. He never stopped reading. Or looking for adventure.

Adam bounced at his side. “I love showing off my new home! Come on.” He dragged Stryker forward. He waved his hand, and the big heavy door opened. “I love being magical!”

Stryker snorted. He wouldn’t know. It was still pretty cool to be part of it though. And Gavin could fly! Stryker needed to remember to take him flying. Stryker had almost got his chance when they’d been in fae but Rainier had shown up to take them home before Stryker figured out how to ask.

“Minions!” Adam called.

Stryker stared at the massive but empty entry.

“Huh, where is everyone?” They stepped inside.

Immediately the difference in temperature was noticeable. Stryker expected the massive house of the most powerful demon in hell to be fancy and full of old expensive relics. Instead, Stryker loved how homey the place felt.

He turned in a circle to take in everything.

“Minions!” Adam hollered.

Wow, Adam was loud. Stryker didn’t know what he expected but it wasn’t the cute little bow tie-wearing demon that scurried in, holding a clipboard.

“Nasario! Where is everyone?”

The little demon looked up from his clipboard. “Adam! When did you get back? I thought you were returning to the human realm for the afternoon.”

Adam sighed. “I did. And I brought home a new minion!”

Nasario glanced at Stryker in confusion. “He’s human?” Nasario gasped. “Did you kidnap a demon? Master Mal is not going to like that. No, he won’t like that at all!” Nasario danced nervously in place. “This is bad.”

“I didn’t kidnap him!” Adam declared. “He came with me willingly.”

Now Stryker was getting nervous.

Nasario stilled. “Willingly?”

“Yes!” Adam stomped his foot. “And I don’t kidnap people.”

“Of course not.” Nasario snorted, releasing smoke from his nostrils. He scrunched up his nose, making the spikes across his forehead more prominent. “You just call it adopting.”

Adam turned to him. “I’m the best at adopting! I promise to take very good care of you.”

Stryker rubbed the back of his neck. “You are planning on returning me to the human realm, right?”

Adam grinned. “Of course. Eventually.”

Maybe Stryker should have thought this through. “Gavin will be mad if I’m not back soon.”

That perked Nasario up. “You know the thunderbird?”

Stryker knew where his salvation lay. “He’s my mate. Or he will be my mate. It’s a long story.”

Nasario clapped. “We have another mated pair!”

Adam bounced. “Isn’t it exciting? Oh! We should throw a party!”

“A party?” Stryker repeated. “We haven’t mated yet!” This was getting out of hand. Gavin might have been right to have been concerned for Stryker. He did seem to find trouble.

Adam waved his hand. “It’s fine. I love parties. Where is Siezman?”

Nasario cleared his throat. “Furfell is on shift tonight. They’re...taking a break in the pool before Furfell has to leave.”

Adam leaned closer. “That means they’re having sex.”

Stryker snorted. “Yeah, man, I got that from the context clues.”

“Very loud sex,” Nasario added.

“Siezman is a screamer,” Adam added.

They were crazier than he was!

“What about Notel?” Adam asked.

“At the market,” Nasario replied.

“Gammer?” Adam questioned.

“He went to have lunch with his mate,” Nasario said.

“Loma? Luma?” Adam demanded.

“At the office.” Nasario was smirking now.

“But I want to have a party!” Adam shouted. “I need my minions!”

Stryker placed his hand on Adam’s shoulder. “It wouldn’t be much of a party without Gavin. Maybe we could set something up for another time.”

“Fine.” Adam’s shoulders slumped. “I guess I can show you around some.”

“I’d really like that,” Stryker responded with a smile. He was pretty sure that he’d just avoided something that would have gotten him in loads of trouble.

* * * * *

Gavin

Gavin knew when he was being given the runaround. And the boys weren’t even doing a good job of it. He stomped up the back steps and paused on the deck. Crossing his arms over his chest, he waited.

From the top of the playset, Bryce, Nate, and Ansley were trying badly to peek down at him. Logan was asleep under his favorite tree, and Mason was chopping wood for the firepit as Levi drooled over him.

That left...and there they were now.

The back door opened and Lawson and Sam tiptoed out. Literally tried to tiptoe.

They froze as they spotted Gavin.

“Uh-oh.” Lawson tried to backstep.

“Shit! I mean—” Sam glanced around frantically.

“Hello, boys,” Gavin drawled. “Do you have something to tell me?”

“No!” Lawson and Sam said in unison.

“What’s going on?” Drake asked as he followed behind the boys. “Gavin?”

Gavin lifted a brow at the two troublemakers in front of him.

“Sam?” Shawn rose from the chair where he’d been talking with Axel and Trevor.

“What’s going on?”

Sam started to squirm.

This was too easy.

Drake wrapped his hand around the back of Lawson’s neck. “What did you do, pup?”

“It wasn’t our fault!” Sam cried. “I love pie! Pie is my nemesis!” He turned and buried his face in Shawn’s chest.

Lawson shifted from foot to foot. “I made Sam help me. I’m sorry!”

“I have no idea what’s going on,” Shawn admitted.

Gavin nodded as Axel and Trevor joined them. "Where is my mate, boys?"

Sam and Lawson both dropped their gazes.

Axel growled. "You know how worried your Daddies would be if you were missing," he reminded them.

Lawson's eyes widened. "He's safe! Adam wouldn't let anything happen to him."

Gavin sighed. He really should have expected this. "Adam took him to hell?"

"He wants to be a minion!" Lawson claimed. "And Adam was supposed to have him back by now!"

Axel shook his head before he gave a sharp whistle. "Family meeting now!"

Logan woke and rubbed his eyes. There was a mad dash from the top of playset. Axel glanced at Gavin. "Go get your mate. I need to talk to the boys and remind them how keeping secrets can be dangerous."

Sam turned, his face red. "I'm sorry!"

Lawson bobbed his head. "Me too."

"I know," Axel said kindly. "Everyone inside."

Gavin watched his family file into the house. Axel wasn't really mad, but the boys did need the reminder that no one should be sneaking off. Especially not Stryker, who didn't understand the full danger of living in their world. Stryker had only seen glimpses of the danger they lived in. Plus, Gavin was still worried about the federal agent and his detective that might be after his boy.

Stryker might think that the danger was over since they got rid of the RV, but Gavin knew better. He strode to the tree line where the hell portal was as he pulled his phone out of his pocket.

He hit the contact he needed and brought the phone up to his ear.

As soon as his call was answered, Gavin spoke. “Your mate has kidnapped mine. I need you to come get me.”

Mal growled. “On my way.”

A second later, Mal stood in front of Gavin.

“Thanks for coming,” Gavin said sincerely. He would never admit it to anyone but he was a little in awe of Mal. The demon was powerful yet kind and loving. Gavin bet that Mal would never fail to protect his family.

Gavin shook that thought from his head. He had a wayward mate to collect.

“We really should have expected this,” Mal said, placing a hand on Gavin’s shoulder.

They really should have.

Gavin was transported into the middle of a...pool party?

“What the—” Mal glanced around. “How did Adam arrange a party so fast?”

There were tons of demons running around in the skimpiest bathing suits that Gavin had ever seen. Food had been spread out on tables under the canopy and music blared from hidden speakers.

Gavin searched the crowd for his mate but didn't see him.

He turned to ask Mal if he could sense where Adam was when the sliding glass door opened. Stryker stumbled out as he laughed while talking to Adam and another demon that Gavin vaguely recognized.

Stryker spotted him and froze.

Gavin gave him a little finger wave.

"Hey!" Adam bumped into Stryker. "Why'd you stop—" His mouth formed an O before he grinned. "Hello, mate."

Mal stalked forward. "You have some explaining to do, my mate."

Gavin followed behind.

Stryker saw his approach and shoved the energy drink can into the demon's hand before smiling sweetly.

He really wanted to laugh. Both Stryker and Adam totally knew they were busted but each tried to act innocent. Mal already had Adam up in his arms as Gavin reached Stryker.

"Hey, Papi! Funny running into you here," Stryker said.

"Is it?" Gavin questioned.

"Yes?" Stryker asked. Not sounded as certain as he had just a moment before.

"But it's not my fault!" Adam whined next to them. "The party just sort of happened."

I planned on taking him back.”

Gavin shook his head. “Did you get your minion induction?”

Stryker shrugged. “We might have gotten distracted.”

“Really?” Gavin glanced around. “I wonder how that happened?”

Stryker wrapped an arm around his back. “Well see, Adam wanted to throw us a party but all his minions were busy, so he said he’d show me around. As he introduced me to the demons on this plane, we started to collect a few followers. The demons love to hear about the human realm and had all kinds of questions. And we got hungry. Notel had just returned from the market and said he would set up some food out here for us and my new demon friends. Then someone found the music and the dancing started. Of course, we had to take a dip in the pool when it got hot. Dancing is a very sweaty activity.

Gavin ran his hand down Stryker’s bare back to cup his perky ass in those tiny swim trunks.

Stryker laughed. “Siezman made them for me. Do you like them?”

“Siezman is notorious for that trick,” Gavin said. “He did the same to Levi.”

“Well Levi is an attractive man,” Stryker replied.

“I’ll show you attractive!” Gavin grasped Stryker’s other ass cheek and lifted the boy.

Stryker laughed while wrapping his arms and legs around Gavin. “I didn’t say he was more attractive than you.”

“Remember what you told me when I was having lunch with Levi? He already has a mate,” Gavin said.

“Yes, he does.” Stryker leaned closer. “I missed you though. It’s strange. All these amazing things are happening, but I don’t really feel settled until I’m in your arms.” Stryker shook his head. “Ignore me. I don’t know why I’m being sappy.”

Gavin caught Mal’s eye and motioned he was taking Stryker inside.

Mal nodded back as he carried Adam closer to the pool.

The coolness of the interior was such a stark difference to the heat outside that Stryker shivered.

“Why did we leave the party? Are you really mad?”

“I’m not mad.” Gavin carried Stryker to the front room and sat on the couch. He pulled a blanket from the back and laid it over his barely clad boy. “I just want to talk to you.”

Stryker rolled his eyes. “I said ignore the sappiness. It won’t happen again.”

“I kind of hope it does,” Gavin admitted. “I liked hearing it.”

“Yeah?” Stryker smirked.

“I like seeing the real you. The one that no one else gets.”

Stryker bit his lip. “You know that I don’t feel like I deserve you. This.” Stryker waved his hand around. “Any of this.”

“You do though. The fates brought the two of us together for a reason.” Gavin picked up Stryker’s hand and kissed the back of it. “I am more sure of that than anything else in my life.”

“What if I fuck up?” Stryker asked.

“I would think you’d have realized by now that you’re not the only troublemaker in this family.”

Stryker shook his head. “I’m not talking about fun pranks or sneaking off. I’ve done some shitty things in my life.”

“You’ve had to do a lot to survive,” Gavin said.

“I didn’t have to do everything I did.”

“Do you think I judge you?” Gavin questioned. “The man who admitted to hunting down humans?”

“They killed your family,” Stryker argued.

“Doesn’t mean I was right. There might have been another way.” It was a question that Gavin didn’t like thinking about.

“They killed your family,” Stryker repeated.

“You don’t talk about your family,” Gavin said gently.

“Yeah,” Stryker said. “Not much to say about them.”

“Parents?”

“Left me in a fire station when I was five. I don’t remember them,” Stryker said.

“Damn.”

“I was bounced from foster home to group homes to another foster until I turned eighteen and aged out of the system. I was never in any place for more than six months at a time,” Stryker shared.

“You never had a real home.” That explained so much.

“Even once I was on my own, I moved from place to place. Just staying long enough until someone became suspicious.”

“I’d imagine that you have stolen enough money to have a house of your own,” Gavin said. It was a question that Gavin had been curious about for some time now.

“I guess I never found anywhere I want to stay permanently.” Stryker shrugged.
“Until now.”

Gavin smiled. “Until now. With me?”

“Yes, with you.”

Gavin drew Stryker down to kiss him. He pulled back and cupped Stryker’s cheek.
“That makes me very happy.”

“Me too. Just one thing.” Stryker held up one finger.

“What’s that, my mate?” His mate. His boy. His special person.

“Adam is not in charge of our mating celebration. I have no idea how things got so

out of hand. It's like every demon we passed just turned direction and followed us home. Before I knew it, there were two dozen demons here and we were having a party. It was nuts."

Gavin nodded. "I agree."

"I mean I'm a little weird but Adam—"

"Is on a whole different level. And he has demon minions to do his bidding," Gavin said.

"Yeah, it's kind of scary."

Gavin laughed. "We'll keep our celebration to the bedroom."

"Now that is a celebration that I can get behind, Papi."

Gavin grabbed Stryker's legs, forcing the boy to straddle him. "You like that plan?"

"I love that plan!"

Gavin kissed him but his cell ringing from his pocket had him drawing back.

"No!" Stryker whined. "We were having a moment!"

He chuckled and shook his head. "Let me check who it is. It might be Jason or Tristan. They should have dropped off the RV by now."

"Fine." Stryker leaned back, giving Gavin enough room to maneuver his cell from his pocket. Stryker didn't stop touching him though. He stuffed his hands under Gavin's T-shirt.

Axel's name flashed over the screen.

"Hello?" he answered. He had to bite off the groan when Stryker pushed up Gavin's shirt and kissed between his pecs.

"Gavin, we need you back at the house," Axel said gruffly.

Gavin straightened. "What's wrong?"

"We have visitors," Axel informed him.

Gavin caught Stryker's hands and squeezed. "Who?"

"Members of the paranormal council," Axel said.

"What the fuck!"

"That's what I'm wondering. Get here fast. They're asking about your mate."

Stryker

“What if they arrest me?” Stryker asked as they stopped on the edge of the property.

The big house loomed in front of them as he nervously yanked on Gavin’s hand to keep them from moving forward.

“I won’t let anything happen to you,” Gavin promised.

“But you can’t promise that!” Stryker said. “This is like the big dogs of your world, right?”

“We don’t actually interact with them much. Rainier has more experience as the king of the fae, but our family tends to steer clear.”

“Because they are evil council members set to take me away and lock me into a cell somewhere I’ll never be found,” Stryker exclaimed.

“I wouldn’t allow that. Axel wouldn’t either. You are our family.”

“Is this about the money I stole from the coven?” Stryker asked.

“I don’t know. We reported everything months ago. It could have taken them this long to follow up, I suppose.”

“But why would they be asking for me?” Stryker questioned.

“That is a very good question.” Gavin glanced around. “Maybe I should have left you with Mal and Adam.”

“Or we could run!” Stryker thought that was a brilliant idea. “My bike is right over there.”

“We are not running.” Gavin turned to him. “I will protect you from anything.”

That was what Stryker was afraid of. “I don’t want anyone else to get hurt. Bryce, Nate, Sam, Lawson and all my new friends.”

“The boys will already be someplace safe,” Gavin assured him.

“They are.”

Both of them jumped at the new voice. Gavin barked out a laugh before pointing up.

Nate peeked out of some kind of hiding place at the top of the tree. “The boys took the portal to Dean’s bakery. Logan and Shawn are with them. Trevor and I are watching the perimeter in case anyone else shows up. Right now, it’s just two men from the council.”

“And they want me?” Stryker asked.

“I don’t know. As soon as they pulled up Axel sent me and Trevor out the back and the boys to the portal. They are in an official paranormal council SUV though.”

“Official,” Gavin said. “Which means they can’t just take you. Not with you being my mate.”

“Congrats by the way!” Nate called down. “I love getting new brothers.”

Stryker grinned. “As soon as I get out of this, whatever this is, we’ll find some trouble.”

Gavin grabbed the back of his neck. “One crisis at a time, please.”

“Sounds good, Stryker. I’ll be up here if you need me.”

“He is one of the best snipers in the world,” Gavin reminded him.

Stryker waved up to Nate in thanks. At least his new friends would be okay. Stryker really couldn’t think of why the paranormal council would be looking for him, unless it was to take him away. That worried Stryker.

This wasn’t the first time that he’d had to run from the cops. Hell, Stryker usually knew before the cops arrived when they were after him. This was more like when the witches had captured him. Stryker wouldn’t have gotten away without the help of Dean and Noah.

“Let’s get this over with.” Gavin started toward the house.

“Wait!” He grabbed Gavin’s wrist to halt him.

Gavin turned. “I promise it will be okay.”

How did this man have any faith after what had happened to him and his family. Had the council even helped them back then? Huh, that was a very good question. Stryker was basing his fear off what he thought the council could do. And yet, even Gavin said that they didn’t have much contact with the council. Wasn’t Axel like one of the most powerful alphas in existence? Stryker had a few more burning questions.

Maybe the paranormal council needed to answer a few of his questions.

“Kiss me,” Stryker ordered.

Gavin grinned. He pulled Stryker close then wrapped his arm around Stryker’s waist. “I’ll kiss you if you make me a promise.”

“What’s that?”

“Promise me that you won’t run. That you won’t leave me. No matter what happens,” Gavin ordered.

“I promise.” He had absolutely no plans of leaving Gavin. If Stryker left, he would take Gavin with him. However, Gavin wouldn’t want to leave his family behind, which meant that Stryker had to stay. Needed to protect Gavin’s family.

Gavin kissed him.

It was not a gentle, coaxing kiss.

Gavin consumed him. Thrusting his tongue inside as he yanked Stryker even closer, Gavin made love to his mouth. Stryker strained against Gavin as his cock hardened and he stopped caring about anyone other than the man who wanted to claim him as a mate.

“If you two fuck, I am totally watching!”

Gavin pulled away and laughed. “Don’t you get enough sex with your mates?”

Nate grinned. “But there’s never too much sex, am I right?”

Stryker nodded. “He’s not wrong.”

“Come on,” Gavin urged. “The sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can finish what that kiss was starting. And without an audience.”

“I don’t mind!” Nate called.

“Alright, let’s tell these council fuckers where they can stick it.”

“Maybe you should let me do the talking,” Gavin replied.

“Probably a good idea.”

Stryker slipped his hand in Gavin’s and this time they both turned toward the big house. Instead of being afraid, Stryker would help protect Gavin’s family from whatever trouble Stryker brought to them.

They strode forward and across the expansive backyard. No wonder Stryker had problems getting coverage of the whole property on his cameras. There was so much land that belonged to the alpha and his family.

There was a different feel from the territory claimed by the pack and the state park. Even as a human, Stryker understood.

He tightened his fingers with Gavin’s.

Stryker’s footsteps sounded heavy on the steps then the deck.

“Stop,” Gavin murmured. He released Stryker’s hand before taking up a fighting stance.

“Wh—” Stryker started to ask.

The back door opened. Two men stepped out and Stryker knew exactly who they were. Even as Axel, Crake, and Bo followed behind them.

“Well shit!” Stryker spat.

The younger man, blond with green eyes, grinned. “And here we are. The hacker that goes by the handle Stryker.”

Gavin made a distressed sound in the back of his throat.

“You’re part of the paranormal council?” Stryker questioned.

“You really should be careful of who you steal from, little thief,” Aaron Johnson told him.

“Maybe your friend should keep better track of his belongings,” Stryker quipped back. Okay, so they had agreed that Gavin would do the talking here but Gavin hadn’t said a word. He was all stiff beside him. Besides, Stryker could handle this. He’d only borrowed the RV after all.

Aaron Johnson growled as he stepped forward.

“That’s not how this is going to go,” Axel said as he stepped between Stryker and the private detective. “Stryker is a human and part of our family.”

Aaron shook his head. “Are you saying that he stole on your behalf?”

“I did not!” This was not going to be pinned on anyone other than him.

“Enough!” the agent Stryker had stolen from shouted. He stepped past Axel. “Gavin?”

“No,” Gavin whispered.

What the hell? Stryker turned to look back and froze. Gavin had gone completely pale. He was also shaking so hard that Stryker didn’t know how he was standing. Stryker went to grab Gavin, but he took a step back.

“Gavin?” the agent repeated.

Stryker moved to block the agent’s path to Gavin. “Back off.”

“Move!” the agent ordered. His eyes flashed. Familiar eyes. Eyes that Stryker knew.

“What the fuck?” Stryker demanded.

“No!” Gavin yelled. “You’re dead!” He stumbled back.

“Oh my God! Gavin!” the agent ran at him.

Stryker turned while Bo and Trevor leapt at the agent. Aaron Johnson pushed at Stryker’s back, but Stryker was stronger than he looked. He wrapped his arm around the agent’s neck. Axel reached for Gavin as he fell down the steps of the deck.

“Release me!” the agent shouted.

Above them the skies darkened. Lightning flashed and the ground rumbled.

“Gavin, it’s okay.” Axel hugged Gavin tight. “Calm down. It’s okay.”

Stryker was losing his hold on Aaron Johnson. A human against a paranormal was not a fair fight.

Aaron broke free then launched himself at Trevor and Bo.

“It’s not Gavin causing the storm!” Stryker shouted as the rain began to come down hard and fast. “It’s his brother!”

All movement around him stopped.

“What?” Axel demanded.

“Let the agent go,” Stryker said.

Trevor and Bo looked at Axel. Axel nodded. Agents Cunnings and Johnson pushed away. All the men on the deck were breathing hard. Well except for Gavin who looked like he saw a ghost.

Stryker marched forward.

“Gavin.” Stryker cupped his face. “Papi, can you hear me?”

“I—” Gavin turned pain-filled eyes toward him.

“I know,” Stryker said. “I know.”

Gavin shook his head.

Stryker wrapped his arm around Gavin’s lower back. Gavin leaned on him. Stryker almost couldn’t hold him up. Luckily, Axel moved to add his support.

“What’s going on, Stryker?” Axel asked him.

“Look at him.” Stryker pointed at Agent Cunnings. “Look at his eyes. Can’t you see

it?”

Trevor and Bo both turned.

“Fuck!” Bo murmured. “He smells just like Gavin. Thunderbird.”

“I don’t understand,” Trevor said.

“My name is Leo Cunnings. Or that is my name now,” Agent Cunnings said. “And you are keeping me from my brother.”

Gavin whimpered.

Stryker’s heart was breaking. Gavin sounded so lost and scared.

“Gav,” Agent Cunnings murmured.

“It’s a trick,” Gavin said. “The hunters—”

“They’re gone,” Stryker said. “Remember?”

“But—” Gavin shook.

“I need you to calm down, Papi.” Stryker hugged him tight. “You have your family here. We’re with you.”

“I’m his family,” Agent Cunnings growled.

“How?” Gavin whispered.

“I can explain,” Agent Cunnings said. He stepped forward. “Just...please, let me

touch him.”

“Papi?” Stryker asked.

A tear fell and trailed down Gavin’s cheek, but he nodded.

Trevor and Bo stepped to the side.

Aaron Johnson watched with them with wide eyes.

“Easy,” Axel ordered. The word coming out with all his alpha power. “I don’t care who you are. If you hurt him, I’ll tear your head from his body.”

Tears were falling from Agent Cunnings’ eyes as he slowly walked forward. “I would never hurt him.”

Gavin gasped. “Leo? How?”

“Gavin.” Agent Cunnings stopped when he was right in front of them. “It’s really you.”

“Yes,” Gavin sobbed.

“My little brother.” Agent Cunnings grabbed Gavin hard, yanking him from Stryker and Axel’s hold. “My brother.”

Gavin was clawing to get closer to his brother. As if that was even possible. The brothers cried together, and Stryker found his own emotions coming to the surface. He stepped back to lean against the railing as he watched Gavin, his mate, his future.

The fates.

Stryker had cursed them for so long.

He'd been hurt. Scared. Lost. Abandoned. Stryker had never understood why he hadn't been enough for the people that he'd been placed with. If his parents couldn't even love him, then why would anyone else? Anger and confusion had run his life until Stryker learned to take control. To be the one that decided what he deserved.

Everything he'd been through had led to this moment.

Not only had he found his forever home, his partner, his family, but Stryker was the reason that Gavin was being given a gift that he'd thought he'd lost so very long ago.

Axel shuffled over and placed his arm around Stryker's shoulder.

Stryker leaned against the alpha. "How is this even happening?"

"We'll find out," Axel vowed. "I do know one thing though."

Stryker wiped his eyes. He hated showing weakness in front of anyone. "What's that?"

"That Gavin wouldn't have his brother back if you hadn't stolen his RV."

Stryker gave a watery laugh. "Do you think that will get me out of trouble?"

"I'm pretty sure reuniting the two of them trumps everything else," Axel said.

Stryker nodded. "We should celebrate with chicken nuggets. I have this awesome air fryer that will have them ready in just minutes."

Aaron Johnson stepped in front of them. "I bought Leo that air fryer for Christmas."

“Must be a different one. I just found this one lying around,” Stryker lied.

Aaron Johnson glanced at Axel. “You have your hands full with this one.”

Axel chuckled. “You have no idea.”

* * * * *

Gavin

“This is a nice place,” Leo said sitting on the couch.

“Thanks,” Gavin replied as he pulled Stryker down on his lap across from his brother. His brother. Gavin was still unsure how this was even happening. Stryker frowned but wiggled until he was comfortable.

Gavin was a little clingy, but his mind was still reeling. Aaron Johnson, his brother’s best friend, sat beside him on the couch.

They retreated to Gavin’s cabin to catch up on things and so the boys could return home but not be in the way. Gavin knew that his chosen family was just as curious as he was, but they were giving him time.

“I can’t believe this,” Aaron said. “Who knew tracking down a little thief would lead to you two being reunited?”

“Fucking fates,” Stryker muttered.

Gavin bit back his amusement but Aaron gave a big belly laugh. Unlike Gavin and his brother, Leo, who were tall and sleek, Aaron Johnson was a little on the short side, heavier, with a bushy beard and interesting green eyes. Gavin couldn’t place his

paranormal creature, but it was something old. Like him.

Leo leaned forward to rest his elbows on his knees. “What happened to you?”

Gavin shrugged. “I used the escape tunnel to get into the woods. I waited three days, but no one ever came for me.”

“No one?” Leo asked. “I’d hoped. Prayed. That maybe someone else had gotten away.”

“No, once the time past I went to check on things. I didn’t want to get too close in case the hunters were still watching. I could see and smell the smoke from the ashes.”

“They burnt everything to the ground,” Leo said. “I thought they got you too. I looked for you. I swear I searched and searched but there were no signs that you made it out of the cabin before it went up in flames.”

Gavin believed him. “How did you survive?”

“Father ordered me to shift,” Leo said. “The hunters had arrows though. Me and Uncle Mike were trying to help from the sky, but we were both hit. I managed to make it far enough that the hunters must have forgotten about me.”

“But you were injured?”

“Arrow in the shoulder and I fell hard and fast. Hit my head and had several broken bones. I was out for nearly a week after the council found me,” Leo explained.

“The council found you?” Stryker asked. His eyes narrowed.

Gavin was surprised by the scent of anger and doubt coming from his boy. “What is

it?”

Stryker shook his head. “Nothing. Sorry I interrupted. Go on.”

Leo shrugged. “The council found me and took me to their doctor. Once I was awake and healed enough to ask questions, I asked about you, Gavin. They said there was no sign that you’d gotten out of the cabin.”

Gavin didn’t know how to respond to that. Obviously he’d gotten out.

“They took me to where they were housing the survivors of the attacks,” Leo said. “There were so many kids that were all alone just like me.” Leo looked over to Aaron.

Aaron nodded and gave Leo a small smile.

Aaron had been rescued from the hunters as well? That was interesting. Gavin still couldn’t place his paranormal creature though. Now he knew how Bryce had felt.

“They gave us some options. They could try to place us in foster homes, with new families, or we could train and become part of the council,” Leo told them.

“You both obviously chose to work for the council,” Stryker stated.

“I had a family,” Leo replied. “One that I loved very much. I didn’t want a new one. Besides, I was already old enough to shift and make my own way. I gave myself a mission.”

“What was your mission?” Gavin thought he already knew. He and Leo had been close as children.

“I was going to find the hunters that took my family from me and make them pay,” Leo said coldly.

“And did you?” Stryker questioned.

Again, Gavin was surprised. Stryker was almost hostile.

Leo smirked. “It took time but yes. My team and I tracked down hunters all over the world.”

“You said you looked for Gavin?” Stryker questioned.

Leo nodded. “I went back to the cabin. I searched for any sign that he got away. By then a few months had passed. I even searched the woods. Looking for something. Anything.”

“Leave nothing behind,” Gavin said softly. That was what he’d been taught by his brother and father.

“But you were so young,” Leo said. “I was sure if you were alive, I’d find something. Anything.”

“I traveled quite a bit once I got my bearings,” Gavin supplied.

“Where did you go?” Leo fisted his hands. “Who helped you?”

“No one,” Gavin admitted. “I didn't trust anyone. Not paranormal and especially not humans. I lived off the land for decades until I ran into Axel. I was in my late twenties by then.”

“That had to have been at least twenty years!” Leo exclaimed.

“I can see that.” A little smile played at the edges of his mouth. “And found a pack and a very strong alpha.”

He was a little embarrassed. Not an emotion he was familiar with.

“We’ve all heard of your pack in the council,” Aaron said.

“They’re a family. Not a pack,” Stryker stated.

Aaron laughed. “You don’t like us much, do you?”

Stryker rolled his eyes. “I haven’t seen or heard anything that I would change my opinion.”

Gavin squeezed Stryker, but Stryker wasn’t looking back at him. He was staring right back at Aaron.

“We’re the good guys,” Aaron responded.

Stryker snorted.

“We did come all this way tracking you down,” Aaron reminded him.

“And what were you going to do with me once you caught me?” Stryker quipped.

“Oh! We can send you the location of the RV.” Gavin just remembered that.

“That can wait,” Leo assured him.

“What do you think we were going to do to you?” Aaron asked Stryker.

Stryker grinned. "I don't think you could do anything to me. You didn't call the cops. Why didn't you call the cops? And if you work for the council, why are you listed as a PI? These are the questions I have. Not everything you're saying is making sense."

"We didn't call the cops because we didn't need to. Plus, who really wants cops in their business? We had the time and means to track you down."

"Are you really a PI?" Stryker asked.

"Yes. I retired from the council," Aaron told him. "And that RV is Leo's retiring plan."

"You want to retire?" Gavin asked. Could this mean that maybe Leo would be around more?

"I've been thinking about it." Leo leaned back. "I used to be in the field quite a lot but now I mostly push papers. It's boring."

"What about the secret labs underground?" Stryker asked. "Or the experiments?"

"What the fuck are you talking about?" Aaron demanded.

"You know." Stryker waved his hands around. "Evil government programs. Hellbent on taking over the world!"

Gavin shook his head. Stryker couldn't be serious.

"The only secret we have anything to do with is preventing humans from ever learning of our existence again. To avoid the hunt or anything else like that happening ever again."

“Boring!” Stryker responded. “You need to be deep into some kind of conspiracy that Gavin and I are going to have to break you from the council’s hold.”

“And yet if Leo would just turn in the paperwork, he would be free,” Aaron said. “No need to rescue him from anything other than his fear of being bored.”

“That’s why you haven’t retired?” Gavin questioned.

Leo nodded. He shared a glance with Aaron before clearing his throat. Aaron sighed.

“You might as well tell them,” Aaron said.

Stryker straightened. “Is it juicy? Do you need our help?”

Leo smirked. “Sorry to disappoint you. However, there is a reason I purchased the RV.”

“And never used it,” Stryker muttered.

“About six months ago, Aaron started to have dreams,” Leo said.

“Dreams?” Stryker repeated. He flopped back against Gavin’s chest.

Gavin placed his palm over Stryker’s stomach. Just above the waistband of his pants. His little mate wanted to thwart an evil plan so bad.

“Yes, dreams,” Aaron said. “I’m an oracle.”

“Fuck me!” Stryker exclaimed.

Gavin was just as shocked. An oracle? Gavin had believed oracles only existed in

myths and legends.

“Not very many people know that.” Leo pointed at Stryker. “That information does not leave this room.”

Stryker huffed. “Fine.”

“Anyway,” Leo said. “Aaron started to dream about a place. The thunder and rain fell nightly. Lightning would brighten the sky. A lone figure in the distance circling above.”

“At first I thought I was dreaming about Leo,” Aaron said. “Which was quite awkward, let me tell you. I do not need to be dreaming about my best friend.”

Leo smirked.

“However, in the dreams I could feel that it wasn’t Leo. Something was different. Not wrong but not right,” Aaron shared.

“Aaron eventually told me, and it brought back all the hope that I’d buried. When he described his dreams, I could feel that I needed to find the place he was seeing. He’d already left the council. Most of my original team had. I was wasting my time there. So, I purchased the RV. Started making out where paranormal packs were,” Leo explained.

“And then some little thief stole it,” Aaron accused.

“You were going to look for me?” Gavin questioned. “You thought it was me in Aaron’s dream and were coming to look?”

“I was both afraid and hopeful. What if after all this time you were still alive? I have

still put off retiring because then I would have to search for you. Find out one way or another if you were really dead. I was hanging on to the little bit of hope that I had left.”

“And then some thief stole the RV!” Aaron said louder.

“I would like to point out that by borrowing the RV, I did bring you right where you needed to me. I saved you months if not years of traveling,” Stryker said.

Leo snorted. “You might have a point.”

Aaron growled. “Fucking dreams. They could be just a little bit clearer.”

Leo laughed as he patted Aaron’s knee. “There, there. It all worked out in the end.”

A damn oracle. His brother back. All because of his mate. Gavin squeezed Stryker hard.

Stryker coughed. “Ease up there, Papi. I need to breathe. Human, remember?”

Gavin kissed the back of his neck. “Sorry.”

Stryker patted the hand still lying across his stomach.

“I still can’t believe that you were going to look for me,” Gavin confessed.

“He never stopped looking. Never gave up hope although we all told him that you were gone. That you would have resurfaced by now if you were alive. Every mission, he looked,” Aaron said. “It was one of the reasons our team was in the field for so long. He carried the only picture he had of you around. Still does.”

Gavin stiffened.

“What is it?” Stryker asked, his eyes narrow and lips pressed together.

Gavin kissed Stryker’s forehead and lifted him to sit on the arm of the chair. “I’ll be right back. I have...something.”

He hurried from the room as Stryker began to ask more questions. Instead of the accusatory or invasion questioning, Stryker’s interest had moved to the absurd. He really seemed to want to find a secret underground bunker or something.

Hurrying to his closet, Gavin pulled out the old wooden box that he kept hidden away. The few reminders of a childhood that had been ripped from him. He carried the box back into the living room but paused at the doorway.

His boy was reclined on the arm of the chair appearing relaxed but there was still a stiffness to his shoulders that Gavin didn’t like. They’d talk after Leo and Aaron retired for the night. Axel had already set them up in one of the cabins. At least until they figured out what to do.

Gavin wanted to ask his brother to stay.

Was that selfish of him?

Leo had a life, a job, friends. Gavin was terrified that if Leo left his sight, he might not ever see his brother again.

Before he could figure out what he wanted to do, Stryker glanced up at the doorway. “What do you have there, Papi?”

Gavin strode forward.

He stopped beside his brother and crouched, placing the box on the coffee table. “I went back to our house.”

Leo leaned forward.

“There wasn’t much I could scavenge. Some of Grandma’s canned food and a shovel from the shed, I think.” It was hard to remember. That had been so long ago. All Gavin really knew was everything had been gone.

Leo snapped his head to Aaron. “I knew someone had been there. I told you that they’d gotten in the cellar.”

Aaron patted Leo’s shoulder. “It could have been anyone. There were lots of us that had lost everything. Scavenging was common in that time.”

Leo nodded. “What if we just missed him? Or if we’d stayed longer, we’d have found him?”

Aaron sighed. “There’s no way to know. Don’t start playing the what if game.”

Gavin had to agree. It wouldn’t do either of them any good to wonder what could have been. If Gavin had been rescued by the council, would he have made the same choices as Leo or would he have sought out a family?

Eventually Gavin had found a family.

His family.

Axel and Bryce, Nate, Bo, and Craig, Drake, Lawson, River, Anton, Rainier, Shawn and Sam, Trevor and Anton, Seb, Ash, Adam and Mal, Levi, Mason, Jason, and Tristan, Logan, Dean, and Noah, Lucifer, Cary, and Gage, and the demons that were

just joining them like Atom and Ari. It had taken longer than he'd liked but he wasn't without those that he loved.

His finger shook as he opened the box.

Stryker and Aaron also leaned forward to see.

"I couldn't find much," Gavin said again in a whisper. "But I took these." Carefully he picked up the old burnt photographs. The one on top had the edges burnt so badly that they crumbled. Right in the middle of the photo, yellowed and aged by the years, was the image of Gavin and Leo smiling. Gavin was missing both his front teeth.

"Fuck!" Leo's finger hovered over the photo.

"It's all I had left," Gavin said thickly. Emotion once again overwhelming him.

He had spent a lot of time on his own. Gavin set the photo back in the box. He only had about six and all of them were damaged. "Anyway, you had one photo. I had these." He went to stand but Leo grabbed his hand. Leo squeezed his fingers tight and nodded but didn't say anything.

Gavin appreciated it.

Leo released Gavin's hand and Gavin returned to Stryker. He sat and this time it was Stryker who slid onto his lap without any coaxing. Just having Stryker with him helped calm the feelings rolling inside him.

Rain still fell lightly out the window of the cabin, but he didn't know if that was his doing, Leo's, or a mixture of both.

"I have one more question," Stryker said.

“Sure. Then you can tell us how you ended up here with my brother,” Leo replied.

“Oh!” Stryker clapped. That was the best story ever.

Gavin snorted. He wondered just how much truth was going to be in Stryker’s story. He was a hacker and a thief after all, and Leo worked for the council. Maybe he should be worried.

“So,” Stryker drawled. “How long have the two of you been fucking?”

Stryker

“It was a perfectly innocent question!”

Pulling the sheet down on the bed, Gavin shook his head. “It is none of our business if they’re fucking or not.”

“You’re telling me that you weren’t just a little bit curious?” Stryker whipped his shirt over his head.

Gavin pressed his lips together.

“Ha!” Stryker pointed at him. “You did want to know!”

“And now we know that they aren’t,” Gavin said.

“They aren’t anymore,” Stryker reminded him. He shoved his pants and underwear down his legs. Gavin did the same across from him. “They have fucked previously, and I think Aaron still wants your brother’s bod.”

“I really don’t want to think about my brother having sex,” Gavin told him.

Naked, Stryker climbed onto the bed on his hands and knees. “We could talk about us having sex.”

Gavin ran his gaze over Stryker’s body. Stryker knew that he couldn’t really feel the heat from that look, but his body responded. His cock hardened and his breathing

picked up.

Stryker leaned forward. “You have a promise to keep. Something about where that kiss had been leading.”

Leaning across the bed, Gavin came within inches of kissing him. “Thank you for being with me tonight.”

“I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.” Stryker closed the distance and kissed Gavin. He licked at Gavin’s bottom lip until Gavin opened for him. Stryker slipped his tongue inside, coaxing Gavin to kiss him back.

Gavin groaned into his mouth while kneeling on the bed.

Stryker moved onto his knees so they were in the middle of the bed and he could touch Gavin. He would never get tired of touching him. Ripping his mouth away, Stryker panted. He had one more thing to say.

“So beautiful,” Gavin cupped his face. “My good boy.”

Stryker shuddered. Wrapping his fingers around Gavin’s wrist, Stryker met the his gaze. “I want to mate with you.”

Gavin’s pupils dilated. “We don’t have to yet—”

“I want you to claim me. I want to belong to you,” Stryker confessed.

“Don’t you know that you already belong to me?” Gavin asked quietly.

“Forever.” Stryker wanted, needed, to clarify. “And you’ll belong to me too.”

“I have,” Gavin assured him. “I have belonged to you since the first time you smirked and called me Papi. Even if I couldn’t see your face, I knew.”

Stryker had to kiss Gavin for that.

He launched himself at Gavin. They rolled and nearly tumbled off the bed, but Gavin didn’t stop kissing him. Stryker ended up under Gavin’s larger body with Gavin kneeling between his legs.

Stryker strained to reach Gavin’s mouth when Gavin drew back from the kiss.

“Hold on, boy,” Gavin told him. “I need to get the lube. I want to be inside you when I place my bite.”

Stryker nodded. “Please!”

Gavin reached over to the drawer beside his bed and yanked it open. He grabbed the bottle of lube before wiggling it in front of Stryker.

“Score!” Stryker praised with a laugh.

Gavin grinned down at him. “I plan on doing just that.”

He groaned and shook his head. “Really?”

Gavin snorted. “That was pretty corny.”

“It was.” Stryker wrapped his arms around Gavin’s neck to pull him down. “Now kiss me to make up for it.”

Gavin kissed him.

Stryker whined when Gavin pulled away again. His cock wept, releasing precome.

Sitting back on his heels, Gavin pushed Stryker's legs farther apart. "Now the fun begins."

Stryker was already having fun. He wanted more so he didn't argue. He was intrigued by the wickedness in Gavin's eyes.

Gavin caught Stryker's knee under his arm as he coated his fingers from the bottle of lube.

"Such a good boy for me," Gavin teased. He ran one slick finger over Stryker's rim.

Stryker tried to push down, but having one leg up in the air didn't afford him enough ability to move.

Gavin tsked at him. "Patience."

Fuck that! Digging his left foot into the mattress, he tried again.

This time Gavin rubbed harder on Stryker's hole.

Stryker grunted. Almost. He could almost feel the entry. He just needed—

Gavin withdrew his finger then added more lube. He started to spread it around his rim but never breached him.

The lube was thick and slippery. Perfect.

Gavin coated two fingers next.

Yes! That was what he wanted!

With two fingers, Gavin began to tease him again. Stryker's legs were spread enough that he could feel a twinge in his hip. Not that he would be complaining about that.

Down Stryker's crease then up to circle his hole. Gavin was masterfully teasing him.

Stryker's dick bobbed.

"Please, Papi!" Stryker begged.

"Such a good boy. I love it when your sweet to me."

Stryker opened his mouth to say something—he wasn't even sure what—when Gavin pushed two fingers in deep.

Stryker grunted.

His body locked down around those digits.

"I need you to relax for me," Gavin coaxed.

Stryker took a deep breath. He knew what to do. Looking up at Gavin was just fucking with his mind. Gavin appeared other-worldly. The shine to his eyes, the heat from his body.

Gavin pulled back his fingers then slowly, too carefully, pushed them back in.

Stryker shook.

Gavin pushed his knee farther toward Stryker's chin.

“I can’t wait to be inside you,” Gavin murmured. He pumped his fingers in and out until the rhythm was smooth and the sting had faded.

“More!” Stryker demanded.

Gavin gave three more thrusts of his fingers then pulled them away.

Stryker panted.

Gavin added more lube. Three fingers this time. He placed the digits back to Stryker’s rim.

The sharp bite quickly turned into pleasure.

Stryker tried to spread his legs even farther. To open himself wide. He needed Gavin to move past this part so Stryker could finally be claimed properly.

Inside him, Gavin stroked Stryker’s walls until he brushed a pad over Stryker’s prostate. Stryker bucked but again he couldn’t go anywhere.

“That’s the spot,” Gavin said.

“No shit!” Stryker bitched. “Again.”

Gavin’s low chuckle filled the air as he pushed harder on Stryker’s prostate.

Stryker’s cock twitched and bobbed. He wanted to reach for it. To touch himself.

“Don’t even think about it,” Gavin warned. Each plunge of his fingers seemed to go deeper, even if that was impossible. “We’re going to come together.”

“Not if you don’t hurry,” Stryker warned.

Gavin didn’t stop fingering him though. He moved his hand faster. Spread his fingers wide until Stryker grunted but he continued the sweet torture.

“I need—”

“I know what you need,” Gavin told him. He roughly pulled his fingers free, leaving Stryker to regret the loss. That was until Gavin began to pour the lube over his dick and rubbing it in.

Stryker got lost in watching Gavin stroke himself, the lube leaving Gavin’s cock shiny.

Gavin threw the bottle down onto the bed then scooted up the mattress. His knees brushed Stryker’s ass before Gavin lifted him.

Now both of Stryker’s knees were nestled over Gavin’s elbows.

He was spread good and wide. Perfect to be fucked.

“I’m going to bite you,” Gavin warned. “Leave my mark on you.”

“Yes!” Stryker wanted that. Needed it. Had to have it.

Gavin grasped the base of his cock while positioning himself at Stryker’s hole.

“My boy. My mate,” Gavin said as he started to push in. Invaded him.

His channel clenched. His hole attempted to stop the invasion, but Gavin continued to push forward.

He didn't stop.

Not as Stryker moaned.

Not when Stryker's cock hardened impossibly more.

Not even when Stryker started to shake.

This was a claiming.

They'd had sex before, but it had been fun, teasing, lighter. This was anything but that. Nearly curled into himself, Stryker couldn't do anything but take what Gavin gave him.

It was glorious!

Gavin finally pushed all the way to the hilt.

Stryker was full, fuller than he'd ever been before. It wasn't just the huge dick inside him. It was as if Gavin's entire presence had entered him as well.

Their gazes met. Locked. The veins in Gavin's neck strained as he held himself still. Waited.

Stryker took a deep breath. He knew what to say. "Claim me, mate."

Gavin nodded. He drew back then slammed forward.

The bed rocked.

Outside, lightning cracked and streaked across the sky.

The rumble started deep then grew in volume.

Gavin pulled almost all the way out and thrust hard.

“Fuck yes!” Stryker shouted.

Hard pelting rain hit the window.

The grip Gavin had on him was firm. As if Stryker would ever want to get away from him. He was pinned down right where he wanted to be.

Gavin’s next plunge had him pegging Stryker’s gland nice and hard.

Stryker yelled again.

Throwing his head back, Gavin let lose a roar that shook the house.

More lightning. Another rumble of thunder.

They lost any sense of rhythm, forcing Stryker to throw his hands up and brace himself against the headboard as the entire bed shook. Gavin was fucking into him so fast and deep that Stryker was pretty damn certain that came from his paranormal side.

There was nothing but heat and pleasure between them.

It was like the air had been sucked out of the room.

Stryker couldn’t catch his breath.

Gavin was grunting and thrusting.

Stryker's entire body was on fire! He wrapped his fingers around his own cock in desperation.

"I'm gonna—" he managed.

"Now!" Gavin ordered.

Stryker stroked himself, hard and fast, just like Gavin's hips moved.

Gavin lowered his mouth.

Stryker was bent in half. He nearly couldn't keep stroking himself.

There was a lick to his neck.

"Mine," Gavin declared then he struck.

Sharp teeth bit into Stryker's skin and he screamed.

His vision whitened.

Gavin took a draw, a suck, and that was all Stryker needed.

His cock exploded, shooting cum all over himself.

Inside his ass, he was flooded with more heat, wet and sticky.

"Fuck," Stryker whispered as Gavin pulled his mouth away.

A large boom shook the house and rain pinged against the window.

Gavin lifted his head to peer down at Stryker. He was still buried deep. Gavin's arms shook but he was smiling. "My mate."

"Yours," Stryker agreed and closed his eyes. He was utterly exhausted.

"Thank you, mate," Gavin said quietly. "Thank you for coming here. For stalking me."

Stryker grinned and opened his eyes. "You can call me Drew."

"Drew?"

"But not in front of anyone else. And never in front of your brother or anyone else from the government."

"Sure, baby. Not in front of anyone else," Gavin agreed.

* * * * *

Gavin

He'd woken up to a dozen fresh donuts on his kitchen counter with two Styrofoam cups next to them.

Gavin grinned down at the note left behind with them.

Congrats on your mating. Celebration bar-b-q tonight!

'Love, the family.

Tradition. It had become tradition for donuts and coffee the morning after a new

member was added to the family. Gavin hadn't thought much of it, especially now that he wasn't living in the big house. His family hadn't forgotten though. They'd come through.

Juggling the note, box of donuts, and both coffees, Gavin strode back to where he'd left his boy sleeping peacefully.

He nudged the door open as Stryker sat up in bed.

"Good morning," Gavin said.

Stryker rubbed his eyes. "What time is it?"

"Early," Gavin said with amusement as he crossed the room.

"Then why are you out of bed?" Stryker demanded.

"I heard someone in the kitchen."

"Your kitchen?" Stryker dropped his hands. "Are those donuts?"

Gavin chuckled. "Our kitchen and yes." He passed over the note first. "Welcome to the family."

Stryker read the note and frowned. "How did they know we mated?"

He sat on the edge of the mattress. "Pretty sure the storm last night was a good indicator."

"Yeah." Stryker grinned. "You were pretty loud."

Gavin shook his head as he passed Stryker the coffee with his name. “You were the one that begged me to fuck you and bite you three more times after that.”

Stryker’s hand went to his neck. “That was amazing.”

Gavin agreed. “So, we get coffee and donuts.”

“I don’t get it,” Stryker said. He did steal the box of donuts, placing them on the mattress between them.

“It started after Axel brought Bryce home for the first time,” Gavin said. “They hadn’t mated yet, but Axel fetched donuts that morning and wouldn’t allow anyone to have one until Bryce got his first. It became tradition as each new member was added to the family.”

“Donuts,” Stryker mused. “I guess it’s not that weird.”

“You made me get up and make you chicken nuggets in the middle of the night because we needed to celebrate our mating,” Gavin reminded him. It had to have been the weirdest after-mating celebration Gavin had ever heard of. The both of them standing in Gavin’s chicken as Stryker taught him how to heat the frozen nuggets in the air fryer that he might have stolen from Gavin’s brother.

They’d eaten the nuggets standing up by the sink until Stryker had gotten on his knees and blown him.

Okay, maybe weird wasn’t the word he should use. It had been hot. Sexy.

“Chicken nuggets and donuts,” Stryker grinned. “I really like this family.”

“I really like you,” Gavin said, leaning over to steal a kiss.

“I kind of, maybe, really like you too,” Stryker replied.

“You’d better. You’re stuck with me now.”

Stryker grinned. “Mates.”

“Mates,” Gavin agreed.

“Now, about these donuts.”

He chuckled and opened the box.

Stryker grabbed a pink-sprinkled donut and shoved half into his mouth.

Gavin sipped his coffee.

“Good,” Stryker said with his mouth full.

“You’re getting crumbs everywhere,” Gavin told him.

Stryker held up the remainder of his donuts before he smashed it against Gavin’s chest.

“What—” Gavin tried to jerk away, splashing some coffee on his hand.

“Oops!” Stryker said. The grin on his face was the complete opposite of his words. Stryker quickly straddled Gavin’s waist.

“Stryker—”

“Call me by my name,” Stryker demanded. “I haven’t heard it in a very long time.”

Gavin set his coffee on the nightstand before he cupped Stryker's face. "How about this? I love you, Drew."

"Wow," Stryker breathed out. "That sounded even better than I imagined."

"Then I'll say it over and over until you're used to it," Gavin vowed. "I love you, Drew."

Stryker started to tear up. "I love you too."

Gavin kissed him.

His boy was the one that drew back. "And I better clean up the mess I made." Stryker leaned forward to lick some of the frosting off Gavin's nipple.

"Good boy," Gavin praised as he leaned back giving his boy room to work. "Make sure you get every crumb."

"Yes, Papi."

Stryker

“That is not true! There is no way,” Stryker demanded.

“It’s true,” Adam said.

“It is true,” Seb agreed. “I’ve been there.”

“To Atlantis?” Stryker asked.

“Anton, River, and Rainier have been there too,” Seb added. “Rainier has a cousin that lives there. They don’t get many visitors, so Juniper loves when someone shows interest.”

“And does this Juniper have a phone number?” Stryker asked.

“Wait!” Seb exclaimed. “This sounds like you’re planning on sneaking off to Atlantis.”

“No sneaking,” Stryker lied. “I just want to talk to him.”

“Nope!” Seb climbed to his feet. “I’m not getting involved in this. I’m not River! Nope.” He scurried off, leaving Stryker to stare after him.

“What just happened?” Stryker questioned.

“We just got rid of the person who would have stopped us,” Adam said with a grin.

Oh no, Stryker knew he was in trouble. This was not what he had been planning. Gavin was going to be really pissed if Stryker realm-hopped again. Stryker had been given very specific warnings about that.

The celebration bar-b-q was in full swing and while Gavin was distracted introducing his brother and Aaron around, Stryker had snuck off with some of his new hell realm friends. He hadn't meant for things to get out of hand so quickly. This wasn't his fault!

"Here take my hands," Adam ordered.

"Maybe we should—"

"You have to hurry!" Adam said. "Seb could rat us out any second."

"Do you even know how to get to Atlantis?" Stryker asked.

"I just have to do my blinky thing!"

"Your blinky thing?" Stryker did not have a good feeling about this.

"I'm practically hell royalty. I have all these special powers. What's the point if I don't use them!"

"I don't know—"

Adam grabbed his hands and did that over-dramatic blink again.

The ground fell away, wind rushed in his ears, and Stryker landed on his ass in the middle of a large empty room.

"Ow!" Stryker complained.

Adam groaned. "Damn."

"Where are we?" Stryker asked.

Adam peered around. "Atlantis?"

"Wouldn't we be in water?" Stryker questioned.

"Oh, good point. Although, this is probably better since neither of us can breathe underwater," Adam said.

"You didn't think about that before?"

"Oops?" Adam shrugged.

"Dude!" Stryker exclaimed. He rolled onto his knees to stand.

Alarms started to blare, and Stryker had to cover his ears.

"Shit!" Adam was also covering his ears as the alarms continued to blare.

"How do we turn them off?" Stryker asked.

"I don't know!" Adam shouted.

A door that Stryker hadn't noticed opened and three men walked out.

"I told you we had guests!" A tall, slender attractive man stated as he stepped forward. "Hello."

"Hello!" Adam bounced. "I'm Adam and this is Stryker. Are we in Atlantis?"

“You are in our portal room,” the blond told them.

“But in Atlantis?” Adam questioned.

“I’m Juniper,” the blond replied. “These are my mates Arran and Darwin.”

“Rainier’s cousin?” Adam asked.

“You know Rainier?” Juniper asked.

“He’s part of my pack,” Adam replied.

“Adam,” Arran said. “The fae dryad mated to the master of hell? That’s explains how you broke into our home.”

“We didn’t break in,” Stryker said quickly. He was not getting busted for breaking and entering. “We just sort of popped in.”

“It’s customary to ask permission,” Arran replied.

“True. Sorry! I wasn’t even sure if it would work,” Adam said.

“Then why did you take me here!” Stryker shouted.

“It seemed like a good idea at the time,” Adam told him.

“It seemed like a good idea?” Stryker screeched. This was bad. So very bad! Stryker was all for causing chaos, but he wanted to live to at least enjoy some time being mated to Gavin.

A phone started to ring. Arran groaned before he reached into his pocket and answered. He narrowed his eyes at Adam before he barked. “Hello?”

Stryker really needed to be careful what ideas he came up with. Having his new friends by his side was both fun and terrifying. Anything could have happened to them. Maybe Gavin was right. Stryker needed to learn more about this new world he'd found himself in.

"Yes," Arran said into the phone. "They're here."

And Gavin was going to be pissed.

"Permission granted," Arran said then hung up the phone.

A second later Mal and Gavin popped into the room.

"Hi, mate!" Adam waved to Mal.

Mal growled.

Gavin stomped forward.

"This was not my fault." Stryker held his hands up.

"Do you have any idea how it feels to have my mate constantly disappearing on me?" Gavin asked.

Stryker sighed. "I'm sorry. I really didn't mean for this to happen."

Gavin pulled him close. "I'm not letting you out of my sight ever again. I'm going to tie you to my side."

"I'm okay with that." Stryker held on tight to Gavin. There was fun and then there was just crazy. Adam might be a little too crazy even for him. Not that Stryker was over causing trouble with Adam. He just needed to plan ahead better where he had

more control.

“So!” Juniper clapped his hands. “Who wants a tour? Maybe you can even meet one of the seahorses! Just don’t try to ride them.”

Stryker perked up and Gavin groaned.

“Seahorses?” Stryker asked.

“Don’t try to ride them,” Gavin warned.

But that sounded awesome! A seahorse ride? What would be better than that? “Sure, I’ll totally be cool.” Now, he wondered what he could bribe a seahorse with.

“This isn’t going to end well,” Gavin murmured.

Stryker rose to his tiptoes and kissed him. “How bad can it be?”

Gavin groaned again.