



Only One Tent (Pride Camp 2025 #2)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: Six days of camping with him no, no, no!

Skyler has a great career and super friends. Everything he could want, except for a daddy. But he's been wrangled into a PRIDE camping trip, so maybe he can relax and stop worrying about what he's missing. That is until his least favorite client ever is pushed on him.

Nelson Crowell, Crow to his friends, has been thinking about a snarky lawyer ever since the wedding they recently attended. And no one needs a daddy as much as Skyler, but Skyler hates him. His friends have warned him Skyler doesn't have his own equipment for this, and there's only one tent he can share—Crow's.

This has disaster written all over it. An enemies to lovers romance.

Welcome to Pride Camp where diversity and inclusion is our motto. We've got daddies, mommies, littles, pets and families of all kinds. So, unroll your sleeping bag, make a couple smores, and enjoy the show!

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Chapter one

The Wedding

I was thrilled to be invited to the wedding.

Danny had been a friend for a long time, and he deserved to get married on the beach.

What a dream.

Especially at The Don CeSar.

Elegant to the extreme if you liked the pink palace in the background.

Aside from the hotel, the staff had set up an arbor with gorgeous flowers in front of the seating area, looking out to the water.

They skipped an aisle as they weren't going to do the walking up it part.

The white chairs all faced the area where they would stand and had a view of the water, sand, and sky behind them.

Danny and Lee were walking around with the photographer in the sand, getting all kinds of different poses while the guests started trailing in.

Me included.

They looked cute, and both wore gray slacks and vests, as well as white linen shirts with sleeves rolled up.

Handsome.

And they were barefoot, so very Florida.

Danny had everything.

A great career, this wedding, and the man, who was also his daddy.

I wasn't a Little like him, but I maybe wouldn't mind having a daddy too.

Someone to take care of me after having spent most of my life worrying about others.

I had great friends and the same career as Danny, but I didn't need a wedding since my dating life was non-existent.

No daddies or anyone else for me.

Levi, Danny's best friend and also a Little, was Danny's best man, but I didn't know the guy standing up for Lee.

He might have been a relative, brother, or cousin.

I didn't know Lee all that well, truthfully.

Although, I credited myself for having the balls to call the sexy daddy and hook him up with Danny way back when they first met.

I watched from a second row of seats as the photographer posed them and checked

my watch.

I needed a drink, and that wouldn't happen until the reception, so they needed to move this along.

I still had about ten minutes or so.

I could wait.

Other guests filtered in and sat around.

A few older people picked chairs in the front, and I had to assume they were parents or other relatives.

I wasn't close enough to either of them to know their family though, so some of my assumptions could be off.

It didn't matter.

It was too lovely an afternoon to worry about who was who.

The sky was a perfect blue—royal or azure or some shit—and spectacular, cloudless over the sugar-white sand.

The rolling waves made a soothing soundtrack playing along in the background of the whole event.

Before my mind could wander much more, the wedding party approached.

Yay!

We were doing this.

Danny and Lee stood under the arbor thing, and each of the best men stood to the side.

The photographer circled around like a shark, getting more shots of them from various angles until the music started.

Mr.

Photo-dude disappeared, and the official walked up to them.

After saying something to the grooms, he made his way around to the back of the arbor and started his wedding speech.

The ceremony flew by super-fast after that.

And they were kissing their husbands.

Very romantic.

I did love it, and I was incredibly happy for my friends.

But I was also a little sad and lonely.

I didn't even have a plus-one.

What was wrong with me and my life?

Drew, our boss, often told me I worked too much.

He wasn't wrong, but it filled the time void.

And when that wasn't possible, I could be found hiding out at home, usually reading but occasionally binge-watching something or other.

The truth was I was boring.

And even though I wanted a special someone in my life, I wasn't going anywhere or doing anything to meet that someone.

We were directed to the back patio for the reception.

Pink, orange, gray, and coral flagstones made up the patio floor, and small cocktail tables with white tablecloths flanked the side between the walkway and the pool.

The other side had more formal seating, with six tables with floral centerpieces and about eight chairs per table.

Most of the guests were heading for the tables, but I went the other way for a drink.

A bar was set up on the far side of the pool, and it was calling my name.

"Get a drink, Skyler ..."

I ordered a double martini and a draft beer, then took them both back to the tables.

I walked around slowly, sipping the martini, until I found the place setting with my name on it.

Thankfully, it was one of the tables closest to the walkway, so I could hit the bar again without interrupting everyone if I needed to.

I swapped the name card with someone to ensure and easy out.

And why did I need to drink?

Oh, right, yeah, I was alone while Danny had just married his daddy.

I hated the way that sounded in my head.

I was feeling sorry for myself, and I shouldn't go there.

I drained the martini then sipped my beer.

And then.

Everything got worse.

Nelson Crowell sat across from me.

He smiled.

“Well, hello. It's been a while.”

“Not long enough.”

Nelson scowled.

“Yeah. I've apologized, Sky.”

“Sorry, not enough. And it's Sky ler .” Emphasis on the part he left off.

The jerk.

“Excuse me, Mr. Crowell.” I would have sat next to anyone else in the world.

Why him?

Why was he speaking to me after the shit that went down?

“Do you think you can sit somewhere else?”

“No. And it’s Crow.”

Stupid nickname.

He’d asked me to call him that before, but I never cared much for it.

I never cared much for him, especially after he tanked my case.

For no reason.

Except maybe because he could.

I rolled my eyes, wishing I had another martini.

I drained the last of my beer instead.

“That was a long time ago, Skyler . Can’t we put it behind us?”

I didn’t want to put it behind us.

We knew each other because of the lawsuit that Nelson messed up for me.

And I hated the guy.

“I don’t think so, Mr. Crowell.”

“Call me Crow, please.” He held his hand out, pleading.

I wasn’t having it.

“No. I’m not calling you anything. I don’t like you. I see through you.” And his bullshit.

Rich guy can do whatever he wants, play games, fuck up people’s lives like they were nothing to make him feel more important.

I didn’t need that.

God, why?

Anyone but him.

The wait staff started serving salads, and once they placed a plate in front of me, I pushed my chair back and headed to the bar.

I’d rather have another drink than sit there eating grass with that traitor.

I ordered another martini and sipped it when I wanted to slam it.

I wasn’t going to get stinking drunk and embarrass Danny, but I no longer wanted to be here.

Nelson—Crow followed me to the bar.

“Hey. Skyler. I’m trying to be cool. To apologize. And this is a special day for our

mutual friends.”

“About that. How exactly do you know the grooms?”

“I kind of know Daniel. Drew actually—”

“Thought so.” No one who knew Danny called him Daniel.

Even if that’s what he put on the invitation and announcements.

Danny and I worked at Drew’s law firm, and Crow was apparently still a client, which surprised the hell out of me because Drew had principals, and Nelson Crowell did not.

“Thought so what?”

I grunted.

How did he not get it?

“You really did a number on me and nearly fucked up my career. You may take that casually, but I do not. I’ll tolerate you since, apparently, you’ve fooled Drew somehow, but that doesn’t make us friends. Got it.” I lifted my eyebrows.

He had better get it.

“Crow.”

He held his hands up.

“Got it.” He ordered an old-fashioned.

Was that pretentious or what?

Then he took it back to the table and I ordered another double vodka martini.

I didn't have to drive after the reception since I had a room booked at the hotel.

An expensive room that I would be enjoying.

Alone.

I took my drink back to the table and made myself stick around for the main course.

I needed to soak up some of the alcohol.

Thankfully, I wasn't a lightweight.

After the admittedly delicious dinner, the music started, and the whole party moved to the cocktail tables.

I got another martini and sat beside the pool.

I took off my loafers and rolled up my slacks so I could stick my feet in.

Crow plopped his sorry ass down beside me as if he belonged there.

"Is it heated?"

I threw my hand toward the giant hotel looming above us.

"Would this place not heat their pool?" They were one of the top luxurious beach hotels in all of Florida, not the bay area alone—all!

“Good point.” He had switched his hard alcohol for beer, and I probably should too, but I hardly cared.

“Are you staying at the hotel? You’re not driving, right?”

“Don’t judge me.”

“I’m not. Just thinking of safety.”

I made a raspberry.

Well, he wasn’t wrong.

“Yes, staying here. And I’ll probably have another drink, then head up.”

“You have to wait for the cake, Sky.”

“I do not. And don’t call me that.” Something about him shortening my name, as if he were a friend, grated on my nerves, making me want to grind my molars.

He held his hands up again as if exasperated.

Behind us, the party cheered and clapped, and the music shifted to something slow.

The DJ said, “Ladies and Gentlemen, our grooms for the evening. Mr. and Mr. Carpenter. Their first dance as husbands.” Danny took Lee’s last name.

I hadn’t expected anything else from their dynamic.

Then they stepped out into the open space and danced.

It was nice.

Their pants were still rolled up—still barefoot.

But they'd lost their vests.

They looked fantastic.

And happy.

I wanted that.

Two more drinks later, I ordered another when I shouldn't have, so I took the last drink up to my room.

I planned on crashing, passing out, and dealing with life in the morning.

But as I hit the bed, I was still thinking about one Nelson "Crow" Crowell.

Crow was such a stupid nickname.

And why was I still thinking about him?

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Chapter two

Drunk at the Wedding

After Skyler left, I sat at the bar and ordered another old-fashioned.

Or three.

I hated how sad he looked.

Damn, that boy needed a firm hand—a good daddy.

But I would never be that for him.

Since he hated me.

No matter how hard I tried with him, screwing up his case was too much for him to get over.

I suspected he didn't know why I did it, and he didn't care.

He was selfish, unable to see outside himself for even one damn second.

Fuck him anyway and his cute ass and sassy mouth.

I didn't need that.

I ordered another drink.

Finally numb now.

And that was a good damn thing because I couldn't stand that feeling of wanting anything.

And that deep hole inside of me that needed to be filled with things I didn't have often got me in trouble.

I wouldn't mind wanting Skyler on his knees in the bathroom, though.

Damn.

That man had no clue how sexy he was.

Warner joined me at the bar, slinging his arm around my shoulder.

"Dude. What's going on?"

"Nutin." I laughed, hearing how dirty that sounded, but Warner glared at me, unamused.

"How many of these have you had?"

"Before or after Skyler left? Lost count after..."

Warner was my best friend in the whole world.

He had my back.

My ride or die.

So when he kissed my cheek and said, “You’re done here, Crow,” I didn’t even bother arguing.

Warner tugged me off the bar stool and aimed me inside the hotel toward the lobby.

I stepped onto the loud-ass, busy carpeted floor and its weird geometric pattern that would not stop spinning left and jerking right.

I moaned loudly, closed my eyes, and grabbed my head.

“Yeah, too much drink-a-hol.”

“No lie, bro. Let’s go. I’ll get you up to your room.”

“Okays. Think Sky’s room’s next to mine? Maybe I can tap, tap, on the wall.”

Warner shoved me into the elevator and hit our floor.

“Who are you yammering on about now?”

“You know. The lawyer boy. Sky-lers...Skyler...” I couldn’t remember his last name at the moment.

“Skyler Baldwin? The twink that works for Drew?”

To be fair, he wasn’t the only twink who worked for Drew, but he was the only one I was interested in.

“Yeah. The law-hottie with the eyes.” I waved at my eyes, assuming Warner knew

what I meant, but he just laughed.

I didn't even care.

I laughed with him.

I tended to be a happy drunk, even while mooning over someone I'd never have.

The elevator doors opened, and Warner tried to pull it together and stop laughing as he led me down the hall.

"Everyone has eyes, man."

"Duh. You know what I mean." I never said things like duh .

I must have drank entirely too much.

In fact, before I could think much of it, I was in bed in the hotel room, and Warner was putting a cold, wet cloth on my head.

I had no idea how I got there.

"There's a trash can beside the bed. In case, you know." That was the more important thing to focus on.

Puking.

Or rather not puking.

"You're my lifeline."

“Yep. Not like you’ve never done the same for me. I’ll have room service send you a hangover plate in the morning.”

Then he was gone.

The lights were out.

And I was alone with my thoughts.

I might owe Danny an apology.

I’d have to ask how bad I was.

Tomorrow.

Right now?

I thought of Skyler.

The one person I had no chance with.

How did I end up being such a loser in relationships after being so successful in every other aspect of my life?

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Chapter three

The Camping Trip

A few months later...

The breakroom was empty when I walked in to grab my lunch.

I needed the break but still had several briefs to get through before the end of the day.

I didn't want to take work home over the weekend.

For once, I'd had enough work and was looking forward to much-earned downtime with a good book.

I planned to re-read my favorite go-to mystery and immerse myself in a different world.

I pulled my sandwich out of the fridge to take back to my office.

Turning around, I ran smack into Danny.

Literally.

"Ow. Damn. Back up, man." I held my hand out to gently move him.

"What are you doing this weekend?" He was bouncing on the balls of his feet,

excitement leaking out of him.

He grabbed my arms, pumping them and generally being typical over-the-top Danny.

“Nothing...” I held my breath, waiting for whatever wild suggestion he was coming up with.

80s Night at Afterglow?

A Little party at his place?

You never knew with Danny.

“Are you taking off next week for Pride?”

“Wasn’t planning on it.”

Danny shook me again.

He was entirely too excited.

“Drew said we can have off. He’s even closing the office, man. And I need you.”

“Need me for what? Let go, dude.” Escaping the breakroom was going to be a challenge.

I loved Danny to death, but sometimes, he was too much.

I’d hoped he’d calm down after marrying Lee, but nope.

He was still hyper-excitable.

He tugged my arm.

“There’s a Pride camping trip. Drew is sponsoring it, so I know you can go. I need you to be there.”

“You don’t.” I slid past him with my sandwich, finally dislodging him from my person, but Danny grabbed me again from behind and put his face against my back.

“Please, please, please. This is going to be the best thing ever. Sky-ler...” I hated it when he begged.

“You have to.” He sounded like a three-year-old, which was par for the course with him.

“I’m not the camping type. Lee will be with you, right?” Thank all that was holy for Lee.

Danny plopped down in a chair and faceplanted into the table.

He was incredibly hard to resist.

“Yes, Lee is coming, but I need friends there too. It’ll be so much fun. And I’m responsible for organizing everything. I need your support.” He made need sound like it had four syllables.

“I don’t have any camping stuff.” Outdoors wasn’t my thing.

A comfy couch with extra cushions was.

I had a plant once.

After it died, I gave up.

And it was a cactus.

Thanks, Mom, and your don't worry, you can't kill this one, Sky .

“You don't need anything. So many people are coming, someone will share with you. This is a company-sponsored trip. You have to come.” I really didn't think Drew would fire me if I didn't go.

And I didn't want to go.

I wasn't kidding when I said I wasn't the camping type.

“I only go outside to get to my car, Danny-boy.”

“It's going to be fun. Seriously, I promise someone will bunk with you. We rented out every tent space and some of the RV spots in the place.”

“You helped organize this?” I had my suspicions.

Why was this so important to him?

“Yes. Duh...When Drew asked me, I couldn't say no. Could I? No. And I need this to be a success. You know. So he'll ask me to do more things.” Danny looked up at me with those puppy eyes that he had perfected over the years.

And he'd had a lot of practice with being a Little and all.

He knew I wouldn't say no to that.

“Fuck. Fine. Whatever. When and where?”

“We’re meeting here. In the parking lot. We’re all loading up on two busses to drive out together.”

“What? Can’t I just meet you at the campground?”

“No. Duh. This is about community. PRIDE, Sky. We all go together.”

What had I signed up for?

And was it too late to back out?

“Whatever, fine. When?” Why the hell was I giving in to this?

“Uh... tomorrow morning. We’ll be gone for like six days. I’ll tell Drew you’re in.”

Fuck my life.

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Chapter four

Getting Ready to Camp

I packed my gear in my truck and headed over to pick up Warner before heading over to Drew's office for this trip.

Warner and I went way back, and he recently landed a job at Drew's firm, so we had been invited on a camping trip for Pride.

I was excited about it, but mostly because I hoped Skyler would also be going.

Glutton for punishment?

Obviously.

I didn't know much about him, to be honest, but he was sexy as hell when he got riled up.

Even if Sklyer didn't go, it would be great.

I loved camping.

And this one included a spring-fed river we could paddle board on.

I parked in Warner's driveway and honked my horn.

“Let’s go. Let’s go.”

Warner ran out with a duffle and his tent.

And his new boyfriend.

I would have been happier if it was just Warner, but Cody was a sweet twink and was also very outdoorsy.

He was actually a good match for Warner, so I couldn’t hate them being together.

“Hey Crow, you know Cody.” Not a question.

We’d met.

“Yes. Good to see you. Ready for the trip?”

“Oh yeah. This is going to be epic. I grew up in the country part of Florida, you know? I’m not a city boy like you two.” He winked boldly at Warner.

“And I love-love the water. Do we have room for blow-ups?”

“Yeah. We have inflatable paddleboards .” Warner quickly clarified, which was good.

But then he looked at me as if I organized all this.

“I’m sure there’s room. I have one too.”

Cody clapped.

Actually clapped.

“I’ll go get them.”

“I have snacks and drinks. I’ll grab the cooler.” Warner dashed back into the house.

A few minutes later, we were loaded up and headed over to Drew’s office, where we’d transfer everything to the bus.

“So y’all have your own tent? I brought the bigger one for all of us, in case.”

“Too small, Crow.” Warner laughed.

“If you know what I mean. I brought one.”

“No worries.” I didn’t actually want to share if they were going to be fucking all weekend, anyway.

We pulled into the parking lot alongside two big buses and quickly transferred our equipment.

I wasn’t looking forward to a long drive packed in with a bunch of strangers, but I was willing to do it.

I couldn’t wait to get there, set up camp, and then head to the water.

And better yet.

Who did I spy talking with the newlyweds?

Yep, none other than Skyler Baldwin.

All five-nine of him.

Brown hair, green eyes, and the most fuckable lips I'd ever seen on a man.

Stunning.

And probably deadly—at least figuratively.

Even though I knew he'd never give me the time of day, I was still very much interested in him.

It must have been the love of a challenge.

I wasn't a masochist, but who knew what could happen away in the woods for nearly a week.

This was going to be a great trip.

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Chapter five

Loading Up the Buses

At the law office parking lot of Drew King, where I worked, two big buses were parked, disrupting the view of the large glass and brick building.

Probably thirty or forty people who I did not know were mingling and loading equipment underneath in the storage compartments.

Okay, to be fair, I did know a lot of them.

They were from the firm, but they'd also brought friends and family.

And I kind of knew some of Danny's friends like Levi.

But it still felt overwhelming, like I was in over my head.

Entirely too many people for my comfort.

Put me in front of a courtroom, and I was better than fine—I was fire.

Outside of that?

Not so much.

I wanted to hide.

And to top it off, I didn't have any equipment to shove under the bus, making me feel less than with this crowd.

I left it to Danny to figure out who I could bunk up with.

Or tent up with—whatever.

But it wasn't looking good.

I had a duffle bag full of T-shirts and swim trunks.

I also brought flip-flops and a beat-up pair of sneakers along with the hiking boots I wore.

But nothing else.

No bedding or pillows.

And certainly not a tent.

And I was not going to sleep out in the open.

Mosquitos.

And I was not going to sleep with Danny and Lee.

Newlyweds.

I was ready to get back in my car and leave when Danny said he found someone to share a tent with.

“So, no worries. We’re all adults. There’s plenty of room. So, get your sassy-ass on the bus.” He practically corralled me, and that made me super nervous.

“Who am I bunking with, Danny?”

“Don’t worry about it.” He shoved me toward the bus.

“Let’s go already. You’re holding up the works, man.”

I got on the bus, but I worried.

All the way there...

I sat by a window, looking out at the road flying by.

Mostly, a whole lot of nothing.

We weren’t going all that far north of Tampa, but certainly far enough that the buildings and businesses gave way to trees and fields.

A lot of excited chatter droned on around me, oblivious to the scenery.

They were talking about getting on the water.

Rainbow Springs was known for its crystal-clear water.

We were also going to go hiking nearby, and Danny alluded to some surprises along the way.

What kind of surprises could you have at a campground?

I didn't know.

Finally, the bus pulled off the highway and drove farther into the countryside.

Small houses and farmland replaced the trees as we wound around the road.

Then, eventually, we pulled onto an even smaller road and then into a gated drive.

The bus driver punched in a code that lifted the gate and drove into the campground.

Up and around a windy road until we parked in front of what looked like an office and a small shoppe.

Big oaks, dripping with Spanish moss, lined the area along with other trees and lush vegetation.

I didn't know what kind they were, but green—everything was vivid green.

“Okay. Hang tight, everyone.” Danny jumped up from his seat.

“I'll get our assignments, and then we'll unload the bus.” He scampered off to the little store, and while he took care of business, I helped with unloading equipment. I didn't have much of my own, but I happily lent a hand to everyone else.

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Chapter six

At The Campground

Danny said Skyler needed a tent partner, so I volunteered.

That couldn't have gone better if I'd planned it.

I was pretty sure it would piss him off beyond reason when he found out, but it couldn't be helped.

I was the only one with extra space and equipment, including an extra sleeping bag, so that should make him feel comfortable.

Maybe.

More importantly, this would be the opportunity to set things right with him.

Or maybe it could lead to more.

So, I was careful and picked a spot for my tent in the very back, which was a little bit secluded, surrounded by trees you had to squeeze between to get in and out.

Danny winked at me knowingly when he okayed the assignment.

Maybe he was secretly rooting for Skyler and me to get together.

I know I was—even if it felt like wishful thinking.

Rubbing my hands together in anticipation, I plotted out where I wanted everything to go on our site.

I spread the tarp over the ground and started opening the bag holding the tent.

Before I got very far with the unpacking, footsteps approached, Danny was walking Skyler over.

I stood and got an eyeful of Skyler.

I could imagine the smoke coming from his ears.

Oh yes, he was angry.

“Hey. Welcome.” I spread my arms out.

Skyler turned to face Danny.

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.”

“No. This is the only choice.” Danny stretched out an arm, physically maneuvering Skyler into the site.

“Skyler, relax. Be nice.”

Skyler’s face turned beet-red, and he shook his head, then looked at the ground.

“This is not happening right now. No, no, no. No way am I sharing a tent with this asshole.”

“Hey, now. I volunteered. And I have plenty of room.” I spread my arms wide in invitation again.

One I was afraid he wouldn’t take.

“I think I’ll call an Uber and go home.”

Danny huffed, “Don’t be ridiculous.”

“I’m not,” Skyler protested with his hands balled into fists and planted on his hips.

“You are. But it’s okay. I get it. Not what you expected, but damn, it’s not the worst thing in the world, and if you open yourself to this, I think you’ll find Crow is not so bad. I mean, you could actually be friends.”

Danny’s words only earned me another scathing look from Skyler.

“I don’t know about that.”

“I’ll be very nice. You can trust me,” I added.

“I doubt both of those statements.” Skyler sighed.

“I guess I don’t have a choice. But.” He turned to Danny and pointed his finger into Danny’s chest.

“I’m holding you responsible for his behavior.” He pointed at me.

“Got it?”

“Fine. It’ll be fine, Sky.” Danny hugged Skyler and then booked it out of there like

his pants were on fire.

I didn't blame him.

A pissed-off Skyler was quite something.

"I'm working on the tent." I pointed to the bag.

"And there's a cooler. We can set up—"

"I'm going for a walk." Skyler stormed away, leaving me to set everything up.

Well, who was the asshole now?

Apparently, me for assuming he would help out.

I would do it without complaint, though it would go faster with help.

Ultimately, having him in the tent was more important than having his assistance with it.

Hopefully, that turned into something more.

But I would start with friendship if I could.

Both seemed unlikely at the moment.

He wasn't going to trust easily.

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Chapter seven

WTF at Camp

I kind of felt bad walking away without helping.

I wasn't normally that guy.

But.

Fuck him and Danny for shoving me into his space.

I didn't like it.

If I stayed to help, I was liable to do or say something none of us would like.

I walked past the main office building.

It was long, with six posts across the front, supporting an awning over the walkway.

It had a metal roof and was clean and inviting, though nothing fancy.

I cut across some grass and saw a sign for swimming and a boat ramp, so I headed that way.

The path split between a couple of buildings.

Well, one was more of a covered area, and the other was bathrooms and maybe a storehouse.

Farther down, I could easily see the swimming area next to the boat ramp.

Four steps led to a big drop-off, and along the side, cement walls shaped the area.

I sat on a nearby bench that overlooked the water and took off my socks and boots.

I sat, letting my feet hang over the edge.

They barely reached the cold water.

It wasn't terribly deep, maybe waist-high.

A few kids splashed around, and some folks were putting kayaks in the water at the ramp.

The sun beat down on me, high overhead, and made me consider going in the water.

Sweat beaded on my forehead.

After another few minutes of sitting there, I thought fuck it and pulled my shirt off, tossing it by my shoes before jumping off the side into the cold, cold water.

It was so refreshing.

I dipped my head under, then popped back up and shook like a dog.

The kids near me laughed, and I smiled back at them.

It was extremely hard to be mad at anything.

It was beautiful and full of life here.

“Hey, Sky!” Danny came down to the water.

He slid his flip-flops off and stuck his feet in like I had earlier.

“I’ve been looking for you.”

I bet.

“Why? So, you can foist me on some other asshole?” Guess it wasn’t impossible to be mad after all.

Yep, still pissed.

“Hey, man. You’re not being fair. And you ditched out, leaving everyone else to set up. That’s not like you.”

“It’s not like me to be here at all, Danny. I mean, for real. This is not my thing.” I stood on the rocky ground in the cool water, airing my issues to the public.

Great.

“You’ve had to twist my arm this entire time. You knew how I felt, and yet you didn’t find out who I could share with until we got here. It’s almost like you knew it would be him.”

“I didn’t. Maybe I assumed, but I didn’t know. But you need to relax and open up. This is not the worst situation in the world. And Crow is not as much of an asshole as

you think he is.”

I made a raspberry and went under the water.

I didn’t think Danny actually knew Crow very well.

When I came back up, shaking my head again, Danny was standing there staring at me.

“What?”

“I think it’s you being the asshole now.”

One of the kids near us giggled, probably at his cursing.

And maybe he was right.

“Watch your language, man.” I nodded toward the youngsters.

We may have booked up most of the campground, but not all of it.

“Yeah, sorry, kids.” He waved but they pretty much ignored him.

Danny snorted.

“So, I’m going to go finish setting up and hang out with Levi. You do whatever you want.” He flicked his hand and turned his back, walking away, clearly peeved.

“Okay, already,” I huffed.

“Wait up, Dan.” I guessed this was going to be one of life’s suck-it-up moments.

Especially when I struggled to get back out of the water.

That first ledge was a bitch.

I pulled myself up though, and grabbed my shirt, pulling it on, the material sticking to my skin.

I slid my feet into my boots without tying them and tucked my socks in my back pocket.

“You going to stop acting like a jerk?” He crossed his arms over his chest and glared at me.

Brat!

“You going to stop setting me up?” This time, I slung my arm around his shoulders.

I wasn’t as mad anymore.

At least, not at him.

Danny made a growly noise that sounded a lot like a baby bear.

He’d never pull off a grizzly.

“Butt-hole.”

“You’re entirely too cute. It’s hard to stay mad at you.”

“Yeah, I know.” He kissed my cheek, and we walked back toward our campsites.

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Chapter eight

Tent Is Set

I got the tent set up.

I used the whole space in the back for the bed.

I had a queen-sized air mattress that I put on the ground and piled other blankets beside it.

One thing I always brought camping was extra bedding.

Most people didn't think about it, but an extra blanket or two could mean a world of difference when it came to comfort.

So now I had a huge sleeping area that would make Skyler more comfortable.

Maybe.

Hopefully.

In any case, that was all I could do.

In the front room of the tent, I had a folding table set up with the things we would need, including flashlights and Yeti mugs.

Our duffle bags of clothes were on the ground underneath the table.

Two camp chairs were on the other side.

I also had floor mats, one inside and one outside.

Perfect.

Outside the tent, I had a cooler, now loaded with ice and drinks, sitting beside the picnic table.

If this had only been for us, I would have had a second cooler with food and a grilling station set up.

But for this trip, Drew's team provided plenty of food.

Speaking of the devil...

he walked into my campsite.

"Hey, Crow. Got a minute?"

We had known each other for many years.

Despite keeping his firm on retainer, I considered Drew more of a friend than a business associate.

"Sure, boss. This trip was a great idea."

"You know it was mostly Danny and a few others putting it together. All I had to do was open the wallet."

We both chuckled, but I knew what he meant.

He sponsored but relied on others to actually put it together, but he knew a good thing when he saw it.

“Well, I’m enjoying it so far.”

“Good. But I really wanted to talk to you about Skyler. Danny says he’s going to bunk with you.”

“That’s the story.” I balled my hands into fists and planted them on my hips, trying not to look defensive because I could guess what Drew was going to say, knowing that Skyler pretty much hated me.

“Do you know what you’re doing?”

I had to be honest here.

Drew was a good friend, after all.

“No. Definitely not.” Because the truth was, when it came to Skyler, I was clueless.

He’d hated me, with good reason, for a long time.

But after a while, it was bullshit.

He never checked back to find out why I had fucked up his case.

He never even considered that there would be a good reason.

He had only been concerned with how it messed up his career.

I understood that was an issue, but there were other factors to consider, and honestly, Drew didn't hold it against him, so he should have gotten over it.

For fucks sake, it was years ago.

"I understand what went down back then, and you obviously know Skyler took it hard. He's sensitive. He was new back then, but now he's a seasoned pro. Add those two things up, and I guarantee you he'll eviscerate you with words in ten seconds flat if he wants to." Drew's face was all concerned.

I'd guess it was for both of us because he wasn't wrong about Skyler from what I'd seen already.

"Not my intention to get on his bad side. I'm thinking the opposite. Maybe it's way past time to make it up to him."

"I hope so. He's a fantastic lawyer. I need him. And I like him. I don't want to see him, or you for that matter, getting hurt over this."

"Nope. I'm tougher than that." I fake-punched him in the arm.

"I've been trying to apologize to him."

"He's stubborn."

"Don't I know it. Holds a grudge for-fucking-ever. But maybe this trip is what he needs to get over it. I'm going to do my best to make him see I'm really a nice guy."

Drew chuckled.

"Are you though?"

“Fuck you, man.”

He reached out and shook my hand.

“Seriously, I hope you’re right. Hope it works out. Let me know if either of you need anything.”

“Thanks, Drew.”

He walked away, stopping to talk with other people as he went along.

He was one of the best people I knew.

That was really saying something, considering he was a lawyer.

All in all.

My hope aligned with his.

Maybe Skyler could stop being so obstinate.

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Chapter nine

Day One

Hiding was not the best strategy.

Especially since eating and sleeping were necessities.

From what Danny said, the next day was going to be busy.

So, it was time to do that sucking it up thing.

My growling stomach seconded that decision.

The cooking was being done from one of the sites in the center of the campground, between two RVs that were owned by a few of the more well-paid lawyers in the firm and their partners.

Leslie Howe and her wife Deanna, who owned a boutique store in St.

Petersburg, were one of the couples with the RV.

They weren't self-proclaimed chefs or anything but opened their equipment and storage to everyone.

It turned out Danny's husband, Lee, was also one of the men who would man the grill on this trip, but that wasn't what we were doing for dinner.

The other RV was owned by Walker and Morgan Jackson.

Walker was one of the best in the firm, but I didn't know much about his husband.

They had brought four big containers of smoked brisket and multiple containers of prepared potato salad and coleslaw.

The only thing being grilled was the garlic bread.

Simple meal to feed the masses, and it was perfect for day one when everyone was so busy.

We all met around the double RV campsite and made plates.

I didn't see Crow anywhere.

If he didn't show up, I would fix him a plate out of guilt.

But I didn't want to be that nice to him.

Instead, I grabbed a Diet Dr.

Pepper can out of a cooler of drinks and took my plate to one of the picnic tables where Danny and Lee sat.

"Hi, guys." I sat across from Danny.

I'd been hanging around with him, walking from campsite to campsite and helping out where needed.

I'd assisted a couple of ladies in putting their tent up.

Hosed out a cooler where a couple of soda cans had burst open, then took it up to the main office to refill it with ice.

And other small chores like that.

But what I was really doing was avoiding going back to Crow's space.

I didn't want to be there, especially knowing I was going to have to sleep in the same damn tent.

Danny and Lee greeted me and kept eating.

"This is so good." Danny wiped his mouth.

"Dig in, man."

I took a bite, and he wasn't wrong.

"This is amazing. Who made this?"

"Walker's husband," Lee answered while Danny chewed another bite.

"Mmm...it's good. I don't know much about him. Morgan, right?"

Danny swallowed with a nod.

"Yeah. Morgan. He's real nice. But I admit I don't know what he does either." He picked up his bread but didn't take a bite.

"Hey. Where's Crow?"

“Don’t know.” I shrugged, thinking he was missing out on this food.

“Don’t worry, if he doesn’t show up, I’ll take him a plate.”

Danny smiled.

He was so sure he’d solved all our problems by shoving us together.

Not.

I glared at him.

I had not forgotten.

“You’re still not out of trouble for this mister.”

He held up his hands.

“Wait and see.” With a mischievous look in his eyes, he giggled as he dug back into his food.

Afterward, we helped clean up.

The RVs had sinks, but there was more cleaning up to do than that, so some of us used a collapsible wash basin to wash up silverware and stuff outside.

With everyone chipping in, it only took a few minutes.

And Danny and a few others informed me that the key to fun camping was keeping things clean and organized.

Made sense.

But Crow never showed up, so I made him a plate and headed over to his site.

“Hungry?” I stretched out the food to him like an olive branch, though I still didn’t think it was me who needed to make nice.

I was simply trying to get along to get through this.

“Wow. Thanks. Yeah, I lost track of time, I guess.” He took the plate and sat at the table.

“Looks like you got everything together.”

He nodded and pointed his fork toward the tent.

“Go check it out.”

I didn’t argue, since I needed to figure this out.

What was the situation?

I ducked in, wiping my feet on the mats.

The front section had a table with supplies on it and under it, including my duffle bag.

That was actually considerate of Crow.

He was trying, so I figured I needed to as well.

Manners would get us through this awkward situation.

In the bigger sleeping area, two separate sleeping bags were set up, one on top of a thick blanket palette on the ground and the other on an air mattress.

So separate but close together.

Too close.

Fuck me.

Nothing I could do about it.

It could have been a smaller tent that had us shoved right up against each other, body to body.

This was at least a concession, though I didn't look forward to sleeping on the hard ground.

It was getting dark, and the next day was going to be crazy, so I grabbed my duffle and pulled out a pair of sweatpants and a tank top to sleep in.

I changed quickly and then stretched out on top of the sleeping bag on the floor.

Crow even supplied a pillow.

Why was he so thoughtful when I was trying so hard to stay mad at him?

After a few minutes Crow walked in, wearing only a pair of shorts.

Not very long shorts.

To be fair, they weren't booty shorts, but they weren't basketball shorts, either.

“Uh, Sky? You’re probably going to get hot wearing that. I mean, I do have a fan, but it gets hot in here at night.” He went about setting up the little fan, which I didn’t think would do much to cool us off.

“A few flashlights are on the table if you need to go to the bathroom. It’s probably going to get very dark.”

“Okay, thanks.” I rolled over, facing the sidewall of the tent, giving him my back.

“It’s hard to find things in the dark. Maybe set a pair of shorts close before we crash. That way, you can find them easier if you get too hot.”

“I’m fine.” I was not going to admit I was wrong.

I didn’t care.

Sharing this small space, especially with him practically naked, required sweatpants.

Why did he have to have such thick, muscular legs and such a broad chest?

“You are. And stubborn.”

I turned and glared at his snarky ass.

He turned over on the air mattress, and it shifted, making a squeaky noise.

“Have it your way.” If he wanted to be considerate, he could have offered to sleep on the ground and give me the mattress.

Even as I thought it, I knew I wasn’t being fair.

I grunted and turned back.

The ground was hard, but there were blankets under it, so it was not the worst place I'd ever slept.

It didn't take a long time for me to drift off.

But, of course, it got hot.

Mother fucker!

I was sweating and fucking miserable.

I tossed and turned but couldn't get comfortable.

And I had to take a piss.

I tripped, trying to get out of the fucking tent.

At least it wasn't too hard to find a flashlight.

The bathhouse was only a short walk up the sidewalk, so I went and headed back to the tent.

It was so fucking hot.

I hadn't listened to Crow about having a pair of shorts handy.

And I didn't want to try and find any in the dark.

But it was dark, and I was beat.

I took off my sweats to sleep in my boxers and tank.

I still wouldn't admit I was wrong, though.

I looked over at Crow, sleeping peacefully and snoring lightly.

He was too fucking sexy for his own good.

Fuck Crow, anyway.

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Chapter ten

Day Two

This was what I was here for.

The river.

We were all going on the long trip down.

Some of us had our own equipment, and the camp organizers, aka Danny and Drew, but mostly Danny, rented out the innertubes for anyone who didn't, which was still a good bit of campers.

The tubers lined up to get their inflated watercraft, and the rest of us dealt with our own.

I had an inflatable paddleboard.

It was the greatest thing since bacon.

Thankfully, we had power at our site.

It made things a little easier, especially for pumping my paddle board up.

Once it was ready, I hauled it down to the water.

The ramp was crowded with tubers and kayakers, so I went through the swimmer area, garnering a few dirty looks, but I got out beyond the roped-off area quickly.

I paddled to the far side of the river and watched for anyone I knew, particularly Skyler.

I was hoping to spend some time on the water with him.

Not finding him, I waved to a few other people.

Drew and Justin would drive one of the buses and their truck down to the pick-up point down the river.

Then we'd load up and drive back to camp.

Going down the river was slow but a lot of fun.

No worries.

After a few minutes of fighting the river to wait for Skyler, I gave up.

I straddled the board and tucked my paddle along the side.

Leaning back on my hands, I let the current slowly pull me along, only using the paddle to avoid the trees when I drifted too close to the shoreline.

A couple of folks from our group were laughing and cutting up and splashing.

They splashed me, too, though I didn't think they meant to.

I waved to them and let them go past.

After a few minutes, we were all spread out along the river.

Voices carried across the water, though I couldn't tell what was said or who was speaking.

Everything echoed weirdly.

A sleek, black cormorant bird dove into the water, popping up across the river.

A couple of turtles with yellow stripes down their face and necks hung out on a log.

The sky was incredibly blue and the water cold.

Refreshingly cold.

It was a stunning day.

Then I heard his voice, and I perked my head up.

He was close, so I paddled over to him.

“Hey, Skyler.”

He was on a tube, trying to get situated comfortably from the looks of it.

And having issues.

“Yeah. Crow, hi,” he muttered, pulling his legs up and across the inflatable.

I knelt on my board, paddling to stay close to him.

“Nice, right? Don’t you love this?”

Skyler huffed.

Then he raised his face to the sky.

“Yeah. It’s nice out. I’m not fond of this thing.” He patted the tube.

“But it’s alright. I guess.”

“I’m not fond of tubes either. I prefer something more like this.” I gestured to my board.

“That’s pretty cool, honestly. Was it expensive?”

“Uh, not really, no. I didn’t buy the most expensive one, but there were others cheaper. This is the third time I’ve been out on it.”

“Ahh...it seems like fun, but I’d probably tip it over. I have no coordination. Or balance.”

I could imagine that, but he would probably do better than he thought.

“I tipped it a few times when I first got it. Takes a minute to get the hang of it.”

“Cool.”

We floated along and chit-chatted.

It was nice.

For once, he wasn't trying to run away or strangle me.

A perfect day, except the sky was growing dim, with a few dark clouds in the distance that appeared to be rolling in quickly, and I was guessing it would rain.

Up ahead, I saw it coming down, a dark curtain of water.

"Oh shit," Skyler sat up.

"It's going to rain."

"Yep. We're already wet, though."

"Mm...what about lightning."

Florida was the lightning capital of the world, but this didn't look like a bad storm, and I hadn't heard any thunder.

"I think we're okay."

"Sure. This is fine." He patted the tube again as if convincing himself.

"Rubber. Right."

"Exactly." I wasn't entirely sure if that would help or not, but he seemed a little frightened and needed some reassurance.

It tugged that spot inside me that wanted to be someone's daddy.

I swallowed it and paddled closer to him.

Things were fine at first.

It sprinkled, so not a big deal at all.

But after another minute or two, it came down hard.

And Skyler obviously didn't like it.

"This sucks. Fuck. I don't like this. Who knew you'd need an umbrella to float down the river. Damn."

"Hey, let's go over there." I pointed to a thick overhang of trees up ahead.

"Uh. How am I gonna get over there?"

"Put your feet in the middle and kick." This was definitely a new experience for him, and he fussed and growled, but he finally got his feet under him.

Together, we managed to maneuver under the trees.

I jumped in and pushed the tip of my board into the shore a little so it wouldn't float off, then I pulled his tube closer.

Once we were situated, I got back on my paddleboard.

Skyler sat on the top of his tube with me holding his feet.

"This is so uncomfortable." Skyler frowned.

"It's a story you can tell. Something you'll remember."

“You’re very optimistic. I don’t remember you being that way before.”

“A lot’s changed since then, Sky.”

“Whatever. Some things don’t.”

“Like what?” I wanted to say his grudge and ask him if he could let go of it for half a minute to see what was in front of him.

But...

“You ruined my case. Nearly ruined my career. And now you’re ruining this trip for me.”

“I’m ruining it for you?” I asked with raised brows.

Not sure how he came up with that.

Skyler scowled.

“I think you know.” But he didn’t offer an example.

I thought he was projecting.

“I think you ruin everything by being here. Why are you hanging out with me anyway?”

I’d had enough of his childish complaints.

“Skyler. You have been so busy being mad and throwing around that pissy attitude that you haven’t given us a chance to get to know each other. And that’s what this trip

is about. Getting to know people, growing closer, and having a good time together. We could actually be having a good time here. We could be friends. I've been trying with you."

When I thought he couldn't scowl more, he upped his game with a deeper frown and a middle finger.

"Let go of me." He kicked his feet, nearly dumping himself in the water, but he held on at the last minute.

He dropped his feet back into the center of the tube and kicked off.

It was still raining but not as nearly as bad as it had been.

I watched him paddle off, catching up to another group from our camp.

Well fuck.

That didn't go well.

I had no idea how he could hold a grudge for so long.

When Drew said he was stubborn, he was underestimating him.

Stubborn didn't even begin to cover it.

Warner and Cody paddled by, so I pushed out from under the trees and caught up to them.

"Hey, y'all."

Cody waived.

“Hey. Did you hide under that tree while it rained?”

“Yeah, I’m kinda smart like that.” I winked at the twink, who laughed.

Warner maneuvered his kayak around, bumping into my board.

“Where’s your friend? Skyler?”

“Don’t know.”

“What’s the deal with him anyway?”

“I don’t know. He’s being stubborn. I swear he needs a daddy to take him in hand.”
Maybe to spank his ass.

“Uh-huh. And I bet that’s going to be you?” Warner looked skeptical.

I chuckled.

“Well, if I can manage it. Oh yeah.” I’d love to paddle that boy’s ass until I could see my handprint in pink.

Then fuck that ass.

I’d probably need to gag him first, but I wasn’t sharing any of that, though.

Warner splashed me with his paddle.

“Cool down there, Hot-daddy.”

I flipped him off, but Warner only laughed.

He was such a good friend, and I'd known him for so long it was hard for us to truly offend each other.

But sometimes, we pushed it.

“Whatever, dude. Let's leave this grouch alone, Cody, and get on down this river.”

I let them paddle off.

It would be good to spend some time examining my motives while enjoying nature.

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Chapter eleven

Gone Tubing

How could Crow be so insufferable and so good-looking at the same time?

I wanted to like him, but OMG—he was so full of himself.

Like he thought he could fix my issues?

Well, fuck him anyway.

I didn't have problems for him to solve.

He was the problem.

I continued floating along, ignoring everyone else, and honestly, that wasn't hard to do.

Leaning over the side of the tube, I saw fish dart around below me and swim through the long grasses.

It was like hovering over an aquarium.

Peaceful.

Calming.

Especially since the sun came back out and started heating up the rain-cooled water.

A huge double rainbow stretched across the sky.

No doubt about it, the day was turning out to be simply gorgeous.

Levi and his sister, Brianna, floated over.

“Hey, Sky!” Levi called out.

“Have you met Bri? And this is Lilly and Landon, her kids. They came out to tube with us.” All four of them were on innertubes like mine.

Levi paddled toward me, and Brianna grabbed onto my tube, making a chain.

“Hey, I’m Skyler. I’ve met Brianna. Not the kids.” I’d met Brianna at Danny’s wedding, but they hadn’t brought the kids, obviously.

“It’s Bri, please. Are you a lawyer, Skyler?”

“Yes, I work for Drew, and it’s Sky, please.” I echoed her words, receiving a big, wide smile in return.

“Great. Sky it is. So you work with Danny, then?”

“Some. We’re good friends. I kind of introduced him to Lee.” The kind of part was that we were at the BDSM club in the Littles room, and I so did not want to get into that.

Especially with her kids, although they seemed grown and also ignoring us.

Lilly looked like she could actually be sleeping, draped over the tube, and Landon was looking around at everything and taking pictures with his phone.

I'd left mine at camp, not wanting to risk it getting wet.

But to each his own.

Landon looked a bit older than her.

He might have been college-age, maybe, while she was likely a junior or senior in high school.

Although, I wouldn't put money on it.

Levi pointed out the prehistoric-looking birds drying their wings on the branches of a nearby tree.

And Landon scrambled to get the picture.

Then he pointed out turtles on the side and suddenly got very excited when he saw three otters ahead.

Okay, that was exciting, but Levi's voice changed, and he got that dreamy look on his face that Danny always did when he was in his Little headspace.

"Look. Bri, Sky. Otters. That one's on the shore. Oh, the others are swimming."

Landon chuckled at his excitement but didn't stop taking pictures, either.

"Don't even think about getting close to them, Uncle Levi. They crack through oyster shells with those teeth and jaws. Your petting fingers wouldn't stand a chance."

Levi huffed.

“If I stood a chance, they’d swim away. Lookie.” He pointed at them again, but this time behind us.

One of them popped up in the water then disappeared in an instant.

“Too fast for me. I’d never catch ‘em.” His voice slipped even more into Little-mode. I looked at Landon to gauge his reaction, but he only looked amused. As did Brianna. It was pretty obvious they knew.

“Hey, Levi?” I wasn’t going to ask who knew and who didn’t. I wasn’t going to out him if I was wrong.

“Yeah?

” he answered, not looking at me.

“Where’s Hudson?” That was his partner.

The question made Levi pout.

He was kind of cute.

“He had stuff to do. Grown up daddy stuff.”

Well then, maybe everyone did know.

Then Levi smiled brightly.

“He’ll be here tonight for dinner and after.”

Lilly's head popped up from the other side of her mother.

"Oh, are we staying for the karaoke? I want to sing."

Bri rolled her eyes.

"Sure."

"Karaoke?" I hadn't known that was the plan.

"Yeah. It's special. I'm not 'posed to tell. But it's gonna be so fun. Please stay, Bri."
Levi pouted.

He was cute, but it made me feel sorry for Hudson.

He probably gave in entirely too much with this one.

"I said sure." Bri held up her hands.

"Yay!" Levi clapped.

Then he went back to pointing out things for Landon to take pictures of.

His attention span was short.

Much like Danny's.

I could see why the two of them were such good friends.

I dropped into the water to cool off.

And Landon offered to hold on to my tube if I wanted to swim a bit.

Levi called out.

“Me too. Me too.” And splashed into the water.

That kid had entirely too much energy.

After swimming a bit, I climbed back up and held on to the tubes while Landon swam with Levi a little more.

“That was refreshing, Lilly. You should get in.” Landon splashed his sister as he crawled back up on his tube.

She wrinkled her nose.

“No thanks.”

I stuck with Levi and his family for the rest of the trip.

Then, finally, we got out downriver, where the vans were picking us up.

The ramp had deep stairs at the very end because the water dropped off.

I used them to get up on the ramp and pulled the tube with me, carrying it to the end of the dock where someone collected it.

We all chatted as we dried off, and I couldn't help looking for Crow.

I didn't see him, but didn't think he could have been terribly far away from me.

Putting it behind me, I got on the bus.

I sat back and closed my eyes.

I hadn't realized how tired I was from the water and the sun.

Who thought you could get that tired doing so little?

I mean, I practically reclined and relaxed the entire way.

Someone plopped next to me, and I opened my eyes.

Crow.

Had to be him, right?

“What?”

“Just making sure you made it back all in one piece.”

“Sheesh. I am an adult, you know.”

His smirk said he didn't, in fact, know that I was a grown-ass man and was probably about to rub my inexperience or naivety in my face.

Or whatever his joke was going to be.

Maybe my size since I was significantly smaller than him.

I was almost as tall as him but built like a twink.

Skin and bones with a bubble butt.

My thighs were a little thick, too.

But one hundred percent adult.

It wasn't my fault Crow was built more like a linebacker.

With broad, muscular shoulders and...

And I had to stop thinking about him.

"Never mind. You know what. Go sit somewhere else and stop bothering me."

He added a smarmy chuckle to his smirk.

"What if I don't want to. Maybe I'd rather sit here and keep ruining your trip."

I flipped him off, but then he shook his head as he got up and sat somewhere else.

Then Danny caught my eye, and he frowned and shook his head.

"Fucker," I muttered under my breath.

I didn't need his judgement.

Danny walked up the aisle and leaned toward me.

"It wouldn't kill you to be nicer to him. He is helping you out."

"Who? Crow?" I acted like I didn't know what the fuck he was talking about.

“I’m nice. What’s not nice.”

He scowled at me but walked off, muttering, “Whatever.”

Good.

When we got back to camp, everyone split up and a lot of us got showers.

I felt like I needed it after being in the water of the springs.

Thankfully, there were several bathhouses throughout the grounds.

But once I was all cleaned up, I had nothing to do until dinner.

I went back to the campsite to maybe sneak in a quick nap.

But as I slid through the gap in the trees, Crow stood there in the middle of our site, drinking from a bottle of water.

I felt like he was constantly in my face.

I huffed and moved to go around him.

He stepped right in my way.

“Hey, Sky.”

Fuck it.

I sat at the picnic table beside the tent with my back against the table part.

“What?”

“You look tired. Maybe you should take a quick nap. I’ll wake you in a few minutes.”

I lost my cool.

Jumping up, I glared at him.

“Do not tell me what to do.” And pointed with a jabby finger.

“You’re not my daddy. You’re just a thorn in my side.” Even though I wanted a nap, I hated him telling me to take one.

Yeah, logical.

I guessed that went out the window when emotions were involved.

“I could be.”

What the fuck was he talking about.

“A thorn?”

“Your daddy.” He gave me a sultry look that I might have had a little bit of a hard time resisting.

But no.

I needed to be pissed off and that look did not help.

In a move that rivaled my stupidest moments of all time, I got in his face.

Sure, he was a little taller than me, but I did not care.

“Stop it. Stop harassing me. Stop being nice. I don’t want anything to do with you.”

Crow stepped forward, and I instinctively took a step back.

His face was a mask of anger.

Then I bumped into a tree, but he still kept coming.

Did I push too far?

Had he snapped?

He stared at me with his dark scowl, looking at the top of my head, my eyes, my mouth.

Oh shit.

I could only imagine what he wanted.

To kiss me?

To throw me over his shoulder?

To push me down on my knees?

And why did my dick take notice?

But I hated him, right?

How was I going to get through this trip?

It was only the second day of six.

I wanted to kill Crow and Danny for setting me up.

I would have to walk into town or call an Uber.

Mother fucker.

If I ended up doing that, I was going to beat the shit out of Danny.

But no.

Crow took a step back.

“I hear you, Sky. Loud and clear.” Then he stormed off, leaving me completely unsure of what I wanted.

But I was hard as fucking wood—as the saying goes.

And I hadn’t felt this needy in a long damn time.

And I was pissed off about all of it.

I stormed into the tent and searched through my luggage for lube.

Why hadn’t I brought any?

Oh right, not expecting sex in the woods.

There was a bottle of hand lotion on the supply table, though.

That would work.

After squirting enough in my hand to do the job, I crawled into the other side of the tent and shoved my shorts down with one hand.

Then I stroked my cock hard and fast.

No time for bullshitting here.

This was going to be ugly.

And I thought about all the things I didn't want to think about.

How big was Crow's cock?

How would it feel inside me, stretching me?

Or maybe shoved in my mouth and down my throat.

Would he grip my hair and use me hard?

I could see his eyes all aflame as he took me.

I spread my legs wider, tugged my balls, clenched my ass, and came like a fucking geyser with Crow's fucking name on my lips.

Damn, I hated that guy.

It was burgers and dogs for dinner.

I figured we would have at least one night with the traditional grilled food.

And who didn't love that?

I did.

I grabbed a plate and buns and doctored them up before standing in line at the grill stationed between the two RVs.

After receiving one of each, I also plopped coleslaw and a handful of chips on my plate and went to find someone to sit with.

After our little blow-up, I decided I needed to meet more people.

I wasn't going to spend this entire trip with Crow.

No way.

Levi's family were eating at a bench across the street, so I went there.

It felt safe, and there were a few people I didn't know at their table.

"Hey, Levi. Can I join y'all?"

"Sure, dude. Here. Move down a bit, Landon." The teen—twenty-something—scooted over and I slid beside him at the edge.

From my seat, I had a good view of most of the campground and could see who was moving in and out of the food prep area.

And there he was.

Crow stood in line with that other guy he came with and some twink.

Why did this guy get under my skin like that?

After he got his food, he sat at a table with a few people who I didn't know.

His friends went with him.

I took a bite of my burger while glaring at Crow.

“Wow, Sky.” Levi grabbed my attention.

“What?”

“Are you that hungry?”

“What do you mean?”

“You're face.” He motioned over his face before looking at me expectantly.

And I really did not want to give him an explanation.

Not when—Drew stopped at Crow's table.

Drew was my boss and the sponsor of this event.

And while I figured I should be representing the company better, I also couldn't find it in me to care.

I was a lot more concerned about why Drew was talking to Crow.

What could they have to discuss?

And if Crow had other cases, who was handling them?

It wasn't me.

"Switch with me." Levi got up and slid in between Landon and me, and Landon got up to sit in his vacated seat.

"Hey." He leaned into my shoulder.

"Are you okay, Sky?"

"Yeah," I muttered, but maybe I wasn't.

"I don't know." I dropped my half-eaten burger back to my plate.

Drew left with a wave and headed over to the table where the buns and condiments were.

Crow chatted with his friends left at the table.

This sucked.

And I wasn't entirely sure why.

And worse, Levi kept trying to talk to me.

He could obviously see I was upset, but I wasn't all that close to him, and this was shit I wasn't even telling Danny.

But we weren't as close as we used to be anyway.

Actually, Levi filled Danny's BFF spot now, and I still kind of felt a little jealous over it.

No one had filled mine, but it had been years since then, and we weren't school kids.

Relationships changed, and I should be over it.

Only Danny was still in my BFF spot, like it or not.

Fuck it all.

"Sorry, Levi. I'm really kind of tired. I'm going back to my campsite." I took the last of my food with me, thinking I'd eat it there and then, what?

Go to bed?

I couldn't even remember what was on schedule for the next day, but I was sure it would start too early.

I ate quietly, then cleaned up.

But before I could sneak into the tent, Danny showed up.

"Hey, man. You're gonna be late. Chop-chop."

"Late for what?"

"Are you kidding me? This is probably the best part of the trip. It's PRIDE, remember?"

Honestly, I hadn't remembered.

I was focused on simply getting through the day.

“So?”

“Sooo....” He stretched it so out three times longer than mine.

“Drag Queen Karaoke!” He grabbed my arm and tugged.

“You'll love it.” Great.

The party was being held behind the main office.

The lawn stretched out wide, and tables and chairs were set up.

And on the porch, a makeshift area serving as a stage had been marked out with streamers.

This was a camping sing-along, PRIDE style—complete with a drag queen host.

Danny shoved me over to a table with people I did not know, but I sat.

For him.

It wasn't a bad seat.

I could see everything very well, but I could also ditch out easily if I needed to.

“Hello, gentleman and gentleman. And others...” The drag queen spoke into the mic while gesturing wildly.

She had platinum blond hair, done up with a huge purple bow wrapped around half of it, and she wore a matching jumpsuit with silver platform heels.

Her makeup was wild and exaggerated, as one would expect, with purple, glittery eyeshadow and deep red lips.

“I am Madame Bella Donna. Here to help you have tons of fun on this PRIDE camping trip.” She bounced up and down, clapping her hands, and everyone applauded.

“Well, thank you. Thank you. I am a bit of a diva, so I love-love-love the attention.” She leaned over and fake stage-whispered.

“That means more applause, people.” Everyone laughed again as we applauded.

“Okay. Let’s get this thing started. I expect everyone to sing along with this classic. Hit it, Bender.” She motioned to a guy I hadn’t noticed yet.

He stood in front of a sound console.

This Bender guy nodded and moved his hands, and the music started up.

It was Gloria Gaynor’s I Will Survive .

Perfect!

Bella Donna started in with the lyrics, “At first I was afraid, I was petrified. Thinking I could live without you by my side...” She had a good, rich voice.

“After spending oh so many nights thinking how you did me wrong, I grew strong, and I learned how to get along...” She moved out into the audience and stuck the mic

in random people's faces, and they sang along.

Pretty much everyone knew the song.

And it was getting everyone in the right mood.

At the end, Bella Donna went back to the patio stage.

"Now we have some folks already signed up to come on up to this, uh-hum..." She gestured to the marked-off area.

"Stage. But you know. You won't be better than me. I'm deadly..." She thrust her hips to the side, camping it up, but nothing was even remotely lewd.

"Try anyway, sweethearts..." She explained how to sign up using the cards on our tables, and then she reached into a big bowl and pulled out a name.

"Our first guinea pig—uh, I mean volunteers...are..." She bent over and made an over-dramatic motion of winking with an open mouth.

"Nelson Crowell and Warner Rainey... Get on up here, boys." She used the card to gesture and then to fan herself when Crow walked up to her.

"My-my-my... This one, am I right?" She looked out at the rest of us, and everyone cheered.

Crow was going to sing?

What the hell?

And what would he sing?

I was actually on the edge of my seat.

“Hit it, Barney,” Bella said to her assistant, who scowled at her, but then the music to B52’s Love Shack started up.

Love Shack ?

Really?

I laughed so hard, but they weren’t bad.

Crow was bigger than his friend Warner, so it was even more comical when Warner did the male parts and Crow did all the female parts.

All of them.

Including the most famous, “Tin roof—Rusted.”

I had never seen this side of Crow.

I’d seen him all scowly, and I’d seen him trying to be nice to me.

And I’d seen him determined, like when he ruined my case.

But I’d never seen him funny.

And he had a nice voice.

And...

I didn’t even know what to think.

Afterward, they got a lot of applause, and a group of other people from Drew's firm got up and did an ABBA song.

I only knew Dancing Queen .

But they chose Waterloo .

I didn't know the words to that, and honestly, they weren't that good.

Especially after Crow.

Then Lee and Danny got up.

I knew from experience that Lee could sing, but Danny couldn't, not even if his life depended on it.

However, he absolutely loved to sing and did it all the time, especially 80s songs.

So...

they'd picked Celebration .

Lee sang most of the lyrics, but Danny worked the audience, getting everyone to clap and sing along.

"You know this one. Sing with us. It's PRIDE, y'all. Let's celebrate." And everyone did.

Danny wiggled his ass and moved around a lot.

It was pretty good.

After a few more songs, including a Pink song that Lilly sang, Bella took the mic back.

“Now, everyone needs to participate. It’s not a sing-along if we don’t all sing. Along.” She encouraged us to pick songs.

A few more people did, but then she came to my table, thankfully, without a mic.

“Hey, cutie. What are you going to sing?”

I took a deep breath and sighed.

“What do you have from like Bon Jovi?”

“You know Bon Jovi?” she asked curiously.

“Yep. Probably every single song.” I’d had such a crush on Jon Bon Jovi as a kid.

Hell, I still did.

He’d grown into a good-looking man.

“Okay. I’ll see what I got. Stand over here. You’re next.”

I don’t know why I didn’t argue.

I didn’t know why I was so serious about it.

I don’t know why I lied to myself like that.

Yeah, I did.

I wanted Crow to like my performance.

And I kind of wanted Danny to like it too.

Danny meant something to me.

He was like a brother.

And Crow...

I didn't want to look at that any closer.

Not yet.

Bella went and did her thing, then came back over.

"It's You Give Love A Bad Name . Can you do that?"

I nodded.

I'd actually sung this one at karaoke bars often.

There was no lead-in for it.

It just started with the first iconic line.

That tended to make the intro timing more difficult, but it was going to be what it was.

I could catch the beat if I was off.

As soon as it started up, I held the mic in both hands and sang, “Shot through the heart and you’re to blame...Darling you give love, a bad name.” It was primarily acapella, and I was right on time with the rhythm.

Then the song moved into the verse, and I moved across the fake stage, pointing out at the audience and making other hand motions that went with the song.

I hardly thought about what I was doing; I focused on singing.

When I got to the end of the song, since turnabout was fair play, I went out to the tables and got other people to sing with me, and then I got Bella to sing.

“Madame Bella Donna! I shouted, then aimed the mic at her.” She didn’t disappoint, and we finished the song off together with a round of, “You give love, bad name—Whoa-oh, oh-oh-oh.” Until the music faded out.

She towered over me and bent over to sing into the mic, but it was fun, and everyone cheered, which made me blush.

Performing like that would have been easier with a drink.

Watching was better, so I slid back to my seat.

It wasn’t long before Levi squeezed in beside me at my table and handed me a flask as if he’d read my mind.

“You look like you could use one.”

I took a swig without even asking what it was.

Apparently, Vodka.

“Thanks.”

When I handed it back, Levi took a swig.

“Figured you better get some before I drink it all. Cuz I’m going to need it.”

“Why?”

Bella spoke in the mic again.

“Okay, PRIDE partiers, we have one last performance...please put your hands together for Little Levi and Sister Bri.”

Levi hid his face behind his hands and groaned.

But Brianna wasn’t letting him get out of it.

She grabbed his arm, “Let’s do this, Bro.”

“Ohmygawd. You’ll be fine. Go.” I shoved him a little, and he turned to me with a glare and mouthed traitor .

I just laughed, wondering what they would do.

“Y’all ready?” Bella asked.

Bri nodded.

Levi held up his hands as if he didn’t know.

Bri stuck a mic in one of them and put it in front of his face.

“Fine. Let’s do this.”

Funky, muted music started, and Bri sort of talk-sang, “Okay.”

When the music cleared up, it was sort of a dance beat.

Then the first chorus started, and I recognized the relatively new song.

It was by Dua Lipa.

Bri was good at singing through the chorus.

But.

When the first verse kicked in, Levi sang.

“Time is passin’ like a solar eclipse. See you watchin’ and you blow me a kiss.” I was sure Danny was going to be jealous.

That boy had chops.

His voice was crystal clear and beautiful.

His face, on the other hand, looked terrified.

He could be a star, but he obviously had horrible stage fright.

When the song was over, I stood to applaud.

Bri took a big, dramatic bow.

Then hugged Levi, who still looked terrified.

Then he practically ran away from the stage and right into the arms of his man, Hudson.

It was honestly too cute.

After that, the assistant, who I wasn't sure what his name was, passed around cards to each table with lyrics on them.

Apparently, there was actually one more song.

“Okay, campers. We’re closing tonight with a sing-along. A camping sing-along classic. Y’all probably know the words, but here they are on these cards, just in case. And please leave them on the tables when you’re done.” Everyone picked up their cards, including me.

There was plenty of light to read from the porch and party lights strung around, attached to poles in buckets that circled—or squared—the tables.

Plus, there were battery-operated lanterns on the tables.

So, no worries.

“Okay, no music for this one. So, let’s do it, campers! Happy PRIDE!”

Everyone clapped and cheered one more time, and when we settled, she started singing and we joined in.

It was the classic Kumbaya .

Could it have been anything else?

We did not sound like pros.

But it was fun.

Everyone rocked back and forth as we sang, and when it was over, everyone stood and clapped again for Bella Donna.

She was fun and unexpected.

We all headed back to the campsites.

Levi caught up to me and slung his arm around my shoulders.

“I shared my booze, and you threw me under the bus.”

“Ohmygawd. You’re so drunk.”

“Maybe.”

“You sang so beautifully. I loved it.”

“Thanks,” Levi slurred the word.

He was totally drunk.

Hudson came up behind him, picked him up, and tossed him over his shoulder.

“Excuse us.” He nodded to me.

“Sure. See ya later, Levi.”

Hudson rubbed Levi’s ass, which was hanging over his shoulder, as they walked away.

It was kind of funny.

I knew Hudson would take care of his boy, though.

He was in good hands.

Crow was already at our campsite when I got there.

“Would you like a drink? I made a pitcher of Sangria. But this version gets seltzer water over the top to fizz it up. And maybe the brandy is a bit strong. I don’t know. I added more strawberries.” He held up the pitcher.

Okay...

I didn’t know what was up with that.

“Sure?”

“It’s my favorite camp drink because it’s easy to make and tastes great. I like pouring it into a beverage cooler thing.” He pointed to one that was open on the table.

“Sure.”

Crow poured some into two solo cups, then the rest went into the cooler, and he screwed the top on it.

“You can refill easy, here.” He tapped the spout.

“Thanks.” The drink was strong.

“Brandy?”

“Red wine. Brandy. Fruit. Oh, we didn’t spritz it. Hang on.” He opened a big cooler and fished in the ice, pulling out a can of soda water.

He popped it open and poured some over the top of both our drinks.

“Now try.”

“Mmm...better. I like the fizz.”

“Right. Me too.”

After one drink, I was good and warm inside.

Maybe too good.

Was he trying to get me drunk?

Crow chatted along soothingly, but I wasn’t listening much.

Something about hiking and swimming scheduled for the next day.

Great.

And it would probably be starting too fucking early.

And.

It was nice.

Crow was nice.

The soft timber of his voice was soothing.

Had I judged him too harshly?

After all, he'd been nothing but nice to me on this trip.

Honestly, he was nice at the wedding, too.

But did that make up for fucking up my case?

He almost messed up my career.

Hell, if I had been at any other firm, I probably would have been fired.

I thanked Drew regularly for giving me another shot.

Mostly by being the best damn lawyer I could.

I was having a hard time reconciling the two Crows.

Maybe three.

He'd been funny singing at Karaoke.

“Hey, you know. I thought you were really good. You’ve got a good voice for Bon

Jovi.”

“Yeah? You think? I love Bon Jovi.”

“Yes, and me too.” Oh shit.

Did we have something in common?

“Uh...you were funny.” I pointed at him, then refilled my cup.

Crow came over and spritzed it with a new can of soda.

“Warner and I have done that routine a lot.”

“Warner, yeah. He’s what?” And why was I fishing?

“Best friend. Known each other forever.”

I nodded.

“The twink is his boyfriend?”

“Yes, Cody. It’s new but he seems nice.”

“Right. I better get to bed. If we’re getting up early.” I didn’t want to admit how good I felt.

A part of me was venturing into dangerous territory, and the best thing I could do was get in that tent and crash.

“Sure. Give me your cup.”

“Okay.” I fished out a strawberry before handing him my mostly empty cup.

Then licked my fingers and ducked into the tent.

I grabbed a loose T-shirt and basketball shorts to change into.

Before I could get into the bedroom side, Crow came in.

The area was too small, smooshing us face-to-face.

“Sky...”

I looked into his eyes.

They were normally plain brown, but so close in the low light, they looked dark, black.

I didn’t answer him, stuck on his soulful eyes.

Crow leaned in and pressed his lips to mine.

At first, they were soft and cushy, but when I didn’t pull away, he pressed for more.

His tongue slid back and forth, asking for permission, and I wanted to grant it.

His mouth was warm, juicy, and tasted like our drinks.

I could kiss him forever.

Kissing Crow.

Then I pulled back.

Unsure.

That man was entirely too sexy.

And I was tipsy.

And don't I hate this guy?

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Chapter twelve

Day Three

Normally, I woke up quickly, popping up like a jack in the box.

Yes, I was a morning person, even when I'd been drinking a little.

Admittedly, I had been tipsy the night before but not drunk.

But I still let Skyler run and hide in the tent after I kissed him.

Right.

But now?

I was warm and cozy, my body not wanting to get up and my brain still feeling a little hazy.

And a hard body lay beside me.

And poked me with a hard cock.

Shit.

Shifting, I realized that Skyler was pressed against me.

And his cock.

Yes, it was poking me.

It was so hard.

Ugh...

How had I even gotten on the ground beside him?

We were squeezed in between the air mattress and the side of the tent.

I had to be a gentleman, right?

I wanted to grab him and...

nope.

I turned over on my side to face him.

“Sky. Hey. Wake up.” I shook his shoulder gently.

He stirred, soft green eyes slowly opening.

“Oh—damn.”

“Let Daddy take care of that for you? No one will know.” I didn’t know what possessed me to say that, but I couldn’t resist.

He was so fucking adorable, half asleep.

“Mmm...like a secret?”

I nodded and whispered, “Yes.”

“Uh...okay?” He didn’t sound sure.

Or fully awake, to be honest.

And damn me, but I was going to take advantage of the situation.

I leaned in, mouth so close to his ear I could nibble his lobe, and whispered, “Daddy’s got you.” I slid down his body, reaching up his shirt to feel his hot skin, then smoothed my palms along and down to his hip bones.

He didn’t stop me.

Didn’t make a noise, even when I slid his boxers down just enough to let his dick pop out.

And it was as lovely as I imagined.

Probably more.

I squeezed his hip bones as I leaned in and licked over his crown, collecting the pre-cum that leaked out.

Skyler mewled softly, and I took that as a sign to continue.

I sucked his pretty cock into my mouth, swirling my tongue and sucking.

Skyler made more noises, but soft like he was holding back.

He didn't want anyone else to hear.

I made it my goal to get him screaming.

Tugging his balls with one hand, I sucked him furiously.

All the way down and back up.

His cock was thin but long, proportioned similarly to his entire body.

Long and lean and sexy as hell.

His head hit the back of my throat every time I took him all the way in, but I could take it.

I couldn't wait until the trust was there between us so I could let him fuck my mouth for real, but he wasn't ready for that.

No, he hardly moved.

He needed to feel like this was happening to him and not that he was an active participant.

I'd seen that before with other boys.

At least in the beginning.

And with Sky being adamant that he hated me, it had to be all the more so.

And it did not stop me.

I took him down again and again, sucking steadily.

Until finally, Sky punched up with his hips and moaned, not loudly but louder than before.

And he shot out, coming with force.

I sucked it down, loving the taste, salty and tangy but not nearly as bitter as I expected.

I wanted to stay with him and snuggle and maybe get off myself after that, but Skyler had other ideas.

“Ohgawd. Shit-shit-shit.” He shoved at me, and I rolled away.

He pulled up his boxers and ran.

Right out of the tent, not even stopping to grab clothes.

Shit was right.

Ugh.

I didn't know how this was going to play out, but he left me there so hard and horny I could probably blow off the top of the tent.

I groaned and pulled my boxers down to expose my super hard cock.

I needed relief—fast and dirty.

I licked my hand and stroked myself.

It only took a few strokes before I was leaking all over the place.

I rubbed over my cockhead, adding the pre-cum for more lubricant.

It felt good, but I needed to move.

I set one foot flat on the ground and moved my hips, fucking into my gripping hand.

I imagined Sklyer over me, holding on to my shoulders and riding my cock.

I would fuck up into him every time he came down.

I'd get to see his half-lidded eyes as he pleased himself.

His mouth hanging open in a pant.

Fuck.

I came pretty hard, sparks behind my eyes and body seizing up with a grunt.

Laying there tired and huffing, I imagined what we could be.

Yeah, Skyler and I would be explosive.

I hoped like hell I'd moved him one step closer to that but feared the opposite.

There was no time for useless thoughts, anyway.

We had hiking on the plan for the day, and I needed to get dressed.

Lee and Danny came around the corner as I was getting my hiking boots on.

“Hey, Crow,” Danny called out.

“Don’t forget swim gear. There’s a swimming area off the springs for after the hike.”

“Trust me, you’re going to want to get in the cold water,” Lee added.

“Oh, right.”

“Tell Skyler. Okay?” Danny pulled Lee away.

“We have to remind everyone. See you at the buses.”

“Sure.”

I went back inside the tent and changed again.

I wore swim trunks under my shorts.

Then I tucked my wallet in my pocket and went to search for Skyler.

I was guessing he would be hiding in the bathroom and probably not sure how to get back to the tent in only his boxers when the whole camp was stirring.

It felt like my fault, at least in part, that he would be in that situation, so I went through his bag and grabbed shorts, a tee, and swim trunks.

After tucking them under my arm, I grabbed flip-flops and marched to the bathroom.

Inside, I called out, “Skyler?”

“Yeah.”

“Hey, we have the hike today and a swim. I brought you something to change into.”

He opened the stall, peeking out.

My heart did a pirouette at how adorable my boy was.

Wait.

Scratch that.

Not my boy.

Not yet.

I handed him the clothes and dropped the flops inside the stall.

“You okay?”

“Y-Yes. Why wouldn’t I be?” And that was how he was going to play it.

It never happened.

Right.

“Well, I’m here for you if you need anything.”

“I don’t need you.” He slammed the stall door.

Why did I keep trying?

We loaded on the buses and headed to the main Rainbow Springs Park.

They had a large facility with hiking trails, a place to put kayaks in, and a swimming hole.

All of it was bigger than the campground, but it was also completely open to the public, so it wouldn't be primarily our group.

There were a lot of people there for the day.

We all hung around the entrance while Danny showed our camping credentials, so they would let us in.

It only took a minute or two.

We all split up into groups and headed out.

Some went straight to the springs to swim, but I planned on tagging along with Warner and Cody.

I looked around for Skyler but didn't see him.

But after his little hissy fit, I wasn't sure I wanted to be around him anyway.

I walked up a small hill and headed along the paved path.

The scenery was incredible, and I wished I had someone to share it with.

Hell, I didn't even know where Warner and Cody had run off to—plan ruined.

I sighed, taking in the plants and flowers and little lizards darting everywhere.

One particular flower was shaped like a honeycomb and had rusty orange-red blooms

that circled around.

Bees hovered over them and the lush foliage surrounding them.

When I turned the next corner, I heard the rush of water, and a little farther along the path, I found the source.

A huge waterfall.

Well, huge might not be the right word.

It wasn't Niagara Falls, for sure.

More like a mini-me for the more famous falls.

But for Florida, it was big.

Perspective was everything.

It turned out there were several falls along the winding path.

There was even one that continued to flow under a bridge and into another pool with water so clear you could see the burping springs shooting up fresh water into the pond.

I'd never seen anything like it.

I wondered what Skyler would think.

But why should I worry about him?

I was coming around to the decision to leave him alone.

Every time I pushed him, he ran.

And this morning's push had probably been too far.

I wasn't going to keep throwing myself at him.

I wasn't going to beg.

I didn't think he really hated me, but he certainly didn't like me much.

And maybe I needed to give up.

I moved on, and in a few minutes, I found Warner and Cody.

Or rather, they found me.

Warner put his arm on my shoulder and Cody bounced up and down.

"What's going on?" I asked.

Warner smiled.

"We found something, and you have to see this."

"It's a zoo." Cody bounced and walked at the same time.

I could see why Warner liked him.

He was cute and feisty.

“Zoo? I don’t remember hearing about a zoo.”

“Well...” Warner rocked back and forth.

“Kind of a zoo.”

We went up a short hill into the area of an actual abandoned zoo.

There were no animals.

A big fountain in the center of a wide pavilion had been taken over by plants and weeds.

To the side, cages with rusty fencing were falling apart.

“Hey, watch this, Daddy Crow.” Daddy Crow?

What was Warner telling him?

I glared at my friend as his boy ran down the path, but he was back in a flash, only he was inside the cage.

He waved and jumped around.

“We should swap places and have Cody get a picture of us in the cage!” Warner was clearly excited about that idea, though I wasn’t.

I would do it for him anyway.

“Whatever.” I went around to the opening with Warner.

The cage wasn't more than fencing, much like anyone would have around their yard, but it went up high and made a roof of sorts, though half of it hung down inside the cage, and it had been set in stones that made a low wall.

According to a sign, the largest animals they kept were deer or bobcats.

I didn't know what they'd kept in this thing, but it was strewn with leaves, Spanish moss hung over parts of the dilapidated ceiling.

And near the front, a big log lay across the ground.

Warner and I posed while Cody took pictures with his phone.

Some of our shots were normal, with us standing there smiling, but then Warner started acting like a monkey and cutting up.

With a little encouragement, I joined him.

So, who knew what kind of pictures Cody got of us.

Or worse—video.

After a bit, I tired of it.

“It's freaking hot out here. Let's go find this swimming hole.”

Cody jumped up and down again.

“Yeah! Let's go swimming, Daddy.” When the three of us were back together, Cody grabbed Warner's hand and tugged him back the way we came.

“Daddy, huh?” I had to give him shit, but we both enjoyed the daddy/boy dynamic in a relationship.

Oh.

I let that slip with Skyler earlier.

Maybe that’s why he ran so fast?

If that was going to scare him, I didn’t think we’d work out anyway.

But there was still something inside me that simply did not want to let go.

“Don’t act like you don’t know. Daddy Crow .” Warner mocked me.

“No need to get sarcastic with me.”

“Whatever.”

I had nothing else to say to that.

Or anything, really.

I was at a loss for what to do about Skyler and felt like maybe nothing was going to work.

I shouldn’t continue to pursue someone who obviously wasn’t a fit for me, regardless of potential.

With a long sigh, I shoved thoughts of him down so I could enjoy the day.

And the swim.

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Chapter thirteen

Swimming

I left my clothes, boots, and phone with Drew on the benches that surrounded the upper level of the swimming hole.

He would be taking turns with Justin, Danny, and Lee, watching all of our belongings, so I felt safe to leave it and head to the water.

I jumped in and swam out to the buoy and rope barrier constructed to mark the edge of the swimming area.

The water was so cold and felt great.

After hiking for most of the morning, I felt hot and needed refreshing.

I paddled around and chatted with a few other guys from the law firm.

I wanted to stay in the water, but I kept eyeing the ladders.

Dog paddling where I couldn't touch the bottom was exhausting, and it was deep everywhere.

I floated on my back for a bit but didn't trust I wouldn't bump into anyone or that someone wouldn't bump into me.

I couldn't relax enough with so many people around, and honestly, most of them weren't from our trip.

The ladder closest to me had a bunch of kids hanging all over it, but it started thinning out, so I made my way over.

I needed to get out for a little bit.

Before I could get far, my day was ruined.

Crow popped up in front of me with that snarky-ass grin of his that made my stomach flutter.

"Sky. Here. Want to use these?" He thrust two pool noodles at me.

The fucker.

Why did he have to be so sweet?

"Yeah. Uh, thanks." I lowered my eyes.

Mother fucker.

He had woken up next to me this morning on the ground.

And then took pity on me and blew me to take care of my raging hard-on.

Well, it was his fault I had one, so that seemed fair.

But then I ran.

And he came after me, saving me from an embarrassing situation.

And I repaid him by running and hiding.

Again.

I'd been avoiding him all day.

So mature, Sky—not.

But I couldn't avoid him now.

I slung my arms over the floaties and kicked my feet, taking me over to a more open spot near the edge of the area.

I turned and was not surprised at all that Crow had followed me.

“This water feels really good, doesn't it?”

“Yeah, it does. These help though.”

“Thought they might.”

“Crow, uh...I don't want things to be awkward between us. I'm sorry I ran off this morning.” Words tumbled out of my mouth, completely different than what I had intended to say.

Sorry?

Was I?

His brown eyes widened and darkened, though they were already so dark, I hardly thought it possible, but he'd proven me wrong again.

"I..."

Just that one word.

Why did my heart hammer so hard?

Fuck it.

I leaned closer and gently kissed his wet lips.

"Yeah?" he asked when I pulled back.

I shrugged.

I didn't know what the hell I was doing.

I had to admit that Crow was sexy, and apparently, against my brain's judgements, my body wanted to climb him.

In fact, I wrapped my legs around his waist and shifted my floats behind me, hooked under my arms.

Feeling him against me like that made my brain short-circuit.

"This is a family-friendly area, you know?"

I huffed.

“Whatever.” And kicked away from him.

He grabbed my ankle and pulled me back toward him.

“Don’t run, Sky.”

“Is it gonna make you chase me?”

He didn’t answer that question.

He raised an eyebrow, then let me go, leaning back and closing his eyes.

He looked peaceful, so I did the same.

It seemed I wasn’t wrong though.

When he pushed, I ran, and he chased.

Was that how it was supposed to go?

No.

But I didn’t know if we had any kind of future together.

So many issues.

Not the least of which was that he’d betrayed me once already.

How could I trust him?

We sat together on the bus back to the campsite, and he held my hand.

Maybe I had Crow pegged wrong.

Whatever happened back then, or what I thought, Crow was being so nice to me now.

Maybe it was his way of apologizing?

Maybe we could have something here.

Friends with benefits?

I wasn't sure about any of it.

The rest of the night and through dinner, I was nervous.

Crow pulled me with him to sit with his friends while we ate.

Since we'd been gone most of the day, dinner was bought.

Fried chicken, mac and cheese, rolls, and some people were eating salad, but I didn't.

I ate enough salad normally.

Lived off it.

But this was vacation, so hard pass for me on that one.

Cody was fun and reminded me a little bit of Danny.

So much energy just waiting to burst out.

But his boyfriend, Warner, managed to keep him contained.

Cody called him his daddy, but he didn't seem like a Little.

But what the fuck did I know about it?

Danny and Levi were both Littles, but both were very different.

So, I could be wrong.

Either way, I didn't ask.

Instead, we talked about music and movies.

Pop culture felt like safe territory.

We cleaned up after dinner, which wasn't hard since we had paper plates.

Then everyone was building campfires and Danny passed around supplies for smores.

I hadn't made smores since I was a kid, and it hadn't been all that often back then.

My family had always been more into intellectual pursuits.

We went camping a few times, but mostly because my uncle bullied my dad into it.

He would always say that we needed more fresh air and to interact with others in the wild.

But I wasn't into it, and neither was my sister.

Ember was what I thought of as a prissy girl.

She had been doing her nails since she was six.

Makeup as soon as Mom would let her at thirteen.

She mostly wore dresses, but she was into fashion, so if she wasn't wearing a skirt, she was wearing nice clothes like slacks.

Shorts and jeans were practically impossible to get her in.

So camping?

No.

Getting dirty, fishing, hiking, and that sort of thing?

No.

We were both out.

I was glad now that I had some experience, but it wasn't my favorite thing.

I had enjoyed this trip so far, though.

When I wasn't moping over Crow, it had been fantastic.

Going down the river, hiking, swimming.

Maybe if I stopped being so hard on him, I could enjoy the three days we had left a little more.

What a concept.

Crow had the fire stoked, and the sun was sinking down, barely visible behind the trees and casting cool shadows across our campsite.

He handed me a metal rod and a bag of marshmallows.

“Know what to do with these?”

“Yeah—” I stopped myself from giving a snarky remark, trying to stick to my new fun strategy.

“Thank you.” Wow, that didn’t hurt as much as I thought it would, especially when Crow gave me a real smile that lit up his handsome face.

He was kind of regal with heavy features.

I stuck my marshmallow on the stick and held it over the flames, turning it so it didn’t get too dark.

I didn’t like it burned like other people.

Like Crow, apparently, because he was blowing flames off his puffy-sugar blob.

It was charred black.

I shook my head and watched mine.

“Perfect. See?” I held the golden-brown goodness out to him.

“Uh, can you help me get it on the chocolate?”

“Yep.” He said with a mouthful of s’more.

He put a block of chocolate on a graham cracker square and pulled the marshmallow off my rod, sandwiched between the crackers.

He handed it to me.

“Here you go.”

“Thank you.” I took a bite.

It wasn’t as good as I remembered.

But I turned to Crow and kissed him.

We were both kind of sticky, but worse, I was beginning to really like his kisses.

And his laugh.

We fixed a few more s’mores, then cleaned up.

Crow tasked himself with making our drinks while I ran the extra supplies back to our central cooking area by Leslie and Deanna’s RV.

They’d set up a station so anyone could use what was left.

When I returned, Crow had two chairs set up beside the fire, and he handed me a plastic cup.

“It’s the same thing we drank last time.” He waved his hand as if trying to blow off any expectations I might have for better.

“A little more seltzer this time.”

I sat in one of the chairs and held up my cup.

“To having fun the rest of this trip!”

Crow tapped my glass with the rim of his.

“I’ll drink to that.”

The night air was cool and lovely with the day’s humidity mostly gone.

Everything was quiet and above us, the stars peeked out.

There were more of them than I could count, and it made it hard to pick out constellations, especially since the big dipper was the only one I knew anyway.

I felt peaceful for a change.

It was nice sitting by the fire and enjoying the night.

Even with Crow.

“You know, Sky, you don’t have to sleep on the ground. There’s more than enough room for both of us on the air mattress.”

“There’s more than enough room for you on the ground with me, too.” Apparently, since he’d joined me uninvited the night before.

“Sure. Sure. But the air mattress is more comfortable, trust me.”

I took a long drink.

Then, a long breath.

“Well, well, Mr. Crowell. It sounds like you’re trying to get me into bed.”

“Skyler, my dear, I’ve been trying to get you into bed since the wedding.”

I couldn’t help but flip him off.

But what the hell?

It was only a few more days.

So, I stood and went into the tent.

I stripped and crawled under his blanket on the air mattress.

The situation felt surreal.

I truly thought this could never happen.

And I’d only had one drink—that I didn’t even finish.

Then Crow stuck his head in.

“You okay in here?”

“Mmm...tired.”

“Okay, sweet boy.”

I didn’t have the energy to correct him.

I closed my eyes and snuggled down, feeling more comfortable than I had since this little camping trip started.

Until Crow got on the bed, tipping it toward him.

“Hey!”

“Sorry. Relax.”

As I did, the mattress evened back out and I had a hot-skinned naked Crow beside me.

He touched my hip, slid his hand up my side, around my back, and down to my ass.

He squeezed it and gripped it to pull me closer, then rested his hand on my hip.

I tucked my face into his neck.

It felt snuggly and warm, and his naked body all pressed against mine had my cock harder than the ground I’d been sleeping on—no way was I going back to sleeping there.

“Skyler.” My name was a purr on his lips.

Looking up at him, I wasn’t all that surprised when his lips pressed against mine.

His tongue slid along my bottom lip, and I gladly opened my mouth for him.

He thrust his tongue inside, giving me more berries and lemon.

The kiss deepened, tongues sliding together, and his hands roamed my body.

I had to reciprocate that, reaching out to him.

His strong arms and shoulders were a turn-on.

He was muscular and thick.

I grabbed his ass, and there was nothing flabby about it.

“Fuck...” Everything smelled fresh, like earth but woodsy and humid, like trees, but underneath all of that, something a bit musky coming from Crow.

It was kind of primitive or instinctual and totally sexy.

“Mmm...” Crow slid his hand between us, gripping my dick and stroking it.

My pre-cum poured out.

I hadn't been this turned on in, like...

ever.

I felt like bouncing, and I shifted up and down on the mattress, trying to get more friction on my cock, trying to simply move.

“Be still, Sky. I've got you.”

Oh hell, images of him pinning me down and fucking me hard flitted through my mind, and I swear my cock wanted to dance, I was so turned on.

But I took a deep breath to calm myself.

The last thing I wanted was for Crow to decide he didn't want me after all.

At least for tonight when I was so wound up.

Once I settled down, Crow stroked my dick again.

I made a mewling sound deep in my throat.

Before I could do much more, his cock was pressed against mine.

“Damn, Crow.”

“Yeah. Hold still.” He gripped both of us together and humped into his fist, rubbing his dick against mine.

And I swear my eyes rolled to the back of my head.

Maybe they didn't, but my mouth fell open and my tongue hung out, and it was probably not attractive at all, but oh.

My.

Fucking.

Lord.

Of.

Spirits.

I had never felt anything so good in my life.

His hand and his dick massaged my cock into total bliss.

“I...ugh. Crow...” I couldn’t make my thoughts connect, but that feeling in my groin and the tingling that was taking over my body were drowning me.

“Gonna...”

“Do it. Come for Daddy.”

And why those three words made my whole world explode, I did not know.

What the hell was wrong with me?

How could I live without this in my life now?

But I still didn’t trust him, and I didn’t know how to get over that.

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Chapter fourteen

Day Four

I woke up with Skyler wrapped around me like a giant sloth.

And I had no complaints.

Except I needed to get up and really didn't want to wake him.

I slowly and carefully shoved him over and slid off the far side of the mattress.

When I finally made it out, he was still asleep and clutching my pillow.

His face looked so serene, like an angel, though he was anything but.

Skyler was a fireball and related more closely to a devil.

Well, even Lucifer was supposed to have been beautiful, and I could not deny Skyler was that.

The rest of the morning was taking care of business, cleaning up, and getting breakfast, and hopefully all of that before Skyler got up.

I didn't want him to be self-conscious about the night before.

Hopefully, breaking the morning tension with food would help.

I carried a plate of scrambled eggs, sausage, and a couple of pieces of toast back to the campsite.

Skyler was up, stretching, and showing a sliver of skin around his middle that made me want that for breakfast instead.

“Mmm...do I smell sausage?” he asked, bringing my attention back.

“Yes. I also have scrambled eggs and toast.” I stretched my arms out, offering him the meal.

He took it and peeked under the plate I’d put on top.

“Mmm...yum. Thanks, Crow. You didn’t have to get this for me.”

I brushed him off.

“It was no problem.” I sat beside him with my plate at our little picnic table and dug in.

I was grateful for the food at that moment because I couldn’t think of anything to say to him.

Well, anything that I didn’t think would get him running away.

By the time we finished, Danny and Lee showed up.

“Hey, Skyler. Today’s a free day, so we’re going to play cards for a while. Want join in over at our site?”

“Yeah, sure. Crow, you’re coming too, right?” Skyler’s invite surprised me.

His eyes were big and welcoming, as if he actually wanted my company.

That was a first.

Danny put an arm around Skyler's shoulder while staring at me, and his eyes were full of challenge.

"There's room for you, big guy. If you can handle the competition."

I grunted but nodded.

"Let me clean up here a bit and I'll be right over." Truthfully, I needed a minute.

It wasn't that I was surprised—okay, I was surprised.

Danny and Lee probably only invited Skyler to start with, knowing he hated me and it would give him an out for the morning.

And now, my biggest enemy was asking me to join in.

And why?

Because we fooled around a little bit?

Or was he softening toward me?

I didn't know for sure, but eventually, we were going to have to hash things out.

But not right now.

At Danny and Lee's campsite, they had set up a folding table and chair.

Danny was short and could barely see the table, so after complaining, he stuck a pillow under him.

Lee shuffled the Uno deck.

“We were going to play Cards Against Humanity but it seems like no one had brought it.” Lee scoffed and started dealing.

“This is Uno No Mercy. It’s a little different than regular Uno, so we should talk about the rules.”

Danny wiggled in his seat.

“Like if you play a zero, everyone passes their hand to the next person in whatever direction the play is going. That’s my favorite.”

“Okay, that’s weird.” It had been a long time since I played Uno, and it sounded like this version was going to be more enthusiastic.

“What else?”

Lee dealt the cards.

“If you play a seven, you have to swap hands with someone else, your choice who. That’s great near the end of the game.” I already thought I’d hold on to that one until someone was low on cards.

This could be fun.

Danny finished up the instructions.

“The rest of the cards are pretty self-explanatory.”

“Maybe not the discard all,” Lee said.

“Right. That one means you discard all the cards in your hand of whatever color we’re on. So if I play a blue card and you have a lot of blue, and you have the discard all, you play that and dump ‘em all.”

I picked up my cards and arranged them by color. “Shit.”

“What?” Skyler asked.

“I have a card I don’t know what it is, and it’s going to give it away, but...” I held up the wild card with the little square frowny faces.

Danny bounced in his seat. “Oh! Oh! I love that one too.”

Lee put his hand on Danny’s shoulder, probably to calm him down. “It’s like a regular Wild, except that the next player chooses the color and has to draw, putting the cards face up until he gets that color.

Then they all go in his hand.

”

“And he doesn’t even get to play the card!” Danny said without the bounce this time, but he was overly loud.

“Got it.” A very dangerous card.

Danny bumped his shoulder into Skyler, who was sitting next to me.

“Hate to be you, getting that one thrown on ya.”

Skyler rolled his eyes and pulled his cards closer to his chest.

“Whatever. You don’t know what I have.” I imagined Skyler would be a shrewd player based on what I’d seen of his performance in the courtroom.

We would have most definitely won the case had I not stepped away from it to negotiate a settlement on my own.

“Okay. You go first, Crow.” He motioned around the direction of the play and dropped a yellow four on the discard pile.

I played a yellow seven.

“Already?” Danny called out.

But Lee explained, probably based on my blank face.

“That’s the swap hands card.”

“Oh. Shit. Can I take it back?”

“It’s our first time playing this one,” Skyler argued.

“I think we should let him. And we now know two cards in his hand. That’s fair.” I wasn’t wrong about him.

So cunning.

Danny opened his mouth as if to argue, but Lee shut him up quickly.

“Okay, but last time. Don’t forget the rules. Seven you swap and zero everyone shifts hands.” He motioned again around the circle.

“Okay. Got it.” I took it back and played a yellow six.

We went around with Skyler playing a yellow four, Danny playing a blue four to change the color, and so on.

Lee and I also played blues, and then Skyler popped a reverse card and a shark-like smile as he glared at me.

“You’re in trouble now, Crow.” Then he laughed maniacally, and the rest of the table cracked up.

“Well, shit.” All my good cards would now be aimed at Lee.

I wasn’t sure how I felt about that, but I didn’t have to wait long to see what happened because I didn’t have anything else that would play.

“Sorry, Lee.” I played the Wild frowny faces down.

“Why did I know that was coming?” Lee hung his head.

“What color?” Danny asked.

Lee looked at his hand.

It probably didn’t matter much since no one had even drawn from the pile yet.

“Green, I guess.” Then he flipped three cards until he got to green, and none of them were special cards.

“Go, Danny.”

Danny played a green four, and then it was Skyler’s play, and that worried me.

He scrunched his nose.

“Well, no fours and no greens, so...” He played a Wild card.

Not just any Wild card, either.

This one was better than the frowny faces, and I hadn’t expected it.

Draw ten.

“Really?” He gave me an odd look, accompanied by a foot nudge.

Okay then.

I drew my ten cards.

“What color?” Lee asked.

Skyler answered, “Blue.”

He probably thought I didn’t have blue since I didn’t before, but I did now that I’d drawn so many fucking cards.

We went around the circle a couple of times until Danny and Skyler were both down to two cards.

I slapped down a Wild I’d drawn with my draw-ten, which I was pretty sure would

reverse the play to Skyler as well as making him draw four.

“I see how you are,” he said as he drew, but then we were exchanging sexy looks and more foot nudges.

Danny bounced in his seat again.

“What color? What color?”

“Red.”

Danny slammed a red card down and yelled, “Uno!”

Then it was Lee laughing as he slapped a seven down, which made me think I should have done that since I still had mine, but I hadn’t thought it through.

Lee made a gimme sign with his hands and exchanged with Danny, who pouted and stuck his tongue out.

“Mean Daddy.”

Lee looked smug.

“Your go, Crow.”

I slapped my seven down, now that it was in my head, and changed with Lee.

“Uno, in case I need to say it.” I smirked, then looked at the card.

It was a blue two.

Skyler gave me a sexy, pouty look.

“Hmm...red, right?”

“Yep.”

“Well...I don’t know what I have to do here except...” He played a red zero.

He hadn’t let on at all.

I did not want to play poker with him.

Now he had the single card and said, “Uno.”

Danny giggled.

“If this keeps up, I might actually get that back. At least we all know what it is now.”

That meant keeping the play off of blue at all costs.

But.

Skyler rubbed my leg with his, and I looked at my new hand, which had been Lee’s.

I held up a red one that had an arrow in a circle.

“What’s this?”

“Skip everyone. It goes all the way around and back to you. It’s a way to get rid of an extra card,” Lee answered.

“Ah...” I put it down because that only helped me.

But then I played the same card in blue.

And then a blue reverse.

“Uno.” I was also down to one card.

And it was another Wild.

“Fuck.” Lee dropped a blue three.

“That was my plan, you know.” We all laughed at that.

Danny made a little growly sound as he examined his cards.

He was too cute, but not as cute as Skyler.

He was also staring at his remaining card and making a face.

We all knew what his card was, so the question was, what was Danny going to play.

“No blue.” He drew.

And drew.

And drew.

“Fuck.” He slapped down a blue card.

A four.

Skyler dropped his card on the pile.

“I win!”

The rest of us groaned, but I secretly was very happy.

We played a few more games, and the entire time, Skyler nudged and rubbed my leg.

He even put his hand on my thigh at one point.

I wasn't sure if he was trying to distract me or not but combined with the sultry looks he kept shooting my way, I didn't fucking care.

I wanted to get him back to the tent and show him what his little flirting was actually doing to me.

We helped put up the table and chairs when we finally finished playing and then walked over to the food station for lunch.

Today was simple sandwiches and chips.

All the fixings were laid out on the table set up between the RVs, and everyone hit it buffet style.

Lee had his piled high with every meat and cheese available.

“Dang, Lee, you eating for two?” I teased.

He smiled back at me with a cheesy-ass grin.

“It's a Dagwood special.” He added potato chips to the top of the sandwich before

topping it with another slice of bread.

“How the hell are you even going to eat that thing?”

“I have a big mouth.”

Danny snorted a laugh.

“You can say that again.”

Skyler giggled at their banter.

Out of everything, it was his smiles, laughs, and snarky giggles that I enjoyed the most.

Every time one popped up, my heart felt like champagne had been poured over it.

We headed back to our campsite to eat since it was closer than Lee and Danny’s.

Everyone else’s sandwiches were more modest, but I did put extra chips on my plate when I noticed Skyler skipped them altogether, and I was glad I did.

He was stealing them off my plate before we even sat down.

But I loved it.

Loved everything about him.

I recognized I was falling hard and couldn’t stop, but I was also scared to death because I could easily see him breaking my heart.

In fact, all the evidence pointed in that direction.

He was having fun and enjoying the attention now, but as soon as this trip was over, he could swing right back to hating me.

And I did not want that to happen.

If it did, I'd be devastated.

After we ate, Danny and Lee decided to go put their kayaks in the water.

The sun was out, and it was getting hot.

They cleaned up their plates and headed off to get ready.

"Hey, Skyler. Would you like to go with them?"

"Uh, I don't have a kayak or paddleboard. And I don't think the tubes were organized for us again."

I had a solution to that.

"You can get on mine."

He looked at me with those big green eyes and made an O with his mouth.

Damn, if anyone needed a daddy, it was this boy.

And I wanted to be that for him so hard.

"You won't have to do anything but sit on the end of the board. Or lay across it." I

shrugged like it was no big deal.

“Put your feet in the water. Swim. It’s fucking hot, right?”

“Yeah. It’s hot. I think that sounds good.” He didn’t sound sure.

He seemed skittish and ready to bolt.

I couldn’t have that.

“It’ll be fun. We’ll paddle upriver and float back. A shorter trip than last time.”

He threw his hands up.

“How can I say no to that?”

I had him pack a bag with a few things, including the water pouch for our phones and a couple bottles of water, sunscreen, and towels, while I inflated the board and got us ready.

Then we hauled the board and our asses down to the water.

Danny and Lee were putting in when we walked up.

“Hey!” Danny shouted.

“Catch up with us.”

“Okay!” Skyler waved back at him.

There were a few people in front of us, but it didn’t take long before we were in the

water with Skyler sitting on the front end of the board, leaning back on his arms, looking so casual.

I stood in the middle, just behind him, and paddled us toward where Danny and Lee were doing their best to wait for us.

But they were making an effort to keep moving upriver a little at a time and not being pulled back by the current.

Finally, they pushed out to a calmer area of water and hovered for a bit, and we caught up.

“Hey, let’s look for a place we can beach for a bit. So we can get in the water and swim.” Danny pointed up the river at the side of the shore.

We paddled along for a little while until Lee found a spot he liked.

It had a tree with a low branch that we could climb on along one side and a little bit of shallow water with a sandy bottom across the main opening.

We paddled into the cove and propped our boards in with the trees and overgrowth so they wouldn’t float away.

I helped Skyler off the board, not that he needed it.

“Thanks,” he muttered, then splashed over to Danny.

It was my understanding that they had known each other for a long time, and it was interesting seeing them playing in the water together.

Lee chuckled at their antics.

“They used to be best friends. It’s nice seeing them have some fun like this.”

“What happened? Why aren’t they still friends?” Yep.

I was very curious.

“Oh they’re still friends, only not as close. Time gets in the way. Plus, Danny found another Little friend he hit it off with, and well, Skyler is not a little.”

He could have fooled me with the way he and Danny were playing in the water.

“Maybe not a Little, but he sure needs a daddy.” I didn’t know Lee well, but since he was into that stuff, and I knew he was Danny’s daddy as well as husband, I felt comfortable with it.

“I’ve been saying that for years.” He stretched his fist out for me to bump.

So I did.

“Let’s show them how to have fun.”

“What do you have in mind?”

He pointed at the large branch hanging over the water.

We climbed up and jumped off, surprising the boys with cannonballs.

Then they had to get their turns in.

After a lot of jumping off the tree, splashing around, and exploring underwater with Danny’s snorkel and mask, we finally decided to head back.

On the way, Skyler jumped in the water and swam around.

Then climbed back on.

Several times.

He was growing bolder and enjoying himself.

I made a quick promise to whatever god was listening that I'd get him outside more if we stayed together after this trip.

Once we returned to the dock, we pulled the kayaks and paddleboard up on the grassy area between there and the swimming hole and jumped in.

We'd only been out a few hours, and dinner was still at least an hour or so away, so we walked around the cool water.

Skyler jumped on my back, wrapping his legs around my waist.

"We should have brought the noodles to float around on."

"I can go get them if you want."

"Nah. Next time. Right now, you'll work."

"Oh yeah?"

"Hell yeah." He was laughing, but when I fell back into the water, dunking him, he came up spurting water.

"Not funny."

I couldn't help laughing because I was simply happy he was warming up to me.

"Okay. I won't do it again. Hop on."

He started swimming away, but I grabbed him, pulling him back.

After a little good-natured wrestling, he climbed back on me, and I waded farther out.

He pulled himself in close, so we touched, his chest pressed against my back.

He kissed my neck.

"Crow?"

"Yes..."

"You seem like such a good guy now. I don't understand why you blew my case. Why?"

"Really?" I knew we would get to this conversation, but I didn't expect it yet.

Skyler dropped down in the water, and I turned to face him.

"Yeah. I mean. I drew up the contract myself. That out clause was solid. No way we could lose." He grabbed my arm as if he was begging me for an answer.

"Sometimes in life, you do the hard thing because, like it or not, it's the right thing." I hoped he could understand.

The situation was spiraling out of control at the time, and I needed to move fast.

I didn't regret my decision.

My holding company was trying to buy a business, but it turned out there was baggage associated with it that I didn't want to deal with.

I took what Skyler called the out clause .

It was a stipulation in the initial contract that allowed me to back out of the deal.

But then I found out more about the owner's financial situation, the reasons behind him selling when he didn't actually want to sell in the first place, and the reason he sued me.

He felt he had to.

It was such a complicated situation.

Skyler crossed his arms over his chest.

"How was paying that guy twice the purchase price and then not ending up with any ownership of the business right? Fuck, I could have at least negotiated a better deal for you if you would have told me you wanted to settle. I don't understand."

"Skyler, that guy ? He needed the money a lot more than I did. He was only selling his business, the business he built from scratch, because his wife had cancer, and their crappy insurance left them with astronomical bills. Avoiding the PR nightmare we would have had to face because of this lawsuit alone was worth that price. And settling gave him the opportunity to take the money and not have to swallow his pride." That was the truth.

No way was I going down as the big bad businessman who squashed the guy whose

wife was dying of cancer.

Not happening.

But a part of our deal was that both sides would keep quiet.

“Nobody told me this. You didn’t tell me.”

“Two reasons, Skyler. First, you didn’t give me a chance to explain. But the conversation was private, and an NDA accompanied the agreement. Technically, I wasn’t allowed to tell you. I’m still not. And your career was never in jeopardy. Drew knew.”

“I should have known. All Drew said was drop it.”

“Sky...man...” I held my hands out, hoping he could put this aside.

“I couldn’t keep hurting that guy. Not after knowing what they’d been through.”

“I didn’t know. That’s so not right. All this time, you let me think—” He pursed his lips and glared.

“Stop finding things to hate me for.”

“Finding? I thought my job was on the line. And if I got fired for this, no other firm was going to hire me. How do you not understand that?”

“Drew wasn’t going to fire you. He understood the situation. We couldn’t tell you. But you didn’t trust us. You didn’t trust me, but worse, you didn’t trust Drew. If your job was in jeopardy, it was because you didn’t trust your boss. Not what I did.” I hated throwing that in his face, but sometimes hard calls had to be made, and we had

made them.

Skyler had to find a way to deal with it.

“You’re a great lawyer. No one is taking that from you.”

He stood there, water up to his shoulders, and stared at me like he was trying to figure me out.

His eyes were bold, but that could have been the sun on the water reflecting in them, but I doubted it.

Skyler was intense.

“I need to think about things.” He walked off, crawling up the steps out of the water and then over to the grassy walkway.

He grabbed a towel and his phone out of our bag.

Our bag .

There wasn’t an our in any of this.

Skyler was running again, and I wasn’t sure how it would end.

I rubbed my aching chest, feeling like I was going to throw up.

The conversation had not gone how I wanted it to.

At all.

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Chapter fifteen

Game Night

Since it was a free day for everyone, Walker and Morgan teamed up with Lee and Justin, Drew's partner, to really put it out for us.

Ribs, cornbread, baked beans, potato salad, grilled vegetable skewers, corn on the cob, and a few watermelons, some of which were spiked.

I wanted to start with the boozy melon, personally.

After that chat with Crow about why he sabotaged my case, I wanted to get drunk off my ass and forget we even had the conversation.

A part of me felt cheated.

Another part of me felt relieved.

Crow had good reasons, but I should have been brought in on it.

And I did trust Drew.

That didn't mean I didn't feel some kind of way about it all.

I needed to leave the past in the past.

Okay, I could do that.

But.

Could I move forward and have something—anything—with Crow?

I didn't have an answer.

Dinner was fantastic, and while I ate with a few people I didn't know, Danny and Lee came around, letting us all know there was a social hour behind the main office afterward.

This time, with mixed drinks and the plugged watermelons.

There would also be some games and our drag queen from karaoke would be back to lead the fun.

As long as I didn't have to sing again, I figured I could play along.

We finished eating, cleaned up, and headed over.

A bar was set up on the covered porch where the karaoke had been set up last time.

Someone had pushed the folding tables together to make it, but there was plenty of booze.

I wondered how they pulled that off since we were in a state park, but with Drew sponsoring, I figured it was all about money.

The lawn no longer had tables and chairs; they'd left it a big open space, forcing everyone to stand around and talk.

Before it became terribly awkward, our drag queen grabbed a mic and blew into it.

“Testing, testing. Hello, people.” She waved her hand in the air.

“Remember me? I’m the lovely Bella Donna, your hostess to die for.” She flung her hips back and forth with each description.

“And I’m going to get these games started.” This time, she wore a sequined jumpsuit, and her hair was a matching lilac, hanging down around her face in a sculpted fashion, and her makeup was again over the top.

Everyone clapped and hooted, and she preened overdramatically.

“Now, now. Thank you. Thank you.” She bowed.

“Okay, before we begin, we have a few rules. Are we ready for the rules?”

Everyone cheered, some people yelled, “Yes!”

“Good. Good. Rule number one. If you’re playing a game, set your drink down. Now we have these cute cups and markers here, so put your name on them so you don’t mix up drinks. Unless you want to.” She did an exaggerated eye roll that made her entire body move.

“Get all mixed up, that is.”

The crowd laughed, but it wasn’t all that funny to me.

I looked around to see who was there.

I knew a few from work, and Levi and his daddy were lined up on the far side.

He caught my gaze and waved, so I waved back.

I didn't see Crow, but that didn't mean he wasn't with us.

It was crowded.

Bella Donna moved around the patio.

“Okay. Next rule. If you can't stand up in order to play the game, you need to go back to your campsite. In other words, if you fall down drunk, you're out.” She pointed over her shoulder.

“We all need to drink responsibly, or Mr. Drew will have big fines. Got it?” She eyed all of us and pointed at us as well.

“Good. Now that we've got that straight.” She leaned to the side and did a loud fake stage whisper that we all heard because, yeah, she said it into the mic.

“That's the only thing I got that's straight.”

That got a lot more laughs and a few catcalls.

It didn't offend Bella Donna, though.

She was camping it up for us.

“Now, now. Thank you. Yes. Let's get the first game started. We all know how to play Simon Says, right?”

Everyone cheered again, though I wasn't sure why.

Who actually liked Simon Says?

Well, her way may be better, though.

Bella Donna's Simon Says was a drinking game, and she called it Bella Says .

Any time someone was called out, the rest of us took a drink.

“Okay, everyone needs a drink to play this version, it's the keep your drink with you exception.” That was probably why it was the first one.

“Grab it and get back on the field.”

Once we were all back on the field, she had us head patting, turning in a circle, raising our glass, and then she said, “Stand on one foot.” And I did.

But, yep, she didn't say Bella Says , and I was out.

Which was good because my drink was kind of strong, and maybe I'd drunk a little too fast.

I watched the game progress, spotting Crow toward the back.

He was focused.

His friend was beside him, and they laughed hard when they were eliminated.

I wanted to be next to him, laughing along.

Instead, I headed back to the makeshift bar and got a refill.

After Bella Says, a few corn hole boards were set up, but I wasn't into that.

I leaned against a pillar and watched.

"Sky! Hey." Danny bounced over.

Literally bounced.

"You aren't drunk, are you? There's another group game coming up after this one."

He waved at the corn-holers, corn-hole players, whatever.

"No, I'm fine. I don't do well with all that." I flitted my hand in the same direction as Danny had.

"Oh, no problem. But play the next one. Don't drink too much." He pointed at me, then bounced off again with a cheery laugh.

I thought he should listen to his own advice, except he was always pretty energetic.

We used to go dancing together a lot before he met Lee.

That was always a good time.

Eventually, they wrapped up the corn hole.

Crow, paired up with his buddy, made it to the final round, but then they lost to two of the top lawyers from Drew's firm.

They had all been very competitive.

"Okay, Campers." Bella Donna was back on the mic.

“New game. First, we need to separate into two equal teams. Mr. Danny and Mr. Lee are going to help. Number them off one, two, one, two.” She made a motion over her head signifying to get things rolling.

Danny started on one side and Lee on the other, and they had us all count off in order.

I was a two.

Then we lined up with one team on each side of the field.

“Now, you should remember this game. We need a captain from each side.”

Crow was on the other side.

I wasn’t sure, but I had a sneaky feeling this was going to be a drunken game of Red Rover.

And I was not wrong.

“It’s Red Rover, campers! Team one.” She pointed over at the other team.

“I hope you got to know each other this week. I need the captain to call out the name of someone on the other side. Then you know what to do, right?”

Most of us yelled, “Right.” Some hooted.

A few were probably too drunk to be playing this.

“Okay, team two. If your name is called. Get ready. I’ll give you the line. Then you stumble...uh run...hopefully, you can still run. And go break through to the other side. Team one. Call.”

They didn't call me first.

Thankfully.

They called someone I kind of knew, who was a partner to one of the lawyers at the firm.

He was a little tipsy, but he wobbled on over.

I think they knew he was too inebriated.

He did not break through.

"Oh, too bad," Bella fake pouted.

"You have to join team one...aww..."

Team one copied her with the "Aww..."

It went back and forth, with some actually breaking through.

When someone broke through, he picked a player to join him back on their home team.

Someone on my team picked Crow.

Bella called out, "Red Rover, Red Rover, send that big ol' hunky Crow right over."

Some laughed, but Crow was serious.

He ran into a weak spot and crashed through.

Thankfully, it wasn't me who let him break the chain.

But it was me he chose to go back with him.

"Let's go, Skyler. You're joining us on team one." He grabbed my hand, lacing our fingers together.

My heart pounded so hard that I thought it was going to burst out of my chest as we jogged across the lawn.

He didn't let go when we joined the line.

After a few more people, team two was decimated and only three people were left.

They gave up.

"Are we sticking around or going back to the campsite?" Crow asked me.

"Uh...I am tired after that one." Not to mention, they were going to do sack races next, and I was so out on hopping around the field.

"All you did was jog across the field once." That was true.

No one even tried to break through on me.

Probably because I was holding on so tightly to Crow, and his biceps, pecs, and shoulders were very intimidating.

"Whatever. Let's get some watermelon, then head back."

"Oh, right. I forgot the melon."

We got a small slice and another drink.

I ate my melon as we walked back to our tent.

It was boozy, sweet, and oh-so juicy, and by the time we made it to the tent, I had it dripping down my chin and all over the front of my shirt.

But so did Crow.

We laughed and went to clean each other up when Crow's friend showed up with his twinkie boyfriend in tow.

"Hey, so are y'all together now?" the friend asked.

I couldn't remember his name and wondered if that was one of those accidentally-on-purpose things.

Like, I didn't care, so I couldn't remember.

Crow wiped the last of the melon off my face and tossed the wet wipe in our trash bin.

"Well, Warner, if you must know, we're not defining it yet."

Ah, his name was Warner .

And what did Crow mean?

I wasn't sure what their banter was about, but Warner's boyfriend was shooting me the sympathy eyes.

I didn't need his pity.

Why wasn't Crow getting the pity-eyes?

He'd be lucky to have me.

Well, I think it might work both ways, but at a minimum, we were going to be a thing for this trip.

Maybe or maybe not more than that.

So yeah, not defining it.

I did not correct him, but I did narrow my eyes at the twink.

It certainly wasn't any of their business.

I fixed another drink, but a much weaker one, since I'd been drinking a good bit already, and listened to them chit-chat about the games we'd played.

My mind wandered.

Because maybe I wanted to get fucked because hanging around with this hunky man who was still being so nice to me, even though I walked off on him, made me super horny.

And maybe it was alcohol fueled, and maybe I didn't fucking care why.

I glared enough that the twink got the hint.

Finally.

He grabbed Warner's arm.

"Hey. Let's leave these two love birds alone." He winked, but he didn't look too sure of himself.

"I have better things lined up for you, Daddy."

"Mmm...that sounds good." He kissed his boyfriend, then waved at Crow.

"Later." And they left, squeezing between the trees.

Crow sat on the bench and focused his attention on me.

"They're finally gone. Just you and me now."

"Yeah."

"Wanna talk about our last conversation?"

No.

I did not want to talk about it, but I could see from the stubborn line of his jaw that if I wanted to move on, I'd need to.

I huffed, "I still don't trust you."

"Define trust."

"What?" Was he being obtuse on purpose?

"Sky, Sky, Sky...there are different types of trust. Different ways to trust people.

Like I trust you to be honest with me, but I don't trust that you won't run again."

Oh.

"I trust that you won't run." He laughed a little, but the serious part came next.

"I trust that you'll be honest with me. If I ask. If I don't." I shook my head and glared at my feet.

"I do not trust. At all. That you'll tell me things I might need to know, if I don't specifically ask."

"I can work with that."

"What the fuck does that mean?" I threw my hands in the air and sloshed out some of my drink—I should just finish it off.

So I did.

"It means that I understand where you're having trouble, and I can try to reassure you that going forward, I'll tell you what I think you need to know. Without you having to ask."

"No. I heard how you worded that. It's not what you think I need to know. It's what I think I need to know." I pointed at him and me as I spoke, emphasizing my point.

"I don't know what you think you need."

I rolled my eyes.

"Let me clue you in on a few things. Things you probably need to know." He crooked

his finger and put his drink on the table.

I walked closer, and he patted his lap.

What the fuck was I supposed to do about that?

I sat.

On his lap.

With my legs across his, sideways.

He wrapped one arm around my back and grabbed my outer thigh with the other.

“Skyler. Sweet boy.” I wanted to interrupt him about that, but kept my mouth shut because I wanted to know what he had to say.

“I know you heard Cody call both Warner and me daddy. That’s because we play around with that dynamic. It’s a big part of who I am.”

I bit my bottom lip.

I suspected.

And I happened to know a few things about that.

Hell, I had a membership to Afterglow.

As soon as I could afford it, I bought it.

But I almost never went.

Why?

Not because I didn't want to.

"D-Do you go to a-a club?"

"Yes. Have you heard of Afterglow?"

My feet looked nice.

Yep.

How did I get out of this?

Why did I want to run?

This.

This was what I wanted.

Right?

"Y-Yes."

He squeezed me.

"Do you know what that means? Being a daddy?"

I shrugged one shoulder.

"You like having someone call you Daddy. I'm not a Little like Danny, you know. I

don't do that."

"I don't want a Little. Just a boy. Like you."

"I'm not—"

"Oh, I think you are. I think you're lying to yourself. And if anyone around here needs a daddy, it's you."

I exhaled very loudly.

"Why? Why do you say that? I'm a lawyer. A very good one. I live all by myself and make my own decisions. I do not need anyone telling me what to do. I don't have daddy issues." I started to pull away, but Crow held me tight.

"Shh...you have it all wrong, baby."

Oh shit.

He called me baby and my dick was suddenly rock hard.

"Crow..."

"Listen for once, Sky."

"Fine."

"I don't want to boss you around. I want to take care of you. Big difference. I want to help you. I'm really fucking good at seeing what people close to me need, and with you...I want to give you everything you need."

“What do you think I need?” I turned to face him directly.

I wanted to see the truth or the lie in his eyes.

“First. You need fucked. Seriously. Aside from that, you need someone to level you out. Give you courage to grab the things you want that you think you shouldn’t.”

Well.

Talk about hitting it in one.

Or two.

Wasn’t that two things?

So what the fuck was I going to do?

Go along with it?

Try it?

Run?

Crow stared me down.

Eye-to-eye, I wanted everything he was offering.

“Okay,” I whispered.

“Show me, Daddy.”

He smiled, eyes lighting up and everything, before he leaned in and kissed me.

But oh hell, he didn't simply kiss me.

He ran his hand up my back.

Squeezed my leg.

Slid his tongue between my lips and along my tongue.

All so, so slowly.

He owned me.

My heart raced.

He pulled back, and I chased his mouth.

“Turn around and straddle my legs.”

I did without hesitation, and I wrapped my arms around his neck.

He held me with one hand at my back.

“I want to treat you right, Skyler.” It was almost weird hearing my full name on his lips, when he so insistently never called me that, even though I asked him repeatedly.

Whatever.

He was going to do what he wanted, and I was tired of arguing.

He pushed my back lightly.

“Kiss me.”

I leaned in and followed directions.

This time, his other hand came up to cup my face, then slid into my hair.

Everywhere he touched me tingled.

My dick was hard and uncomfortable in my board shorts.

I pulled back and stood to yank them down.

Then remembered where we were and fidgeted instead.

“You want to get naked, Skyler?”

“Yes, Daddy.” Oh shit.

That was twice I’d called him that, and I really liked it.

So did my poor dick.

He nodded as if coming to some decision.

“Get in the tent.”

I practically ran, but Crow was on my heels.

As soon as he zipped the doorway, he grabbed me, pulling my shirt over my head.

“Kick off your shoes.” When they were in the corner, he yanked my shorts off.

I stood there in front of him, completely naked, and his eyes feasted on my body.

“You are so-so beautiful, Skyler.” He stepped in closer and rubbed his palm down my side, around to my back, and down to my ass where he squeezed a handful.

Hey, I worked hard on that bubble butt.

Millions and millions of squats.

And it was paying off, if his moan had anything to say about it.

“Fuck me...” it was both an exclamation and begging.

I wanted his cock in me so badly, I could taste it.

And I wasn’t opposed to getting started that way.

“Do you have lube or condoms, Sky? I didn’t bring any.”

“Fuck. No. I wasn’t expecting to hook up.” Who got fucked on a camping trip?

Oh, apparently me.

“I’ll take care of that tomorrow. For now, get on the mattress.” He started stripping as I climbed up on the makeshift bed.

Once naked, he stood there, watching me and stroking his cock.

He was so fucking sexy.

His body was sculpted from muscle and skin.

He had a little hair on his chest as dark as his head, but not too much.

A trail of it led down to his cock.

He was neatly trimmed and that big rod he stroked was thick, long, and a dusky pinkish color with a paler head.

My want multiplied, like times a hundred.

I tried to reach for my anger, my hate.

And it was gone.

I had to admit that I liked him.

And maybe I was over some of that hurt.

Or most of it.

Whatever.

Finally, he crawled up beside me, pulling me to face him and touching me from shoulder to hip.

His fat cock pushed against mine.

I humped against him, needing more friction, more of his skin, more of everything
Crow.

His scent circled me, fresh and rich.

He thrust his hips against mine as he tipped my head up with his fingers under my chin.

Then he kissed me again, his tongue fucking me in time with his thrusts.

Could I come just from that?

But Crow had other ideas.

“Suck me, Skyler.”

As I slid down his body, Crow grabbed my shoulders and pushed them to go the other way.

He manhandled me until I was backwards on top of him, staring at his beautiful cock.

I flicked my tongue over his crown before sucking him down, and when he moaned, I was sure the next campsite over heard it.

What a fucking turn-on.

While I continued to suck him, he lifted my ass up with his hands on my upper thighs, and then he sucked on me.

“Oh, Daddy.” I had never had a sixty-nine quite like this.

In fact, I think I’d only ever had one, and it wasn’t anywhere near as good as this.

“Fuck. Make me come, Daddy.”

A part of me wondered if I was going to call him that all the time now, or only during sex?

I was definitely pushing my boundaries, but I didn't think I'd push it that far.

Who knew?

I sure as fuck didn't.

The only thing I knew was how fucking good it felt with him sucking my dick, slobbering over me, tickling my balls then...

a wet finger slid in my hole, and I nearly shot off right then.

"Skyler. Don't stop sucking me, boy."

"No, Daddy." I went back to work, but it was so hard to concentrate on making him feel good when he was making me feel even better.

Then he stopped and set my legs back down.

I turned to look back at him.

"Make me come, boy. Then I'll take care of you."

I didn't argue; that made the most sense.

It was hard to do both at the same time.

Sexy as hell, and I needed release so badly.

I grabbed the bottom of his cock and stroked as I sucked him, which was no hardship.

I loved the feel of my tongue lapping over his head.

I wiggled my fingers over his balls and slid one back to rub that sensitive skin behind them.

“Yeah, like that. Tug them.” I massaged them, playing, tugging, and rubbing as I sucked.

Crow moaned, cursed, and then went still.

His grunt was my only warning as he came hard.

I swallowed down as much as I could, but some slid out, coating my mouth.

“Come here, boy.”

I secretly loved being called boy by him.

Why had I tried to run from that?

I let my anger toward him get in the way of all this yumminess.

He moved me into position beside him.

“Missed a spot.” He licked the rest of his mess off my face.

And simultaneously showed me another kink I hadn’t realized I had.

I had been vanilla, but I wanted so much to explore this other side.

And Crow handed it to me like a fucking buffet.

“My turn.” He shoved me to my back and slid down my body.

His dark eyes stayed on mine the whole time.

He licked my cock once, twice.

“You want this, baby boy?”

“Yes, Daddy.” When I said the words, his face lit up, eyes sparkling.

He needed me as much as I needed him.

He sucked me into his mouth.

“Fuck, Daddy-Crow...”

He stopped and shoved my legs up to get to my hole.

He didn’t play around or tease, he jumped right in to fucking my hole with his velvety tongue, making me squirm.

He chuckled as he held my hips to keep me still.

When I thought I couldn’t stand it anymore, with all kinds of weird sounds coming from me, he moved forward and took my dick into his mouth again, sucking me furiously.

“Oh, gawd...” I came so hard, stars exploded behind my eyes as my body shook with pleasure.

When I finally stopped, Crow wrapped me up in his warmth.

I fell asleep faster than I ever have in my life.

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Chapter sixteen

Day Five

I didn't wake until the sun was beating down on the side of the tent where I still held a sleeping Skyler in my arms.

He was wrapped around me again, my little sloth.

Damn, things had changed a lot between us.

And it had happened just when I thought it wouldn't.

When he called me Daddy , my whole being rejoiced.

I needed that in my life more.

All the time.

And not from just anyone—only from Skyler.

I watched him sleep.

It was our last day to actually do things.

We would pack up and go home the next day, and that would be a totally different world to navigate.

For now, I wanted to make things super fun for Skyler so he could remember this trip forever.

What would he want to do?

More hiking?

Swimming?

Get on the river again?

I was up for any of it.

Skyler's eyes fluttered open.

He seemed startled to be awake for a second, and then he smiled.

His green eyes caught the sunlight filtering in and sparkled like peridot stones.

“Hi.”

“You are so fucking beautiful.”

He laughed.

“Yeah, I don't think so. Are you drunk already?”

“Don't. Don't do that.” He frowned, and I hated that.

“Skyler. You're the best thing I've ever seen. Inside and out. Please do not think otherwise. Don't deflect my compliments. I mean them.” And to prove it, I leaned

over and kissed him.

Not gently or teasing, nope.

I kissed him hard and dirty.

He moaned under me, and I wanted him all over again.

More than anything, I wanted to make love to him, fill him up.

That would have to wait.

“Let’s get breakfast.”

“Okay, Daddy.”

“I love that, you know.”

“I figured. I kind of like it too.” Oh, fuck me.

His blush was adorable.

I covered his face in kisses, pecking his cheeks and forehead and nose, ending at his lips.

We got up and headed to the bathhouse to take care of our morning rituals, then headed over to the food RVs, hand in hand.

A few people were frying bacon and handing off the excess grease to the egg station, where they used it to scramble eggs.

So not healthy.

But it smelled so good, there was no way I wasn't having some.

A third station was making toast, so we loaded our plates with all three and then sat at an empty table.

Before we finished, Warner and Cody joined us.

Cody was a good boy for Warner.

Everything he wanted.

But not my type.

Skyler wasn't anything like him, past his slim build.

But I noticed how Skyler watched him, maybe seeing him in a different light.

Cody stole a piece of bacon from Warner, laughing when Warner scowled.

"Thanks, Daddy."

Then Warner smiled at him.

"Anything, for you, Cody-boy."

I watched Skyler taking in the interaction.

His eyes grew wide.

I think he liked it.

He glanced at me and blushed.

Yep, he wanted it but was afraid.

At least this was something I could help him with.

“Hey, you guys want to hit the water with us? We’re going upstream a bit this morning,” Warner asked.

“Skyler? What would you like to do?” I reached for his hand, lacing our fingers together.

He let me hold it.

“That sounds fun.”

“Okay. Let’s clean up and get out there!” I stood, picking up my plate, and Warner did too.

Cody hooted.

“Up the river! Yay!”

We put the paddleboard in and had a fantastic morning.

Skyler seemed to enjoy it a lot, whether it was hanging his feet in the water, lying on his stomach and peering into the depths, or jumping in to cool off.

I was definitely bringing him here again.

Once we made it back to the campground and put our stuff away, we decided to go into town for lunch.

And maybe a drug store.

We hunted Danny down to see if we could get a vehicle, but we couldn't drive the big bus.

That was frustrating.

No one else had a vehicle we could use.

I normally camped with my SUV, but this trip had been different.

"We could call an Uber," Skyler suggested.

"I guess if we're going, we'll have to." The closest little town was too far to walk, so I pulled up my app, and we walked to meet our driver at the campground entrance.

He seemed nice, and we piled into his SUV and headed off.

"Where exactly are you going? The app said into Dunnellon."

"Well, we want to get lunch. Any suggestions?" I asked.

"Most people go to Swampy's, but it's kind of touristy and expensive. Hmm...you might like Blue Gator Tiki Bar. They're less expensive and just as good, if you ask me. It's a cool outdoors vibe."

"Sounds good."

“Do you mind stopping at a drug store on the way?” Skyler asked.

I smiled.

It meant he was still very interested in sex with me.

Otherwise, he wouldn’t have said anything.

“No problem.” Once he stopped, I ran in and quickly picked up what we needed.

At the restaurant, the driver gave us a card.

“I’m Jim. Call me when you’re finished, and if I’m around, I’ll pick you up. If not, I’ll get someone cool to stop.”

“Thank you, Jim.” Skyler smiled, and I shook Jim’s hand, taking the card.

We ate fried fish and drank beer, and pointed out the décor to each other.

There were gators everywhere, from the wooden carved one out front to the head sticking out of the wall.

There was even a giant gator skin displayed, complete with feet.

There were also a lot of bar signs, and we were seated near the water, so we had a great view of the river.

Since we weren’t driving, we ordered another beer and shots of tequila.

It was a good time, and one I’d remember forever.

We called Jim, and he was close.

We finished our beer while we waited.

Then he drove us back to the campground.

It had been a pretty nice afternoon.

When we walked into the campground, it was very quiet.

“Everyone must be off doing things.”

“Well...” Skyler shook our hands where they were joined.

“Maybe then you could do me?”

Yep.

My boy was horny.

But I was not complaining.

“Not a hardship.” I pulled him closer and let go of his hand so I could put my arm around his shoulders.

He wrapped his arms around my waist and we headed for the tent.

Inside, I opened the bag from the drug store and handed him the lube.

“Open this.” He started picking at the plastic while I worked on the condoms.

I pulled two out—just in case.

I dropped them on the bed and started getting undressed while he continued to pick at the lube.

“Give it.” He handed it over, and I opened it up.

“Now, strip.”

He snorted.

“So romantic.”

“You want romance?”

He gave me that cute little half-shrug.

“Maybe.”

“How about this? We get naked and get busy, and then when we get home tomorrow, I’ll wine and dine you?”

He looked confused.

“I haven’t even thought about tomorrow.”

“It’s okay. But there will be a tomorrow. Back to real life. And I want you in mine, Sky.”

He shook his head.

“Now you call me Sky?”

“I’m confused.” Was he only playing with me?

What was the deal with his name?

“You wouldn’t call me Skyler when I wanted you to. Then when we were...” he motioned to the air mattress and circled his hand.

“You know. You called me Skyler. And now you’re back to Sky.”

“Do you have a preference?”

“From you? Skyler. Whole name.”

“Okay, Skyler. How about boy ? Can I call you boy?”

“Yes,” he answered quickly and started pulling off his clothes like they were on fire.

Mental note.

Skyler really likes to be called boy.

I joined him in taking the clothes off, and we climbed on the bed.

He giggled at the squeaky noises my knees made as I crawled up behind him.

“Do you like ass play? I want to take my time getting you ready.” I rubbed his cute butt, giving it a little squeeze.

“Uh, yeah. I’m a total bottom.” He scratched his head.

“Don’t ask me to top. Anything else? I’m in.”

“Good to know. Now ass up.”

He flipped over on his hands and knees, assuming the position as the bed wobbled.

I swatted his ass cheek, then spread them.

“Hey, what’re you doin’ back there?”

“Shh...boy. I’ve got this.” I leaned in and flicked my tongue over his hole.

“Oh.”

I teased a little before diving in, spearing my tongue in.

I loved rimming, loved his flavor.

I stuck a finger in on top of my tongue, and he moaned, but it wasn’t very loud, and I wanted the whole fucking camp to hear him.

My next move was to find his prostate.

I’d bet he was sensitive there if he was, in his words, a total bottom .

I shoved in and moved my finger around until he jumped and gasped.

“Right there?”

“Ye-es...”

I repeated that move a few times before grabbing the lube.

I slicked my fingers and went to work stretching him.

I didn't know when the last time he'd had sex was, but he was pretty tight, and even though I was sure he could take my length, the width was something else.

I was thick.

I took my time, but Skyler seemed to like it.

He ground down on my hand, while his moans grew louder.

Finally, I couldn't take it anymore, wanting more than my hand inside him.

I practically vibrated with need.

I sheathed and lubed my cock and then rubbed the tip over his hole.

"You ready?"

He trembled beneath me.

"Please, Daddy. I need it."

"Need what, boy?"

"You. Fuck me, Daddy, please."

"With pleasure, my boy." I hummed as I pressed inside him, taking it slow, careful not to hurt him as I pushed in farther.

“You okay?”

“Y-Yes...”

“Good boy. Take all of Daddy’s cock.” Something in my words seemed to resonate with him, if his noises were any indication.

Time to move.

Which was not as easy as it should have been.

Fucking air mattress.

It sunk in at all the wrong places, making it difficult to find my rhythm.

But it still had to be better than the hard ground.

I grunted with effort, trying to make it good for both of us, but I felt like I was coming up short.

“Okay. Wait.”

I pulled out, holding the condom, and got off the bed.

Then I grabbed Skyler’s ankles and dragged him to the edge.

“Shit!” he called out.

“I got this.” With feet on the ground, I reached under him, maneuvering him around to where I wanted him.

I reached between his legs and stroked his cock, massaged his balls.

Dirty-dirty thoughts of him tied up and waiting for me...

“Damn, I want you.”

Skyler muttered something, not sure what, but it sounded a lot like fucking take me .

I crouched and slid back into his hole.

This time, there wasn't much resistance.

Only enough to make him moan again.

Then I lifted him with my arms wrapped around his thighs.

Much better leverage.

Not only could I fuck into him hard, but I could move him back and forth.

Oh fuck—new favorite position.

“Ohgawdohgawd...fuuuuck...Crow!”

“Yeah” was all I could say.

Because it felt too good, and I was going to come in record time.

They had a swing at the club, and I needed him in it sooner rather than later.

Despite the kinky thoughts, something niggled at the back of my mind that something

wasn't exactly right.

I stopped moving.

“What?” Skyler glanced back at me over his shoulder, and I immediately wanted to kiss those plump lips.

His lower one looked like a darker pink and wet like he'd been abusing it with his teeth.

I took a deep breath and pulled out one more time, making him grunt.

But I needed to see him, so I flipped him over.

“Kiss me, Skyler.”

He smiled and sat up, stretching for me.

I kissed him, sliding my tongue beside his, letting them dance together.

When I pulled back, he lay down again, still smiling as if he got away with something.

Maybe he had, because he certainly had me all turned around.

I wanted so much more from him.

And not all of it was about sex.

He'd captivated me when we first met, when he'd handled my case.

He was younger then, but I never quite got him out of my mind.

And finally, he was here.

I didn't want to mess up this time.

I rubbed his cock.

“Fuck me, Skyler, you are the sexiest thing I've ever seen.”

He blushed and tried to turn his head.

“Hey. Look at me.” He pointed those green eyes at me with lips pressed tightly together.

“I'm not kidding, teasing, or whatever you're thinking. You are beautiful. Don't turn away when I say it.” He blushed a deeper red, but he didn't look away.

I slid my hands under his thighs, lifting him again.

He gently grabbed the tip of my cock, pushing it to his hole.

We worked to push back in together.

“Move, Daddy...” his breathy words made my heart flutter.

Could I have this beautiful boy in my life?

I wanted it—wanted him.

I listened, moving, but slowly.

In and out, savoring every pull of his tight channel, watching his face, gazes locked.

Even the air felt more intense.

This.

This was what I had been missing.

Not only at this moment but also in my entire life.

I picked up my rhythm, a little at a time.

Until sweat trickled off my forehead.

Skyler lifted his arms over his head, stretching them out.

As I moved faster, he gripped the sheets.

His mouth fell open, and his eyes slid to half-mast.

The hooded look from him was hot as fuck.

He panted.

Just damn.

And I chased my orgasm in him, moving erratically.

His cock slapped against his tight stomach, and I thought I was losing my mind.

Just as I felt that crazy tingling in my cock, I pulled out, grabbed my dick and ripped

the condom off so I could spray out all over him.

His chest, his stomach, his cock, all covered in my spunk as if I'd marked him as mine.

I shivered until the thrill left me.

Then I dropped to my knees and took his beautiful cock in my mouth.

It tasted salty and bitter from my ejaculation that splattered over it, and tangy from his pre-come that leaked out like a faulty faucet.

The smell of my spunk combined with his lovely, light scent.

I wasn't sure if it was oranges or something close, but it intensified everything.

I rubbed my tongue along his length, sucking to please him, teasing his crown.

"Oh gawd, Crow...I need to come." He grabbed my head, threading his fingers wildly through my hair.

I pulled up.

"Fuck my mouth, boy."

"Oh...yes, Daddy." His breathy words tripped over my heart as he took me at my word, using my mouth until he bucked madly against me.

"I'm gonna. I'm gonna."

Then he did.

After taking all he had to offer, I climbed up on the mattress again, pulling him with me back to the top, and pulled a sheet over us.

I wrapped my arms around him and stuck my nose in his hair, smelling his sweet citrus scent that sprinkled over our love-making.

That alone was an aphrodisiac, making another round a possibility.

“So good,” he mumbled.

Shortly after, he slept.

And I felt content holding him.

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Chapter seventeen

Day Six

It was time to go home.

I hadn't even wanted to go on this trip, so why was I so sad now?

I packed up the last of my stuff in my duffle bag and deflated the mattress while folding blankets.

All of which Crow had selflessly shared with me.

Fuck me, if I didn't start tearing up.

Why?

Fucking Nelson Crowell.

That ass had gotten under my skin.

Filled me with hope and promises, and now it was ending.

I didn't want to think about it because every time I did, my heart raced uncontrollably.

So, I busied myself with packing up and carrying all of Crow's shit to the bus.

Then I helped at any other campsite that needed it.

Until there was nothing left to do but climb on the bus.

I plopped down in the first empty seat and slid across to the window, leaning against it.

I closed my eyes, feeling the tired down to my bones and regretting none of it.

When someone slid in next to me, I turned to see who.

I should have known.

“Skyler.” Crow took my hand as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do.

He had been amazing on this trip, never giving up on me when, by all rights, he should have.

And he totally changed my opinion of him.

He wasn't a giant asshole at all.

Quite the opposite, in fact.

And when I had been so angry about him ruining my case, it turned out it was because he was a nice guy with a big heart and even spent extra money to help the guy out who had tried to sue him.

Baffling, but I loved that about him now.

What was going to happen between us when we returned to the real world?

That was the question.

I thought this was going to be a one-and-done.

Convenient and let's make the trip fun with some sex.

But he squeezed my hand and smiled.

He'd said he wanted me in his life, but what did that mean to him exactly?

Were we going to date now?

Were we boyfriends?

And couldn't we find a better term than that?

We weren't in high school after all.

The trip home was subdued compared to the one out.

It seemed as if everyone else was worn out too, and I ended up falling asleep, my head on Crow's shoulder.

But I woke up quickly when the bus stopped and parked in front of Drew's office building.

Home again.

We all got off the bus and started unloading.

I helped whoever needed it, especially Crow.

I only had my one duffle, and that took a whole two seconds to toss in my trunk.

Once Crow's car was loaded, he looked at me across the hood.

Nerves jumped up, making me sweat, and my pulse picked up again.

I wanted to ask him what was going to happen with us.

When could we see each other again?

Instead, I stood there and stared at him, shifting my weight from foot to foot.

Warner and Cody had shoved their shit in Crow's car as well, so I assumed they would ride together, and sure enough, they climbed in, waving at me.

I bit my bottom lip.

Was it over?

Crow circled the car and came up to me, stopping face to face.

"Skyler. I need your number." He handed me his cell.

"Uh, right. Okay." I took it and entered my number, still unsure.

Maybe he'd call me then.

Why would he ask for it if he didn't plan on calling?

Why was I so fucking insecure about this?

He pulled me to him, my face smashed into his chest, and hugged me—kissed the top of my head.

“I have to get these kids home.” He thumbed over his shoulder.

“You okay to drive?”

“Uh, yeah. I’m fine. Uh. I’ll, uh, get a coffee on the way.”

Crow scowled then fiddled with his phone a second, then my ass buzzed.

Oh yeah, I’d stuck my phone in my back pocket.

“That’s me. Call me when you get home, so I know you’re okay.”

It was on the top of my head to say yes, Daddy , but I didn’t.

I couldn’t.

“Oh, okay. I will.”

He winked.

Kissed me.

And got in his car.

He was leaving, but this had to be the start of something.

I think it could actually work out.

Maybe for once, I could be the one loved by a hot daddy.

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Chapter eighteen

Afterglow

The next morning felt wrong waking up alone in my own bed.

No air mattress, no tent, and worse, no Skyler.

I had to change that last one.

This could really be something between us, and I needed to make that happen.

It was too early when I stretched and got out of bed.

Skyler had texted me when he got home the day before, which was good and bad.

I was happy he was safe, but it didn't give us a chance to talk.

I could have called, but we were both tired.

So now, I was going to get coffee and something to eat.

Then I was calling him.

He answered quickly.

“Crow?”

“Yeah. It’s me. How’re you feeling this morning?”

“Rested. Ha! I went straight to bed last night. I’m glad I took today off to recuperate, though.”

“Me too.” I worked from home and set my own schedule, so I could work or not as I liked.

He probably didn’t have that option, though his boss, Drew, was probably a very cool boss.

I’d known him a long time, and he was always a decent guy.

And more so, since he’d gotten together with Justin.

A man like him was better with someone.

And I suspected I was too.

“Want to go out tonight? I’d like to pick you up at like six. Would that work?”

“Uh...sure.”

“Good. Text me your address, and I’ll see you tonight.”

“Okay.” He sounded quiet and shy.

I knew he turned in on himself when uncomfortable, but I wanted to drag him out.

I was nervous how he’d react, though.

Because I didn't tell him where we were going, and he didn't ask.

If he had, I would have told him to wait and see.

But it would work out.

"This isn't a dinner date, though, so you should eat before I get there."

"Uh, okay. I will."

"Good boy. See you tonight." Yeah, we could do dinner some other time.

I'd told him I would wine and dine him, and I would, but first, this date was going to be a make-or-break for us, and I wanted to get into it with him right away.

Because I was pretty confident it was going to be the make-it side of that equation.

Turns out, I was more nervous than I thought I would be when I knocked on his door.

His house was cute, and not all that far from mine, but where mine was a modern ranch on the west side of Parkland Heights, his was a Spanish-style bungalow just north of Hyde Park.

Only a fifteen-minute drive through backroads.

His house had a driveway, where Skyler's little sedan was parked and two sidewalks leading up to his front door.

One from the drive and one from the street where his quaint little mailbox stood.

I waited for him beneath the covered porch with its arches, looking out into the street

on one side and a little patio with a couple of chairs and table out the other.

When he opened the front door, I could see straight through his house to the giant sliders and backyard, which was obviously lush.

“Hey. Want a drink first?” He held his hand out, inviting me in.

“No,” I shook my head.

“Thank you, but no drinking tonight. Maybe after.”

“Uh. Okay.”

“You ready?” When he nodded, I took his hand, gently pulling him out of his house and into my arms.

I wrapped him up, liking how he fit against me.

I gave him a quick kiss.

“Let me lock up.” He turned and locked the door before dropping the keys in his pocket.

He followed me down the path to my car in his driveway.

“This is not the car you had on the camping trip.” He pointed at my little red sports car.

“I have more than one car. I like this one for date night. Don’t you?”

“Yeah, it’s cool.” I opened the door for him, tucking him inside.

I got in the driver's side and strapped in.

"It's pretty new." It was a BMW Z4, and I'd only had it for a couple of weeks.

"I like how sleek it is, but it's not the most expensive car in the world." I shrugged.

I didn't want him to think I didn't care about throwing money away, but I also wanted to impress him.

He wore a pair of slacks and a shirt with a tie.

They fit very well, and he looked like a hot businessman.

I was dressed similarly, sans tie.

"Uh, should I lose the tie?" he asked, nervously.

"No. I like it. You look good."

"Definitely a different look than camping clothes. But you've seen me in a suit."

"Mmm...I have. And I recall you looked good then, but I think you look better now."

"Why?"

"Because you're actually with me."

"Oh." He looked out the window as I drove.

He sat up more as we drove along, taking note of where we were, and when I pulled in the parking lot, he said, "Oh shit. Afterglow?"

“I figured we’d put our memberships to the test.”

He put his hands over his face.

“I hadn’t thought about...”

“I told you what I want in a relationship, Sky.”

His head jerked up.

“Relationship?” I stared at him.

What the hell did he think this was?

I was too old for hookups.

“Uh...okay. I can do this.” He shut his eyes tight for a second then looked back at me with those piercing peridot eyes.

Well then...

“Good, boy. Let Daddy show you a good time.”

We checked in and walked through the club, my hand at the small of his back.

I didn’t bother stopping at the bar or tables, nope.

I walked straight through, across the dance floor and right to the door of No Limits.

Inside, we gave up our phones and did breathalyzer tests.

Standard for entry.

No drinking and playing at Afterglow.

The owner, Braxton, wouldn't allow it.

Skyler stepped up, following the rules without question.

"So you've been back here before, too?" I asked as we headed down the hall to the private room I'd reserved.

"Uh. Only to watch. And with Danny." He shrugged like it was no big deal, but if that was the truth, it was about to become a big deal for him.

I opened the door and motioned for him to enter first, then I locked the door behind us.

Skyler gulped, looking around the room.

At the far end was a niche with a queen-sized bed sticking out of it.

The blanket on top was black and it had a red sheet folded over where it had been turned down.

Two matching red pillows were at the head.

But I didn't want to use that.

I was more interested in the padded table in the center of the room.

Skyler looked at it, trailed his finger along it as he moved farther inside, but he was

looking at the side walls.

They were padded with plenty of spots to tie or cuff someone.

There was a Saint Andrew's cross tucked into the far side as well.

It was a smaller one and was also padded like the walls and the table.

Adjacent to the cross was a section where a variety of equipment hung.

It included straps, cuffs, light chains, whips, and floggers.

A pretty chandelier hung over the center table.

Not too low, though.

"Wh-What are we going to do here?" Skyler asked.

I patted the table.

"Jump up here." We sat side by side so we could talk, because we needed to be clear with each other first.

"What do you want to happen tonight?"

He shrugged.

"Well. Sex. But..." He glanced at the walls, the cross.

"I don't know about all this other stuff."

“Is that a no to all of it?”

He shook his head.

“No. No. That’s not what I mean. I just don’t know, like, what it is, what it’s all used for. I mean I can guess, but...I probably I need to know what you’re going to do with it first.”

“That’s fair. What if I wanted to tie you to this table, tease you and fuck you?”

“Tie me?” He rubbed one of his wrists with the other.

“Have you ever been tied like that before?”

He sucked his lip into his mouth and blushed.

“No, but...”

“But what?” He didn’t answer, instead he looked at his feet.

“Would you like that?”

He gave me another shrug.

I couldn’t tell if he was excited or only embarrassed.

“Maybe. If I trusted that person.”

“Do you trust me?”

He turned sideways on the table and crossed his legs.

“That’s a tricky question.”

“One we’re circling back to since our trip, right? Do you still not trust me?”

“I...I trust you more than I did. And I trust you won’t hurt me physically. But emotionally? I’m not sure.” Now he pulled both lips in between his teeth as if to keep himself for saying more.

“I don’t want to hurt you, baby. I want to make you feel good. And I want to see if this...” I waved around the room.

“Is something you want. Something you can trust me with.”

He stared at me hard, and I let him look as long as he liked.

I let him take the time he needed.

He took so long, I was waiting for him to say no and walk out.

But he didn’t.

“Okay.”

“Okay?”

“I’m trusting you. I want this. I don’t want to be hit. That doesn’t do it for me. But the rest. Yeah...”

“No impact play. Got it. You trust me on the rest of it?”

“Yes.”

I smiled.

Couldn't help it.

My dick went rock hard when he said that one little word.

I was going to take this boy through the paces and see what he had inside him.

“Stand up.”

He jumped to his feet and looked at me with challenge in his eyes.

Oh, my boy was going to get bossy.

Impact play wasn't the only way to punish a mouthy boy.

“I'm ready. Daddy.”

That was even better.

“Good. If at any time you want to stop, just say red . Okay?”

“Red, got it.”

“Take off your clothes.” I remained on the table, watching as he undid his tie.

And carefully put it on top of the spanking bench shoved up in another corner.

Fine by me, we wouldn't be using it.

He undid his buttons and untucked the shirt, leaving it hanging open on his shoulders.

He kicked off his shoes and socks, stuffing them in his loafers and tucking them under the bench.

Then he undid the button on his slacks and unzipped them, but he turned around to pull them down, giving me the perfect view of his sexy ass sticking out when he bent.

He was feeling brave.

He removed his shirt and folded it and his pants and put them on the bench.

“Underwear too, baby boy.”

He ran his fingers along the inside of the waist band.

I could practically see his brain thinking.

Was he going to do it?

He pushed them down and dropped them on top of the rest of his clothes on the bench.

He stood there completely naked.

His cock was sticking up, nice and hard, so he was enjoying it so far.

Step number two.

“I have something for you.” I jumped down and crossed over to a cabinet on the wall beside the bed.

When I reserved the room, I asked for certain supplies to be loaded, including a butt

plug.

They'd left a few choices.

I chose the box that was the size I wanted for him.

I turned and tossed it to him.

I wanted him to open it, so he'd know it was brand new.

While he fussed with it, I grabbed the lube.

Skyler pulled it out of the box and held it up.

I took it from him and drizzled lube over it, then rubbed it to coat it well.

"Put your hands on the table."

He leaned over, hands on table, legs back, ass out, knowing it was coming.

"You ever use one of these? Or toys?"

"I-uh-I have a dildo. But not that."

"Okay. It's not much different." I pushed it, and he grunted.

"Okay?"

"Yes."

"Yes what?" Yep, I was going to make him call me daddy at every opportunity.

“Yes, Daddy.”

“Good boy. Now up on the table. Hands and knees first.”

Up he went.

I used the butt plug to fuck him, while running my hands over his back, shoulders, and down to his ass.

I wanted to take my time and enjoy every bit of him.

I also couldn't wait to fuck him.

And he seemed just as eager for it.

I slid my hand over his cock, stroking and squeezing until Skyler hummed his appreciation.

“Okay, on your back, knees up.” I made sure he didn't fall off as he shuffled around, ending up on his back, feet flat on the table and his knees up.

Quickly, I took off my clothes and put them on the bench as well.

Next time, I'd have him undress me.

I checked the supplies and found what I wanted.

I held the cuffs above his face so he could see them.

“I'm going to attach these to the table, then your wrists. Okay?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

Was it even possible for my dick to get any harder?

It didn't matter.

It was hard enough and leaking.

I secured the cuffs, making sure I had keys to get him out, but it was only a twist lock.

He couldn't get out without help but it wouldn't actually lock.

Good enough.

I clicked them over each wrist.

“You okay?”

“Yes, Daddy.” His words were getting breathier, like they had at camp.

I loved the hell out of that sound already, so I quickly crawled up on the table between his legs.

My patience for playing was nearing the end.

I put a hand on each of his knees and spread them apart.

Unlike typical dungeons, this one had decent lighting, better than we had in the tent during our trip, and now I could get a very good look at my new boy.

He was so damned gorgeous.

Thin, but not too thin.

He'd filled out in all the right places since we had gone to court together.

And his cock was so delicious, ruddy and long.

He was trimmed up, and I was sure he'd manscaped before I came and got him.

"Damn. You look so good; I want to eat you up." I licked the pre-cum off the tip of his cock, then stuck my tongue in his belly button, and mouthed down his sexy V to his treasure trail, making him giggle and squirm.

I grabbed the end of the butt plug and fucked him with it while I sucked his cock until he started flexing his hips up.

I pushed the plug in and held his hips down.

"Easy boy." I kissed his soft skin.

"I could get used to this, Skyler." I was falling hard for him.

I sat up and looked at him, green eyes glittering under the chandelier.

"Do you want me to fuck you, Skyler?"

"Yes, Daddy. Please."

I had to get up to get a condom, and damn I couldn't wait for the day we could stop using them.

But I still wasn't sure Skyler was going to keep me.

This was new and fun, but would he still like it in the morning?

We were going to find out.

I put the condom on, crawled back on the table and pulled the plug out, setting it on his stomach, the lube making him sticky.

There were plenty of wipes in the cabinet though.

Braxton's people thought of everything.

"Ready, Skyler?"

"Yes, Daddy." Again.

It would never get old.

"Fuck, I love that." I wanted to say I loved him, but it was way too soon for that.

He wasn't ready.

That was easy to see.

He liked getting fucked, but he was still skittish.

I pushed his knees back, holding him up and pressed my cock inside his hole.

He grunted, but took it relatively easy, since the plug had done its job.

“Nice. Take Daddy’s cock. Good boy.”

As I pushed all the way in, I watched his emotion and feelings play across his features, but I could only guess what he was thinking.

Once he relaxed, I moved, slow and easy, shifting my hips as I pulled out nearly all the way and pushed back in with a quick slide.

I was pretty sure I hit his prostate when he pulled against the cuffs.

He could yank them all he wanted since they were padded and wouldn’t hurt his wrists, and I was determined to give him something to make him jangle those chains a lot.

My rhythm picked up and soon I was fucking in and out of him hard and fast, I pulled his legs up so they were draped over my arms.

Skyler made little squeaking noises with every round.

He closed his eyes, but that mouth was open with his tongue hanging out like a panting dog, and I leaned forward, capturing it in my mouth, garnering a moan from him as I sucked it.

I couldn’t be more ecstatic.

He could be a boy that I could keep as my own and everything I desired in so many ways.

Skyler shifted, wrapping those long legs around my waist, and pumping his hips with every one of my thrusts.

He tightened his ass, gripping my cock hard, and I lost my fucking mind.

The loud moan in the room was now coming from me, and it only took another thrust or two before I came hard with a grunt, my body freezing and colors flashing behind my eyelids.

I held that position through my orgasm until I calmed down, then I pulled out and disposed of the condom, but my boy hadn't had his release, and I felt desperate to give that to him.

Moving back to the table, I pushed the butt plug back inside his hole.

"Daddy..." he wiggled around, showing his pleasure and begging for more.

"I've got you, Skyler." I worked his cock over, licking, sucking, rubbing, and massaged his balls for a bit.

Then I fucked him with the butt plug, in and out fast, as I sucked his cock, hoping it would overload his senses to make him get off faster.

And my bet paid off.

He came hard with Daddy on his lips.

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Chapter nineteen

Had Enough

Even though I had a membership to Afterglow, it wasn't top on my list of places to go.

Normally, I would show up for special events like dance parties, especially when they did 80's night.

The attention I got on the floor was exciting, but I never left with anyone, and I never went behind the doors to No Limits, the back room where all the kinky shit really happened, with anyone.

Well, Danny had dragged me there a few times, but all that went down was him playing in the Littles room while I watched.

Sometimes, I would color with him or play with some of the toys.

Honestly, it felt like babysitting.

Eventually, that all stopped because Lee took over, and it wasn't really my thing.

This night was totally different.

I went with Daddy Crow behind the doors.

And I turned myself over to him completely.

It was an area I'd never been to—a private room.

And my wildest fantasies began playing out as Crow chained me to a table and fucked the hell out of me.

He even used a butt plug, and when he pushed it in the first time, heat flared low, burning in my belly.

I could have taken more, but our relationship was only beginning.

There would be more fun play times like that.

I hoped.

After he made me come so hard I thought my brain had melted into my cock, he unlocked the cuffs, rubbing my wrists, although they weren't even red.

Then he wiped me down, cleaning both of us up, with wet wipes.

He tossed the wipes in the trash can and handed me a bottle of water.

“Drink, baby.”

I downed about half the bottle, not realizing how thirsty I was, before handing it back to him.

He put it down beside the table and picked me up, walking to the back of the room where he climbed on the bed and held me.

He wrapped the blanket over us from the sides and let me cuddle.

I even dozed off a bit, all warm and cozy and cared for.

This felt like the most important part of everything, and I wondered what else I would do to get here again.

Eventually, I started squirming.

If I stayed here and fell asleep hard, it would be an all-night sleep, and I didn't think we could do that.

"Are you ready to go?" he asked in that deep, rough voice that made me shiver.

"I-I guess." I wanted to go home with him.

To his place.

Or he could join me back at mine.

I didn't want to leave his side, no matter what happened.

"Let's get dressed and enjoy the club a little bit before we call it a night. How's that sound?"

I imagined dancing with him, our bodies pressed together, gyrating to the beat of the music.

"Sounds good." Yeah, I could be into that.

We dressed, and surprisingly, Crow fussed with my hair, straightening the mess it had

become before we headed up the dark hall and back to the main areas of the club.

As we walked across the dance floor and toward the tables, everyone seemed to know him.

A twink with purple hair put his hands on his arm and shoulder, nearly hanging from him.

“How you been, Daddy Crow?”

I did not want this guy touching my daddy .

And how I had claimed Crow as that so quickly, I didn’t know, but I was running with it.

I glared at the twink, but it was Crow who removed his hands.

“I’m good, Joey. I’m here with Skyler.” He nodded to me, and when I smiled, I pulled out all of my lawyer persona I had and gave him a toothy shark-like grin.

He backed up a step.

Good.

“Okay. Have fun guys.” Then he slunk away and into the bodies dancing on the floor.

But others called out greetings to him as well.

Finally, we sat at a table, and he ordered a couple bottles of water.

But I wanted a drink.

An alcoholic drink, preferably strong.

I didn't suggest it though.

Crow was in control here.

A few guys came to the table and chit-chatted with him.

I rubbed my sweaty palms on my slacks and noted the uptick in my heartbeat.

I didn't like this, and the longer I sat there sipping on my water, the more I wanted to run, because it seemed like Daddy played around, maybe more than a little.

We didn't have a relationship, not really.

Despite what he'd said, this wasn't what I would call a relationship, he just wanted someone to fuck and call him daddy .

I didn't think that was going to be me.

I liked the kinky stuff, and my deepest, darkest desire was to have a daddy for my own.

How nice would it be to have someone love me, care for me, and maybe spoil me a little.

And yeah, crazy hot sex would be even better, but this wasn't it.

In my vision, the sex was the sprinkles on top, but for Crow, it seemed it was the whole dessert.

Maybe even the meal.

Finally, Joey came back to the table.

I didn't listen to his words.

I only saw his big eyes and pouty mouth.

I imagined it around Crow's cock—

I'd had enough.

I stood.

Gave Crow one last look and walked away.

I was beyond huffy.

Beyond mad.

Standing on the walkway outside Afterglow, the evening breeze cooled the sweat on my forehead.

I took a deep breath, and...

I rode here with Crow.

I hated being stuck, but this was easy enough to fix.

I pulled up my Uber app and ordered a car.

And surprise, it arrived before Crow bothered to even look for me.

Fuck him.

Chapter twenty

Shit What Did I Do?

Three days.

That's how long it had been since I talked to Skylar.

I couldn't believe this.

What the fuck had I done?

I stared out the window above my desk.

I'd set the little table in front of the long, narrow windows stretching floor to ceiling that overlooked the pool.

I'd originally meant it to be a drop zone for towels as it was next to the door leading from the pool to the backyard from my main en suite, but I liked setting up my laptop and working here, since it had the best view in the house.

Today though, I didn't much care.

I wanted to see Skylar splashing around in that pool and maybe bring him out a frozen drink like a margarita or something.

But Skylar would not answer my calls, and I was sick of leaving messages.

What the fuck was he thinking?

I thought he'd gone to the bathroom at Afterglow, and by the time I realized he hadn't, he was gone.

And he wasn't coming back.

And I couldn't think about anything else.

Had I done something to blow it?

Or was he fucking with me the entire time?

Playing with my heart, reeling me in so he could break me.

Well, it worked, and I didn't know what to do.

Shutting my laptop, I got up and crossed the room.

I grabbed my keys as I headed out the front door.

The SUV was in the driveway, since I only had room for my Beemer in the small garage, and I wondered for the millionth time why I bought a million-dollar home with only a one car garage.

But fuck it.

I got in and dialed Warner at the same time.

"Yo," he answered.

“Where are you? I’m heading over.”

“Pushy much?” he made a derisive noise that I ignored.

“Need to talk.”

“Already?” What the fuck did that mean?

I ignored it.

After a moment’s silence, he muttered, “Okay, I’m at home today. Come on over then.”

He only lived a few miles away.

We were always close whether that meant proximity, mentally, or emotionally.

We’d grown up together—best friends—Done everything together.

Including fucking a few guys and one eventful double penetration session, but none of that even compared to Skyler.

I parked and walked into his house, not bothering to knock.

That’s the kind of bond we had.

“Back here,” he called from his office.

I knew where to find him.

The door was open, and I waltzed in and plopped down on his leather sofa.

Warner spun around in his chair and stared at me with his hands on his knees.

“What the fuck, dude?”

“It’s Skyler.”

“So, I guessed. What the hell’s the problem?”

“He won’t take my calls.”

Warner leaned back and crossed his arms over his broad chest.

He wore a crisp white T-shirt and swim trunks, probably headed out to the pool after he finished up whatever he was working on.

That was a normal day for both of us.

Unless he had to go into the office or court, which happened, but mostly, he worked from home.

“Look, Crow. If you like this guy, go get him. I mean, I’ve never seen you like this over anyone. What’s so special about him anyway?”

I glared at Warner.

He’d heard me bitch about Skyler before.

After the trial and after Danny and Lee’s wedding.

He knew how I felt.

“He means something to me.”

“He’s gotten under your skin. Again. You need to either get him on board or forget about him.”

“I can’t forget about him. Have you seen him? Talked to him? He’s amazing. So fucking smart. Sassy, but not in a bad way. And so fucking vulnerable.”

“And what? You think he needs a daddy?”

I definitely thought that.

“If anyone I’ve ever met needs one, it’s him.” I’d thought that so many times now.

I’d even told Skyler what I thought about it.

“I need a drink for the rest of this conversation.” He grunted and got up.

We moved back into his main house.

He had a fancy bar set up between his kitchen and dining room.

“What do you want?”

“Nothing. I’m driving.”

“Fine. Suit yourself.” He hummed as he poured golden liquid, probably whisky or bourbon, from a decanter into a glass.

He dropped a big square ice cube from his under-cabinet icemaker in and swirled it.

“Now...” He motioned to the living room where he had comfortable furniture and a large screen over the fireplace.

His was wood-burning while my two were electric.

His house was overall more traditional than my modern mini-mansion.

Neither were like anything we grew up in.

Our families both lived in the same middle-class neighborhood.

But we grew in station over the years, having not only lucrative careers, but amazing financial investments.

I wasn't a billionaire, but I had more than a few million to spare, and so did Warner.

Hell, he didn't have to work for Drew, he simply enjoyed it.

And he knew me better than anyone else.

So when he sat in a club chair and sipped his drink, eyeing me.

“You are a dumbass. What did you do? Take him to Afterglow right off the bat?”

I eased down onto his couch and clasped my hands in my lap.

“Yes. But hey, I'm not perfect. It's just that, I don't know, Warner. This is more than a boy under my skin. I mean he's so pretty with those green eyes and tight bod, but there's so much more to him than that. He laughs easily. Enjoys the moment.”

“I saw you watching him during the camping trip. When he didn't know you were

looking.” He pointed at me with his index finger on the one holding his glass.

“I had a feeling we’d be having this conversation.” He took a sip.

Then sighed over dramatically.

“Never thought the two of us would ever settle down. But...I can see you long term with him, if you both can get over yourselves.”

“Is this about Cody? Are you serious with him now?”

“Oh, I’m serious all right. Hell, he’s the only one that’s been around more than a fucking minute. He’s adorable, right?”

Not my type, but I could see him with Warner.

“For you, yeah.”

“Well, yeah. Only me. We’re exclusive, and if it keeps up, I’m going to ask him to move in.”

“That’s fast.”

He shrugged.

“When you know you know. But you? What the hell?”

“I can’t let him go. Yes, I took him to Afterglow, but everything was great. Yeah. Until Joey started insinuating himself.”

“You should have never hooked up with him. I warned you.”

“That was a long time ago. I haven’t been with anyone, especially him, in a long time. And he never fucking bothers me, but he saw me with Skyler.” I held a hand up as if that explained it, but it wasn’t the entire story.

“After Joey came to the table, Skyler simply left.” I motioned to the door.

“Without a word.”

“Sounds like your boy got jealous.”

“But there’s nothing to be jealous of. I can’t even think about anyone else. I’m breathing Skyler, morning, noon, and fucking night. I want to see him smile. Want to show him new things. I want to know everything about him. Want him in my bed and my life.”

“Oh. My. God. Crow. You’re in love with this guy.”

That was it.

Exactly.

“Yeah.” I felt hopeless.

“Maybe tell him that. You closeted asshole.” Okay, he wasn’t wrong.

I was good at being the daddy, taking care of someone, and telling them what to do.

Especially during sex.

But I wasn’t so good at talking and sharing.

And I wasn't very in touch with my feelings.

I needed Warner to help me with that shit.

That was why I was here.

"I would, but that's something you say in person. The first time. Right?"

"Uh, yeah."

"So how the fuck am I supposed to tell him when he won't see me? Won't take my calls?"

He made that noise again as if blowing me off.

"You know where to find him."

Oh.

I did alright.

I called Drew to warn him on the drive over.

I hated that it came down to this, but I drove straight over to Drew's firm and parked in the visitors' section.

Then I stormed through the front doors.

A receptionist seated behind the large mahogany front desk asked pleasantly, "Good afternoon, sir. How can I assist you today?" I'd seen him a few times, and although I didn't have an appointment this time, Drew assured me access when I called.

I was dressed in slacks and a golf shirt, so I didn't think that would be an issue.

I cleared my throat.

"I'm here to see Skyler Baldwin."

He slid a pair of readers over his nose and started looking through notes on a tablet.

"And you are..."

"Nelson Crowell."

"Crowell...Crowell...I have a Crow. Mr. Crow."

"Yes, that's me."

He looked at me skeptically.

"I've been here before, surely you recognize me."

His face pinched up.

"You do look familiar, but I think I need to call Mr. Baldwin."

"No. Call Drew. Please."

He cocked his head.

Yep, he was totally suspicious.

But he called Drew and got the okay.

Then gave me directions to Skyler's office.

Down the main hall, third left and second door on the right.

I repeated that several times and headed out to find him.

And I only made a few wrong turns before stopping in front of his office.

He had a side window along his door, so I could see him sitting at his desk, reviewing paperwork.

And even better, he was alone.

Shoving the door open without knocking, made his head pop up from his papers in surprise, but in the next second, he scowled.

“What are you doing here?”

“You wouldn't talk to me.”

“For reasons.” He gave me that look he'd had on his face at the wedding as if he thought I should be dropped off with the trash.

“Thank God we used condoms.” He went back to his paperwork as if ignoring me was going to get me to leave.

He was wrong about that.

“Skyler. For real. I haven't slept with anyone from Afterglow in years. Four to be exact.”

“No way. I call bullshit. You have not been abstinent for four years.”

“No. I haven’t, but it hasn’t been anyone at the club, and you’re not a saint either, are you?”

He scowled at me.

“I work too much. I read when I’m off work. I hardly go out. And the truth is I haven’t hooked up or dated or anything even half as much as I’d like to.”

“I find that hard to believe.” He was so fucking gorgeous; he should have men beating down doors to get to him.

He shook his head.

“I. Don’t. Go. Out. Get it?”

I needed to read between the lines.

I rubbed my face.

“Skyler. I’m clueless. Okay. Here’s what my dating life has been like. Yes, I’ve spent a lot of time at the club and have tried to find a boy, but I haven’t been sleeping with them. Because I discovered that, most of the time, that’s all they wanted. And I was never going to find that perfect guy if I slept with them all. And I still didn’t find anyone. But I haven’t been fucking everything in sight. Yes, I know Joey from Afterglow. Yes, I slept with him, but that was more than four years ago. He was the one that made me realize I was going about it all wrong.”

“Oh.” His face was blank, unreadable.

“You have a way of thinking the worst of me and then disappearing so I can’t clear things up.”

“Oh.”

Not knowing what to think or do, I figured honesty was the best place to start.

And that meant being honest with myself as well as him.

“I want you, Skyler. That’s all. I love you.”

His green eyes narrowed.

“How do you know that in five days?”

“Technically, it’s nine.”

“Whatever.”

“I don’t know, Sky, but I see you, and you need me. And I need you. Can we try this thing out? Without running away every time you get pissy?”

That’s when he smiled.

But he also rolled his eyes.

“Okay. To be honest, I’ve always wanted the daddy thing but was too afraid to go after it. I’m not a Little like Danny, but I…” He tilted his head back and forth as if weighing it out.

“I can be kinky. But there’s so much more that I need besides the sex. Can you do

that? All the real relationship stuff?”

It felt like I was on the witness stand.

I had to redirect.

“Skyler...Starting off our dating at Afterglow probably wasn’t the smartest thing for earning trust.” I hoped he would understand.

“I’m sorry. But I feel like we can do this. Do you need a good daddy, Skyler?”

Skyler bit that lower lip, and breathed out, “Yes.”

“Can I be your daddy then? If I can give you more than the sex?”

Danny burst through the door, loudly.

“So help me God, Skyler Liam Baldwin, if you say no, I will beat you to death.”

I was shocked, but Skyler burst out laughing, and so did Danny.

Then he circled Skyler’s desk and hugged him.

After a bit, they settled down.

“Sorry. Couldn’t help myself.” Danny shrugged.

Then they looked over at me.

I held up my hands in surrender.

“Fuck. Yes, okay.” He dropped the pen he’d been holding on his desk.

“Yes, you can, Daddy.”

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Chapter twenty-one

What's My HEA?

We were actually in a committed, monogamous relationship.

Wow.

I still had to pinch myself daily.

But this dreaded day had finally arrived.

We were going to the club, Afterglow.

Again.

Maybe I was more prepared this time?

It wasn't like a total flop the last time, but dealing with all the thirsty twink
flirting with my daddy would be rough.

Danny's advice was to stake my claim and make sure everyone knew it.

Crow seemed quietly on board with that as he handed me a box.

"Present for you," he said a little shyly, which was not like Crow at all.

Cocky, yes.

Shy, no.

I took the shirt box from him.

“What’s this?”

“Something for tonight.”

I sat on the bench at the end of his king size bed, where I’d slept so comfortably the night before.

Seriously, I might stay with him forever for the cozy bed alone.

Skeptical of the present, I opened it slowly.

And pulled out a mesh shirt, lined in leather.

“Woah.” Underneath it was more leather—a pair of booty shorts.

I’d never worn anything like this, but I’d seen guys at the club in similarly revealing outfits.

Maybe even some showing more skin than this would.

“I don’t know...”

“You’ll look fantastic. Grab a quick shower and try it on.” Now that was the Crow I knew, pushy arrogant bastard.

“Fine...” I sounded like I was giving in, but there was a part of me that was giddy at the idea of wearing such a sexy outfit.

But oh.

“What shoes am I going to wear with this?”

“Don’t you have boots?”

“Boots? No.” I had dress shoes, loafers, and sneakers.

And flip flops but none of those were going to work.

“I want you to be comfortable. How about black tennis shoes?”

I shook my head and held up the shorts.

“This is not comfortable, and sneakers won’t go with it. I think. Not mine, anyway.” Maybe I should call Danny, but honestly, this wasn’t something he would wear.

Completely different style.

“They look small. They might not fit.”

“They’ll fit. Shower. Try them on. And then we’ll go to the store and find some fancy footwear for you.” He winked at me.

“Prick.”

His maniacal laugh followed me into the bathroom.

And what a bathroom.

I mean, mine was nice with subway tile and all that, but his was like a spa with full slab marble on the walls of the shower, a separate soaking tub, which I was dying to get into—maybe tomorrow.

The wall behind it was wood, maybe bamboo.

Whatever it was, it was gorgeous.

I loved everything about his house.

Especially the living room.

It was so modern, but still cozy.

It had an electric fireplace that was set into what looked like stacked brick to the ceiling.

Obviously, it wasn't a real fireplace, like wood-burning, but it was really cool, and his big ass TV was mounted above the firebox.

But that wasn't even the best thing.

Nope.

The back wall leading to the pool was three quarters sliders that opened all the way up.

The last little bit was a big window over the wet bar.

At first, I thought it was odd, until he opened the window.

It lifted on some kind of hydraulic springs and acted as a passthrough to the pool.

For drinks.

Or whatever.

And that wet bar was slick.

And so was my hair under the hot water dropping from the rain head above me.

Fuck.

I could get used to this.

My place was great, and I'd earned it myself, but I was fast loving this one.

And having Crow along with it wasn't bad either.

He was growing on me.

To be honest, I was falling for him.

I hadn't said those three words yet, and since that day in my office, he hadn't said them again either.

He was waiting for me, and I was pretty fucking close, even without the gorgeous house.

I tried the club clothes on and strutted out into the bedroom wearing them.

Crow's eyes grew wide.

"Holy shit, baby boy. You look incredible. I knew you'd look good, but fuck me, you're a knockout." He whistled.

"Thanks. And great job on the sizes." I turned and slapped my ass that filled out those shorts like they were made specifically for me.

Crow made a growly sound and grabbed me, tossing me to the bed.

"Maybe we skip the club and fuck here all night." He mouthed at my throat and the side of my neck.

"Oh no. We said we were going, and I have to show this off now." I trailed my hand down the center of my shirt along the leather where the buttons were to emphasize it.

There was more leather at the cuffs and along the waistline.

It really was a nice top.

And I did really want to go back to Afterglow.

I had something to prove.

"I have a friend who designs club wear, and I sent her your size. She wanted me to get your exact measurements but that was tricky. I used that black tee you left here that fits you like a glove."

"Uh-huh. The one I have a hard time getting out of that you almost ripped?"

"Yeah, that one." He kissed me quickly, then gave me a cheeky smile.

“Okay. Get some regular clothes on and let’s go get you some boots.”

I’d never owned boots.

Never needed or cared for them.

Loafers were more my style, but I had to admit, I found a pair I liked that would look good with the outfit, probably other outfits, and felt good on my feet.

They weren’t heavy like combat boots, or sleek like dress boots.

They were somewhere in between.

They laced up the front and were shiny black.

They cost a couple hundred bucks, which had me scoffing, but Crow grabbed them and headed to the checkout.

Afterward, we had lunch at a nice steakhouse down the road.

You needed reservations for the main seating area, and it wasn’t open for a few hours, but the lounge was.

We ordered eight-ounce filet mignon and salads.

As I chewed my delicious steak, Crow pointed at me with his fork.

“We need to have dinner here some time. Half this menu is absolutely fantastic, but I haven’t tried the other half. Yet.”

He could be so charming.

“I’d love that.” I knew he had money.

He owned a holding company that bought and sold other companies.

That’s how he’d gotten in trouble all those years ago.

He tried to buy a company from a desperate man who didn’t actually want to sell but needed the money.

I hoped Crow got a lot of karma out of that deal, and he must have.

Fancy house, two cars, expensive restaurants, and he thought nothing of dropping hundreds of dollars on clothes for me.

Maybe thousands.

That top could not have been cheap.

“Crow…”

“Hmm?”

“You know you don’t have to impress me.” I waved my hand around, indicating the restaurant, then gestured toward the plate.

“I know—”

“Nonsense.” He scowled.

“It’s not that I don’t appreciate it.”

He reached across the table and grabbed my hand.

“Skyler. I have money. I do. More than I’ll ever spend, even giving a lot away to charity. So if I want to spend some on you, I will. It makes me happy. I want to spoil you.”

“Okay. I don’t want you to think I’m taking advantage. That’s all.” I squeezed his hand.

I had what I needed.

“I don’t think that at all. You’re a very successful lawyer. You own a beautiful home and a nice car. You wear designer suits. And I bet you save or invest most of what you make. If you wanted those boots, and I wasn’t around, you would have bought them.” He shrugged as if it were nothing.

And in a way, it was nothing.

He was right.

I could afford them.

“I do invest a lot.” They weren’t the words I wanted to say.

“I guessed as much.”

We finished eating and headed back to his place.

Having already taken over three drawers and a part of his closet out of convenience, I wanted more.

I didn't want to go back to my place if I didn't have to.

I loved my house, but honestly, I didn't want to be without Crow.

Didn't want to sleep alone or hang out where he wasn't.

Since we still had a few hours before going to the club, we jumped in the pool for a bit, and then I grabbed my book and relaxed in one of his loungers.

It was another perfect Florida summer day.

Crow went in the house and a few minutes later, called out to me through the pass-thru window.

He held a frozen drink.

"What's this?" I walked over and took the drink and sipped from the straw he'd stuck in.

"Yum."

"Strawberry daiquiri, light on the alcohol."

"It's great. Thanks."

"You're welcome." He grabbed a second drink and joined me on the patio.

"What are you reading?"

"It's a cozy mystery, MM style."

“MM?”

“That means gay, male-male.”

“Gotcha. Is it good?”

“Pretty good, yeah. Better than a straight contemporary romance, but I like those too.”

“Hmm...good to know.”

We were learning a lot about each other from moments like this, hanging out and talking.

He was more than the confidence he exuded and his daddy-kink.

He hadn't always been super rich, and we had similar backgrounds with our families being middle class and a bit weird.

And he could be very compassionate and loved good food.

He didn't read a lot, but he researched tons of things for work and pleasure.

He didn't play video games or watch a lot of TV, but he did like good sci-fi and monster movies, and Grimm was his favorite series before it was cancelled.

I liked that one too, so we planned a binge marathon.

But I also learned how beautiful his eyes were when he smiled at me.

He loved to hold my hand, and his hot-spot was on his neck, just under his ear.

And I liked him entirely too much.

We walked into the club, the same as last time with his hand at the small of my back.

He guided me through the bar area and to the dance floor.

“Want to dance a little first?”

The music wasn’t great, but I liked the idea of dancing with him, and we missed out on that last time.

“Sure.” I slid my arms around his neck and rocked my hips into him.

He ran his hands up my back.

“You look fantastic.”

“Thanks.” I’d added eyeliner and fixed my hair a bit, and along with the leather it made me feel fantastic too.

It wasn’t something I was used to, but I liked it.

“You don’t look like the sharp lawyer I know.”

“Mm...maybe not, but I’ll still win any argument you throw at me.” Okay.

I admit it.

I wasn’t very good at flirting, but it hardly mattered.

“I bet I can occupy your mouth with other things.”

I tossed my head back and laughed.

That's when that little purple-haired twink from the last time walked up.

He thrust his hip out.

"Can I cut in?"

"No," I barked at him.

He opened his mouth to say something, but I wasn't having it.

No one was going to make me feel less than, and Crow was mine.

"Overruled. Daddy Crow is taken. Move along."

He shut his mouth and stared at me hard.

Then turned on his heel and walked away.

"Well played." Crow pulled me closer, pressing his front to mine, letting me feel the bulge in his jeans.

"Let's go get our room. I'm hard as hell for you."

"That got you hard? You better not show up at court any time soon."

"Who knew you verbally lacerating people would be my kink?"

I swatted his chest.

“Shut the fuck up.”

He leaned in and bit my lower lip, tugging it with his teeth.

“Let’s go, lawyer-boy.” He grabbed my hand and led me to the door to No Limits.

After we checked our phones and took the breath test, Crow led me down the hall.

We passed the Littles room, and I peered in the window, wondering if Danny was there, but I didn’t see him.

I followed after Crow down another corridor.

If I had to get out of there myself, there was a high probability that I would get lost.

But he knew where he was going.

At the room he opened the door.

It was a different one than last time.

This one had a contraption in the center and the floor was padded.

“Shoes off at the door.” He pointed at a shelf beside the entrance.

“Might as well put your clothes there too.”

I undressed and sat everything, neatly folded, on the appropriate shelf and turned to watch him.

“Undress me, Skyler.” That was different, but okay.

If he liked that, I could do it.

Unlike other daddies here, he didn't wear the typical leather.

His top was a deep burgundy, velvety material and so soft, and it was impossible to resist rubbing my hands all over his chest before I started unbuttoning it.

When I finished, I slid my hands inside, touching bare skin.

Stretching up on my bare toes and wiggling against him made all the blood in my body rush to my cock.

I took a breath and pushed his top over his shoulders and down his arms.

"Nice, Skyler. Fold it up." He pointed to where my clothes were on the shelf, so I added his to the pile.

I reached for his waistband, but he shook his head and pointed at his shoes.

Yeah, boots first.

They were more like combat boots, and I'd have to untie and partially unlace them.

Oh.

Well.

I squatted to do it, but didn't like the position, so I got on my knees, thankful for the soft carpeting on the floor and not tile or wood.

"Damn, Skyler. I like you naked on your knees in front of me."

My cock jumped.

Did I like his words or being on my knees for him?

Maybe both.

I did like it, so it didn't matter why.

I worked his laces and pulled the boots off, setting them on the floor next to mine.

Then I stood and reached for that front button on his pants.

They weren't leather.

The material was more like cargo pants, but they were black and tight.

He had to wiggle his ass as I peeled them off.

"You're going to have fun getting these back on, Daddy."

He chuckled softly.

"Don't I know it." I got them down, and he stepped out of them.

"These too." He held his socked foot up, so I pulled them off too.

Finally, we were both naked, but what was next?

I looked around the room anxiously.

I didn't know what the fuck was in the middle, but there was a bed in the back of the

room and other things hanging on the walls, including a closed cabinet on one side.

“What’re we doing?”

Crow stepped closer and pulled my bottom lip from between my teeth.

“Don’t do that. I’ve got you.”

I sighed.

“I trust you.”

“Okay. This is the swing room.” He nodded to that big contraption.

Now that he said it was a swing, I saw it.

“Oh. I get in that?”

“Yes. I’ll help.” He maneuvered me into the cradle on my back and made sure it was steady.

“I know it’ll hold your weight, because I’ve been in it.” Now that was a sight to imagine.

When I laughed, he glared at me.

“Enough of that, cheeky boy. Hold your hands up.”

I lifted my hands over my head, and he secured leather cuffs around my wrists.

“Feet here.” He pointed at the stirrup-like straps at the bottom.

When I stuck my feet in them, my knees went up and spread open.

He wrapped cuffs around both of my ankles.

There was no getting out of this unless he let me.

“I didn’t use a plug or anything, so I need to get you ready.”

“Okay, Daddy.”

He leaned over and kissed me before getting on his knees between my legs with a cocky smile on his face.

He swiped his tongue over my hole, and I closed my eyes.

There was nothing like a good rimming, and I planned on enjoying it, if that’s what Daddy wanted to do.

He teased and poked the tip of his tongue inside.

He licked over my hole and up my taint with the flat of his tongue, then pushed it in again, fucking me with it.

After a minute, he stuck his finger beside his tongue, making the fit tighter, and making me moan loudly.

“Mmm...forgot the lube. Damn.” He stood and rushed to the back of the room, where I couldn’t see him.

“Crow?”

“Hold on. I’m here.” He touched my thigh as he came around.

“Sorry. I was so excited to taste you, I forgot to grab supplies.” He winked at me.

I wanted to tell him he could lick me anytime he wanted, but I held back.

He knew that anyway.

But being at the club heightened everything.

He dropped back down between my legs and used the lube and his fingers to work my ass over, hitting my prostate every chance he got.

I loved every second of it.

Then he kissed and nibbled my thigh before standing.

“You ready?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

“Okay.” He leaned in and kissed me again.

“Remember. If you need to stop for any reason, you say red .”

“Got it. Red.” I nodded, more than ready to get on with it.

He rolled the condom on, and when he looked up at me, his face was so open and hopeful, I wanted to give him everything.

“I hope we can stop using these soon. I want to feel your walls gripping me without

the barrier.”

“Me too.”

“You’re so hot inside; it’ll probably scorch my dick.”

I sucked my bottom lip between my teeth.

I wanted...

“Fuck me, Daddy.”

“With pleasure.” He pressed the top against my hole and pushed, working it in.

Once we got that out of the way, he fucked me.

But then he grabbed onto the swing and started moving me.

Back and forth, swinging to fuck me on his cock.

And it felt good.

But.

But.

The room started spinning and the sides of the swing rubbed my bare skin.

I couldn’t breathe.

“Cr-Crow...” I squeezed my eyes shut, feeling heat in my cheeks.

Then I remembered.

“R-Red. Red.”

Crow stopped immediately.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay, Skyler?”

“No. No. Get me out of this.” I was almost in tears, overwhelmed, and I couldn’t even say why.

Crow moved quickly, unhooking all the cuffs and practically pulling me out of the contraption, holding me tight.

“What do you need?”

“Air. I can’t breathe.”

“Shit. You’re having a panic attack.” He carried me to the bed and sat me on the mattress with my back against the headboard.

“Put your head between your knees.”

I did what he said, but I didn’t know if it would help.

I’d never had a panic attack.

I didn’t know what to do.

Crow rubbed my shoulder and murmured softly to me, although I didn’t focus on what he was saying.

I breathed in and out deeply.

Until my heart stopped all that ping-ponging around my chest.

I leaned back, and Crow handed me a bottle of water.

I had no clue where or when he'd picked it up, but I was thankful and took a long drink.

His brows were pinched above his long nose, and he looked so worried.

“Are you okay?”

I nodded.

“I'm sorry.”

“No. Nothing to be sorry about. I'm glad you remembered your word.”

“Me too.” We stared at each other.

He looked as vulnerable as I felt, and I didn't know which I hated more.

“I don't know what happened. It was good. Then all of a sudden it wasn't.”

“Okay. Well. That's fine. No swing.”

“That doesn't mean no Afterglow. I like coming here with you. But...” I waved at that thing in the center of the room.

But it wasn't what I hated.

I started rambling.

“There’s something here, Crow. I like you. I mean, way more than anyone. Like ever. I’m falling so hard. But it’s not, you know? It’s still shaky. And I don’t know where we stand or where we’re going, and half the time I can’t get out of my head, but in there in that...” I stuck my hand out.

“My brain stopped. I wasn’t thinking. Only feeling. And something tripped in my head, like I can’t do that. How can I do that? I...I trusted you, Crow. I didn’t trust me. Does any of this make any sense?”

“Maybe.”

“Maybe? That’s all you have to say?” I wanted to scream.

To run.

But Crow climbed up on the bed and sat cross-legged in front of me.

“I’m trying to understand, but that was a lot to unpack.” He blew out a long breath.

“First, maybe we need to talk about our relationship more. And I know I’m not good at that, so you have my permission to force that on me.” His smile was so cute and smug.

I couldn’t be mad at him.

“Second, I think I pushed too fast for this.” He nodded his head behind him to indicate the swing, the club, or something.

“I want to do this with you.”

“I know. I want that too, but we can go slower. I mean, the possibilities are endless. And I can refrain from springing surprises like that on you.”

“Yeah. I think if I had time to get used to the idea, it might have been better.”

“But maybe you need to talk to someone. A sub or something, because I think you reacted when you were slipping into sub space.”

“What’s that?”

“Fuck. I really have made a mess of this. I’m a pretty good daddy, Skyler, but maybe not this side of it. You definitely need to talk to someone.”

“Okay, but not that purple-haired dude.”

He laughed and pulled me into his arms.

He kissed the top of my head.

“How about we go home and make slow, passionate love?”

“Home?”

“Yeah. Well, you’re practically living with me anyway. I expect you’ll have all your stuff moved in by the end of the month.”

I chuckled, because it was cute.

But.

“Crow. We haven’t even talked about that.”

“Okay. Let’s go home and discuss it in the morning.”

I rolled my eyes.

“Fine. Let’s get dressed.” I was determined to stick this out and make that stubborn man talk more.

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The water was crystal clear and cold.

The sun was hot, even after my dip.

I slid my shades and hat on and glanced over at Skyler.

He was standing up on his own paddleboard, and behind him, lush trees lined the bank.

Cyprus, pines, and oaks dripping Spanish moss.

Low brush, shrubs, and ferns filled in every gap.

I knew better, but it felt like we were out in the middle of nowhere.

“Crow! Crow! Look.” He pointed to a large floating mass of weeds, seagrass, and lilies.

I paddled a little closer to see what he was so excited about.

Deep in the center, a tiny alligator floated.

It would have been easy to miss.

“You have eagle eyes.”

“Shh...Don’t bother him.” He paddled away.

I had to get him his own board.

He wasn't sure about it at first, but he enjoyed paddling independently and not being attached to me.

And I loved seeing him do it.

The joy on his face.

He was so relaxed.

And after several months of difficult cases, he needed the break.

Since he officially moved in with me, I tried to make it as relaxing as possible for him.

Drinks at the pool, soaking in the tub, or just sitting in the living room together.

He read while I researched the latest investment opportunities with the fireplace on and the TV off.

But there was nothing like getting away from everything out here in nature.

We'd arrived early so we could spend time on the water before dinner.

I'd rented an RV for this trip.

No fucking on an air mattress this time.

"Ready to head back?" I asked, stomach growling.

I had burgers ready to pop onto the grill at our campsite.

“No. But let’s go ahead and turn around. We can take our time getting back. Right?”

“Sure.”

Skyler hooted and jumped in the water.

He was clever enough to strap his board to his ankle so he could swim around without worrying about it floating off or needing my help to hold it.

I shouldn’t have been surprised; my boy liked all kinds of straps.

We now had an assortment at home.

And we often put them to good use.

We also had been back to Afterglow several times, but not to the swing room.

That was going to be a hard pass.

Even if Skyler wanted to try it again, I wouldn’t let him.

That had scared the ever-loving life out of me.

But it had also been a turning point for our relationship.

When we returned home, we made sweet, slow love, and Skyler finally admitted he loved me.

But he also laid down the law.

We now had a once-a-week check-in on how we were feeling and what was going on with the relationship.

When I shared well, he rewarded me by riding my dick.

Nothing like watching him pleasure himself like that.

Fuck!

I was so gone for him.

And I had a huge surprise.

We hadn't been together long, but there was no way I was letting him get away from me now.

After swimming a bit, Skyler climbed back on his board and paddled over to me.

He sat and propped his feet on my board, so I sat as well, and we drifted along.

I only paddled to avoid crashing into the trees, but mostly we stayed in the middle.

It was late summer, nearly fall, but still hot with plenty of other people on the river.

"This reminds me, I saw the pictures Levi's nephew took at the PRIDE trip. He got a few great shots of me."

"I'd love to see them."

"I'll send them to you." I could practically see his brain churning as he leaned back with his hands behind him to prop himself up.

"What's on your mind, Skyler?"

"I don't know. Just. We don't have any pictures of us together."

“We’ll get some. Promise.”

“I’m not much on selfies. But...”

“Right. We’ve been together too long to not have any. You know Warner and Cody are coming out tomorrow. We’ll get them to take some.”

“Sounds great. But...”

“Out with it already.”

He stuck his tongue out at me.

“I want maybe something more professionally done. Would you do that?”

“Absolutely.” He had my brain spinning.

I could think of a few really good reasons for doing that, but I wasn’t ready to share.

Yet.

“Awesome.” He smiled and the sun lit his beautiful green eyes.

After dinner, we sat in camp chairs in front of the RV and sipped my favorite camping sangria.

I had his surprise in my pocket and was gathering the guts to do it.

“You’re looking pretty smug over there, Daddy Crow.” He tapped my knee with his bare toes.

I loved it when he went barefoot.

I grabbed his toes.

“You have the sexiest feet.”

Skyler scoffed.

“I’m going for a refill. Want one?”

“Sure.” I handed him my plastic cup and watched him cross to the big water cooler filled with punch.

He stuck each cup under the spout, freshening up both drinks.

He came back and handed me one.

“Skyler?”

“Yeah?” He sat and took a sip.

“I love having you here.”

“Me too.”

“Not just here. I love having you in my life.”

He quirked his eyebrow up.

I had his attention.

“I love being in your life, Crow.”

I pursed my lips.

I had more to say but it was all jumbled up in my chest.

He waited me out.

I took a long, deep breath.

“I want you in my life. Forever.” I got up and knelt in front of him.

I pulled the box out of my pocket and handed it up to him.

“I want everything with you. Skyler Liam Baldwin, will you marry me?”

“What the fuck!”

Had I fucked up again?

“No, no, no. Don’t do that with your face.” He sank down to his knees in front of me and grabbed my cheeks.

“You surprised me. I love you, Crow. I’m not going anywhere.” He looked back and forth between my eyes.

“Oh yes, Daddy Crow. I’ll most certainly marry you.”

“I think my heart exploded.” I held my chest with one hand.

Skyler tugged the box out of my other hand and opened it.

“It’s beautiful.”

“Not traditional.”

He rolled his eyes.

“Neither am I.” He flung his hand and the ring back to me.

“Put it on.”

I slid the white gold band on his finger.

It was encrusted with diamonds and peridots.

“It matches your eyes. I had it made especially for you. It is one of a kind. Just like you.”

He jumped forward, landing in my arms.

I would always catch him.

We hugged hard and then he pulled back and cupped my cheek before kissing me softly.

“I love you.”

“I love you, too. Skyler.” We stood together, still embracing.

“This is the happiest day of my life so far.”

“Mine too.”

“Now, about those pictures you want...”

Thanks for reading Only One Tent .

I hope you fell in love with Skyler and Crow.