



The Year of Us: June

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Category: Romance

Description: Cory Callahan and Reese Rollins are total opposites.

Cory wears a Rolex and makes six figures a year.

Reese is a bartender with a busted screen on his cellphone.

Cory lives in New York.

Reese lives in LA.

One delayed flight and a chance meeting at a bar later, the two strangers find they have one indisputable thing in common...

The attraction between them is incendiary.

But after a shared night at an airport hotel they learn there's one other trait they share.

They're both dominant and not interested in being told no.

The Year of Us is a twelve novelette series from Kate Hawthorne and EM Denning, exploring what happens when two men with nothing in common find out there might be something between them after all.

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Cory

It all came about by accident, really. The project I'd been working on in LA had moved into the next phase of development and they wanted me available for a more hands-on approach.

Rather than fly back to New York in between, I decided to rent an apartment in Los Angeles and work from there for the time being.

I was used to working away from my actual assistant so it was no big deal for me to switch my current home base to a different city. The idea of being in closer proximity to Reese had made the most recent flight across the country nearly unbearable.

Reese knew I was coming. He didn't know that three weeks out of the next four, I'd be here, just a few blocks from his apartment.

It put me a bit out of the way when it came to getting to the site, but the offices weren't that bad of a commute, even with traffic, and the idea of being so close to Reese was too good to pass up.

The apartment I found was on the top floor and had rooftop access.

It wasn't as roomy as my place in New York, but it was more than enough space for Reese and me.

There was a bedroom that had a small desk in front of the window.

To my chagrin, it was decorated with millennial gray floors and white walls. White cupboards. White everything.

Oh, well. The assault to my eyeballs was a small price to pay.

Reese wasn't expecting me to arrive until the next day, a little fib on my part so I could surprise him.

Our schedules were still a bit opposite.

Me working during the day, during the week.

And Reese working nights on the weekends.

But we'd made it work before, and now we'd have weeknights all to ourselves.

I didn't bother unpacking except for a change of clothes and my toiletries so I could shower the airplane smell off my skin.

I contemplated showing up at the bar, but I'd never surprised a boyfriend before, and I wanted to make sure I got it right.

I decided to lure him here instead. Thankfully, the apartment came fully furnished and I'd paid an extra fee to have them come by and put new linens on the bed and in the bathroom.

The first thing I'd done after sending the deposit for the apartment was to use the internet and explore my soon-to-be neighborhood. I had two very important stops to make before I saw Reese.

The whole time we'd been apart, I wondered if I was doing too much. Would he think

I was moving too fast, or smothering him, or going overboard?

In the end, I decided to trust my instincts, and him, and after my two important stops, I knocked on his front door. After a few seconds, it opened and Reese stood there, looking sexy as fuck in his tight, ripped jeans, his tight shirt, and a smirk. A bit of a sassy attitude never hurt either.

“What’s this?” Reese asked as he drew near, but stopped when I produced a bouquet of flowers from behind my back.

“Flowers?” It came out like a question, but then his puzzled expression turned into a bright smile when I revealed my other gift. “And whiskey.”

“And a boyfriend who’s here a day early.”

He leaned in, angling for a kiss, but I knew if we got started here, we’d never make it to the big surprise.

“Get those in water and put the whiskey away. There’s one more surprise.”

Reese did what he was told, his cheeks flushed with a pretty pink hue that made me feel like a million fucking dollars.

“No one’s ever bought me flowers before,” he said, adjusting the way they sat in the glass he’d used as a vase.

“Good. I like the idea of being the best boyfriend you’ve ever had.”

Reese didn’t seem to know what to say to that, but he smiled at me in a way that made me believe I was.

“Where’s this other surprise?” he asked, scooping his keys up off the counter and tucking them into his pocket.”

“It’s not far,” I told him, linking our hands together.

I’d never imagined what it would be like to walk around with a boyfriend. With a man on my arm out in the daylight. I’ll admit that the first half a block unnerved me, but when I realized that no one seemed to notice, it made it easy to relax.

Reese didn’t comment until we were off the street, up the elevator, and I was unlocking the front door of my apartment.

“Cory,” he breathed, sounding uncharacteristically nervous. “Where are we?”

“Right, sorry.” I laughed and then tugged him out of the hallway and into the apartment.

There was a small closet to the right and a galley kitchen to the left.

“This is my home base for the next few weeks. The LA project has shifted into the next phase, and they want me on site. I could’ve stayed in a hotel, but I wanted somewhere that felt a little more private. ”

“You—” Reese looked at me like he didn’t understand everything I’d just said. And then he looked around at the apartment, and then back at me. “For how long?”

“I have another consult in Denver in a few weeks that I’ll have to fly out for. But I’m here for the next three weeks.”

Reese grabbed me and spun me. He pressed my back against the wall and devoured me. His kiss was deep and rich, and his hands cradled my face momentarily before

sliding down my body until they came to rest on my hips.

I wasn't as reserved. I'd been starving for his touch.

His taste. The feel of his asscheeks. I reached around and gripped his ass in both hands.

Pulling him against me, I let myself enjoy the friction of his body against mine.

Truthfully, I could've been happy with a frot next to my front door.

But something in the atmosphere shifted and I found my hands roaming upward.

Up the expanse of his back and then into his hair.

"Reese." I kissed his lips. The corner of his mouth. His cheek. His jaw. I tilted his face down and let my lips ghost against his ear. "Reese. My good boy. My best boy. Will you kneel for me?"

I kissed him again, hope soft on my lips and waited for his answer.

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Reese

“So needy,” I murmured, smiling against Cory’s mouth. He groaned, cock pressing into my thigh. “You show up a day early and spoil me with whiskey and flowers I don’t even get to appreciate, then you take me to some bougie apartment and tell me to get on my knees?”

I’d already boxed him in against the wall, and I shoved my leg between his, using my knee to spread his legs, the top of my thigh to press against his cock.

“I asked very nicely,” he protested, digging his fingers into my hips. “Besides, you like when I call you a good boy.”

“Do it again, then,” I whispered, kissing my way down his neck toward his collarbone.

“You’re a good boy, Reese,” he murmured, and I palmed his erection with my hand. “You’re the very best boy.”

I hummed, rucking up his shirt so I could get my fingers onto his skin.

It had only been a month. It was always only a month, but as our relationship had turned into something more than sex, the need I felt for his company during our time apart had also escalated into something that was getting very hard to manage on my own.

“Do I really have you for three weeks?” I asked, putting enough space between us so

I could get his shirt over his head and onto the floor. My hands went to his belt next, knowing that he could beg me as much or little as he wanted. I would still end up on my knees for him.

“Three weeks,” he promised.

“Tell me I’m a good boy again.” I undid his belt, pulled down his fly, and took his pants down to the middle of his thighs.

“You’re a good boy,” he panted, and I sank down to my knees on the hard tile floor of his rented apartment.

Cory’s cock smelled like expensive soap, and I realized he’d been in town long enough to freshen up before coming to see me. His early arrival hadn’t just been a surprise. It was also pre-meditated. Dragging my cheek over the length of his cock, I smiled, feeling more special than I had any right.

“On my knees like this?” I asked, looking up at him and opening my mouth. His cock slipped past my lips and landed hot and wet against my tongue. I sealed my mouth around him and sucked hard, taking down as much of his shaft as I could manage without choking myself in a decidedly not-sexy way.

“Just like that.” He tangled his fingers into my hair and dropped his head back against the wall with a moan. “Just like that, Reese. There’s my good boy and his perfect fucking mouth.”

There was no lie between us about the fact I did like when he called me a good boy, but it also went deeper than that.

I didn’t only like hearing it, I liked being it, and I knew enough from my years as a dominant that there wasn’t anything wrong with finding pleasure in submission and

service.

It simply wasn't something I'd ever planned for myself.

With Cory, though, there was no other way, and I was finally starting to be okay with that.

"Would you put your hands behind your back for me?" Cory asked, his chin against his chest down, fingers still threaded through my hair. "I know it's a lot."

It wasn't a lot.

But it was new.

With a mouthful of his cock, I slowly lowered my hands from his thighs, letting them hang loose at my side for a breath before reaching behind my back and twisting my fingers together.

The sound that left Cory's mouth at my compliance was absolutely feral, and his cock pulsed so hard it smacked into the roof of my mouth.

"You're a vision," he moaned, pulling back enough to slide all the way past my lips, a chain of spit connecting us together as he gave me back my mouth. "What are your limits?"

I didn't even know anymore.

"None right now," I said, "but if you don't come in my mouth, I'm leaving."

Cory cursed under his breath and thrust himself back into my mouth, hard and deep enough to get me right to the not-sexy kind of choking I'd been trying to avoid.

I gagged around his length, which only spurred him on.

With my hands behind my back—of my own accord—the only brake on this blow job was Cory’s own willpower, which seemed to grow thinner with every inch he fucked past my lips.

Tears streamed freely from the corners of my eyes, and the sounds that echoed through the open floorplan apartment would have made a porn star blush. The whole time, Cory murmured words of affirmation and praise, his voice a complete contrast to the punishing way he fucked my throat.

I was covered in tears and spit and precum, and I’d never been more turned on.

Every experience with Cory was a new one, whether I was on my knees, or he was on his, and I didn’t ever know what to expect.

I hadn’t planned on becoming a submissive—or rather, a switch—but I hadn’t planned on developing feelings for Cory Callahan either.

“I’m so close,” he rasped.

He grunted. He fucked into the back of my throat, and then he went still.

Cory’s cock thickened and pulsed, shooting a burst of cum right onto my tongue and another that slid straight down into my throat.

He cupped one hand under my chin, the other cradling my cheek, and there was nowhere for me to be except in that moment with him, with his dick and his cum and his blown pupils and his strong fingers... the only thing that mattered.

I swallowed every drop he gave me, sinking down onto my heels when he finally

released my face and pulled out of my mouth.

He leaned against the wall, then slumped to the floor, spreading his legs so one was on either side of me.

Cory scrubbed a hand down his face then gave me the kind of smirk that had caught my attention the night I met him at the bar.

“Well,” he said with a shaky breath. “That was quite the housewarming gift.”

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Cory

Reese had been monumentally perfect. Somewhere between January and now, he'd gotten comfortable with the idea that he could like something different. Something he never expected. His open-minded bravery never ceased to amaze me.

"You're incredible." I ghosted a kiss against his lips. "You work tonight?"

He groaned and leaned against me, resting his head on my shoulder. "Don't remind me."

"Have you eaten?"

"I was going to grab a bite before work," he mumbled. "Though now I really don't want to go."

"Yes, but I'm here for the next three weeks and you get to decide where you want me. Because I can give you a key and you can let yourself in and wake me up, or I can stay over at your place tonight. They're not expecting me until late morning, so I have time."

A warm, wet mouth worked its way down my throat. He slid his hands up my shirt and I relished the way his fingers bit into my flesh.

"Can I mark you?" Reese asked. He lifted his head and caught my gaze. "I'll make sure to leave it where it won't show."

His lips still looked puffy from the epic blow job he'd given me, and it wasn't lost on me that he still needed to come. We were still sitting on the floor in my entryway, hardly an ideal place for us to continue our reunion.

"Let me show you the rest of the apartment first." With a groan, I got to my feet and tucked my dick away, then extended a hand to Reese to help him up. "Why is it so hard to get off the floor? I swear it used to be easier."

"It's because you're old."

"Hush. That's not a safe subject." I grinned at him, loving how natural it felt to be with him. Reese was easy to talk to. Easy to be with, in every sense of the word.

Once he was on his feet, I gave him the rest of the tour. It wasn't much of one. I showed him the living room and pointed at the bathroom, then pulled him into the bedroom.

"It's not much, but it will be more private than a hotel room."

"No room service here, though." Reese wrapped his arms around me from behind and pressed a kiss against my neck.

"Is that a dealbreaker?"

"Nah. We can get delivery. It's almost the same thing." He pressed closer, grinding his still hard cock against my ass. "I missed you."

I'd missed him too. Every day. Every second I was away.

I'd spent the past month rolling the word boyfriend around in my head and digesting that information.

I'd been single for so long that the idea of not being single felt like it should bother me more than it did.

But I'd watched my friends couple up. I'd come back to New York from a work trip and find that another one of them had paired off.

And they were sickeningly happy. Disgustingly domestic.

And it wasn't that I was jealous of them, but it woke me up to the fact that I wanted someone to come home to.

"Do I get to meet your friend?" I asked, earning me a soft laugh from Reese.

"As if I'll be able to keep her away from you now that you're going to be in the city for longer than a weekend."

"Is that a yes?"

"That's a yes." Reese kissed me below my ear, sending a shiver up my spine. "I'll talk to her soon and set something up."

"I'd like that."

He grabbed my hips and ground his dick against my ass. "And I'd like this."

He nipped below my ear and I turned my head to meet him in an imperfect kiss. Turning in his embrace, I wrapped an arm around his neck, then slid my other hand down between us and cupped his dick through his pants.

"Someone's needy."

Reese scoffed. “Someone else got to come already.”

“What if I asked you to wait? What if I wanted to go back to your place, feed you dinner, and then wait for you in your bed? What if I wanted you to come home from work and see how much of your dick you could get in me before I woke up?”

“That’s a lot of what-ifs.” Reese’s eyes narrowed, but he licked his lips, clearly interested in my proposition.

“You don’t have to say yes.”

“And if I say no?”

“Then you say no, and we find another way to get you off. No harm. No foul.”

Reese groaned like he was in pain, and he crushed his lips against mine. Sliding his tongue into my mouth, he clung to me and mapped my body with his hands before suddenly breaking the kiss.

“Fuck. Work is going to fucking suck. I’m so goddamned hard.”

I smiled up at him and brushed a kiss against his mouth. The tip of his nose. His cheek. “What’s good to eat around here?” I asked, changing the subject.

Reese heaved a sigh and accepted the fact that he’d be without an orgasm until after his shift.

“There’s a place on the way back to mine; we can grab something from there. I get food from there all the time.”

“You want me to stay over?”

His eyes crinkled at the corners when he smiled. “I want to stumble in from work and fuck you through the mattress without trying to remember where the hell I’m going.”

“Let me grab a toothbrush.”

Color tinted Reese’s cheeks. “I already have one for you,” he admitted.

Reaching up, I cradled his cheek in my hand. My heart was melted butter when it came to Reese. “What am I going to do with you?”

“A lot of things, I hope.”

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Reese

Getting Cory situated at my apartment and then leaving him behind was agony. I wanted to stay, watch him make himself at home in my space. I'd told him to do it, and I wondered what he would get up to by himself while I was busy at work. I didn't have anything to hide.

I'd watched him unwrap a clean toothbrush and drop it into the holder mounted to the wall, and I'd definitely watched the way he smiled at me as the plastic rang out against porcelain.

Excitement laced with fear bloomed in the middle of my chest, and the way he danced his fingertips across my hip and my stomach on his way back into the living area didn't go unnoticed.

His shoes were by the front door, his bag on the floor by my bed. While I got ready to go, he sat on the edge of my bed and scooted back until his shoulders hit the wall, then he crossed his legs at the ankles and smiled at me like I was getting ready to hang the moon.

It was that smile that got me through my entire shirt, his words from earlier in the day about the things he'd wanted me to do to him that spurred me through the end of night prep in record time.

I made sure to be quiet as I could when I got home, and I found Cory sprawled face first on my bed, his bare ass in the air and his arm wrapped possessively around my pillow.

His phone was propped up against the bottle of lube I kept on the nightstand, a movie playing the end credits.

What if I wanted you to come home from work and see how much of your dick you could get in me before I woke up?

We'd talked about it, and I'd told him what I wanted, and he'd stripped out of his clothes in my absence, fallen asleep, spread for the taking.

I'd been teetering on the edge all night, my arousal alternating between something that felt like pleasure and something that felt like pain.

The switch into submission had already scrambled my brain enough that trying to make sense of the other was one step too far for me.

Quietly, I stripped out of my work clothes, not bothering with a shower.

I'd need one after, but it would wait until the morning.

I settled one knee on the bed, then the other.

Cory didn't so much as change his breathing.

I knee-walked toward him, turned off his phone, then squirted enough lube into my hand to slick my cock for entry.

I didn't think I'd even get the tip inside without waking him up, but I was happy to try.

Situating myself between his legs, I gently spread his cheeks apart, revealing a smear of wetness that leaked out of his asshole.

Arousal pulsed like a violent wave through my whole body as I faced the proof he'd gotten himself ready for me while I worked.

Cory had gotten himself naked, climbed into my bed, and fucked himself with his hand while I was making drinks for a bridal party from Orange County.

I notched the head of my cock against his already slick hole and pushed the tip inside. Cory grunted, burying his face into the pillow, but for all intents and purposes was still asleep. I shivered, power racing through my veins.

This was hot.

This was so fucking hot.

Slowly, I fed another inch into him, then another, and another until I'd reached the thickest part of my shaft.

Going slow was torture, but Cory still snored softly beneath me, his hair soft and loose across his forehead.

I was deep enough inside of him I could fold my body over top of his, bracing one hand beside his head and the other near his waist.

I sank myself into his body until I was fully seated, groaning under my breath at how wet he was.

God, what had he done to himself on my sheets to get his body this fucking ready for me.

I was desperate to shove my hand between his stomach and the bed to see if I'd find remnants of an orgasm drying against his skin.

My cock throbbed, already threatening to burst, and it was that expansion that finally got a reaction out of my sleeping boyfriend.

Beneath me, Cory lifted his hips off the bed and grumbled something under his breath I couldn't quite hear.

His lashes fluttered, but his eyes didn't open, and he moaned my name with more need than I'd ever heard from him when he was awake.

Was this what he meant when he told me he 'dreamed about me?

When he told me how often he thought about me fucking him?

I shoved his legs farther apart, not caring anymore if it woke him up or not.

I was minutes away from coming and I wanted him conscious for it.

Pulling out until I was fully free of his body, I slammed back into him with enough force to knock the air out of both our lungs.

His eyes flew open, then rolled back as I set an immediate and punishing pace.

He'd wanted me to see how much of my cock I could get into him without waking him up, and the answer was all of it.

I'd wanted to come home from work and fuck him so hard into the mattress than nothing else in my life mattered.

Heat built low and hot between my legs, and Cory reached back, grabbing my hip and digging his nails into my waist. He didn't try to stop me, the sharp bite of his fingers only driving me deeper.

The bed slammed against the wall, and neither of us managed any sort of breath beyond a desperate and forced exhale between thrusts.

Nothing else mattered.

Nothing mattered more than him.

Than us.

Than this .

Cory whimpered, chin quivering as all his muscles tensed and locked, and I knew if he hadn't come on my sheets earlier, he just had.

I slammed against him two more times before my own orgasm pulled over me like a blanket, taking us both under from the swell of it.

I shot a violent spray of cum into Cory's body, collapsing on top of him as I lost control of my limbs.

My vision whited, stars blinking to life behind my eyelids. The only thing I knew was Cory was here for three weeks, he was mine, and...

My mouth opened on its own accord, dropping wet and sloppy kisses against the side of his neck, his ear, his jaw, while the aftershocks of my orgasm settled in my bones.

"I love you," I whispered, because in that moment, it was the only thing I knew to say.

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Cory

Truth be told, I slept better in Reese's bed than I had anywhere else and when he arrived home, I was dead to the world.

I'd worked myself until I was loose and empty.

Waiting for him in his apartment had been a special kind of torture.

To be surrounded by his scent, his things, but be absent from his company?

It was agony. But the payoff was exquisite.

Reese had thoroughly fucked me, pounding me with the force of a desperate man, and after, he lay boneless on top of me. The moment held its breath as he ghosted kisses across my shoulders. And then I heard him whisper.

"I love you."

He stiffened, a subtle difference in the way his weight sat on me.

"I mean, I loved coming home to you." The way he backpedaled wasn't unexpected. Reese had been hesitant. Cautious. Guarded. But it still was a blow to my chest for him to give me that gift and then try to take it from me.

Squirming under him, I managed to roll over onto my back. Reese tried to get out of bed, but I wrapped my body around his and tugged him down on top of me.

“Reese, settle.” I always meant the words I said, even when I softened the level of dominance I used, as I’d been known to do where Reese was concerned.

But this was a hard line for me, and I needed him to know I meant business, so I used a little more force behind my words than I usually did. Reese stilled immediately.

“I didn’t mean it.” His voice was strangled, like he was choking on his own tumultuous emotions.

“I got caught up in the moment,” he tried, without meeting my eyes. That wouldn’t do.

With my heart twisting in my chest like Reese had reached in and grabbed it in his fist and pulled, I made myself stay calm. “I have a new limit, Reese.”

Immediately his gaze snapped to mine. The sadness in his eyes was mixed with wariness, maybe a hint of fear. We were in uncharted territory. Carding my fingers through his hair, I tightened my grip until I was sure I had his full attention.

“Never, ever lie to me.” Still keeping my hold on him, I brought his mouth down to mine and demanded entry with a bruising kiss.

It started out rough, an assertion of my dominance.

A tangible reaction to prove that I meant what I said.

And when he softened and let me take over the kiss, when he let me lead, I rewarded him by relaxing my grip.

I let my kiss become more gentle and when I pulled away, I waited until he opened his eyes before I released the smile that I’d been holding back from that first moment

of hesitation.

“I love you too.”

Reese huffed and buried his face in the curve of my neck. I allowed it, for now.

“I’ll never lie to you, Reese. Not about this. Not about anything.”

He made a sound that might have been him saying thank you.

“And I expect the same from you. No lying.”

“I didn’t mean to say it.” Reese relaxed on top of me, like he was too tired to keep fighting.

“Not meaning to say it doesn’t make it untrue, does it?”

Reese was quiet for some minutes. I didn’t expect him to answer right away, and I started to worry that maybe he hadn’t meant it.

Maybe I’d gotten in over my head again. Maybe I’d, once again, fallen too hard for someone who didn’t feel the same.

My heart wasn’t the fragile thing it was break-up years ago, but after being alone for so long, finding Reese felt like coming face to face with a miracle.

“Well, considering lying is a limit... no. It’s not untrue. I mean it. I just didn’t mean to say it.”

I’d heard Reese in many states before. Aroused. Annoyed. Sated. I’d never heard him petulant before. My heart gave a happy flutter at the idea that he was comfortable

enough to let himself be petulant. Vulnerable.

“Are you pouting?” I carded my fingers through his hair again. “I must say, it’s rather cute.”

Reese snapped his head up and glared at me. “I’m not pouting. And it’s not cute.”

Raising my head, I stole a quick kiss before collapsing back down onto the pillow. “You are and it is, but if it’s not something you’re ready to say, I don’t expect to hear it. Okay?”

Reese let out a sigh. “Okay.”

“Now, about that wake-up call.”

He made a sound low in his throat. “Liked that, did you?”

“You were exquisite.”

Reese made another pleased sound, and I gave into the temptation to kiss his forehead. “My good boy.”

“What’s your schedule like while you’re here?” he asked a few minutes later. He sounded like he was close to sleep.

“They’re not expecting me until lunchtime tomorrow, but after that it’s pretty basic office hours. I’ll be back in time for dinner if you want to see me before you go to work.”

“I always want to see you.” He snuggled closer.

“Because you love me?” Yes, I was fishing. Sue me.

Reese let out a sigh. “Yes, Cory. Because I love you.”

“I love you too. Now get some sleep.”

Reese, worn out from work, and from topping me, fell asleep almost right away. I wasn't so fortunate, but I did get a chance to lie there and think about everything that had happened in the past hour.

At the beginning of the year, I never imagined that I'd be here, in LA, in the bed of a man I'd fallen hopelessly in love with.

There was still a chance that things might not work between us.

I had to go and fall for a man who'd only ever been dominant.

A man whose life was across the country from mine.

If things were going to work, concessions would have to be made sooner or later.

Rubbing my eyes, I let out a sigh and willed sleep to take me.

Reese loved me. I loved Reese. I was in LA for the next three weeks. For now, that was more than enough.

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Reese

Having Cory available to me for more than thirty-six hours was the gift that kept on giving.

He did a pretty good job of splitting his time between his rented apartment and mine, favoring mine on the nights that I worked so he could be in bed waiting for me when I stumbled through the door at the end of a shift.

The ready access had initially started with more orgasms than my body knew how to handle, but we'd quickly settled into a rhythm that gave us both a break. It also gave me the chance to be his boyfriend for the first time. Something I wasn't quite used to, but far from ready to give up.

That was how I found myself with a brown bag in hand, standing in front of an office building in downtown LA just shy of noon on a Tuesday, because Cory had left early for work and I'd woken up with my face buried in a pillow that still smelled too much like laundry detergent and not enough like him.

We'd stayed at his rental the night before because, even though he clearly favored my place, he was hesitant to bring more than a change or two of clothes and sometimes his laptop over.

I realized, after he'd left and I'd gotten in and out of the shower, that we'd been dancing around each other for half a year, and I still had no idea what kind of sandwiches he liked.

We'd talked about a lot of things, especially the past couple months when things had started to get serious between us, but the distance was a hindrance that put restrictions on us that I hadn't recognized.

In the end, I'd settled on getting one ham and Swiss and one roast beef and cheddar.

I liked either, but I'd let him have first pick.

It wasn't flowers and whiskey, but hopefully the sentiment would feel the same.

At least, that's what I told myself as I rode the elevator up to the twelfth floor and greeted the receptionist at the front desk of the firm Cory had contracted with.

She was sweet enough—Morgan would like her—then she pointed me toward an office in the corner and sent me on my way.

Another thing I learned was that even though I knew, in a figurative sense, that Cory was rich, and important, I didn't really understand the scope of it.

Sure, he had his expensive watch and his condo in New York, but to be on site for less than a month and have managed to commandeer a corner office?

I rapped my knuckles against the half-closed door, pushing it open enough to stick my head inside.

Cory looked up from his laptop, expression tight, but as soon as he saw me, it was like every string of tension in his body unknotted itself and fell to the floor.

He closed the lid of his computer and stood up, curling the fingers on his right hand to beckon me closer.

I lifted the bag in greeting and stepped into the office. “I hope it’s okay I brought lunch.”

“More than okay.”

He came around the corner of the desk and took the bag out of my hands and tossed it onto the desk, then he grabbed my face and slanted our mouths together using his tongue to spell out my favorite kind of hello.

“The door is open,” I murmured, not knowing if I really cared or not.

“Should I close it?”

I swallowed hard, nipping at his bottom lip. “I didn’t come for that.”

“You come for me,” he whispered, walking us both backward until he reached the door and pushed it shut. “Every time.”

God, it was impossible to tell him no.

“Ham or roast beef,” I muttered, using my hips to push him back toward the desk. “If you don’t eat, you won’t have energy to fuck me later.”

“Oh, am I topping tonight?” He smiled against my mouth and took a step back. He pulled out both of the chairs on the guest side of his desk and we sat down, knees close enough to touch.

“If you want,” I said simply.

If I had a preference before him, I couldn’t remember it anymore.

“And ham,” he said, passing me the bag. “Thank you.”

I reached in and pulled out both sandwiches, passing him the one he’d asked for. I’d also gotten us water and chips, and he picked the plain bag of potato chips over the barbeque flavor, which I did make a mental note about.

“This is a nice surprise,” he said after his first bite. “And the sandwich is too.”

“It felt...like a boyfriend kind of thing to do.”

Cory smiled. “It does.”

“You looked a little pressed when I got here,” I said a few bites later. “Is everything okay?”

“Just dealing with contractors. Nothing that won’t pass.”

“Are they difficult?”

“When they want to be.” Another sly smile. “Just like you.”

I snorted, finishing the last couple bites of my sandwich. I crumpled the wrapper and tossed it into the paper bag, then leaned back and stretched my legs out, kicking my sneakers against the impeccable shine of his dress shoes.

“Don’t scuff me up,” he warned.

“Or what?” I teased, kicking him again.

Cory moved slowly, deliberately, setting his almost finished sandwich and chips on the desk before leaning forward and fisting my hair in an unforgiving grasp. He

pulled me out of my seat and onto my knees, then shoved my head down until my mouth grazed the hem of his navy wool slacks.

“Or you can clean them,” he said softly, the hand in my hair loosening enough to let me up if I wanted or to keep me there if I didn’t.

Much to my dismay, my cock throbbed against my thigh, and I groaned, letting him guide me the rest of the way down until my lips brushed across the toe of his shoe.

Precum pulsed out of my cock, wetting my briefs, and when I relaxed enough to let my lips pucker, to dust a kiss across the polished leather, I was already on the brink of coming.

“Just a kiss or two, Reese,” Cory suggested, tone laced with that unforgiving edge of dominance that had always been impossible to ignore. “But make sure you use your tongue. I want them shiny and new when you’re finished.”

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Cory

Los Angeles agreed with me. Or maybe it was the close proximity to Reese that agreed with me.

But I slept like a fucking king in his bed or mine.

And not having to rush back to New York or some other location was definitely something I could get used to.

Especially if Reese made it a habit to stop by and have lunch with me.

I hadn't anticipated his arrival or the flash of brat that appeared when he scuffed my shoes with his sneakers but putting him on his knees had felt right.

Warmth bloomed in my chest when I watched the way he folded for me.

The way he brushed his lips against the top of my shoes.

A little hesitant. A little reverent. A little unwilling to admit how much he liked it.

Then his tongue poked out and he swiped it over the top of my shoe, leaving a trail of shiny saliva behind.

"You look good down there." Good seemed like such a weak word to describe the way Reese looked kneeling at my feet, worshipping me. But he liked to hear the word good in relation to himself. It wasn't lost on me the effect calling him a good boy had

on him. It was his Achilles' heel.

"That's a good boy," I said, proving my point when he choked off a whimper. "Get them nice and clean for me."

After he made another pass with his tongue, I pulled him up by the hair and yanked him forward, pressing his face against the bulge in my pants while I slid my freshly shined shoe between his legs. Lifting my toes, I nudged him, smiling when he whimpered as my shoe made contact with his bulge.

"Did you need something, Reese? Didn't I leave you satisfied this morning? Or are you a needy little slut?"

When he nuzzled my bulge, a hungry sound rumbling out of him, I lifted my foot again, pressing a little harder this time.

"Did you need to come? Use your words, Reese."

"I need to come," he whispered, clearly desperate, if the husky quality of his voice was any indication.

"I have to prep for a meeting, but if you can make yourself come in the next five minutes, I'll allow it. If not, you'll have to wait until tonight after work." I dragged Reese's face up and looked into his eyes. "But you can't touch yourself."

Confusion fluttered through his expression. "Then... how?"

I straightened my leg a little more, making contact with his erection. "You know how."

Understanding lit up his features and he shuffled forward. "Five minutes?"

“Four and a half now.” I put my other hand down, pointing my wrist toward him so he could see my watch. “You can keep time, Reese. Better hurry.”

His hips started to rock, and I pulled my foot away. “Not so fast. Be a good boy and get my dick out.”

Reese fumbled with my fly and untucked my shirt.

I grabbed my tie and threw it over my shoulder to keep it out of his way.

The moment he had my cock out, he devoured it, sliding it into the heat of his mouth.

His hips jolted and I felt him grind his dick against my leg.

The position was imperfect, but watching him struggle to get himself off while humping my leg and sucking my dick made it worth it.

And then there was the way his gaze kept darting to the Rolex on my wrist to check the time.

At the two-minute mark, he found a frantic sort of rhythm that worked well for him.

And for me. At the three-minute mark, I half expected Reese to come.

It wasn't until he grabbed onto the arms of the chair for leverage that he really got going.

I could feel the heat of him, the rigidity of his cock as he ground it against my leg.

I was close to coming, but I didn't want to yet.

I wanted to let it build and build. I wanted to work myself into a frenzy now and let it simmer on low all day and all night until I was free to unleash it on him with no one else around.

“Thirty seconds, Reese,” I warned, wondering if he was going to make it or not.

Then his hips stuttered, and he used my cock to muffle the sounds he made as he came, hot and sticky in his pants.

I almost felt bad for making a mess of him, but when he was done coming, I tapped his cheek. “Time’s up.”

He looked confused when I tucked my dick back in my pants. “But you...”

“Didn’t come? No, I didn’t. Not because you weren’t wonderful.

” Leaning down, I tilted Reese’s head up so I could brush a kiss against his lips.

“Tonight, when I get home, I’m going to get you nice and loose, and I’m going to send you to work with a plug in.

Then when you get home, I’m going to fuck you until you pass out.

Then I’m going to plug your ass and do it all over again in the morning. ”

“Jesus.” Reese exhaled.

“Are you safe-wording?” I asked, unsure if that was far too much for him. But then he smiled up at me, looking sated and pleased, and maybe a little excited.

“Hell, no.”

“You’ll still be a good boy if you safe-word,” I reassured him, brushing my thumbs over his cheekbones before combing my fingers through his hair to try and tame it again after I’d messed it up.

Reese scoffed. “I know that. You act like I’ve never had a plug in my ass. You should know better than anyone that doms can take things in the ass, Cory.” He moved and winced. Glancing down at his pants, he made a face.

“There’s a bathroom.” I pointed to the door that led to my private bathroom. One of the perks of being in demand was a nice corner office with all the luxuries. “You can clean up before you leave.”

Reese rose to his feet, pausing to kiss me quickly before he slipped into the bathroom.

I could definitely get used to being in LA.

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Reese

I was unashamedly naked when Cory got home.

Flat on my back with my legs bent at the knees and my fingers twisted nervously in the sheets.

He commanded my space the way he commanded any space, stalking into my apartment like the predator he was.

He dropped his laptop bag on the floor and toed off his shoes at the same time he worked loose the knot on his tie.

He pulled his belt halfway off before stopping himself, and then he was on the bed, between my legs with his face buried between my asscheeks.

“Hello to you too,” I managed to tease, arching off the bed as he made short work of spearing his tongue straight into my ass.

He groaned in reply, fingers digging into my thighs so he could spread my legs wider.

He was still dressed, tie loose around his neck, top two buttons of his shirt undone.

His pants on, belt and fly open and I wished so desperately for his cock.

If he’d left me hard and wanting all day the way he’d done to himself, I would have been on the brink of an explosion.

“God, I’ve missed you,” he said, most likely to my ass and not to me.

He pulled back enough to lick me from my taint to my balls with long and hot strokes of his tongue that had me shivering.

I reached for his hair, not above pulling him up to my mouth so I could get our bodies better aligned.

But as soon as I got my hand into his hair, he curled his fingers around my wrist and made a very pleased sound.

“I knew you’d do that,” he whispered, shifting to kiss the inside of my wrist. He moved so he was kneeling between my legs, eyes dancing with some new and uncharted kind of playful danger.

Cory’s tongue darted out, licking across his lower lip that was already wet with more than enough spit to get me ready for him.

“I didn’t say you could touch me, Reese. Did I?”

The question was slow and tentative, and I knew it was asking much more than it appeared on the surface.

It was the ask for a scene that we hadn’t fully negotiated.

Not that he wanted to go into it without negotiating, Cory would never.

But normally we talked things through far enough in advance that I knew what kind of games would be expected or played. This was...

This was new.

I propped myself up onto my elbows and gazed down at him, my cock between us, still hard and leaking, not scared in the slightest about what he was asking of me.

“No,” I rasped. “You didn’t.”

Cory pulled his tie free from his shirt and gestured at my arms, his stare steady on my face the whole time. My heart rate spiked, but I brought my hands together in front of me as he—very loosely—wrapped his tie around my wrists.

“Is that too tight?” he asked.

I shook my head.

“Is that too tight, Reese?” he repeated.

My chin quivered, but I forced the word out, “No.”

A small smile settled on his lips. “One day.”

He traced his fingers over the places where the silk encircled my wrists, his skin a shocking warmth next to the coolness of the tie.

“We don’t touch without asking, Reese,” he said. “Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I croaked, fingers already itching to touch him again, but my cock positively throbbed with want at our new predicament.

“I’m going to spank you, Reese,” he said gently. “A punishment.”

“I didn’t know.”

“It’s not a punishment for you.” Cory tugged my wrists and pulled me over his lap. He was sitting on the edge of my bed by the time he got me where he wanted me, naked with my ass up again for him, my bound hands on the other side of his body.

“Are you sure?”

He pulled his belt off—and dropped it onto the floor.

“I’m positive. It can’t be a punishment for you if you like it, Reese. And you very much like being spanked, don’t you?”

He drew circles on my ass with his fingers, and I shivered, letting my forehead fall against the sheets. I didn’t answer and he gave me a soft smack against the back of my thigh, startling me.

“Yes,” I said quickly. “I do like it.”

He hummed his agreement. “I like spanking you too, but I’d much rather have my face buried between your cheeks and my cock shoved up your ass, so this is punishment for me. Punishment for not telling you what I expected before we got started.”

I closed my eyes with a groan.

“Just five then, since it’s my fault.”

“Five,” I agreed.

“Five, and then I’ll shove my cock so deep into you that you’ll see stars.

” Cory petted his hand down the slope of the small of my back, over the globes of my

ass, and down to the backs of my thighs.

“Five and then I’ll keep my promise to plug you up before work and then fuck you until you pass out when you get home. Is that all right, Reese?”

“Yes,” I whispered, my cock leaking a river against Cory’s slacks.

What had this man done to me?

In his office earlier in the afternoon, I’d gotten onto my knees for him and kissed his shoes.

I’d humped his fucking leg and came in my pants like a desperate little teenager, then I’d waited naked for him to get home to fuck me and send me off to work?

When had I become so compliant and so fucking needy?

Cory’s hand landed hard against that very tender spot between my thigh and my ass, and I groaned, fucking my hips against his thigh to search for friction.

“It kills me to know your cock is hard and not in my mouth right now,” he said, sounding as apologetic as a Dom ever would about that kind of thing.

His torment only made me harder.

Another spank, the same spot on the other side.

“I hate that you’re so close to coming and I’m not even inside of you yet,” he said.

I tested the strength of the tie around my wrists, knowing immediately I could pull my hands out if I wanted to, and genuinely shocked to find out that I didn’t want to.

“Stop,” I said, the sound as jarring to my own ears as glass shattering.

Beneath me, Cory’s body tensed, and he lifted his hands off my skin.

“What’s wrong, Reese?”

“Nothing,” I said quickly, angry at myself for the outburst.

For a beat, the only sound was that of our labored breathing, off time until it wasn’t. Even our lungs worked in sync, and I imagined if I could press my hand against his chest, our hearts would have been in sync as well.

“Reese.”

“Nothing,” I said again, sinking down into his lap. “My wrists, though. They’re just...not that tight.”

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Cory

For a few terrifying moments, I thought I'd gone too far. Pushed too hard. Wanted too many things too soon. And then Reese's confession slipped out of him, hesitant, but clear as a bell.

"You want to be restrained properly?" Putting my hands back on his body, I felt the tension bleed out of him like his whole body was sighing with relief. My hands skimmed up his arms, stopping only when I reached the tie on his wrists. "Tighter?"

"Yes." On my lap, Reese was as still as a statue, but when I pulled the tie tighter, locking his wrists together so that he'd have to work harder to get out of the binding fabric, Reese relaxed even more. I was fairly sure that the only rigid thing left of him was his cock.

"Is that better?" I slid my hand down his back, feeling the curve of his spine and the softness of his skin.

"Thank you."

"To reward you for being a good boy and telling me what you need, I'm going to start over and give you those five strikes you have coming."

Reese let out a whimper that went straight to my cock.

God, I'd been hard for him all fucking day.

Even before he'd surprised me at my office, I was thinking about him.

His appearance felt like I'd manifested him through thought alone.

And having him on his knees for me had been exquisite.

The more he gave me, the more I wanted. The more I needed.

Reese as a dom was hot. Controlled. Commanding.

In charge. Competent. But Reese as a submissive was extraordinary.

He was still confident, but in a messy, needy way. He was still controlled, but one day I'd get him to let go of that too. But most of all, like this, it felt like he was mine. Like I was the only person in the universe who could put him over their knee and have him be there willingly.

I rubbed my hand over the globes of his ass, mapping the contours, teasing the crease of his ass with the tips of my fingers before pulling my hand back.

I struck him on the tender spot at the bottom of the ass where it met the thighs.

Reese let out a pained yelp, but his hips bucked forward, and he thrust himself against my legs.

After striking him a second time on the opposite side, I smoothed my hand over his ass again.

“Three more and then I'm going to fuck you.

” Reaching out with my free hand, I grabbed the tie that bound his wrists together and

held it, reminding him they were there, that I was in control. That he'd let me. Begged me.

The next two strikes came down, one right after the other on alternating butt cheeks and for the last one, I released the tie, spread his cheeks and smacked his hole. Reese cried out and jerked against my legs, his hips stuttering as he tried to still his thrusts.

“Cory.”

My name whined out of him and tangled around my heart.

There were times when how much I loved this man scared the living shit out of me.

Times like now, when it felt like my heart was beating outside my body.

But every iota of fear was worth it as I rearranged him, draping him over the edge of the bed with his feet on the floor and his chest pressed into the mattress.

I raked my fingers through his hair, pushing the strands out of his eyes. “I love you, Reese.”

Desperation won out and I practically tore my pants getting my dick out. Reese stayed in place the best he could as he reached for the lube with his still restrained hands and tossed it over to me.

“Thank you, darling,” I said as I took it and squirted an ample amount on my cock.

I drizzled some down his crack for good measure and used the head of my dick to spread it over his hole.

And that was all the warning he got before I breached him.

His breath whooshed out of him as the head of my dick pressed inside him, sliding into the tight squeeze of his hole.

Grabbing his hips, I held him still while I slowly worked my way into him. Inch at a time. Reese would've liked me to expedite the process, given the way he kept trying to thrust back and swallow my cock with his ass, but I kept a tight grip on him and made him behave for me.

Once I was fully seated inside him, I slid out, then back in again. Reese moaned, long and loud as I did it again and again, until eventually I stopped pulling all the way out and just committed to fucking him with long, deep strokes that made his bed squeak and made him moan.

Leaning forward, I wrapped my arms around him and pulled him upright so we were both standing. His knees were bent, allowing me the best angle possible to drive my cock up into him. I pressed my mouth against his shoulder.

"Can I leave marks on you, Reese? Is that a limit?"

He shook his head, then remembered at the last second to use his words. "No. Not a limit. I want it."

I closed my eyes and ghosted a kiss against his skin. "That's my good boy. I'll let you come soon."

Reese made a strangled sound, and his hips levered as he fucked himself on my cock.

"That's right. Ride my dick, baby."

Baby. Darling. He might hate them, and I certainly hadn't planned to say them, but there was a rightness to the endearments that I couldn't ignore.

When I latched my mouth onto his shoulder and wrapped my hand around the base of his cock at the same time, Reese went fucking feral. He rode my cock and fucked my fist at the same time, but he didn't come, not even when he whined and moaned and panted.

I pulled my mouth away and admired my work. The dark splotch I'd left on him made my balls throb and I worked him faster. "Come for me, Reese. Come on my cock."

He was coming before I had all the words out and I wasn't far behind, pumping his cock as he emptied his balls, cum streaming down my fingers as Reese sagged forward, half sobbing with pleasure.

I pinned him to the bed, my hand pressing down on the newly minted hickey I'd left.

The bed protested my every thrust as I slammed into Reese, coming so hard I stopped breathing.

Stopped thinking. And when I was done, I pulled out.

Gently, I traced the rim of his ass with my finger, making sure he wasn't injured before I grabbed the plug off the nightstand and slid it into him.

Reese was face down, half on the bed, half off, his hands still bound, his ass red from my hand and his crease shiny with lube. Sweat made his hair stick to his forehead. He was easily the most beautiful man I'd ever seen.

His eyes fluttered open and he looked at me. "I love you, o," he said.

And he was all mine.

Reese

“I love you,” Cory said to me again after he helped me onto the bed and spread my legs.

“I love you,” he said when he pushed a mid-sized plug into my swollen and fucked asshole.

“I love you,” he said a third time, kissing the place where the flared base of the plug pressed against my skin.

Gooseflesh prickled up and down the length of my body, and Cory laid himself out on top of me to steady me, both of us sweaty and trembling. He brushed my hair back from my face and kissed my forehead, and I’d never felt more treasured or necessary in my entire goddamn life.

“Would it be horrible of me to send you to work smelling like sex?” he asked, rolling off of me and picking loose the knot in the tie around my wrists. The silk fell away and then he kissed me there too.

Slowly, I regained my spatial awareness.

My thoughts widened from being solely about Cory until the other parts of my life and my day filtered back into recognition.

His fingers massaged swirls and stars over my wrist bones, and I’d let him tie me up a hundred times over if he always touched me that tenderly afterward.

“I could probably get away with it,” I answered, voice scratching. I cleared my throat.
“But Morgan won’t let it slide.”

Cory helped me into a seated position, both of our feet flat on the floor. He’d barely gotten out of his slacks. He was still wearing his socks, and I was completely naked.

“Morgan’s coming by?” he asked.

I knocked him with my elbow. “Are you jealous?”

“You know I want to meet her.”

“And I want you to meet her,” I said. “That was actually something I was going to talk to you about when I brought lunch, but you distracted me with your watch and your shoes.”

He huffed an amused laugh. “Oh, is that what happened?”

“Clearly.” I pushed myself to stand and Cory was hot on my heels, walking me to the bathroom like I was an invalid and not a fully whole and able-bodied man. “I’m fine, Cory.”

“I know you are.” He smacked my hand when I tried to protest his help, and I was too weak to fight him more about it. “What is this, Reese?”

“It’s aftercare.”

I leaned against the bathroom counter and waited for him to turn the shower on for me, watched the way he waved his hand beneath the spray to check the temperature of the water before stepping out of the way to let me in.

“I wish your shower was bigger,” he said, pressing a kiss against the bruise he’d bit into my shoulder as I passed.

It was tender, already purpling, and I winced at the touch.

Every muscle in my body went tense, on the defensive, until my hole clamped down around the plug he’d shoved inside of me after keeping up his end of the deal he’d promised me earlier in the day.

I groaned, pulling the shower door closed behind me.

“I know I said I love you, but I think maybe I hate you.”

He sat down on the closed lid of the toilet and smiled up at me, smug and knowing.

“Sure you do.”

“Are you going to sit here the whole time I clean up?” I asked, gingerly reaching for the soap.

“Yes,” he answered simply.

I washed myself as carefully as I could, trying to ignore the way every muscle in my body still trembled and ached from use.

Once I finished, I pushed open the door and stepped right into the towel Cory held out for me.

He wrapped me up and traded places, taking whatever was left of the hot water without any protest.

“So,” he said, tipping his head back to rinse the sweat from his hair. “You were

saying about Morgan?”

“She has been on my ass about meeting you since she knows you’re in town,” I said. “She suggested I bring you to work for a little with me tonight so she could come by and do more than lurk at you from across the bar.”

“Does it make you uncomfortable?”

“What part?”

“Any of it.”

I sniffed, hanging up the towel after getting myself dry.

“No,” I said. “A few months ago, it might have, but you’re my boyfriend now and we love each other, and if you lived here, you would have met her a very long time ago.”

I didn’t need to see Cory’s face through the steamy door to know there was an unspoken question hanging in the air.

“What?”

He chuckled. “I’ll table it for another day.”

“That’s ominous.”

He turned off the water and opened the door, stepping onto the bathmat in all his wet and naked glory. Cory was so fucking gorgeous, and his cock was the best I’d ever had. I wanted to spend half my time on my knees with his dick in my mouth and I wasn’t even his submissive. I?—

Wait.

Was I?

Was I his ?

Was I even submissive ?

“If I asked you to kneel...” I trailed off, not able to finish the thought before he sank down to his knees in front of me.

I cursed under my breath and pulled a dry towel off the back of the door. Holding it open for him like he’d done for me, I clenched my jaw as Cory elegantly lifted back to his feet and walked into my waiting arms.

He kissed the slope of my neck, down the length of my collarbone and then licking the trail of kisses away with one long drag of his tongue.

“I’ll do anything you ask of me, Reese,” he whispered. “Always.”

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Cory

Reese and I shared a kiss in the parking lot before we walked into the bar where he worked.

He left me seated at a stool at his section while he ducked into the back to clock in.

I hadn't 'been here for months, and I discovered that I had a bit of a soft spot for it.

It was, after all, where Reese and I met.

He reappeared a minute or two later and tied an apron around his waist, then shot me a smirk as he reached for their best whiskey. Their best was merely tolerable, but Reese killed some of the flavor with Coke and set it on a napkin for me.

"This one's on the house."

I lifted the glass to my lips and took a sip. "It's perfect, thank you."

"Oh ,God, the foreplay has already started." A woman who had to be none other than Reese's best friend sat down on the stool next to mine.

"It's not foreplay," Reese argued.

"Please. I could see the heart eyes from across the room. Give me my usual." Then she turned and held her hand out to me. "You must be the boyfriend. Reese has told me... not everything about you because he's a horrible best friend. But he's told me

enough.”

“Cory Callahan. Architectural consultant and whiskey snob, at your service.” I took her hand, but instead of shaking it, turned it and dusted a kiss across the back of it.

Reese grinned as Morgan gaped at me like a fish out of water.

She looked at Reese. “Damn. I can see why you’re a mopey asshole when he’s not around.

” Before Reese could protest, she turned back to me.

“I’m Morgan, Reese’s best friend and... shit, I had this whole ‘I know where to hide a body’ speech all rehearsed, but something tells me I don’t need it. ”

“Well, thank you.”

Reese delivered a pink concoction to Morgan, who popped the straw in her mouth and took a long sip.

“So, Cory, tell me all about you and my boy here. He’s frustratingly skimpy on the details.” She pushed her long, cherry red curls over her shoulder.

“Morgan, behave,” Reese warned, but I had a feeling she never listened to him.

“I always behave.” Morgan glanced over her shoulder. “Oh look, a customer. They seem really, really thirsty, Reese.” Morgan made a shooing motion with her hand.

Reese sent her a withering glare, but went to the other end of the bar to take that person’s order.

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask her if he was actually “mopey” when I wasn’t around.

I had to admit that the thought made me sad for him, but it pleased me in a sadistic way to know that I was missed.

That the lack of my presence was felt so keenly that it bled into other parts of his life, because every moment that I was away from him had started to feel empty and worthless.

Being away from him made me feel wrong-footed in my everyday life.

I guess I was just pleased to know that I wasn’t the only one affected.

“Ugh, you two really are disgusting.” Morgan sighed. “You’re supposed to be paying attention to me, the all-important best friend, but you’re too busy making eyes at Reese.”

With a grimace, I made myself block out Reese and focus on Morgan. But the way he moved behind the bar had been captivating to me from the first night I saw him.

“I love the way he moves. I can’t help it. But I do apologize.”

She offered me a smile and looked deeply pleased about something.

Stirring her drink with her straw, she seemed to contemplate her next words before saying them.

“I’m not actually offended. I’m glad Reese found someone who pays attention to him the way you do.

I am, however, a little jealous. And slightly miffed because he doesn't kiss and tell. ”

“Well, I hate to disappoint, but neither do I.”

“It's fine. At first, I thought you were just a one-night thing. And then when you kept coming back, it was clear there was more between you than just...” She made a vague gesture with her free hand. “You know, all that.”

She groaned. “What I'm trying to say is that you make him happy. Don't stop.”

“I don't intend to.”

“Good, now that's out of the way.” Morgan drained her drink, then pointed at mine. “Drink up, buttercup.”

“Are you trying to get me drunk?”

Reese returned and looked back and forth between us, his expression a mixture of pleasure and mild concern. “Another one, Morgan?”

“Please. And another for my new friend.” She flicked her gaze to my drink. “It's not even good whiskey. There's no point in trying to savor it.”

“Brat.” Reese shook his head and started mixing another one of Morgan's bright pink drinks. I didn't pay attention to what went in it, and only part of me was tempted to try it. The other part of me downed my whiskey and Coke and asked for another.

“I'm afraid that if you plan to get me supremely drunk to pry secrets out of me, that it's not going to work., I warned Morgan.

“What, you're impervious to alcohol?”

“No, but I am far too old to go to work with a hangover. My twenties were a long time ago. Not everyone is young and beautiful like you.”

Morgan put her hand over her heart, then looked at Reese. “You have to keep him, Reese. Ten out of ten. No notes.”

“I’m glad you approve.” Reese set her drink down in front of her, then made me another. Even during a weeknight, the bar was getting busy, and Reese’s attention was pulled away from us again.

I liked Morgan. She was kind and funny, and it was clear that she loved Reese. She was also easy to talk to and by the time we finished our second drinks, it felt like she and I had been friends longer than the thirty minutes we’d been sitting together.

When Morgan’s second drink was done, she pulled some money out of her purse and slapped it down on the bar. “Come on, Cory. Let’s get out of here.”

I glanced at Reese, who was down at the other end of the bar. Upon seeing the look of confusion on my face, he made his way over to us.

“And where are we going?” I asked when Reese was close enough to hear.

Morgan looked at Reese and flashed him a bright smile. “I’m taking him on a tour. He’s probably only seen the inside of your apartment.”

“We’ve also seen the inside of mine. And my office. And he did take me to Santa Monica for breakfast one time.”

“Well, that’s a start at least.” She looped her arm through mine. “I’ll make sure he gets home in one piece. Don’t worry.”

What had Reese gotten me into?

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Reese

Cory and Morgan never returned to the bar, which was not surprising.

I hoped they had managed to have a good time together while I worked, but I also hoped they'd said their goodbyes before I got home because the plug Cory put inside of me after our last round had spent the entire night dragging against my prostate if I moved the wrong way and to say I was ready to burst would be an understatement.

Thankfully, I received a text from Morgan at quarter to two telling me she approved, and a text from Cory near the same time that wasn't anything more than a picture of him in my bed, naked from the waist up.

I sped through the rest of my shift as fast as I could and made it home in record time.

Cory was still in my bed, one arm folded behind his head, the other holding his phone as he scrolled his screen.

"Someone's eager," he teased, throwing back the sheets.

"Please take this out of me," I begged, stripping out of my clothes and climbing into bed.

Cory chuckled and let his hand trail down my side and over the swell of my ass until his fingers were against the base of the plug.

"Why?" he asked.

“Because of this.” I pulled his hand to my front, covering my aching hard erection with his palm.

“I’m really tired, Reese,” he whispered, smiling and tucking his chin against his chest. Cory rolled me over so my back pressed against his chest, the searing heat of his erection hard against my thigh. “Morgan is a talker.”

“I know, but can we not talk about her right now?”

“Would you rather talk about the way you wanted me to tie you up earlier today?” He kissed the back of my neck. “I’ve been dying to talk about that all night.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

Rather, I didn’t know which of the dozen things I was feeling was the one I wanted to say.

Yes, Cory had tied me up earlier, and yes, I’d asked him to do it tighter.

It wasn’t the first time he’d restrained me.

He’d done it our first night together in New York, but it had been different earlier.

Like another step in a direction neither of us had specifically talked about walking, even if we’d been heading there the whole time.

“You think too much,” he said, hand between our bodies, fussing with the plug.

It pushed against my rim as he tugged and then it popped free.

I buried my face into the pillow at the same time Cory rolled me onto my stomach

and mounted me.

His cock slipped into me easily, my muscles clamping down around him as he seated himself fully, balls nestled against my ass.

I groaned into the sheets, reaching back blindly to feel for his hand or his leg, or any part of him that I could touch.

“Easy for you to say,” I argued. “Not your whole life getting turned upside down.”

“Isn’t it?” He punctuated each statement with a thrust of his hips, pushing us both down into the mattress. “I don’t date. I don’t bring men to the club. I don’t bring men to my house. I definitely don’t fly across the country every month for a man.”

“That’s for work,” I argued weakly.

“Is it?”

He pulled us both onto our sides, hooking one leg over mine to pull my body open for him. He wrapped his other arm around my chest, holding me as he rocked into me at a slower pace than before.

“Isn’t it?”

He skated his hand down my stomach until he reached my cock, still hard and needy after hours of neglect at work.

“You tell me, Reese. You’re a smart boy.”

“Not for work,” I whispered.

He kissed my shoulder and groaned quietly, going still behind me.

A shudder rippled across his chest as he came inside of me, and without prompting and without question, his talented fingers curled around my dick and stroked me until I fell headfirst after him.

Cum splattered my chest and my stomach, but his strong leg wrapped around mine kept our bodies joined in the most important places until the aftershocks of both our orgasms quieted down.

“I love you,” I murmured, no longer able to keep my eyes open.

“I’ll never get tired of hearing that,” he said, smiling against me. “I love you too, Reese.”

There were no words exchanged after that, not even a goodnight, but the conversation played on repeat loud enough in my head to keep me up for another twenty minutes.

Long after he’d fallen asleep inside of me, I remained awake, knowing there were two weeks left on his trip and two weeks was plenty of time for things between us to change.

And there were things that needed to change.

Cory was a patient man, and he’d been more than gracious with me while I worked through whatever chaos his presence created in my life, but for as easygoing as he was about most things, he did deserve more than an unspoken agreement.

It had taken us months to call ourselves what we were, even longer to admit the feelings between us were love.

The only other confession left to make was that we might have started as two dominant men, but that wasn't where we found ourselves anymore.

And it was a complicated thing because, while I enjoyed submitting myself to Cory, I didn't consider myself submissive and I didn't think I ever would. It was almost like a secret between us. A gift, just for him. Did that make me a switch? Did that make me a dominant with a submission kink?

I had no fucking idea.

But I knew that within the next fourteen days, I'd have to figure it out.

Cory

I knocked at Reese's door at precisely six p.m. I'd been forced into the office all day long, but I managed to get to my rental in time for a shower and a change of clothes. As much as I knew Reese loved seeing me in—and out of—a suit, tonight wasn't about that.

The door swung open, and I presented a delicious-looking Reese with a bouquet of red chrysanthemums. I had money on Reese not knowing they meant I love you, not that I needed flowers to say it for me.

Since our mutual declarations, not a day went by when I didn't tell him more than once how I felt about him.

Reese took the flowers from me and held them out of the way while he stepped into my arms and stole a kiss. "Thank you."

Morgan told me how happy he'd been about the flowers. It pleased me immensely to be the first one to buy him flowers. The first one to get him on his knees.

"You look amazing," I told him as he set the flowers on the counter. This time, I'd sprung for an arrangement that came in a vase. He'd had to use an empty pickle jar for the first ones I'd given him.

Reese was dressed in his signature jeans and faded band tee, but he'd slid a few chunky rings on his fingers and he wore some bracelets with beads and leather cord on his wrist. His hair was styled, and my dick throbbed when I saw the dark eyeliner

that made his eyes stand out.

“You’re one to talk.” Reese slipped his arms around me and cupped my ass. I’d worn a pair of jeans and a short-sleeved shirt that was the color of Reese’s eyes. “I almost want to stay in and take you out of those clothes.”

“We’ll have time for that later.” I stepped out of his embrace but linked our hands together. “Ready?”

“You still haven’t told me where we’re going.

“That’s part of the fun.”

Reese followed me out of his apartment and down to the ground floor where a car waited outside for us.

I opened the rear door for him, and he smirked at me as he climbed in ahead of me. “You know Ubers exist, right?”

“I’m aware.” Once the car was in motion, I laced our fingers together again.

I wasn’t looking forward to when I had to leave Los Angeles.

I’d spent my adult life chasing the next big project, forging a name for myself.

I had a small handful of friends, but they’d all paired off and no one wanted to be the third wheel.

Even me, who’d spent a lot of time avoiding the very thing I found with Reese.

“Are you going to tell me now where we’re going?”

“Hmm, no, but you can relax. We’re almost there.”

When the car came to a stop, Reese’s eyebrows shot up.

“A hotel?”

“We’re not here for a room, if that’s what you’re thinking.” The car parked at the curb, and I stepped out. When Reese joined me, he still looked skeptical. “Come on. It’s starting soon.”

I followed the signs to the paint and sip event, something Morgan assured me Reese wouldn’t hate, but wouldn’t be good at. Which was fair, because I wasn’t about to excel at painting cherry blossoms either.

Glancing at Reese when we stepped into the room, I saw the corners of his eyes crinkle, then his gaze slid over to mine.

“Painting?”

“And we get to drink wine. A man cannot live on whiskey alone. Although I try. Come on.”

I led us to two empty seats that were side by side. The room was abuzz with conversation as the other participants sat and chatted.

Once we were seated, a woman came around with the wine for the evening. “Tonight’s wine is a rose from Mallory Vineyards. It’s one of their famous bubbly wines.”

She filled our glasses while telling us more about the wine, not that I was able to pay attention to anything but Reese.

He wasted no time sampling the wine. She'd barely left the table, leaving the bottle behind for us, when Reese took a sip.

"How is it?" I asked, somewhat curious. I'd been a whiskey drinker for as long as I could remember.

"It's nice."

I took a sip and while I'd never give up my whiskey, I had to admit that the bubbly wine was a pleasant change.

"So, paint and sip?" Reese looked at the blank canvas in front of him, and then back at me.

"I'm not really a high-octane kind of boyfriend. So, if you were hoping for sky diving or bungee jumping, I'm sorry to disappoint.

He looked like he wanted to reply but turned his attention to the artist slash instructor at the front of the room explaining the first step of the painting.

Everything had been set up for us beforehand. All we had to do was pick up the brushes and follow along.

It turned out to be easier said than done. The background was supposed to resemble a sunrise or a sunset, with a nice blend of colors. I started out fine, but the paint didn't seem to want to do what I wanted it to do.

Reese glanced over at my work. "You're not really good at this, you know."

Looking at Reese, I smirked. "I know. Regardless of what my boyfriend might think, I'm not good at everything."

He laughed. “Oh, your boyfriend thinks you’re good at everything, does he? And what proof do you have of this?”

“No proof, just a hunch.” I poured us another glass of wine. Maybe more bubbles in my bloodstream would improve the quality of my painting.

They did not.

More wine made it even harder to master the medium. My tree looked like something out of a horror fil... or a preschool art contest. When it came time to add the cherry blossoms to the tree, I’d thoroughly resigned myself to the fact that I was a terrible artist.

But the slight humiliation at my nonexistent skill set was worth it to sit next to Reese and talk the way friends did.

The way boyfriends did. I still hadn’t quite wrapped my head around the fact that Reese was my boyfriend.

I was absolutely serious about him. I’d wanted him from the first moment I saw him, and that feeling had only grown in intensity every day since.

Reese looked over at my painting again and I saw the humor he tried to rein in.

“You can say it,” I told him, setting my brush down in defeat. “It’s awful.”

“Oh, it’s not that bad, Cory.” When I looked over at him and raised an eyebrow, his smile grew three times its size. “Okay, so it’s really bad. But I’m keeping both of these, and I’m hanging them up in my apartment.”

“You don’t have to do that. I’d be fine pitching mine into the nearest dumpster.”

“Don’t you dare.” Reese leaned over and stole a kiss.

I felt a few pairs of eyes on us when he did that and while this wasn’t the time nor the place, it did give me ideas about the future. About taking him someplace where people could watch us do more than kiss.

“I’m keeping it,” Reese insisted.

“It’s going to give you nightmares.”

“It’s going to remind me of my boyfriend while he’s gone.

” He grabbed his wine and took a sip. “This is the nicest date I’ve been on, maybe ever.

I’m having a lot of fun, and it’s not because my cherry blossom tree came out better.

It’s because you’re with me. I don’t care if your painting is honestly sort of horrible. ”

“Wow.” I couldn’t help the way my amusement made me smile. “Thanks.”

“It’s the nicest date I’ve been on because it’s with you.”

Right. Through. The. Heart. Reese’s words weren’t a line at all. He’d never been anything but unfailingly honest with me, even when it had been hard for him.

“You’re smooth. Did you know that?”

“I’m aware,” Reese told me. “I’ve also heard that flattery will get me everywhere and I’m sort of counting on that.”

Reese's gaze was hungry, and I could feel my own want rise up in me, bubbling to the surface in a way that wasn't unlike the bubbles in the wine.

"You don't have to flatter me, Reese." Leaning closer, I lowered my voice to a whisper. "I'm a sure thing."

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Reese

Cory was a sure thing that night and, for the next two weeks, he continued to be the same.

We'd fallen into a comfortable kind of routine, alternating between his rental and my place, finding time between the end of his day and the start of mine.

To say I'd gotten used to him would be an understatement, but the date of his return to New York grew closer every day.

The red chrysanthemums he'd gotten me on the night we went to paint had finally started to curl and wilt around the edges, which felt patently unfair since he was set to leave the following morning.

He spent his last night in Los Angeles in my bed, and I woke up early, lying beneath his burning hot limbs for a solid fifteen minutes before forcing myself out of bed.

I was careful, as to not wake him, but he heard me messing around in the kitchen anyway, tying string around the stems of the flowers so I could hang them to dry.

At least I could have that.

"Come back to bed," he murmured from the sheets, one arm reaching up toward the ceiling. He crooked his fingers and beckoned me closer.

I finished knotting the string and set the flowers down on the edge of my sink because

I hadn't had time to decide where to hang them yet. I hadn't even had time to make coffee.

"What time is it?" he asked, eyes half closed when I knee-walked up onto the bed beside him.

"It's early," I said.

Cory kicked the sheets down to the foot of the bed and rolled onto his stomach, that seductive little dip in his spine on full display. He pressed his cheek against the pillow and stared up at me with those sleepy eyes of his and said, "I want you to fuck me."

"Anything you want," I promised, reaching for the lube.

I was always hard for him, always ready, whether he wanted to fuck or be fucked, and our bodies moved together in a perfect kind of alignment as I slicked my fingers and used them to prep him.

Cory made the most beautiful sounds when he wanted to get fucked, every one of them shooting straight to my cock.

I used my fingers on him as long as I could, but he was so hot and so tight, it wasn't terribly long before I traded out my fingers for my shaft.

Sinking into him, I shivered as Cory splayed himself out on the bed.

He let out a trembling breath and relaxed, the exhale giving me another inch of entry into his body.

"I don't want you to go," I admitted softly, dropping my forehead onto his back in that space between his shoulder blades.

Moving my hips slowly, I used my body to spread him open even more, but instead of taking him down to the bed, I looped my arm around his chest and pulled us both back onto our knees.

Cory sank down around my dick, grunting at the new angle.

“I want to stay like this forever,” he whispered, head falling back against my shoulder.

I reached around and made a loosely gripped his cock, my hand slick from when I’d prepped him for me just minutes before.

“How am I supposed to go back to New York?” he asked, more to himself, I thought, than to me, which was good because I didn’t have an answer for him. I didn’t know how he was supposed to go back, and I didn’t know how I was supposed to stay.

Morgan was also miserable over the idea of him leaving as the two of them had become fast—if not troublesome—friends.

“Don’t worry about that now,” I said, tightening my hold on his shaft.

We’d still not talked about the developments in the kinky side of our relationship.

He hadn’t brought up the night I asked him to restrain me, and I’d been content to let that conversation go unspoken.

But he wasn’t new to this lifestyle and neither was I.

Just because the territory was new for both of us, the makeup of the dynamic, didn’t mean we weren’t aware of the rules.

I fucked Cory long and slow, releasing my grip on his cock every time he got close.

I didn't think it was the last time we'd get to be intimate before his flight home, but I still wanted to savor it.

When I couldn't hold out any longer, when the sheets were as sweat-soaked as our bodies, and his mouth moved as frantically as my brain, I finally let us both finish.

I thrust into him one more time before my body fought against all the restraint I'd been exhibiting, an orgasm tearing out of me with so much force I felt it in the base of my spine.

Cory came seconds after, spilling all over my fingers with violent bursts of cum that had his cock growing thick and hard in my hand.

Even after we'd both finished, I didn't want to let him go.

Trying to keep him in my hand and me in his body, I lowered us both down to the bed and held him tight against my chest.

"What time is it now?" he asked, body soft and pliant against mine.

"It's still early," I told him again. "Go back to sleep."

Maybe if we were wrapped up in each other, lost to sleep, time would somehow stop, and we wouldn't have to face the reality that awaited us the following day.

Is love enough to keep Cory and Reese together once there's thousands of miles between them again?