



Twink Heart

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Category: LGBT+

Description: Welcome to Hardwood Beach, the best beach with a ridiculous name on Lake Michigan. Where if the wind and waves don't carry you away, your heart certainly will.

Ryan

When I found my girlfriend in bed with another man, I packed a bag and left without a word. No fighting, no tears, no goodbyes. I drove away from that life and swore off women forever. Forever single sounds way better than being cheated on.

But when I literally trip over James Hart, the last thing I expect is for sparks to fly with another man. He laughs too much and sees the good in everything. He's like a ball of sunshine all the time, and it makes me want to hurl. And yet, I can't stop staring.

Exploring the side of me I've hidden for all these years was easy compared to the emotions that came rushing in afterward.

James

My dating life is nothing but a series of short-term flings. So when a grumpy tourist trips over me at the beach and won't quit eyeing me up, I don't expect anything lasting to happen.

But Ryan Baker feels different. There's something about his rare smiles that makes my heart sing. But I don't want him to just be another notch in my belt. Things between us get hot and heavy fast, and I don't find out until after that I'm his first experience with another man. When he acts like he's about to run, I do everything I can to get him to stay.

Can I convince a heartbroken man to trust in love again?

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Seeing another man balls deep in my girlfriend wasn't how I wanted to start my weekend.

Now, to be fair, my relationship with Mia had been on the rocks as of late. I'd been spending a lot of late nights taking meetings with executives instead of with her. When the new responsibilities came in from work, I promised her it would just be a temporary thing. However, that had been nearly eight months ago. Each night I stayed up later and after a while, she stopped waiting up for me. Canceled dinners and missed events piled up along with broken promises I knew I wouldn't be able to keep. Not to mention we hadn't actually fucked in probably four months.

So, when I found out she was cheating, I wasn't completely caught off guard. But I was still upset.

I'd taken that promotion on her advice. We'd been together for a couple of years and we knew we wanted to get married someday, and she wanted to start a family. But that meant finding something better than a junky little two-bedroom apartment on the bad side of town. The only way out was with money, and her teaching salary wasn't going to get bigger anytime soon. So, after a long chat, I applied for a higher position. To my surprise, I got it. But nearly the moment I did, I had to basically say goodbye to my personal life.

I was willing to sacrifice it, though. The new position meant I was able to put away quite a bit of money for a down payment on a house. In fact, we'd scheduled a realtor to go look at a few next week.

But some strangers' balls slapping against her ass put a damper on those plans.

Mia begged me to stay, trying to win my forgiveness by telling me it meant nothing. She was just lonely. I didn't argue, and I didn't scream. Hell, I couldn't feel anything but this overwhelming numbness threatening to consume me. And when I didn't respond to her, she freaked out and stormed out of the apartment. I spent the next thirty minutes gathering up my things and took them down to my SUV. The apartment was in her name, and we weren't married. So I just left.

I didn't think twice about leaving all the furniture or appliances I'd bought. All I knew was that I needed to get out of there as fast as possible.

That's when I called my best friend, Adam, and asked if I could crash at his place. And while he said he didn't have room for me thanks to his new boyfriend, he did have a place I could stay out on Lake Michigan. It turned out he'd inherited a small lake cabin from his late uncle and he wasn't planning on using it for the rest of the summer. It was mine as long as I needed to stay there.

And that's why I was driving down the scenic route through bum-fuck Michigan. Trees flashed by on my left side while the lakeshore flew by on my right. His cabin was south of Ludington, but not by much. It was just far enough out of town to avoid having constant traffic, but close enough that there was a public beach within walking distance.

I looked up at the brown park sign that caught my attention.

Hardwood Beach, 3 miles

I scoffed, half a laugh blowing through my lips. Hardwood Beach? Really? Might as well call the damn place Boner Beach. Immediately my mind was filled with images of old naked men walking around the beach sporting erections with little tufts of gray hair above them. Then again, I was fairly sure nude beaches were not a thing in Michigan. At least not legally. Not that it ever stopped people. And, judging by the

name, it sounded like a gay beach, anyway. That's probably why Adam liked it so much.

The thought almost made me write it off. But then something else deep inside me stirred, something I hadn't really thought about since college.

Men.

It was a complete secret, of course. I'd never told anyone about my wandering thoughts concerning a few certain guys. There were the normal ones, like celebrities, that were just too hot to be turned down by anyone, regardless of gender. But I never told anyone about the hockey guy I roomed with sophomore year who liked to walk around nearly naked all the time. Or how he liked to play video games in just his boxers. Or how, that one time, I noticed the head of his cock poking out of the front hole in his underwear, and I didn't say anything because I wanted to look longer and fantasize about how it might feel in my mouth...

That whole year was a strange one for me. There was a lot of self-loathing and repressing that happened during that year. But when I returned the following year to a different roommate, those feelings didn't persist. I wrote it off as simple confusion due to my roommate being practically naked all the time and young adult hormones. Women were my thing, and that's just the way I was.

And thankfully, those thoughts were easy to brush away again. The last thing I wanted was to get involved with anything complicated. And shifting the entire framework of my sexuality was complicated. I wanted to avoid that at all costs.

However, I also wanted to avoid women as well. The whole ordeal with Mia left a bad taste in my mouth, and I didn't want to be involved with anyone ever again, as far as I was concerned.

I truly thought I loved Mia. But the moment I saw her in bed with that stranger, something inside me snapped. Warmth turned to ice and walls went up around my heart immediately, if only to stop it from shattering into a thousand pieces. Everything I'd worked so hard for was for her, to give her the kind of life she so desperately wanted. And I felt more betrayed than I ever had in my life.

So, no. I wouldn't let anyone get close to me again. Not like that. Being single and free was safe. At least then nobody would have the power to hurt me like that ever again.

I was pulled from my thoughts when my phone chimed and said, "Turn right in five hundred feet."

I'd been so lost in my own downward spiral that I didn't realize I'd gotten so close to the cabin. Taking my foot off the gas, I slowed the SUV and looked for the cabin. I was immediately drawn to a large rainbow flag hanging high off a tree near the edge of one of the driveways. I didn't even look down at my phone, knowing that had to be Adam's cabin.

Pulling the car up the short driveway, I parked in front of a small single-stall garage attached to an equally small cabin. The place was painted a dusty blue and the front entrance had a small overhang made from honey-colored cedar. It didn't look like much from where I was sitting, but the place had fiber internet, meaning I could work remotely while I was there. Not to mention it was only a ten-minute drive to town where I could get anything I needed. And, from the looks of it, the neighbors weren't in their cabins right now either.

I had the entire place to myself.

I got out of the car, stretched, and headed around the side of the garage. There, I found a small but suggestive gnome statue tucked into the landscaping. I picked him

up, flipped him over, and pulled a little handle on his butt, only for it to pop open and a key to fall into my hand.

“You’re such a weirdo, Adam,” I muttered to myself, pushing the gnome’s butt closed and placing it back in the wood chips.

Letting myself in through the front door, I made a quick tour of the cabin. It wasn’t a mansion or anything luxurious, but it was functional and clean. It was a small two-bedroom with a single bathroom and a kitchen straight out of the eighties. The appliances were old, and the wood paneling on the wall made the place look extremely out of date, but everything worked. Once I flipped the router on, I had all the internet I could ever want and more.

But the real surprise came when I glanced out the sliding glass door at the back of the house.

With my jaw hanging loose, I pushed the doors open and stepped out onto a massive cedar porch that was easily bigger than the entire house and garage combined. There was patio furniture and a grill already set up and ready for use. On the far end was a long set of stairs going all the way down to the water. But it was the view that stopped me dead in my tracks.

The trees and yard fell away, leaving me with an incredible waterscape stretching across the entire horizon. White sand glared in the sun, leading into cerulean water that darkened as it stretched to the edge of the world. Beyond that was nothing but blue sky with a few puffy white clouds.

The entire scene took my breath away. I’d been to the lake as a kid, of course. But for the past decade or so, I’d been too busy with school, college, and then a job to make the trip back. After all that time, I’d forgotten what I was missing. To think I’d lived my entire life only a couple hours from something so majestic, and I never went to

see it. Somehow, that felt like a crime.

But just as quickly as those feelings came, they were quickly washed away as I thought about Mia.

She always wanted me to take her to the lake.

With a deep sigh, I turned around and headed back inside. I didn't have time to waste sitting around and staring at the scenery. The cabin needed groceries, and I still had reports to get done before Monday. I might've been staying in a stunning location, but that didn't mean I could slack off.

I had an entire life to rebuild. One that was just for me and didn't include anyone else.

And I just wanted to be alone.

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Isighed as I tossed my phone into my passenger seat. It didn't matter how many dates I went on with guys or what kind of plans we'd made, they always canceled after we had sex and I never heard from them again.

This time, I was sitting in the parking lot of the grocery store where I was just about to go in and get the supplies for the nice dinner I'd planned for the pair of us. It was supposed to be a sort of decadent French dish made with fish, pastry, and lots of butter. I didn't really know if I had the skills to make it, but recipes were easy enough to follow and this one didn't seem that difficult.

But I saw no point in going through the trouble now, especially since I knew I'd never be seeing Ray again. He wasn't the most interesting person, but he treated me decently. I wasn't a fan of his smoking, but then again, how picky could I be in such a small town? It wasn't like there were a ton of guys to choose from. And now, besides the tourists, I'd been fucked and dumped by most of them.

That's the way it always went. As soon as guys got what they wanted from me, they fucked off. I wasn't sure if it was my ass, my dick, or my personality that was driving them away, but I was starting to take it personally. But I always got the same excuse. Something unexpected always came up. They'd let me know when they could reschedule, and then radio silence.

I guess that was dating apps for you. Then again, being a twenty-two-year-old twink in the gay world was a recipe for getting used and tossed out with the trash. Everyone had a fantasy, especially older men, about being with guys that looked like me. And once they got it, they didn't want to keep it. And it didn't matter how many dates I waited before putting out, the results were always the same. It turned out Ray was no

different from any of the others in the end, no matter how much he tried to convince me otherwise. I was just a fantasy to him.

It wasn't like I chose to be a twink, either. I wasn't one of those guys that starved myself or avoided any sort of physical activity to stay small. It just sort of happened. I'd always been a little on the shorter side and my metabolism was fast. To some I'd won the genetic lottery, but to me I was shrimpy and gaunt. Guys seemed to like it, just not enough to stick around.

Now I'll admit I'm young and naive. But I'd also done a lot of work to make sure I wasn't just some young mean thing that liked to make people feel bad for fun. I was genuine and mature for my age. Or at least I thought I was. None of my friends wanted to hang out with me because I was too boring. While they wanted to go get blackout drunk every single night after work, I wanted to stay at home and have a nice relaxing evening reading a book. I wasn't the wild kid that everyone expected me to be.

Maybe that's what was driving guys away.

I wasn't sure. However, I was sure that I now had no plans for dinner and there was nothing in my fridge that really sounded good. So, I figured I might as well forget the fish and go pick out something a little more my style.

It was going to be a chicken nugget sort of night.

With a deep sigh, I scooped up my phone, grabbed my wallet, and headed into the store. It was a Friday night, and the place was bustling. Of course, I expected nothing else in the middle of July. The days were hot, the beaches were packed, and Ludington was the center of all tourism for at least sixty miles. The place was practically overrun in the summer with families and older folks on vacation. That meant a lot of guys for me to choose from, but they'd all have to go home, eventually.

Short term dating was all I seemed to be good at anyway...

I tucked a basket into the crook of my arm and headed toward the frozen food section. The first thing on my list was chicken nuggets. And, since I didn't have to worry about having a guy over or bottoming that night, I could pretty much eat whatever the fuck I wanted. Before I even left the frozen section, I already had chicken nuggets, tater tots, and a pint of ice cream with my name on it.

But I couldn't just buy food for tonight. My fridge had been looking sparse for a while, so I figured I might as well grab a few staples. Wandering through the store, I slowly filled up my basket to the point where I wished I'd gotten a cart instead. My lithe form was not built for carrying heavy things, and my basket was becoming unwieldy.

However, I managed to practically drag the thing up to the self checkout because, god forbid, I have to make small talk with some stranger who'd had their soul consumed by retail work. Instead, I waited in line for however long it would take to get out of there without having to say a word to anyone. For as many dates as I went on, you'd think I would be better at talking to strangers. But usually I avoided it at all costs. I was awkward at the best of times and my small talk skills were a solid negative ten.

Finally, when an old woman struggling with her three screaming kids left one of the checkout kiosks, it was my turn.

I strode toward the checkout quickly, not wanting to lose my chance or look like I was dawdling. In my haste, I didn't see a man pulling his cart out to leave, and I ran right into the side of it, dropping my basket to the ground.

"Oh my god!" I cried, embarrassment flooding through my system as I crouched down to collect my things. "I'm so sorry!"

“You’re fine,” he replied, his tone monotonous. “It was my fault. I got in your way.”

He stooped down beside me to try to help gather up my items. Thankfully, I’d already managed to grab the majority. However, there was a family pack of Oreos that I hadn’t picked up yet. I reached for it at the same time as the stranger, our hands meeting in mid air.

Now, you know how the world stops when awkward things like this happen? And then in a split second, you begin overthinking everything? Why are my hands so sweaty? Does he think I’m hitting on him? Why did my finger twitch like that? Did I just caress him weirdly by accident?

All of that rushed through my mind at the same time. However, that feeling was followed up by a strange but delightful tingling sensation and a sudden rush of goosebumps over my arms. I yanked my hand away, surprised and oddly a little turned on by this stranger.

“Sorry,” I muttered, glancing up into those warm brown eyes of his. I noticed a stray strand of sandy blond hair across his forehead and a small scar on his lip. Embarrassment rushed through me again, and I tore my gaze away.

“Here,” he replied, seemingly unfazed by the entire exchange. He held out my massive family pack of Oreos.

“Thanks,” I muttered, taking them a bit too quickly. Then, like an idiot, I stood there sheepishly, waiting for him to make the first move.

“No problem.”

Without even so much as a second glance, he turned his cart away and strode toward the entrance. I watched him go for a moment, completely oblivious to everything else

going on around me.

“Number four is open,” a gravelly voice said next to me.

“Right!” I blurted, snapping back to reality. I was still standing in the middle of the self checkout where the stranger had left me. “Sorry!”

I ran to the open spot, scanning all my items at the speed of light. In less than a minute, I was done and practically running out of the store. It wasn’t until I collapsed into the driver’s seat of my car that I finally took a deep breath.

What the fuck was that all about?

Nobody got me to freeze up like that. Ever. And somehow, after all these dates where I felt cool and confident, some complete stranger caught me off guard and totally wiggled me out. It was totally out of the norm for me.

Of course, he was really fucking cute, so that didn’t help. Those deep brown eyes of his and the way his hair was just the right amount of messy. Talk about swoon worthy. And that scar on his lip? I bet that had a cool story to go with it.

However, judging by his clothes, his lack of bling, and the fact that he was wearing a ratty pair of dad sneakers, I was almost certain he was straight. No self-respecting gay man would wear shoes like that outside of the house. Seriously. Not to mention, the way he spoke and carried himself didn’t read as the type that would be into men.

Then again, maybe I was the one being judgemental.

Maybe that’s why guys never stuck around...

Was I a judgy person?

I wasn't sure. However, the one thing I was sure of was that I'd spend the rest of my night and probably most of tomorrow overthinking it and making myself feel bad. So at least in that way, I had something to do with my evening now.

With a sigh, I put the car into drive and headed for home.

By myself.

At least I had chicken nuggies.

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My phone had buzzed at least three times since I began a report for work ten minutes ago. I was getting a bit irritated, since the report needed to be turned in Monday morning bright and early. My boss had been riding my ass all week about it. Even after I told him about splitting up with my girlfriend, he merely reminded me about the report and told me to take time off if I needed it after our next big push.

The phone buzzed again.

I grabbed it off the table, fully intending to yeet that fucker straight to hell. But when I glanced down at the screen, I saw Adam's picture. It was him that wouldn't quit texting me.

Adam: Hey buddy, you doing ok?

Adam: You alive?

Adam: I swear to god, if you killed yourself over some stupid girl, I'm gonna be pissed.

Adam: Okay, well now you're just being rude.

I rolled my eyes as I read. The man was ridiculous. I'd never met a more sassy and inappropriate person. The things that came out of his mouth were almost exclusively the stuff that's meant to stay inside your brain. Not with him, though. He said it all.

Me: I'm alive. I'm just busy.

Adam: Getting laid already??!

Me: No. Work stuff.

Adam: Gross! What the fuck are you working on that for? It's the weekend!

Me: I'm salary. Weekends don't exist, remember? Just like working hours don't exist.

Adam: That's stupid. You should find a new job that's not so soul-sucking.

Me: Where would that be? You got a job offer for me?

Adam: Anyway... Why are you out at the beach or something? You've been through a trauma. You should go relax and grieve or whatever it is you straight people do.

Me: I'm not sure I'm really up for that right now.

Adam: Well, how the hell are you gonna get laid if you don't put yourself out there?

Me: Shouldn't I be taking that time to grieve, like you said?

Adam: Look, I slept with a woman ONCE and let me tell you, the pussy ain't worth the trouble. Just go find another one.

Me: Omg...

Adam: Hear me out Booboo. Put the report down, go to the beach, and get some sun. It'll make you feel better, you'll get some eye candy, and you can start forgetting about old what's her face and start getting ready to find someone that DESERVES you. You worked your ass off for that bitch, and now it's time for you to take care of

yourself.

Me: I hate when you say intelligent things

Adam: I'm here for you, Booboo.

Me: Stop calling me that.

Adam: Absolutely not :P

I sighed as I put my phone down. As much as I didn't want to admit it, Adam was right. Sitting around and burying myself in work wasn't going to help me forget Mia, and it definitely wasn't going to make me feel better. Grieving felt like a strong word for the situation. After all, it wasn't like someone had died or anything. But, in a way, I suppose my life, as I'd known it, was now dead. Just a quick glance up at the unfamiliar cabin surrounding me was enough to prove that.

There was a sudden crushing realization that I would never be going home again. The place I'd lived and built a life with Mia was gone. The past was suddenly and permanently out of reach and the future was dark from where I was sitting. I didn't see how things could possibly get any better. I didn't want Mia back, that was for sure. But I wished I could get back the feeling of knowing someone cared about me and was waiting for me when I got home.

I shook my head. No. I didn't want that anymore. Relationships were for idiots who liked to be taken advantage of. Love was for suckers, and I wanted nothing to do with it ever again.

A sudden rush of anger and depression filled my chest, and I had to push my computer away. I didn't want to think about work right now and as far as my boss was concerned, he could suck my fat cock and do his own goddamn report.

Pushing myself away from the desk, I decided I would take Adam's advice. Going to the beach sounded like a good excuse to get out and do something for me for once. Fuck the rest of the world. I was going to look out for number one this time.

???

I hated the beach.

Sure, the sand was beautiful, the sun was bright, the breeze was just enough to take the edge off, and the water was the most crystalline blue I'd ever seen.

But the entire fucking thing was dripping with couples.

There were a couple of teenagers making out like there was no tomorrow. An old couple walked along the beach, hand in hand, picking up interesting looking rocks. A crunchy organic farm looking couple carried buckets and picker-uppers, grabbing trash and laughing as they went. There were even a pair of toddlers holding hands while they built shitty sandcastles near the water.

Worst fucking place ever.

And then there was me. I was back near the treeline, trying to keep in the shade and away from all these goddamn tourists and their perfect fucking lives. Seriously, if I saw one more person smile, I was going to puke. These people were the worst. How dare they all be so happy? Didn't they know that my life had literally just fallen apart? Wasn't it obvious from the cloud hanging over my head? The giant one that read 'my girlfriend cucked me in our own bed'.

People were the fucking worst.

I'd gone through all the trouble to gather up the supplies I needed from Adam's

garage, hauled them out to the beach, and then set up all this fucking bullshit so I could pretend to be doing self-care. And now that I'd gotten it all set up, I wanted to leave. I wanted to forget about all these happy people and go back into my dark corner of the cabin until the summer was over. There was just too much hope in the air and it left a bitter taste in my mouth.

Fuck, I was grumpy.

So I gave it a half hour. I thought it deserved at least that much. But, by the time I hit fifteen minutes, I couldn't take the laughter and the constant noise anymore. I just wanted to be anywhere else.

With a sigh, I got up and started to pack my things. I stuffed everything back into my bag, folded up my chair, and headed back toward the parking lot. Several times I had to avoid people on the ground or dodge around running children who were fucking oblivious, apparently. One of them nearly ran me over and when I sidestepped, my foot contacted something fleshy instead of sand. I tried to catch myself, but it was too late.

I was going down.

My bag flew off my arm as I hit the sand. Thanks to my excellent luck as of late, I landed on the hard ass chair instead of the cushy sand. A low groan left my lips as I laid there for a moment, hating everything in existence. This was absolutely the last time I ever let Adam talk me into anything.

"Are you okay?" a voice said.

I glanced to my right, a pair of bright blue eyes staring back at me. My mouth opened to reply, but then I was struck with a sudden sense of familiarity. Had I seen this dude before? I looked him up and down, taking note of his short dark hair and tanned skin.

Of course, I couldn't help noticing his lithe muscled form and the tight little trunks he was wearing. They left nothing to the imagination, and considering the bulge, the dude was packing.

"I'm fine," I said at last, tearing my eyes away from his visible penis line. "Sorry."

"You and I need to quit running into each other like this," he laughed.

I furrowed my brows, looking up at him. "Excuse me?"

"Last night," he said. "At the store. I ran into you in the checkout line by accident."

My eyes widened. "I thought you looked familiar.

He blushed a bit. "Here. Let me help you."

"Don't worry about it—"

"No, I don't mind."

"Really, it's fine."

But he was already picking up my things and putting them back in my bag. I sighed, pushing myself back to my feet. I gave the chair a kick before I gathered it back up again. The stranger was still grabbing my things, and I had to stand there awkwardly as he did it, not wanting to get in his way or trip over him again.

Of course, it did give me a really good view of his ass as he bent down to grab my book I'd brought and not touched. The fabric of his trunks was stretchy, pulling over his tight little bubble butt. I couldn't help a low groan as I stared. It was a nice ass. Like, easily one of the best I'd ever seen.

When he turned around, I tried to act like I hadn't been looking, but he just smiled, putting my bag over his shoulder.

"I'll help you carry it to your car," he said, as if that were a normal thing to do.

"You don't have to—"

"I want to," he said, cutting me off. "And I could use the stretch."

He leaned back, holding his arms out wide as all the muscles along his body rippled. I practically started drooling on the spot, but quickly snapped myself out of it. I'd literally just broken up with my girlfriend and I already knew dudes were not my thing. Besides, he wasn't hot. It was just a lot of... skin, I guess. Yeah. That was the issue. Skin.

My dick getting chubby was just the heat and the sun. Definitely not this guy. It couldn't be.

"Fine," I sighed.

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I couldn't believe my luck as I followed the cute guy back to his vehicle. Was I being a little pushy about helping him? Yeah. But did I have an ulterior motive that was completely selfish? Also yes.

Ever since running into him at the grocery store, I'd been kicking myself for not getting at least his name. Something about that moment when we touched stuck with me and I felt this weird sort of connection. It was unlike anything I'd experienced before, and I wanted to know what it was. I knew full well that it might just be lust or even some weird infatuation. After all, I was a sucker for straight guys, and this dude definitely looked straight. But I still wanted to know.

And I couldn't stop myself from hoping that he might be a little hetero-flexible. I mean, what gay man doesn't have straight boy fantasy? And this one, despite his surly disposition, was probably the cutest guy I'd seen in a while. Plus, I thought the whole grumpy facade was adorable. It just made him sort of irresistible.

"It's such a beautiful day, isn't it?" I asked as we walked. "I couldn't stay in the house more than an hour after I woke up. I just had to get out and get some of this sun."

"It's okay," he replied. "Kinda hot."

"That's why I keep close to the treeline," I nodded, still grinning from ear to ear. "I can jump back and forth between the two and get the best of both worlds." I looked up at him. "Ever been to Hardwood Beach before?"

"No."

“Are you a tourist?”

“No.”

“Do you live around here, then?”

“No.”

Wow. This guy was extra grumpy today. But I wasn't going to give up.

“I grew up here,” I said, trying to carry the conversation as we neared the parking lot. “Or well, my parents moved here when I was seven and it's just where I ended up staying. It's pretty nice and definitely busy during the summer when all the tourists show up. But I don't mind. They bring a lot of good business with them, and that keeps this little town ticking for the rest of the year when it's a bit colder.”

I paused for a moment, realizing I was rambling.

“So, if you're not from here but you're not a tourist, are you new in town or something?”

Another sigh. “I guess you could say that. My friend is letting me stay in his cabin while I get some things figured out.”

“Well, that's nice of them!”

“Yeah.”

I didn't want to pry too deep. Obviously, whatever was going on with this guy was personal, and it wasn't my place to question him about it.

“So... you’re out here alone, then?”

He lifted an eyebrow in my direction. “Yeah. I guess.”

“Sorry,” I laughed, patting him on the shoulder. “That probably sounded really creepy! I just wasn’t sure if you’d come out here with family or a partner or something!”

His face fell. “Nope. Just me.”

I knew I’d touched a nerve, so I quickly changed the subject. “My name is James,” I said, holding out a hand. “James Hart.”

“Rowan,” he replied, giving my hand a quick shake.

“Rowan?” I couldn’t help a grin. “That’s a unique name!”

“Yep.”

“Your parents must have had high hopes for you,” I added. “Rowan trees are a symbol of power and wisdom. They’ve got a pretty long sacred history.”

“I’m not religious,” he replied simply. “And my parents are dead.”

My heart sank. “Oh... I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I didn’t know them.”

“Oh... uh...”

“This is my car,” he said, not waiting for me to make a recovery from the

awkwardness I'd suddenly thrust our conversation into. "I should get going."

"Right," I nodded, handing his bag over. "Uh... I'm sorry for being awkward."

"It's fine."

He started to turn away, but I couldn't let him go just yet. Not without at least one attempt.

"The truth is... when I saw you yesterday at the store. I... well, I thought you were really cute."

He stared at me blankly.

"And I thought maybe I could give you my number."

I reached into the tiny pocket in my trunks and pulled out a piece of paper that I'd already written it down on, hoping the universe would bring us together again. With a shaking hand, I pushed it into his, laughing mostly out of nervousness.

"I'm not gay," he said flatly, staring at the paper.

"Oh... well, I mean, we could just be friends, right?" I offered, trying not to show how heartbroken I was. "You're new in town and I could show you all three of the cool places to hang out if you want. But no pressure."

He stared at the paper a moment longer. "Thanks," he muttered. "I'm leaving now."

"Right," I nodded, trying to act cool. "It was good to meet you, Rowan."

"You too, James."

His tone made me think otherwise, but I just gave him a nod and headed back toward the beach.

“Have a good day!” I called in one last-ditch attempt to seem like I was totally unbothered by his rejection. “Enjoy your book!”

God... why did I have to be so fucking awkward? I was as cool as a cucumber around all the other guys, but there was something about this one that got me all flustered. And it was driving me crazy that I didn’t understand why it was happening.

But it was probably for the best that he’d rejected me right off the bat. At least that way I wouldn’t have to go out with him for a while, finally drum up the courage to let him fuck me, and then watch him ride off into the sunset with nothing but a shitty text message.

No, this was probably for the best.

However, I couldn’t help looking back over my shoulder as I walked away, watching him pack his gear into his SUV and climb in. Even from a distance he was intensely handsome. I could see the sun glinting off those strong shoulders of his. His tank top was tight enough across the chest for me to imagine how hot he’d look without it on at all. And even though he was wearing baggy swim trunks, I still caught a hint of that bulge here and there while we were walking. In fact, I thought I’d caught him staring at my ass. But I suppose I was probably making that up considering his reaction to my advance.

When I got back to my towel, I was happy to see that nobody had run off with my backpack or my phone that I’d completely left lying out in the open. I turned back toward the parking lot, watching the SUV with Rowan in it head toward the exit. A quick glance down at my phone showed I had no missed messages or texts awaiting my reply. I let out a long sigh, the smile fading from my face.

I'd most likely never hear from or see him again.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

Another ding from my computer.

A message flashed across the screen, telling me I had yet another email from my boss. I sighed as I clicked to open it. I started to skim it but wasn't really reading it at all.

All day long, it had been nothing but email after email from him. First, he wanted an update on that report that I'd already sent to him. When I told him that, he wanted revisions. After those, it was new images and then new formatting, and it just kept going on and on like that all fucking day.

I was on the edge of rage quitting my entire fucking job.

But I forced myself to sit back in my chair and take a deep breath. I couldn't quit. My entire life had already fallen apart and the last thing I needed was to throw my job onto the tire fire that was my existence. Sure, I had a fair bit of money saved up that I'd no longer need for a down payment on a house for Mia and myself. However, that didn't mean I should just quit my hard-won job and start the countdown toward my inevitable doom. Jobs like mine weren't exactly easy to come by anymore.

No. It was best to just do whatever inane fucking thing my boss wanted, and get on with my day. Besides, he was a boomer, and it wasn't like he was going to learn how to use our software anytime soon. If he were going to, he would've done it years ago. So I should stop wishing he would and focus on my work.

However, that wasn't the only thing that was bothering me. Work would've been a lot easier to deal with if I hadn't dreamed about that guy at the beach all night. I woke up

that morning stressed out and questioning everything I'd ever known. Not to mention I had to do laundry because of it.

The dream started off simple enough. I was at the beach again, sprawled out on a folding pool chair that seemed far too nice to have dragged out to a public beach. An oversized umbrella was stuck in the sand beside me, throwing a deep shade over the upper half of my body. However, as I looked around, I found I was the only one there. The entire beach was completely abandoned, and I had all the sun, waves, and breeze to myself.

At least it was until I saw him. It was that same guy, James, that had given me his number. I recognized those blue eyes immediately. He was wearing those same little skimpy trunks that hugged every curve and bulge of his body. I could clearly see his cock shifting side to side as he walked toward me, the thick shaft pushing against the fabric. It wasn't until he got closer that I realized he was already hard, his cock snaked over his hip in a vain effort to stay under the thin fabric.

When he got to me, he said nothing. But I watched as his eyes licked down my body and widen as his gaze landed on my crotch. When he wouldn't stop staring, I glanced down and found that I was already completely naked. Not only that, but my cock was rock hard and leaking pre-cum.

He made some comment about being impressed by my size, then asked if he could get more comfortable. Dream me said yes immediately and James pulled down his trunks, sliding them off his lithe form so that his cock could finally hang free.

I drooled in awe as I watched him. And when he caught my stares, he offered himself up, pressing his cockhead to my lips. Well, dream me didn't even hesitate. His cock was in my mouth before I could even think about it. I loved the feel of it and the taste of him. The dream was so lucid I thought it was actually happening.

But it got a lot better when he pulled away and asked if he could show me something even better. I eagerly agreed and before I knew it, he was straddling my hips, my cock buried to the hilt inside his sweet tight ass.

Everything after that was a rush of dopamine, moans, and incredible sensations. I loved the way my hands fit around his hips, the way his muscles flexed under my fingers, and the way his tight hole hugged my cock, milking me until I could hold it back no longer. I came inside him, both of us orgasming at the same time.

And then I woke up.

In my sleep-drunk state, I looked around for him, wondering where he went. When reality finally settled back in I noticed that not only was I rock hard still, but the sheets were completely soaked with cum.

Now, I hadn't ejaculated in my sleep since I was a teenager. Even then, I was like fifteen. However, it wasn't the mess that concerned me. It was the fact that my dream had been about a man.

At first, I tried to blame it on the fact that I hadn't had sex in months. I'd been too busy to care for Mia's needs, so she found someone else. But I never got that chance. And considering I'd only broken up with her two days ago, I hadn't really found a moment to hunt down a hook-up. But the more I thought about it, the less I could deny that I found James attractive. Obviously, since I'd just creamed the sheets the first time I ever dreamed about him.

All those memories from college came flooding back to me. I'd spent so much time and effort pushing them down, confident that I only liked women and that it was nothing more than a weird college blip.

However, with the bad taste toward women left in my mouth from Mia, those feelings

suddenly seemed stronger. I couldn't deny that James was beautiful. He was a bit shorter than me, thin, wiry, and had an impressive bulge. Not to mention those bright blue eyes coupled with dark hair just did something to me that I couldn't deny. But he also smiled a lot and seemed to have such a cheery disposition and that was a bit annoying.

As I got up and stripped the bed to clean the sheets, I found myself asking a lot of questions. What were relationships with men like? I'd heard from Adam that it was easy to hook-up with guys, but harder to find something meaningful. Then again, after Mia, I wasn't sure I wanted anything meaningful again with a man or woman. Could James and I have a purely physical relationship? Friends with benefits, right?

Having known Adam for several years, I knew he wasn't the easiest dude to get along with. He was sassy and a bit rude sometimes. But he was the only gay guy I knew, and it seemed like he was nursing a broken heart every few months. Not that it ever stopped him from getting back out there again, but I didn't want to deal with that. I didn't want to get close enough to anyone to be hurt ever again.

But there was a piece of me that I wanted to explore. Back in college I'd wondered if I might be bisexual and now that these feelings were threatening to overwhelm me again, those same wonderings came back. The thought of doing something with another man scared the balls off me. Doing it in my dream was one thing, but doing it in real life was another thing entirely. However, that didn't mean I wasn't curious.

So, for the rest of the morning up until the current moment, I'd been waffling back and forth about what I should do. Should I act on this dream and give it a shot? Obviously, James was interested. He wouldn't have given me his phone number if he wasn't. And he called me cute, which was weirdly nice and patronizing at the same time.

My other choice was to be smart and avoid getting involved with anyone. As far as

my broken heart was concerned, love equaled eventual betrayal and heartache. I was already in the pits of despair about the entire situation with Mia, and I felt grumpy, angry, and like fucking shit all the time because of it. It probably wasn't even fair to ask James to be around me in my current state. Hell, I didn't even want to be around me!

Then again, this might be my only chance to explore this side of me. Mia was gone, I was a single, albeit sad, pringle, and I didn't know anyone in this town. Even if someone were to see us together, none of it would ever get back to work, my friends or whoever the fuck else might care about such things. But I especially didn't want Mia to know. She'd take it personally if she found out I ran off to be with a man. I could already see how that looked like I'd ignored her for months because I was secretly gay and couldn't tell her.

I glanced down at the small slip of paper on my desk, James' loopy handwriting scrawled over the surface. Was it worth the risk? Probably not. Was I going to text him anyway under the guise of being just friends? That seemed like a safe enough place to start. Then, if I decided he really was too cheerful to stand being around, I could just leave and never have to see him again. After all, it wasn't like I was going to stay here forever.

Best-case scenario, I got to explore this secret side of me I'd kept hidden for all these years. Worst case, I left and never told another soul what had taken place.

It seemed like a win-win situation because, no matter what, I wasn't going to get attached. I was done with that nonsense.

Picking up my phone, I started to type.

Me: Hey James, it's Rowan.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

Surprise wasn't quite a strong enough word when I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket. The moment my gaze fell on the screen and saw the message, my jaw fell open.

Unknown: Hey James, it's Rowan.

I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. The cute grumpy boy from the beach was texting me? He actually used my phone number? After his rejection, I was a million percent certain I'd never hear from him again. Why would I? He wasn't into men and he definitely didn't seem to be into me. But there was his message on my screen and it filled my mind with a thousand different questions.

I forced myself to take a step back, checking myself before my thoughts ran away from me. He told me he wasn't into guys and he didn't seem very fond of my compliments, so I could forget all about that possibility right now. However, I had offered to be his friend and show him around. That part he seemed less averse to, but still a bit on the fence. If he was texting me for anything, it was just to be friends. Nothing more was ever going to come of it.

Curbing that last tiny spark of hope in my chest was difficult and as much as I tried, I could still feel it there. So I chose to ignore it. Flipping the messaging app open, I began to text back.

Me: Hey Rowan! Glad to hear from you :) How's it going?

Rowan: Fine I guess.

Me: That's good.

Rowan: Yeah.

I stared at the screen, my brows furrowed in confusion. Why had this dude texted me if he wasn't going to say anything? Maybe I needed to prod him a bit.

Me: So what's up?

Rowan: I think I want to take you up on your offer. I don't have any friends here and I don't know anything about this place. Maybe you could show me those cool spots you mentioned or something.

Me: I'd be happy to! What kind of things are you into?

Rowan: I don't know. Maybe just some place quiet.

Me: Do you like coffee?

Rowan: Yeah. It's alright.

Me: Let's start with a cafe then! We can just hang out and chat and get to know one another!

Rowan: Great.

Me: When are you free?

Rowan: Tonight okay? After five?

Me: Sounds perfect! I'll text you the address and meet you there!

Rowan: Cool

Well, he wasn't much of a conversationalist, I'll give him that. And judging by his use of punctuation, he seemed about as excited to hang out with me as a person going to get a flu shot. But I tried to give him the benefit of the doubt. I'd already learned by accident that he was an orphan and probably grew up in the foster system. I couldn't imagine that left people with the greatest of attitudes toward life.

Maybe he just needed someone to show him that life could be fun. I always enjoyed helping people. In fact, if I was being totally honest, I was a fixer. The moment I saw someone in trouble or in need of help, I was there. It had gotten me into trouble several times with guys I tried to date. The problem with dating someone that needed to be fixed was that sometimes they didn't want to be fixed. Then there was butting heads and fighting and it never ended well.

So it was probably a good idea not to try to fix Rowan. Instead, I decided I would take a completely different approach. This time I'd just let him be himself. Sure, I'd do my best to learn what I could about him so I could understand his point of view, but I wouldn't try to cheer him up. I'd just accept him the way he was.

That felt like a very mature decision.

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A couple of hours later I was pulling into the cafe parking lot after work. I spotted Rowan's SUV almost immediately and saw him sitting in the driver's seat staring at his phone. He looked totally out of it, like he was doomscrolling just to pass the time.

I tried to shut my car door loudly in the hopes of getting him to look up. But when he didn't, I walked over and knocked on his window.

I'd never seen a man jump so high in my life. His head nearly went through the roof of his car and his phone went flying. I tried not to, but the look on his face had tears streaming down my face as I doubled over, clutching my belly as I laughed.

"I'm sorry!" I said as he opened the door, still cackling to myself. "I wasn't trying not to scare you."

"It's fine," he grumbled. "I wasn't paying attention."

"You looked like you were zoning out a bit."

"Yeah. Long day."

"Well," I replied, finally straightening up. "Let's get you some coffee and you can tell me all about it."

He paused. "Do they have food here?"

I nodded. "Yeah. Not much variety, but they have sandwiches and stuff."

"That's fine." He glanced away. "I... I'm not much of a cook and I forgot to eat today."

How the hell could someone forget to eat?! That was like my favorite thing to do!

"Uh... do you want to go somewhere with more food choices?"

"No. This is okay."

"Okay. Well let's get you something to eat before you pass out on me."

I gave him a big smile, but he just nodded. It was odd, but I honestly didn't mind that he was grumpy all the time. It was sort of cute, actually. But I stomped that urge down immediately. This was a just friends thing. Besides, I didn't really want to sleep with him, anyway. The moment I did, he'd leave. So this was probably best for both of us.

Leading Rowan inside, I took him up to the counter so he could see the menu board and let him know what their best items were. When he placed his order I was surprised to see him wave me forward and tell me to add my coffee to his order. I tried to deny the kind gesture, but he insisted. Instead of making a scene, I just ordered and decided I'd get his next time we hung out.

It was a short wait to get our drinks and Rowan's sandwich, but by the time we sat down I was practically burning with questions.

"So, why the long day?" I asked, taking a sip of my iced coffee. "Work stuff?"

"Yeah," he nodded, taking a bite of his sandwich. "Boss is an idiot."

"They do that sometimes," I chuckled. "What does yours do?"

"He's a boomer."

"Ah. That explains it. Does he know how to use email?"

"It's the only thing he does know how to use and he uses it to fucking pester me all day long about stupid bullshit."

"Ooh," I grinned. "I like the passion. Keep going."

Rowan waved me off. "It's not important."

I leaned across the table. “Look, I love good work drama. So tell me about it.”

“The day’s over,” he sighed. “I don’t want to relive it.”

“Totally fair.” I took another sip. “My day was pretty blah. Just normal junk.”

“What do you do?”

“I work reception at a veterinary clinic,” I replied. “It’s like being a vet except I just get to pet animals all day and I don’t have to do the gross stuff. It doesn’t pay much, but it’s a fun job. I love seeing all those cute pups all day long.”

“Dogs are alright.”

“I really like it when people bring in bunnies or snakes or weird pets. That’s always fun.” I glanced up at him. “So what do you do?”

“Stupid corporate bullshit.”

“Ah. Flavor?”

“Software.”

“Oh. You must be one of those smart types.”

“I’m just a middle manager who hates his life.” He paused. “And actually, I’m a fucking idiot.”

I furrowed my brows, caught off guard by the ferocity of that last comment. “That’s a mean thing to say about yourself. I’ve only known you for twenty minutes and I can already tell you’re not an idiot.”

“If I wasn’t, I wouldn’t be here,” he said flatly.

“I know I shouldn’t,” I started hesitantly. “But I want to ask...”

Rowan shook his head. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“I figured from the way you said it.” I desperately searched for something else to say.

“Uh... so what do you like to do for fun?”

“I don’t really have time for fun.”

“Are you always this grumpy?”

The question seemed to catch him off guard. “I’m grumpy?”

I raised an eyebrow, but stayed silent.

He let out a long sigh. “I know. Sorry.”

“It’s alright. I think it’s kind of cute.” I froze. “Uh... I mean. It’s... you know... manly or something.”

I caught the faintest hint of a grin curling the edge of his lips and my heart swelled. Just that tiny movement made him so unbelievably attractive at that moment. I knew right then and there that I wanted to make him smile as much as possible.

“It doesn’t bother me when you say stuff like that you know,” he said. “My best friend is gay. I’m used to it.”

“You have a gay best friend?”

“Yeah. Have been since the end of college.”

“And you said it’s his cabin you’re staying at? I wonder if I know him.”

“He just inherited the place last year from his dead uncle. It’s right on Lake Michigan!”

“Well that’s lucky!”

“His uncle died, so maybe not that lucky…”

“Hey,” I said, holding my hands up. “Silver lining, right?”

He glared at me for a moment. “Are you always this chipper?”

“What do you mean?” I asked, putting on my best vacant smile as I crossed my eyes. I saw that grin pull at his lips again and my heart soared. “I know. I’m a bit much sometimes.”

“No,” Rowan replied. “It’s okay.”

“Just okay?” I tried to act offended. “What a glowing review.”

He looked me dead in the eye. “It’s kind of… cute.”

My heart skipped so hard I thought it had stopped all together. If he kept going the way he was, this man was going to kill me.

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I thought the coffee date went well. Not that it was a date of course, but just a completely platonic meeting between two men who definitely weren't interested in one another.

?Ahem.

?Anyway, the meeting went well. James and I parted with the beginning stages of friendship under our belts. I wouldn't say we were best friends, but I couldn't deny the fact that I wanted to hang out with him again, even if he was grossly positive all the time.

?I'd never met someone who could see a bright side to everything. The guy was impossible to bring down. It was kind of weird to be around, considering how completely fucking depressed I felt at the moment, but I figured it might be good for me. After all, I wasn't going to get any positivity from myself, so getting it from someone else seemed like the next best option. Granted, it didn't make me feel any better, but I couldn't just wallow in self-pity all the time, right?

?Our coffee date had been three days ago and now that the weekend was coming on again, I was feeling the need to see him. I'd had a little more time to grapple with the feelings I was having and had yet to come to any conclusions other than the fact that there were definitely some sexual urges there.

?Every time I looked at James, I couldn't see past how hot he was. I never thought I'd be thinking that another man was hot, but there it was. I wasn't sure if it was his lithe form, the beautiful blue eyes, or the way his shirt rode up when he stretched that made me drool like a dog.

?Of course, he caught me looking the first time he did it. After that, he did it at least three more times, confirming that I couldn't stop myself from staring. That was after I called him cute, which might have given him a little bit of a hint as to what I was after. I couldn't tell if he was just toying with me or interested. Either way, I was like a fish on a hook and I couldn't fight where James was concerned. I was swimming toward him willingly, knowing full well that this entire experiment could bring my entire self-image crashing down around me.

?But even with all that risk, the way he smiled at me gave my heart the tiniest lift out of the darkness. When those bright blue eyes looked my way, I forgot how depressed I was for half a second and the world seemed brighter. It only took a couple of those before I was hooked. Now I needed it like I needed air and no matter what I did, I couldn't get him off my mind.

?With a sigh, I pulled out my phone and flipped open the texting app. Sitting around torturing myself about texting him wasn't going to help me accomplish anything. I wanted to see him again, I knew that. I just hoped I wasn't making another huge mistake that would cost me dearly.

Me: Hey James, what's up?

James: Howdy stranger! I was wondering when you were going to reach out! I was starting to think I'd scared you off! :P

Me: You didn't. Just a busy week.

James: I get that. Hopefully you're less busy now?

Me: Yeah. Happy for the weekend I guess. But kinda bored. Not sure what to do around here.

James: So you texted me?

Me: Yes?

James: I'm honored :) What would you like to do?

Me: I don't know. Something I guess. What's there to do?

James: Well, there's lots of nature around here if that's your thing. Or there's a pretty decent bowling alley that does glow-bowl on Friday nights.

Me: Glow-bowl? Are you in middle school?

James: No, I just like to have fun! :) Besides, you're not exactly geriatric you goof

Me: I'm a helluva lot older than twelve though.

James: Age is just a number! But if you don't want to do that, we could go on a hike through the dunes. It's a great place to watch the sunset.

Me: That seems more my speed. Lots of noisy people and bowling balls is... meh.

James: What have you got against balls?

Me: Haha. Very funny. I can see why you like glow-bowl night. You've got that middle school humor.

James: I can't help it I have good taste in comedy :P I'll meet you at the state park in an hour?

Me: Sounds good.

?I slipped my phone in my pocket and got up from the couch. If I was going hiking, I'd need to find something appropriate to wear. Considering I'd only grabbed my flip-flops and junky tennis shoes on the way out of my old life, I needed to make a trip to the store.

???

?“Ooh,” James cooed the moment I stepped out of my SUV. “Nice boots.”

?“Thanks,” I grimaced. I was hoping he wouldn't notice. But I didn't have enough time to scuff them up before going to the park. “I didn't have any hiking shoes.”

?“You should've asked,” James said, glancing down at his bare feet and wiggling his toes. “You won't need any.”

?“Uh... you aren't worried about glass or anything?”

?“Nope! I've been hiking out here a million times without shoes and I never have any issues.” He smiled wide, his bright eyes catching the sunlight. “People around here are really good about taking care of the environment. They just know how special this place is.”

?I couldn't help lifting an eyebrow in his direction. People? Good? I doubted it.

?“And besides, I don't want to end up with three pounds of sand in my boots.”

?Yeah, I didn't believe him. Positivity was one thing but blind trust? That was gonna be a no from me dawg.

?“I'll take my chances,” I replied. “Besides, I need to break them in anyway.”

?“Oh? Do you hike a lot?”

?“Not at all.”

?He cocked his head to the side in confusion. “You bought boots just for this outing?”

?“I guess?” I glanced down at them, suddenly nervous. “Is that wrong?”

?“No. Just seems expensive.”

?“I guess I’ll just have to start hiking then.” I looked around at the woods surrounding us. “Don’t they say nature is good for your mood or some dumb shit like that?”

?James burst out laughing. “Yeah. I guess they say that.”

?“Probably about time I start exercising again, anyway.”

?“You look like that and you don’t exercise?!” He pointed at my arms and to my chest. “You’re kinda fucking built.”

?“You think so?” I glanced down at myself, not really seeing anything impressive. “I do some push-ups sometimes when I’m stressed out at work, but nothing crazy.”

?“Fuck.” James shook his head. “You must be really stressed out then. I didn’t realize it was so bad.”

?A grin threatened to spread over my face, but I forced it back. However, James noticed and a big smile filled his face instead.

?“It’s okay to smile,” he said gently. He was looking at me that way again, like there was something besides just friendship bouncing around in that brain of his. It

shouldn't have turned me on as much as it did. "I don't mind."

"I'll try to remember that." I waved him on as I started toward the woods. "Come on. I want to see if this place was worth the boots."

"Have you ever seen a sunset on Lake Michigan," James asked, hiking a backpack onto his shoulders.

"No."

"Then don't worry. This is gonna be the best hike you've ever been on. I guarantee it."

He strode ahead, his bare feet digging into the dirt as we started up the trail. I let myself fall back a few steps, a grin pulling at my lips again. From this position I could not only hide my amusement, but it also gave me a view of the nicest ass I'd ever seen.

I doubted a sunset was gonna be better than that.

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“Itold you,” I laughed as Rowan plopped down at the top of the massive sand dune and kicked off his boots. He turned them over, pouring out an astounding amount of sand. “Bare feet is the way to go.”

“It”s gonna be so much lighter walking back,” he sighed, watching the sand stream out of his boots. He pulled off his sock too, wiggling his toes into the sand. “You could”ve warned me how steep it was.”

“I figured you”d already seen the dunes from town. They”re huge.”

“I did, I just didn”t know we”d be climbing them.”

“What”s a good hike without breaking a sweat?” I grinned widely. “It feels good!”

“You”re one of those types aren”t you? The kind that gets some sort of sick thrill out of being in pain.”

“I mean, being smacked around isn”t the worst.” I felt the heat flush to my cheeks. “That was probably TMI...”

“It”s fine,” he sighed. “My girlfriend was into that shit too.” He suddenly froze up. “Uh... ex girlfriend I mean.”

That”s what was going on! At last he gave me some sort of clue as to why he was such a grump all the time. But I contained my excitement at this new revelation. I didn”t want him to think I was enjoying his pain. On the contrary, I wished I could take it away.

“Can I ask what happened?” I paused for a moment. “You said was... did she die?”

“No,” he grumbled. “Although that might’ve made things easier. At least I could’ve pretended she still liked me instead of seeing her getting railed by another dude in our bed.”

“Oh wow...” This was something I couldn’t find a silver lining in. Not this time. “I’m sorry that happened to you.”

“Eh, whatever,” he scoffed. “It doesn’t matter, anyway.”

“It sounds like it matters a lot.”

Rowan glanced over at me, the sadness in his eyes plain to see. But there was something else there too, a look that begged me to change the subject. I had a feeling he’s never wanted to talk about his ex girlfriend to begin with. It must have just slipped out.

“We can talk about my love life if you prefer,” I offered. “It’s pretty bad too.”

“You get cheated on too?”

“No. But I’m pretty sure my literal ass is cursed.”

He lifted an eyebrow.

“Every time I let a man take me to bed, he never comes back.” I couldn’t help a pitiful laugh. “I must be really bad in bed.”

I saw that attempted grin again. At least that cheered in up a little. I plopped down in the sand beside him, stretching out and leaning back on my elbows. I pushed the bag

between us and pulled it open.

“I brought water and snacks,” I smiled. “Help yourself.”

“You think of everything.”

“I do what I can.”

I grabbed a water bottle and downed half of it before dropping it back in the bag. When I leaned back, I noticed my shirt had ridden up and my shorts were pulled tight over my junk. Rowan’s eyes were already glued to the patch of skin just above my waistband and I did nothing to remove his temptation. After all, I kind of liked the attention. And now that I knew he was single, I was feeling a bit flirty. Considering how depressed he was, it might not have been the most ethical choice, but at least the eye candy would help him feel better, right? If that wasn’t philanthropy, I didn’t know what was.

“This is my favorite place in all of town,” I said, staring out at the horizon as the sun sank lower. “The sunsets here are the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.” I glanced up, giving him a wink. “Present company excluded of course.”

“Right,” he said, clearly not believing me. “I’m sure a thirty something with emotional baggage really drives you crazy.”

I gave him a light shove. “You should be kinder to yourself. You’re extremely handsome.”

“I don’t know about that...”

Was this straight man fishing for compliments? I wasn’t sure. But he didn’t seem uncomfortable, so I wasn’t going to stop.

“I’m serious! Those brown eyes and that messy blond hair. You must have everyone drooling over you.”

“Not as much as you might think.” His gaze flicked in my direction before going back to the sand. “I’m sure you can have any guy you want.”

“Yeah,” I nodded. “But not because they like me or care about me. I’m just a fantasy to them.”

“A fantasy?”

“Yep.” I could see his confusion. “I’m a twink to guys and nothing more. Just another square on their gay bingo card.”

“Adam has said that word before,” he replied. “I never understood it though.”

“It just means I’m young, skinny, and fairly hairless. It’s just gay lingo for a body type.”

“And that’s a fantasy?”

“Yep.”

Rowan looked over himself. “What am I?”

“Well, I’ve seen you shirtless and I wouldn’t call you a bear or an otter. But you’re too muscular to be a twink and you don’t really have the attitude for a twink.” I paused looking him over. “You’ve got sort of a jock build but a boy next door sort of vibe.”

“Those were all words I’ve heard before,” he nodded. “But in a new order I don’t

understand.”

“Eh, labels aren’t important,” I smiled. “You’re handsome and kind, that’s what matters.”

“I’m not that kind.” He crossed his arms, staring out toward the horizon. “And I hate everything.”

I placed a hand on his shoulder gently. “Being hurt and upset doesn’t mean you’re unkind. It just means you’re going through stuff.”

He shrugged my hand off. “Whatever.”

I took his meaning. He was done talking about feelings. Time to move on to a less serious topic. I’d already pushed the poor guy enough as it was.

“What a granola bar?” I asked, rooting around through my bag. “I’ve got an apple in here, a soft chocolate bar, and some beef jerky as well.”

“You have jerky?” he asked incredulously.

I laughed. “Why? Do I not look like the type?”

“Not really. You don’t wear enough camo for that.”

“It’s tasty,” I smiled. “And I buy the all-natural kind that’s not full of preservatives so I can share it with the pups at work.”

“So... you’re offering me dog treats?”

“It’s human food!” I scoffed. “It’s just also happens to be good for dogs.”

?He lifted an eyebrow, reaching in and taking a granola bar. “I think I’ll pass on the dog treats.”

?“Suit yourself,” I replied, taking out a piece of jerky and popping it into my mouth. “You’re missing out.”

?A comfortable silence fell over us as we munched away. Both of us stared toward the western horizon as the sun got lower and lower in the sky. The clouds overhead went from blue to purple to stunning golds and pinks all at once. The lake looked like it was on fire as the sunlight danced off the waves. I couldn’t help a few sighs as I watched. There was just something so beautiful about being out there at that time of day. I never got tired of it.

?Out of the corner of my eye I saw Rowan glance my way more than once. His eyes always went to my exposed midriff then down to my bulge before he snapped them back toward the horizon. I heard him gulp audibly a couple of times and it took everything I had to bite back my laughter.

?For a straight man, he seemed to be going through it. Maybe it was my confidence that surprised him or maybe he’d just never been around another guy who didn’t care about that sort of thing. But I had a feeling it was because he liked what he saw. The more he looked, the closer he pulled his knees to his chest, and I had a sneaking suspicion that he might’ve been hiding something.

?Had I given this poor man a boner? And if I had, did I really care? No, I didn’t. Actually I found it kind of hot. I mean, it was a bit stereotypical that I had the straight guy fantasy like every other gay guy. And I’d also just got done telling Rowan how I didn’t like being a fantasy to other guys. But that didn’t stop me from liking the attention. Besides, he’d called me cute last time we hung out. That had to mean something, right?

?After the sun had finally set and the color started to fade from the sky, I realized it was time to go. We had a long trek back to the car, and it was going to be dark by the time we got there. Thankfully I had a flashlight in my bag as well, but I still didn't like being in the woods after dark. Last year someone had spotted a wolf in the park and I wasn't keen to run into one myself.

?“We should probably get going,” I said, stretching and pushing myself back to my feet. “I don't want to keep you out all night and it's gonna get cold fast out here.”

?Rowan nodded. “Alright.” I went to grab the backpack, but Rowan took it before me, throwing it over his shoulder. “You carried it up here so I'll take it back. It's only fair.”

?I nodded with a smile. “Okay.”

?He was such a gentleman.

?We started back down the dune, slipping and sliding our way to the base. I was fairly certain Rowan's boots were already full of sand again, but he didn't say anything. Leading the way, I took us through the wood via the most direct path back to the parking lot. The moment we were under the trees, everything got a lot darker. Nighttime came on much faster under the canopy and it took a moment for my eyes to adjust. There wasn't enough light to see detail, but I could still make out the path just fine.

?“It's another half mile,” I said, waving Rowan on. “Not too far—”

?A searing pain shot through the bottom of my foot and I cried out. I fell forward, heading for the dirt when a pair of hands caught me from behind, bringing me back to my feet. But I could already feel the hot wetness of blood flowing across the bottom of my foot.

“Are you okay?!” Rowan asked, panic clear in his voice. “What’s wrong?!”

“Something got me,” I replied, managing a weak smile. I spotted a fallen tree only a few yards away. “Help me. We need to see what it is.”

Rowan helped me limp over to the tree and sat me down. I pulled out my phone and flipped on the flashlight. I didn’t flinch when I saw the mix of blood and dirt plastered to the bottom of my foot. However, even in the dark I could see the color leave Rowan’s face.

“It doesn’t look that bad,” I said, leaning down to get a better look. I hissed through my teeth as I poked at it. “But it hurts like a motherfucker and it’ll need stitches.”

“Should I call an ambulance? What if it gets infected?!” I could hear the panic in his voice. “Are there predators around here that can smell blood?”

“Rowan,” I said gently. “Calm down. It’s going to be fine. Take a deep breath.”

He did.

“There’s no need to call an ambulance and I’ll get it cleaned out so we don’t have to worry about infection.” I couldn’t help a small chuckle. “And last time I checked, there are no sharks in these woods, so I think we’re fine.” I pulled him down to sit on the log next to me. “Hold my phone while I clean this, okay?”

Rowan did as he was told. I rummaged through my bag, finding the small first aid kit I always kept in there. Working in a vet clinic taught me that life favored the prepared, so I made sure to have one on me all the time.

Using what was left of our water, I washed the wound free of dirt and grime. The cut was deep, but clean, telling me I’d probably stepped on a piece of glass. Thankfully

there was none lodged inside. That made things easier.

I dabbed a fair amount of iodine on the wound, turning it a gross brown color in the process. But I knew that would take care of any infection issues for the most part. After that I put on a few gauze pads and wrapped it up tight to staunch the bleeding. Meanwhile, Rowan looked like he was about to pass out.

“Okay,” I said at last, packing everything away again. “I’m gonna need your help to get back to the car. I can’t walk on this.”

“I’ll carry you.”

I shook my head. “It’s okay, I can just lean on you.”

“No.” He got up, threw the backpack over his shoulders, and scooped me up like I weighed nothing. “I don’t want to take a chance of you getting hurt again.”

Despite the pain, I felt myself swoon a bit as he hefted me into his arms easily. “Okay,” I stammered, biting my lower lip. “If you say so.”

He started back down the path once more. “Maybe you should consider shoes next time.”

“Yeah,” I sighed, leaning my head on his shoulder.

But secretly, I was almost glad I’d stepped on the glass. I never would’ve gotten to ride in his arms any other way.

Talk about a good way to end a hike with a beautiful man.

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“Avet clinic?” I balked. “Really? What the hell are they gonna do for you?”

“I work here,” James replied, smiling as always. “The vet stays here late on Fridays to finish up paperwork. He’ll get me stitched up.”

“But this place is for dogs! And you’re not a dog!”

“Astute observation,” James sighed. “But they have everything here you’d find at a hospital and it won’t cost me the next ten years of my life to pay off.” He gave me a stern look, cutting off any further argument. “Now help me inside.”

I did as I was told, coming around to the passenger side of my car to retrieve him. We’d had to leave his car at the park because his foot was too injured to drive. Even though he resisted, telling me he could handle it, I wouldn’t hear of it. Besides, even if he got a parking ticket or something, I’d pay for it. I didn’t care about that.

Scooping James into my arms once more, I headed for the front of the building. To no one’s surprise, it was locked, and the place looked closed save for a light coming from the back office. James rapped on the glass door, but when there was no answer, he pulled out his phone and began to dial. A couple of rings and someone picked up.

“Hey Doc,” James said. “I’m out front of the clinic. Can you let me and my friend in? We need your help.”

I heard a voice respond, but I couldn’t make out what he said. A moment later the lights popped on in the front lobby and a man wearing a pair of dusty blue scrubs pushed the front door open.

?“James? What’s going on?” He glanced down at the bandaged foot that was red with blood and sighed. “What did you do now?”

?“You say that like this happens all the time!” James retorted. “I’ve only ever come to you once for help and that was because I found a puppy!”

?Doc lifted an eyebrow. “You didn’t have just one puppy, you had seven puppies. And you were here two months ago when you had that weird rash.”

?I felt my cheeks burn in embarrassment. The last thing I wanted to do was hear about James’ mysterious rashes.

?Of course, he noticed and immediately tried to save himself. “It was just poison ivy!”

?“Yeah, but it was on your ass,” Doc replied with a grin. “And other places. Can imagine how you got it...”

?“Alright, alright! Will you just help me please?”

?That was the first time I’d ever heard James get flustered. Usually he was all smiles and happy sunshine. But this veterinarian kept him on his toes.

?“Yeah, come on in. Let’s make sure you’re not gonna get gangrene and die.”

?Doc waved us in and I followed with James still in my arms. He led us toward one of the patient rooms and had me place James on the stainless steel bench in the center that was usually reserved for pets. James put his foot up on the table and Doc started pulling the bandages away.

?“Is... is this sanitary?” I asked, staring at the bench that probably had twelve

different dogs on it today alone.

?“Everything in the rooms is sanitized between patients,” Doc replied, not looking up from his work. “It’s probably cleaner here than it is in most hospitals. We’re not understaffed and working twenty-four hours a day like most nurses, so things actually get done properly here.”

?“Oh. Okay.” I paused for a moment. “Is he gonna be okay?”

?Doc glanced up at me, smirked, then looked at James. “He’s gonna be fine. Don’t you worry.” He tossed the bloody bandages into a trash can under the bench. “What did you step on?”

?“Glass I think. The cut’s pretty clean.”

?“Barefoot again?”

?James sighed. “Yes...”

?“I told you to stop doing that, you silly boy.”

?“So did I,” I added.

?“Finally,” Doc laughed. “A man that speaks sense. Much better than that last idiot you were dating. Hold on to this one.”

?I opened my mouth to correct him, but my heart practically dropped out of my butt at his assumption and I found it very difficult to produce sound.

?“You cleaned it with iodine?”

?“Yeah,” James nodded, clearly unperturbed by his boss’ comments. “I think it needs stitches.”

?“It does,” Doc replied. “But I only have anesthetic spray. I don’t have any shots for people.”

?“That’s fine, Doc.”

?“You sure? That’s gonna hurt like hell.”

?“Can’t hurt more than it already does.”

?Doc sighed. “We’ll see.”

?“You’re going to sew him up?” I asked, my embarrassment suddenly forgotten.

?“He needs it.”

?“I... I don’t know if I want to see that...” I could feel my face flush white again. “I’m not great with blood and stuff.”

?“You can sit in the waiting room,” Doc offered.

?“Go ahead,” James smiled. “I’ll be fine.”

?I fought with myself for a moment. I wanted to stay there and be supportive of James because I knew how much pain he must be in. But my stomach was also turning at the idea of seeing a needle pushed through his skin. Still, I couldn’t bear the thought of leaving him. I didn’t know why either. It wasn’t like he belonged to me and we definitely weren’t involved. However, I wanted to be there at his side. I had to be.

?Just as I was about to leave, I spotted another rolling chair on the far side of the room. I grabbed it and pulled it over to the stainless steel table, climbing in so I was facing away from James' feet.

?“I’ll stay,” I said, a flood of anxiety filling my chest. I was so far out of my comfort zone, but I couldn’t help it. James was hurt, and I felt like I had to be there for him. “For moral support.”

?James nodded with a smile and held out his hand. “For moral support.”

?I took his hand, the butterflies in my stomach erupting all at once. It was such a small gesture, but there was something so deeply intimate about having his fingers laced through mine. I felt like my hands were made for his, like his were the ones I’d been searching for all my life whenever I went to take someone’s hand.

?I couldn’t help rolling my eyes at myself. That was a stupid thing to think. Good thing I didn’t say it out loud because that was some cheesy bullshit for the movies. Real life wasn’t that nice.

?However, I didn’t get to dwell on it for too long as James’ fingers squeezed around mine.

?“Brace yourself,” Doc said with a click of his tongue.

?The next five minutes were some of the weirdest and most uncomfortable of my life. And that being said after I found some other dude fucking my girlfriend. James winced and squeezed my hand as Doc sewed him up. But, to his credit, he didn’t cry out or even whimper. The dude was a fucking trooper. But then again, after some of the things I heard gay guys go through in the bedroom from Adam, James was probably a lot tougher than his soft smiley facade might imply.

?“Well, that should about do it,” Doc said at last, leaning back from James’ foot.

?I stole a glance downward, surprised to see that not only was his foot stitched, but completely cleaned and bandaged once again. It almost looked like nothing had every happened to begin with.

?“You know to keep that clean,” Doc added. “And to stay off it. I won’t expect you in the office all next week while that heals.”

?“I can’t take that much time off work!” James protested. “You guys need the help! And well... I need a paycheck.”

?“It’s not going to break the bank to pay you for normal hours, so don’t worry about that.” Doc pulled off his nitrile gloves and tossed them in the trash can. “However, when you get back you’ll be on cleaning duty. And if I ever hear of you walking barefoot out in a public park again, I won’t be stitching you up. You can go deal with the hospital.”

?“Ugh... fine. That’s fair I guess.”

?“And you,” Doc said, pointing at me. “Make sure this boy wears some shoes. You seem to have some sense, so keep him in line.”

?“Oh... uh... we’re not together...” I was having a hard time looking Doc in the eyes as I said that. “He’s just a friend.”

?“Uh-huh,” the vet nodded. Clearly he didn’t believe me. “Right. Still make him wear shoes though.”

?My cheeks were burning. “I’ll do my best.”

?“If that starts to look even remotely infected, you call me. I don’t care what time it is.”

?“Don’t worry,” James smiled. “I know what to watch for.”

?“Good.” Doc huffed, stood up from his stool, and stretched. “Now get out of my office. I want to go home. It’s the weekend for Christ’s sake.”

?James started to slide off the table, but Doc stopped him.

?“What are you doing? You can’t put any weight on that with fresh stitches in.”

?“I have to walk, Doc.”

?“Your friend carried you in,” he replied, glancing over at me with one eyebrow raised. “He can carry you out.” He paused. “In fact, it wouldn’t be a bad idea for you to have someone to look after you, at least for the weekend.” Doc turned to me, a serious look on his face. “Can he stay with you for the weekend?”

?“Uh...”

?“You don’t have to do that, Rowan.” James looked suddenly embarrassed for the first time. “We just met. You hardly know me.”

?“You can stay,” I nodded, surprised by the words that came out of my own mouth. “It’s a two-bedroom cabin, so I’ve got room.”

?“Then it’s all settled,” Doc smiled. “Now go away.”

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Surprise wasn't quite a strong enough word when I felt my phone vibrate in my pocket. The moment my gaze fell on the screen and saw the message, my jaw fell open.

Unknown: Hey James, it's Rowan.

I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming. The cute grumpy boy from the beach was texting me? He actually used my phone number? After his rejection, I was a million percent certain I'd never hear from him again. Why would I? He wasn't into men and he definitely didn't seem to be into me. But there was his message on my screen and it filled my mind with a thousand different questions.

I forced myself to take a step back, checking myself before my thoughts ran away from me. He told me he wasn't into guys and he didn't seem very fond of my compliments, so I could forget all about that possibility right now. However, I had offered to be his friend and show him around. That part he seemed less averse to, but still a bit on the fence. If he was texting me for anything, it was just to be friends. Nothing more was ever going to come of it.

Curbing that last tiny spark of hope in my chest was difficult and as much as I tried, I could still feel it there. So I chose to ignore it. Flipping the messaging app open, I began to text back.

Me: Hey Rowan! Glad to hear from you :) How's it going?

Rowan: Fine I guess.

Me: That's good.

Rowan: Yeah.

I stared at the screen, my brows furrowed in confusion. Why had this dude texted me if he wasn't going to say anything? Maybe I needed to prod him a bit.

Me: So what's up?

Rowan: I think I want to take you up on your offer. I don't have any friends here and I don't know anything about this place. Maybe you could show me those cool spots you mentioned or something.

Me: I'd be happy to! What kind of things are you into?

Rowan: I don't know. Maybe just some place quiet.

Me: Do you like coffee?

Rowan: Yeah. It's alright.

Me: Let's start with a cafe then! We can just hang out and chat and get to know one another!

Rowan: Great.

Me: When are you free?

Rowan: Tonight okay? After five?

Me: Sounds perfect! I'll text you the address and meet you there!

Rowan: Cool

Well, he wasn't much of a conversationalist, I'll give him that. And judging by his use of punctuation, he seemed about as excited to hang out with me as a person going to get a flu shot. But I tried to give him the benefit of the doubt. I'd already learned by accident that he was an orphan and probably grew up in the foster system. I couldn't imagine that left people with the greatest of attitudes toward life.

Maybe he just needed someone to show him that life could be fun. I always enjoyed helping people. In fact, if I was being totally honest, I was a fixer. The moment I saw someone in trouble or in need of help, I was there. It had gotten me into trouble several times with guys I tried to date. The problem with dating someone that needed to be fixed was that sometimes they didn't want to be fixed. Then there was butting heads and fighting and it never ended well.

So it was probably a good idea not to try to fix Rowan. Instead, I decided I would take a completely different approach. This time I'd just let him be himself. Sure, I'd do my best to learn what I could about him so I could understand his point of view, but I wouldn't try to cheer him up. I'd just accept him the way he was.

That felt like a very mature decision.

???

A couple of hours later I was pulling into the cafe parking lot after work. I spotted Rowan's SUV almost immediately and saw him sitting in the driver's seat staring at his phone. He looked totally out of it, like he was doomscrolling just to pass the time.

I tried to shut my car door loudly in the hopes of getting him to look up. But when he didn't, I walked over and knocked on his window.

I'd never seen a man jump so high in my life. His head nearly went through the roof of his car and his phone went flying. I tried not to, but the look on his face had tears streaming down my face as I doubled over, clutching my belly as I laughed.

"I'm sorry!" I said as he opened the door, still cackling to myself. "I wasn't trying not to scare you."

"It's fine," he grumbled. "I wasn't paying attention."

"You looked like you were zoning out a bit."

"Yeah. Long day."

"Well," I replied, finally straightening up. "Let's get you some coffee and you can tell me all about it."

He paused. "Do they have food here?"

I nodded. "Yeah. Not much variety, but they have sandwiches and stuff."

"That's fine." He glanced away. "I... I'm not much of a cook and I forgot to eat today."

How the hell could someone forget to eat?! That was like my favorite thing to do!

"Uh... do you want to go somewhere with more food choices?"

"No. This is okay."

"Okay. Well let's get you something to eat before you pass out on me."

I gave him a big smile, but he just nodded. It was odd, but I honestly didn't mind that he was grumpy all the time. It was sort of cute, actually. But I stomped that urge down immediately. This was a just friends thing. Besides, I didn't really want to sleep with him, anyway. The moment I did, he'd leave. So this was probably best for both of us.

Leading Rowan inside, I took him up to the counter so he could see the menu board and let him know what their best items were. When he placed his order I was surprised to see him wave me forward and tell me to add my coffee to his order. I tried to deny the kind gesture, but he insisted. Instead of making a scene, I just ordered and decided I'd get his next time we hung out.

It was a short wait to get our drinks and Rowan's sandwich, but by the time we sat down I was practically burning with questions.

"So, why the long day?" I asked, taking a sip of my iced coffee. "Work stuff?"

"Yeah," he nodded, taking a bite of his sandwich. "Boss is an idiot."

"They do that sometimes," I chuckled. "What does yours do?"

"He's a boomer."

"Ah. That explains it. Does he know how to use email?"

"It's the only thing he does know how to use and he uses it to fucking pester me all day long about stupid bullshit."

"Ooh," I grinned. "I like the passion. Keep going."

Rowan waved me off. "It's not important."

I leaned across the table. “Look, I love good work drama. So tell me about it.”

“The day’s over,” he sighed. “I don’t want to relive it.”

“Totally fair.” I took another sip. “My day was pretty blah. Just normal junk.”

“What do you do?”

“I work reception at a veterinary clinic,” I replied. “It’s like being a vet except I just get to pet animals all day and I don’t have to do the gross stuff. It doesn’t pay much, but it’s a fun job. I love seeing all those cute pups all day long.”

“Dogs are alright.”

“I really like it when people bring in bunnies or snakes or weird pets. That’s always fun.” I glanced up at him. “So what do you do?”

“Stupid corporate bullshit.”

“Ah. Flavor?”

“Software.”

“Oh. You must be one of those smart types.”

“I’m just a middle manager who hates his life.” He paused. “And actually, I’m a fucking idiot.”

I furrowed my brows, caught off guard by the ferocity of that last comment. “That’s a mean thing to say about yourself. I’ve only known you for twenty minutes and I can already tell you’re not an idiot.”

“If I wasn’t, I wouldn’t be here,” he said flatly.

“I know I shouldn’t,” I started hesitantly. “But I want to ask...”

Rowan shook his head. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“I figured from the way you said it.” I desperately searched for something else to say.

“Uh... so what do you like to do for fun?”

“I don’t really have time for fun.”

“Are you always this grumpy?”

The question seemed to catch him off guard. “I’m grumpy?”

I raised an eyebrow, but stayed silent.

He let out a long sigh. “I know. Sorry.”

“It’s alright. I think it’s kind of cute.” I froze. “Uh... I mean. It’s... you know... manly or something.”

I caught the faintest hint of a grin curling the edge of his lips and my heart swelled. Just that tiny movement made him so unbelievably attractive at that moment. I knew right then and there that I wanted to make him smile as much as possible.

“It doesn’t bother me when you say stuff like that you know,” he said. “My best friend is gay. I’m used to it.”

“You have a gay best friend?”

“Yeah. Have been since the end of college.”

Our night wasn't even close to over after the vet's office. The first thing we did was make a quick trip back to James' apartment so that he could grab some essentials. Well, so that I could grab them for him. After that it was picking up dinner on the way home. Ludington was a small town and if it had been any other night but Friday, everything would've been closed. Lucky for us James knew a little bar that made, according to him, the best chicken strips in town. He put in an order that I stopped and picked up on the way home.

By the time I pulled into the driveway the entire car smelled of deep fried food and I felt like I might starve to death if I didn't get to eat them soon. I carried James inside, his bag and our food cradled in his arms. We parked on the couch and dug in, both of us ravenous after a long hike and a very long detour on the way back home.

But after the first few bites, I found it hard to concentrate on the food. All I could keep doing was glancing up at James over and over again, hoping that he didn't notice how much I was gawking. Despite his accident earlier in the night, he was still a pinnacle of joy and sunshine. Nothing got that guy down. A part of me admired his tenacity, but the louder side of me found it more than a little annoying. Some asshole had left broken glass at the beach that just put him through a world of pain. How could he not be upset about that?

However, all that being said, I couldn't help feeling a little grateful about the glass. If it hadn't happened, James would be at his own place right now and I'd be in this cabin alone, probably skipping dinner again. Even though he was all bandaged up, it was nice to have someone to eat with. I'd grown so used to sharing meals with Mia that it felt odd to eat alone this past week. Having James there gave me a small sense of normalcy that I didn't know I'd been craving. And all thanks to his accident.

Did it make me a bad person that I was enjoying it?

“I can hear the cogs turning from here,” James smiled, giving me a playful nudge. “Is the chicken really that good?”

I shook myself out of it. “Sorry. Spaced out.” I paused. “Uh, yeah. I guess the chicken is good.”

“You guess?!” He was completely flabbergasted. “These are the best chickie fingies in town!”

“What the hell did you just say?” I asked, furrowing my brows.

“Chickie fingies?”

“Chickie fingies?!” I couldn’t help the smile that spread over my face. “That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard. Are you a toddler?!”

James just shrugged, enjoying my reaction. “That’s what they are.”

“Oh my god...” I shook my head. “I never expected to hear a grown man say that. Or anyone for that matter.”

I looked up, noticing he was staring at me.

“What?” I asked, suddenly self conscious.

“You have a really beautiful smile. You should wear it more often.”

“I... reserve it for special occasions,” I replied, already feeling it slip away. “It doesn’t come out much lately.”

“That’s okay. It was worth it.”

Those damn butterflies in my stomach were going crazy again. Anxiety rushed through my chest and I felt the heat in my cheeks. When he looked at me like that... I couldn't explain it. Everything just went haywire and my heart began to tap dance in my chest. Something about him drove me crazy, but I didn't understand why.

"So," I said, pulling my gaze away. "How long have you worked at the vet clinic?"

"Only about a year," James replied, going back to his food. Although I could still see him keeping an eye on me, hoping I would smile again. "I plan on staying there as long as I can. At least until I go to vet school."

"Is that something you want to do?"

He shrugged. "Maybe. I'm not really sure. It's an idea though."

"And your boss has stitched you up before?"

James laughed. "Well, that was the first time he's had to sew me back together. There was the rash thing he so nicely reminded me of." He glanced in my direction. "Do yourself a favor, never get poison ivy on your junk. It's awful."

"How did you do that?"

He lifted an eyebrow, a mischievous smirk curling over his lips.

"Ah. Gotcha."

"And the puppies weren't my fault," he continued, shifting the subject. "I was driving home after work and I found a box of them on the side of the road. Someone had just abandoned them and they looked malnourished already. I couldn't just leave them there."

“Are you kidding me?” I felt the anger rise in my chest, my neck burning. “Someone just dumped them on the side of the road.”

“Yep. Some of the trashy people around here... they’re awful.”

“That’s fucking disgusting,” I hissed, ripping a piece of my chicken strip free with my teeth. “Absolutely revolting!”

James laughed at my sudden show of passion. “Well, you’ll be happy to know that we saved them all, and they all found great homes. One of them even went home with Doc.”

“Good. No dog deserves that. Especially not a pup.”

“Agreed.”

“So... is Doc his real name then?”

James was perplexed for a moment, then laughed as he realized what I meant. “No. His name is Dr. Keegan.”

“What’s his first name?”

“Not a clue. All I know is that he’s single, and he has a dog now.”

“What?”

“That’s why I call him Doc,” James smiled, as if it were the most obvious thing in the entire world. “Now everyone at the office calls him that.”

“Does anyone know his name?”

“Oh probably.”

“And he knows you’re gay?”

That question surprised him. “Yeah. Everyone does. Why?”

I shrugged. “I don’t know. It just seems kind of personal, I guess. I wouldn’t want to go around having to tell everyone my sexuality all the time. It seems uncomfortable.”

“Well, you don’t have to,” he replied matter-of-factly.

“What do you mean?”

“You dated a woman, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Tell me, how many times in your life has anyone assumed you were gay? Asked you about your boyfriend? Or even tried to set you up with another man?”

“Never,” I replied. “Well, until tonight. Doc thought we were together.”

“And did you ever sit any of those people down and tell them you were straight?”

“No…”

He nodded. “That’s what I mean. People who look and speak like you are assumed straight. You don’t have to inform people of your sexuality because they just assume you’re normal.” He made quotations in the air with his fingers. “People did the same to me until I came out and I have to keep coming out to all the new people I meet so I don’t have to have any awkward conversations about girls I’m not interested in with

them.” He took another bite of his food. “It’s just something straight people don’t think about. When you’re the default setting, you don’t have to explain yourself. But when you’re different, people don’t know what to do unless you give them some directions.”

“Oh...” I sat there for a moment, feeling kind of uncomfortable. “I... I feel like I should apologize.”

“No need,” he smiled. “I was just explaining. But now you know.” He took another bite. “But, between you and me, the way I dress and the way I talk give me away most times now. The more I lean into who I am, the less I have to explain myself, which is nice.”

I took a moment to collect my thoughts. “Thank you for explaining it to me,” I said at last. “Adam and I have never talked about that sort of thing. I know he’s gay, but he doesn’t talk much about the experience I guess.”

“If you ever have a question, just ask,” James said, patting me on the thigh. “I’ll answer whatever you want. No topic off limits.”

I’ll admit, I didn’t hear much of what he said the moment his hand came to rest on my thigh. His touch was like a bolt of lightning through my system. Everything went into overdrive all at once. The butterflies in my stomach erupted, my heart raced, goosebumps broke out over my skin, and I felt a distinct twitch in my pants. And that twitch was rapidly swelling into a problem that I wouldn’t be able to hide in the thin shorts I was wearing.

“Let me... uh... go make sure your room is ready,” I said suddenly, dropping my food on the coffee table and getting up.

As I stood, James’ fingers grazed my groin. It was completely my fault, but it made

me blush about a hundred times harder.

“There’s no rush,” he began.

“It’s fine!”

I practically ran across the room, all too aware that my chub was quickly becoming a full on rager. By the time I pushed my way through the second bedroom door and shut it behind me, my shorts were fully tented. I leaned against the wall, breathing hard. I’d never gotten that hard that fast in my entire life. It was like someone had found the secret formula after all these years of getting close enough. It was almost terrifying how fast it had happened.

But what was actually terrifying were two simultaneous realizations I had.

One, I was very obviously more attracted to men than I previously thought.

And two, there was no fucking bed in the second bedroom.

“And you said it’s his cabin you’re staying at? I wonder if I know him.”

“He just inherited the place last year from his dead uncle. It’s right on Lake Michigan!”

“Well that’s lucky!”

“His uncle died, so maybe not that lucky...”

“Hey,” I said, holding my hands up. “Silver lining, right?”

He glared at me for a moment. “Are you always this chipper?”

“What do you mean?” I asked, putting on my best vacant smile as I crossed my eyes. I saw that grin pull at his lips again and my heart soared. “I know. I’m a bit much sometimes.”

“No,” Rowan replied. “It’s okay.”

“Just okay?” I tried to act offended. “What a glowing review.”

He looked me dead in the eye. “It’s kind of... cute.”

My heart skipped so hard I thought it had stopped all together. If he kept going the way he was, this man was going to kill me.

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Rowan had been gone for nearly five minutes when he finally returned to the living room and delivered the news.

?“Uh... there’s no bed in that room,” he said, his face flushed.

?“Oh,” I replied, not really sure what to say. “So... what’s in there then?”

?He turned even redder. “It’s... It’s...”

?I was getting concerned. “Is it a body?”

?Rowan shook his head.

?“Is it something we need to call the police about?”

?He shook his head again. “It’s uh... a sex swing.”

?“WHAT?!”

I was on my feet before I could help myself, my injured foot giving out beneath me. Rowan caught me and pulled me back to my feet.

?“You can’t walk on that, remember?”

?“Show me the sex swing!”

?“What? No! That’s gross!”

?“Then I’ll walk myself!”

?I started to try, but he pulled me off my feet easily, scooping me into his arms as he scolded me. But when he saw that I wasn’t giving up, he sighed and looked away.

?“If I show you... will you please behave?”

?I wasn’t gonna lie, I kinda liked it when he scolded me. “Alright, I promise,” I said, holding up three fingers on my right hand. “Scout’s honor.”

?“This is so fucking embarrassing,” he grumbled as he carried me toward the door.

?“Don’t be embarrassed. It’s not your cabin.”

?“No... but Adam didn’t tell me this place was his sex den.” He sighed again. “Why would he let me stay here?”

?“Because he’s a good friend trying to help you out,” I replied, giving him a pat on the shoulder. “A sex swing is just a bonus.”

?Rowan grumbled some more, but I couldn’t make out what he was saying. However, I was practically writhing with anticipation as he pushed open the bedroom door with his foot. My eyes widened as my gaze came to rest on the first sex swing I’d ever seen in person.

?It was a lot bigger than I expected. Someone had gone through the trouble of installing hard points in the ceiling, attaching them to the rafters above the drywall. Four eye hooks extended down connected to carabiners and straps that held the large leather swing in place.

?I just stared and stared, not quite believing what I was seeing. “Wow,” I heard

myself say. “This is pretty fucking awesome.”

?“It’s weird.”

?“Why is it weird?” I asked, turning back to Rowan. “It’s a swing meant for sex. If anything, it just means fewer bed sheets that need to be washed.”

?“Isn’t this some weird BDSM thing?” he asked. “Shouldn’t there be whips and handcuffs and stuff?”

?“Only if you’re kinky.”

?“I’m not,” he replied flatly, clearly not amused by any of it.

?“You sound boring,” I joked. “Now put me in the swing.”

?“What?! No!”

?“Oh come on!” I begged, putting on my best puppy dog eyes. “I’ve always wanted to try one!”

?Rowan’s face turned as red as a beet. It took me a moment to realize what he thought I was saying.

?“I’m not asking you to fuck me,” I burst out laughing. Of course, I had a feeling I wouldn’t mind if he did, but that was a fantasy I didn’t want to entertain while I was in his arms and my dick was less than a foot from his face. “I just want to sit in it and see if it’s comfy!”

?“Do I have to?” He sounded so put out.

?“Yes! Doc said you had to take care of me and I won’t get better if you don’t put me in the sex swing.”

?“Oh my god...”

?“You signed up for this,” I reminded him. “When you texted me to hang out. This is the friendship deal.”

?“Talk about fine print,” he muttered.

?With all the gentleness of a lover, Rowan placed me in the sex swing, careful to make sure my injured foot didn’t bump anything. Of course, as soon as I was in it, I put my hands through the handles and my feet up in the stirrups, my ass spreading wide under the thin fabric of my shorts. And the moment I was in that position, my gaze came to rest on Rowan and those brown eyes of his. My cock began to thicken, and I was just about to pull my legs down when Rowan’s gaze zeroed in on my groin.

?For a moment I thought he was just staring at my bulge. But then I felt a sort of cool draft. It was with a sinking heart that I remembered I’d neglected to wear underwear on our hike. I glanced down, noticing that the tip of my cock had escaped the shorts and sat there pulsing against my thigh.

?“Uh...” I muttered, suddenly terrified of what I’d done.

I tried to pull myself free of the stirrups, but of course my feet got stuck and I was left to struggle helplessly, my cock slipping further and further out of my shorts with every movement.

?My heart was beating a million miles an hour and my face burned with embarrassment. It was one of those rare moments in my life where I was so overwhelmed that I wished I could just disappear. And all the while, Rowan’s eyes

were zeroed in on my thickening cock that slipped further and further out of my shorts.

“Fuck...” I whimpered, trying to pull my injured foot free. The movement caused a streak of pain and I winced.

However, my show of pain seemed to snap Rowan out of his fixation.

“Let me help you,” he said, stepping forward.

“I can get it—”

“Stop,” he commanded, cutting me off.

My gaze snapped up to him, the intensity in his eyes turning me on even more. I was a bit of a sucker for dominance. My skin tingled as he grabbed my ankle and pulled it out of the stirrup and placed it gently on his shoulder. I was extremely aware of his bulge pressed against my ass and I shivered with delight.

“You’re going to hurt yourself doing that,” he said, pulling my other ankle free. “I don’t want you in pain.”

“Sorry,” I replied, desperately grabbing my shorts and yanking the legs down to hide my shame. “I wasn’t trying to—”

“It’s fine,” he replied, keeping his gaze clear of my crotch. “It was an accident.”

“Right...”

God, I’d never been so fucking embarrassed in my entire life. Being coy was one thing and flirting was another. But I’d never resorted to just flashing my cock at guys

to get them to like me. And being so turned on didn't help either. Granted, most of it was just the sex swing and the compromising position it put me in. But I couldn't deny that Rowan was doing something to me as well.

?At that moment, I almost wanted him to take advantage of me. He could give me orders and tell me to please him. Then he could use my body for his own pleasure. Honestly, that would've been really fucking fun and incredibly hot.

?Stop.

?Rowan had leaned down and wrapped his arms around me, lifting me onto his shoulder in a fireman's carry. It was the only way he could get me back out of the swing. As he carried me out of the room, I became only too aware of the fact that my hard-on was grinding against his shoulder. There was no way he didn't know how I was feeling, he just might not know the entire reason for it. However, I didn't need to be fantasizing about him and making it worse.

?“I'm gonna put you down on the couch,” he muttered. “If you want, we can watch a movie or something before bed.”

?“Yeah,” I said, trying to act like everything was okay. “Probably best I sleep out here tonight.”

?“If you're tired, I'll take you to the bed. You need better rest if you're going to heal and this couch fucking sucks.”

?“Where will you sleep?”

?“Out here.”

?“You can't do that!”

?I felt him sigh beneath me. “It’s fine.”

?“No,” I barked, patting him on the back. “Absolutely not. I won’t let my issues rob you of a good night’s sleep. I’ll survive a night or two on the couch.”

?“You’re annoying,” he said, sighing again. “There’s no arguing with you, is there?”

?“I won’t let you sleep on the couch,” I repeated defiantly.

?“Fine,” he said, carrying me toward the bedroom. “Then we’ll both sleep in the bed.”

?I tried to open my mouth to argue, but I found myself unable to make a sound. My body betrayed me. I knew I should decline his offer. Two men sleeping in the same bed, especially after what had just happened... well, that had some weird connotations. And yet, I couldn’t force myself to argue. No matter what I came up with, it wouldn’t get me through the impasse we found ourselves at. I wouldn’t allow him on the couch and he wouldn’t let me stay there either.

?So I guess sharing a bed was our only choice. My heart leaped at the thought, but my brain began to spiral.

?How was I going to sleep with such a beautiful man inches away from me that I couldn’t help fantasizing about? The couch might’ve been lumpy, but at least I wasn’t rock hard from thinking about having its dick up my ass.

?By the time Rowan placed me on the bed and went to brush his teeth, my brain was a maelstrom of sexy and yet problematic fantasies.

?I had no idea how I was going to get through this weekend.

?None of this would've happened if I'd just worn some damn shoes.

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It took me a long time to fall asleep with James lying only inches away from me on the queen sized mattress. Even with the distance between us I could feel the heat of his body under the blankets. He'd left his shorts on, but stripped off his shirt. However, I went to bed practically fully dressed, terrified of what I might feel if his bare skin touched mine.

?Truthfully, I was worried I wouldn't be able to control myself if I felt him against me.

?It took quite a while to fall asleep because I was so scared of accidentally touching him. But once I did, I slipped into another dream about James. It was much like the other I'd had a few nights ago. But this time, once we started to fuck, I realized it was a dream.

Before the climactic moment, I forced myself awake, terrified that I'd shoot my load all over the bed again. That was the last thing I wanted to explain to James at seven in the morning.

?However, when I woke up in the early gray morning before sunrise, the sensations I was feeling didn't stop. All at once I realized that both of us had turned over in the night. We were not both in the center of the bed and James was cuddled up against my chest much like Mia used to do to me. My muscle memory had taken over, and I found I had an arm thrown over him, pulling him in close. His head was nuzzled against my chest and I heard his soft, steady breathing signaling he was still asleep.

?I felt a rush of sadness realizing it wasn't Mia. But that was quickly driven out of my mind when I felt movement against my cock.

?Not only was I rock hard and wound up like a nine-day clock, but James was also hard and his was grinding his cock against mine without realizing it. I stared down at him for a moment, patting his shoulder to see if he was awake. But there was no response. He was still totally asleep.

?The moral struggle began.

?Clearly, James didn't know what he was doing. He was probably having a dream like I was and his body was reacting naturally. I, on the other hand, was now fully awake and allowing him to grind against me. It felt good. Too good. But I wasn't sure that was a good enough excuse to allow it to keep happening.

And yet, I knew I didn't want to stop. That much was certain. But he was getting me close to the edge already. If I didn't pull away, I wouldn't have a choice soon.

I was terrified of how he might react, but I couldn't allow myself to do this without him knowing.

"James," I whispered urgently, shaking him awake. "James."

"Huh? What?"

"Please," I practically begged, my voice heavy with lust. "You're touching me... a lot..."

He blinked a few times, leaning away from me. But it only took a quick glance down for both of us to see that not only was his cock head hanging out of the top of his shorts, but both of us were absolutely soaked with pre-cum.

"Oh my god..." he whispered, pushing himself. "I didn't know! I was asleep! I'm so sorry!"

The loss of his heat made my heart fall. I was terrified of what had happened and how much I liked it, but my curiosity was definitely piqued. Drunk with lust and aching for the touch of another person after months of nothing made words flow I didn't expect.

"Will... will you help me?"

James stared at me for a long moment. He seemed afraid, intrigued, and turned on all at the same time.

"Are you sure?" he asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

I nodded. "I... I want to try it."

He didn't argue or pull away. In fact, he drew himself close to me once more. Now that my eyes had adjusted, it was easy to see the desperation in his gaze. I thought I'd been weaving some story for myself about him making advances in a vain attempt to make myself feel more wanted. But the way he looked at me now... well, I could no longer deny that he'd been thinking about me in that way too.

James pressed his cock back up against mine, the heat flooding through me all at once. My nerves lit up like sparklers in the middle of a dark night, the rush of pleasure nearly too much to bear. I glanced down at him as he leaned toward me, his gaze fixed on my lips.

"No," I said, shaking my head. "N-Not that."

He just nodded quietly, leaving his head on the pillow a few inches from mine. For some reason, kissing him felt too intimate. That was for people you liked, not for some guy that you were hot for thanks to hormones and morning wood. And there was no room for feelings like that in my already broken heart. That wasn't going to

change anytime soon either.

“I...” I faltered for a moment. “I want you to just touch me.”

James nodded, his hand slipping down between us under the blanket. I hissed through my teeth as his fingers dove under the waistband of my shorts, pulling out my thick, throbbing cock drenched in pre-cum. He swirled his fingers around it for a moment, caressing the sweet spot on the underside of my shaft with an expert touch. A few seconds later he pushed my shorts down, letting me free of that fabric prison at last.

At the same time I felt something else press against me as he pulled his own shorts down. The heat was familiar, but it wasn't until he wrapped his fingers around me that I realized he was stroking both of our cocks at the same time, the undersides pressed together.

I growled with satisfaction as James stared up at me. He bit his lower lip, letting out a few soft whimpers as he stroked the pair of us together, using our combined pre-cum as lube.

I couldn't believe what I was doing. Letting another man jerk me off was a far step from just fantasizing about a college roommate. But doing it with our dicks pressed together? That seemed pretty high on the gay shit scale. And yet, no matter how much I wanted to beat myself up about it, those thoughts were quickly overwhelmed by the sheer ecstasy of the friction created between us.

Before I knew it, I felt my hips begin to grind forward, searching for more of that sweet sensation. I was already pretty riled up thanks to my dream and as James moaned next to me, I had a feeling he was getting there too.

“Fuck that feels good,” I grumbled, thrusting harder against him. “I don't think I'm

gonna last.”

“Me either,” James muttered, grinding against me himself.

Our cocks moved in time, sliding in and out of James’ fingers over and over again. Pre-cum had already soaked into the sheets at this point and I wasn’t concerned about laundry. I didn’t care if we came all over the bed, I just needed the release. It had been months, and I wasn’t going to hold back. Not this time.

My muscles tensed and my cock thickened as I picked up speed. James whimpered in delight as I fucked his fist. I felt that familiar tingling sensation at the base of my balls growing until I could hold it back no longer.

“Fuck!” I cried, thrusting hard.

I didn’t stop fucking his fist as I covered him in months worth of cum. There was a rush of heat and the scent of pheromones from under the blanket as I shot my load all over him. At the same time, James tensed up, thrusting forward himself. He leaned forward, burying his head against my shoulder as he let out a whimpering moan. I felt a hot splash of liquid across my belly as he came all over me, coating not just the sheets by my t-shirt and my shorts as well.

We both lay there, breathing heavily with James’ hand still wrapped around us both. I thought I would go soft after a minute or so, but I didn’t. Something about having that gorgeous man buried in my neck and his cock pressed against mine kept me throbbing. And I wasn’t the only one.

Of course, the moment the euphoria began to wear off, the doubts crept in. I was terrified of what I’d done. What I’d asked for. I’d pretty much come to terms with the fact that there were men I found attractive. That was something I couldn’t deny. But I’d thoroughly convinced myself that I would probably never do anything with them

even if I had the opportunity. The fantasy was fun, but that's all it was.

?Well, not anymore. It seemed my wish to get physical with James had been heard by the universe and poof, my wish was granted. However, now that the sexy part was done, I had to deal with the clean up. And I wasn't talking about the cum, that was the easy part. No, it would be the next few weeks to years of my life as I teased apart the meaning behind all of this. Not only was I attracted to men and having sexual fantasies about them, but now I'd basically had sex with one. It was weird frottage sex, but still pretty much sex.

?But Jame's hand and cock had felt so good. I found myself glancing down at him, wondering what his mouth or even his ass might feel like. My cock gave a heavy twitch, and I sighed. Clearly this wasn't going to be something that went away after the first attempt like I'd hoped.

?There was no use fretting over it now though. Right now I needed to get cleaned up.

?However, when I went to move, James didn't budge. I paused for a moment, listening to his deep regular breathing. Then I let out another sigh.

?He was asleep. Both of us were absolutely dripping in cum and his hand was still wrapped around our cocks. But he was asleep nonetheless.

?What had I gotten myself into?

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If I said things between us were awkward later that morning when I finally got out of bed, I'd be making the understatement of the year.

?Rowan had snuck his way out of bed sometime after we did the deed and gotten himself cleaned up. However, he let me sleep in as long as I wanted. I was surprised to wake without him in the bed, but when I realized I was glued to the sheets with dried cum, I figured he probably had the better idea.

?But that wasn't the awkward part.

?After I peeled myself off the sheets, I still needed to get cleaned up. Rowan heard me moving and came into the bedroom. He did everything he could not to look at me as he gathered me up and took me to the bathroom. I was left there to do my business and get cleaned up, but once I turned on the shower, I realized I had a problem.

?I couldn't get my foot or the bandages wet. That meant I'd need help with a shower or I'd need to take a bath and that would require help to get in and out of.

?“Rowan?” I asked timidly, pushing open the bathroom door. “Can... Can you help me with the bath?”

?He looked terrified and once again, did everything to avoid looking me in the eye. But he still nodded and headed my way. I kneeled on the floor next to the tub and started to draw the water, the steam rising and fogging up the large mirror on the opposite wall. Rowan stepped in behind me and stood there, awaiting further instruction.

“I... uh... need to get cleaned up,” I said, my voice barely above a whisper. “And I can’t get my foot wet. So a bath might be the best choice.”

“Okay.”

“I’ll need you to help me in.”

He nodded. And reached down for me even though I was still wearing my shorts.

“I’ll have to be naked,” I said, pushing his hand away. “I don’t want to do laundry and take a bath at the same time.”

His deep brown eyes widened as if he hadn’t considered that part. I couldn’t help but chuckle a little. How he thought I was going to take a bath in cum-soaked shorts was beyond me. Besides, what was he so nervous about? He hadn’t been too worried about shooting his load all over me earlier. I failed to see how being naked in front of him was weirder than that.

I reached out and took his hand so he could help me to my feet. As soon as I was at eye level with him, he turned around in some vain attempt to give me privacy as I undressed. I just smirked, hooking my thumbs in my shorts and pushing them to the ground. Of course, the moment my cock flopped free, it began to thicken. Just the act of being naked in front of him turned me on more than I anticipated.

“Alright,” I said. “I’m ready.”

Rowan turned around, swallowed hard, and tucked one hand behind my back and the other under my thighs, lifting me clean off the floor with ease. My stomach turned happily as he swept me up. My dick flopped back, making a small slapping noise against my stomach. He glanced down, his eyes widening even further.

?I laughed again.

?He just sort of held me there as he forced himself to look away.

?“You can put me in the tub now,” I said.

?“Right.”

?Placing me gently inside the tub, I threw my leg up and over the edge. Thankfully it was oriented in just the right way so my injured foot could hang outside of it while the rest of me was pretty much submerged. The hot water swelled over my body, goosebumps breaking out over my skin. With my good foot I reached up and pushed the handle off with my toes.

?Silence.

?“Do... Do you need help?” Rowan asked, still trying to divert his gaze. “If not, I can leave.”

?As much as I wanted to pretend this was all some sort of weird fantasy porno film, the truth was you could cut the tension in the room with a knife. Clearly Rowan was upset about what had happened between us and I needed to get to the bottom of it. If there was one thing I couldn’t stand, it was unspoken bad feelings.

?“I might,” I replied, tapping the fluffy bath mat next to me. “Will you stay in case I do?”

?He sighed, but sat down facing away from me with his back leaning against the side of the tub. It wasn’t exactly how I wanted to do things, but it was a start.

?“So...” I began, searching for a delicate way to get this train rolling. “Did you get

any more sleep this morning?”

“No,” he grumbled.

“Sorry.”

Another sigh. “Not your fault.”

“Anything wrong?”

“No.”

“Rowan,” I said, placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “Talk to me.”

He shrugged my hand off, pulling away from me. “There’s nothing to talk about.”

“Clearly something is bothering you. If what we did wasn’t okay, you need to tell me. Or at least explain to me what’s going through that head of yours so I can understand.”

He glared over his shoulder at me. “Why the hell do you care about what’s going on inside my head?”

I smiled. “I’m your friend.”

“Yeah fucking right,” he scoffed. “You don’t even know me.”

“I’d like to know more if you’ll let me.”

“Right. I’ll just sit here and spill my guts out to you so that way, come Monday, you can fuck off and never talk to me again.” He pulled his knees tight to his chest. “Or

maybe you'll just go fuck one of the other thirty-seven guys you have fantasizing about you."

"Okay, that made me mad.

"I don't have thirty-seven guys waiting for me," I growled. "And I don't appreciate how much of an asshole you're being. You're the one that told me you wanted to try it this morning."

"And you were the one grinding against me in your sleep," he shot back.

"I already apologized for that! It wasn't like I did it on purpose!"

"Well, it's your fault I even had the thought in my head to begin with."

I laughed at him. "Bull fucking shit, Rowan. There's not an actually straight guy on this planet I could turn gay. You've had those thoughts for a long time, I guarantee it." I paused, scoffing at him. "I bet that's why you're so mad right now and taking it out on me. You're upset that you liked it and that terrifies you."

"You don't know shit about me!"

"I know you're a grumpy asshole who apparently likes to blame other people for his own problems." I grabbed him by the shoulder, forcing him to look at me. "I don't care if you like dick. Nobody does. But I don't like being treated badly because I did what you fucking asked me to!"

Rowan growled, pulling himself away from me and up to his feet once more. He grabbed a bar of new soap off the counter and tossed it into the tub with me.

"Wash your fucking self."

?And then he stormed out, slamming the door behind him.

?I sat there in the tub, fucking fuming. I couldn't believe the insinuation he was making. Yes, I admit, I was touching him in my sleep. But how could I be blamed for that? Plus, it wasn't like I was alone. He was rock hard and leaking pre-cum like crazy when I woke up, so clearly he was involved somehow. Not only that, I tried to pull away from him and it was he who asked me to stay. Hell, I didn't even want to spend the weekend at his cabin in the first place!

?The level of upset I was reaching was new for me. Yes, I thought Rowan was hot and yes I might have teased him a couple of times. But the situation with the sex swing the night before was a complete accident. Not only that, if he was actually straight like he claimed to be, it wouldn't have bothered him, anyway. We would've just laughed it off and moved on.

?But no. Every time I moved or a piece of skin showed, he was staring at me like a starving wolf glaring down a steak just out of reach. He acted like this was all my fault, when in reality it was because of him that I was here to begin with. He was being a dick.

?However, the longer I sat there in the hot water irritated with Rowan, the more the irritation began to shift to myself. I should've known better than to get involved with anyone. If my track record told me anything, it was that being sexual with another man meant they never wanted to see me again. Why should Rowan be any different? And now, thanks to my stupidity, I was stuck in a cabin, stuck in a tub, and my car was parked five miles away at a park with a ticket on it most likely. And my foot was too injured for me to do a goddamn thing about it.

?I fished through the water furiously to find the soap. Once I did, I began to scrub my body with a vigor I'd yet unleashed on my skin. By the time I'd worked out most of my frustration, my skin was pink and sensitive.

?And yet, I was still irritated. Seriously? What was it about this guy that was getting me so worked up? Was it the damaged goods and the sad puppy dog eyes? Or maybe it was the big dick and the way he liked to tell me what to do.

?I didn't fucking know.

?But I was sure of one thing. I'd never been this upset about a man before and that scared the ever-living fuck out of me.

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I stormed out of the bathroom in a huff. Who the hell did James think he was? He didn't know shit about me and yet he sat there in that tub chastising me like he knew a damn thing about my life and the things I'd been through. He wanted to pretend that he gave a shit about me just to get close. I saw the lust in his beautiful blue eyes that made me melt every time I looked into them. And then, after he got what he wanted from me, he'd fuck off just like Mia did and find someone else.

?That's what happened when you cared about people. They used you and left, taking your heart and your happiness with them. I couldn't let that happen again.

?I stormed out of the cabin onto the back porch, going all the way to the railing and leaning against it. A picture-perfect scene of crystalline water and blue sky stretched out before me, but it brought me no joy. Instead, all I felt was fear and distrust.

?James scared the shit out of me. Not only did I enjoy looking at him and I knew I definitely enjoyed touching him, but his smile was infectious. I liked the way he made me laugh even when I didn't want to. And even though it drove me crazy, I liked that he could find some good in any situation that came his way. If it wasn't so damn annoying, it might have been a bit inspirational. And the way my heart fluttered when he looked at me... well, that was the most terrifying part.

?I was still broken from Mia. Our years-long relationship had ended just over a week ago. My life was in fucking pieces, I was living in a borrowed cabin, and the only thing I had left from my old life was my SUV and a shitty job I hated. I'd left my heart behind me and I had no intention of getting it back. But try as I may to resist James, he was making me feel things I wasn't ready to feel. I hadn't even begun to process everything that was going on.

?Thoughts of Mia drove me to pull my phone out. Whether I was feeling grumpy, sorry for myself, or just plain being a masochist, I wasn't sure. But I flipped open her Instagram without thinking, just to see what she'd been up to. And the moment her feed loaded, my heart dropped.

?She hadn't posted just once, but several times in the last week. Not a single one of them would make anyone think she'd been through something painful. Each post was all smiles. There was one of her and her friends out shopping, out to eat, or going to a movie. Those were fairly normal. But when I saw all the pictures of her and the guy I'd caught her fucking, the depression threatened to consume me.

?Mia was already posting pictures of them together, holding hands, and going on dates. There were even some of them kissing. And a couple, I noticed, had definitely been taken back in the late winter earlier that year.

?It seemed her and her boy toy had been together much longer than I knew.

?A new wave of betrayal washed over me as I realized for the first time that Mia had been over me months ago. And, instead of saying anything, she just went out and found someone else to make her happy. Hell, maybe she did try to tell me. But trying and doing were two different things. If she wanted to be with this other guy, why didn't she just call things off? What was her master plan? Maybe there wasn't one. I didn't know. I just knew that it felt like having an ice pick driven through my heart.

?The grief I was feeling was months overdue. My anger was overwhelming. All I wanted to do was scream. But it wasn't going to help. Nothing would get my old life back or the comfort I felt within it. That part of me was dead, and I was still struggling to lift my broken body back off the proverbial pavement of life.

?And I'd been taking it out on James.

?I flipped over to my texting app and started to type.

Me: I need some advice.

Adam: Happy to help! What's up, Booboo?

Me: How do I talk to guys?

Adam: There are a million different things I want to say right now, so I hope you appreciate how much restraint I'm showing by not saying any of them.

Adam: You talk to guys like you do anyone else. Honestly and genuinely. Most of them appreciate directness.

Me: And what if I've been an ass?

Adam: You apologize you dummy! This isn't rocket science!

Me: Is it really that easy? When Mia was upset I felt like I had to put on a three-ring circus to figure it all out.

Adam: Talk to him like you talk to me.

Me: I can try that I guess...

Adam: And when you're done, I have several questions you are required to answer.

Me: This is really new for me so don't go crazy.

Adam: Pinky promise.

Me: I'll text you later.

Adam: You better, Booboo.

I stared at my phone screen for a moment longer, rereading his messages. I still couldn't believe something so simple could really be the answer.

With Mia I had to coax out the problem, dance around subjects, and jump through all sorts of hoops just to get her to tell me what she was upset about. She always thought it was obvious, but I never knew what she was going on about until she told me. And, as soon as she did, I apologized. But sometimes that wasn't enough either. It was a strange ritual that drove me up the wall. Of course, I knew not all women were like that, but in Mia's case, she really could be damn near impossible to try to figure out.

But could guys really be so easy to talk to? Adam seemed to think so. I just hoped James was feeling receptive. Of course, I didn't want to just barge into the bathroom and force him to listen to my bumbling apology. That would be awkward and probably make things worse.

Not only that, but the need I felt to apologize to him was odd to begin with. I knew I owed it to him after the things I'd said, but it was the feeling that I would die if he stayed mad at me that threw me off. Since when did I start caring so much about what he thought? Clearly I did though and there was nothing I could do to try to convince myself otherwise.

What James thought about me... mattered. That terrified me. But at the same time, it was becoming extremely clear that neither my old life nor Mia would ever have me back. Everyone else had moved onto a new life already. So... couldn't it be my turn to try something new? I was still scared, but I didn't want to keep fighting this piece of me anymore. I was tired and sad, so why should I deny myself what little happiness I could find even if it was different from anything I'd ever done.

?I shook my head, trying to clear my thoughts. I needed a moment to formulate everything, so instead of heading straight back inside, I parked myself in a patio chair and stared out at the scenery, hoping it would give me some clue as to how to do this. The last thing I wanted to do was be an ass to him again. He didn't deserve that.

?After ten minutes I really wasn't much further than where I'd started. With a deep sigh, I pushed myself back to my feet and headed inside. I stepped through the sliding door just in time to hear a loud thud from the bathroom and a cry of pain.

?Without a moment's hesitation, I darted across the house and threw open the bathroom door, terrified James had tried to get out and fallen. What if he was hurt because I stormed off? I would never forgive myself. But as my eyes focused I realized he was still sitting in the tub, water splashed all over the floor, and he was nursing an elbow as he hissed through his teeth. The moment I opened the door, he glared in my direction.

?“What the hell do you want?” he barked, still rubbing his elbow. “I'm fine!”

?The words stung more than I thought they would as he gave me a taste of my own medicine. “Do... Do you need help?”

?“I don't need anything from you.” He glared up at me, his blue eyes blazing. “Once I get dressed, I'll leave. That's what you and every other guy want from me anyway, isn't it? Just get a piece and fuck off forever.”

?“James...” I began, taking a step forward as he began to struggle again. “Please let me help you.”

?“I told you I'm fine. Probably better off on my own, anyway.”

?I hated to see that sunshine of his broken. He was always full of smiles and laughter,

but it was becoming extremely clear that I'd hurt him. So, instead of reaching for him I merely took a step forward and sat down on the ground, putting my back against the tub once more.

?“Can I talk to you?”

?“Considering I can't get out of this fucking tub,” he growled, smacking the side of it. “I don't see how I have much choice.”

?I sighed, pulling my knees to my chest once more. “I'm sorry, James.”

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I stopped my struggling for a moment, surprised by the words that had come out of Rowan's mouth. If he were anyone else, I might not believe him. But considering what little I knew about him, I didn't really think he was capable of faking emotion like that.

"I'm sorry I blew up."

Rowan's intimidating stature had condensed itself into a ball next to the tub as he pulled his knees tight to his chest. He hung his head down between his knees and I wasn't sure if he was crying or not. I hoped not because if there was one thing I knew about myself, it was that I was a sympathetic crier. Nobody ever cried alone in my presence.

"I'm just... I'm just so fucking angry right now," he added, his voice barely above a whisper. "Everything is so fucked up."

I relaxed back into the tub, ceasing my struggling for the moment. Letting out a deep sigh, I placed a hand on his shoulder. I hated how easy I was to apologize to. The moment a boy started showing me emotion, I was about as rigid as a wet blanket.

"Will you just tell me what's going on in that head of yours?" I asked gently. "I might understand more than you think I do."

He shook his head. "It's so stupid..."

"I bet you it's not."

?Finally he looked up at me, his eyes bloodshot. “Everything I thought I knew about myself and my life has been crashing down around me. I’m pissed off at everyone and everything, I don’t want to be here in this beautiful place because I feel so damn bad, and to top it all off I met you and I just don’t know what to even think.”

?The hurt in his voice had me on the edge of tears. “You really did care about her, huh?”

?“I’ve been working this shitty job non-stop for months to give her the life she wanted. I was determined to buy her that house she dreamed about so we could raise a family. It didn’t matter if I was happy as long as she had everything she wanted.” He turned away from me again. “And not only did she cheat on me... but I just found out it’s been happening for months. I know I spent a lot of time at work and I wasn’t caring for her like I should... but if she was so unhappy, why didn’t she tell me?”

?“I wish I could tell you, Rowan,” I replied, carefully choosing my words. “Sometimes it’s easier to ignore a problem than to face it head on.”

?“We could have been so happy,” he continued. “And I could’ve had a normal life.” He paused for a moment. “And now... now I’m... broken.”

?This time I forced him to look at me. “You are not broken,” I said sternly, holding his chin in my hand. “You’re hurt and trying to figure it all out. That doesn’t make you broken.”

?“But I never liked guys before this...”

?“Well you sure as hell aren’t broken for being attracted to men either.” I gave him a good once over. “And I bet if you were being honest with me, you’d tell me that you’ve had thoughts about guys before. You don’t just turn gay because of a bad breakup.”

?He stared for a long moment. “M-Maybe,” he replied finally. “In college a little...”

?“Tell me about that,” I said, releasing him from my grasp. “The breakup will heal in time, but this seems like the thing causing you to lash out.”

?“Sorry...”

?“Don’t be sorry,” I nodded. “Just explain it to me.”

?He nodded. “It’s... hard to say. I’ve hidden it away for so long.”

?“Take your time.” I leaned back in the tub, giving him the space he needed. “And start from the beginning.”

?Rowan heaved a big sigh before he nodded. With one last glance at me, he rested his chin on his knee and started to tell me his story.

“There was a guy sophomore year that I roomed with. A hockey player.”

“My god,” I laughed. “That honestly explains everything. But continue.”

“Well, he didn’t wear a lot of clothing when he was lazing in our room.”

“Naturally.”

“And I caught him a couple of times with his dick sort of poking out of his boxers. At first I was gonna tell him, but when I realized I didn’t want my view to go away, I stopped myself.” He sighed again. “I spent all year trying to convince myself I didn’t want anything from him while fantasizing about him all the time.”

“What happened?”

“Nothing,” he shrugged. “The year ended, we parted ways, and I tried to forget about him. When I got a new roommate for junior year, I didn’t find him attractive and I wrote it off as a weird phase brought on by hormones and youth.”

I could tell Rowan was having a hard time telling me this story. He was baring his soul to me and all I could do was laugh. What he’d been through would’ve turned on any sane person. It was like the start of a cheap porno.

“I’m not laughing at you,” I added, wanting to explain myself. “It’s just the whole roommate thing is a funny situation.”

“Funny?”

“Yeah. Like bad porn funny.”

He grumbled, but didn’t reply.

“So I take it you never explored anything after that? No thoughts about other guys?”

“None.”

“Not even your gay friend?”

Rowan lifted an eyebrow. “Adam? Never.”

“Not even a little bit?”

“He’s handsome,” he sighed. “But we’re just friends. I don’t feel any sort of physical attraction to him.”

“Not your type?”

“Yeah. He’s fun to be around, but not for days at a time.”

I paused for a moment. “So what made you attracted to me after all these years? What did I do to get you so worked up and confused?”

I wasn’t sure if it was a totally relevant question and I knew it was one Rowan didn’t want to answer. But my curiosity was burning me up, and I had to know. What could make a mostly straight man suddenly forget his preferences?

“I don’t know,” he said softly. “Maybe it’s the fact I’m single now or maybe it’s because I’m so desperate not to feel bad that I’ll take anything.” He looked up at me, his cheeks blushing. “There’s something about you I can’t quite put my finger on. But... I don’t know... I feel like I have to give it a chance. Like I don’t have a choice in the matter.”

Now it was my turn to get all worked up. I fought back the surge of emotion that wanted to bring me to tears. It was incredible how quickly this grumpy dickhead had grown on me. Last week I could’ve walked away easily but now I felt the same as he did. I couldn’t leave and not just because I was trapped in the tub.

“That might be the sweetest thing anyone has ever said to me.” I leaned forward in the tub, wrapping my arms around Rowan’s neck. “You don’t have anything to be afraid of with me, alright? If you want to just explore who you are, that’s fine with me. I’ll be your safe place if that’s what you need.”

“Why?” he asked, his voice shaking. “Why would you do that for me after I was such an asshole to you?”

“Because,” I replied. “There’s something about you I like too and I can’t quite put my finger on it. You’re grumpy as hell, you’re hurt, and I just can’t stand to see cute guys brought so low.”

“Aren’t you the one that’s tired of always being the one that gets left behind?” he offered, giving me a way out. “That’s what all those other guys did to you.”

“This is on my terms,” I nodded, giving him a squeeze. “I don’t know you well enough to know if something could work out between us or if that’s what you even want. But I know I’ll regret not giving it a shot. So I’m happy to be your summer rebound if that’s what you need.”

Rowan shook his head. “I don’t understand you.”

I smiled back at him. “Then learn.” I leaned closer, pushing my forehead to his. “Now will you please kiss me already?”

He hesitated for a moment, but then that grin began to pull at the corners of his mouth once more. “I’ve never done that before...” He paused, his gaze dropping to my lips. “Show me.”

My smile widened. “I’d be happy to.”

There was still some hesitation as he glanced at my lips, then back up. Finally, after taking a deep breath, he leaned forward. I closed my eyes as he pressed his lips to mine, a shot of electricity streaking through me like lightning. My skin broke out in goosebumps and I couldn’t help but lean into him. His tongue pressed against my lips and I let him in without a second thought.

The whole world stopped spinning as time stood still. At that moment I knew my summer was going to be anything but normal. Rowan was something special and making him smile became my only goal.

I was hooked.

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After our heart to heart that morning, the rest of the day was pleasant and a little more comfortable than it had been previously. There was still tension in the air and Rowan wasn't really sure how to act around me, but that was to be expected. He'd just taken a big step, and I didn't expect him to suddenly be one hundred percent alright with everything. He needed time and space to feel comfortable.

?So, I did what I could to make him feel like there was no pressure. We lazed on the porch in the sun, we drove into town to get takeout, and spent most of the night watching movies. It was honestly one of the most relaxing Saturdays I'd had in a long time. Usually I was out at the beach or on a date in a vain attempt to find a guy who actually wanted me around. But being with Rowan made all that feel sort of superfluous. He might've been quiet, but I knew he wanted me around. I could see it in his gaze every time he looked at me.

?Those brown eyes of his made my heart soar.

?“I'm gonna put dinner stuff away,” he said after the credits rolled for the movie we'd just finished.

?“Okay,” I replied with a smile, handing him my plate. “I'd help you but I can't walk.”

?“It's fine. I don't mind.”

?I grabbed his hand and pulled him down so he was face to face with me. “Thanks, babe,” I said and gave him a little peck on the cheek.

?The man turned a bright shade of lobster in all of three seconds and practically ran to the kitchen to pack up our leftovers. It was the first time I'd made a move on him all day and it was worth it. I loved seeing him all flustered. It was adorable.

?Sliding my phone out of my pocket, I decided it was time to doom scroll for a couple of minutes. I hadn't checked anything all day and even though I wasn't especially popular, I didn't like having a ton of notifications on my phone. For some reason that just drove me crazy.

?As I unlocked it and swiped to the home screen, I saw I had a couple text messages waiting for me from a named contact. Opening the app I felt my heart sink. They were from Ray, the guy that had stood me up over a week ago and never reached out again.

Ray: Hey cutie! I'm gonna be back in town this weekend and I thought it might be nice to hang out. God knows I miss that sweet ass of yours :P

Ray: You still there or are you ignoring me?

?I sat there for a moment, reading over his messages. It was surprising to hear from him to say the least. He'd canceled our previous date at the last minute and acted like it was no big deal. Then he waited over a week to text me again? And now he had the gall to make it a booty call?

?I knew my reply before I even brought up the keyboard.

Me: Sorry, I've had a lot going on. But I'm gonna be busy all weekend, anyway. I figured when you didn't reach out after last time that you weren't interested anymore.

?There was a little hesitation before I pushed send. The message was pretty straightforward, and some people saw that as rude. However, so was canceling a date

an hour before with no explanation and no intention to reschedule.

Ray: Something came up, and I had to go back home.

Me: I thought you said you lived here in town?

Ray: I don't think I did.

Me: No, you did. You said you had a house on the north side of town on Hamlin Lake. You even offered to take me there.

Ray: Why are you making stuff up? Do you want to meet up or not?

?Okay, now I was getting mad. It was one thing to ignore me, but it was something entirely different to straight up gaslight me.

Me: No. I'm busy.

Ray: You don't have any time at all?

Me: Nope.

Ray: Well, whatever you're doing, it better not be anything with another guy. We're together.

Me: Excuse me?

Ray: I bought you dinner, and you begged me to fuck you. I'd say that means you owe me at least a chance at being your boyfriend.

?Holy shit. I couldn't believe what I was reading.

Me: First off, I paid for my half of the meal. And secondly, we had sex because I thought you were a halfway decent guy. But your messages are telling me just how much of a jealous bitch you are. So you can go fuck yourself. I don't want to ever see you again.

Ray: Who the hell are you to talk to me like that you fucking cheap whore?

?I didn't wait to see what other messages might come my way. Instead I just clicked on his contact icon and blocked his number. However, one last message made it through before I could stop him.

Ray: If you won't be with me, you shouldn't be with anybody.

?I just scoffed and thrust my phone back in my pocket. All the good emotions of the day had been ripped away from me in a matter of seconds and I was seething. How dare he sweep in and not only try to ruin my day, but try to make me look like the asshole? What a fucking dickhead.

?Forcing myself to take a breath, I willed myself to calm down. Maybe he was a dick, but at least I'd dodged a bullet. At first Ray seemed like a pretty nice guy and I had high hopes for what we might become. But after that little text exchange, I never wanted to see him again. He'd shown his true colors, and I was no longer interested. Now that his number was blocked, I'd never have to hear from him again.

?But I didn't feel any sense of loss. Not with Rowan around. He was ten times cuter than Ray and even with his little blow up earlier in the day, still treated me a lot better than Ray ever had. So I counted myself lucky.

?“Something wrong?”

?I turned to see Rowan standing a few feet away, staring at me.

?“No. Why?”

?“You’ve been glaring at that throw pillow for a couple of minutes,” he said. “Did it do something to you?”

?I glanced over at the simple blue and white striped pillow. “I mean... it’s ugly and cliché, but I don’t hate it I guess.”

?“Did something happen?” He looked suddenly worried. “You’re always smiling and now you’re not. Did I say something stupid again?”

?There was a long pause before I decided it was probably best to be completely honest. Rowan needed that if he was going to trust me fully. “I just got an annoying text from an ex is all. Nothing to worry about.”

?“Oh.” He shifted uncomfortably from side to side. “Am I... in the way?”

?“What?! No!” I laughed at that, surprised he was so worried. “Believe me, I never want to see or hear from that guy ever again. He’s an asshole. In fact, I just blocked his number permanently.”

?“Okay. If you’re sure I’m not stopping you from living your life...”

?“Believe me, I’d rather be here with you on your worst day than hang out with him.”

?That seemed to cheer him up a little. He came over to the couch and instead of sitting on the opposite end, he took a seat right next to me so that our thighs touched. I could feel the tension in his body and he kept wringing his hands nervously.

?“Something up with you?” I asked.

?“I... I don’t know.”

?“Well that’s not much to go on.”

?“Sorry,” he sighed. “I know I’m a pain.”

?“You’re not, I promise.” I reached out and took his hand, giving it a gentle squeeze. “Why don’t you just tell me what’s on your mind? Say anything you want. There’s no shame here.”

?Rowan took a deep breath. “There’s just some things I’ve been thinking about. Things I’d like to try.”

?“Like what?”

?“Like... bedroom things.”

?“Ooh,” I cooed. “You want to explore a new way to put sheets on a mattress? Or maybe how to hang clothes?”

?He gave me a serious amount of side-eye.

?“I know what you meant,” I laughed. “Just giving you a hard time. I know you’re nervous.”

?“It’s just... weird to talk about.”

?“How did you and your girlfriend talk about sex?”

?He furrowed his brows in confusion. “What do you mean?”

?“I mean, how did you talk about meeting your needs in the bedroom? Did you talk about things you like? Things you don’t like? Or maybe hard limits for stuff you weren’t into?”

?“No,” he said, shaking his head. “We just had sex. Or well, we used to. She never said anything to me and I figured it was a pretty straightforward operation.”

?“That’s not a very wise assumption,” I said softly, trying not to make him feel bad. “Everyone likes different things and just doing it the normal way sometimes isn’t good enough for people.”

?“So I messed that up too—”

?“That’s not what I’m saying,” I interrupted. “Did she ever tell you what she wanted or ask what you liked?”

?“No, but—”

?“Then she was being uncommunicative too.”

?Another sigh.

?“Here, let me show you how it’s done,” I said. I sat up a little straighter and made sure he was looking me in the eye. “I really enjoy making out, oral sex of any kind, bottoming, and I especially enjoy being bred when I’m with a person I trust. Other than that, I really like the idea of that sex swing in the other room and I find it really hard to resist a guy after he’s been on a run or working out.” I couldn’t help but smile. “There’s just something about that smell, you know? I don’t know what, but it just gets to me. Oh, and I love being ordered around in the bedroom. Dominance makes me weak in the knees.”

?Rowan sat there, his mouth hanging open as he stared at me. However, a quick glance down at his lap told me all I needed to know. His shorts were already tented and I could clearly see the head of his cock fighting against the fabric. Apparently talking about what I liked really turned him on.

?“Now it’s your turn,” I nodded. “Tell me what you like.”

?“I... I’ve never been with a guy before...”

?“So tell me what you’ve fantasized about. That’ll give me a clue.”

?“I mean... What we did this morning was hot.”

?“Okay. Anything else?”

?His cheeks turned bright red as he turned his gaze to the floor. “I... uh... I’ve always wanted to suck a dick,” he nearly whispered. “And anal seems sort of interesting.”

?“Interesting how?”

?“I’ve heard it’s tight, and it hugs everything a bit more. At least that’s what Adam said.” He shook his head. “I don’t know though. It seems risky.”

?“Risky?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

?“Like... things could get... you know... dirty.”

?I couldn’t help but laugh. I should have known that was going to be his concern. “Well, that’s a reality with having sex in general. Things can always go wrong. But I’ll let you in on a secret.”

?“What?”

?“There are tools to make sure everything is pretty clean before you start. Most of the time, that takes care of everything. But, if something happens, you just clean up and move on. That’s why there’s soap.”

?He nodded. “Yeah. That’s makes sense I guess.”

?“Anything else you want to try or that you like?”

?“There’s one thing I’m gonna miss I think.”

?“What’s that?”

?“It’s weird but... I kinda liked going down on Mia.”

?“You can do that with guys!”

?He seemed confused. “What? How?”

?“Just do the same thing to their butts.”

?His jaw fell open again. “Is that... sanitary?”

?“Again, soap. It exists for a reason.”

?“I guess... I just... I didn’t think you could.”

?“Clearly you’ve not been on social media for a while. Eating ass is very popular.”

?He shook his head. “There’s so much I don’t know...”

?“Well, don’t worry. We can start with the easy stuff.”

?His gaze flicked up to mine, his eyes filling with lust in an instant. “When?”

?I smiled, my heart racing as I realized this was my chance. Leaning back against the couch, I grabbed the waistband of my shorts and pushed them down, my half-hard cock flopping out onto the fabric.

?“We can start right now if you like.”

?He stared at my dick hungrily, licking his lips.

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“If you’re not ready, I understand,” James began.

But I was already on my knees in front of him. He chuckled, his blue eyes sparkling mischievously.

“Well, I guess that answers that question.” He reached down, grabbing my chin between his thumb and forefinger. “Just take your time, cutie.”

My chest filled with heat. Cutie. I liked the sound of that. I didn’t know why, but I did. Coming from him, it felt like the best compliment in the world. However, it was quickly forgotten as I stared at his cock gently pulsing against his shorts.

“What... What do I do?” I asked, realizing I had no idea where to start.

“Well, you put it in your mouth,” James laughed. “Then you do to me what you like done to you. The only favor I ask is no teeth. If there’s something I want, I’ll tell you.”

“Okay.” I paused, my hands on his knees. “Can... Can I take your shorts all the way off?”

“Yes, please.”

With shaking hands, I reached up and slipped my fingers under the waistband of his shorts. I was so fucking nervous, but somehow I found the will to pull them down past his knees and to the floor. He pulled his feet out and I tossed them to the side. As I lifted my gaze back to his cock, James slid forward, spreading his legs wide, so I

had a good view of his entire package.

?It was an impressive dick. He was thick judging by what I felt earlier that morning, probably an inch or two longer than I was. It was the sort of cock that you might expect to find a mold of at a sex toy shop. He had a pronounced cockhead with a thick ridge and there was a thick vein running along the top of his shaft. And he had a heavy set of balls to complete the set. The guy was hung like a porn model.

?“It’s... It’s big,” I said, my hands still at my sides.

?“Thanks,” he smiled. “Guys seem to like it even though I’m a bottom. But I like to top now and then too.”

?My eyes widened at the thought. “That fits in people?”

?“Sure does,” he grinned. “Pretty snug too.”

?“Wow.”

?He gazed down at me, grabbing my chin once more. “Why don’t you taste it? I’ve been told my pre-cum is pretty sweet.”

?I swallowed hard. “Uh... alright.”

?Well, there was no turning back now. I couldn’t dawdle any longer after a direct ask like that. I wanted to suck his cock so bad but the nerves were killing me. Still, the last thing I wanted was to let him down after all this buildup. And with my cock painfully hard and straining against my shorts, I was certain I wouldn’t have the willpower to deny my urges, anyway.

?Taking a deep breath, I leaned forward, my hands naturally coming to rest on James’

hips. My face hovered an inch or two from his cock and I could feel the heat rolling off his body. Along with it came his natural manly scent. It was earthy and pleasant, but there was an edge of something there that made my cock twitch and my mouth water.

?I needed to taste him. And after all these years of that fantasy living in the back of my head, I finally gave in.

?With the tip of my tongue, I licked the top side of his cockhead. James chuckled at my shyness, but I barely heard him. The taste of his skin spread over my tongue and I knew I wanted more. Opening my lips, I slid his cock into my mouth, just an inch or so.

?“Mmm,” James hummed, his laughing replaced with a soft moan.

?I pushed a little further, taking more of him. I felt his cock begin to thicken, swelling in my mouth as it grew fully hard. The sensation sent a shiver through my body. Feeling him grow inside me... that was something I’d never thought about. But now that it had happened, I wanted to feel it over and over again. I ran my tongue over the underside of his cock, flicking it over the thick shaft. He groaned in pleasure again.

?“That feels good,” he smiled, watching me. “Try using your lips a bit more.”

?I did as I was told, eager to please. Remembering his ask to avoid hitting him with my teeth, I wrapped my lips over them, gliding up and down the first couple inches of his cock. My saliva quickly created the needed lubrication and before I knew it I was bobbing up and down like a pro.

?“Damn,” he muttered, his thighs tensing on either side of my face. “You’re a natural.”

?Spurred on by his compliment, I pushed down further. However, the moment his thick cock hit the back of my throat, my body convulsed and I flew back as I gagged and coughed.

?James laughed of course, his cock flopping side to side as he did so. “You don’t have to take the whole thing on your first try,” he said. “Just do what you can and use your hand for the rest.”

?“What do you mean?” I asked, still squinting as I cleared my throat a couple of times.

?“Like this.” He reached out and took my hand, placing it at the base of his shaft. “Hold that hand there and work the top part with your mouth. You can move them in time with each other. And, if you work up enough spit, you can use it as lube and stroke me while you suck.”

?“It sounds complicated.”

?“I promise, it’s not,” he smiled. “You’ll find your rhythm. And, if you’re feeling extra frisky, you can suck on my balls too.”

?There was so much to try.

?“Also,” he said, grabbing me by the face and pulling me into a passionate kiss. “Take your pants off so you can touch yourself while you suck me off.”

?I pulled away, breathless from his kiss and dizzy with lust. “O-Okay.”

?Doing as I was told, I stripped off my shorts. I saw James staring and figured I’d give him a bit more to look at. He said he liked the way my body looked, so I took off my shirt too. The only thing I kept on was my baseball cap, turning it backwards so it

didn't get in the way.

?With his instructions in mind, I placed one hand around the base of his cock and the other hand around mine. Licking my lips, I leaned down and wrapped them around his cockhead once more. It took me a moment to figure out what he was saying about working my hand and lips in time, but once I did, it was easy to hear how much he liked it.

?James moaned and shifted, his hand immediately going to the top of my head. With the tips of his fingers he gave me signals of when to speed up or slow down or to rotate my head slightly as I sucked him. It was incredible how much he could convey with just a gentle touch.

?The better I got, the stronger his taste became. Pre-cum spilled out of him, spreading over my tongue. The salty sweetness drove me into a frenzy. If I wanted more, I had to do a good job. Within seconds, my only goal became making him cum in my mouth.

?I had to have his load.

?James was right about finding my rhythm. Once I had him practically bucking into my mouth, I felt like I knew what I was doing. I stroked myself faster, feeling the waves of pleasure rushing across my body. My blowjob was getting sloppy, but the saliva helped ease the friction between my hand and his cock. Before I knew it, my fingers were sliding up and down his shaft easily, milking more and more pre-cum out of him with every stroke.

?Soon I had him shivering, my tongue getting him closer and closer to the edge. His scent was stronger and his pre-cum was coming faster now. Tension filled his body as he rocked in time with my lips, giving me everything he had. I knew it wouldn't be long before he finally came. And I was right there with him. My cock was harder than

I thought possible and my own pre-cum was dribbling all over the floor. But my pleasure didn't matter. All I wanted was cock and cum. I was fucking crazy for it. I abandoned my own cock and wrapped my fingers around his balls instead.

"Fuck..." James moaned, his fingers tightening on my hat as he pushed me lower. "You're gonna make me cum."

I didn't say anything, I just sucked harder and faster.

"Oh fuck... fuck..."

His cock suddenly swelled and his muscles tightened. I felt his balls draw up as I stroked him and I knew he was finally there.

With a cry, James thrust his hips forward, pushing his thick throbbing cock to the back of my mouth. He pulsed in my hand as he shot his hot, sticky load inside me, flooding my mouth with his seed. I drank it down hungrily, savoring every drop of that salty sweet fluid.

Even after he came, I just kept sucking. James moaned and moaned until he finally had to grab my head and force me away.

"Too... sensitive..." he said breathlessly, his chest heaving.

"Fuck," I sighed, laying my face against his groin so his cock pulsed against my lips. "You taste so fucking good."

"Did... Did you cum?"

"Not yet."

?He glance down at me, nodding toward the couch. “Get up here.”

?I did as I was told. The moment I was there, James pushed me down on my back and crawled up my body. Before I knew what was happening, he slipped my throbbing cock into his mouth, sucking me greedily. The sensation nearly bowled me over and it was all I could do to hold back the absolutely obscene sounds I wanted to make.

?And James didn’t just suck the first three inches of my cock like I had done to him. No. That man had a lot more practice than I did and he quickly swallowed every last inch of me with ease. Not only that, once he’d deep-throated me to the hilt, I could feel his tongue flicking against my balls.

?“Fuck!” I cried, surprised by the intensity of this new sensation.

?I’d never been deep-throated before. The tightness and the hot tongue against the underside of my shaft was completely new and totally mesmerizing. Not only that, but James didn’t have to immediately back off like I had when I tried. He stayed where he was, bobbing up and down, taking my entire cock with every stroke of his lips.

?Needless to say, I lasted all of thirty seconds with that sort of attention.

?“Oh fuck,” I muttered, my body tensing as my balls drew up. “I’m gonna—”

?I didn’t get the words out before I shot my entire load down James’ throat. To my surprise, he didn’t pull back. Instead he just stayed there, my cock buried to the hilt as he drank down every last drop of my cum.

?Finally, he pulled back with a gasp, licking his lips before he went back down on me, licking every inch of me clean.

?“Holy fucking shit...” I said, my heart pounding so hard I thought I might die. “That was fucking crazy...”

?“Damn,” James replied, licking his lips again. “You shot big fucking loads. That’s hot as fuck.”

?“Really?”

?“Hell yeah.”

?I felt a mixture of pride and embarrassment. “Did... Did I do okay with you?”

?“I came, didn’t I?”

?“Yeah. But it was good?”

?He crawled further up my body, grabbing the back of my neck. “It was great.”

?James pulled me into a sloppy, passionate kiss once more. His tongue quickly slipped inside my mouth and swirled around mine. The taste of my own cum on his lips made cock twitch once more.

?Maybe this whole liking guys thing wasn’t so bad. I could definitely get used to this.

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I learned that night that Rowan and I had completely different reactions to getting off. While I had a tendency to get super sleepy, he got hyper. As I was trying in vain not to fall asleep on him, he was already up and getting warm washcloths to clean up with, fetching leftovers from the fridge, and putting on another movie.

I did what I could to get cleaned up, although I wasn't really worried about it. A little spit never hurt anyone and being covered in cum was kind of a turn on for me. I liked the scent of it on my skin. It was like a little reminder of the hot times I'd had not long before.

Once Rowan was done running around and finally back on the couch to watch the movie, I convinced him to stay naked and we both cuddled up under an oversized blanket to watch the movie. To be honest, I wasn't even sure what he turned on because I was out like a light within three minutes.

When I woke up the next morning, I found I was back in Rowan's bed alone. I was happy to find that my foot was already feeling a thousand times better. Even flexing it felt fine, the flesh no longer swelled and pulled against the stitches. Thanks to Doc and Rowan, I was mending pretty quickly, and I figured I'd be on my feet in a matter of days.

I pushed the covers down, stretching my naked body out in a pool of warm sunshine streaming through the window. There were dark clouds on the distant horizon. It looked like there was going to be a thunderstorm in the next few hours. But that sounded fun to me. Watching storms come in over the lake was always good.

However, my attention was pulled away as my nose caught a new scent and my

stomach growled.

?Bacon.

?Like a cartoon character, I nearly floated up and off the bed following the scent toward the kitchen. The moment my feet hit the floor, Rowan was in the doorway.

?“Stay off that foot!” he growled, crossing the room and sweeping me up into his arms once more. “You have to tell me when you need to go somewhere, okay? I don’t want you hurting yourself.”

?I threw an arm around his neck. “Whatever you say, boss. I like it when you tell me what to do.”

?He sighed, but I could tell it was just an act. The smirk pulling at his lips and the way he glanced down at my naked body told me all I needed to know.

?“Well, here’s an order then. Get dressed and come eat breakfast.”

?“That’s gonna be a no to the clothes,” I replied. “But a yes to the food.”

?He rolled his eyes. “Fine...”

?“Don’t pretend like you’re mad,” I laughed. “I can see you staring at my dick.”

?“I’d rather stare at your ass,” he grumbled.

?“How about this,” I offered. “After my bath, I’ll let you do more than just stare.”

?His eyebrow lifted.

?“You like sucking my cock so much, you should try eating my ass.”

?The sparkle in his eyes told me he was interested, but his hesitation told me that maybe that was a bit too much just yet.

?“We don’t have to do that just yet,” I giggled. “But I’m open to other ideas if you have any. And not just sex either, I don’t want you to think I’m just using you. I’d say we could go out somewhere and find something to do, but it looks like it’s gonna storm.”

?“Maybe we can drive out to the beach and watch the storm come in?”

?“Actually,” I nodded. “That sounds kind of fun.”

?“You’ll have to put clothes on for it.”

?“Eh. I’ll live I guess.” I leaned forward, kissing him on the cheek. “But I’m still eating breakfast naked.”

?He let out a heavy sigh, carrying me out of the room and toward the kitchen. “You’re going to be the death of me.”

?“Look at it this way,” I offered. “You’ve been fantasizing about stuff like this for years. I’m just helping you get caught up on the experience.”

?“So you’re doing me a favor?”

?I smiled. “Obviously.”

?Rowan just shook his head as he took me out to the kitchen and sat me in one of the barstools at the island. It looked like he’d been up for a while cooking and my mouth

was already watering from the scent. There were two plates already made, both had a stack of blueberry pancake topped with whipped cream and lemon zest with a small pile of bacon off to the side.

?“Wow...” I said, practically drooling all over the counter. “Are you a chef or something?”

?Rowan shook his head. “No. I just... well I don’t get to cook that often and after yesterday I figured I should do something nice for you.”

?“I get rewarded for letting you suck me off?” I laughed. “Fucking score.”

?“I meant for being so patient with me and hearing me out after I blew up.”

?“Oh. Well, it was just the right thing to do.”

?“Yeah, but you didn’t have to.”

?“I wanted to,” I corrected. “Back when I was figuring stuff out I didn’t have someone to talk to that would actually listen. And nobody should have to go through that. It’s hard enough to accept those things about yourself when you spend your whole life being told it’s wrong. The least I could do was hear you out.”

?“I appreciate it nonetheless.” He paused for a moment. “And I’m sorry for being grumpy all the time. I’m just... still hurt I guess.”

?“Don’t worry about it. I think it’s cute, anyway. As long as you don’t hate me for smiling all the time.”

?“It is annoying. I don’t know how anyone can see the bright side as often as you do.”

?“I have a job I love, I live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, and I’m having breakfast with a cute boy. What more could I possibly ask for?”

?Rowan blushed as he pushed my plate toward me followed by a bottle of maple syrup. “Don’t let it get cold,” he said, averting his gaze so I couldn’t see how surprised he was by my compliment.

?However, when he came around the island to sit next to me, I noticed his shorts were tented again. I took a mental note that he was voice activated and definitely had a praise kink whether he knew it or not. After we’d finished breakfast, I tested my theory. And sure enough, the guy popped a boner every time I told him he was good at something or told him he was beautiful. It was sort of funny to watch because he didn’t know what to do with himself or how to react. And I’ll admit, I found it quite entertaining watching him flounder.

?After a quick bath and a change of clothes, Rowan and I packed up and headed out to Hardwood Beach. We made a quick stop at one of the small corner stores for a few drinks and snacks. I was still full from breakfast, but if we were gonna hang out at the beach for a while, I’m sure I’d get snack-ish. That’s why my bag always had extra granola bars rolling around in the bottom of it. I knew how I was and I made sure I was prepared at all times.

?“Back into the parking spot,” I said as we arrived. “So the tailgate faces the lake.”

?“Okay?” Rowan replied, not sure where I was going with it.

?Once he parked and I had him pop the hatch, I crawled back through and over the seats, finding a perfect place to perch so I could watch the lake in comfort. Rowan came around the other side, dropping out backpacks in the trunk and sitting next to me.

?“See? Now we can watch the storm come in and we won’t get rained on!” I leaned back against the inside of the car, stretching my legs out in front of me. “And we can lay down if we want to.” I glanced up at him. “Do you go out to watch storms a lot?”

?“I used to,” he nodded. “Back in college. There was a bluff nearby that had a little park at the top of it. I used to drive out there and watch them roll in over the city.”

?“Sounds romantic.”

?“I always went alone,” he replied.

?“You can do romantic things with yourself,” I laughed. “I take myself on dates all the time. It’s called self-care.”

?“It sounds sad.”

?I lifted an eyebrow in his direction.

?“I mean... not that there’s anything wrong with it... just that... I don’t know... How can you do stuff like that by yourself? I’d feel weird if I went on a date alone. Everyone would just look at me and think I was pathetic or something, wouldn’t they?”

?“Who cares?” I asked honestly. “Isn’t it better to be nice to yourself than to worry about what other people think? If I spent my whole life worried about what others thought of me, I wouldn’t be half the person I am today. I’d probably still be in the closet too.”

?“I guess you’re right,” he sighed. “I just... I’ve never had to do date stuff alone I guess. Mia and I had been together since a little after college.”

?“That’s a long time to be with someone.”

?“Leaving her made me realize how much I took for granted. I never had to eat alone, sleep alone, or go out alone. Now I feel like the entire world is staring at me when I go anywhere, like they know I’m just some sad single schmuck who couldn’t keep his girl happy.”

?“I don’t think that’s what they see.”

?He glanced up at me. “Right...”

?I reached out, tracing my fingers over his jaw. “I can’t speak for them, but I know what I see.”

?“What’s that?”

?“A cute boy that needs to be kissed and told that despite his past mistakes, he’s still worthy of being loved, no matter what kind of person he chooses to find that in.”

?Rowan looked like he wanted to respond, but his lip quivered and he just leaned forward, resting his head against my chest. I pulled him in tight, unable to stop smiling as he snuggled in. Sometimes I worried I pushed him too far, but as his arms wrapped around my waist, I realized that maybe this was exactly what he needed.

?And just as we found comfort in our mutual silence, the rain began to fall.

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The panic was starting to settle in as a bolt of lightning streaked across the sky, the following thunder shaking the rain loose from the clouds. Heavy raindrops struck the top of the SUV so hard that the noise was nearly deafening. However my panic had nothing to do with the storm and everything to do with James.

?What I'd interpreted as fantasies to begin with had started to bloom into something else. Sure, I'd noticed my odd need to apologize to him after our fight the day before. But that was just good manners, right? Feeling a need to take care of him and make him smile was just part of being a good host. Everything else was just sex and nothing more.

?But now there were other things happening. And those things scared the shit out of me. It was one thing to want to fuck him, it was quite the opposite to feel like I wanted to take him out on a date.

?What was wrong with me? I was still torn up about Mia, wasn't I? I needed at least what? Three to nine months to process the loss of my long-term girlfriend? The one I thought I was going to marry someday and start a family with. The one I'd sacrificed all my freedom for so I could buy her the house she'd always wanted. I'd lost all of that a week ago. And here I was sitting next to a man that I was quickly developing feelings for.

?It was just rebound feelings, right? It had to be. There was no way anybody could possibly start to care about another person so quickly. This wasn't some stupid Hallmark movie or a fairy tale. This was real life and that meant I couldn't just jump into another relationship so quickly.

?Then there was the part about him being a man. Sure, in the past couple of days I'd been slowly coming to terms with my sexual attraction to him. But part of me was still holding out hope that it was just him and not every man that I found attractive. Of course, there was that guy in college, but that was so long ago that it didn't count. Right? Right?!

?That aside, romantic feelings were just plain too much and too far. I couldn't care about James in that way. Someday I had to go back to my old life. While that didn't include Mia or our apartment, it did mean I had to be around my friends and colleagues again. Adam knew and I could deal with that. But the thought of having to come out to everyone left me with a bad taste in my mouth. Sure, things were a lot more tolerant than they used to be, but that didn't mean people wouldn't treat me differently. I might not get a promotion or some people might stop talking to me all together.

?Besides, James loved living in Ludington. He wasn't going to leave for some heartbroken sad sack like me. He deserved better than that. And it would never last anyway. If there was one thing about relationships I was certain of, it was that they all came to an end, eventually. Things might feel wonderful and new right now. But eventually he'd cheat on me just like Mia did. It was a sad conclusion to come to, but one I felt certain of.

?Relationships always ended in heartbreak.

?Something touched my thigh, and I nearly jumped out of my skin.

?“Sorry,” James laughed, giving my leg a squeeze. “I didn't mean to scare you.”

?I shook my head, trying to dispel my depressing spiral. “It's okay.”

?“Isn't the rain beautiful?” he asked, pulling himself over to my side of the car and

laying his head in my lap. “I love the way it sweeps in over the lake. There’s just something so calming about the entire thing.”

“It’s like white noise,” I replied matter-of-factly. “Like the kind you play to fall asleep.”

“Yeah. But it smells way better.” He wrapped his arm around my waist, snuggling in close. “And the company is a lot better.”

The butterflies in my stomach always went wild when he said stuff like that. It was disconcerting how quickly he could get me all riled up both emotionally and physically. He had too much power over me.

“It’s pretty,” I said at last, choosing not to comment on the rest of his statement.

We were quiet for a few minutes, both of us just staring out over the lake at the rain fell and the waves crashed. The wind that had swelled up at the beginning of the storm had now died down. The rain fell straight down, filling the air with the smell of petrichor and earth. It would’ve been really nice if my head wasn’t still spinning.

“What do you dream of doing with your life?” James asked out of the blue.

“What?”

“If money were no object and you could spend your life doing whatever you wanted, what would it be?”

I furrowed my brows. “I... I don’t know. I never really thought about it.”

“You don’t dream about your life?”

?“Why would I?” I shrugged. “I have to work at this job to make a living and when I retire someday, if I’m that lucky, I’ll be too old and decrepit to do anything but sit around and watch television. So there’s no point in dreaming about something that will never happen.”

?James nodded, but didn’t comment. Instead he added, “I dream all the time.”

?I couldn’t help myself from asking. “About what?”

?“I like the vet clinic, but if I didn’t have to make money, I think I’d start a small farm or something.”

?“A farm?”

?“Yeah. Wouldn’t it be nice to wake up every day, feed the chickens, collect eggs, and grow veggies? I could have my own little orchard full of fruit trees and there would be a stand out by the road where I could sell the extras or just give them away I guess. Just my own small haven in the middle of nowhere for me and my man.”

?“I didn’t think you’d be into that sort of thing.”

?James shrugged, holding me tighter. “It just feels like the sort of thing I’d love to do with my life. And, if I try it for a while and decide it’s not quite what I want, then I can go find a new dream. That’s the beauty of life.”

?“Sounds like you’ve got it all figured out,” I sighed, shifting myself into a more comfortable position. “I hope you find the guy that wants to do that with you.”

?I felt him flinch at my words, but he covered it up quickly with a stretch before he pulled himself away.

?“Yeah. Someday. But for now, I’ll work at the clinic until I get money saved up for such a place. And even if I have to start the farm alone, I’d do it, anyway. I love animals and nature too much not to have at least something.”

?“I hope that works out for you.”

?James looked up at me, his blue eyes sparkling. “I hope you find something that makes you happy too. I know things have been tough for you.” He paused, placing a hand on my shoulder. “Just don’t let your anger get in the way of finding your happiness, okay?”

?I wasn’t sure if it felt good or violating that he could read me so easily.

?“Right,” I muttered, tearing my gaze away from him.

?James went back to his side of the SUV and got comfortable once more. A few minutes passed by and a part of me wanted to stay out there, but the mood had shifted. What had once been a happy and warm private moment had turned as cold and damp as the weather outside. I let out a sigh, knowing I couldn’t handle it much longer.

?“Well, I have to go back to work tomorrow,” I said at last. “And your foot is getting a lot better.”

?James nodded, his smile fading. “You can take me home whenever you want. In fact, why don’t you take me over to the dunes and I’ll pick up my car. I can just drive with my left foot.”

?Sadness filled my chest as I realized what I’d done. “Are you sure?”

?“Yeah,” he sighed. “You’ve already done too much for me as it is. I need to let you

get back to your own life.”

?I hated myself for taking his smile away. I watched him crawl back into the passenger seat and slip his seatbelt on. I wanted him to stay, more than anything. But, I knew he had to go. I had a job waiting for me and a life I needed to rebuild. Adam wasn't going to let me live in his cabin forever and I didn't plan to. Come tomorrow morning, I needed to start looking for an apartment of my own and it was probably best if I didn't stay in Ludington.

?My time with James had been nice, but it was only temporary. I didn't want a relationship from anyone. My heart just couldn't take it.

?So, sliding out of the back of the SUV, I let the cold rain soak through my clothing as I shut the tailgate and headed back to the driver's seat. It was time to take James home.

?And it was time for me to be alone once more.

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I'd taken James to the state park to retrieve his car. By some miracle, there wasn't a ticket on the windshield, although it looked like there was some kind of note under the wiper blade. Before we parted, I thought he might touch me, hug me, or even give me another one of his kisses that I craved so much. But there was nothing. Instead, he simply waved, got in his vehicle, and drove away, the note flying off the windshield before get caught up by the breeze.

I felt lost after that moment. I made my way back to town, wondering what I should have for dinner. But after driving around aimlessly for nearly an hour, I decided I wasn't hungry and just went back to the cabin. The rain had gotten heavier, and the sky darkened, bringing a sense of twilight to the world long before the sun even set.

That was nothing compared to the moment I walked into the cabin and realized James wasn't there. I put my keys on the counter, kicked off my shoes, fell face first onto the couch, and felt the tears well up in my eyes. I cursed myself over and over again for feeling the way I did. If I hadn't been so fucking stupid and let myself develop this little crush, things wouldn't be so hard.

I stayed that way for nearly an hour. After that I did nothing but doom scroll on my phone, watching videos go by of people much happier than I was. Meanwhile, my mind wandered. I thought about how angry I was with Mia, how angry I was with myself, and how much I missed James already. My resolve to keep him at a distance was slowly eroding as the aching in my heart ate away at me. But as much as I wanted to, I wouldn't allow myself to text him.

Finally, when I could no longer stand it, I left my phone on the coffee table and went to bed early, removing the temptation.

I couldn't remember the last time I'd had such a sleepless night. By the time I got up for work the next morning and logged into my work laptop, I looked like a raccoon that had been hit by a car. Out of the entire twelve hours I'd spent lying in bed, I slept for maybe thirty minutes. The rest of that time I spent beating myself up for being stupid, for feeling things, and for letting myself hope.

Somehow I made it through the morning rush to lunch. I wasn't sure how considering I didn't have the report done that my boss wanted and I couldn't find the motivation to care about a damn thing he wanted. More than once I had to bite my tongue when he said something stupid to me. I was starting to get really fucking tired of his ineptitude around basic computer tasks. He ran a multi-million dollar company, he should know how to use Microsoft Office.

When I finally peeled myself away from the computer and went out into the kitchen to try to find something to eat, I spotted my phone still sitting on the coffee table. For a moment I tried to walk by it and resist the temptation. But the longer I stood there, the more I realized I wasn't going to win this battle.

With a sigh I walked over and picked it up, clicking the screen on to see what I'd missed in the past sixteen hours. And, while I had several messages, none of them were from James. However, there was one I was surprised to see.

Mia: Hey, just wanted to make sure you were okay. I haven't heard from you since you disappeared.

My heart pounded and my chest filled with anxiety as I stared that message down. Mia was absolutely the last person I wanted to talk to. Not to mention, she had super moved on from me months ago. So why the hell did she care now? It would've been nice if she gave a shit enough to tell me she was cheating on me back in February.

I didn't want to drag it out, but I knew she wouldn't stop texting until I answered her.

So I started typing.

Me: I'm fine.

Mia: Good! I'm glad to hear it! Where have you been staying?

Me: With Adam.

Was it a lie? Yes. Did I want her to know where I actually was? Absolutely not.

Mia: I'm glad he had room for you. Although you didn't have to leave.

Me: Pretty sure I did, Mia.

Mia: That's not how I wanted you to find out about that. I didn't do it on purpose.

Me: Okay.

Mia: And besides, it's over now, anyway. Cory broke up with me.

Oh man... the satisfaction I felt reading that message was damn near orgasmic.

Me: Why's that?

Mia: I never told him about you. And when you caught us, he didn't like it.

Me: Sounds like a decent guy. Glad he's moving on to something better.

Mia: What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

Me: Just what you think it does. You cheated on me for months instead of telling me

your were unhappy. Then you trick this guy into sleeping with you without telling him you've had a boyfriend for years? Talk about manipulative.

Mia: I've been telling you for months that I was unhappy!

Me: When Mia? When did you fucking tell me to my face that you were unhappy?

Mia: There were signs!

Me: I'm not a fucking oracle, Mia. I don't read signs. I was far too busy working so I could buy you a house to sit around and consult a crystal fucking ball to figure out what the fuck you wanted from me.

Mia: So this is my fault then? Is that what you're saying?

Me: It's literally ALWAYS been your fault. You cheated on ME, not the other way around. I was faithful to you the entire time!

Mia: I doubt that.

Me: It's true.

Mia: So what are you gonna do with all our house money?

Me: OUR house money?! You can go fuck yourself. Every last penny of that came out of my paychecks, went into my savings account, and was earned by my blood, sweat, and tears. You never gave me a fucking dime.

Mia: I bought some of the furniture for the apartment!

Me: Then keep it.

Mia: You fucking tightwad asshole! And here I was trying to tell you I wanted you back, and that I forgave you for practically neglecting me. You can go fuck yourself. You're probably some fag, anyway. That's why you wouldn't touch me anymore.

My heart was racing. Between the anger and Mia's sudden attack, I didn't know what to do. But her accusation made my breath catch in my throat. Was it possible she knew? Had I shown signs of my fantasies before now? The panic started to rise, filling me with dread.

But then a new message came through, the notification dropping down from the top of my screen.

James: Hey, I just wanted to make sure you were okay. And I wanted to apologize. I gave you a cold goodbye yesterday, but I had some time to think and I'm sorry. I know you're going through things and trying to figure it all out. I should have been more understanding. Let me know if you want to get dinner sometime and if you're willing, I'd really like to kiss you again.

The emotional rollercoaster I was on was indescribable. But the moment I finished reading James' message for the second time, my thoughts on the subject solidified. Everything with Mia was over. Like super over. And her outburst had proven to me that I was wasting time grieving the loss of something that I was better off without. Sure, life was a little different now, but from where I was standing, it was suddenly a whole lot brighter. Mia was my darkness and James was like the sun rising, the light that would lead me into the future.

Another message from Mia came through and in that moment, I made a decision.

Mia: Your silence speaks volumes. I bet you are just some fag. Good thing you don't have any family or they'd be really disappointed. I'm sure you've been choking on Adam's cock for years now.

Me: Mia, you're right. I am a fag. And you know what? I wasn't that way before I met you. But your pussy is just so fucking gross that I decided I never wanted to see another one again. So congratulations, you made me gay. You probably made Cory gay too. Have a nice life.

And before she could respond, I blocked her number, so I'd never see another message from her again.

My heart was still racing, and I was terrified, but I knew what I had to do. Flipping over to my thread with James, I began to type furiously.

Me: Let's go to lunch. Right now. We need to talk.

James: Don't you have to work?

Me: I'm taking a sick day.

James: Only if you're sure. I don't want you to get in trouble.

Me: Believe me, you are FAR more important than my job.

James: That... is so sweet 3 I'd love to go to lunch with you.

Me: I'll be on my way in ten minutes.

Tossing my phone onto the charger, I ran to the bathroom and flipped on the shower. The last thing I wanted to do was start my new life with the grime accumulated from the past. It was time to wash Mia out of my hair for the last time.

It was time to go see my sunshine with open arms.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

Rowan was practically out of breath when he showed up at my front door. He looked flushed, bothered, irritated, and happy to see me all at the same time. However, the moment he laid eyes on me I watched him quietly suppress it all in a vain attempt to seem a little more normal. Obviously something had him all riled up, I just wasn't sure what was going on.

?Of course, his reply to my text had caught me off guard. In the first place, I'd never expected a response. But even if I was going to get one, I suspected it would be a single word or just some placation that let me know he was no longer interested. However, an invitation to hang out and to kiss him again? That was the last thing I expected.

?He carried me out to the car, insisting that I not walk on my injured foot. I noticed a figure a few spaces down that was staring at us as he leaned against his car smoking a cigarette. It was probably one of my neighbors wondering why there was a man kidnapping me. Although, considering I wasn't putting up a struggle, I hoped they wouldn't call the cops. I couldn't explain what was going on to them anyway because I still didn't know how this meeting was going to end.

?“Where do you want to eat?” he asked the moment we were both in the car. His voice was a little manic. “Anything sound good to you?”

?“Are you okay, Rowan?” I asked with no small amount of concern. “Is something wrong?”

?“Actually,” he replied with a sigh. “For the first time, everything seems sort of right.”

?I lifted an eyebrow in surprise. “Well, I guess that calls for a celebration then.”

?“Is there a good place to do that?”

?“Hardwood Beach obviously. Boner Beach is the only place to celebrate.”

?He smiled. Not just a grin or a smirk, but a full on fucking smile. My heart started to pound and my chest swelled with pride.

?“That sounds perfect,” he said. “Let’s get takeout and go have a picnic.”

?Now I was really worried. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

?He reached over, placing his hand on the side of my face, his thumb stroking the line of my jaw. “I don’t think I’ve ever been better.”

?I smiled, leaning into his touch. This was a side to Rowan I’d never seen before, but I liked it. I wasn’t sure I’d ever see him smile like this.

?Thirty minutes later we arrived at the beach with a bag full of Chinese food, which was Rowan’s favorite. He backed the SUV up so the trunk faced the beach, popped the tailgate, and carried me to the back just like the previous morning when we watched the storm roll in. But this time it was the middle of the afternoon and the beach was packed. And to my surprise, he didn’t flinch away from me when other people turned their gazes in our direction. In fact, he seemed to swell with pride.

?I’d never seen such a rapid transformation in a person before. It was like I didn’t even know him.

?We got comfortable, unpacked the food, and just after we took our first bite, Rowan sat his down on the trunk floor and looked my way.

?“I’m sure you’re probably wondering why I asked you out here,” he began.

?“Actually, I’m sort of wondering if you’ve snapped and if you’re going to skin me and wear me like a coat.”

?“You’re not my size,” he grinned. “And the lambs are still screaming.”

?“Good movie reference.”

?“Thanks.”

?“So what is going on?” I asked, putting my food aside as well. “You seem like a brand new person today. And after the way I treated you yesterday, well I wasn’t expecting such a warm reception.”

?He took a deep breath. “Mia messaged me today.”

?My eyebrows shot up. “Your ex-girlfriend? What did she want?”

?“She wanted me to come back home.”

?The surprise I felt turned to icy dread in an instant. So that’s why he was smiling. He’d been offered his old life back on a silver platter and he was being nice to me so he didn’t feel bad about leaving. I’d seen it a million times before. Dudes took me out on nice dates after using me for sex just to let me know they didn’t want to see me again.

?“When are you leaving?” I asked, my hunger forgotten as I stared out over the sand.

?“Leaving?” he asked, cocking his head to the side. “Why would I leave?”

“You’re going home to her, aren’t you? You can have your old life back. I know that’s what you’ve wanted.” He opened his mouth to reply, but I cut him off. “It’s okay. I mean, it kind of sucks, but I understand. I know all this new stuff has been really hard for you, so it only makes sense you want to be comfortable and happy. And that’s okay.”

I started to push myself up, but he grabbed my arm, holding me in place.

“James,” he said sternly. “Sit down.”

There was that dominance again and of course, I complied immediately.

“Let me explain.”

“There’s nothing to explain...”

“I’m not going back.”

I opened my mouth to keep talking, but stopped as his words sunk in. “W-What?”

“I’m not going back to her.”

“But... she—”

“She’s a money-grubbing bitch.”

Now it was me who was at a loss for words.

“Long story short, her new boyfriend broke up with her because she’s a cheater. Then she let it slip that she only wanted me back to get the money I’d saved up for a house for us. Not only that, but when I told her off, she tried to make it sound like

everything was my fault and that I was the one in the wrong.”

?That sounded exactly like the conversation I’d had with Ray over the weekend.

?“Then she called me a fag.”

?“She what?!” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. “People still say that?!”

?“She did. Twice. And I told her she was right before I blocked her.”

?“Christ. That’s a fucking lot to deal with all of a sudden.” I gave him a good once over. “Why do you seem so happy about it? Anyone else would be falling apart. A week ago you thought you were straight.”

?“I did. But I know I’m not now.” He reached out, taking my hand and pulling it into his lap. “I don’t know if it’s just you or if this is a part of me that I’ll need to explore more, but I don’t care. The truth is that I find you very attractive and I think I might even... like you.”

?I didn’t know what to say, so I just stared at him with my jaw hanging open.

?“I’d like to give this... whatever it is with you, a shot.” Those brown eyes of his searched mine, desperately trying to find some hint that I felt something toward him. “If that’s something you’d be interested in. I know I’m a mess and I know I’ve got a lot to learn. But I’d do my best to be whatever you need me to be.”

?“Rowan,” I replied, finding my words at last. “I don’t need you to change to make me happy. I don’t know who all you’ve dated in the past, but that’s not how relationships are supposed to work.” I leaned in, pressing my forehead to his. “I like you just the way you are, baggage and all.”

?His breath hitched. “Do you really mean it?”

?“Of course I do.” I pressed my lips to his, savoring the taste of him on my tongue as we connected once more. My skin erupted in goosebumps and a shiver ran down my spine. “But you have to make me a promise.”

?“Anything.”

?“If you ever don’t want to be with me, just say it, okay? Don’t make me guess.”

?“That’s an easy promise to make,” he replied, hugging me tightly. “And the same goes for you. I don’t know if I could stand another situation like I had with her.”

?“I would never do that to you or anyone,” I said confidently. “I promise.”

?We sat there for a long moment, just holding one another and enjoying the contact. The food lay forgotten next to us while the cool breeze kicked up over the lake. Everyone else at the beach was just having a normal day, completely unaware of the revelation that had just taken place. Rowan was finally ready to accept who he was, and he wanted to do it with me of all people.

And, of course, I was more than willing to give him a chance. I wanted nothing more than to wake up every day next to him and see that smile on his face. He made my heart flutter in ways that I didn’t know were possible. After all the dates I’d been on, Rowan was the last person I expected to make me feel this way. But I was thrilled nonetheless.

?When we finally pulled away from one another, I shifted over to Rowan’s side of the trunk so we could sit shoulder to shoulder. I picked up his food and handed it to him before taking my own.

?“So,” I said, beaming from ear to ear. “What’s next?”

?“Well,” he replied, taking a big bite. “The first thing I’m gonna do is quit my job.”

?I nearly spit out my food. “What? Why?!”

?“I hate it.”

?“Yeah... but don’t you need to make money?”

?“I have quite a bit put away,” he grinned. “And I’m gonna spend it all on myself just to spite Mia.”

?“I mean... I get the urge to do that, but is it smart?”

?“I’ve got enough saved up to get me through at least a year’s worth of expenses. In that time I can find another job that I actually don’t mind doing. Plus it’ll give me some time to think about what you said.”

?“What did I say?”

?He glanced over at me, a smirk on his face. “You said you had dreams about a farm. And I want to find out what my dreams are. Who knows, maybe they’re not so dissimilar to yours.”

?“Alright, but don’t go buying a farm just because I want one,” I warned, pointing my spoon at him menacingly. “I know you’re excited and ready to do something drastic. But if you and I are going to date, we need to take it just a little bit slow.”

?“Like... no sex slow?”

?He gave me his biggest puppy dog eyes, and I nearly melted on the spot.

?“Sex is fine. But I don’t want you building a new life around me before we even know if we can stand each other for that long.” I leaned close, poking him with my spoon. “If you’re going to build a life here, then do it for yourself only. If it’s meant to be, then we’ll make it work.”

?“Alright,” he said, holding his hands up in mock defeat. “If I make any decisions, I’ll make sure they’re purely selfish.”

?“Good boy.” I went back to my food. “So, did you decide to become fully gay or are you going with a different label?” I pointed out toward the beach. “Who do you think is hot out there?”

?“That guy right there,” he replied, pointing to a red head in a pair of green trunks with muscles for days. “He’s hot.”

?“Accurate.”

?“And although his girlfriend looks like she would probably tie me down and beat me with a riding crop, she’s kinda hot too.”

?I looked her up and down. “I don’t see it.”

?“She’s got a nice shape and good tits.”

?“Huh.” I tried to imagine her naked before I reached down and poked my dick through my shorts. “Nope. Not even the tiniest twitch.”

?“Well, you’re gay.”

?“And I’m gonna say pretty confidently that you’re bisexual.”

?Rowan smiled. “I think I can handle that.”

?“Do me a favor though,” I added. “If you ever want to fuck a girl, don’t ask me to be part of it, okay?”

?He laughed out loud at that, the sound of his laughter filling my chest with pride and affection.

?“Don’t worry,” he replied. “With you around, I doubt I’m even going to notice other people.” He leaned close, kissing the side of my neck. “You’re the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. No one else can compare.”

?I melted into him, the butterflies in my stomach erupting into a frenzy.

?This boy was going to kill me.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

Rowan practically kicked the cabin door down as he carried me over the threshold. My foot was feeling fine enough to walk on a little, but he wouldn't hear of it. Instead he took me to the couch and sat me down gently, his lips pressed against mine as he crawled into my lap. I was surprised to find him grinding against me, but I definitely didn't mind. I'd been hard as a rock since he began kissing me back at the beach and that wasn't going to go away any time soon.

"You're so beautiful," Rowan whispered against my neck as he kissed his way down my shoulder. "So fucking beautiful."

"Rowan," I replied, my hands already under his shirt. "You don't have to do this if you're not ready. I can... wait..."

"No," he replied feverishly. "I've been thinking about this since the day I met you." He leaned back, his brown eyes fixed on mine. "I want to worship every inch of you if you'll let me."

"I..." I hesitated. "I'm a little worried. About going all the way..."

He suddenly sat back, taking his hands off me. "I can stop."

"It's not that," I replied, turning my gaze to the floor as my cheeks burned with embarrassment. "It's just that... Well, every guy I do that with... leaves. And I don't mean it happened once or twice. I mean every single one."

Rowan reached out, cupping my cheek. "I'm not going to leave you," he stated confidently, his expression hard and determined. "You're patient, you listen to me,

and it doesn't hurt that you're pretty easy on the eyes."

?I couldn't help laughing at that.

?“I'm not leaving,” he said again, leaning close. “And if this doesn't work out... well... we'll figure it out. But it won't be tomorrow or the next day because I need more time than that with you. I want you around. Even if we don't go all the way, I still want you here. You're... special to me.”

?Well, that did it. The moment those words left his mouth, the icy walls around my heart melted. Suddenly I was ready to go, regardless of the consequences. If he'd been anyone else, I might not have believed him. But seeing as it was Rowan who was incapable of making up that kind of sincerity, I gave in.

?And, of course, I wanted him so bad I could taste it.

?“Please,” I said, wrapping my arms around his neck. “My body is yours. Do whatever you want to me.”

?Rowan smiled, kissing me hard. “This isn't about me. I want to make you feel good.”

?“Well,” I laughed, cocking an eyebrow. “I guess you better get to sucking then.”

?“Anything for you.”

?With a grin, he slid back and dropped down to the floor on his knees. He lifted my shirt up and over my head, kissing his way down my body. He made a quick detour to my nipples, biting and licking until I was practically writhing in his grasp. Then, before I knew what was happening, he slipped my shorts off my body, allowing my rock hard cock to spring free at last.

?Rowan took me in his hand, milking my cock from the base until a fat drop of pre-cum appeared at the tip. He licked it up greedily, moaning as the flavor spread over his tongue. I hissed through my teeth in pleasure as he suddenly took me into his mouth, his tongue flicking over the sensitive underside of my cockhead.

?It seemed he remembered all his tricks from our last bit of fun and went straight to the best ones first. I was already on the edge to begin with, so turned on by his passionate kisses and his touch that I could barely contain myself. Waves of pleasure rushed through my body, crashing over and burying every thought I had to tell him to stop. Already my muscles were tensing, and I felt my balls draw up.

?“I’m gonna—”

?That was all I got out before the moan took over and I pumped Rowan’s mouth full of cum. To his credit, he didn’t sputter or pull away. Instead he sucked even harder, making sure to swallow every last drop of my load. His hands were all over me as he sucked and sucked, licking every inch of me clean.

?Finally I had no choice but to push him away.

?“Too sensitive,” I said, my voice shaking. “I... I need a break for a second.”

?“Let’s do something else then.”

?I was still panting as my orgasm ebbed. “Like what?”

?“This.”

?Rowan grabbed my ankles and pulled me forward. My butt hung off the edge of the couch while my back and shoulders were nearly flat on the seat. He put his hands on the back of my knees and pushed them back, my ass spread wide and on full display

only inches from his face.

?“W-What are you d-doing?”

?A sly grin filled his face. “Trying something new.”

?His comment registered just as his nose came to rest against the underside of my balls. Before I could make sure he was ready for such a thing, I felt a hot tongue against my hole. Immediately the tension in my body disappeared and my moans filled the cabin.

?“Oh fuck...”

?Rowan popped back up, licking his lips. “You know, I thought it would be weirder. Or like... be gross or something. But it’s not at all.”

?“Thank you?” I laughed, unsure if it was a compliment or not. “I shower.”

?“That or your ass is just fucking tasty.”

?“Oh my god...”

?“Anyway,” he smiled, his head dipping back down between my legs.

?His tongue flicked over my hole once more and all the words left my brain. There was nothing but sensation and pleasure filling me up. I thought after cumming I would need some time to recover. But the moment his tongue started making long strokes between my cheeks, I was rock hard again. Then, when he began pressing harder against my entrance, pre-cum began to leak from me once more. I’d never had such a reaction to someone before.

?“Fuck...” I moaned, hooking my arms behind my knees and pulling myself wider for him. “Goddamn you’re good at that... like really good.”

?“Thanks,” he muttered against my ass, his voice muffled. “It’s my first time.”

?After ten long minutes of him giving me the tongue lashing of my life, I finally grabbed him by the hair and hauled him up. My face was flushed, heat rolled off my skin in waves, and my belly was completely coated in a sticky layer of pre-cum.

?“I need you to fuck me,” I commanded, holding him tightly.

?“I... I don’t have any condoms,” he replied, his smile fading.

?“I’ve got a clean bill of health if you don’t want to use one.”

?“Are you sure?”

?I nodded. “You can breed me if you want. I’ve always wanted to feel another man cum inside me bare.” I took him by the face, fixing my gaze on his. “I trust you.”

?He swallowed hard, but his eyes lit up with excitement. “Okay...”

?I stopped him before he went too far. “Kiss me again.”

?Rowan smiled, leaning close and pressing his lips to mine. His tongue danced over mine, the taste of my skin on his lips. I could still taste my cum on his tongue and the thought of him filling me with his own turned me on more than I could express.

?“Please,” I begged once more, unable to wait any longer. “Please fuck me. I need you inside me.”

?My breathless pleas caused Rowan's pupils to dilate as he pulled back. In one swift movement he removed both his shirt and his shorts, his heavy cock springing free at last. A thick bead of pre-cum had already gathered at the tip, adding some slickness to my already saliva-drenched hole as he rubbed his cockhead against my entrance. I squirmed in delight, feeling his thick cock pressed against me like that. I couldn't lie, I'd been fantasizing about it for a while now and I was hungry to have him inside me.

?He was a little hesitant for the first time as he leaned forward, pressing himself harder against me. I reached up, wrapping my hand around the back of his neck.

?“Harder,” I said, keeping his gaze.

?“I don't want to hurt you.”

?“I'll let you know if you're hurting me. But right now, I need you inside me.”

?Reaching down, I wrapped my fingers around his hips and pulled him closer, his cockhead slipping past my ring with a small but satisfying pop.

?“Oh fuck...” he moaned, his eyes rolling back in his head.

?“That good?”

?“Better,” he smiled, rocking his hips forward so that he slipped in further. “This is way better than anything else I've done before.”

?“You're not the first person to say that.” I gave him a wink. “Now, fuck me.”

?He didn't reply. Instead, he just did as he was told.

?I hissed through my teeth in pleasure as he sank to the hilt, the thick shaft of his

cock stretching me further than I'd had in a long time. The intensity of the sensation sent shivers up and down my spine, alighting all my nerves along the way. But what really got my attention was his cockhead. The ridge popped over my prostate in the most exquisite way, drawing more moans from my lips. I felt my muscles flex and my hips gyrate as I instinctively rode that spot over and over again, grinding the pleasure into my body.

Rowan's fingers wrapped around my waist, holding on as I took what I wanted from him. Although, if I was being honest, he definitely didn't seem to mind. The guy was practically writhing in ecstasy after only a minute or so. Eventually he pinned my knees down, forcing me to keep still as my ass was spread wide. Keeping his eyes on me, he began to thrust, his thick cock fucking me wide open.

"Fuck..." I groaned, my body rocking in time with his. "God damn that cock is thick!"

He grinned, shifted his angle, and kept going. Apparently the guy had been taking notes because that slight adjustment made all the fucking difference. All thoughts left my brain as he found my prostate again and began to attack it with single-minded intensity. My moans quickly filled the cabin, and I knew I probably sounded ridiculous, but it felt so fucking good that I couldn't help it. Pre-cum was practically streaming down my cock, and it took everything I had not to touch myself. I knew if I did, it would all be over again and I wanted him to breed me before I came.

Rowan's pace picked up, the feeling of his heavy balls slapping against my ass sending percussive bursts of perfection flowing through me. Everything about his body was incredible. Even after all the guys I'd tried to be with, nobody had ever fucked me like this before. They only cared about themselves. But Rowan, well he was doing everything he could to make me cum. And if he wasn't careful, he was going to, whether I touched myself or not.

“Oh fuck,” Rowan said, his thrusts growing erratic. “I’m not gonna last.”

“Don’t hold back,” I replied. “I want it all!”

Grabbing my hips, Rowan fucked me even harder, my body rocking against the couch. The sounds of skin on skin, moans, and effort filled the air. My muscles tensed and I felt my balls drawing up, the familiar tingling sensation crawling up my body.

“Fuck... fuck, fuck, fuck!”

With one last cry, Rowan slammed himself to the hilt, his cock easily popping past my second ring. His cock throbbed heavily as a searing heat filled my belly. I felt each and every shot of cum that he pumped into me, the sensation making me feel absolutely drunk with lust. It was also just enough to push me over the edge.

A cry escaped my lips and my hips bucked as the orgasm rushed over me. Without touching myself, my cock pulsed and striped my chest in sticky cum. Rowan stared down in disbelief, his mouth hanging wide as he watched me writhe in pleasure. I couldn’t help riding his cock through the entire orgasm, milking him with my tight ass.

Eventually he had to pull away, the overstimulation too much to bear. A rush of cum followed his exit, and I practically drooled in happiness as his cum leaked out of my ass.

Rowan collapsed beside me on the couch, his legs splayed wide and his spent cock still twitching between them. I let my feet fall back to the floor, my body shaking as I realized I’d forgotten to breathe for the past thirty seconds or so.

“Oh my god,” I panted as I relaxed into a man-shaped puddle on the couch. “That’s

the best cock I've ever had. No contest."

"What?" Rowan replied just as breathlessly.

"No joke. The best. Hands down."

"I'm not even that big," he retorted, giving his half hard cock a shake. "You're bigger than me."

"Yeah, but you're thick," I moaned, rolling over to kiss him. "And that ridge on the head is fucking magical. I've never had someone beat my prostate into submission like that And I've never cum without touching myself before.."

He laughed, but he still looked a bit concerned. "It almost sounds like I hurt you."

"Only in the right ways," I smiled, kissing him once more. "I know I'll be sore and I hope I limp for a week. Every time my used ass twinges I want to be reminded of how you bred me today."

He blushed in embarrassment, but I could see his smirk poking through. "Was it really that good?"

I held up three fingers on my right hand. "Scout's honor. Best I've ever had."

"Fuck..."

"Damn right," I smiled, patting him on the leg as I rolled back to my original position. "Good hustle."

"Good hustle?"

?“Yeah. That’s what straight guys say, right?”

?He lifted an eyebrow in my direction. “I don’t know. I’m not straight, remember?”

?“Not after that you aren’t.” I gave him a wink. “Welcome to the Alphabet Mafia.”

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

Despite how tired I was from not sleeping the night before, I could barely sleep again with James in my arms. My heart was still racing, although it wasn't from the sex. It was racing because I'd found something I didn't know I needed. Something I never thought I'd find again.

?A place to belong and someone to belong too.

?Now, I wasn't quite ready to call up a wedding planner and book a venue, but I knew I definitely felt a strong something toward James. Everything I'd told him was true. He felt safe, like the special place that was made just for me. In the world of heartache and hurt like I'd become used to, he was a bright ball of sunshine that drove the darkness away. Already I found myself smiling completely by accident. Colors were brighter, and the world didn't seem so dark. Even my situation and the fact that I had almost nothing couldn't bring me down.

?I felt happy for the first time in months. Up until that moment, I wasn't sure I could ever feel that way again. On top of that, I hadn't realized how long I'd been miserable until James came into my life. I felt stupid for trying to push him away at first. Things that worried me before seemed like silly trifles to be upset about. Who cared if I liked guys too? Being bisexual wasn't a crime, and I wasn't going to look at it like it was the end of the world anymore. In fact, it barely changed anything. The more I thought about it, the more I realized I'd always been this way, I just wouldn't allow myself to accept it.

?All that was over now. Heading into the future I would be true to myself, I would do my damndest to look on the bright side, and I'd do everything I could to not only make my life better, but James' as well. Starting today I would have a brand new life.

?And as much as I wanted to wake James and celebrate that fact, I knew I should let him sleep. So, when the early gray of morning eventually rolled around, and I was far too restless to stay in bed anymore, I kissed him gently on the neck and slid out of bed without being noticed.

?I took myself to the kitchen, turned on the coffee pot, and went over to the sliding glass door to stare out at Lake Michigan. Despite the early hour, the lake was still a gorgeous sight to behold. The early morning blues and pinks along the horizon reflected off the water, giving the world a strange ethereal glow. A part of me wanted to run down to the beach and go for a swim, but I didn't want James to wake up and find me gone. The last thing I wanted was for him to think I'd run off on him like all those other guys. No. For now I'd stay in the cabin. We could go swimming when he woke up.

?A flash of light behind me caught my attention. I turned to see a car pull into the cabin's driveway. It was a dark sedan with those bright blue LED lights that could peel your cornea right off your eye. I held up a hand to block the light and moved to the side so I wasn't being blinded.

?From what I could make out, it wasn't Adam's car. And he wouldn't be up this early, anyway. There wasn't much traffic on the road this time of morning either. And, when it didn't pull out again, I started to get a little nervous. What was the driver doing? Why had they chosen this driveway out of all the others?

?I seemed to recall some odd fact about robbers hitting houses in the early morning when everyone was sure to be asleep. With that thought in mind, I ran back to the bedroom, grabbed my phone, and went back to the edge of the window. I'd just started to pull up my keypad in case I needed to call the police when the car finally started backing out of the driveway once more.

?I let out a long sigh of relief. Despite my good mood, I'd let my anxiety get the

better of me. The driver wasn't trying to break into my house or be a creep. They were probably just trying to figure out where they were going and needed a place to turn around. After all, there were lots of beaches around the cabin and a few of them public. It was also the height of the tourist season and it wouldn't surprise me if there were several wannabe photographers looking for a good place to set up and get morning shots of the lake.

?Chuckling to myself, I wrote it off as a case of early morning jitters and tucked my phone back in my pocket. Just as I did the coffee pot in the kitchen chimed to let me know the brew was ready. Grabbing a cup and filling it nearly to the brim, I threw on a hoodie and went out on the back porch to watch the darkness of night slowly transform into day.

?Pinks and blues gave way to reds and golds as the sun rose opposite of the lake. The moment sunlight spilled over the trees, the water seemed to suddenly burst into flame. Oranges speckled with bright whites danced off the distant waves all the way to the horizon. I couldn't help but smile as the beautiful display unfolded in front of me.

?When the sun was fully up, I finally pulled out my phone again and flipped over to my messages. Adam would probably be awake by now and I'd been dying to ask him something all night.

Me: You awake?

?There was no return message for a few minutes. But just when I started to think I'd need to try again later, a message finally came through.

Adam: Barely. Why?

Me: I have a favor to ask you.

Adam: Can't it wait until a decent hour?

Me: I'll just ask and you can answer when you're ready. You might want to think about it first, anyway.

Adam: Sounds complicated. Go for it I guess.

Me: Can I rent your cabin for a while?

Adam: I told you to stay as long as you needed.

Me: Yeah, but that means like a month or two. I want to stay here for a year or more.

Adam: Oh... that's surprising. Something happen? GASP!!!! IS IT THAT BOY????!!!!!!

?I'd started to formulate a response but then my phone rang. It was Adam of course.

?“Hi,” I said, pulling it up to my ear. “Couldn't wait?”

?“No!” he practically shouted into my ear. “What the hell is going on over there?!”

?“A few things...”

?“I guess so! I let you borrow my cabin after a bad breakup and suddenly you're a brand new person with all these secrets!”

?“I wasn't keeping secrets,” I replied. “I just didn't know.”

?“You didn't know?” He didn't sound convinced. “How is that even remotely possible? Did you just see the lake and suddenly think huh, I like dick now?”

?“Alright, alright. So I might’ve thought a roommate was hot back in college.”

?“AHA!”

?“But I thought it was just a phase.”

?“Oh Booboo,” he sighed. “It’s never just a phase. Once you get the hunger, it never goes away.”

?I lifted an eyebrow. “That what happened to you?”

?“I’ve had the hunger since the eighth grade. There was no hope for me.” He sighed. “And I’m a slut, so high school and college were quite the experience for me.”

?“How come that doesn’t surprise me?”

?“I thought I’d turn you,” he replied. I could hear the smile in his voice. “But I learned pretty fast you weren’t into me.”

?“You can be a lot sometimes,” I said without thinking.

?“Wow,” he replied flatly. “You sound just like the guy that broke up with me two days ago.”

?“Didn’t he just move in or something?”

?“Yep,” he sighed. “Turns out I’m too hard to live with.”

?“I... I’m sorry, Adam.”

?“Eh, it’s fine.” I could almost hear him shrug. “Boys come and go. Sometimes

literally. That's just the way it is sometimes." He paused for a moment. "Maybe when you're done with the cabin, I should come out there for a while. Sounds like the place is good luck."

? "There are definitely cute boys here."

? "So who is this cute boy, Booboo?"

? I blushed even though I was by myself. "His name is James. He's a bit younger than me, but really nice and he puts up with my shit."

? "Uh-huh."

? "And he... well... he makes me feel really good."

? "Home field advantage has that affect."

? "I mean, that part is great too. He's got an amazing ass—"

? "I knew you were a top."

? "But he's really sweet and I feel like... I don't know... like he sees me."

? "Oh boy. That sounds serious."

? I nodded. "It's kinda scary how well it's going."

? "Well, let me tell you something, Booboo. If this boy means that much to you and he makes you feel that good, you hold on with both hands and you don't let go. You haven't dated any guys before, so you don't know how rare that sort of thing really is. I've been sifting through the garbage for years trying to find a good one and I haven't

yet.”

“Maybe you should stop looking in the garbage then,” I replied. “And find some place nicer to search.”

“Don’t you worry, Booboo. As soon as you’re out of that cabin, I’ll come right on down to Boner Beach and find myself a good man.”

“If I find another one, I’ll send him your way.” I paused. “So... you don’t mind if I stay? I’ll pay you rent and everything.”

“Tell you what,” he replied. “You give me enough to cover the bills down there and we’ll call it square. I wasn’t planning to use the cabin this summer, anyway. The job has me too busy for that.”

“Well, don’t be a stranger, okay? Come down some weekend and I’ll let you meet James. You’ll like him.”

“He better be great,” Adam replied, a tone of warning in his voice. “Because you deserve something wonderful after all the bullshit you’ve been through.”

“Thanks buddy.”

“Anytime, Booboo.” He sighed. “Now if you don’t mind, I’m going to go back to sleep... or jerk off alone. Whatever comes first I guess.”

“Well... you have fun with that,” I laughed. “I’m gonna go crawl into bed with James.”

“Sure, sure. Rub it in why don’t you.”

?“Oh, don’t worry. I intend to.”

?“Christ, Booboo. That was terrible.”

?“Thanks.” I couldn’t help a smile. “Talk to you later, Adam. And thank you for accepting me without question.”

?“That’s what friends are for. Take care.”

?I pulled the phone away from my ear, clicking the red button. There was still a wide smile on my face as I went back into the cabin and headed for the bedroom. For the first time in months, a thought crossed my mind that I wasn’t sure I would ever hear again.

?Everything was going to be okay.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

You know those moments when you suddenly realize that life had been sort of gray for a while, but you just thought it was normal? Well that's how I felt after Rowan came waltzing into my life. I truly thought everything was going okay for me, apart from dating, and that my life was pretty good. But after spending a week in Rowan's arms every night, I realized that not only had I been missing something extremely important, but that I was falling for him much faster than I realized.

At first I thought it was just a little crush mixed with quite a bit of lust. However, as the week went by and I woke up every morning in Rowan's bed, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't just a mere crush. Something else was going on, something that scared me. And yet, no matter how fearful I was of those feelings, I couldn't stop myself from snuggling up against him.

Of course, his cock neatly wedged between my cheeks was a good motivation to get closer.

Rowan, as it turned out, had a bit of a kink. He liked to wake up already inside me. I fully planned to coax him into being more dominant and aggressive with me as he got more comfortable, but for now I'd settle for this. Besides, it was hot as fuck and I loved it. Ever since he told me about that fantasy, I'd woken him up every chance I could that way.

So this morning, just like the others, I curled my naked body up against him, making sure my ass was positioned just right. He was hard the moment our skin made contact, and it only took a little wiggling to get him to work up the generous bead of pre-cum I needed to get things started. Once I had that, it was a simple game of working him deeper between my cheeks until he slipped inside me. The moment he

did, a moan escaped his lips, but he was still asleep.

Working myself up and down, I played a game with myself. I wondered how long I could keep it going until he woke up. Could I get him to breed me before he realized what was going on? He seemed to love the idea of that. Something about me using his body for my own pleasure just did it for him. I'd never seen a guy get so hard so fast when I mentioned it to him.

Knowing my mission, I slowly rode that thick cock of his, the bed rocking gently as I ground my ass against his pelvis. The perfect angle was easy to achieve in this position, the fat ridge of his cockhead making slow circles against my prostate. My cock was already leaking pre-cum all over the sheets as I stroked myself.

I buried my face in the pillow, letting the moans escape me whenever they wanted to. Waves of pleasure rolled up and down my body as I slowly fucked myself, grinding harder and harder against him. I could feel him pulsing inside me, each throb filling me with delight. That thick vein of his swelled against my entrance, creating more friction that I couldn't get enough of. I drove myself all the way down to his hilt, taking every last inch of him I could get. His cockhead slipped past my second ring and I gasped, feeling his balls tight against my ass.

Rowan's body reacted in kind, although his breathing remained steady. His hips rocked and gyrated, driving that cock deeper than I thought possible. My hole ached from the stretch, but in the most gratifying way. Finally I found that I could just lay there, Rowan's unconscious form taking over the majority of the movement. I heard him moan lightly in his sleep and I wondered what kind of dream he was having.

"James..." he muttered under his breath. "Fuck... James..."

Oh my god, he was dreaming about me. My heart swelled with affection. Out of all the people he could choose from real life or the dream world, his subconscious

wanted me. I was filled with a mix of pride and happiness that I'd never felt before.

After everything I'd been through with those other guys, I finally found one that not only wanted me more than once during the day, but dreamed about me during the night as well. I couldn't ask for anything more.

I reached back, grabbing his hand and pulling it up to my hip. His fingers dug in instinctively and I grasped his hand tightly, riding his cock even faster. My ass bounced against his pelvis, rocking him and the entire bed at the same time. It only took a moment or two before I heard him gasp awake. Without a moment's hesitation, his grip tightened, and his hips suddenly began thrusting harder.

The sounds I made were pathetic and slutty, but I didn't care. I needed that thick cock of his like I needed air. His balls slapped against my ass as he pounded me harder, stretching me as far as I would go. Pure ecstasy pulsed through my system and my muscles began to tense, my tunnel hugging his cock tighter and tighter. I wasn't going to last much longer and judging by the pounding I was taking, I wouldn't have to wait long for that fat load of his either.

He didn't have to tell me when he was going to cum. I felt his balls draw tight against my ass as he slammed himself to the hilt, his cock spasming inside me. Heat flooded my insides, each pulse of his cock corresponding with a sudden rush of warmth. At the same time I buried my face in the pillow, crying out as I spent myself onto the sheets in front of me.

Without pulling out, Rowan wrapped his arms around me and pulled me tight against his chest. I felt his cock slide just a little bit further inside me, the wave of satisfaction swallowing my entire body whole. If I could stay like this forever, I'd be fine with it. There was something so wonderful about having him inside. Being one, even though it sounded cheesy, was not only erotic, but deeply intimate. I'd never felt so connected to someone before.

“Thanks,” he sighed in contentment, kissing the side of my neck. “That was amazing.”

“You know me,” I replied, still a bit breathless. “Always happy to take one for the team.”

He gave me a squeeze. “And you’re so good at it.”

My chest swelled with affection. “Thanks, babe.”

We laid there for a long time, just enjoying the afterglow of our morning wake up ritual. Eventually Rowan’s cock grew soft and slipped out of me, a trail of cum running down my ass behind it. I loved the feeling and the sheets already needed to be washed thanks to me, so I didn’t think much of it.

But eventually both of us had to pee, and that wasn’t something either of us wanted to wash out of the mattress. There were just some lines that didn’t need to be crossed.

I let Rowan go to the bathroom first and took my turn after, flipping on the shower once I was done. There was a fair amount of cum dried on my skin that needed to be washed off. When I was finished and pulled the curtain open to grab my towel, I found Rowan standing at the sink, brushing his teeth.

“I need to make a trip back to my apartment today,” I said as I stepped out of the shower and began to towel myself off in front of him. Rowan, of course, turned and stared at my ass and cock the entire time.

“What for?” he asked, his toothbrush hanging limp out of the corner of his mouth.

“Laundry needs to be done, I could use some clean clothes, and I do have like three houseplants that have been horribly neglected.” I couldn’t help but grin as he stared.

“Oh. Okay.”

I pulled the towel away, shaking my hips so my cock slapped against my thighs.

“There. Is that what you were waiting for?”

A wide grin broke out over his face. “Oh my god. I love to do that too! It’s so satisfying!”

“Boys are weird.”

“Oh come on! It’s fun and you know it.”

“Alright,” I smirked. “It’s fun. But did you hear anything I said?”

“Apartment, laundry, coming right back so I can suck you off.”

“Not sure I said that last part...”

“It was implied.”

“Oh, was it?”

He just gave me a goofy grin and went back to brushing his teeth. “And maybe we can go out to dinner tonight or something. I can pick you up at your place and we could go out to the beach with takeout again. I saw there’s supposed to be another thunderstorm.”

“You know what? That sounds great. And it gives me some time to get everything done because I’m pretty sure I haven’t done laundry since last Monday.”

“No worries.” He looked up at me, toothpaste clinging to the corner of his mouth.

“Oh, I called my boss last night and quit finally.”

It made me a little nervous that he’d quit the only source of income he had, but I was trying to be supportive. “How do you feel about it?”

“Pretty good. I did the math and thanks to Adam, I’ve got a little over a year’s worth of expenses saved up. That gives me plenty of time to find another job doing something I enjoy.”

“Any idea what that is yet?”

He grinned. “Nope! Not a clue! But I’ll begin that adventure today while you’re doing laundry.”

“Well,” I sighed. “I hope it turns out exactly how you want it to. And I’m here to help you in any way I can.”

“Thanks, babe,” he replied, leaning over and kissing me with his fresh minty lips. “And try not to worry. I’ve got plenty of money. Everything will be fine. Worst-case scenario, I end up in a job like the one I have now. I literally have nowhere to go from here but up.”

I nodded, realizing he was right. “Absolutely. And you’re going to make a great life for yourself. I just know it.” I walked over, wrapping my arms around his neck as I pulled him into a deep kiss. “I can’t wait to see what you make of it.”

He smiled wide, his cheeks blushing crimson. “Thank you.”

???

A half hour later I was in my apartment, feeding laundry into the communal coin-

operated machines on the first floor. I had to hike across the building a bit to use them, but I didn't mind. Since it was the middle of the weekday, the place was totally deserted and I could use as many machines as I wanted all at once. That cut down my waiting time considerably.

After chucking everything in and fishing out enough coins to get it all running, I took myself and my oversized basket back outside and headed for my apartment. However, as soon as I turned the corner, I saw a man standing outside my front door. At first I thought it might be Rowan, but as I approached, I saw the red glow of a cigarette as he took a drag and blew the smoke out through his nostrils. I stopped dead in my tracks as he turned toward me, his gaze coming to rest at last.

"I was wondering where you were, baby," he grinned in that characteristically fox-like way of his. "I've been trying to find out."

I didn't get any closer to my door. Instead I made sure to stay out in the sunlight where anyone looking could see me. Ray had said some pretty fucked up things to me and I wasn't sure what he'd do next. However, just the sight of him made my skin crawl.

"What the fuck do you want, Ray?" I growled.

He clicked his tongue at me. "That's no way to talk to your boyfriend."

"You're not my fucking boyfriend. And you need to leave."

"I just wanted to have a talk, baby. You blocked my messages before I could finish what I was saying. I wanted to explain."

"There's nothing to explain. You're a dick, a creep, and a manipulative asshole. And I never want to see or hear from you again. End of story."

He grinned wider, his gaze reaching a level of psychotic I didn't know he was capable of. I felt a tinge of fear. Suddenly being mostly alone in the apartment complex didn't seem like a blessing anymore. I took a few steps back, putting myself at the edge of the parking lot. Ray wouldn't do anything stupid, would he? He couldn't be dangerous, right?

"You're making me kind of mad," he said, the amused edge in his voice disappearing. "I'm trying to give you a chance to apologize."

A sound caught my ear, and I glanced to the left. An SUV was coming up the drive. My chest flooded with relief as I realized it was Rowan.

"You better get out of here, Ray," I said confidently, my smile returning. "Or my real boyfriend is gonna kick your ass. Or maybe I'll do it instead."

The SUV pulled up behind me into a parking space. But Ray didn't stop. Instead, he just grinned.

"Well, let's see what he thinks about this."

Before I could take a step back, Ray grabbed my wrist and pulled me right against him, forcing his tongue in my mouth. The taste of cigarettes made me gag, and I pulled away from him, shoving him away from me.

"Get the fuck off me!" I screamed.

Behind me, I heard the SUV door open and a pair of footsteps approach. Ray made a grab for me in my moment of distraction but a hand on my shoulder yanked me out of the way. I watched as Rowan grabbed Ray's wrist, jerked him off balance, and clocked him right upside the face as he began to fall. There was a sickening crunch and Ray fell to the ground, howling in pain. Rowan looked back at me, his eyes filled

with hurt and anger.

“Are you okay?”

“Y-Yeah,” I nodded.

“Get inside,” he commanded. “I’ll take care of this.”

I did as I was told and practically ran to the front door. Once I was inside, I shut and locked it behind me before running to the window to watch and make sure Rowan was okay.

Rowan’s lips moved and although I couldn’t hear anything, I could tell by his face they were threats. Ray, on the other hand, had gone from menacing to pathetic in a matter of seconds. Blood streamed down his chin and he could barely get himself off the ground.

Finally, once Rowan was done speaking, Ray dragged himself back to his car and drove off, tires squealing. Rowan stood there for a moment and just when I thought he’d head for the apartment, he went back to his car. He closed the door, sat there for a moment, and started to back out of the parking lot.

I didn’t understand what was going on until my phone chimed and I glanced at the message.

Rowan: He’s not coming back. Stay inside. I need some time to think.

My heart fell as I realized what had happened. Ray, without knowing it, had just forced Rowan to relive one of the most tragic moments of his life.

And now I wasn’t sure if I would see him ever again.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

Obviously he's been lying. There's no way that James and Ray had been together for weeks. Not when James had been spending every waking moment at my side. So obviously it was a lie, but that didn't stop it from dredging up every bad thing I've been through in the past months.

Even though Ray forced himself on James, seeing them kiss like that reminded me far too much of Mia and the day I caught her cheating on me. I knew James didn't do it on purpose, but that didn't mean I'd be able to get that image out of my head either. And Ray wasn't James' only ex either. From the way he talked, it sounded like he had dozens of them just milling about. And if they were anything like Ray, they could show up at any time and try to exert their influence over James.

How long could it possibly be until he chose one of them over myself? Ray was attractive, more so than I considered myself. Chances were the rest of them were just as pretty and some of them might even be halfway decent. Meanwhile, I was still some washed up nobody who was not only toting around an incredible amount of emotional baggage, but was now jobless as well with absolutely nothing to offer James except my attention.

How could that ever be enough for someone as beautiful and perfect as him?

I felt so unworthy of his care.

My thoughts spiraled as I drove. I took turns not knowing where the roads led. So, after a while, I was surprised to find myself back at Hardwood Beach completely by accident. Instead of going to the main beach, I took one of the less traveled park roads back to a hiking trail. It wasn't a place that James and I had been to and judging by

the lack of cars in the small dirt parking area, I would have the trail to myself.

Leaving my SUV behind, I headed up the trail, not really sure where it would take me. I noticed a buzz in my pocket and took out my phone. There was a message waiting from James, but it was just a single word.

James: Okay.

I thought he might fight me have a conversation or try to find me. But he probably already knew what had been going through my head for the past half hour. I'd told him everything about Mia and how our relationship had come to an end. He knew even more than Adam, and that was saying something. Out of all the people in the world I knew, James understood the most.

There was a swell of affection as I read his message. Not only was he giving me the space I'd asked for, but he didn't try to make me feel guilty about not talking to him. He never did things like that. It wasn't until moments like this that I realized how deeply damaged I was from all those years with Mia. When I said something, James listened. He didn't try to shift the situation to suit himself or redirection attention. He just... listened.

The rush of endorphins behind that thought made me wince. I felt pathetic for being happy about something so simple. But that's how I felt. And the more he treated me with that level of kindness and respect, the more those feelings grew.

As I hiked up the trail, I started to realize something that I'd been pushing down for a while.

James was becoming everything to me.

Fear and butterflies filled my stomach as I came to that realization. Three little words

bounced around my head that I longed to speak out loud. But the mere thought of it made me want to vomit right there on a nearby tree.

I pushed forward, climbing the high sandy hill that rose up in front of me. The exertion took my mind off things as I struggled. My breath came in shallow gasps as my boots began to fill with sand. As usual, James was right. Hiking boots were great for hiking, just not on the shores of Lake Michigan or up a dune.

At the top the trees fell away, and I found myself standing at the peak of the tallest dune. I gasped in mouthfuls of air, my chest heaving as I surveyed the scene. Crystalline water stretched to the horizon, dancing in the midday sun. Waves crashed against the golden beaches below, the people so small from this height that they looked like ants milling about.

The rush of oxygen seemed to clear my thoughts for a moment and I suddenly realized I needed advice. And there was only one person in the entire world I could think to call.

Pulling out my phone, I flipped through my contacts, smashed Adam's face, and pulled it to my ear. It rang twice before he picked up.

"Hey Booboo," he said from the other end of the phone. "How's it going?"

"I think I'm in love," I blurted out, the sound of the words sending a streak of anxiety through my chest.

"Oh." He was quiet for a moment, clearly surprised by my outburst. But as he spoke again, I could hear the smile in his voice. "That's wonderful! Congrats!"

"It's not wonderful," I replied, on the verge of panic. "I'm fucking scared out of my goddamn mind! I don't know what to do!"

“Alright, take a deep breath.”

I did as I was told, although I did it with an air of annoyance.

“Caring about someone isn’t the end of the world.”

“Yeah, but it will be when he decides he doesn’t want me anymore.”

There was a long pause. “Why do you think that’s going to happen?”

“That’s what always happens!” I replied, clearly exasperated. “That’s how relationships work. You care for someone, you tell them you love them, and then they move on. It happened to me and it happens to you all the time.”

“Ouch. Not sure if I appreciate that.”

“I’m sorry,” I sighed. “I’m not trying to make you feel bad, I promise. I just... well, my relationship with Mia didn’t go well and yours don’t seem to last very long... and I just don’t have any other frame of reference.”

“Well, let me tell you about my relationships,” he said with a long sigh. “Most of them are just friends with benefits.”

“But I thought this last guy—”

“Was no different. We met on a hookup, we knew it wasn’t going to go anywhere from the start, and then I got attached.” I could hear the hurt in his voice and I felt bad for bringing it up at all. “When you set an expectation with people, you have to be clear with them when that expectation changes. And by the time I finally got the courage up to tell him how I felt, he was already on the run. The sex was great, but that’s all it was to him. I was the one that caught feelings.”

“So what if it’s just me that feels this way?” I asked, my anxiety looking for any tiny way to prove my suspicions right. “What if I tell James how I feel and he just runs off?”

“Do you really think he will?”

I paused. “No...”

“Did he tell you this was nothing more than sex?”

“He... He said that he wanted to help me figure out who I was and that he’d be my safe place to experiment if I wanted it. That I didn’t owe him anything.”

“Holy fuck...” Adam gasped. “That dude is fucking head over heels for you!”

“He said that like three days after we met!”

“Then he had a huge crush on you already. That or he’s a world class manipulator.”

“He’s not that,” I replied with certainty. “I know he’s not.”

“Well, my guess is he already loves you, Booboo. But he knows that this is your first time with a guy and he doesn’t want to make you feel pressured or rushed.” I could hear him smiling again. “If you love him, you should tell him.”

“Even if it’s only been a couple of weeks?”

“Sometimes the heart just knows what it wants.”

“I just... I don’t want to be tricked again... that was too painful.”

“Think of it this way. Would you rather spend the rest of your life being miserable and avoiding people? Or would you rather have some happiness along the way even if it doesn’t last forever?”

“I...”

“The correct answer is the second one,” Adam chuckled. “Just so you know. I don’t want to watch you wander through life miserable and alone because sometimes things go wrong. Go tell that boy you love him, be happy, and enjoy every moment you can. That’s all you can do.”

“You’re right,” I sighed at last, knowing I couldn’t fight him. “And I’m sorry for making you feel bad.”

“Don’t worry. Someday I’ll find the guy that’s right for me. Even if I have to fuck every dude in the state, I will eventually find him.”

“That sounds like a lot of work.”

“It’s God’s work,” he replied. “The greatest work a man can do.”

“Somehow I doubt that.”

“Try bottoming sometime, Booboo. You’ll change your mind, I promise.”

“What makes you think I haven’t?”

“Babe, I’ve been gay for nearly three centuries. Believe me, I know your asshole is a virgin.”

I couldn’t help laughing. “You’re dumb.”

“You love it.”

“You’re right.”

“Now, quit talking to me and go get that boy!”

“Alright, alright. I’ll talk to you later.”

“See ya, Booboo.”

“And Adam?”

“Yeah?”

“Thanks for being such a good friend.”

There was a long pause. “You’re my best friend, Booboo. I’d do anything for you.”

“Same.”

“Now get off the phone!”

“Okay! Fine! Bye!”

As soon as the line went dead, I flipped over to my texts and began to type. I had quite a few things I needed to say to James.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:17 pm

I'd spent the majority of the past hour fighting my anxiety as it tried to convince me that I'd never hear from Rowan again. Just when I thought everything was finally going my way, Ray's stupid ass had to turn up and ruin it all. I had to admit there was one thing he was good at, and that was being an insatiable dick.

I wished so badly that he was still out in the front lawn so I could fucking deck him myself. Rowan had gotten a great punch on him, but now I wanted one too. At least that would help me take my mind off the fact that I'd probably just lost the best guy I'd ever dated, even if only for a second.

At one point I did break out of my depression to go switch my laundry, knowing stuff had a tendency to disappear when you didn't take care of it. And when I got back to my apartment, I found a text waiting on my phone for me.

Rowan: Come down to the beach. We need to talk.

A public place. That never boded well. Men took their lovers to public places to dump them in the hopes that they wouldn't make a scene. At least that's what two decades worth of rom-coms had taught me.

I let out a long sigh. There was no putting it off though. Whatever was going to happen, I wanted to get it over with. The faster I ripped off the bandaid, the faster I could start healing.

Me: Okay. Let me know where you are and I'll head out.

Rowan: Hardwood Beach. Take the back trail to the top of the dunes.

I stared at my screen for a moment. That was a lot less public than the main beach. Maybe he didn't trust me not to make a scene. I had dressed him down pretty hard that one time. Or maybe he just wanted to make me work for it. Either way, it didn't matter. I had to go.

Me: On my way.

A half hour later I found myself clambering up the steep dune, slipping in the sand as I trudged my way to the top. By the time I got there I was panting like a dog and dripping in sweat. It was a hot day. However, the moment I crested the top a cool breeze whipped up off the lake and I had to stand there for a moment with my arms wide to let it wash over me.

"It feels good, doesn't it?"

I whipped to the right to see Rowan sitting there in the sand with his back against one of the few trees that clung to the peak of the dune. I'd been so busy trying to breathe that I hadn't even noticed him there.

"Y-Yeah," I said, unable to think of anything else.

"I can see why you like this place so much," he continued, still staring out at the horizon. "When I first got there, I couldn't understand why someone would want to live in such a podunk little place. But the longer I'm here, the more I realize that this town and this beach... they really are the most beautiful things in the world." He glanced up at me. "Well, second most beautiful."

I wasn't sure if I felt a rush of panic or elation at his words. Maybe it was a combination of both. Whatever it was, it caused words to start spilling from my mouth like a torrent.

“I’m so sorry, Rowan. I didn’t know Ray was in town and I should’ve told you about the texts he sent me last weekend. He was trying to manipulate me and being an asshole. I told him off and blocked him thinking that would be the end of it. I never expected him to show up on my doorstep like that. When I told him about you he grabbed me and forced me into a kiss to try to make you feel bad and I know you’ve got some trauma about stuff like that so it was the last thing I ever wanted you to see. You have to know, he doesn’t mean anything to me—”

“James,” Rowan said, reaching out and taking my hand before pulling me down into his lap. “I know.”

I stared at him for a long moment. “You... You do?”

“Well, I don’t know all the details, but I could tell from the way you reacted that you didn’t want him around and that you weren’t involved with him. That’s why I hit him so hard.” He pulled me in tight, kissing my forehead. “Nobody touches my baby without his permission.”

Oh boy, that caused some butterflies in my stomach.

“So... you... you don’t hate me?”

He shook his head. “No. I knew the moment I got there that you weren’t doing that on purpose to try to hurt me.” He paused for a moment, his brown eyes traveling back to the horizon. “But you’re right, it did dredge some stuff up that I had to think through before I could figure out what I wanted to do.”

“Yeah...” I turned my gaze away too. “So... what did you decide?”

“Well, I had to call up an old friend and ask some advice.”

“Adam?”

“Mm-hmm. And he gave it to me straight. Or well... gay I guess. I don't think Adam could do anything straight.”

That made me smile.

“He told me I should be honest with you.”

I looked up at him, preparing myself for what I was about to hear. “And what's the truth you need to tell me?”

Rowan took a deep breath before leaning down and pressing his lips to mine. He kissed me long and deep, his tongue swirling around mine with a passionate sweetness that I'd never felt before. When he finally pulled away and began to speak, I already knew what he was going to say. His kiss had told me everything.

“I love you, James,” he said breathlessly. “I know it's fast and maybe I shouldn't feel this way already, but—”

I placed a finger on his lips, silencing him.

“I love you too, Rowan.”

“Really?”

“Of course I do!” I couldn't help but laugh. “I think I have for a while. But I didn't want to say something and cause you to run off. I know how difficult this entire transition has been for you and you're still working through your breakup too. I know you've been feeling much better this past week, but I didn't want to tempt fate.” I reached out, cupping his face in my hands. “I decided that if it was meant to be, you'd

be the one to tell me first. The last thing I wanted to do was seem like I was using your recent tragedy to manipulate you.”

He seemed to melt in my hands, his fingers digging into my lower back as he pulled me closer. “I thought you’d think I was stupid for saying it. Or childish.”

“Not at all. It’s fast, you’re right, but what’s the point of waiting around to be happy?” I pulled him into another long kiss. “I’d love to stay by your side as long as you’ll have me.”

“That might be a really long time,” Rowan replied with a smile. “I hope you’re ready for that.”

I nodded. “I am.”

“Can we start now?”

“We already have.”

I stayed there in his lap, the pair of us exchanging kisses in the cool breeze. The world around us seemed to brighten, filling in all the dark corners and gaps with a plethora of love that neither of us knew we could feel. When we finally pulled apart, Rowan took out his phone and handed it to me.

“Will you take a picture of us together?” he asked, blushing as he held me tight. “I... I want to remember this moment forever. And I want to tell people about my new... boyfriend.”

“Are you sure you’re ready for that?”

He nodded.

“Alright,” I smiled, holding the phone out to capture us both. “Say cheese!”

The phone chimed in my hand and the screen flashed, a perfect picture appearing on the screen of myself in the arms of the man I loved. That one beautiful moment captured forever that we could always look back to and see how desperately in love we were.

“I guess I should probably update my relationship status,” I said, handing his phone back to him. “And delete my dating apps. I’m not gonna need those again. Also, you better get ready for all the questions you’re gonna get. If anyone is an ass, just let me know. I’ll take them out.”

Rowan just smiled, kissing me again. “I really am the luckiest man in the world.”

“I might have you beat there,” I smiled back.

“I love you, baby.”

“I love you too.”

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 2:18 pm

Two Months Later

“You know, seeing you this happy is sort of unnerving,” Adam said as he sat back in the patio chair, a margarita balanced in his left hand. “This boy must be good for you.”

“It’s amazing how far being a decent person goes these days,” I chimed in, smiling as always.

“Better you than me, honey,” Adam grinned. “I do my best not to be nice to anyone.”

“You’re nice to me,” Rowan added.

“Yeah, but being mean to you is the equivalent of kicking a shelter dog and I just can’t bring myself to do that.”

“You’re right,” I nodded. “Big dog energy with this one.”

“Absolutely.”

Rowan seemed confused. “You guys think I’m like a dog?”

“In the best ways, Booboo,” Adam said. “You’re food motivated, you like to cuddle, and you’re pretty happy with just keeping things simple. It’s like a himbo but with more tail wagging.”

“I don’t have a tail...”

“But he does wag,” I said, glancing over at Adam. “When he wants something or he gets excited, he does this little butt wiggle and it’s so cute.”

“Oh my god! I’ve seen him do that now that you mention it!”

Both of us were laughing, mostly at his expense. But it was all in good fun. Rowan on the other hand looked like he was regretting ever letting Adam meet me. The two of us got along a lot better than I expected. I knew that best friends could be a little protective sometimes and I wouldn’t have blamed Adam for that. But the moment he stepped foot inside the cabin and made some sassy remark, I countered him almost immediately. He gave me a good once over, nodded in respect, and we’d been basically best friends ever since.

And then we proceeded to pick on Rowan for the rest of the night. It was good fun and I could tell Rowan secretly enjoyed it. Seeing the two important people in his life getting along was worth the small amount of harassment.

The past two months had nearly flown by. One night I was standing on top of a dune telling him I loved him and then it was suddenly two months later. But we were still so disgustingly in love that every day felt like another day in paradise. Rowan really was my everything and I wouldn’t have it any other way. I’d never met someone so perfect before.

Sure, we had our moments where we had to slow down and explain something to one another. But nearly all of it was because I was his first boyfriend. There were questions that came up that he had no context for and I was more than happy to talk him through it.

However, we never fought, we never raised our voices, and there was such a level of care and respect between us that I was nearly bowled over by it on a daily basis. It made me realize that all the men I’d dated before Rowan were absolute dogs. But in the bad way. They were like junkyard dogs trained to fight and dominate anything

they came across. But Rowan was like a Labrador that was just happy to be included.

When I first met him, he'd been in a constant state of depression and moodiness. But over the past couple of months he'd been getting a little bit happier with every passing day. The grumpiness wore off and soon I found him smiling for no reason at all. Sometimes I liked to pretend it was all my doing, that I was the one that brought him out of the storm he'd been weathering. But I had to give a lot more credit to him.

Rowan had found his calling. And pretty quickly too. When he first quit his job, he started going on a lot of hikes around the area. Well, on a whim, he began taking pictures and recording small snippets along the way because he was so enthusiastic about how beautiful the dunes and the beaches were. Well, after getting a little attention online, he started making videos with more purpose. Thanks to his marketing background and some targeted ads, his following had quickly expanded. Already he was getting offers to sponsor products in his videos and he had a blog that was making money. A blog. I thought those had been dead for years, but Rowan made it work somehow. The man was quickly becoming a hiking influencer, which was a crazy thing to ever say out loud, and we traveled every weekend up and down the shoreline looking for places to make his next video. I even got to be in a couple of them.

So now, on top of being successful in the most unexpected way ever, Rowan was only getting more buff with the constant exercise. He was fit to begin with, but he was quickly approaching model status and that was equally wonderful and terrifying. Sometimes I felt like I had to beat off both men and women with a stick while we were out hiking. But he never gave them the time of day. He had eyes only for me and that was such an incredible feeling.

"Well," Adam said at last, slapping his knees in that Midwestern way that let me know he was ready to go home. "I've got a bit of a drive back so I should probably get going."

“You’re more than welcome to stay if you want,” Rowan offered.

“And sleep where?”

“You could sleep in the sex swing,” I offered.

Adam glanced at me, a mischievous look in his eye. “Oh, I have a feeling that’s going to be busy tonight. So I think I’ll just head home.”

I gave him a wink. “That’s my plan.”

“Oh my god...” Rowan sighed, shaking his head.

“Don’t act so embarrassed. Now you’ve got two gay guys in your life. We’re gonna talk.”

“He’s right,” I nodded. “Nothing is a secret now.”

“Oh, I want every detail.”

“I’ll text you.”

Rowan, beet red and obviously embarrassed within and inch of his life, led Adam to the front yard to see him off. I followed close behind, grinning the entire way. We all said our goodbyes and Adam was getting into his car before he stopped and called out to Rowan.

“Do me a favor,” he said.

“Yeah?”

Adam gestured to the pair of us. “Don’t fuck this up. This guy’s the real deal. I only

hope I end up so lucky in the future.”

“Come stay for a while and I bet you will,” I replied. “Boner Beach is a magical place. You never know what you might find there. A good-looking dude like you should have an easy time getting anything you want.”

“I might take you up on that.”

“Anytime. Just let us know when you’re coming and I’ll make sure I set up some dates.”

“See?” Adam said, looking back at Rowan. “He’s a good fucking guy! Take good care of him!”

Rowan nodded, pulling me in tight. “I’ll do my best.”

“You better.”

With one last wave, Adam got in his car and headed back down the driveway. We watched him turn to the north and disappear out of sight. I stood there for a long moment, my arm snaked around Rowan’s waist. Gently I worked my fingers under the waistband of his shorts, grabbing a handful of his bare ass and squeezing it gently.

“Hey!”

“Hey yourself,” I smiled, leaning against him. “Don’t act like you don’t like it.”

He pulled me close, his hand slipping down my pants in turn and palmed my entire ass cheek with his big man paw. I couldn’t help but shudder in delight at his touch.

“Seems like someone likes to have the favor returned.”

“You know you can always touch me any way that you want. My body is yours.”

“I like the sound of that.”

His hand slipped down further and I felt his finger slip between my cheeks, gently caressing my hole. My cock gave a heavy twitch and began to lengthen down the leg of my shorts. It was only a matter of seconds before I was standing there in the driveway with a full tent.

Rowan pulled his hand back, and I thought he'd take me inside. Instead, he slipped his middle finger into his mouth, got it nice and wet, and returned it to my hole. I felt myself practically melt into him as he did three or four slow circles before slipping the first digit inside me.

“Oh fuck...” I gasped, my fingers pulling at his shirt as I tried to stabilize myself. “Did having your friend over make you that horny?”

“No. But listening to you talk about getting fucked in that sex swing did.”

His finger slid in up to the second digit and he started to massage the furthest edge of my prostate.

“Fuck!” I had to gasp for breath. “I... I didn't think it would have such... such an effect!”

“Well, you've started this now,” he replied, looking down at me. “And since you've made it clear that your body is mine, I plan to use it to my own satisfaction tonight.”

I thought about all the leftovers still on the front porch. “What a-about d-dinner?”

“Let the raccoons have it,” he grinned. “I've got more important things to eat.” He leaned down, kissing me so hard that my lips ached. “Like your ass.”

I was practically a puddle already, but that line made my knees give out entirely. Rowan didn't miss a beat as he picked me up and tossed me over his shoulder. As soon as I was up there, he pulled my shorts down and slid his finger back inside me, forcing a guttural moan from my lips. He just laughed to himself and carried me inside, kicking the door shut behind us.

There was no point in asking where he was taking me. When he turned to the right and headed for the second bedroom, my suspicions were validated. He really hadn't been kidding about the sex swing.

When I made that off-handed comment, the last thing I expected was for him to follow through with it. We'd been spending most of our time in the cabin for the past two months, but had yet to explore that particular piece of furniture. Not that I hadn't thought about it every single night that I stayed over, but it just never felt like the right time to ask. After all, the sex swing belonged to his friend and that could be a little awkward. However, I had a feeling that Adam's encouragement to use it had been the permission Rowan finally needed.

And now I was the one that was gonna be suspended like a baked ham and fucked until I could see straight.

It sounded goddamn amazing.

By the time Rowan placed me in the swing, he was already up to the knuckle in my ass. As he pulled his finger out, I moaned pathetically, missing the feel of his thickness inside me already.

"Don't worry, baby," he said, brushing a dark lock off my forehead. "I'm gonna give you all the cock you can take tonight. By the time I'm done with you, you'll be so fucking full of my cum that you won't be able to think."

I could feel myself practically drooling thinking about that.

“You’re gonna fuck me more than once?”

He leaned close, his intense stare sending a shiver up my spine. “I’m gonna fuck you until the sun comes up.”

Another shudder of delight. “P-Promise?”

He smiled, kissing me softly. “Promise.” He gave me one last kiss. “Take your shirt off while I go grab my supplies.”

“Supplies?”

“Shirt off,” he commanded.

There was that dominant edge to his voice again, and I fucking loved it. Forgetting my questions, I did as I was told, tossing my shirt to the floor. After that I lifted my legs and put them in the stirrups, my fingered hole spread wide for him the moment he returned. Part of me wanted to reach down and continue what he’d started, but he hadn’t given me permission to do that. Plus there was no point in rushing anything. If we were going to fuck all night, then it was probably best to take things slow.

But secretly, I hoped I wouldn’t be able to walk by dawn.

I sat there in the swing, listening to Rowan shut the cabin up for the night. Out the open window I could see the stars starting to pop into existence one by one in the night sky. It was such a beautiful night, and we had the place entirely to ourselves. With no nearby neighbors, I fully planned on moaning like a cheap slut the entire night.

Rowan returned a few minutes later and as I turned to look at him, my jaw hit the floor. He was completely naked, his cock already at attention with a bead of pre-cum gathering at the tip. In his arms was a towel piled with a few essential items, mainly

lube. However, that wasn't what made my jaw drop.

He was wearing a black leather chest harness I'd never seen before.

"Where the fuck did you get that?!" I cried, my cock throbbing in excitement.

"I drove up to Traverse City earlier in the week and got it at a shop." He turned to the side, showing off how well it hugged his tight physique. "I thought you might like it."

Now I really was drooling. "I fucking love it."

He gave me a wink. "It'll give you something to hang on to while I'm fucking your brains out all night."

"Yes sir."

He did a double take. "Oh. That... I liked that."

We were learning so much about each other. "Well, then I guess you better get started, sir," I said, stressing that last word. "My hole is in desperate need of your care."

He growled under his breath. "I guess I better get started then."

Before I could prepare myself, Rowan dropped down to his knees, his face all but disappearing behind my crotch. All I could see was the top of his head and feel his touch as his fingers danced over my thighs.

And then I felt his tongue, hot and wet against my aching, needy hole. I bucked at the sudden flood of sensation, but the stirrups held me in place. My hands twisted around the handles above me, the leather and fabric squeaking under the pressure. A low moan filled the room, echoing from deep in my chest. No matter how many times

Rowan ate my ass, it was always a mind blowing experience. In fact, he'd only managed to get better at it, constantly one upping himself.

Spread wide with nowhere to go, I just leaned back, letting him work his magic. He started with slow up and down strokes before swapping them out with a series of quick flicks. Then, when he had me practically writhing in ecstasy, he leaned into it, using his chin to increase the pressure as he pushed his tongue deeper inside me. I couldn't help crying out, my sounds growing pathetic and desperate. The longer he ate my ass, the more I needed his cock inside me. My hole aches for his cum and I never felt quite complete without it dripping down my ass.

"Please," I begged, doing everything I could to get his attention. "I need you to fuck me. Please!"

"You need it that bad, huh?"

"Yes, sir!" I whined. "I need you to breed me! I want your cum deep in my ass!"

His head popped up over my throbbing cock, a wide grin on his face. "Alright. But you can't touch yourself."

I nodded feverishly. "Whatever you say, sir."

"Keep your hands in those straps."

I laced my hands through, grabbing hold of them both. "Yes, sir."

"Good boy."

Pulling himself to his feet, Rowan position himself between my legs, the heat of his throbbing cock pulsing against my hole. He grabbed it by the base, smearing his pre-cum over my hole. Sure, there was a bottle of lube sitting on the table beside us, but

he wasn't going to need it. Thanks to his rimming and the copious amounts of pre-cum he created, there was no need to get it out. And for every round after that, I'd already be pumped full of his cum. That, of course, was the best lube in the world.

"You want this fat cock?" he asked, rubbing his cockhead against my hole in tantalizing circles. I could see the hunger in his eyes and it turned me on even more.

"Please," I begged. "Please, sir. I need your cock so bad."

He smiled, rocking his hips forward so that his thick head pressed against my hole, stretching it ever so slightly.

"Please!" I said again, this time more earnestly. "I need it so bad..."

"Don't worry," he replied, leaning down to give me a sloppy kiss. He pulled back, patting the side of my face with enough force to let me know he was in charge. "You're gonna get all I can give you."

And before I could say anything else, he took a step forward and buried himself to the hilt.

The sudden rush of intensity through my body made me cry out. My hole stretched quickly, allowing all of him in as he pushed all the way to my second ring. A tidal wave of pleasure crashed over me and I let out a long sighing moan. This was exactly where I wanted to be, practically strapped into this sex swing and being absolutely fucking abused by this beautiful man and his thick cock.

I was in heaven.

Then Rowan began to fuck me. Tingles that I didn't know I could have ran up and down my spine. My skin broke out in goosebumps and my hole flexed of its own accord, hugging Rowan's cock every time he pulled back. Meanwhile he'd wrapped

his hands around my thighs, using the motion of the swing to not only pull back, but slam himself to the hilt with each thrust. His balls slapped against my ass in just the right way, filling the room with the sounds of beautiful rough man fucking.

It didn't take long for me to get completely lost in the sauce. The delight and satisfaction filling me up made me drunk with lust. Not to mention, the way Rowan pounded my prostate was enough to make me forget who I was entirely. Pre-cum soaked my belly as my cock flopped back and forth with each thrust of his hips. My head hung limply against the small leather pillow, moans I had no control over spilling out of me. Everything around me disappeared. Everything except Rowan, those intense brown eyes of his watching my every move, and that thick cock driving me to the edge of oblivion with every thrust.

I laid there, letting him use my body just like he wanted me to. We'd moved past the point of talking dirty or trying to turn each other on. Now there was only the task at hand and making one another feel as good as possible. Rowan angled his hips a little more, making sure that every push meant his cockhead thudded over my prostate, forcing even more pre-cum from my already aching cock.

How long it went on, I wasn't sure. All I knew was that at some point there was a shift in his pace. His thrusts got closer together, and I felt his cock swell inside me. At the same time the intense grinding against my prostate seemed to build, and I felt that familiar tingle building in my balls. All at once the world became crystal clear once more and I looked at him with a single-minded focus.

"Breed me," I commanded, my hands still gripping the straps. "Breed me so I can cum."

He grinned. "Anything you say, baby."

Rowan's grip tightened on my thighs to the point where I knew he'd leave bruises. But I didn't care. He pounded me as hard as he could, his cock assaulting my body in

the most exquisite ways. I felt him push past my second ring, pulling the most needy and pathetic sounds out of me that I'd ever heard. My body tensed around him, hugging his shaft tightly as my own orgasm built at the base of my cock.

"You ready?" he asked, his voice shaking.

"Breed me, please!"

Another three strokes was all it took before Rowan cried out, forcing himself as deep inside me as he could go. A searing wave of heat flooded my insides, his cum filling me to the brim. The feeling of his balls unloading and his cock pulsing deep in my ass pushed me to the edge at the same time. I pulled my legs out of the stirrups, wrapped them around his waist, and forced him deeper inside me as I cried out, coating my torso in my own seed. The first shot went further than the rest, striping hot sticky cum across my face. I licked it off my lips greedily, not caring who it came from. I just needed more inside me.

A moment passed as the pair of us heaved together, breathless from our mutual orgasms. Eventually Rowan collapsed against me, smearing my cum between us and all over his brand new chest harness. I pulled my hands out of the straps and grabbed the harness, pulling him further up on top of me.

"I didn't get to hold your harness," I said weakly, my voice shaking.

"Next round," he panted. "You can do whatever you like."

"I like it when you order me around," I laughed.

"I noticed."

Another thirty seconds of panting.

“Thank you, Rowan,” I said, lifting his chin and kissing him deeply. “Thank you for being so wonderful.”

“Sure,” he smiled, still drunk from the sex. “Thanks for putting up with my dumb ass.”

“It’s my pleasure.” I wiggled my butt, shifting his still hard cock in my ass until he groaned happily. “Literally.”

“You already want round two?”

“You promised me all night long.”

He nodded. “And I meant it.” Another kiss was exchanged. “Just let me hydrate for a minute. I need a Gatorade or something.”

“Bring me one too.”

“But you have to let me go first,” he said, pulling against my legs that were still locked around his waist.

I couldn’t help a grin. “No.”

“No?”

“Not until I tell you a secret.”

He leaned down close. “What secret?”

“That I love you more than anything in the world.”

Rowan’s soft brown eyes lit up, shifting into a look I saw that first night I told him

that and many times since. And one I hoped to see for the rest of my life.

“I love you too, baby.”

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