

The Big Match (Friends, Sexcapades, And Love Affairs Bonus Story, Patreon Exclusive)

By Laura S. Fox

Adrian walked slowly, checking every corner, to assure himself they were alone in the house. Mikey had soccer practice, and Sophia was with her royal grandparents, which meant she must be getting showered in gifts. Still, for what he had in mind, he needed to be extra sure they had the place to themselves for at least one hour.

He eyed his husband from a safe distance. Edward was resting his head in his palm, while browsing through a medical journal. He was wearing glasses now, which made him look even more distinguished, and his preference for hard copies hadn't waned despite their home being equipped with the latest gadgets and technologies available.

There were a few silvers in his hair now, but Adrian could bet he hadn't changed in the last ten years. When sharing playful banter, Edward often teased him about still desiring him while he was turning into a middle-aged man.

Adrian often snorted at that. Grace to good genes and a perfectly balanced lifestyle, Edward looked younger than his age, and he was in excellent shape. Only thinking of how tight he was, even after being as sexually active as they could be with two kids turning the house into a playground slash battlefield at any occasion, was enough to make his mouth turn dry.

He licked his lips. On his way back home, he had only thought of that. Adrian had never thought he would be the kind of guy to enjoy sex on a schedule, but sometimes, you just grabbed what you could. Still, that didn't mean that he wouldn't take advantage whenever he could be spontaneous.

Edward stood and headed for the large bookcase, most probably in search of additional research material. Adrian smirked when he noticed the earbuds. Only his husband was capable of listening to audio books and reading at the same time. Apparently, two published research papers weren't enough for his highly accomplished spouse.

That meant that he would take Edward by surprise in the most literal sense of the word. Adrian closed in the distance and quickly wrapped one arm around his husband's waist while using his other hand to grab his ass.

"Adrian," Edward said with a sigh.

"Ah," Adrian expressed his disappointment. "Did you notice me?"

"Ever since you came home."

“But you have your headphones on.”

Edward chuckled and removed the earbuds, letting them dangle over his shirt. “I saw your car.” He pointed at the window.

Adrian was a bit disappointed in his foiled attempt to surprise his husband, but that didn’t mean he was losing sight of his most important goal. He began fondling Edward’s ass, enjoying its firmness.

“Hmm,” Edward purred and placed one hand over Adrian’s arm that sat comfortably around his waist, “am I to be molested then?”

Adrian caught Edward’s ear between his teeth. “That’s the plan, Mr. Edward Rossi.”

“Oh, I see. Should we head over to the bedroom?”

Even after all this time, they enjoyed playing the same game. Edward would pretend he was unaffected by Adrian’s rough hands handling him until they were in bed, naked and sweaty, and Adrian would do his best to drive him mad.

“No,” he replied curtly.

He let go of Edward’s ass only so that he could pull out his cock. With the same brusque moves, he pushed down Edward’s pants, enough so that he could have unhindered access.

“So,” Edward commented, his voice half amused, half losing breath, “should I continue my research while you’re having your way with me? I’m afraid the topic is quite dry and not at all conducive to arousal.”

Adrian smirked. “Speaking of which.” He dropped to his knees and pulled apart the round buttocks presenting themselves nicely. Edward might have troubles keeping his voice down once he started, but that was why he had had to make sure the house was a brat-free zone.

Edward moaned softly in approval as Adrian moved his tongue slowly. “We have exactly fifty-five minutes,” he whispered.

“Trust me, I know,” Adrian replied. “Good thing I got ready on the way here.”

“Ready? How?”

“Thinking of you. Like this.” Adrian enjoyed rimming Edward something madly. It made him proud to know that he was the only one who could make a man like that come undone. No one else knew how Edward looked, disheveled, exhausted, and happy after sex. No one knew how his voice sounded when he let go. He was the only one entitled to all those things, and a myriad others.

“While driving?” Edward teased. “That cannot be safe.”

“I’m a multi-tasker, by definition,” Adrian said back with conviction.

He squeezed Edward’s buttocks, grinning at the sight of the light red marks left by his fingers. Many people thought of Edward as a cold person, who would never display any signs of emotions in public, but again, they weren’t entitled to know him otherwise.

“Good. I married a multi-tasker,” Edward joked. “I thought that was a thing for kitchen appliances.”

“Or corporate workers,” Adrian added. He slapped Edward’s ass, making him gasp. “Stop joking. Our fifty-five minutes will be up before we know it.”

“Fifty-two,” Edward corrected him.

Adrian pulled Edward’s ass cheeks apart and studied the pink hole. He swiped his tongue along the crack a few more times, making his husband buck back his hips and let out some shameless sounds.

That meant that neither of them needed a long foreplay. He got to his feet and aligned their bodies together. The curve of Edward’s ass fit against him like they were parts of a whole.

“You know, Mr. Rossi,” Adrian whispered into Edward’s ear, “you look mighty fuckable, with your ass pushing into my cock like this.”

“I’m trying to give you a hint,” Edward replied. “Are you going to take it or --”

“Or nothing. Ready or not, here I come.”

Edward laughed softly. “I suppose this never gets old.”

Who said sex with the same person lost its shine after a while? It hadn’t happened to him, and he had never worried about it. After several years of doing the hookup dance as a young man, Adrian could swear he was the living proof that all everyone needed was to find to right person. In his case, an arrogant good looking man had been his demise. His life as a bachelor playing the field had ended the moment he had set his eyes on Edward.

Of course, at the time, he had had no idea about it. But, man, people everywhere envied their marriage. He knew that they were a bit of a topic of conversation among some neighbors, and petty jealousies weren’t uncommon. How they made it work was what some people wanted to ask them. One look at Edward and his impenetrable face, and they swallowed their words. Adrian still found it funny that some folks were so intimidated by his husband.

On the other hand, he wasn’t sure he was ready to let go of the secret of their happiness.

He pushed inside slowly at first, moaning softly into Edward's ear. "So deliciously tight, Your Majesty."

"We don't have time for foreplay and my getting loose. Should I apologize or --" Edward teased him, while his breath grew deeper.

"Apologize? No way," Adrian cooed. "I fucking love it like this."

He nuzzled Edward's nape, as he moved his hips, enjoying how the tight channel was allowing him in, little by little. Then, without warning, he pulled back and slammed one time, hard, inside his husband.

"Damn," Edward breathed out. "Someone got a little pent up, didn't he?"

"You can't expect me to have been satisfied with this morning's quickie," Adrian replied.

Edward pushed his ass into his crotch, meeting him, thrust by thrust. "And last night's full course meal," he said and laughed breathlessly.

"You're so hot for me right now. Are you sure you were doing research and not watching some porn?"

"Oh, Adrian," Edward gasped in fake shock. "Is that how little you know me?"

"Now, I know you a lot."

He pulled Edward down to the carpet. It was exciting to do it like this, while there was still light outside. Not that he was complaining, but surprise sex was pouring new fire in his veins. Edward agreed, his harsh moans growing in intensity.

"Honey, do you think I can make you come like this? No cheating. Hands in front where I can see them."

Edward stretched like a cat, extending his arms in front. He threw a seductive look to Adrian over his shoulder. "I never cheat."

Adrian hammered the gorgeous ass in front of him with increased speed. He was lucky Edward was his better half. Other people might not know what to do with someone they could have so much power over. But Edward was a generous tyrant. His requirements were simple, and he gave back as good as he took.

He didn't mind when the roles were reversed. It usually happened when he was too tired, and Edward wanted to make him feel good. It didn't happen that often, but even this versatile part of their relationship was assuring. None of them was below the other, and their balanced way of life reflected in everything they did.

“You’re still so fucking gorgeous,” Adrian whispered as he penetrated Edward’s ass, enjoying the view of his cock getting swallowed to the hilt.

“Not so fast,” Edward breathed out.

Adrian grinned. He always said that, but the moment Adrian slowed down, Edward was starting to move his hips desperately.

“Then I should go slower, right?” he teased.

It was a feat of strength to command his hips to move ampler, decreasing their maddening pace, but he always did what his husband wanted. Edward’s fingers dug into the carpet, and his moans grew louder.

“Even slower than this?” he asked.

“No. Harder now. Faster,” Edward commanded.

They enjoyed this to the extreme. They had their own pace, their way of doing things. Right now, it meant that Edward had reached that delicious spot on the curve of his arousal, and it was only this long he could last on the verge of coming undone.

“Oh, fuck, I so love coming in your ass,” Adrian whispered as he began moving with renewed urgency.

Edward threw his head back and shouted. That was his cue. Adrian moved as fast as his body could handle and all of him poured inside his lover, as an imaginary barricade fell.

They were even getting better at it. Adrian kept Edward impaled on his cock for what felt like an eternity as he spurted wave after wave. He didn’t care about records, but he could bet not every guy could have orgasms as long as his.

“Wow,” he said and laughed as he pulled out.

He checked his husband’s backdoor, enjoying the amazing look of his cum gushing out. With unsteady fingers, he gathered the precious fluid and pushed it back in.

Edward shuddered. “Stop teasing me. I can’t handle a second round so fast.”

“So, you came?” Adrian asked, feigning innocence.

“Like you couldn’t tell. I’ll have to clean the carpet again,” Edward said, but there was no shadow of a reproach in his voice.

“We have time for a shower,” Adrian said, after consulting his watch. Edward had insisted on getting him a Rolex, and he couldn’t say ‘no’. People were free to gossip all they wanted; he

enjoyed being married to a rich guy. Only because that rich guy was Edward, and the rest of the world was free to think whatever the hell they wanted. He wasn't doing bad for himself, and the house was paid in full from his personal pocket, after, of course, having a bit of a row with Edward's parents.

"A shower sounds swell," Edward admitted.

Adrian helped him to his feet and kissed him, one time, hard on the mouth. "It looks like research makes you horny, doctor."

Edward chuckled and patted his cheek. "Stop with your teasing. We now have only twenty minutes left. It wouldn't do us any good to stop in the middle of it, right?"

"You know it," Adrian admitted. "Let's hurry. Your parents are like clockwork. I might have to go pick up Mikey, though."

"He insisted that he knows his way back home," Edward reminded him. "I think it would be a blow to his confidence if you showed up."

"All right. He has exactly ten minutes after the time he should be home. After that, I'm going."

"Have a little more faith in your son," Edward chided him with affection. "He's growing, and he's with his closest friends."

Mikey was nine years old, and they had decided to have him shortly after getting married. Although genetically he belonged to Edward, they had both been surprised to see how much he actually took after Adrian. Of the two parents, he had chosen Adrian as his personal hero and role model, so he was his spitting image regarding stubbornness and determination.

The soccer field where the youngest athletes of their suburb trained wasn't far, but Adrian suspected that Mikey would prefer to stay behind with others and play some more.

"I guess he is," Adrian admitted. "Let's go take that shower. We'll have to look presentable when your parents get here, or your dad will start giving me the evil eye."

Edward laughed, to his annoyance. "He likes you very much."

Adrian grunted. "Yes. As a pack mule. I had no idea managing the Hastings' wealth would be so much work."

Edward caressed his cheek. "And you're well equipped for it. My father wouldn't ask it of you if you weren't."

Adrian smiled. His relationship with his father-in-law was a tad strange, but he could tell Charles Hastings appreciated him, in his own way. His mother-in-law had told him her husband needed

time to warm up to people. Maybe in thirty years' time, their relations would get to a normal temperature.

"Where is Michael?" Charles asked, the moment they were all seated comfortably in the living room.

"Still at soccer practice," Adrian replied airily.

His father-in-law frowned a smidge. "He spends too little time studying."

"He's nine," Adrian offered in a terse voice.

"Daddy, daddy, daddy, look what grandpa got me," Sophia began and ran into his arms.

Adrian could only assume that the princess tiara his daughter was so proud of was the gift in question. "You look like a real princess," he commended her. And then, he turned his eyes on Charles. "I hope these are not real diamonds or something outrageous like that."

His father-in-law looked away. "No. That would be preposterous."

So, they weren't diamonds. That was a relief.

Edward walked into the room with a large smile on his face. Sophia forgot in an instant about Adrian and hurried to him to show off her expensive gift. While Mikey favored him, Sophia didn't hide at all that she was daddy Edward's daughter.

Edward lifted her in his arms and kissed her cheek. Sophia took after her grandmother on Adrian's side, which meant that she would be a heartbreaker growing up. That also helped her in making her other grandparents buy her everything she wanted.

Adrian had plenty to argue about that.

"Dad," Edward said in a stern voice, "we've talked about this, haven't we?"

Ah, he could just lean back and grab the popcorn. He didn't have to say anything to Charles about buying too many expensive gifts for Sophia because Edward was on it.

"Don't worry, dear," Mrs. Hastings who had remained suspiciously quiet so far intervened. "Sophia also got a chemistry set. She's bound to take after you."

Adrian straightened up in his chair. If his mother-in-law was in it, they would have a hard time determining them to stop getting the girl such costly presents. The chemistry set had to be a red herring.

"Grandma teaches me how to make... actions," Sophia said after a short pause.

“You mean, chemical reactions?” Edward asked.

Sophia nodded. “Yeah. Like turning colors blue.”

Well, at least she had played with the chemistry set, Adrian thought to himself. That would make Edward happy. They weren’t yet sure what their children would become, but they wanted them to have all their options open while growing up.

“Will you stay for dinner?” Edward asked.

“No, no, we should be on our way,” Charles replied and stood to his feet.

Adrian had a hunch that his father-in-law wasn’t crazy about having anything less for dinner than food prepared by his in-house chef. But he let a lot of things slide since he preferred to enjoy dinner in the family, with his husband and children, than having to pay attention how he held his fork.

They saw Edward’s parents to the door, and Sophia insisted on waving goodbye until their car was out of sight.

Adrian checked his watch. “Mikey is almost twenty minutes late.”

Edward sighed but smiled right after. “All right. You can go. But make sure you keep out of sight if he’s still in the middle of it.”

“I know the drill,” Adrian said with an eye roll and kissed Edward and Sophia on the cheek. “Just don’t start eating without us.”

“No chance of that. Sophia wants to be on salad duty. That may require at least a few tries until we get it right.”

Among other things, like wanting to become a princess, or trying her luck with the chemistry set, their daughter fancied herself a salad chef. Adrian had no idea where that came from, but, at six years old, she could be a salad chef if she wanted.

Adrian sauntered toward Mike and Jared who were standing at a fair distance from the soccer field. “So, none of your rascals came home, either?” he asked.

Jared grunted and pushed his hands into his jacket. He sported a much shorter hairstyle now, but it looked good on him. “Auggie is bent on trying my patience today.”

Adrian grinned. “At least, we get to share the pain.”

Their firstborns were the same age since they had wanted to have them the same year, and it had made them all happy when their kids became close friends even without their parents' encouragements. Mike had been blessed with twins, Patrick and Liam, and by the shouts on the soccer field, they were at the heart of all the ruckus.

"Armstrong!" The coach blew his whistle. "Not you, the other Armstrong!"

Mike puffed his cheeks and exhaled. "I really wonder if Coach Patterson knows who's who."

"Do you know?" Adrian punched his friend's shoulder playfully.

They followed with their eyes the two redheads running toward the coach. If Coach Patterson hoped he could yell at only one of them, he had to think again. Pat and Lee, as they went by, were like peas in a pod and never one without the other.

"Do I have to explain to you what a foul is, again?" The coach continued to yell at the two miscreants.

"Do you know what a foul is, Mike?" Adrian asked.

They all snickered.

"I have a feeling Lee is going to explain it to me in detail," Mike said, feigning resignation.

"Does that mean that he will kick you in the shin again?"

"Could be," Mike said with a philosophical shrug. "Seeing how Ryan is keeping them in line all the time, they take it out on me. All their energy, I mean."

"Then I should be happy Auggie is just a goalie," Jared said.

"Just a goalie?" Mike asked and wiggled his eyebrows.

Jared's face fell. "Don't let him know I said that. I mean it."

Auggie was the quietest of the group, and he had a way of doing things in a measured manner that surprised all the grownups. Shane often took him to his folks' ranch to teach him how to ride a horse, and he had taken to it like a natural. Jared was very proud of his son, but he tried not to boast too much.

After all those years, Jared still cared about everyone's feelings just the same. But he was entitled to be proud of his son.

"The coach should know to let them go home by now," Jared said. "I wonder why they're still training."

As if the man had heard them, he turned his head and waved. Then he dismissed Pat and Lee who returned to the field looking no more chastised than before, and approached the fence.

“Gentlemen,” he said.

“Coach.” Adrian nodded. “What’s with the long hours?”

Mr. Patterson wiped the sweat off his forehead with the back of his hand. “Didn’t your kids tell you? We have a big match coming up. The boys from Barring Grove have a bone to pick with us.”

Adrian quirked an eyebrow. Mikey had somehow forgotten to mention it. “So, it’s like the battle of the suburbs or something?”

The coach didn’t seem to get the joke. “Dads will be on it, too,” he said and pointed a finger at them. “You’ll go against Barring Grove.”

“What?” Jared intervened. “Why?”

Mr. Patterson was a man with a heart of gold but a short fuse. He was getting red in the face, and Adrian wondered if his heart was capable of taking it for long. “It’s kids versus kids, and dads versus dads. South Crest versus Barring Grove. Is this the first time you hear about it? Someone should have told you.”

Adrian had an idea now who that someone was supposed to be, and there was a possibility that the coach had relegated that information to the wrong messengers. “Are we supposed to play soccer?” He checked with his friends for confirmation of how ludicrous the idea sounded.

“We only know about it from what kids tells us and a bit from TV,” Jared added. “I mean, Auggie talks about it all the time, but it’s not like I have any idea about being there, on the field.”

The coach bounced on the back of his heels and threw them a cursory look. “You’ll learn,” he said matter-of-factly. “And we’re lucky that we have so many dads in good shape.”

He turned to yell at the kids again, and finally, the group gathered around him. “Why didn’t you tell your parents about the match?”

The group shifted and looked down.

“Caleb doesn’t have a dad,” Mikey blurted out. “And his mom is disabled.”

“Michael!” Adrian said sternly. “That’s not nice.”

Caleb, a scrawny boy with a lisp, intervened. “She is,” he confirmed while wiping his nose with his forearm. “She cannot play soccer with one leg.”

Jared ran one hand over his eyes, and Mike let out a sigh.

“And Johnny’s dad is old,” Mikey added.

“That’s it. You stop talking right now, young man,” Adrian said. It was usually Edward’s role to be the stern one, but his son was just saying whatever crossed his mind without realizing that he could be hurting the other kids.

“Did you guys think that it wouldn’t be fair toward your mates to let us know about the match?” Jared asked.

Multiple pairs of eyes stared at them.

“Yes,” Auggie said. “It’s all of us, and all of our dads, or no one.”

“We could play,” Pat or Lee – Adrian was, after all, the one who couldn’t tell the twins apart – said while hooking one arm around his brother’s shoulders. “We’ll wreck Barring Grove. Just us.”

“You can’t. You need a goalie,” Auggie explained.

Adrian thought of Auggie as a mini-Shane, but a sterner one.

“Then you’ll come with us,” Pat or Lee said. “And we’ll wreck them.”

“Boys,” Mike intervened, “you’re not wrecking anyone.”

“Do we have to ask permission?” Pat or Lee cocked his head. “Can we wreck Barring Grove, dad, please?”

Adrian wasn’t entirely sure whether Mike’s twins were sly like foxes, or they just found it completely normal to address everything standing in their way head on.

“I basically just said ‘no’,” Mike said with a voice full of resignation.

“Do I have to explain what ‘fair play’ is, again?” Mr. Patterson asked the two troublemakers.

Pat or Lee puffed out his chest. “It would be more than fair. Three against eleven.”

“What is the problem, coach?” Adrian asked. “Kids, go play a little.”

The boys didn’t wait to be told twice and hurried back to the field.

“We might not have enough dads,” the coach admitted. “Your boy’s not wrong, Mr. Rossi.”

Although they had agreed to have their names turned to Rossi-Hastings on their IDs, to keep things simple, Adrian and Edward had agreed on using only Adrian’s last name in their day by

day dealings. The same went for Mikey who liked having Rossi written on the back of his soccer t-shirt despite his legal name, but the Hastings had been adamant about Sophia. She was the one they showered mostly in gifts, anyway. Any effort to impress Mikey had proven fruitless. The boy loved his grandparents, but he found hanging out with them pretty boring.

“Some of them are not in that good shape or are too busy,” the coach continued. “And, of course, there’s the boy without a dad.”

“And a mom with only one leg,” Mike added.

“Mike, seriously,” Adrian said. “You too?”

“Sorry. These guys are rubbing on me,” Mike replied.

“Yeah,” the coach said. “Talk to your husbands. We need all men on deck for this.”

Jared let out a small weird sound. “Is it really that important?”

“It’s for charity,” Mr. Patterson explained. “All the tickets proceeds will go to funding a school for underprivileged kids.”

“Oh,” Jared replied. “But who’s going to come see a soccer match between two suburbs? We’re eons away from pros. I mean, we’ll all come to watch our children, but --”

“Barring Grove made soccer into a religion down there.” The coach nodded vaguely, and they all looked in that direction only to reconsider one second later. “So far, they’ve beaten everyone.”

Mike grimaced. “Ugh, is it wise of us to go against them, then? If they’re that good? We could just forfeit.”

“That won’t sell tickets,” Mr. Patterson said matter-of-factly.

Adrian frowned for a second. A bit of a competitive ambition began to rise inside him. “I think we could play. As long as you talk us through.”

“Adrian, are you sure?” Jared asked.

“Hey, it’s a sport. How hard can it be? And we already know the general rules since our boys cared to explain them.”

“Yeah, my shins remember,” Mike said with a sigh.

“You’ll have to go through a medical,” the coach continued, now invigorated with the prospect of having to train a grownups’ team.

“When is this match scheduled?” Jared asked.

“In a month’s time,” the coach replied.

“Is that enough to turn us into soccer players?” Mike expressed his doubts.

The coach gave them a cursory look. “You look like fit lads to me.”

Mike threw Jared a silent plea. The only answer back was a shrug.

“All right. So together with our better halves, we’ll be six. That means that there are five positions waiting to be filled, right?” Adrian asked.

“Not only. We should have some people on the bench. But, at this point, I’d be happy if you brought a couple of fit fellows like you. The dads in this town are pretty busy. I mean, those with kids on the team. Now, I’ll have to check on those boys and call it a day. I bet you want to take them home to dinner,” the coach hurried to say.

He was barely out of earshot when Jared turned toward them. “Is it just me or are we being played here a little?”

“I think the coach really wants to win against those people in Barring Grove,” Adrian offered.

“But why us?” Mike asked. “I’m still not exercising much.”

During the last decade, Mike had put a little bit of meat on his bones, but he wasn’t athletic by far.

“He might just want that hunk of a husband of yours,” Adrian teased him.

Mike scratched his ear. “We could say that we’re busy, like the rest of the dads.”

“Yeah,” Jared piped in. “We should have thought of that.”

Adrian took his best friends by the shoulders. “Really, guys? Are we running away in the face of competition?”

“Hey, coach said that those guys in Barring Grove are big time into soccer. I don’t think we really stand a chance,” Jared said.

“With that kind of attitude, of course we don’t,” Adrian retorted. “Come on, guys? Who doesn’t want to be a hero in front of his kid?”

“Apparently, the other dads,” Mike said.

“Maybe their kids didn’t say anything either. Let’s see what everyone has to say and play some soccer,” Adrian replied. “We’ll wreck those guys if we’re all in it.”

“You sound like my boys,” Mike said with a small snort. “But fine, I guess I want to be in it now, too.”

“Jared?”

“If you’re both in it, I can’t say ‘no’. And Shane likes soccer, and he definitely knows a lot more about it than me. We might stand a chance.”

“What about having enough people on the field? Where can we find a couple of ‘fits lads’ like us?” Mike said and curled his fingers into quotation marks.

“I think I have an idea,” Adrian said with a smile.

Jared held Auggie’s hand on their way home. “How come you didn’t say anything about the match, Auggie?”

“Mikey said that we shouldn’t. We didn’t want Caleb to feel bad.”

“That’s serious thinking for nine-year-olds,” Jared said, mostly to himself.

“Caleb cried when the coach told us to tell our dads about it.”

“Oh,” Jared said. He could only commend their sons on their sensibility, then.

“He didn’t want us to see him, but we did. So then, we thought that if Caleb couldn’t tell his dad about the match, we shouldn’t, either.”

That was quite the solidarity. It was one of the reasons why Jared appreciated Auggie’s involvement with a team-based sport. Shane enjoyed soccer, and he was the aficionado in the family, so to speak, and Jared watched it whenever he could. Plus, Auggie truly enjoyed being a goalkeeper for the kids’ local team.

“Well, it looks like the coach is bent on having us play, too,” Jared said. “But if you guys don’t want us to, then we won’t.”

“Caleb said now that it was fine, and that he wants to see our dads kick their dads’ asses.”

“You shouldn’t talk like that, Auggie,” Jared warned.

“I was just saying what Caleb said,” Auggie said matter-of-factly.

Nine-year-old logic. Jared couldn’t entirely hold it against him, and Auggie was a good kid, anyway.

“Then we should talk to daddy, and see what he has to say about it.”

Auggie stopped for a moment and looked at Jared. “You can convince him.”

“Oh, thank you for the vote of confidence. But daddy might not say ‘yes’ since he can be pretty busy with work.”

“You can change his mind if he doesn’t. Like when I wanted both a console and a bicycle for Christmas. Or when I got a bad grade in math, and you convinced him not to be disappointed in me.”

All those were true, but it wasn’t like Shane was tough to convince, anyway. Still, Auggie saw him as the figure of authority in their home, so it wasn’t unusual for him to come to Jared first whenever he had a problem or wanted to ask for something.

“Then we shouldn’t worry. Plus, daddy likes soccer almost as much as you,” Jared said and ruffled Auggie’s hair with affection.

The front door opened in front of them before they could reach it.

“If it’s not my favorite boys,” Shane welcomed them with a large grin. “Just in time for dinner.”

Jared kissed his husband shortly. “Were you getting ready to come get us?”

“Nah. I knew you’d be here before long. You know better than letting me alone with all the food.”

Shane was just teasing them, but Jared knew his husband had a system to make their son eat enough for his age, and not take to junk food and sweets.

“But I was really close to sitting at the table and eat everything.”

“No way, daddy,” Auggie said and passed by them in a hurry. “I need all my macros for soccer.”

“First, you wash,” Shane called after him as Auggie rushed up the stairs.

Jared laughed. “I had no idea macros are something a nine-year-old would take seriously.”

“He’s a brainiac,” Shane said and hugged him. “I need to offer good arguments or he’ll smell bullshit.”

Jared snickered. “I guess you’re right. Now, what did you cook, daddy?”

“A healthy balanced meal,” Shane replied with a smile. “Auggie will be happy to get all his macros.”

“Hmm, sounds delicious,” Jared said. “Let’s have dinner, and then we’ll have to talk about an important matter.”

“What important matter?”

“We have to learn how to play soccer.”

“So, babe, let me get this straight,” Shane said as he massaged Jared’s shoulders slowly, “you just want to see me in sexy soccer getup, and you didn’t know how to ask.”

Jared shivered under his husband’s skillful ministrations. “Yeah, right. Now that you mention it, I don’t think I want a lot of strangers ogling my beau in sexy soccer getup.”

“Beau? I thought we got hitched or something.”

“We did? I cannot quite recall that. Care to remind me how it all went down?”

Shane kissed the back of his neck. “I’ll just give you a reenactment of our wedding night.”

“Oh, naughty,” Jared said with a small snicker.

“Hmm, should I go dress up for the occasion?” Shane purred in his ear.

“I’d rather have you naked. Plus, we shouldn’t waste our energy. We need to be in tip top shape or Coach Patterson will have our asses.”

“We don’t want that, don’t we?” Shane laughed and slapped Jared’s ass playfully. “Then you should assume the position and take it like a man,” he said in a cavernous cartoonish voice.

Jared propped his elbows against the bed. He wiggled his ass for good measure. “Is that good enough for you, honey?”

“Hmm, what were you saying? There’s this juicy ass in front of me, winking and asking for a dicking.”

“You joker. Just get to work before I jump your bones and give you my loving all night long.”

Shane laughed, and Jared followed but not for long as he was silenced by a hot tongue working its magic on his crack. His husband then covered him with his entire body and began moving slowly. “You know I don’t mind you jumping my bones, but when you come asking me for favors, I like it that you put out right away.”

“Put out,” Jared snickered. “So, it’s like a transaction?”

“One that makes sure both parties win,” Shane said and turned his head to kiss him while he began moving his hips.

They were moving at the same pace. Over the years, they had found what worked for them and then some, and the result was an amazingly satisfying sex life. Shane had excellent stamina in the bedroom, and Jared liked to think that he wasn't bad himself.

"Oh, babe, you're so good," Shane praised him, like usual. "I like breeding your ass."

They sometimes had a good laugh when watching bad porn, so that was where this was coming from. Jared had to admit that it didn't sound as cringe-y coming from his husband. "Yeah, babe?" he teased him. "What am I, a mare?"

Shane neighed into his ear. "And I'm a stallion."

It was pretty amazing how they were able to keep their erections while joking like that, but it was just one of those things working between them like a well-oiled machine.

They fell on the bed, breathless and laughing.

"Good to see you're in good shape," Jared joked. "You'll need it on the field."

"I'll fight for you, darling," Shane drawled. "I will dedicate the victory to you."

"Hey, it's a soccer match, not a jousting tournament, and I'll be on the field, too."

"Ah, right, I thought you said that," Shane teased him. "But aren't you always falling asleep during the after-match commentaries?"

"What can I say? They're better than sleeping pills, all those analysts. At least, I'm glad you're not letting Auggie watch them since they're so late."

"Any day now, we might not be able to keep him from that. He can watch them online, anyway."

"Right. Remind me to take his phone before going to sleep."

"Auggie wouldn't use it when he's supposed to sleep. He needs his sleep for --"

"Soccer, of course." Jared laughed. "I'm a bit confused whether it's a healthy obsession or not."

"He's into the same thing as other boys his age. It will pass. And if it doesn't, prepare to be a soccer dad forever."

Jared pretended to shiver. "Ugh, that doesn't sound like something I'd like to do."

"You're sporting the sweater look like a champ. I think you'll be fine."

Jared sighed. "Adrian roped us all in. I have a feeling that the first time we attend practice, we'll start cursing our lives."

“At least we’ll have Adrian to blame,” Shane offered.

“True, true. All right, then. Ready for shower and bedtime?”

“Maybe not just yet.”

Jared smiled as Shane straddled him and gave him one of his famous seductive looks. Yeah, maybe not just yet.

“Dad, dad, you really have to play, please,” Pat and Lee began begging the soonest they were home.

Mike was dragged by both hands to the living room where Ryan was watching football.

“What do I have to do now?” Ryan asked. “And how about you greet your dad first?”

Pat and Lee hurried to kiss Ryan on his cheeks. “You have to play. We need to wreck Barring Grove.”

“Care to update me?” Ryan searched Mike’s eyes.

“Coach Patterson has this crazy idea. Our kids will play against the kids from Barring Grove, and, apparently, we, the dads, have to go against their dads.”

“It’s like war,” Lee said, opening his arms wide as if he was an ancient warrior getting ready for battle.

“It’s for charity,” Mike explained.

“Um, hmm,” Ryan started while Pat and Lee began fighting over who should sit on his lap, “soccer? I mean, we’ll have to wear long socks and all that?”

“I’m afraid so,” Mike replied.

“You two, go wash, now,” Ryan said in a commandeering tone, and the two miscreants finally let go of their little war and hurried out of the room. “When is this illustrious event supposed to happen?”

“In a month’s time,” Mike offered with a shrug.

“Oh. So we’re going to become accomplished soccer players overnight?”

“It’s not overnight. It’s a month.”

“Right,” Ryan said with a smile. “And there’s no athletic endeavor we cannot accomplish while given such generous conditions.”

Mike straddled Ryan and gave him a kiss. “It looks like it would mean a great deal to the boys.”

Ryan responded to his kiss with one of his own. “Aren’t we indulging them a little? Maybe a smidge?”

“Maybe,” Mike agreed. “But all the other dads are on it. I mean, Adrian and Jared, and I guess they are convincing their hubbies as we speak.”

“Now, while I know very well that you will cover for them, as always, I’ll ask anyway. Did they get into any trouble at the field today?”

Mike made a blank face. “No. Not that I know of,” he hurried to say.

Ryan chuckled and brought their lips together. “Then, if you’re the only naughty boy around here, I must exact the fitting punishment.”

Mike began to shake his head frantically. “No, no, no.”

“Yes, yes, yes.”

Ryan sank his fingers into Mike’s flanks and began to tickle him, triggering a bout of laughter, hiccups and protests. They ended on the floor, wrestling, Mike to escape, Ryan to capture him into a lock.

Mike was about to proclaim surrender, when the door opened and in came rushing the two he had to blame for being the only one to get punished for their misdeeds, followed by Bran who began to bark right away. Of course, the twins wouldn’t come without reinforcements.

“Let go of daddy!” Pat launched his war cry and jumped on Ryan’s back, making him yelp in surprise.

Lee didn’t hesitate to join in and wrapped his arms around Ryan’s neck, pulling back with all his might. Bran began circling them, wanting a piece of the action.

Ryan growled and pushed himself up with the two monkeys hanging from him. Mike breathed out in relief. “Thank you, boys,” he said cheerfully and patted Bran’s head who immediately calmed down. While he covered for them, the boys responded to that by always taking his side. Ryan jokingly complained that they had formed an alliance to take him down.

In the most literal sense of the term, as Pat and Lee were trying now to use their little bodies to force Ryan to his knees. Of course, there was no chance of that, and Ryan didn’t cut the two miscreants any slack.

“Daddy, help us,” Pat called. “Dad’s too strong!”

“You two still have plenty to grow to take me down,” Ryan said and managed to grab each kid under each arm, enjoying their protests and helplessness. “Now, surrender, or I can keep you like this all day.”

Mike got to his feet and launched his own surprise attack. He grabbed Ryan’s cheeks and kissed him. The boys managed to break free, or Ryan just let them be so that he could embrace his husband.

“Good choice, dad,” Mike praised him. “Now we should sit down for dinner, and I’ll tell you all about the match. I mean, everything I know.”

“Good. Wait, did I say ‘yes’?”

“Yes, yes, you did!” Pat and Lee started shouting.

“Funny, I don’t remember,” Ryan said with a sly smile.

Mike forced himself to give his husband a stern look. “Don’t tease them too much. You don’t want them bouncing off the walls all day long, right?”

It was late into the evening that Mike and Ryan finally put the twins to sleep. They had to do quite a lot to make sure that Pat and Lee expended all their energy and wouldn’t start playing who knew what the moment their parents closed the door. Fortunately, Ryan was a talented storyteller, and great at inventing new adventures, and while the boys were past the age to still need bedtime stories, they always enjoyed their dad’s talented voice acting.

They weren’t the usual stories, either. Ryan knew his kids well, and therefore, his stories always catered to their particular interests of the moment. If he hadn’t known any better, Mike would have believed, just like Pat and Lee, and Ryan was recounting the latest sequel to some important blockbuster catering to nine-year-olds not yet released.

Tales of robots from outer space getting upgrades on Earth were quite good when told by his husband. Mike smiled in satisfaction as his eyelids grew heavy. Drifting off to sleep was no problem with sound effects of explosions as background noise.

He only opened his eyes when Ryan shook him gently. The finger placed on his lips and the short gesture toward the two carrot colored tops peeking from the blanket convinced him to move quietly. Bran was curled on the rug. He wasn’t a young dog anymore, but he preferred the kids’ room to the parents’. Mike and Ryan had nothing against that.

“I’m glad to see that I can still manage to put you to sleep, too, with my stories.”

Mike rubbed his eyes. “So sorry. Your voice is just so soothing.”

“Hmm, especially when I enact the destruction of an entire planet, I bet.” Ryan chuckled and pushed him through the door to their bedroom.

“Yeah, you just have a knack for it. Good thing Hollywood doesn’t know about you and your hidden talents.”

“I would never leave you for fame and glory,” Ryan said and kissed him deeply. “Are you tired?”

While Ryan’s accounts of imaginary intergalactic adventures could be sleep-inducing – which was a great thing, given the amazing energy the twins had all the time – his kisses were anything but. Mike snuck both hands under his husband’s shirt to feel his hairy chest. “Quite the contrary. I’m suddenly very much in the mood for... some action,” he said in a low, cartoonish voice.

“Hmm, it looks like someone’s much in the mood to play.” Ryan picked on the cue right away.

“What were you saying about some punishment?” Mike asked and looked up, pretending to be all innocent.

Ryan laughed, exposing his neck. Mike swallowed once and then sunk his head into the crook of his husband’s shoulder. He would never get tired of that familiar scent. Ryan was his home.

“I think,” Ryan began while cradling him in his arms and moving toward the bed, “that you’re in it deep, young man. First, I’ll have to undress you, and then I’ll have you present your naughty rump.”

“So far, so good,” Mike said brightly. “When comes the punishment? And what is it?”

“Just you wait,” Ryan promised in a playful voice. “Why don’t you assume the position while I think of one?”

They had once had a laugh when someone had approached them while at a gay bar, telling them that he knew them from some BDSM place. At first, they had politely tried to tell the guy off, but he was a bit drunk and insistent, and none of them wanted to cause a scene. One short look between them, and they had begun filling the guy’s head with impossible stories. Naturally, Ryan was the dom, and Mike was the sub. In the end, they had found out that they had gotten so far with their inventions that half the bar was listening.

They had gotten out of there like their pants were on fire, and then decided to keep all their ambitions to become a comedy duo to themselves.

And they had had amazing sex that night. Not that they hadn't always had great sex, but that time, it had been even more mind-blowing than usual. As a young couple, they had decided to explore that part of their sexuality...

... only to discover that erotic fantasies were one thing, and reality another. Ryan had kissed Mike's reddened butt cheek until he had to protest and pretend that it no longer hurt. And then, they had decided that it wasn't for them.

However, a little bit of playful banter was appreciated. So, Mike threw Ryan a seductive look over his shoulder. "Well?"

Ryan climbed on top of him and chewed on his ear playfully. "I know for a fact that you covered for those two today. Since I don't have any means to make you confess, I will punish your body." He said the last words in a cavernous voice, meant to instill fear..., no, actually a little bit of laughter.

Mike's body shook with badly repressed giggles.

"Ah, you don't think I can, do you?"

"I'll believe it when I see it," Mike retorted.

He shivered when Ryan began to enter him. His husband's weight keeping him down like that was always so pleasant and reassuring. And hot. Above all, that.

"I'm afraid," Ryan whispered into his ear, "that I forgot how I wanted to punish you in the first place. So it will only be vanilla tonight."

"I like vanilla. My favorite," Mike whispered as Ryan held him by the hips and began moving slowly in and out.

"We had it yesterday, too," Ryan joked, but his voice was growing a bit breathless. "And the day before."

"What can I say? I'm one flavor's man," Mike replied. He straightened up just so he could catch Ryan with one arm pulled back. "I'm one man's man."

"Good to know. Now who's a good boy?"

"Woof," Mike said playfully.

"Pulling the puppy card with me, eh?" Ryan asked with a grin.

"Woof," Mike said again and snickered as Ryan bit his ear again.

His giggles, however, turned into something else as his husband began kissing his ear, biting only so that he could tease him. The familiar shiver coursed through his body, and he pushed back against Ryan's body, to help him get deeper.

The only thing they had to repress was making too much noise. Once, Ryan had asked him whether he regretted the times when they had been only the two of them, but Mike had reminded him that they had their twins pretty fast, so there wasn't much to compare or regret.

Ryan was getting sexier by the day, and Mike was a bit overly conscious of how everyone eyed his husband, whenever they went to neighborhood parties. Still, any doubts that someone might try to steal Ryan from him were soon alleviated by strong arms wrapping around him. It seemed that his better half was all for public displays of affection, so no one even thought of throwing as much as a wandering eye in their direction. The biggest surprise had been for Mike to discover that a lot of their neighbors actually liked him best and thought of Ryan as being not as approachable as him, to put it mildly.

All this amused Ryan who let Mike in charge of being their family's liaison with the rest of the world. Even more, his husband teased him over getting so much attention from the others. Especially married women seemed to have a weakness for him, thinking of him as cute and trying to get him to participate in their cooking meetups. Therefore, Ryan often joked that he might have to buy a leash or at least a collar to assume clear ownership just in case one of the housewives in the neighborhood got a little bit more daring than the rest.

He jolted and gasped as Ryan smacked his ass playfully. At least they could live with a little bit of so-called BDSM in their lives, but that was about as adventurous as they got. Still, Ryan getting a little bit possessive and a little bit jealous was not at all bad. Quite the contrary, Mike felt sure as hell that no one would ever come between them. While as far away as they could be from their complicated office romance that had started everything, they were just as in love as they had always been and that stood for something.

Later on, as they laid in bed, trying hard to gain back their breathing, Mike asked, "Do you think I could just sit on the bench, as a substitute?"

"Are you thinking about the match?" Ryan caressed his ass slowly. "And I thought I could still blow your mind away."

"You did, but in all truth, of all of you, I'm the least in shape. I might drag you all down. If we're losing because of me and my two left feet, Pat and Lee will make sure I'll never live it down."

Ryan laughed. "I don't think so. They look up to you, you know? And I'm pretty jealous of how close they are to you."

"You're just busier. It's natural, and they look up to you more. You impose respect, which I have to admit I don't. So I'm the envious one."

“Don’t be,” Ryan said and nuzzled his cheek. “There’s no way you’re sitting on the bench. If you thought you could fool me with the ‘I’m not in shape’ speech and by bringing the twins in it, you’re wrong. I’m going to see you out there on the field, daddy.”

Mike sighed exaggeratedly. “You gotta admit. It was worth a try.”

“I have a feeling you’ll be the biggest star on the field.”

“By stumbling and falling during the first five minutes?”

Ryan chuckled and rested his cheek against his. “You give yourself too little credit. But I appreciate your lack of confidence. It must be how you settled for me when you could have someone much better.”

Mike mumbled a protest but his husband stole a kiss and shut him up. “So, I’ll have to play first team?” he asked as soon as he was allowed to speak again.

“There’s no way out. And you’ll have the best supporters in the world cheering you on from the sidelines.”

Mike smiled. Of course, Pat and Lee would probably be the noisiest in the entire crowd attending the match.

“We will need to organize ourselves.” Adrian had expected Edward to take to the idea as soon as it was presented to him, but his husband’s competitive streak which matched his just as fine made him smile. “Mike will make a good striker since he’s the most light-footed of us all. But it wouldn’t hurt to have a second.”

They were all gathered around the war table, and Adrian was thinking ahead. They had some notions of soccer and not only from their sons, and during the last couple of days, he had learned more from online sources or what-not. When the moment came to respond to Coach Patterson’s call, he planned on impressing the guy with their knowledge and preparation.

“Our allies are a bit on the heavy side,” Edward noticed. “And what was the coach saying about having to attract substitutes from other sources? Is that okay?”

“Within reason, of course,” Adrian replied. “And we practically have the perfect option at our fingertips.”

Edward nodded. They had talked of that, but they were still waiting for an answer. Just as he was about to say something, his phone chimed with an incoming message. He checked it shortly. “Christian and his husband accepted,” he said in a non-committal tone.

Adrian had noticed a slight coldness between Edward and Brown that had faded little over the years. They were polite toward one another, and for Christian's sake, Edward was nothing but courteous, but Adrian could tell that there was a conservative part of his husband, one that he might not even be well aware of, that prevented him from accepting Brown completely. That was, most probably, the part he had inherited from his father, although if asked, Edward would have been sure to protest quite vocally against.

"We're going to have those fit guys with us?" Shane asked. "That's awesome."

Whenever they met as a large group, all the others were happy to have Christian and Brown with them, even if Edward kept a slight distance from his cousin's husband. Sometimes, Adrian wondered if he wasn't imagining things, but it couldn't be as he knew Edward the best.

"So, will Christian act as a second striker? We don't know if Coach Patterson will agree. Maybe he has a different strategy," Jared intervened.

"He'll be the center forward," Adrian explained. "As for the coach, we'll make him see things our way," Adrian replied. "We'll let him think he's the boss, but leave it to me to help him see the light."

Neither of those presents argued, and they all saw Adrian as their informal leader anyway, especially since it had been his idea that they should go against Barring Grove, as the coach suggested.

"All right, who's going to be the goalkeeper?" Mike asked. "By the way, you're giving me quite the task. I don't know if I'll be able to score."

Ryan snickered and pulled his husband close. "You're going to score, baby, guaranteed."

Mike scowled for a moment, but then he laughed, too. "Wait, what happens if we lose?"

"We'll have a hard time explaining our sons why we did that," Adrian said.

"Oh, no, we cannot have that," Mike decided.

"Sure thing, we cannot. That's why we're making this happen," Adrian examined all of them. "Now, let's decide who's going to be the goalkeeper."

"It's obvious," Jared said.

"Shane?" Adrian asked, thinking that it was very much possible that Auggie and his dad could share the same position on the field.

"No," Shane said, shaking his head. "The goalie needs to be the guy with the most ice in his veins of all of us. That's your hubby, Adrian," he said as he pointed at Edward.

Adrian had a mind to protest to that, but it was true that Edward never showed his passionate side outside their bedroom, so to speak.

“I’d say it’s a good position for me,” Edward agreed. “Unless anyone else wants it.”

The rest shook their heads.

“Well, it’s decided. Should we pick the center midfielder now or later, after we see how we do on the field?”

Jared snorted. “Adrian, you’re the center midfielder. You got us all into this, so it’s your responsibility.”

Adrian had difficulty hiding how much he enjoyed being picked for that position. As the center midfielder, it would be his role to keep the entire team together and organize them so that they could maximize their chances. “All right, then. Jared and Shane, you’re going to be wingers. Is that okay with you?”

“Sure. Only that my wing might be a chicken wing, while Shane’s will be a hawk’s wing, or something like that,” Jared offered.

Shane squeezed his husband by the back of the neck. “You’ll do your best, daddy,” he teased, “or Auggie might never forgive you.”

“I’d like to think that I’ve done him a great deal of favors so far so that he’ll forgive me if I fail. Ouch, Shane, it’s starting to hurt.”

Shane made up for his roughness by kissing Jared loudly on the cheek and letting go of his neck. “What favors are you talking about?” he asked smoothly.

“It’s not your job to know,” Jared replied quickly. “Well, what position do you have for Ryan, then?”

It was obvious that Jared wanted to change the topic and quick, so Adrian hurried to help him. “Ryan will hold the middle with me and act as part of the defense. Is that good?” He turned toward Mike’s husband.

“Totally fine,” Ryan agreed. “The other dads will fill in the other roles. But what about Rhett? You didn’t say anything about Christian’s husband.”

“He’ll be the sweeper,” Edward talked in Adrian’s stead.

That surprised everyone a little, but most probably for different reasons.

“It might have him running a bit, depending on what we’re going against,” Jared remarked.

“But it’s good to have an extra line of defense,” Mike added. “And Rhett’s a strong dude. I think Edward’s idea is great.”

Adrian didn’t have anything to say against that, then. “All right, lads, as Coach Patterson might say, it’s decided. We’ll take our plan to the man and convince him that we know what we’re doing.”

“Do we?” Mike asked.

“We’ll learn,” Adrian said promptly.

He exchanged a short look with Edward. As much as his husband appeared not to stand Brown, he seemed to have no trouble having him in the closest position related to his on the field. Maybe he just thought Edward didn’t like Brown that much.

Or maybe he was just overthinking things a bit.

“Is it just me or this field is suddenly a lot bigger than I thought before?” That was Jared who was coming from running the designated number of laps, breathless and sweaty.

“It’s a small one, meant for kids,” Mike argued, but he felt his best friend’s pain just the same. “What do you think Adrian will do to us if we say a peep about wanting to give up?”

Their informal leader and actual captain of the team performed soccer drills with the rest of the dads like he had been born for it.

“I don’t worry about Adrian,” Jared said and collapsed on the grass by Mike’s side. “But I worry about our kids.”

Coach Patterson had decided to split their training so that the young team wouldn’t pester them all the time. Therefore, all the kids were now with their grandparents and not at all aware of the trials and tribulations their dads had to go through while they were having ice cream and, without a doubt, tons of fun.

“They would never forgive us,” Mike confirmed. “I still cannot believe we’re doing this.”

“Well, as that saying goes, as long as we’re still young.”

Mike flexed his knees and winced a little. “Tell that to some parts of my body.”

“Our better halves look like they’re having the time of their life.” Jared pointed at Shane and Ryan who were passing the ball from one to another, under Coach Patterson’s scrutiny. Time and time again, the coach was yelling things at them, things Mike still had a hard time remembering all and what they meant.

“So, are you all getting exhausted without us?”

Mike turned his head at the same time as Jared at the sound of that voice. Christian, Edward’s cousin, was walking nonchalantly toward them, followed closely by his husband, Rhett. Rebellious youth was still present in Christian’s mannerisms, even as he had grown into a man. Still, he was so beautiful that even Mike had to admit that except for Ryan, he had never seen someone as attractive in his entire life.

A few things had changed over the years. The untamable hair was now styled in a high cut and trimmed down to the latest hair to create the perfect shape. Ever since Christian had become a renowned lawyer, he had chosen to dress more conservatively, yet still stylish. Rhett, his husband, didn’t show his age, and it was a roundabout joke between them that a young husband could have that kind of effect.

Right now, however, they weren’t in their usual suits, but dressed in soccer gear and, apparently, ready to join the battle. “Feel free to go sit nicely under Coach Patterson’s thumb,” Mike joked. “We’re sitting here, hoping that he won’t notice us for at least the next five minutes.”

“Boys!” the coach bellowed, as if the simple mentioning of his name out of earshot was enough to summon him.

Jared groaned as he pulled himself up. “That’s us. And I bet there’s a new torture aligned for us. Be happy as long as you don’t know what that is.” He shook hands with both Christian and Rhett, and then helped Mike to his feet, too.

If it were after him, they would prolong their break for just a little while longer. The coach seemed happy to have new prisoners to his scheme of shaping them up for the big match and began yelling orders at them.

“Have you ever been in the army?” Mike whispered to the others.

“I did, for a short while,” Rhett replied.

Mike was rightfully impressed. “And do you think this is worse or --”

Rhett shook his head and threw Mike a lopsided grin. “We’ll see.”

There was something charming and just a tiny smidge dangerous about this guy. Mike couldn’t put his finger on, but he had that kind of sex appeal that he hadn’t noticed in a lot of people. It must have been why Christian was so mad about his husband, he pondered, as he noticed how Edward’s cousin turned his head and looked at his partner.

Adrian hugged Christian shortly and shook hands perfunctorily with Brown. It was pretty amazing how in shape that guy kept himself. Their usual joke that it had to be the treatment of a young husband applied regularly couldn't be far from the truth. He pinched the bridge of his nose discreetly to chase away the small frown he sensed developing. Edward walked over to greet them, and for a moment, a familiar smile lit up his face.

It was only with the family that Edward gave up on his defenses, and, as Adrian well knew, Christian was a soft spot for his better half. It had to be for his sake that Edward offered the same smile to Brown.

Now that they were in full formation, they could go back to training.

“So, did you decide that I should be the sweeper?” Brown asked him.

“No. That was Edward's idea,” Adrian replied.

Sometimes, this dude could still get on his nerves. Like right now, when he was watching him like he was expecting Adrian to have a bone to pick with him. Yeah, that shit-eating grin was grating, to say the least, and Brown seemed to know that he was annoying him when he did that.

“All right, then. I'll do my best not to disappoint your husband,” Brown said as one corner of his mouth lifted in a provoking smirk.

Adrian made no effort to stop his frown this time. “Yeah, do that,” he said curtly and turned his back on the guy.

As he was walking toward the table used for storing water bottles and towels, someone came from behind and hooked his arm around his shoulders. He didn't have to turn to know who it was. “Is there something wrong, Adrian?” Edward's voice expressed concern.

“Just a bit thirsty,” he said through his teeth.

“You know it's not that. Two minutes Rhett is here, and you already --”

“It's not about Brown, don't worry.”

Edward squeezed his shoulder, but Adrian just grabbed a bottle and untwisted the cap without throwing his husband a single look. “All right. I won't insist. But please, just make things work out on the field, okay? I know you don't stand him much, but it was your idea to have them on board.”

“I stand him just fine,” Adrian said. “You go and practice those penalty kicks. We need to consider that possibility, too.”

“Of course. Give me a kiss.”

It was unlike Edward to opt for public displays of affection, but Adrian wasn't about to pass up the opportunity. His mood lifted as Edward cupped his cheeks and gave him a kiss on the lips. A few playful catcalls from their friends forced them to cut it short.

"Yeah, yeah," he waved menacingly at them, "just get on with the program already."

"Does the program involve kissing breaks?" Jared shouted at him.

Edward chuckled. "I think we shouldn't provoke our buddies any further. I'm off to my penalty kick practice."

Adrian smiled. He so loved watching his husband go, with that perky ass of his. He was still smiling when he noticed Brown staring at him with the same annoying grin plastered all over his face. He just shrugged and jogged over to the group.

"Hmm," Jared purred as he sensed Shane moving behind him and caressing his ass slowly. "Is that my husband's hand or am I being molested in the communal showers?"

Shane chuckled low and sexy. In an instant, he was all over Jared, wrapping his arms around him and resting his hard and ready cock against his butt. "We're the last ones left. What do we say we get naughty?"

"What if someone comes?" Jared murmured, but he was already bucking his hips against his husband's hard body, as the warm water slushed down their skin.

"Then we might find ourselves in a bit of a pinch. But, don't worry, babe, I set up a special fond for bribing people who might catch us in the act."

"You did?" Jared gasped as Shane's hands grew bolder and began teasing his nipples with increased frequency. "What a cautious man I took as a husband."

Shane laughed in his ear and caressed it with his lips that were soon replaced by a naughty tongue.

"If you keep it like this," Jared became breathless, "I won't be held responsible for my actions."

"Why?" Shane bit his earlobe and sucked it in his mouth. "What will you do?"

"I might get my ass impaled on that hard cock of yours and ride it until there's nothing left in you."

"Is that a promise?"

Jared didn't have to reply to that. Shane's fingers were soon at his backdoor, working slowly and tortuously.

"C'mon, I'm used to it," Jared pleaded, eager now to have Shane get to work.

"Easy, babe, I need you stretched nicely, like this," Shane continued to open him with fingers and spit.

He could deal with that torture for a little while. Shane was soon in, and Jared gasped as his husband's cock buried inside his ass. "Do you feel me, babe?" Shane taunted him playfully.

"I totally do," Jared reply wryly. "If you also moved, that would be so great."

"I aim to please," Shane replied.

Jared had to plant both hands firmly on the wall as Shane began giving it to him slowly, at first, but then faster and faster. It could be that the risk of getting caught was adding to his arousal because he didn't last long. Shane slowed down a little and peppered the back of his neck with kisses and small licks. As Jared's final ebbs of release faded, Shane increased his rhythm again.

"Yes, use me," Jared whispered.

He could hear Shane's breathing quickened as he was working to get himself off, too, using Jared's body for it like it belonged to him. Which, of course, did, and Jared didn't mind the hammering. His cock began twitching and he watched in a bit of surprise mixed with joy as he started shooting again. "Wow," he said quietly.

Shane mumbled something incoherent and let go. They remained like that together, Shane's cock still pulsing a couple of times inside his ass.

"Hey, is anyone still in here?"

The coach's authoritative voice sent them off in a flurry of panic. Shane was the first to get his bearings back. He waved all nonchalantly. "Just us, coach. We'll make sure to turn off the lights when we go."

"All right. Just let me know when you leave so that I can lock everything."

The fading steps let them know that the coach was no longer within earshot.

Jared placed one hand over his chest. "Fuck me sideways, that almost gave me a heart attack. Do you think he could tell we... are basically sharing the same shower?"

"Most probably," Shane replied, completely unfazed.

"I'm glad you're taking things so lightly." Jared glared at him as he turned.

Shane grinned and shrugged. "I think Coach Patterson knows what sex is at his age."

Jared swatted his husband over the shoulder, not too playfully. "He'll think we're sex crazed or something."

Shane laughed. "Chillax, babe. I don't think he could see anything through all this steam. And if he did, he doesn't strike me as the gossipy type."

Jared wanted to glare some more, but he knew Shane had a point. "Let's just wash quickly and not keep him waiting for us to finish. I mean it," he added as his husband began rubbing his chest slowly.

Shane pinched his nipples one time and laughed, the scoundrel. Jared bit his lips not to laugh, too.

"I'm so beat," Mike complained and let himself fall on the bed, face first.

Ryan patted his ass in what was maybe, supposedly, a comforting and compassionate gesture. Too bad each muscle in his body hurt, and his butt was no exception. "You'll get used to it," Ryan said matter-of-factly. "A little bit of physical activity never hurt anyone."

"I'm glad you're so cheerful," Mike mumbled, his face buried in the coverlet. "I can't believe you. How come? It must be because you're in shape, and I'm not."

"Bingo!" Ryan said and laughed. "I didn't know that was it until you told me," he teased.

Mike groaned. "You're a monster, not feeling anything like that. How am I supposed to score if I'm so useless?"

"You worry too much. And you just need to wait for the ball to be passed to you. We'll do the hard work, and you just need to send that ball past their goalie."

"Oh, yeah, it is so simple," Mike complained some more. "I wonder if I'm not worrying for nothing."

Ryan began massaging his ass. "You are worrying for nothing. It's a team game, and that's how we're going to work. As a team."

"Are you going to give me a speech? Like the kind you use to motivate your employees?"

"No, but just because you're my husband, I'm not going to let you wallow in self-doubt like this. It will be up to us to get the ball to you --"

“—and Christian,” Mike added brightly. “Yeah, he can totally score. I saw him, all determined and stuff. He’s our striker, clearly.”

Ryan surprised him by suddenly pinching his butt. “You’re not getting out of this. Yes, Christian will be there, but his role will be to distract the defenders so that you can get a clear shot.”

“Why can’t I be the guy who distracts the defenders on the enemy team? I bet that I can stumble quite artistically.”

“Don’t tell me you watched those infamous European plays. I won’t tolerate cheating in this family,” Ryan chided him.

Mike groaned and shielded his face so that his husband couldn’t look at him. “Maybe I can get a penalty kick out of it.”

Ryan slapped his butt. “Don’t even think about it. And what’s this story, about you being incapable of scoring?”

Mike didn’t have it in him to protest as Ryan rolled him on his back and climbed on top of him. “I believe someone needs to be reminded what he’s capable of,” Ryan insisted and began undressing him.

He was beat, indeed, but there was something else he felt as Ryan touched him everywhere. No wonder there, the soonest his pants and underwear were out of the way, his cock was standing proudly like a ship’s main mast.

Ryan took a moment to examine Mike’s hard cock as if it was something that needed proper perusal and consideration. He then grabbed it and gave it a long lick, making Mike moan and cover his eyes again.

“Without a doubt, you appear to have all the necessary equipment. Now, we need to work on your confidence.”

“I thought technique and training were more important,” Mike commented.

“Hey, who do you think you’re talking to? I’m your bedroom coach, starting right now.”

Mike peeked from under his arm and let out a small appreciative sound as Ryan undressed, revealing his handsome body. His breath became deeper and more irregular as Ryan made a show out of turning and exposing his ass while taking care to lube himself properly.

He chose to close his eyes. If he looked too intently, there was a chance that he would end up shooting before Ryan had a chance to do what he was planning to. And while out on the field, scoring fast was desirable, Mike had a feeling that not the same would bode well with his bedroom coach.

He felt the dip in the mattress as Ryan climbed on the bed and let himself be handled. If that was his husband's choice of therapy for easing his nerves about the upcoming match, he didn't mind. Although he might still have the same lack of confidence, at least the therapy he was going through would be pleasant.

His breath hitched in his chest as he felt Ryan's warm channel of muscles engulfing him little by little. When he felt Ryan's balls resting against him, he knew that he was all in.

"Now," Ryan started, "let's see who believes it anymore that he won't be able to score after this."

Yeah, it was such a good therapy, Mike thought as his husband began moving slowly up and down. The little worry that he might shoot a bit too fast crept in.

"Eyes on me," Ryan demanded and pulled Mike's arms away from his face.

It was a bit funny to be dominated like that while he was the one fucking the other. Well, maybe it wasn't entirely like that because Ryan looked rightfully in charge while keeping his arms apart, wrists pinned to the bed, his eyes burning, and his hips moving and giving him a proper ride.

"This is," he whispered, not knowing what the words eluding him were.

"You're not alone, Mike," Ryan said tenderly, a contrast to the rhythm of his hips and how hard he kept his wrists down. "You're never alone."

Mike felt his chest swelling. It was true. He stared into his husband's eyes with all the tenderness he felt inside. "I know," he said softly, "I know."

Ryan leaned over and kissed him. Just like the rest of what he was doing to him, it was passionate and raw with unhidden power. Mike moaned, thrashed and gasped.

"Then show it to me," Ryan encouraged him and let go of his wrists.

Mike instantly grabbed Ryan's ass, filling his hands with his better half's perfect mounds. Then he started moving, bucking his hips off the bed to a rhythm. He could hear Ryan breathing harder and in a more erratic way. When his husband's ass squeezed him hard and he felt his warm release all over his chest and belly, he saw no reason to postpone it anymore. He brought Ryan's close and filled his ass while still grabbing one buttock with all his might.

Minutes later, his eyes were closing. Ryan chuckled in his ear. "Now tell me, who scored?"

Mike snickered. "Are we doing this? For real? Let me know if you intend to change your career and become a motivational speaker."

"You're not getting out of it by joking. Just warnin' ya," Ryan said playfully. "Now, who scored?"

Mike raised one arm. "I did," he said with a sheepish smile.

Ryan laughed and pulled him out of bed. "See? That's the attitude. Now hit the shower. Then you're allowed to sleep."

Mike grinned as he followed his husband. "All right, coach. You're the boss."

"Are we ready?" Coach Patterson bellowed and blew his whistle loud enough to pierce their eardrums.

"Yes," came a collective shout from more than a dozen young chests.

"Then get there and make your parents proud," the coach ordered.

The kids were out of their skin with enthusiasm, and they had all have a hard time putting them to sleep the previous night. After one month of assiduous training, finally, the big day was here. Jared held one hand around Shane's shoulders and another around Mike's. Adrian was sitting one row in front, as he wanted to be closer to the action. Jared was starting to suspect that Adrian was the most into soccer of all of them after their short-term involvement with the sport. He could bet that he would be the loudest supporter, too, now that the game was about to begin.

"I cannot believe that it's practically a full house," Mike noted as he looked around. "I had no idea small time soccer would have so many fans."

"Apparently," Jared commented, "Coach Patterson and the local committee that takes care of the funds that go to the team had the idea of printing some very interesting flyers."

"Oh, right," Mike murmured. "We were a little, how they say, objectified?"

Jared snorted. "More like our husbands. And Adrian, of course. Is it just me, or are like dozens of eyes on us?"

Mike nodded, and then leaned in and whispered. "That group of soccer moms has been eyeing us since they got here. I don't know what to make of it."

"I'm more concerned about their husbands who we're going against. Those guys really know their deal. Now let's just focus on the game."

Twelve minutes in, and Mikey found himself alone with the enemy team's goalie. Adrian was clapping his hands together so hard that his knuckles were turning white. Edward placed a comforting hand on top of them.

The ball, however, didn't find the net, and Mikey hang his head low as he jogged back. Adrian hoped he could just transmit something positive and reinforcing to their son right now, but Coach Patterson had been quite adamant about them not getting involved as a second line of coaches from the side.

“Go Mikey!” someone suddenly yelled.

Mikey raised his eyes and waved at the audience, a big smile on his face. There was a different spring in his step.

Adrian turned as the benches behind them began to chant. He smiled, and then his eyes grew wide. “Edward, am I dreaming, or is my father-in-law suddenly in charge of the cheerleading team?”

Edward didn't seem at all surprised. “They insisted to come and support Mikey.”

“And you thought it would be a good idea to keep it from me?”

“I didn't want you to get your hopes high. Or mine. But,” Edward added as he waved at his parents, “I'm glad they're here.”

“And your dad looks so dashing with that scarf around his neck.”

“I bet it was my mom who convinced him.”

They didn't have any more time to talk as the audience erupted, and there were fingers pointed at the field. Coach Patterson was yelling something. One kid from Barring Grove was on the ground, holding one leg, his face twisted in pain.

“He was on the ball!” Mike's agitated shouts could be heard from behind. “He only touched the ball!”

Adrian wasn't in the least surprised to see Pat or Lee with his head down, while the head referee was telling him something. The Barring Grove medical team hurried to tend to the boy, but it looked like there was nothing serious. Adrian was starting to suspect Barring Grove of being good not only good at soccer, but also good at faking. The kid who had been supposedly hurt was now running around like he hadn't been on the ground only one minute earlier.

“This is different from all the other times,” Jared commented. “My palms are so sweaty, and I think my stomach will start cramping any minute now.”

“Easy,” Shane comforted him. “Auggie's on top of it.”

The Barring Grove team had been given a free kick, so a lot weighed on Auggie as the line of defense could only do this much. With practiced ease, Auggie jumped just at the right moment and caught the ball that aimed at the high left corner.

Jared sighed and leaned back. "I don't think soccer is good for the heart. Is it too late to convince Auggie to take up chess or something else, less adrenaline filled?"

Shane just laughed. "Your son's about to become the MVP of this match, and you think he should take up chess? He already defended five times."

"I guess," Jared admitted. "Good job, Auggie!" he shouted.

Auggie only turned his head for a moment and then his eyes were back on the field.

"Hush, don't ruin his concentration," Shane warned him.

"I can't believe the referee didn't see that." Mike was all worked up and for a good reason. They were in the second half, and the minutes were dragging with no change on the scoreboard. Pat had gotten a yellow card for grabbing an enemy player by the t-shirt. Yes, it was the third time, but if the referee had known Pat, he would have been surprised that the boy wasn't on the ground, holding his shin and screaming in pain.

Now, the boys from Barring Grove had profited from a bit of a blind eye from the head referee and were launching another attack. Mike didn't want to admit, but, in all truth, those boys were good. He was starting to get a bit of cold feet thinking of how good their dads might be. Barring Grove was there with a big group, not only the soccer moms giving them the evil eye – or maybe they were just ogling them because they were handsome, Ryan had cared to tell him. They were a joyous bunch, and Mike was a bit envious of their chants. Next time, they needed to do better.

This time, however, the clock was ticking, and this attack could be the last one. The scoreboard was unchanged, and the enemy team scoring would be just too much for the little ones on the field.

"Mike." Ryan caught his hand as Pat and Lee began running across the field, launching their counterattack. "Look."

Mike no longer cared that Ryan was squeezing his hand to the point that his bones were starting to crack. The two carrot heads were moving fast passing the ball from one to another. Coach Patterson was having a seizure or something close to that on the sideline. All the substitute bench was on their feet, and so was the entire audience.

Mikey was waiting in front, with the last defender of Barring Grove glued to him like his shadow. The enemy goalie leaned slightly forward, preparing for the shot. Suddenly, Mikey

surprised the defender by dashing to the right. Lee stopped the ball from Pat on his chest, and then sent a precise shot toward Mikey.

Everyone was yelling, and no one could actually hear what anyone else had to say in that ruckus. Mike simply knew that the ball will hit the back net before it even happened. Mikey sent the ball flying at an angle impossible to defend by Barring Grove's goalie.

And then, their group began jumping up and down, shouting in victory. On the field, Pat and Lee hurried to Mikey and pushed him to the ground in their enthusiasm. The entire team gathered around them, even the always calm Auggie who was shouting and waving just like the rest of the kids.

And, the most beautiful moment of all, the head referee whistled the end of the match.

Adrian grabbed Mikey and helped him up on his shoulders. Everyone was so happy, and kids and parents alike were gathered at the diner close to the field for a bit of a celebratory ice cream and snacks. Mikey, no surprise there, was the star, and the other parents hurried to congratulate him on his perfect goal. Adrian couldn't be prouder of his son, although he would have been just as proud if the score had been different.

He put Mikey down once they got at their table. Pat and Lee were the noisiest, and they wanted seven kinds of ice cream, all at the same time. Ryan who was always capable of making them behave now just grinned and let them consume their exultation to their heart's content.

"That was quite the match, boys," Shane congratulated them all. Auggie was sitting between him and Jared and was the only one who wasn't asking for the entire menu.

"Now it is up to us to live to expectations," Mike commented. "In a couple of hours, it will be us out there on the field."

"Yeah, our boys had set the bar quite high," Jared said and ruffled Auggie's hair.

"It's all right, dad," Auggie said. His eyes were shining when he looked at his parent. "If you manage a tie, it's fine."

"A tie?" Jared exchanged a look with Adrian, then the others.

Auggie nodded. "Their dads are good. And you only trained for a little while. So we won't be upset if it's a tie."

"Ah, so if we lose, you'll be upset," Jared said and shook his head.

Auggie frowned a smidge, like he couldn't quite wrap his head around the concept of losing. "You won't lose," he said with the same determination.

“Do you hear that, dads?” Adrian said with a grin. “Congrats on the match, boys.” They raised their soda glasses. “And be sure of it. We’re going to make you proud.”

“I must say that I’m a bit overwhelmed.” Jared scouted the audience and then set his eyes on the field. “It’s a different thing when it’s you out here, isn’t it?”

Mike just nodded. “Are you telling me? I think I’m shaking in my booties.”

“I think they’re just called boots,” Jared offered in a deadpan voice.

“Oh, yeah?” Mike asked.

They were just waiting for the referee to signal the start of the match. From their half of the field, the Barring Grove dads were examining them with stern eyes. All of a sudden, this wasn’t just a match between two suburbs. Jared couldn’t help but think that these dads meant business. At the same time, he felt inadequately trained for the event.

“Let’s do our best, guys,” Adrian told them.

And the ball was on the move.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing, Brown?” Adrian hissed, as the referee warned the guy in a non-committal tone.

It was the second time Brown was tackling an adversary like they were wrestling, not playing soccer.

“I’m the last defender. With these guys, that’s all we do. We just defend,” Brown bristled at him.

In all truth, Adrian was as mortified as the rest of the team at the incredible speed and determination the other guys had on their side. They had rarely left their half, and even Christian and Mike often came to help the defense. Brown wasn’t off the mark, but they couldn’t risk having a man sent out with a red card.

“Just make sure not to get kicked out of the game,” Adrian said and brushed by Brown, making sure to hit him slightly in the shoulder.

“Adrian,” Edward called for him.

He didn’t like the stern look in his husband’s eyes, but he walked over anyway. There was a bit of stoppage time, as one of theirs had been in a quite the duel with an opponent, and a substitute was expected to get ready to replace him.

“Rhett is doing his best,” Edward said. “And these guys are dangerous.”

“Do you need him to defend instead of you?” Adrian let out his frustration and regretted his words the moment they left his mouth.

Edward’s face schooled into a neutral expression. “We’ll talk about this at home.”

Fuck. He wanted to apologize, but the whistle let them know that they needed to return to the match and face another grueling session of fighting off the others’ relentless attacks.

At half-time, they were all exhausted, frustrated, and demoralized. Coach Patterson gathered them together. “Good job, lads,” he beamed at them.

“Good job?” Mike asked, a bit disoriented. “We didn’t do much... or anything.”

“Are you sure we’re in the same match, coach?” Adrian asked gruffly.

“They’re kind of wiping the floor with us,” Jared chimed in.

Coach Patterson wagged his finger at them. “Don’t you talk like that. Your kids are out there, cheering you on. Hell, the entire South Crest is here, cheering you on. What’s with the quitter talk? The scoreboard is as untouched as a virgin. That’s good.”

“You should have told us these guys are pro,” Adrian said.

“They’re not pro,” the coach contradicted him. “They’ve just been in this a bit longer. Now, in the second half, I need you to start attacking.”

“Attacking?” Jared had a stricken face, just like the rest of them. “We’re barely holding our own, trying not to get smashed. It’s a miracle they haven’t scored so far.”

“No miracle,” Coach Patterson said and cut the air with his arm. “You, lads, are better than you think. Sure, they have the experience --”

They all grumbled in acquiescence.

“—and their win streak --”

They murmured again.

“—and a goal-getter who could aim for a Ballon d’Or if he were to play professional soccer --”

“We get it.” Adrian put a hand up. “Is this supposed to cheer us up?”

“What’s that balloon thing?” one of the other dads asked.

Apparently, he hadn't been coached about that by his son, Adrian reflected. Then, he began laughing. A bit of a weight was starting to get lifted off his chest. The others threw him curious looks.

"Coach, I think you made your point. Yeah, we're nothing like those guys. But let's look at the bright side. So far, as good as they are, they haven't scored. Let's keep it that way."

"Are we going to attack?" asked a very confused Mike.

Adrian patted his friend's shoulder. "Yeah. I bet that will take them completely by surprise. Isn't that so, coach?"

Coach Patterson gave him a large smile.

Mike couldn't believe it. The carefully aligned lines of attack that had tortured them in the first half were starting to get jagged and frayed around the edges, with each different scheme they tried. It appeared that, indeed, Adrian and the coach had been correct to assume that Barring Grove had thought that South Crest would do nothing else but defend. The element of surprise had worked well so far, with the only exception being that their attacks fizzled as Mike never managed to run fast enough to catch the balls thrown in his direction by Christian, Jared, or Shane.

He was getting tired and wanted to yell at them to try to score instead of him. The guys just kept apologizing for sending him the ball too far.

But that wasn't the worst thing. There were two carrot heads in that sea of people whom he didn't want to disappoint. The problem was that Barring Grove had a defense, not only an offense. And it was a damned good defense, on top of everything.

Coach Patterson gestured for him to come close when there was another stoppage time whistled.

"Mike," the man said, "you have to do it."

"Do what? They're all over me the moment I touch the ball. When I touch it," he groaned.

"Listen to me. Keep your eyes on the ball. Stop looking around you. Out there," he pointed at the field, "there's only you and her."

Mike thought nothing of the coach talking about the ball as a 'she'.

"You need to take her over that goal line like she's your damned bride," the coach continued.

Mike snickered at the absurdity of that statement.

The coach stopped for a moment and blinked. “All right. Like he’s your damned groom,” he said, completely unfazed.

“Ryan might have something to say about that,” Mike said and bit his lips not to laugh.

The coach gave him a hard look. “Your husband wants you to score.”

Mike nodded and turned his back. If the coach only knew what dirty thoughts went through his mind at that, he would kick him off the field himself.

But he had a point. He took his position and set his eyes on the ball.

There was something happening to him. He couldn’t exactly say what it was; it could be tunnel vision or some other fancy explanation from the realm of psychology. The thing was that the coach was right. He tuned out the yells and noise around him and focused on the ball. One defender tried to tackle him, but he jumped over him with the ball glued to his foot. Another forced an entry, but he executed the most graceful pirouette he must have ever performed in his life.

As he slid on his ass, his foot still reached for the ball. It was like his entire body was trying to extend beyond its physical boundaries. He registered only faintly how his shorts were hiked up and the back of his legs burned as they brushed against the grass.

With the last drop of anything he had in him resembling stamina, determination, and strength, he pushed the ball.

Yes! It was beyond the goal line, and the goalie threw himself to cover the angle, but it was too late, and Mike almost hit him in the face with his boot.

Then the noise was all back. Everyone was cheering, and his ass was hurting something fierce. He was hiked up from the ground as Adrian picked him like he was a feather.

“Did I score?” he asked, not really believing.

Adrian pulled him into a tight hug, while everyone else rushed around him. “You sure did, Mike, you sure did.”

The change on the scoreboard wasn’t enough to deter Barring Grove from their attacks. If anything, they were now more determined, faster, stronger. Adrian cursed under his breath, as their center forward fooled him once again.

He watched as if an accident was happening under his very eyes in short motion. He didn't even have the time to yell at Brown. The enemy striker was pushed back like a bouncing ball and fell on his ass while the audience erupted in loud booing.

The referee whistled. When he reached for his chest pocket, Adrian wanted to close his eyes. Brown deserved to see red. Then he saw the referee pointing at the penalty mark and his world sank.

Of course, the asshole had to do it inside the penalty area. Brown began walking, his face dark, but Adrian couldn't just leave it. As everyone gathered to witness the penalty kick, he rushed after him.

"The fuck is wrong with you?"

Brown shrugged. "Fuck off, Rossi. Just this one time, drop it."

"Drop it?"

"Yeah. And go look. Your husband's about to defend a penalty kick."

Adrian wanted so much to punch the asshole in the face, but there was no time. The kicker took a step back and took a moment to look at the ball. His face gave off nothing. He only raised his eyes once. Edward was waiting, his face the same poker mask as that of his adversary. The kicker made a small feint, and Edward moved slightly, but then the ball went to the high left corner.

Time could stop for all he cared. But when Edward lunged and reached for the ball just with the tips of his fingers, but enough to make the ball bounce off, time came back to normal, and the entire team, along with the audience, erupted in cheers.

"Okay, guys, that was quite the game," Adrian said and patted his friends on their backs as they said their goodbyes for the night.

The kids were all finally exhausted, and the rush of excitement was dying down. Even Pat and Lee were hanging in their dads' arms, no longer the bundles of energy from earlier.

Adrian walked side by side with Edward, Mikey a bit ahead with his grandparents and Sophia.

"You'll have to apologize to Rhett," Edward said matter-of-factly.

"What? Why should I apologize to him? He almost cost us the game!"

"Adrian, Rhett did great. It's not like me to comment on such things, but those two from Barring Grove leading the attack, they kept on taunting us."

“Taunting you? How?” Adrian’s ears perked up.

Edward shrugged. “Please don’t force me to say the words they used.”

“You mean like... slurs?”

Another shrug followed.

“Hey, why didn’t you say anything?” Adrian took his husband by the shoulders. “The referee should have been informed about it.”

“Ah, well, I’m the kind who gets even, not the kind who snitches on other kids,” Edward said lightly.

“But if they were using such words,” Adrian insisted, as he felt disgust rising in his gut.

Edward smiled. “It wasn’t so bad. But I think their striker wants me to be his girlfriend.”

“That son of a --”

Edward stopped him with a kiss. “I thought it was a bit funny. Rhett didn’t think so.”

“I don’t think so, either,” Adrian insisted. “I’ll have to head over to Barring Grove and demand satisfaction.”

Edward chuckled and held him close. “You won’t do that. We gave them an ass-whooping to remember us for a long time.”

“Still,” Adrian tried to argue.

“Hush. It’s over. We won, they lost. And you should stop being jealous of Rhett. Even Christian thinks it’s high time you let go.”

“Who’s jealous?” Adrian asked, irritated.

Edward brushed his furrowed eyebrows with his fingers. “You are. I’m a bit tired to treating Rhett like the plague only so that you don’t get any ideas.”

“What? I thought you couldn’t stand the guy!”

“It’s water under the bridge, Adrian. And he’s all right. He’s good with Christian, and that’s what matters.”

Adrian wanted to argue some more, but then he exhaled. He needed to agree with Edward.

“Although it’s nice to know you can still get jealous.”

“I’m not jealous of Brown,” Adrian insisted. “I mean, not anymore.”

He gave his husband a long kiss. They were out in the street, but it was already dark enough not to scandalize the few passersby that still walked at that hour.

“Too bad. I think I like it that you can still get jealous. Ah, I’ll miss it,” Edward said and yawned.

“You don’t have to miss it. Now I’m jealous of that guy in Barring Grove who wants to be your girlfriend.”

“It was actually the other way --” Edward tried to explain.

Adrian laughed and shut him up with a kiss.

THE END