



Be The  
Father Of  
This Child!

LAURA S. FOX

**Be The Father Of This Child!**

**By**

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M/M Romance

Intended for Mature Audiences Only

This book contains graphic depictions of sexual intercourse and it is not meant for readers who are less than 18 years of age.

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## *Chapter One – It's A Bouncing Baby Boy!*

Ding! Ding! Ding!

Jett opened his eyes. Was that seriously the doorbell? Who the fuck dared to wake him up before ten fucking AM? For a full minute, he lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, with a frown he hoped could be visible through the walls so that the moron who dared to ring his doorbell would get the message.

He pushed himself up. Where were his pants? He had them last night; that much he remembered. Jett winced when he stepped on something cold and icky.

“Oh, fuck!”

What the hell was his ashtray doing on the floor? Obviously, he had left it there, but that didn't mean he wasn't entitled to a little bit of righteous rage. Ah, at least he found his pants. They were hanging by the doorknob.

He shook his head. Wild night. Now, who the fuck was at the door? The sound had finally stopped, but now curiosity was bigger than the determination to strangle the idiot on the other side.

Maybe he could still catch the moron and give him a piece of his mind. That thought put an immediate spring in his step. Jett went down the stairs, groaning. “I'm coming!” It was only fair to give the moron a bit of a head start.

He pulled the door knob so fast that the hinges screeched and sighed. Ah, there was no one. Jett looked to the right, then to the left, and then ... down.

“What the fuck?”

The only reply was a long, clearly aimed at him, wail. Jett shook his head. Was he having hallucinations? As much as he loved smoking, he was only particular to tobacco. So he couldn't blame it on that.

At his feet, on his doorsteps, was a frigging baby! Strapped to a car seat, that kiddie version he saw advertised on TV, and screaming like a banshee. The poor kid was red in the face and clearly in some sort of emergency.

“Who are you, dude?” Jett crouched next to the baby who didn't seem to care about his questions.

With a frown, he picked a small paper square that was caught with a small pin to the baby's onesie.

*Assume responsibility, asshole!*

Jett scratched his head. In the meantime, the baby seemed to be as distressed as earlier. “Hey, dude, not cool,” he said, pointing a finger at him. “I’m trying to think here.”

Did he leave some girlfriend pregnant? He continued to scratch his head. His man bun moved on top of his head, and that must have caught the kid’s attention, because the wailing stopped and giggling took its place.

“You like this thing?” Jett pointed at his top knot.

He knelt next to the baby, and, right away, sticky little hands were in his hair, pulling hard.

“Ouch! Quite the strong fellow, aren’t you?”

The baby giggled again. Jett extracted his bun from the baby’s hands and began to examine the car seat for extra clues. That moment, his phone went off.

With a frown, he checked the message. “Just fucking great,” he murmured.

But a job was a job, and Jett never said ‘no’ to whatever could bring him money. Except when it involved guys with a heavier punch than him. After all, he was a practical man and had no wish for a broken nose or worse.

Without losing time with overthinking, he grabbed the baby with the car seat and all from the steps and began marching toward his car. “It looks like you’re riding with me, buddy,” he said to the baby who was looking up at him with clear blue eyes.

For a second, he observed the kid. Was there any resemblance that would ring a bell? The mom could be ... well, at least several women. He usually used anti-baby devices, like condoms. Not with his steady girlfriends, though. He needed to make a list and start calling people. But that would have to come later. With a shrug, Jett opened the door to the backseat of his car.

And then he scratched his head again. He was pretty sure there had to be a way to put that car seat inside, but who the fuck knew about that stuff? After some deliberation – it wasn’t like he had much time on his hands, or his target would fly the coop – he decided to place the car seat inside and then used the existing seat belt in the back to strap the kid in place.

He took one step back and admired his handiwork. Damn, it didn’t look that safe, did it? Well, it wasn’t much he could do. He would just have to drive slowly, like really slowly.

The kid didn’t seem too bothered with his lack of knowledge in the area of installing car seats for children. Well, then he wasn’t bothered, either.

Jett kicked the engine into gear and then watched the speedometer. “Slow and steady now, right, buddy?”

At least the kid didn't scream when the car moved. Maybe the baby was used to riding. Who knew?

Jett checked for the last time the address where he needed to go. "April Summer," he said to himself, "you'll have to pay up, dude."

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Jett put one cigarette in his mouth and, without lighting it just yet, looked at the baby in the backseat. "You stay here, buddy. If you get bored, just imagine you're my getaway driver."

The kid looked at him and scrunched his nose.

"And don't cry. Crying pisses me off, okay?"

For the moment, he seemed to get the message. Jett climbed out of the car and walked away from it, not without looking back a few more times.

He cracked his neck, once to the right, once to the left, and then lit his cigarette. April Summer sounded like some hippy name. It would be an easy job, and then he'd get back to see what the hell that kid had to do with him.

He ringed the doorbell a couple of times. His target lived in what looked like a complex for students and such. There were only singles, but, at that morning hour – it was still before ten AM -, not many residents seemed to be at home. The message said the target would be present, though.

Finally, someone answered, and a head covered by tousled brown hair stuck through the door. Jett assumed his most threatening stance, his feet parted and his arms crossed. That didn't stop him from sucking from his cigarette. It was a skill, to act like a human furnace, one girlfriend had told him once.

"April Summer?" he asked in a menacing voice, making the cigarette dangle between his lips.

From behind a pair of round glasses, green eyes observed him. Only for a second, because the next, Jett stared in disbelief at the door being shut in front of him.

"Fucking hippy," Jett mumbled to himself and pushed against the door.

It surprised even him how easily that lock gave in. He walked inside and slammed the door behind him. Oh, shit. It was that kind of small apartment with a way through the back. He should have imagined.

Without wasting another moment, Jett ran toward the other exit. In his path, he almost stumbled on what looked like a bunch of IT equipment. Was the hippy trying to set up his own shop?

The back door was swinging in the wind. No wonder there.

The hippy was fast, Jett had to give it to him. He was running like there was a fire lit under his ass, but Jett wouldn't let him escape that easily. What was he thinking? This dweeb wouldn't escape at all.

There was a narrow pathway that appeared to lead to a wooden fence, so Jett threw his cigarette and gave chase. April Summer seemed to be limber enough to jump over that, and he was dressed in a tracksuit that let him move with ease, but Jett wouldn't let him get that far.

“Stop running, you fucking idiot!”

His lungs were fucking burning. He was no runner, usually, because people didn't think they could get away from him. This April dude was so going to get it for this.

Jett managed to catch his target, just as April was about to lift himself on the fence. Without thinking, Jett grabbed him by the bottom of his tracksuit pants and pulled down hard.

Only to come face to face with a naked ass that practically bounced in quite a comical way.

What the fuck?! Jett released his prey as if burned, and April tried to lift himself again. Apparently, it was hard to do that with your pants down your ankles. Jett laughed and this time, grabbed the idiot by the scruff of his neck and made him fall to the ground.

“Don't shoot, dude!” April put both hands up.

“Nobody's shooting, fool,” Jett replied and turned the other roughly.

This time, he came face to face with the green eyes from earlier. They were wide in fear and fringed by long dark eyelashes, darker than the hair of the guy's head. “Do I know you from somewhere?” he asked and looked closer.

The green eyes blinked. “I don't know any gangsters,” was the prompt reply.

“No shit. Then how come you owe money to the Zabinski brothers?”

“I had no idea they were that kind of brothers,” April replied again.

Didn't this wiseass have all the answers ready?

“I don't give a shit. You need to pay up, dude.”

“I don't have the money.”

“Nice try. Now, I'll give you one second to think again if that's the answer you want to give me.”



“Okay. Can I least pull my pants up?”

Jett let go of the moron instantly. His eyes went lower and then moved away. “Fucking idiot,” he said under his breath.

This kind of job was getting suckier and suckier. Where the fuck did it say in his job description that he had to deal with seeing naked asses and dicks?

Not that it had been that bad to stare at the hippy’s ass. April Summer had more than a girl’s name. He also had a round perky ass that shouldn’t be legal on a dude. Not that he had noticed.

Jett shook his head. The morning was getting weirder and weirder, and his head along with it. It didn’t matter what kind of ass that dweeb had. He had to pay.

He looked aside as April struggled with his pants and pulled at his jacket.

“Oh, shit.”

That was April who was staring at him, his eyes even wider. Seriously, one could not look at this dude’s face and see anything else; that was how big his eyes were. And where the hell had Jett seen those before?

Absent-mindedly, he scratched his neck and noticed April’s eyes fixed on his hand. Ah, probably not his hand, but the tattoo on his neck.

“Dude, just pay up and we can part as friends,” Jett said.

“I don’t have the money,” April said again and moved his head from side to side like a broken doll.

“Then you’ll have to come with me, and meet your investors so that you can explain what the fuck you did with their money.”

“No way! They’ll do something to me! Like they’ll blow my kneecaps off or shit like that!”

This dude was doing such a great job scaring himself that Jett wondered what the hell he was still doing there. He was supposed to come up with scary scenarios, not his marks.

“Look, you must have something,” Jett offered. “I saw a bunch of stuff in your room. Just sell all that shit and pay the money back. I’ll tell the Z brothers you need just a couple of days.”

“It won’t work,” April said and shook his head dejectedly. “That stuff is already too old. If I’m selling it, I’m losing money, and I won’t have enough to pay back what I owe.”

“How can that stuff be too old? When did you buy it? Last month or so?”

“Yeah. But there is better stuff out there already,” April explained.

“What the fuck do you need all that stuff for, anyway? Do you want to launch a rocket?”

“It’s for my rig,” April said. “I’m mining crypto.”

“What?” Jett narrowed his eyes.

“Bitcoin,” April explained.

“Ah, you’re a complete fool,” Jett said, the explanation more for himself, then the other. “April the Fool. Yeah, it suits you.” He grinned.

“I’m no fool, man. This is the real stuff. The new El Dorado.” April the Fool really believed that crap.

Jett put one hand up. “I keep to what I said. Now tell me this. How are you going to pay?”

April looked away. “Aside from my rig, I don’t have much else.”

“Think, dude, or things can get ugly,” Jett warned.

“What should I sell? A kidney?”

“It’s an idea. But I don’t think you could sell one if you wanted to,” Jett said and shrugged.

“If you take me to the Z brothers, they’ll fuck me up,” April said.

“Yeah,” Jett confirmed.

“But it won’t be to their advantage. If they let me mine my crypto, I’ll have the money, and I’ll pay them more interest, too.”

“I wasn’t born yesterday, pal. Think of a solution so that I don’t have to drag you to the Z brothers. They’re not patient dudes. And neither am I,” Jett added, remembering who was waiting for him in the car. “Oh, shit.”

Okay, so there was no time for April to come up with ideas. He grabbed him by the front of his tracksuit jacket and shook him. “You have to pay up, dude.”

“Wow, wow, wow, why do you have to get physical?”

“Because talking ain’t working with you, that’s why.”

The same strange sensation that he had seen this dude before struck Jett. He inhaled April’s scent a little like he could get some vital information from that.

“Dude, you’re weird. Stop sniffing me,” April said.

Jett pulled back but didn't let go of April's jacket. "Let me make it clear to you. I can beat you up now and come back later. I'll tell the Z brothers you weren't home. But in two days, you come up with the money, or I come and beat the shit out of you again. See, I'm generous. I'm not taking you directly to them."

"Generous? I can't stand violence!"

"A total hippy and a dweeb? Schmucks like you shouldn't borrow money ever."

"Hey, it's a solid business. I will make a shitload of money," April insisted.

"That's it," Jett said, exasperated with enough conversation. "Where do you want it? Stomach or face?"

"How about neither?!"

Now he could smell fear. Good. Usually, the guys Jett dealt with suddenly remembered they had some money somewhere or had a relative or friend that could lend them the cash, so he didn't have to use his fists.

But, in this case, it looked like he needed to put his money where his mouth was. He pulled his right arm back, flexing his hand into a fist.

"No, please!" April began babbling. "If you kill me, people will miss me!"

"I'm not going to kill you, idiot," Jett said.

"Others are depending on me! An entire family! Children will go hungry if I don't --"

"Does a dweeb like you have kids?" Jett stopped his fist in mid-air. "You can't be older than twenty or something."

"They're not mine! I mean, they're my sister's! But I'm the one who has to take care of them! I mean, from time to time!"

Jett grabbed April by the front of his shirt again and looked him in the eyes. "Do you know anything about babies?"

"Babies? I mean, my nephews are toddlers, yeah, but --"

"Good enough," Jett decided and began pulling April after him.

"Hey, where are you taking me? Hey, I'm too young to die! Please, have a kidney but don't take me to them!"

"I'm not taking you to them, moron. I have a job for you. Do it well, and I'll cover your ass."

The last word barely left Jett's mouth, and he cursed under his breath. He had gotten laid last night. What the hell he had to think of April's round ass that moment?

Ah, well, he needed to get laid again. No biggie. But right now, he needed to solve some shit, and April was as good a candidate as any to help with that. After all, the guy had the perfect motivation to obey.

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April could barely breathe as he struggled to keep up with that dude. He had known for days that was coming, but he had hoped, like the total fool that he was that he would strike it big. Only that the fucking crypto he invested in had continued to drop like a rock. The last investments in equipment were supposed to cover for the diversification of his portfolio, but it looked like he wasn't in any condition to use it now.

The gorilla dragging him away seemed to care naught for his struggles to explain his position. Well, the dude wasn't exactly like a gorilla, but he was pretty buff, and he had just threatened April that he would beat the shit out of him.

And there was also the tattoo. It had been years ago, but April knew that tattoo well. Maybe it was just a frigging coincidence. Maybe there were at least a few thousand dudes who had decided to have a sextant tattooed on their necks, in the exact same position as he remembered.

Now there were more ardent issues at hand. The gorilla let him lock the door behind him and continued to drag him by one arm to his car.

"Man, I'm not going anywhere with you," April insisted.

His jaw fell when the man opened the door to the back and April saw a baby strapped to a car seat and with the extra seatbelt crossed over him.

"See this kid? You're going to take care of him."

April blinked. And then he frowned. The baby started crying like on cue.

"Hear this?" The gorilla pointed at the baby. "I don't need this shit."

April opened and closed his mouth a few times, like a fish out of water. And then it struck him. "Do you want me to take care of your kid?"

The other shrugged. "That's not my kid."

"Did you kidnap him? Hell, dude, I'm not getting into shit like this. I don't need to be chased by the FBI."

"I didn't kidnap him! Just get in the fucking car and make him stop."

“Okay, okay.” April put his hands up in surrender. “What’s his name? It’s a boy, right?”

“How the fuck should I know?” The other bristled and put one hand on the door handle to climb in front.

“Wait!” April yelled. “The car seat is all wrong.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

“This baby is too young to ride like this.” April congratulated himself on knowing at least that. He had never really taken care of his sister’s kids. They lived in another state.

“Then where should I put him? In the trunk?”

“No,” April said and began to unstrap the baby. “There should be something here,” he mumbled to himself, as he searched on the back seat for the LATCH system. “A-ha.”

Pretending he knew what he was doing, he manipulated the car seat carefully, which was pretty hard, seeing that the baby was still in it and didn’t stop wailing. There was sweat on his forehead, but April was overly conscious of having the gorilla watching over him.

It took him a bit of time to find the connectors, but eventually, he managed. Feeling a bit triumphant, he turned toward the other. “There, see? Much better.”

Dark caramel eyes measured him up and down. “Are you sure we never met?”

“Yeah, sure,” April said and blinked a few times.

If he looked enough, there was some resemblance, in how the man’s eyebrows knitted together in thought, in the shape of his jawline, and ... April shook his head. He imagined things.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“It’s Jett,” the guy threw at him and climbed behind the wheel. “Just make the boy stop crying already.”

“Ah, so you know it’s a boy, after all,” April said quickly.

Just his fucking luck, to meet Jett Huntsman after all these years. The past was the past, and it had to remain that way.

Once he managed to scramble to the backseat, he began to make faces and use his hands to distract the baby from his crying. Luckily, the kid wasn’t some tough crowd. Soon, his large eyes were following April’s elaborate, but pretty clumsy attempts of simulating animals, and the crying stopped. Now that the car seat was rear-facing, he could watch the kid easier, too.

April let his eyes wander to the rearview mirror, and Jett's caramel eyes met him midway. He jerked his head away, which must have been pretty funny because the baby started giggling.

"I think you're hired," Jett said.

"I am?" April asked, his voice weak.

"I'll pay the Z brothers what you owe."

"That's like five grand," April said.

"Do you want the job or not?"

"To take care of your kid? For how long?"

"Told you. He's not my kid."

"Ah, right. You don't even know if it's a boy."

April noticed a small piece of paper next to the baby, wedged between the seat and him. He took it and read out loud. "*Assume responsibility, asshole.*" He turned it and looked on the back. "*By the way, his name is Jay. Asshole!*"

"Would you cut it out? And where did you come up with that name?" Jett seemed absorbed by his driving, but April could catch a glimpse of the frown on his face in the mirror.

"It says here, on this paper," April replied and handed it to him over the shoulder.

Jett shrugged. "I don't need that. So Jay, ha?"

"Yeah, does it ring a bell? And what the hell happened? Did your girlfriend just leave the baby by your door and ran away?"

Jett almost missed a stop and cursed, stepping the brake and making April lean forward abruptly. Good thing the baby was well strapped in his chair, and this time correctly.

"How do you know that?" Jett asked.

"Just a lucky guess. And seriously, is that what happened? It's like you live in a movie, dude. How can you not know you have a baby?"

"Shut up, fool."

April felt a little goaded by Jett's condescending tone. "You know, you could hire a normal babysitter for five grand."

"The last thing I need is trouble with girls," Jett said promptly.

“Why? The soonest a female crosses your threshold, you feel the sudden urge to impregnate her?”

April knew he should keep his mouth shut. But he still couldn't believe that was Jett. He was nothing like April would have imagined him growing up to be. So, he had always been a punk. But to become a guy who got girls pregnant and didn't know he had a kid?

April wanted to slap himself silly. People grew up to be whatever they wanted to be.

“I want you to be the one to take care of little Jay over there,” Jett interrupted his train of thought. “Until I figure this stuff out.”

“Well, seeing how you can't knock me up --”

“I'm not gay, dude,” Jett said abruptly. His voice was freezer cold.

April gulped. “I was just joking,” he said quickly. “But I can ask, can't I? Why do you need me for when there are qualified people for this?”

Jett shrugged and appeared to stare straight ahead. “I know I saw you somewhere.”

April stood unmoved in his place, holding his breath. Was it any chance to survive if he opened the door and tried to jump? It was an option worth considering.

“And look, Jay likes you already. So get in shape and do what's best for you.”

“Are you really going to pay the brothers for me?”

Jett flashed a grin at him in the rearview mirror. “Cross my heart.”

April looked away and pretended to play with the baby. He had heard those words before. Too bad it had been all lies.

## *Chapter Two – For Some Reason, I Like Blonds*

Jett would wreck his brain later about where the heck he'd seen April Summer before today because, right now, there were more pressing matters to deal with. Like making a list with all the girlfriends he had about --

“Hey,” he called for April who was struggling with the baby’s car seat and trying to follow him inside the house. “How old is this kid?”

“Seriously?” April threw him a look that told Jett, in a nutshell, what the dweeb thought of him.

“Give me a ballpark,” Jett said and gestured with the hand holding his phone.

“That’s not exactly how this works,” April replied. “I don’t know. I’d say that he’s about one year old-ish? Ah, look. It says on his onesie. Yeah, this was a gift for his first birthday.”

“Hmm.” Jett scratched his short beard in thought. He was just growing it and believed it made him look interesting. “So sometime, about two years ago, I fucked his mom and knocked her up.”

April stared at him in disbelief. “Don’t speak like that in front of the baby! He understands more than you think!”

“Really? I thought babies only knew how to drool and poop or something like that.”

The look in April’s big eyes was speaking volumes.

“All right, all right, sorry I said ‘fuck’. Do you want to set up a bowl and make me throw pennies in it each time I curse?”

April took a look around, the car seat and the baby still in his arms. “Man, your place is like a fucking pigsty. So do you agree that Jay is your kid?”

“There’s a possibility. I’m a philosopher by calling,” Jett said with a grin. “I don’t reject any possibilities right out.”

“Possibilities that involve getting your girlfriend pregnant? I’m pretty sure philosophers don’t have the kind of problems you have.”

Jett grinned again. “Just leave the kid somewhere.”

From his car seat, Jay was examining everything with curious eyes. He looked pretty mature for a one-year-old, Jett thought with pride. Well, maybe the kid wasn’t even his, and he was getting ahead of himself. He still needed to put his mind to work and remember who the hell he was banging on the regular two years ago.



“I can’t just leave him somewhere. He’s not luggage, you know?”

For a guy who was about to sell his kidney only half an hour ago, April had a mouth on him.

“Well, find a place. You and I need to talk finances.”

After some deliberation, April set the car seat gently on the floor, on a patch relatively free of haphazardly thrown objects, and took the baby out of it. Jay seemed pleased with being released from the confines of his car seat and grabbed April’s longish curls with enthusiasm.

“He’s such a good-natured kid,” April praised him and adjusted Jay’s position in his arms so that the baby could sit comfortably.

“He’s going to rip the hair off your head,” Jett warned.

“No, he’s not,” April said back and pronounced the words while looking at Jay and imitating the cooing of babies.

Jett shrugged. “If you wanna go bald, don’t let me stop you. Are you bringing him to our small business meeting?”

“Yeah, I am,” April replied promptly. “There will be a bunch of stuff you should buy. Like a carrier, a crib, diapers, toys --”

“Hey, hey, maybe he won’t be here that long,” Jett said and put one hand up.

“What are you paying me for, then? And I need to set you guys up so that I can go back to my place tonight. It might take a while to put things in order.”

“Do you like your kneecaps where they are in your body?” Jett stopped April. “And you’re not going back tonight. I need to go places. You stay here, with Jay.”

“Did I sign myself up for slavery?”

“Hey, dude, five grand is five grand. You want the money or not?”

Jett never forgot a face. It was stupid, given the circs, that he was willing to throw that kind of money out the window. But the dweeb was good with kids, by what he could see, and that was worth avoiding complications.

Nah, that wasn’t it. Or wasn’t the full story. He wanted to remember where he’d seen April. There was a particular weird sensation he had when looking at those green eyes, made big as saucers by the glasses. While those seemed prescription glasses, they kinda looked good on the guy.

They were making him ... how was that word one of his girlfriends used when seeing something she liked? Ah, adorable. Well, usually, Jett wouldn't say or even think stuff like that about another dude, but April Summer was as unique and strange as his name was.

So, the usual rules couldn't apply to him. Plus, what the hell was with that ass? If Jett hadn't – almost – seen the guy's pecker, he would have doubts whether the dweeb was a dude or a gal.

Whatever. He needed to stop thinking of April's ass, no matter how round and perky. Seriously, that kind of ass made him want to slap it. Playfully, lovingly, but slap it, nonetheless. He could bet those big green eyes would stare at him like their owner was majorly pissed, which he seemed to be most of the time.

April had followed him to the kitchen, which, surprisingly, was the cleaner part of his house. He had done so without a word, at least not one addressed to him, as April was taken to talking to the baby, for some reason. All the kid did was to coo like a bird back to him.

“Write it all down. How much you need to pay back?”

April adjusted Jay in his arms and sat on a chair. Then, with his left, he began scribbling down fast on the paper Jett had handed to him. “Here,” he said quickly and pushed the paper back to him.

“4,876.40 dollars,” Jett recited out loud. “You calculated that on the spot, just like that?”

“Well, when there are kneecaps and kidneys involved, one cannot help but become proficient at math,” April said promptly like that was some kind of logical explanation.

“If you're so smart, how come you borrow money from the wrong people?” Jett questioned.

“Call it a lapse of judgment,” April said. “Also, a complete lack of options.”

“Is that crypto shit really worse losing a limb over it?” Jett questioned.

April's eyes lit up, and Jett knew he made a mistake. A cascade of words from which Jett could only catch a few, like ‘digital asset’, ‘ledger’, ‘blockchain’, came pouring out of the dweeb's mouth.

“Just stop, or I'll get in the mood to kill myself,” Jett said and got to his feet.

He went to his bedroom for the money. There was a current stash he used for the usual stuff. Some could say he was crazy to leave that kind of cash lying around and up for grabs, but that wasn't where Jett banked. Also, if anyone ever had a death sentence and stole from him, at least Jett knew his real money wasn't in danger.

Pocketing five grand, he walked back to the kitchen, where he found April explaining to Jay the name of various objects around. Damn, that looked almost domestic if Jett ever thought about living with someone and also allow that someone to be another dude.

He shook his head. With the wad of cash, he smacked April over the head. Not too hard, but not too soft, either.

April jumped from the chair and gave him a murderous look. Well, the dweeb was kinda jumpy. For some reason, Jett found it pretty amusing. "I'm going to pay up what you own, dweeb."

"All right," April agreed. "Are you sure you're not going to come back for my kidney one day?"

"Take care of Jay. Don't fuck up, and we're cool."

"Wait. You really need to grab some diapers and baby formula for Jay on your way back."

"The fuck do I know about that stuff?" Jett bristled. "You buy it."

"I can't. As you can see, my hands are full," April said and pointed at the baby in his arms. "Oh, fuck, I don't think I like the look on his face."

"What? What's wrong?" Jett asked, alarmed.

They both waited, their ears pricked, and then a sound like a deflating balloon refusing to go quietly into the night interrupted the silence.

"Dude, what the fuck?" Jett began waving his arms in front of him frantically.

"Whew, it was just a fart," April said, looking pretty much relieved.

"Just a fart?" Jett hurried to the window and opened it wide. "This is a fucking bio war!"

"Language! There are babies present!"

"Fuck that, dude! This kid is going to kill us all!"

"Let's not exaggerate ... Oh, God, that does smell awful!"

Jett turned to notice with satisfaction how April's face was contorting like crumpled paper, and the dweeb was holding Jay a bit away from him. No wonder there, the little punk was giggling.

"Jett, I'm sorry, man, but you will have to go for a ride to grab diapers and food for Jay, first. Get some blankies, too. Also, some clothes --"

"Give me your damned phone," Jett said and opened his palm.

April half-turned and made a gesture with his chin for his pocket. Jett sighed and took the phone. Then he entered his number and called his phone.

“Now, you can send me texts like a normal human being. What the fuck? Do you think I can remember all that by heart?”

“All right. But go and bring the supplies we need first.”

“Before paying your debt? The Z brothers are not patient people.”

April waved. “They can wait. Priorities, man,” he added and lifted Jay higher, making the baby giggle again.

“All right,” Jett said, with an exasperated sigh.

He would find Jay’s mom and shove her kid right back into her arms. Then he would grab April Summer, stare into his big green eyes, and stare, and stare until he remembered where he knew him from.

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April felt like cursing the moment Jett was out the door. Why the hell had he agreed to that? Was he really supposed to sleep under the same roof with Jett? How long would it take until he remembered? Then Jett would not only be royally pissed, but he would regret paying his debt and --

And who knew what else he would do? More than seven years had passed since they last saw each other, and, while there had not been many days without April thinking of Jett, at least in passing, he definitely hoped Jett had long forgotten him.

Especially since Jett had turned into a frigging gorilla and was beating people up to shake them for money. Not that April hadn’t realized from the very first moment what a huge mistake he had made when he had borrowed money from the wrong people.

Well, he had thought that the investment would be put to good use and soon, he would have enough money to pay back for the rig, and even something left to buy an even bigger rig.

Now he had a huge problem on his hands. On their way to Jett’s place, April had managed to google quickly on his phone about what babies needed and whatnot, which had definitely helped to make him look knowledgeable enough.

Good thing Jett looked like he knew jack shit about what babies needed. April took out his phone, and with dexterity, he managed to use just one hand to operate it, while he balanced Jay carefully on the other arm and hip.

He needed a crash course on raising babies, and he needed it fast. So he began to swallow pages and pages, without time to digest them properly. At least, those exercises in speed reading served a different purpose, now.

It helped him keep his mind distracted from the many dangerous scenarios it would have liked to create about Jett discovering who April was. Back then, April had used a different name because it had felt good to pretend he was someone else for a change. Jett should not be able to put together that boy he knew seven years ago, with how April looked like today.

April knew he had had a bit of a hard time juxtaposing this twenty-year-old Jett with the memory from that long ago time. After all, at thirteen, Jett had been nothing but a boy, yet to grow into the man he was now.

The caramel eyes were the same, even down to the minutest glint of mischief in them, just as April remembered them. He had changed a lot, too. At least now he no longer rummaged through his sister's hair dye supply to make himself blond because he thought it made him look cooler.

And his glasses were a bit more stylish than the horrible grandpa eyewear he had been forced to use during that time. April wasn't entirely sure that was enough to keep him safe from Jett recognizing him, but their friendship had been short-lived. Plus, he could bet he had made less of a lasting impression on Jett than Jett on him. Or, at least, that was what he hoped.

His life was complicated enough as it was.

"Much easier to leave it to others to worry, right, Jay?" April asked, rocking the baby gently on his knees.

He couldn't let Jay without supervision so that he could investigate Jett's house. What he had seen of it already worried him. Jett was a total slob. He probably ate only takeout. Lucky him, he could afford it. April survived on ramen, rice, and potatoes most days.

Was it worth checking the fridge? April held little hope, but dared, nonetheless. He sighed as he looked inside. Only beer. Great. He didn't drink so a beer on an empty stomach before lunch and after no breakfast at all wasn't a good idea.

He smacked his forehead. Busy as he was with ingesting information on babies, he forgot that Jay was supposedly old enough to eat more than just formula. He began typing on his phone fast, to tell Jett to get some baby foods, too. When Jett typed back 'what kind?', April looked for a second at Jay. "If only you could tell us what you want, buddy," he said with affection.

He had spent some time with his sister's twins, but he was by no means an expert. April hoped Jett would find the baby's mother fast. What could have made her leave her baby with Jett all of

a sudden? Apparently, Jett had no idea about who the mother could be, or he didn't know at the moment.

Probably April would have to perform some hypnosis on Jett to extract that valuable information. By how things looked, the guy was pretty loose, not only with what home cleaning meant but with his morals, too — having a kid without knowing about it?

Maybe if they had grown up together, Jett would have turned differently. April shook his head. That was some lack of modesty on his part. Like he could have an influence on Jett of any kind. Or on his own fate, as it had been.

His train of thought was interrupted by Jett entering the house. April watched as Jett unloaded on the table a bunch of stuff. There were diapers for a small army of babies, at least five types of baby food, bottles, and many other packages.

“Is this enough?”

April just nodded slowly. Okay, so maybe Jett didn't quite believe Jay was his son, but his heart was in the right place. As he looked at Jett, the guy frowned in thought, most probably wondering if he forgot something, April thought he caught a glimpse of that boy from a long time ago. The one who was fearless and generous, the one April had considered his only real friend at one point in their lives.

“It should be. Where should I set camp with Jay?”

Jett gestured around. “Choose a room.”

April cocked his head to one side. “I might pick your bedroom by accident.”

“Then take the one up the stairs to the right. It's the closest to the bathroom.”

“Good. Then I'll see to feeding and changing Jay.”

He definitely hoped he looked confident enough while saying those things. Again, it was a good thing Jett was completely oblivious to whatever caring for a baby entailed. April was afraid he would screw up, but it looked like, for the moment, he and Jay only had each other to depend on.

“I'm off to settling your debt to the Z brothers,” Jett said.

“Sure. I mean, thanks,” April said, realizing that he hadn't said anything about how grateful he was for that.

It was like Jett, the one April knew, to help a stranger in need, no matter how he looked at things. He was lost in thought and didn't notice when Jett came close and stared at him.

“Hey, personal space or something?” he said since he was with his back to the refrigerator and couldn’t take a step back. At least, the baby was between them, so Jett couldn’t suddenly decide to give him a piece of his mind.

“You look so damned familiar, but I can’t place you.”

“Dude, I told you. I haven’t seen you in my life before this morning. I might have a common face.”

“Nah, that’s not it. Is your sister called Melinda?”

“No. Who’s Melinda?”

“One of my exes.”

“Man, you didn’t just say that you thought you fucked my sister.”

“No f-words in front of the kid,” Jett said with the smirk.

“Oh, yeah, sorry,” April said quickly. “Don’t you have someplace to be?”

Jett was too close. April could smell the lingering scent of cigarette and leather from his jacket. Usually, he couldn’t stand tobacco smell, but, in this case, he just found it --

A package fell from the table.

Jett moved away. April cleared his throat and pretended to be engrossed in examining the many items Jett had brought.

“Be here when I come back, or you’ll have a bigger problem than the Z brothers. I’m much meaner than them.”

“And where could I go? This little fellow needs me.” April pointed at the baby in his arms who was already exhausted from all the ruckus.

“I just thought you needed a little bit of friendly warning.”

“There was nothing friendly in that warning, just for the record.”

Jett smirked and winked at him. April looked away and grabbed a pack of diapers. Luckily for him, Jett didn’t choose to tease him anymore and walked away to see about his business.

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Jett couldn’t remember when it had been the last time he thought of a guy as ‘cute’. Well, it had been that time when he was thirteen and got his neck tattoo. Completely illegal, and dangerous,

but he had had the money and the knowledge of where to go to get it. He touched the ink as his mind traveled back in time.

Theo, he recalled. That guy had been a total freak but in a good way. The funniest friend Jett had ever had that summer. That, until Jett had blown it, and Theo had left without leaving a trace behind when his parents came to take him home, wherever that home was. April reminded of him a little. But just a little. Theo's eyes were green, too, and large behind what must have been the most horrible glasses Jett had ever seen.

That must have been why he found April so familiar. That was all. Many dudes had green eyes like that.

Yeah, but Jett didn't usually think of them as 'cute'. April Summer was cute, and Jett needed to stop thinking of that, like ten minutes ago. He needed to pay back the Z brothers, and conclude April's business with them so that the dweeb could focus on taking care of the baby.

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"Did he pay?" The oldest Zabinski brother, Henry, was petting his fat cat with an equally fat hand.

Both were white, so Jett had to squint to see where the hand stopped, and the cat began.

Jett placed the money on the table. "Yeah. Here is all."

The other Zabinski brother, Peter, or the thin one, as Jett differentiated them in his head, counted it, and then pulled Jett's commission from it.

That was how they worked. Jett never took his commission out of the money he brought. That had earned him some respect from the two shark loans. Without saying a word, he took the money and pocketed it swiftly.

"I swear I thought he wouldn't be able to pull it through."

"What would you have done to him if he hadn't paid?" Jett asked in a casual tone.

His ears pricked, despite his nonchalance.

"Someone we know needs something hacked. Rumor has it Summer's good at that. Maybe we'll need you to grab him for us, anyway," Peter said.

Jett snorted. "That hippy dude, a hacker?"

Now that was the kind of turn of events he didn't like at all. So the Z brothers wanted just to trap April.



“Yeah. So they say. We don’t know about stuff like that,” Henry replied. “But if he gets the job done, we get a lot of cash.”

“It looked like he wanted to skip town. He might be away by now.”

Henry stopped caressing his cat. “Well, then you’ll have to find him and bring him to us in case we get contacted again by our client.”

“He paid you back in full, interest and all,” Jett insisted while being aware that he risked raising suspicions by talking too much.

“And? What’s for you?” Peter asked, and his curious eyes were taking him in, like for the first time.

“Nothing. I just don’t think the dude stuck around after I paid him a visit. He was one second from crapping his pants.”

“We don’t care if he’s a coward. You’ll find him.”

“I have other engagements,” Jett said quickly.

“No problem, then. We’ll give the job to someone else,” Peter said.

Jett thought for a second. “You know what? I’ll keep an eye on his apartment, see if something moves. And, when you give me the call, I’ll go pick him up if he’s still there. When will your client call?”

“He didn’t say. Important guy. We don’t need Summer right now. If he’s out of town, track him. There will be enough in it for you.”

“And if your client doesn’t call?”

“He will. That’s not your problem.”

“Okay.”

Jett knew not to overstay his welcome. The Z brothers were not known for blowing kneecaps, as April imagined, but they were far from tame. In other words, April could get in trouble, and Jett could end up having to care for the baby on his own, which was definitely not an option.

So, in the meantime, he needed to keep April away from his own crib. Jett just hoped the dweeb wouldn’t be so stupid to go back there, behind his back.

On the other hand, Jett thought, if he told April the Z brothers didn’t want his kidneys, but his brain, maybe he would freak out and run away. Jett didn’t need that. So April wouldn’t hear from him about what kind of job the Z brothers had him lined up for.

He would have to make a stop on his way home. April would need a bit of a disguise, and Jett just needed to think up some lie.

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Jett stared at the big patch of orange color on the kitchen wall and tapped one finger against his lips. It was true that his place was an absolute mess, but that stain was new.

He shrugged and went upstairs. April jumped – no wonder there – when he walked in without knocking. He looked like he had been through a fight for his life, a fight with a giant carrot, or something like that. Also, he looked like he lost the said battle. April even had small bits of food in his hair, and murder written all over his cute face.

“What’s going on?” Jett asked cheerfully.

“Your kid is a fiend, and I’m not surprised. He tortured me, and now he sleeps like an angel. Look at him.” April was whispering, clearly in no mood to wake up the sleeping baby.

It looked like Jay enjoyed his seat that doubled as a bed, and he was completely undisturbed about the adults fussing around him.

Jett laughed wholeheartedly. “That’s my boy.”

“You’re certain now he’s yours,” April said and crossed his arms over his chest. “And be a little quieter. It was a pain to get him to sleep.”

“He’s a likely candidate,” Jett said with a shrug. “Now here’s something I got for you.”

“Is it food? I’m starving.”

April caught deftly the package Jett threw at him. His face seemed to drain of color. “What the fuck is this?”

“Don’t say ‘fuck’,” Jett warned and grinned.

“It’s hair dye! Why?”

Jett shrugged. “For some reason, I like blonds.”

### *Chapter Three – No Big Deal*

“Blonds? Like in blond guys? You told me you’re not gay!” April exclaimed and then pressed one hand over his mouth, stealing a nervous look in the baby’s direction.

Jett smirked. “I think it would be a good color on you.”

April began munching on one fingernail while he looked again at the hair dye in his hand. “Blond? Why this particular hue, though?”

The color on the package was enough to give April the chills. He couldn’t swear, hand on heart, that it was the same hue he had used at thirteen, stolen from his sister’s stash, but it was really close. It was a bright blonde that April was pretty sure it would catch on his brown hair like a fucking charm.

He studied Jett while trying hard not to stare. Could it be that Jett remembered him and now was just trying to trap him? But why the charade? He could say it.

Remembering how their friendship had ended wasn’t helping right now.

“I just picked it at random.”

Jett’s answer took a while to catch up with him. April stared at the package again, and then he threw it back to Jett. “No. I agree about taking care of Jay, which, by the way, it must be listed on the same level of danger as the Deadliest Catch or something, but I won’t play to whatever weird-ass fantasies you have. What? Do you want me to act like Jay’s mom, now? Is she a blonde?”

“I don’t know who she is,” Jett replied and shrugged. “Jay looks like he has blond hair, right? Ah, then he’s not my kid. I don’t fuck blondes.”

April stared at Jett and huffed. “Seriously? Just earlier, you say you like blonds. Did you mean it like blond dudes? For real?”

Jett cracked his neck. He did that a lot.

“Aren’t you too young to have troubles with your joints like that?”

“Don’t change the subject. Dye your hair, or I’ll take you to the bathroom, shove your hair under the shower and give you a total makeover myself.”

“Don’t tell me you want me to put on makeup, too! I swear I won’t look anything like a woman! Certainly not like Jay’s mom!”

“That’s not why I want you to die your hair, fool!”

“Jay’s mom might not be blonde at all,” April rambled on. “Kids have light hair when they’re little. It changes with age. Even yours was lighter when – I mean your hair surely changed, too!”

Which was true, since Jett’s hair had been a very light brown as April remembered, and now had a darker color. But he was not supposed to give himself away, and yet, there he was, making a total fool of himself.

“That’s it,” Jett said and grabbed April by one arm. “I’ll do it for you.”

“Hey, I need to supervise Jay. What if he wakes up?”

“He looks like he sleeps. It won’t take long. Also, I’ll need the key to your apartment.”

“Um, why?”

“Hey, you’re the dude in debt. I need to limit the damage. All your things will do.”

“Ah, so I’m taking care of Jay for free!”

“Stop talking so loudly! You’ll wake up the baby.”

They both stopped at the same time, holding their breath, and looked at the sleeping kid. Jay seemed completely unaware of the little domestic conflict taking place in the room.

“You’ll get a haircut, too,” Jett said with finality.

“Oh, great. Wouldn’t it be easier if you just shaved my head if you don’t like my hair color?”

Jett seemed to ponder for a second. “Nah, I don’t want you bald.”

“You are very peculiar in your tastes,” April replied. “Why not?”

“I think you’d be less cute if I did that.”

*Say what?* April opened his mouth and remained with it like that for a couple of seconds. Jett pushed his index finger into his mouth, making him choke and take a step back while batting away the other’s hand. “Why the hell did you do that for?”

“Because it’s funny, that’s why. You made such a face.” Jett laughed and made a poor impersonation of what April might have looked like.

April wanted to protest some more, but Jett dragged him to the bathroom.

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Jett took the scissors with confidence. He had no idea about cutting anyone's hair, but it couldn't be too complicated. It looked like April had resigned with the idea that he would get a makeover, whether he liked it or not.

He moved around, grabbing chestnut curls and snapping them fast. April was staring at himself in the mirror, his bottom lip jutting out. Jett stared, too. That lip looked damned juicy.

"Are you going to take all day? If this is some torture, you're a complete weirdo," April said.

Jett snapped out of it. What was with him today? From that time, when he had had fun all summer with Theo and forgotten about all the other things, he had kept away from feeling the slightest thing about dudes. Not that at thirteen, he had known jack shit about what he felt. He had just decided not to investigate further. He liked girls — end of story.

"Have you thought about wearing contacts?"

"Contacts? That's a bit too much hassle, you know? They're expensive --"

"I can pay for them."

"That's not the issue. I need to have them custom made, obviously."

"Do you have a second pair of glasses?"

April seemed to hesitate for a second. "No."

Jett knew he would search the dweeb's home for the second pair. "Now, the dye."

April took the package from his hand. "I'll do it. Just go watch Jay."

"Why?"

"He might wake up. Imagine how he would feel, waking up alone in a strange house."

"Hey, I left you two the cleanest room in the house."

"Thanks. I was a bit surprised." April pulled some food remains from his hair, using the brush he had found on the sink.

Jett stole another glance at him. April's hair was a little spiky now, a consequence of chopped up curls, but even so, his face was still nice. He just looked a little punkish — a punk with glasses, good with kids, and with a passion for cryptocurrency.

Jett shook his head. "Be blond when I get back, or we'll have a problem."

"Yeah, yeah." April waved for him to go away. "Get some food while I do this 'cause I'm starving."

Jett checked his watch. It was already two in the afternoon. Time did fly. “Sure thing. What do you want?”

“Cheeseburger. With pickles. Lots. I mean, if you don’t mind,” April said quickly.

“All right. You like your pickles, huh?”

“I like sour stuff, as a general rule.”

Jett pondered.

“Why are you narrowing your eyes like that?” April questioned, staring at him in the mirror. “You look like you’re about to do something bad.”

“Are you always so distrustful of people?”

“Only of gangsters who take me from my home and order me to dye my hair blond.”

Jett snorted. “Execute the order. Fool,” he added with some satisfaction.

April always bristled at that word. It was like an invisible hand was pinching him, and he got annoyed like a porcupine.

Whistling, Jett left the bathroom. Just as he was about to go downstairs, he remembered to check on Jay. From the door, he looked at the small seat that doubled as a baby crib on the bed. There was a reason why that room was clean. But April didn’t have to know about that. After all, Jett knew his dad wouldn’t be home for months. Even then, he would only be in passing, and the chances were he would spend little time at home. And, by then, both Jay and April would be long gone.

The baby was sleeping soundly. With a shrug, Jett left. So April liked pickles. A lot. Just like Theo. It had been an impulse to buy that hair dye, that color. He was curious how much like Theo April would look. Well, he wouldn’t be Theo, but a version of that boy Jett had known at thirteen, and he would be okay with that.

Sometimes, Jett felt something when he thought of Theo. There was no point in sentimentalism, but it did feel like longing. Like when he heard a good joke, and wanted to tell it to someone, and he turned to his left, waiting, on some unconscious level, to meet those incredibly large green eyes behind the square, black-rimmed glasses.

He grimaced and took out his phone to order food. In the meantime, he took a look around. Maybe the house did look pretty bad. Jett grinned when an idea struck him. April the Fool just got himself another job.

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April looked in horror at himself in the mirror. Fuck. If Jett thought he knew him from somewhere, now he would have the proof. Now, he was no longer sure whether he looked nothing like his thirteen-year-old self or not. If Jett found the glasses, he was fucked. Well, they were too small for him now, so he would say he wouldn't wear them.

With slow moves, he put his glasses on and looked again at himself. He did look a certain way with his hair like that. And the spiky hair made him look a bit less like himself. Well, he would just deny that he knew Jett. What would the guy do? Jett knew a boy named Theo, not April. That was his saving grace.

He found the blow drier and proceeded to tame his hair into submission. As much as he tried, he still looked like he had just survived electrocution.

On his way down, he checked on Jay again. He would have Jett buy one of those fancy baby monitors so that he could move around the house and make it less of a pigsty without watching over Jay all the time.

Jett's eyes were unreadable when he entered the kitchen. April pretended to be nonchalant as he sat down and grabbed the cheeseburger peeking from the paper bag on the table. He was about to take a bite when Jett moved so fast that it made him yelp. He was hovering way too close.

"Have you ever been to Lynn? It's a small town, not so far from here."

April managed to keep the cheeseburger from meeting the floor by executing a strange gymnastic maneuver. "Doesn't ring a bell. I'm not from around here. I'm here for college. Fuck! What am I going to do about school?"

His predicament didn't mean anything to Jett who was getting closer and closer, making him lean back into his chair. "Dude, you're too close. And frankly, I don't know how your girlfriends can stand you or kiss you. It would be like kissing an ashtray."

Jett grinned. April was sure he didn't like that. Slowly, he put the cheeseburger on the table, although he had to stretch so that he didn't touch Jett by accident.

"Kissing an ashtray? Nah, I'm a great kisser. They all love it."

April swallowed hard. Why was Jett so close, anyway? "Well, they might have bad taste, then. I wouldn't kiss --"

Firm lips pressed against his so fast that he leaned back too hard. The chair balanced dangerously, but a steady hand caught it and made it regain its initial position, and April was brought closer, into the kiss. For a moment, his eyelids fluttered. At thirteen, Jett's lips hadn't felt like this. But then, April had been the one to kiss him. Their lips had been cold, but April had sensed warmth between them, or maybe he had just imagined it.

Now, Jett's lips weren't cold. But they were daring, not like that time, and there was more to that. April made a small sound when the brush of lips turned into something else. Teeth caught his bottom lip and bit it softly, making him open his mouth without thinking.

Jett moved just enough to sink one of his hands into the hair at the back of April's head, intending to take the kiss deeper.

*This is wrong, this is so wrong.* April felt as if he was paralyzed and his lips, no, his entire body, didn't want to push Jett back.

A baby's cry from upstairs made them both freeze. April was fast to push back his chair and escape Jett. Without a word, he fled the kitchen and ran up the stairs like he was possessed. Why the hell did he give in like that? Most likely, Jett was fooling around.

"What's wrong, baby boy?"

He was fast to check Jay. The boy's cry diminished upon seeing him, and April smiled. Well, he now understood his sister better. Knowing that someone this small and vulnerable depended on him should have scared him good. But, instead, he felt useful, and something more than that.

He busied himself with distracting Jay with one of the squeaky toys Jett had brought. Hopefully, Jett wouldn't come after him.

April needed time to think. Why the hell had Jett kissed him like that? Was it only a dare for him?

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Jett stood in the middle of the kitchen, his hands by his sides. What the hell had driven him to kiss April? He could blame it on the resemblance between April and Theo, or on how much he had wanted a repeat of that kiss from long ago, or solely on his impulse to taste April's juicy bottom lip.

But that would mean he was at least a bit gay, and that wasn't it. Jett shook his head. Eh, he would tease April over it if he said something. Yeah, he would play it cool. It was no big deal.

Now, he just needed to push the kiss away from his mind. After all, he had plenty of stuff he needed to do tonight, and one of them was to get laid. So, kissing a dude, even a cute one, meant absolutely nothing.

In the meantime, there were some hours to kill, and Jett had no idea how to fill them. There were no other jobs he needed to take care of, and somehow, he needed to stay away from April. It probably was just his imagination and how, so many times, he had hoped he would see Theo again.



Back then, Theo had disappeared without a trace. Jett hadn't known the guy's last name, and the vague address of an uncle Theo volunteered had led him to a morose man who told him no Theo lived there and also to take a hike. At that age, Jett had already started to make quite an impression on people.

The thing was Theo had lied to him about where he lived. Maybe he had lied about the parents who were supposed to take him back home at the end of the summer. He had just disappeared, without giving Jett the slightest chance to make things right.

Not that Jett had had any idea about what to tell Theo. He had only known that Theo had kissed him and that he had pushed him away. Later, he had pretended not to know him, too. Theo must have been hurt. But, on a barely conscious level, Jett had known that the kiss felt right, even if it was from a boy. Yet, at the same time, he had felt like it was wrong.

Now, Jett knew a lot more, like what 'confused' meant. Not that he was confused. No, no, no, not in the slightest. So how the hell he could find this April dude so kissable? It had been so damned easy, too.

A brush of the lips and he wanted to taste. A small taste of that full bottom lip and he wanted in. Hell, if April were game, Jett would do more, like even –

*Easy there.* No way he thought that about a dude. Clearly, his mind was fucked up. Well, he would un-fuck it by getting laid and fast.

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April made another attempt at the cheeseburger left on the table about one hour later and sighed in relief when he saw the kitchen empty. Maybe the divinity was on his side, and Jett was already away, breaking bones, or whatever he did throughout a workday.

Fuck, he had missed classes, April remembered. He needed to talk to Jett and negotiate something. Maybe Jett could take care of Jay while he was attending school. He snorted. Yeah, like that was feasible.

“Are you talking to yourself?”

“Jesus!” April jumped, and the cheeseburger fell on the floor. “Fuck!”

Jett began counting on his fingers. “Taking the name of the Lord in vain. Saying the f-word. Playing with food.”

“Do I look like I'm playing with food? God, I can't believe it! I'm so starving, and each time I try to eat --”

April swallowed his words. The other time when he had tried to eat, Jett had kissed him. There was no point in reminding anyone of that. It had been nothing but a stupid accident. Maybe Jett had tried to stare at him, and maybe he had slipped and –

“Have this,” Jett said and went to one of the cupboards from which he extracted a bag of chips.

The moron was fucking grinning while holding that. April rolled his eyes and moaned. “Are you some champion for all the bad foods in the universe? You only eat takeout; you have only a bag of chips and beer --”

“Hmm,” Jett stared at the bag of chips with thoughtful eyes, “I was saving it to have it with beer, actually.”

“I may be a slave, but I still have rights. I will go and buy something to eat. And I also need to --”

“You’re not allowed to leave the house,” Jett said, and his caramel eyes were impenetrable now.

April stared at him, feeling puzzled. “Say what? Are you crazy?”

“No. You need other glasses. Otherwise, I’m not letting you leave.”

“You can’t really force me --”

“Jay needs you.”

“Hello! You’re the father! Shouldn’t he be your responsibility?”

“I paid your big ass debt. Now he’s your responsibility.”

Jett seemed very pleased with his line of reasoning. April didn’t like it one bit. He could walk out the door. Somehow, he didn’t fear Jett and knew the guy wouldn’t break his bones, whatever his mouth was yapping about. Still, he didn’t dare to leave Jay with Jett. He suspected that the so-called father wasn’t that much advanced from that baby, from a mental point of view. A look around that messy house was enough to confirm that.

“Fine! But I need to go to school. And I need my clothes. And I do have a life, you know?”

“You signed that over to me the moment you thought you would get rich with that crypto shit and failed to pay your debts.”

“All right. I’m willing to negotiate. I need to go to my place and grab some personal stuff, clothes, my laptop, stuff like that.”

“I’ll bring you everything. The keys,” Jett said and opened his palm.

“I’m not handing you over my keys. There’s stuff in there that’s valuable. Are you planning to sell everything? Just so you know, those things are valuable to me, but you won’t get much for them.”

“I’m not selling anything. I’ll bring everything here. Even your stupid mining rig.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah. Here’s my part of the negotiation. Stay here and take care of Jay, and I’ll let you mine your crypto.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. Your power bill will go up, and then you’ll strangle me.”

“Why? How much up can it go?”

April hesitated. But there was no point in lying. “A couple thousands or more for one unit or something,” he muttered quickly.

“Shit.” Jett looked at him and shook his head. “How much is that one unit you’re talking about?”

“Ten grand. But it can go up.”

“Um, and you’re selling it where?”

“I can find buyers.”

“Your business model is complete shit.”

“Hey, it’s a profit.”

“It could be, but you’re already in debt. You went at it the wrong way.”

“I needed a decent rig.”

“You need a bit more brain.”

“Hey! How about you stop insulting people, Mr. I-Break-Bones-For-A-Living?”

“I don’t break bones,” Jett protested. “I merely inform debtors, firmly and assertively, that they should pay up.”

“Pay up or what?”

“I let them imagine any scenario they want. It looks effective.” Jett threw him a meaningful look.

“I’m generous like that.”

Well, the look was meaningful, but April had no idea what it meant. “Whatever. I’m not going to fight you. So leave all the equipment there. I don’t see why you would want to haul it over here. Unless you want to sell it, after all, or maybe start your own mining business.”

“Sure, ‘cause I’m a fool like you.”

April frowned. “Stop using that word. Don’t you think I heard the jokes already? April’s Fool, ha, ha, so funny.”

“Well, your mom and dad must have suspected something about you the moment they saw you.”

“Seriously? And what do you think they saw?”

April crossed his arms over his chest. The look in Jett’s eyes was odd. He was checking him out, and April felt his cheeks getting red under that intense stare. What was with Jett, anyway? It didn’t seem like he wanted to insist on the kiss from earlier, and maybe he would put behind that April reminded him of Theo in the slightest. So what was that look for?

“Do you want the chips or not?” Jett held the bag.

“Yeah, I do.”

Jett threw him the bag and April caught it.

“I need to go and bring you some clothes and other stuff,” Jett said. “While Jay sleeps, how about you clean a little around here?”

“Am I your maid now, too?”

Jett shrugged. “You complained.”

April wanted to do that anyway, but it irked him that Jett thought of him as a pushover. “I’ll need a baby monitor, then. Without it, I won’t budge.”

“What’s a baby monitor?” Jett asked.

“Go to the store and ask for one. Get a wireless model. And make sure that it has a good range. I need to know when Jay wakes up while I’m around cleaning this fucking pigsty.”

“Deal,” Jett said with a smirk. “You suck at negotiating. You should have asked something for yourself.”

April rolled his eyes. “Go already. And grab some groceries. I’m no master cook, but I bet I can do better than the junk food you’re eating every day. Plus, that fridge is not there for beer, okay? It is the type of household appliance meant for keeping food inside. You know, that thing that offers you sustenance, not takeout crap.”

Jett's smirk grew wider. "Sure. Send me a text with what ingredients you want. And, April the Fool, you do know what you're practically just getting yourself more work, right?"

"Right," April confirmed, not terribly convinced.

"Good. I was a little afraid you thought you were doing me a favor."

Jett laughed on his way out.

"Bastard," April murmured while looking after him. "I am doing you a favor."

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"What the hell?"

Jett stacked the equipment in the hallway. "I thought about it. A few grand profit for each unit of crypto you're selling? I get half."

"Half? Wait, then you're paying half the bill, too."

"Nah, that will come from your pocket. Hey, you live here, you eat here, all on my tab. Don't think badly of me if I'm looking out for number one," Jett said as he pointed at himself.

"Living here means that I'll have to find a place on the floor to sleep, because you didn't get a crib for Jay, yet. As for food, seriously, I only had that bag of chips since this morning."

"I'll bring in the grocery bag, too. And then you can get to work and make some food. Are you sure whatever you're making is edible?"

"I survived on little since I came here. I can be very creative when it comes to food, and I'm actually quite good, not that I brag."

Jett shrugged. "Where do you want all this stuff?"

April appeared to ponder. "Do you have like a basement or something?"

"Sure. As long as you don't mind some creepy crawlers as company."

Jett watched April as he appeared lost in thought. He probably strategized about how to set up his rig and get rid of spiders and shit, at the same time. This dweeb wasn't Theo, but he sure as hell seemed to have the same ability to think of solutions and complain as little as possible.

"Ah. I also found your other pair of glasses."

April's hand was hesitant as he reached for the glasses.

"Put them on," Jett insisted.

Maybe all dweebs liked the same kind of glasses. Jett could say that seeing those black-rimmed square glasses brought back memories.

“They’re from an old prescription.”

“Just do it.”

April was just as hesitant as earlier as he took out his round glasses and put on the others. Jett stared at him, and April appeared defeated, for some reason. Fuck, he really looked like Theo. What were the fucking chances?

“Do you have like a brother or a cousin about the same age as you and me?”

Jett watched April as his Adam’s up bobbed up and down.

“No,” came the whispered reply.

“Are you sure? Some guy named Theo?”

“No. Name doesn’t ring a bell.”

Jett moved closer. It was a bit of a dangerous move. *What if you feel like kissing him again?* But it was like a strange pull he felt like he wanted to look at April from up close.

A loud knock on the door interrupted him. April took the glasses off quickly. Jett mumbled something under his breath and went for the door.

“Jett, you fucking scumbag! Since when do you think I’m your booty call?”

Jett looked at the angry woman on his doorsteps. “Maya! Hey, don’t be mad, babe! I heard you were back and thought about a little bit of catching up.”

Maya was the kind to have a mouth on her, but also her booty was great. Maybe it wasn’t that great as a certain round ass -- Jett shook his head fast. Why the hell was he thinking of April’s ass, which he had seen in passing and only because it had sprung right into his face by accident?

“I’m really curious what you have to say for yourself,” Maya said and walked by him into the house. “Who were you with, two nights ago?”

“Why? Are we going steady and I don’t know?”

Maya pushed a few curly locks away from her forehead. As a general rule, Jett preferred brunettes. Because of Theo, he had stayed away from blondes.

“Ah, so you do think I’m your booty call! Well, it’s going to cost ya,” she said and put her hands on her hips, rotating them in a way she knew well drew attention to her perfect behind, held by tight jeggings.

“Shit, I’m not paying for that,” Jett said right away.

“Hey, I’m not a prostitute,” Maya protested. “But you’ll take me somewhere nice tonight and then we’ll talk how steady you want us to be.”

“Steady? I don’t think --”

“If you want booty, darling,” Maya teased, slapping her behind, “you’ll have to pay up, one way or another. Your freedom will do.”

“All right,” Jett said with a sigh. One woman or another, it was the same thing for him. And Maya was great in the sack and funny to be around. He didn’t plan to say ‘no’ if that was what she wanted. “Well, April, it looks like I need to go out tonight.”

Maya only then seemed to notice April. “Who are you, blondie? You’re cute,” she said, pushing her already inflated pushup bra forward and walking toward April.

“Just someone who needs a particular article of interest from your boyfriend,” April said promptly. “Jett, the baby monitor?”

“Baby monitor? What the hell?” Maya asked. “What do you need that for?”

Like on cue, a cry reverberated through the house.

“Is that a baby?” Maya asked and turned to look at him.

Jett winced. How the hell could he explain that and without losing the chance to score tonight?

“Yeah, it’s a baby,” April replied. “Jett knocked me up, and now we have to raise the kid. Make sure it doesn’t happen to you, too.”

Maya’s stunned silence was enough. Jett threw April a murderous look, but the fool chose to rush up the stairs, pretending to be concerned about the kid.

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Why the hell had he said that? April knew he had to check himself for signs of insanity. Jett would so kill him for messing up his date.

#### *Chapter Four - What Your Man Bun Says About You*

April was busy playing with Jay, after changing him, and now they were both surrounded by toys. He was pretty sure Jett's baby was super bright for his age, as he used his own personal language and appeared to be taken with one of the toys that came with a wide array of animal sounds.

After spending some time with Jay, April was afraid he might start talking gibberish, too. Still, Jay's company was preferred to that of his father. Jett would so kill him for ruining his date.

April looked out the window. It had been quite the day. When he had waken up that morning, he had had no idea how much his life would change. The fact that he now practically lived under the same roof as Jett was incredible. How could one go so quickly from a comfortable life, not ounce challenging to figure out, to this?

Maybe his obsession with crypto was unhealthy. But, hey, a lot of people liked to shop, smoke, drink, or watch cat videos on YouTube for eight hours on end. April's passion was to let his heart do flip flops with the ups and downs of the crypto charts. To anyone asking, it was quite the adrenaline rush.

It was quiet downstairs, so April could only hope that Jett was already out. He didn't quite believe he would escape unpunished, but it was still better to have a breather before Jett would strangle him, pun totally intended.

The issue was he was still hungry. He would have to order takeout anyway until he could cook a real meal. Now, the kitchen was off-limits for the simple fact that it was downstairs and that was where Jett could still lurk, waiting to jump him and break his bones after all.

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Trying to convince Maya that the kid wasn't his over a very costly dinner had been exhausting. Now Jett was even more pissed. Mostly because he hadn't managed to get laid, but he could not totally blame that on Maya and her curiosity about the baby. Jett had a feeling she hadn't believe one iota about a long-distance relative leaving a baby in his care.

That was the official version of why he hadn't gotten his fix between the sheets as he had hoped. In all truth, after kissing April earlier, Jett was in no mood for a replacement. Eventually, Maya had ordered the most expensive stuff on the menu and laughed about how he ended up taking care of a kid - the official version, of course. No word of them hooking up had come up, and Jett had kept silent on the subject, too.

But now, he was back home, and he had someone to straighten up.

He yelled from the bottom of the stairs. "Hey, yo, April! Get down here now!"



Jett was sure April could hear him. It wasn't long that rushed footsteps could be heard from above. April looked down at him. "Can you be less of a human-size alarm clock going off at odd hours?"

"If that was your idea of making fun of me, you suck," Jett said matter-of-factly. "You use too many words, and you're annoying."

"I'm not coming down," April whispered, as he remained standing. "You want to kill me, right?"

"Yeah, but that's not why I want you to come down. Have you set up that baby monitor thingy?"

"No. I didn't have the time. I'm starving, too."

"Didn't you say you'd cook?"

It was weird to whisper angry words at each other over the stairs. Jett went to the kitchen, grabbed the baby monitor from the table, and began marching up the stairs.

"What are you doing?" April began walking backward, his eyes growing wide.

"I'll put this fucking house in order," Jett replied and began climbing the stairs, two by two.

April looked like he was about to break into a sprint, but Jett was faster. Just as April was about to disappear through the door to the bedroom he shared with Jay, Jett caught him by the waist and pressed him against the wall.

"You have no idea about personal space, have you?" April moaned as he struggled to break free, but without too much force.

To Jett, it was clear that April didn't want to make noise because of the baby. Well, it worked for him. He kept April there, enjoying, most probably more than he would have liked to admit, the way the dweeb was rubbing his ass dressed in nothing but a thin pair of sweatpants against his crotch. All evening, he had been too busy with other things to think properly about sex, but now that firm butt was giving his cock a workout he could feel even through his jeans. The pressure was damned nice.

"Dude, are you getting hard or something?" April whispered. "I can feel it."

Jett pushed himself away. "Can't help it, after getting a bad case of blue balls because of you."

April turned and faced him. "What? The girl didn't put out?"

"That's not relevant," Jett said.

"Not relevant to what?" April asked.

"To what I'm about to do to you."

April's eyes grew wide again. "Don't beat me up, please! I just have a bad case of putting a foot in my mouth, that's all. I didn't mean anything by it!"

Jett snorted. "Really? I thought you cockblocked me for a reason."

"No reason!" April put his hands up and gesticulated.

"Let's set up that baby monitor because I don't want you distracted," Jett said.

"Wait, if your girlfriend --"

"She's not my girlfriend."

"But she said --"

"It doesn't matter."

Jett walked into the bedroom and began right away to fiddle with the station.

"Don't you ever read the manual?" April asked as he followed.

Jett threw him a pointed look. "Do you?"

April pulled down the zipper on his tracksuit jacket. Jett stared blankly at the black t-shirt with some vividly colored letters on the front. "RTFM?"

"Read the fucking manual," April explained with a roll of the eyes. "Give that to me," he added and opened his palm.

Jett held the monitor away from the greedy hand. "Hey, it's my kid. Let me have my fun."

"You'll take forever," April complained. "And I'm hungry."

"You're always hungry."

"Only when I'm not eating."

"And who's to blame for that? Not my fault you dropped your burger."

"I didn't! You made me drop it!"

"Hey, keep your voice down. Baby in the room."

April obeyed right away, but his eyes were filled with daggers. "All right. Play with the baby monitor if you must, and tell me what you need me for."

"You'll help me figure out who Jay's mom is."

"I don't have a clue about your girlfriends. What help can I be?"

“Well, you seem smart. When you’re not stupid and get in deep shit with loan sharks.”

“Hey, I didn’t know they were loan sharks. I thought only that they were well-intended and wishing to invest in a young enterprise.”

Jett chuckled and continued to play with the baby monitor. “There,” he said with satisfaction and placed the camera so that it could point at the bed and the sleeping baby. “And this is yours,” he said as he handed the receiver to April.

The dweeb took the object and hooked it to his pocket. Jett noticed with satisfaction how pissed April was. Probably he didn’t expect Jett to know how to set up the baby monitor. He had read the manual at a stop on his way back. No biggie.

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April placed the French fries and the fried chicken on the table. “How come you have a cooktop stove, but you don’t use it?”

Jett shrugged. “The house came that way or something.”

April had a feeling Jett was omitting on purpose some vital information. “Does anyone else live here? You know, someone who cooks and knows the fridge is not just for beer?”

Jett threw him a brief look. “Do you see anyone else? And is this ready? I’m starving.”

“Didn’t you just come back from a restaurant dinner?”

“This looks better. And, by the way, completely unhealthy.”

“I know,” April said. “But I’m hungry, and only oil-dripping foods will do it for me now.”

“Then just dig in and shut up. If you put food in your mouth each time you opened it instead of running it like a fucking broken record, you wouldn’t be so skinny.”

He paid no attention to Jett as they ate in silence. The situation was getting weirder and weirder, and April had no idea what to make of it. He got busy with washing the dishes in the sink since he hadn’t noticed the presence of a dishwasher. “I’ll need more cleaning supplies. I saw some in the bathroom, but I need more. Maybe a vacuum cleaner, too.”

“Do I look like I’m made of money?” Jett asked.

April gave him a careful once-over. “Yeah.”

“Good answer.” Jett grinned at him. “Make a list, send it to my phone. Okay?”

April nodded. “I should give Jay a bath.”

“Later. Now that you finally ate, you’re going to help me out.”

They moved to the living room, and Jett dropped on the sofa, spreading his legs wide. April wasn’t sure if he was supposed to sit next to him. The right thing to do, if he cared about remaining in one piece, was to remain standing.

Jett fiddled with his phone, with a deep frown on his face. “Are you just going to stand there?” he asked, without looking up.

“Yeah. It’s safer,” April said without thinking.

The caramel eyes scrutinized him until April looked away. “Really? Safer? From what?”

“Um, you?”

“Chill, dude. I’m not going to beat you up. Just for the record, though. Do you like guys?”

April could feel the blood rushing to his cheeks. “None of your business.”

“That’s a yes,” Jett concluded on his own.

“Hey, you’re the one who kissed me,” April protested.

Jett shrugged, his eyes back to the screen. “And?”

“And shouldn’t I be the one to ask you that?”

“Nope. My house, my rules. I’m asking the questions. And I don’t like guys since you’re wondering.”

“What an insufferable ass,” April said through his teeth.

“I heard that,” Jett said and looked up. This time he was smiling.

Why was he smiling? And particularly, why was he smiling like that? He probably did that to all his girlfriends. They probably felt weak to the knees just like April now. Or maybe they were stronger and impervious to the charms of this fucker. The girl from earlier hadn’t seemed that impressed with Jett, truth be told.

Only that April knew he was much impressed.

“Come here,” Jett said.

He patted his knee.

“Do you want me to sit on your lap?” April asked, not quite sure he understood the gesture.

“Yeah. If I don’t like dudes and you don’t like dudes, what’s the big deal? It will be easier for both of us to look through my phone and search for Jay’s mom. It’s like bros chilling.”

“You either had not one bro in your life, or you’re pulling my leg. And I never said I don’t like guys. Actually, you concluded --”

A stern look was all it took for him to shut up. April moved to sit on the sofa, by Jett’s side. But just as he was about to put his ass down, Jett grabbed him and pulled him into his lap. April grunted and tried to release himself, but Jet snuck both arms around him while balancing his phone with ease in one hand.

He was about to protest when he felt hot breath on one ear, and sharp teeth sinking into the lobe. “Ouch! Why are you trying to pull a Mike Tyson on me, dude?”

April didn’t dare to move, afraid of what might happen to his ear.

It took a few seconds for Jett to release him. “Behave,” Jett ordered shortly. “You’re like an untrained puppy, and my teeth were tingling.”

“Seriously? Is that your explanation?” April protested, but didn’t remove himself from Jett’s arms.

Actually, that felt nice. If he didn’t know any better, he would lean into that warm embrace. But that was Jett, the clearly straight guy in the room if booty calls and girlfriends dropping babies by his doorsteps were any indication, and that meant that it was all nothing but teasing.

Why Jett felt the need to tease him was a different matter. Maybe he was just easy to tease. Or maybe Jett was still pissed about not getting laid, and instead of kicking April’s butt, he compromised by biting his ear and forcing him to sit with his ass right on top of ...

“Dude,” he whispered.

“Um?” Jett asked while he continued to browse through his phone.

“Can you tone it down a bit? I can feel it poking my ass, you know?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Jett said airily.

“Your friggin’ erection?”

“Erection? You must be imagining things,” Jett replied.

“Then what the fuck is that in your pants?”

“My gun,” Jett said, but April could feel the body under him shaking with laughter.

“You don’t have a gun,” April protested.

“You think I’m a gangster. What kind of gangster walks around without a piece?”

“I can tell the difference,” April pointed out. “Is your gun made of meat or something?”

Jett laughed out loud. He lifted April just a fraction of an inch, and then pulled him down hard. “I don’t know, but your ass sitting on it surely feels great.”

April shook his head. “You’re such an asshole.”

“Now stop annoying me and help me figure out this. How the hell do I see posts from the past on this?”

April took the phone from Jett’s hand. Damn, there was an impressive number of chicks in those pictures. “Have you really fucked all of them?”

“They aren’t all my girlfriends,” Jett said, somewhat defensive.

What was the deal with that? “We should go back two years or so.”

April held the phone. “We’re looking at pics with your exes, right?”

Jett nodded.

“Her?” April pointed at a picture featuring Jett holding a redhead lovingly into his arms.

Fucking player.

Jett chewed his bottom lip, lost in thought. “I just hooked up with her once.”

April made a face. “You really need sex ed in your life. One time is enough.”

“I used a condom. Next,” Jett said.

“All right,” April muttered and began shuffling through Jett’s photo albums. “What about her?” This time, it was a beautiful blonde leaning against Jett’s arm and smiling for the camera.

Jett grimaced. “I told you I don’t do blondes. She just wanted a photo with me.”

“And you just said ‘yes’?”

Jett’s shrug was the only answer.

April continued. A fierce-looking woman was holding Jett in a tight headlock and grinning. She had a certain appeal without being someone people would call beautiful. Her short dark hair was all spikes, and her wiry arms were wrapped around Jett, while her eyes weren’t turned toward the camera, like the other girls, but looking at Jett in what appeared to be unhidden affection.

April shifted in his place. Looking at that picture made him feel like he was intruding on a private moment between two people who had feelings for one another. Jett looked happy in that picture, too. “What about her?” he asked quietly.

Jett’s face changed, and his mouth set hard.

April insisted. “Could she be Jay’s mom?”

“Maybe,” Jett said and worked his jaw a little.

“All right. It looks like we’re making headway. Let’s make a list. Pen and paper?”

“I’ll just remember this one,” Jett said and pursed his lips.

April swallowed hard. From the corner of his eye, he could inspect Jett. There was an intense look in his eyes, his eyebrows furrowed in thought. There was some painful history there, he could tell.

Pretending he hadn’t noticed anything, he continued to browse through the pictures. At the end of it all, they had narrowed down to four names. April was still impressed and not in a good way. For a guy barely out of his teens, to have so many girlfriends, women he could get pregnant was an achievement Jett shouldn’t be proud of.

“You’re such a womanizer,” April said and shook his head. “Are you sure these are all?”

Jett nodded. “Yeah. And hey, we don’t know Jay’s exact age. So I just took a longer time into consideration. You know, to cover all the bases.”

“I’m pretty sure you covered all the bases and scored, too,” April said. “How do you manage to fool these women? Is it because of your man bun that they trust you? They take a look at you and say: this guy must be in touch with his feminine side and he’ll understand me!”

April was overly conscious that he was exaggerating, but the serious look on Jett’s face was unnerving. Was it because of the girl with the spiky hair? For some reason, that thought made him feel cold and pushed aside.

He yelped when Jett turned him and made him lay on his back in one smooth move. From above, Jett’s eyes burned. “All right! All right! You’re not in touch with your feminine side! I was just joking! Jeez, you’re really tough, aren’t you?”

“You remind me of someone,” Jett said.

“That’s no reason to trample me, though, right?”

“I’m not gay,” Jett added, seemingly oblivious to whatever April was saying.

“Sure thing you’re not. You single-handedly broke more female hearts than five boy bands together, plus Justin Bieber. You’re safe, you’re safe,” April said quickly and freed one hand to pat Jett on the cheek.

The gesture was supposed to be casual but turned into a caress. Jett leaned forward, and April closed his eyes fast. But, to his surprise, Jett moved away.

“I have phone calls to make,” Jett said. “You can go see about Jay’s bath. And I’ll get a crib tomorrow. Okay?”

April scrambled to his feet. “Okay. Goodnight. I think.”

He didn’t stay to see if Jett wanted to say something else. April knew he would be safer upstairs. Jett confused him, and April hated that. He just wanted to be safe, away from uncertain feelings that amounted to nothing.

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Jett cursed under his breath as he browsed through his contacts. If Jay’s mom was one of them ... He knew who he hoped Jay’s mom to be. Could it be...? Even after more than one year, there was still something there, like the trace of a sharp object piercing through.

Back then, he had been almost happy. He had nearly forgotten Theo and all about confusing feelings. Jett had been at his best back then, or so he thought. Until, of course, he had ruined it, because that was what he did best, after all.

And now he needed to remember, and he was in no mood for that. Having April around, with his cute bottom lip, and even cutter butt was a problem already. His head was messed up enough.

He began calling, leaving the bitter medicine at the end.

“What? You’re married?” Jett exclaimed as he heard his first ex scolding him at the other end. “Say, do you have any kids? Especially a boy named Jay? Sure, sure ... Don’t put your husband on the line ... Whatever. Man, no offense. I just wanted to ask your wife a question.”

First one, excluded. The second was no longer in the country and hadn’t been for a long time. She was quite chatty, and Jett managed with difficulty to end the conversation.

Two left. Jett listened to the phone ringing, without anyone picking at the other end. A breathless voice eventually answered. “Jett? Jett who?”

Okay, so he could remember this ex to have always been an airhead, but he felt stupid about having to repeat his name three times. At the same time, whatever it was that she did to be so out of breath didn’t stop. “A child? With you? I’ve been on the pill since I was eighteen,” the woman



at the other end replied. “No honey, sorry, it’s just a jealous ex --” Jett heard her talking to her bed partner.

He cut the convo. That left him with just one, the one he was afraid to call. But he needed to bite the bullet and do it.

With a long sigh, he initiated the call.

A harsh voice replied. “Yes? Who is this?”

“Carina?” Jett asked, a bit unsure. That wasn’t her voice, but people changed, so who knew.

A silence which he interpreted as tense followed. “Carina is not available.”

“Is she in the shower or something? I can call later.”

Loud laughter was the answer.

“Who’s this?” he asked.

“That’s what I should ask you,” the voice replied.

“I’m Jett. Jett Huntsman.”

“Ah. What do you want?”

“I want to talk to Carina.”

“That would be tricky.”

“Why?”

“Correctional facilities for women don’t take calls at this hour.”

“What? Carina’s in the can? Since when? What for?”

“None of your business. But it must be the bad influence you were for her. You’ve been out of her life for more than a year, right? What do you care?” The voice was venomous, heated.

“Do you happen to know if she had a baby?” Jett decided to cut to the chase.

“A baby? What? With you?” The hoarse laughter returned.

“Did she or not?” Jett’s voice turned to stone.

“No. Happy now? Just stay out of her life, asshole!”

This time, it wasn’t Jett who cut the conversation. He stared at the phone, wondering who the hell that was. What kind of trouble had Carina gotten in? So she wasn’t Jay’s mom, after all. He

should have felt relieved, in a way. The last thing he wanted was for Carina's life to get even more complicated because of him.

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April remained hidden in the shadows, as he listened intently. Carina. That must have been the girl with the spiky hair. Jett's voice changed when saying her name. That counted more than an entire photo album filled with beautiful women.

He snuck back into the bedroom. There was no point in fooling himself Jett could like him like that. It was for the best to let the past remain in the past.

## *Chapter Five – Don't Kiss Other Boys*

April preferred to pretend to be still asleep when Jett opened the door, probably to check on them, quite early in the morning. He waited for a while, attuned to the noise of the house until he heard the front door opening and closing. Only then he got to his feet and took a look at Jay who was already awake and having fun with his own fingers, which appeared extremely fascinating, for some reason.

“You look like a smart kid, Jay. How about you and I go to school today, huh?”

April had no intention to skip classes. Jett probably was out most of the day, and Jay needed some fresh air anyway. He wouldn't listen to that tyrant. Like hell, he and the baby would stay cooped up indoors until the powers that be would allow them to get out of the house.

After he packed a knapsack with everything he needed for Jay and himself and going through what he hoped to be a morning routine for both of them, he was ready to go out the door.

A single look at the baby carrier gave him pause. Was there a trap Jett was setting for him? Yeah, sure, April had put it down on the list, and Jett had bought it, but he didn't have half a brain, and he could figure out such a thing could only have one purpose, which was to go outside without a stroller.

Eventually, he shrugged. He would deal with Jett later, one way or another. Jett wouldn't hurt him too badly. After all, Jay liked him, and April needed moral support. “You're on my side, aren't you, buddy?”

He put up his hand, and Jay did it, too. Smart kid. “Nice high five, buddy!”

Jay giggled in reply.

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“Oh my god,” a girl's voice was heard as soon as he put his foot on the college grounds. “What a beautiful baby!”

April stopped. It was Gabriela, one of the girls who were in his physics class. “Hi, Gaby,” he said. “Say, do you think that if I sneak inside with Jay, can I remain inconspicuous to Mr. Trenton?”

“He's blind as a bat and half deaf,” Gabriela confirmed. “Wait, what the hell did you do to your hair?”

“Long story,” April said with a long sigh.

“And the baby? Jay, you say?”

“That’s an even longer story.”

“All right.” Gabriela nodded and seemed to decide not to prod him any further.

A couple more girls stopped by their side and began to talk animatedly with the baby. Within five minutes, Jay was the center of attention. Quite the lady killer, just like his daddy, April thought. He would have expected Jay to be bothered by the noise and ruckus around him, but he was a natural charmer and enjoyed the attention.

“Guys, I think we need to head over to class.”

The girls waved a collective bye and finally April managed to head over to the building where his classes took place.

“April, my man,” someone called from behind. It was his friend, Raj, who hurried to reach him, a heavy bag on his shoulder. “How’s the crypto mining going?”

“It’s a bit complicated right now,” April said, opting to remain vague.

“Are you thinking about diversifying your portfolio? I can’t endorse that,” Raj said.

“I have a bit too much on my plate right now to think properly of it,” April replied. “And I kind of have my hands full.”

“Yeah.” Raj stole a slightly confused look toward the baby. “What’s with the chick magnet? Weren’t you gay? And the new hairstyle?”

April sighed. “It’s a long story.” He had a feeling he would have to repeat that multiple times throughout the day.

“Okay,” Raj said with a small shrug.

That was one thing about his friends and partners into science April loved. They didn’t care about gossip and never pressed him to reveal something he wasn’t comfortable to talk about.

They began walking together toward their class. Loud laughter and hooting made April turn his head to see who was making so much noise in the morning. Instant regret hit him.

“Just ignore them,” Raj said and began walking a bit faster. “It’s like with dogs. If you don’t pay them any mind, they forget about you.”

“I’m pretty sure starting to run might make dogs chase you and bite your ass,” April said but began walking faster, too.

“Hey, girlie,” someone shouted. “Got knocked up or something? Whose kid is that?”

The idiot’s pals began laughing.

“You would think college was supposed to be better than high school,” April said.

“Just imagine what a bunch of losers with brain damage, beer on their shirts, ugly wives and kids, they will all be about one decade from now,” Raj said in the most philosophical manner possible.

“It’s a nice exercise in imagination. There is a chance they might sign up with some big team and become rich, though.”

“Hey, I’m trying to be positive here,” Raj replied.

“Aren’t you going to talk to us?” A jock jumped in front of them, and April stopped.

“Dan, I’m not in the mood for your bad jokes,” he said and tried to move past the other.

“Hey, I just asked you something,” Dan said.

April knew that trying to make Dan move out of the way couldn’t be easy. The guy was big, but, if April thought a little, he wasn’t as big as Jett, and that alone put a smile of his face.

“Something funny, girlie?” Dan came closer and hovered over him.

“No, nothing,” April said as he chose the path of least resistance.

Dan had been trying to pick a bone with him lately. April was well aware of the reason, but he didn’t want to go there, not even mentally.

“So, whose kid is this?” Dan insisted. There was something strange in his blue eyes, as he searched April’s face for something only he knew.

For the first time in a while, April didn’t find Dan as attractive as he had always thought. He seemed washed out with his blond hair, cropped close to the head, and blue eyes, taken like from some commercial advertising the new football player of the year holding a beer. Or vice versa. The beer was missing, but that wasn’t the issue.

Jett was better looking, regardless of his smoking and bad habits of threatening people with debts.

“Do you want me to sign something, to tell over the local radio, or put on a billboard, just so the world knows it wasn’t you?” April asked directly.

It hadn’t even been his fault. Dan had kissed him while half-drunk and mumbling incoherent things like how he found April pretty. April hadn’t exactly pushed him away, and the bad thing was that someone had seen them. Now Dan was trying to save his reputation by picking on April everywhere they met. It was never more than the usual taunts, but April found it tiring. While he

was not the out and proud type, he had never hidden his orientation, either. Now Dan was making him question whether it wouldn't have been better to keep it under wraps.

Dan blushed, and he seemed to lose his bearings for a second. "I have no idea what the fuck you're talking about, Summer."

"Yeah, me either," April said airily. "Are we done here? I'm going to be late for class."

"Sure thing, girlie," Dan said loud enough to be heard by the others, "but only if you say please."

"Please," April said in a deadpan voice.

Dan seemed stunned by his quick surrender. "Hey, are you pulling my leg?"

He got closer, and April took a step back. "Hey, there's a baby here. I did what you told me, so now you can go back to your friends and tell them how you put the queer kid in his place. Isn't that enough?"

Raj had watched everything in silence, but now he intervened. "Frasier, April here might be too much of an old-fashioned gentleman to tell on you, but if you insist on being a douchebag, I'll do it. Being good at football won't save you. I can guarantee that."

Dan seemed to consider, but then he walked away, not before pointing two fingers at his eyes and then to their general direction.

April turned toward Raj. "Thanks, man. It was cool, awesome even, but crazy, too."

"I'm not afraid of these idiots. They act all high and mighty because their dicks are small."

April burst into laughter, and Jay giggled with him. "Oops, I forgot to tell you. We shouldn't use cuss words in front of the baby."

"Hey, I think he liked my joke," Raj pointed out. "Can you tell me what's going on between you and Frasier? It's like all of a sudden, he wants a piece of you."

"Raj, you're my friend. If I told you, I'd put you in mortal danger, and I can't have that. I don't have many dude friends around here."

"Ah, so the rumor is true."

April threw his friend a crossed look.

"Everyone knows it," Raj said. "That you and Dan made out under a certain tree, at a certain party."

"It was only half a kiss, and also instant regret," April said.

“Half a kiss? How is that?”

“Never mind. Let’s get to class already and hope that Jay won’t need a diaper change anytime soon.”

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Jett had a feeling. He couldn’t say what it was, but it was in his gut. The moment he entered the house, he felt that it was too quiet, but the feeling had started before.

“April!” he called out loud.

Maybe the dweeb was busy setting up his rig in the basement. Jett opened the door and looked down. It appeared that all the boxes were exactly how he had left them. Okay, there was no need to panic. April could listen to music on his headphones or something.

Nonetheless, Jett began walking fast, opening all the doors, and then going upstairs. There was no sign of April. What made the situation double worse was that there was no sign of Jay, either.

Could it be that April had gone outside? But where? Jett pulled his phone and called. No one was picking up, and a thin film of sweat was starting to form on his forehead.

All right, he needed to think. The Z brothers weren’t particularly clever, so there was still a chance the dweeb had just taken Jay out for a walk. But why the hell wasn’t he picking up?

*Because he might have a ball gag in his mouth, while gangsters are forcing him to hack into the government’s network or whatever.*

Jett pushed that stupid thought away. He tried the phone a couple more times. All right, so he needed to know where the hell April was. Last night, he had pretended not to be tech-savvy just for the sake of having April close while browsing through his exes. Why he had done that was unclear even to him, but that wasn’t something he had time right now to think about.

He hoped April had the GPS on and congratulated himself for thinking about that in advance by fiddling a little with April’s phone while the guy was bathing Jay. Jett stared at the screen and cursed.

The idiot had gone to school! Had he taken Jay with him? Most probably! Jett grabbed his jacket and was out the door in seconds. April Summer was in for some rude awakening about who owned his ass.

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April felt good now that he had attended a couple of classes, and was ready to go back home before the ogre might return. Maybe Jett ate lunch at home, although April couldn’t see why since, usually, there was no food in that house. Also, he didn’t need to make Jay too tired. He

was, after all, just a little baby, although very nice behaved. When he wanted, he could be an angel.

He was about to call an Uber when someone's shadow fell over him. April pursed his lips in annoyance. "Dan, seriously, dude, just drop it. Tell me what the hell you want and let's end it."

The look in Dan's eyes was intense. "Come with me."

"No. Whatever it is that you want, you can tell me right here." April didn't feel particularly trustful of being alone with Dan. Who knew what that guy was thinking?

"I said, come with me," Dan said through his teeth, and this time, he grabbed April by one arm.

Jay started crying right away as if he could sense April's distress.

"You're making a scene, and I have no idea how you think that would work for you. And see? You made the baby cry."

Dan seemed disconcerted by Jay's louder and louder cries but didn't remove his hand from April's arm. April tried to shush the baby, but Jay didn't care about that.

"The fuck you think you're doing, dude?"

April felt his hair standing on end at the sound of that voice. Jett was by their side in one second and pushed Dan hard.

For a moment, Dan considered holding his ground, but it looked like Jett's surprise attack, and maybe the wild stare in his eyes were enough to make the jock reconsider. Yeah, April thought with mild satisfaction. Jett was bigger.

"What? Is he your wife or something?" Dan sneered, probably conscious of the stares of bystanders.

"Yeah," Jett replied and took another step toward Dan, pushing him back just with his presence.

"Got a problem with that? That's my kid crying over there because of your ugly mutt face."

"What a bunch of queers," Dan said through his teeth and walked away, obviously trying hard not to break into a sprint.

April would have laughed if the fact that Jett was there hadn't already caught up with him. "Oh, shit," he murmured.

"Get in the car," Jett ordered.



April obeyed without a word, careful only to appease Jay. The cries seemed to subdue as they climbed into the car. Jett climbed in front and slammed the door hard enough to make a point. Jay wasn't appreciative of that and started another series of wails.

"I know you're mad at me, but can we leave it until we reach home and I manage to make Jay stop crying?" April said.

"Sure," Jett replied. "But get ready for some serious ass-kicking."

"All right," April said and gulped.

Jay seemed content with the grownups finally falling silent, and April succeeded in making him forget all about the nasty man from earlier or that his daddy was pretty much pissed with the help of a squeaky toy.

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"Sit," Jett ordered.

He was so fucking pissed that he had no idea where to start. After a short moment of deliberation, he went out and searched for a particular thing in the tool shed. April's pretty green eyes followed him and grew wide.

Without a word, Jett grabbed the rope and caught April's hands behind the chair.

"Wow, wow, wow! Seriously, man, don't you think we should talk first?"

"Talking doesn't work with you," Jet replied. "I told you to stay put. Now I'm opting for a more efficient method."

April tried to move his hands, but his wrists were well secured together. Jett could now read slight fear in those big green eyes. With an annoyed gesture, Jett took April's glasses.

The dweeb blinked a few times. "What's next? Waterboarding?"

So he was a punk, too, even when he was scared. Jett straddled the chair, placing himself on April's lap.

"Seriously, dude, you're heavy."

"Oh, are you a little uncomfortable?" Jett cooed mockingly. "Now listen here, fool, 'cause I won't repeat myself. You do not leave the fucking house."

The blinking repeated. "Would you take that finger out of my face? Is it one or more? I have a sudden need to count them."

Jett brought his hand back and smacked April upside the head, not too hard, but enough to draw attention. "You're not drunk."

"Just blind."

"Stop pulling my leg. Your eyes are not that bad."

"It's true," April admitted with the sigh. "Which means that I will see quite clearly what you're going to do to me, right?"

Jet pursed his lips. "What part of 'you're not allowed to go out' wasn't clear?"

"Hmm, the part where I am a human being, I need to go to school, and also Jay needs fresh air because we're not prisoners here. Wait, are we prisoners? Both of us?"

Jett set his jaw hard. "You'll be going out. With me. But your fucking classes need to wait."

"Wait? For what?"

Jett caught April's chin and made eye contact. "That's not for you to know."

April's eyes grew wide. "Are you afraid someone might try to kidnap Jay? Because you're a gangster?"

"I'm not a gangster, idiot," Jett hissed.

Hmm, actually, an opportunity was presenting itself. Jett caressed his short beard in thought.

"Your eyes are thinning again. You're scary. Just for the record," April said quickly.

"Who was that asshole?" Jett decided to change the topic. It was supposed to be easy to fool April, but under those big beautiful eyes, Jett felt a tiny, just a speck, really, out of ideas.

"What asshole?"

"Don't pretend you don't know. The moron who grabbed you in front of the school."

"Um, ah ... someone."

"Details, dweeb, details," Jett insisted.

"Like his security number and dental records?"

"Are you still going about that gangster crap?"

"Sorry, just my mind ... wait, why do you want to know?" April appeared suspicious now.

Jett enjoyed the closeness. He liked the warmth coming off April, and to look at him. April was a pretty boy, that was for sure. Could Theo grow up to be like this? Maybe he would never know.

A bird in the hand... or how that saying went.

“He made Jay cry. For that, he’s on my list,” Jett replied.

“Let’s not make it more than it was. He’s just an idiot who’s bugging me because of a stupid kiss --”

April’s lips made a small o and then withdrew like they were trying to swallow themselves.

“Kiss? Did you kiss that moron?”

“Actually, it was more like he kissed me --”

“Why the hell did you kiss him?”

“Hello,” April said, “he kissed me. And I would point out at myself to make a bigger point, but my hands are tied.”

“Is he gay, then?” Jett asked.

“No,” April said with a deep sigh. “I just seem to make straight boys kiss me lately.”

“What straight boys? More than one? Do you run a kissing booth or something?”

April threw him a loaded look. “Really, dude? I was talking about you.”

Jett took a moment. Talking about things that could throw him off balance. “Then here’s another rule. You’re not allowed to kiss other boys.”

“Other?” April’s eyes glinted with mischief.

Jett could feel a bit of frustration growing. “You know what I mean.”

“Of course. I’m not allowed to leave the house, to attend classes, and now, on top of it all, I’m supposed to be a monk. Wait, what if they kiss me?”

“They won’t. I’ll be around.”

“Ha, very funny. You have a job, whatever that is, and that means you’re not around all the time.”

“Are you going to call guys over to hook up?” Jett asked that, only half-joking.

There was a possibility for April to play the field. With that cute face and even cuter butt, most probably, a lot of gay dudes were game.

April seemed horrified by the question. “Are you nuts? With Jay here? And, for the record, I don’t hook up.”

“Then what about that asshole?”

“It was a party, he was drunk, and it just happened. And that can’t count as hooking up. Someone saw us, and we didn’t, well, advance from that point.”

“Good,” Jett said, now relieved. “So you never, never hook up?”

April sighed dramatically. “No, dad. I never hook up. And unlike you, I believe in waiting for that special someone.”

“Seriously? Are you a virgin?” Jett burst into laughter.

April got red in the face to the tip of his ears. “At least I’m not plowing the fields from here to Antarctica with my dick, like you.”

Jett’s laughter died. He studied April for long seconds, but the green eyes didn’t back down. Instead, they returned the stare, in what looked pretty much like a declaration of war.

Except that Jett was in no mood for war, at all. What he was in the mood for was within reach. Without hesitation, he grabbed April by the front of his shirt and pulled him into a kiss.

A small sound of distress was the immediate answer, and Jett realized that he had accidentally made April’s arms stretch against the restraints. He shifted their position only slightly, and brought one hand to the back of April’s head, to bury it into the spiky blond hair.

It was so easy to kiss April. Ever since he discovered sex, Jett had decided to err on the side of caution and avoid looking at guys like that. In a way, he had just played it safe. In another, a deeper one, he knew that he couldn’t taint the memory of that kiss from Theo.

Apparently, it was enough for this dweeb to waltz into his life, and he instantly forgot about that. Not forgot-forgot, but there was no guilt in kissing April.

Actually, it was pretty damned fun. And sexy. Jett used his teeth to bit softly April’s lips. It appeared that the virgin boy didn’t care that much about waiting for that special someone, after all.

April was, without a doubt, kissing him back. His tongue was like a weasel, going in and out before Jett could catch it and taste it properly. A bit annoyed, he pulled April’s head down a bit and deepened the kiss. Jett pushed his tongue in, and damn, April’s tongue was friggling sweet.

He was pretty sure his hard-on was now pushing into April’s stomach, but he didn’t want to pretend anymore. He liked this, and April was, sort of, in his care. Therefore, Jett could taste his mouth as much as he wanted.

He brushed his lips over April's time and time again. It looked like April was moving his head, not to escape, but to chase back, and Jett really digged that.

"Awesome," he whispered as he broke the kiss.

April looked at him with guilty eyes. "Don't you think we should check on Jay or something?"

Jett looked over at the table, at the receiver left there. "That one sleeps like a baby. Now, where were we?"

"Stop," April said. "Isn't enough that the female population is in jeopardy across the globe, because of you?"

"Are you in any danger?" Jett asked.

"I'm practically tied up to a chair, in a frigging kitchen, with a guy who weighs a ton crushing my dick. Also, I need to pee. Like really bad."

Jett smirked. "I think you have a boner."

"And I think you should wipe that smile off your face because that's a hard dick close to your ass. And it's all because I need to pee. You know, like morning wood or something. Not because I like you or anything. So that you know."

Jett stood up quickly.

"Thank you. You were crushing me," April pointed out.

"Are you trying to say I'm fat?"

"Just big-boned and it's not a euphemism in your case."

"Have you always been such a smartass?"

"Rumor has it that yes, I've always been like that. My mom told me that my first words, barely out of the womb were: got milk?"

Jett laughed. "You're so full of it."

"If by it, you mean piss, yeah, I am. Could you please untie me? We can continue the torture session later."

"You've seen nothing."

"I bet," came the terse reply.

Jett had an urge to crash that sarcastic mouth with his lips again but decided against it. No matter how good it felt to kiss April, he needed to stop. His sanity was at stake.

April smiled as Jett released him from his constraints. “Now I know for sure I’d never be into BDSM.” He rubbed his wrists with a small wince.

“Just go and come back.”

“What if Jay needs me? I’ll go see him, too.”

“Jay is not the only guy who needs you in this house.”

The soonest the words left his mouth, Jett knew it had been a stupid thing to say.

“Sorry if I make a poor torture victim. Blame it all on my small bladder,” April replied, seemingly not at all taken with Jett’s unusual confession.

Danger averted. Good thing the dweeb took everything lightly. Although, Jett could sense April was far from superficial. The little kid seemed well taken care of. An airhead couldn’t have done that.

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April breathed in and out a couple of times and threw some cold water on his face. Playing with Jett was off-limits. Not done. Dangerous. The guy was straight. He had a kid. Probably a girlfriend. Or more.

“I should start thinking in longer sentences if I want to get somewhere,” April murmured to himself.

That somewhere was lost in a thick haze, for now. And Jett was a great kisser, or at least good enough to make April throw caution to the wind. No, he needed to stop that because he was not thirteen and he could keep his lips and the need to kiss Jett from acting up.

But what was he to do since Jett was always the one to initiate the kiss?

## *Chapter Six – A Walk In The Park*

“Get ready. I’m taking both of you outside.”

April looked up from the bed where he lay close to Jay, confessing to his stupidity in a low voice, knowing that the kid didn’t judge him. He was a pretty good listener, too.

Eventually, the torture session had been averted and postponed indefinitely since it appeared that Jett was no longer in the mood. That was fine by him.

“Outside where?” April asked.

“In the park or something. Isn’t that where all the kids go to play and stuff?”

It was clear as day that Jett didn’t have a plan and was making things on the go.

“You didn’t get a stroller,” April said. “How are we going to carry Jay there?”

“In that thing you took him to your stupid classes,” Jett replied promptly. “And I’m going to carry him.”

“Why you?”

“Hey, he’s my kid. Do you want him to tell me, one day from leaving for college, that he never saw me and I didn’t pay him any attention?”

April snorted. “You want him only because he’s a perfect chick magnet.”

“Chick magnet? Seriously? Is that what you’ve been using my son for?”

“You seem pretty convinced now you’re his dad. Did you find his mother?”

April already knew the answer, but he wanted to hear Jett opening up about that woman called Carina. He couldn’t ask directly, but he was damned curious, and also something else that he didn’t want to think of.

“Not yet. It looks like not one of my ex-girlfriends had a baby one year ago or so.”

“Your photo album is choke-full with women. Are you sure you’re not missing something?”

“Hey, I know who I fucked and if I used a rubber or not.”

“Maybe you were drunk and can’t remember now.”

“I don’t get drunk. Unlike stupid assholes who kiss you only when they got enough liquid courage --”

“Are you jealous of Dan? Is that why you’re pissed at me?”

“Yeah, sure. I’m not interested in you, dweeb,” Jett replied, his eyes darting to one side like he couldn’t look April in the face for some reason.

“Just in kissing me then,” April said back.

Jett ran a hand over his face and pretended to ignore him, by going over to Jay and starting to coo to him like a daddy bird.

“Are we just going to ignore it, then?”

“What’s to ignore?” Jett didn’t take his eyes off his son.

“It’s fine, really. I need to know if we ignore it and that’s all. So can I get a straight answer?”

Jett turned his head toward him and watched him for a few seconds.

“I know my face might look like I’m always joking,” April made a gesture to support his words, “but I’m actually serious. And here it is, an easy way out. It never happened.”

Jett smirked. “You wish.”

April rolled his eyes. “What kind of straight dude are you? Do you want to forget about the kiss or not?”

“Kisses,” Jett pointed out. “There were two.” He put up one hand and cut the air with two fingers.

“Really? Who’s counting?” April crossed his arms over his chest.

“Do you want to go out or not?”

“I do. Let me just get everything we need.”

“I’m going to bring you some clothes to wear,” Jett said and sauntered toward the door. “You won’t go out like that.”

“Why?” April asked, disoriented. “What’s wrong with my clothes? Are we hitting some afternoon cocktail party? With a baby in tow?”

Jett seemed completely unbothered by April’s questions, and went out the door, whistling.

April shrugged. Jett was a weirdo. But damn, he was a great kisser. Only thinking of that was enough to make his cheeks hot. Right, he needed to get a hold of himself, go to the bathroom, throw some water on his face, and hope that Jett would never kiss him again.

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Jett searched through the clothes left on one side of the closet that he didn't throw out. More than one of his exes hadn't cared about coming back for their stuff, and Jett hadn't cared about getting rid of it, either.

After some deliberation and profound thinking, Jett took out something and grinned in satisfaction. April would make such a face, but it was worth it. He liked seeing April making faces. The dweeb was expressive; it was like his entire face morphed depending on what kind of emotions he was going through. If he weren't into crypto mining, he could be an actor.

The thought gave him pause. Was April playing him? Was he reading the signs wrong? Jett didn't want to think of such things. April liked him, and that was final. He grabbed the clothes and marched back to the bedroom April shared with Jay.

"You'll wear this," Jett said and threw the pink tracksuit at April.

"Are you kidding me?" April grabbed the clothes and then kept them away like they were a foreign thing, and alien creatures would come crawling out of them any second now.

"You can't go out in yours."

"Seriously? Why?"

"It's punishment," Jett said right away. "For going to school."

"OMFG." The look of horror in April's eyes was so damned funny.

However, Jett kept a straight face.

"This thing is vintage or something? It says 'juicy' on the fucking bottom of the fucking pants! Fucking 'juicy'!"

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Should Jay hear you talk like a trash bin?"

April bit his lips. His voice lowered. "I'm not wearing this. It's a girl's tracksuit."

"She never wore it. I bought it for her, but she didn't even get around to trying it."

"Why?" April's eyes thinned.

"I have no idea what you're imagining. She just didn't like this shade of pink," Jett said airily.

April threw the tracksuit in his face. "I have no business wearing your girlfriends' clothes."

"Why?"

"Why? Are we really having this conversation? It would look weird on me. I'm a guy."

“You have plenty to fill up that ‘juicy’ bottom,” Jett said with a smirk.

April scoffed. “Did you stare at my ass a lot then? Seriously, this is not a conversation to have in front of Jay.”

“Then change into the clothes I brought for you, and let’s get out already. Ah, you’re not wearing your glasses, either.”

“What a slave driver,” April murmured.

“Hey, it’s that, or we all stay indoors all day long.”

“No way.”

“Then hurry. You wouldn’t want me to spend all day staring at your ass, right?”

April took the tracksuit back with a sigh and headed out.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m going to the bathroom to change, obviously.”

“Can’t you do it here?”

“And offer you a free show? No way.”

“What if I pay?”

“Stop being a moron, you straight idiot,” April threw over one shoulder as he stormed out of the room.

Jett laughed and plopped on the bed, next to his baby. “What do you say, buddy? It’s easy to rile him up, right?”

Jay watched him with curiosity. Jett turned on one side and offered his son his index finger. Jay grabbed it and pulled it. Jett laughed, and Jay giggled, too.

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April sighed as he took a look at himself in the mirror. What was Jett after? Maybe he just liked to annoy him, but April had a feeling that there was more to it than what appeared on the surface. Just like the things with the kisses, and yeah, there had been two, and he knew how to count. And he had counted, too.

At first glance, Jett was a regular punk, a bit hipsterish, but who wasn’t these days? He looked good, the fucker, and he had grown to be a truly handsome man. The short beard made him look a little older than his age, and April had a suspicion that was what Jett wanted.

But beneath that surface, the rivers ran deep. That had been something April had known instinctively when they met the first time, at thirteen. He hadn't had the vocabulary or the emotional maturity to put it in words like that, but he had known Jett was more than met the eye.

Jett was always ready to fight, fists up. He was the one to brush everything off like it was nothing. But under that rough exterior, April had touched, even if shortly, a soft core. He wasn't sure the same thing lay underneath, but Jett wasn't shallow.

Whatever. April pouted as he looked in the mirror again. He was reading too much into everything. Jett was an ass for making him wear a bright pink tracksuit, which, on top of everything, was made for a girl.

If there was one thing Jett was right about, however, April tried to pull the pants up as much as he could, that had to be that he had enough to fill the bottom.

Eventually, with a sigh, he gave up. He would have to wear the pants hanging low because otherwise, the cut would practically show off his dick too much. April winced as he tried to adjust it; he didn't need someone else to tell him he was big in the downstairs department, at least for his skinny frame. It was quite the miracle how he could have such ass and dick while barely having meat on his bones otherwise. Or maybe it was just a matter of perspective. Because he was so skinny, other things appeared big.

"April, did you fall in the toilet or something?" Jett knocked on the door.

"Coming," April replied.

He opened the door and stared at Jett with what he hoped looked like murder written all over his face. Jett offered him a satisfied grin in reply. Then he grabbed April by one elbow and turned him. A small slap over his ass followed.

April turned in shock and pushed Jett back. "Cut it out, moron."

"Juicy, indeed," Jett commented.

With annoyance, April worked his cock again. The damned thing didn't feel that comfortable in that getup.

"Wow, you're packing some heat, dude," Jett said. "Or did you stuff a sock in there?"

"See how this is a terrible idea?"

"Let me just fix it for you."

April yelped as Jett grabbed him by the waist with one arm, and pushed his hand in the front of his pants in one fluid motion. He squirmed as his dick was manipulated around through his underwear until it ended up pointing up.

Jett was away from him just as fast as he had approached him. “Much better now, right?”

“It’s stupid, and you know it,” April said, trying to brush away that Jett had just practically touched his dick.

“Okay, I’ll grab a longer hoodie for you, but you’ll wear the pants,” Jett said.

“Finally, some sense,” April replied and shook his head.

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They were out the door ten minutes later. April climbed in the back of the car with Jay and his seat while Jett climbed in front.

“The moment we are out, you pull the hood up. Understood?”

“What? Are you ashamed of being seen with me or something?” April asked, grudge clear in his voice.

“Yeah,” Jett said. “I don’t go out with dudes, usually.”

“Then how about you leave this dude right here out of it? What? Did Dan calling you queer bruise your ego or something?”

“I don’t give a shit about stuff like that,” Jett said with a shrug.

“Language,” April warned. “Seriously, I’m afraid what Jay is learning from us both. For the record, I’m saying stupid things only because of you.”

Jett laughed. “Of course. Of us two, you’re the angel.”

“Sure thing I am,” April said. “I’m the virgin one.”

*Not for long if I can help it.* Now, where had that come from? Maybe it was better if he just focused on his driving. Why on earth did he care about stuff like that?

Sure, April had lips sweet like frigging heaven, and also, a perfect juicy bottom. But that was all. Jett didn’t do dudes, only girls.

If it were for him to meet Theo again ... no, that was the past. Maybe Theo was married with kids. Well, maybe nothing that dramatic since they weren’t that old, but hey, Jett also had a kid, although he wasn’t married. Nothing was impossible. He was just chasing shadows, and yet, he still hanged on that memory like it was a lifeline for him.

They stopped in front of the park, and April got out and took Jay with him. Jett waited patiently until they were out. He smiled when he saw April pulling his hood up, as indicated. As much as he ran his sexy mouth, April was good at taking orders.

Jett gestured with his chin. "Come on, give Jay to me. Strap me with that thing."

April mumbled something, but handed Jett the carrier and said in a few words how to put it on. Then he helped Jay inside the carrier while cooing endearing words.

"You're talking to my kid a lot more than to me," Jett pointed out.

"He's better company. A real charmer, I say."

"Hmm. Let's roll, then. Go a few rounds and back home, right?"

April threw him a killer look. "No way. We do the whole thing. We go to the sandbox, we chase each other, and we have a snack. I got it all ready right here." He patted the knapsack he brought with him.

"Chase each other?" Jett pointed at the baby hanging from his neck. "Can he even do that?"

"Just watch it," April warned him. "Jay is quite the prodigy. He can walk on his two tiny feet faster than you, I bet."

"I'll take that bet," Jett replied. "I'm sure I can beat a baby."

April gestured at him to shut up. "Hush, don't say that so loudly. People will think you mean it."

"What? I'm faster," Jett protested.

"You're a bad daddy," April said and wagged the finger at him.

"Ah, you want me to pretend I lose," Jett said.

"Oh, what do you know? The moron daddy is, luckily, not that slow. In the head. In case you were wondering," April added, for good measure.

"I didn't know Jay could walk."

"As much as a one-year-old can. Actually, better. Told you. Quite the prodigy."

"That's my boy," Jett said proudly. "Now grab my arm."

"Why? I'm not a cripple," April protested.

"Grab my arm and shut up. Weren't you saying that you're blind or something?"

"I'm not blind," April replied but finally took his arm.

"That's better."

“I hope you know how this looks like. We’re two dudes with a baby, and I’m hanging on your arm. Everyone will think we’re married. They might even think I’m a chick.”

“Not my problem that you don’t do sports and you’re skinny.”

April made a small wince of disgust. “Sports.”

“Actually, I saw you running like a fucking rabbit.”

“Language.” April squeezed his arm.

“All right. Jay, just don’t pay attention to your daddy when he talks smack, okay?” Jett talked to the baby.

Jay was far too engrossed in looking around to pay too much attention to them. He just looked up at his daddy with his clear eyes. Jett handed him one finger. Yeah, that worked every time. He started laughing.

“You like Jay,” April pointed out.

“What’s not to like? He’s a baby. It’s not like he has done anything in his life, except eat, sleep, and poop, right?”

“Right,” April said dryly. “Let’s see how you feel after he throws some mashed carrots right in your face.”

Jett laughed. “That’s why I have you. You’re my human shield.”

April shook his head and smiled. “There’s a good person under this whole gangster persona, after all, right?”

“I’m not a gangster, dweeb.”

“You were ready to beat me up for not paying.”

“Ah, that. That was work. And I don’t hit girls, anyway.”

April muttered something under his breath.

“What are you mumbling about?”

“I’m not a girl.”

“Well, you’re cute like one. I can tease you.”

“I’m a guy. Don’t play your straight fantasies with me. I won’t start wearing frilly dresses or whatever.”

“I could make you.”

“Don’t.”

Jett snuck his hand behind April and pinched his butt. “I’m just pulling your leg. With that thing you have in pants, it’s hard for me to think of you as a girl.”

“Good,” April said, and he seemed relieved. “Hey, did you just pinch my butt?”

“Yeah.”

“We’re in a park. There are people. And kids. And dogs.”

“Are you worried dogs would judge you for having a juicy ass?”

“I’m just worried we might get thrown out by an angry mob scandalized by such behavior, but whatever.”

Jett laughed. “April Summer, you’re a dweeb and a fool, but you’re fun, my dude.”

“Glad to be able to entertain you, my liege. I can’t remember when I applied to become the court jester, but I’m content I qualify.”

They found a spot on the grass that wasn’t already taken and April placed a blanket dutifully on the ground. He took Jay from the carrier and Jett watched in disbelief while the kid began trotting about, giggling, while April encouraged him.

“I had no idea he was old enough to walk.”

April threw him a lopsided grin. “He’s a great kid. Now, you go over there and call for him.”

Jett threw a few glances around, but it looked like everyone was absorbed with their own families and games. Jay almost stumbled, but valiantly continued his race as April was hurrying by his side, ready to catch him, just in case. Jett grabbed the baby and lifted him, making his giggles louder.

It was fun having a kid. Even if Jay wasn’t his, Jett was pretty sure his perspective on babies was changed entirely.

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April was carefully feeding Jay, who was, to his surprise, less fussy now than at home. It had to be the fresh air and the activity making him hungry. April stole a few glances at Jett who appeared to be completely relaxed and enjoying the pleasant weather. He was leaning back on his elbows and had a smile of his face that made April think Jett was pleased with something.

“You said you didn’t find Jay’s mom,” April started.

Jett threw him one lazy look. “When are you going to feed me, too?”

“Feed you? What are you, two?”

Jett grinned. “Put food in my mouth.”

“All I got for us is some crackers. You took me by surprise. I would have made some sandwiches or something. Next time, more planning in advance, please.”

“Yeah, sure. Throw some at me.”

“What? Crackers?”

Jett nodded. With a sigh, April reached for his knapsack. He took a handful of crackers and threw it all in Jett’s face. Jay began clapping, very much amused.

April could barely hold it in, as Jett made first a surprised face and then pretended to growl. He then picked a cracker from where it fell on the blanket and was about to throw it into his mouth when April snatched it.

“Hey, that’s not nice. Don’t eat things that have been on the floor.”

“Hey, it’s a blanket, and it’s clean. And I’m hungry. It’s your fault you threw food at me.”

“All right,” April said, without hiding his exasperation. “Here.”

He held one cracker with two fingers. Jett leaned in just enough to grab it, quite delicately for someone of his size. His caramel eyes flashed at April, and April felt his heart skip a beat.

What the hell were they doing? April took out the bag of crackers and pressed it against Jett’s chest. “Here. Just tell me when you need water.”

The next minutes were spent in silence, as April focused on feeding the baby.

“Who’s Carina?” he asked.

Jett stopped munching his crackers. “You eavesdropped.”

“Yeah. Is she the girl with the spiky hair?”

Jett just nodded and looked away. April had a feeling it wasn’t that great an idea to prod him further, but at this point, he couldn’t help himself.

“Could she be Jay’s mom?”

Jett shook his head “Nah. She’s in the can. But you know that since you listened.”

“Prison? What for?”



“I don’t know the details. The thing is she had no baby, and she couldn’t have left Jay by my doorsteps. Also, she never called me an asshole, even when I deserved it. You know, like that note said. And she would never leave a baby like this.”

“Maybe she had no choice,” April said. “As for calling you an asshole, maybe she changed her mind.”

Jett didn’t appear to taste the joke. “I’m telling you, man. She can’t be.”

“Did you wish she were?” April asked, his heart growing small.

Jett wiped his mouth and pushed aside the bag of crackers. He shrugged and brushed off the question. But April had a feeling he knew the answer to that one.

“So there’s a possibility someone messed up and left a baby by your doorsteps. A baby who’s not yours, and not any of your ex-girlfriends’.”

Jett cracked his neck and grimaced.

“Stop it with that. It’s a bad habit.”

“Oh, yeah? Well, it’s none of your business.”

The words weren’t spoken with ill will, but April recoiled a little.

“We can’t keep Jay if he’s not yours.”

“And do what with him? Give him to some strangers to put him in the system?”

April shook his head. “You’re right. For all we know, he might be yours. And I wouldn’t give him away.”

“Good. That’s the attitude, dweeb,” Jett said, and it already seemed like he was no longer upset.

April breathed out in relief. He was no closer to finding out about Carina, but at least he knew Jett’s heart was in the right place.

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As soon as they were back, and April took Jay upstairs for a nap, the atmosphere in the house seemed to change. April could sense it, although he had never thought of himself as some psychic.

Jett was plopped in front of the TV, but the frown on his face told anyone looking that he was thinking of something and it was nothing pleasant.

April had a feeling that he would better see about other stuff to do than ask Jett about what seemed to bother him. However, he had never been good at ignoring people who were upset, so, with the risk of getting the short end of the stick in all that and be told to fuck off, he went directly at Jett, and put himself between him and the TV.

“Hey, I was watching that,” Jett protested, but his eyes moved to set on April.

“Right. What’s the show about?”

“I don’t know. Penguins and stuff,” Jett replied with a shrug.

April moved just enough to let the screen come into view. The contestants in some stupid reality show were forced to eat insects. “Penguins. Sure.”

Jett turned off the TV and looked at April. “Now that you’re here, what do you want?”

“You’re in a bad mood.”

“So? What do you care?”

The question was a marble ball, a dull sound in the sand. April remembered that other time when Jett had said that. But then was then, and now was now.

“I don’t. You’re just ruining my Zen. Do you have any idea what your bad vibes can do to this house?”

“You’re really into hippy shit. I don’t give a damn. And, by the way, it’s your fault. Why do you want to know about Carina?”

April took a second to weigh things. Whatever. He went straight for it. “She was special to you. She might still be. Are you thinking about visiting her?”

“I don’t know where she is, exactly, and whoever answered her phone was too pissed to tell me anything.”

“This person, who was it?”

“I don’t know. Some chick. Maybe Carina’s sister.”

“Have you met her then?”

“Once, but only in passing. Let’s say we can’t stand each other’s guts. And I’m not sure if that was her, on the phone. I suppose it was.”

“Are you afraid of a girl?” April snickered.

Jett shot him a crossed look. “Carina’s not Jay’s mom. End of story. And Jay looks nothing like her.”

“When they are so little, it’s hard to tell who they look like. Anyway, Jay seems to be a natural with girls. When I got to school this morning, all my female friends were all over him. Jay must be your kid, at least, or this much success with the ladies would be uncanny.”

Jett smiled. April was a bit relieved. But the war was still ahead.

“Come on, what’s the story with Carina? Was she the one and you let her get away?”

Jett just shook his head and looked away. “Nah. That happened before.”

“What?”

“I let someone get away.”

“Then search for that girlfriend.”

“It wasn’t a girlfriend,” Jett replied.

“Ah, your charm didn’t work on that one, huh?”

Jett threw him a dubious look. April had no idea what to make of it.

“You know what? Forget it. I thought it might make you feel good to talk, but it looks like you’re not the type,” April concluded.

“Wait,” Jett called after him.

April turned, feeling hopeful, but not daring to show it.

“Did you come down here because you wanted to make me feel good?”

April nodded, again hoping that his enthusiasm didn’t make him appear too eager.

“Then there’s something you can do,” Jett said with a smirk.

His earlier enthusiasm faded like mist. April cocked his head and looked at Jett cautiously.

“What?”

“Come closer.”

Two words, but they were enough. Something of Jett’s voice, when it dropped low like that, turned April all putty on the inside. And, he told himself, with a huge mental sigh, just like the many women in Jett’s life, he had not one ounce of kryptonite to deal with this guy.

## *Chapter Seven – Are You Freaked Out?*

April wasn't sure he should move and obey Jett's order, but it looked like, for the moment, his body wanted to do that and who was he to argue with his own anatomy?

He stopped in front of Jett. "Well?" he asked. "What should I do now?" April tried to sound casual, but his voice was a bit weird.

Jett's grin grew broader. "Turn."

April sighed and obeyed. And instantly let out a small gasp as his ass was grabbed forcefully. "Dude!"

He tried to get away, but Jett caught him by the waistband of his pants and dragged him back. "Hey, you said you wanted to make me feel good," Jett pointed out.

"I wasn't thinking about putting my ass up for fondling!"

From the force of the pull, April landed on Jett's lap, and now he was kept tightly by the waist.

"Sorry, talking doesn't do it for me. Fondling a cute butt might do the trick, though."

April could feel his cheeks burning. Jett was the biggest asshole in the universe for playing him like that. It wasn't fair. "Don't say that!" He struggled to get away, but Jett made almost no effort to keep him in place.

"You won't get away. Since you're such a goody-two-shoes and you want everyone in this house to be happy and sing 'Kumbaya', it's only fair that you practice what you preach."

"How? By letting you defile my body?"

"Defile your body?" Jett guffawed. "Seriously, dude, just how virgin are you?"

"Um, like one-hundred-percent or something?" April replied as he wiggled his ass, hoping to make Jett uncomfortable, too.

"Ah, so you've never sucked a cock?"

"Of course not! What do you take me for?"

"What about jerking off a dude?"

"No way!" April resigned with a sigh and stopped struggling. "I want to do things like that with someone special."

"Jerking off is not that special. All guys do it."

“Is this argument leading somewhere or you’re this annoying only because you can?”

“Actually, it is. Let’s jerk off together, April.”

April froze for a second, and then he burst into laughter. “You almost got me.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Jett said and snuck his arm around April’s waist like a boa. “Come on. A little jerking off between pals never hurt anyone.”

“Oh, fuck, you’re serious,” April moaned. “Jett, normal pals don’t jerk off together. And we’re not pals!”

“We live in the same house; we raise a kid together ... I’d say we’re more than pals,” Jett said matter-of-factly.

April was about to protest some more when Jett stood up with him in his arms, and then suddenly put him down on the sofa. From the move, April ended with his legs apart and Jett between them, leaning over him, or better said, crushing him.

“April, dude, because of you and that little kid upstairs, I find myself in a dating slump.”

“It must be so tough,” April said and rolled his eyes.

He could feel something against his crotch. Also, Jett was right in his face, and they were too close for comfort. Actually, they were too close for his comfort. Where he stood, Jett appeared to be quite comfortable.

“Yeah, it is. What? You don’t jerk off?”

April blushed. There had been way too many things happening within just a few days to think of that. Well, he had thought of it after Jett had kissed him, but he had pushed those thoughts away.

“I do, but --”

“So let’s just do it together!”

“Wait. Can’t you do it on your own? Watch some porn, for fuck’s sake.”

“I don’t like doing it by myself. It’s boring,” Jett replied.

“Are you trying to tell me that you need an audience? What for? Usually, people jerk off when they’re alone. When they have company, they prefer to do other things,” April explained, overly conscious of how he was babbling and couldn’t look Jett in the eyes.

“Not an audience. What I need is a hand. Yours.”

April swallowed hard. “My hand? What for?”

“Do you want me to spell it for you?” Jett got closer, and April let his eyelids drop, the other’s breath hot on his face. “You help me out, and I help you out in return. Come on. It’s fun.”

“Really? How many guys have you jerked off with?”

“None.”

April risked one look at Jett. Thankfully, he wasn’t looking at him. But his caramel eyes, fringed by darker eyelashes that made April sighed against himself, looked somewhere lower. Just as he realized what Jett was looking at, their lips came together.

For the umpteenth time, it wasn’t fair. April had no defenses when it came to Jett and his kisses. Firm lips were crushing his, making him open his mouth, and accept a teasing tongue that knew what to do to him to make him lose his mind.

He whimpered softly and began kissing back. Since he had lost already, what was the point to resist?

Jett pulled away. Then he grinned. “April, my dude, you’re so into me.”

April pouted. “Am not.”

“You kissed me back.”

Oh, he would have liked to wipe that smirk off Jett’s face, but instead, he just reached out and kissed him, taking him by surprise.

That lasted only for a few seconds, though. Jett came back with a vengeance. He grabbed April by the back of his neck and began kissing him furiously.

They were probably doing all kinds of funny sounds, but luckily, Jay was upstairs and deep in sleep, and no one else was witness to their craziness. At the moment, that was what it felt like, April thought with the last shred of conscious thought.

“You have the best lips,” Jett whispered to him, as he pulled away only to attack April’s lips again and again.

April begged to differ a little. He had kissed a few boys in his life, but he could not remember anything like this. When he had kissed Jett at thirteen, it had been clumsy, and chaste, and nothing like the scorching heat he now shared with the grownup young man crushing him under his weight. So the best lips actually belonged to Jett, not him.

“Thanks, I guess,” April replied, for lack of anything intelligent to say.

Jett climbed on top of him and manipulated his body so that they were touching now, head to toes. April felt funny, but not as he would have expected while being crashed by someone bigger than him.

“What are we doing?” April whispered.

He had no idea why he was whispering. They were alone in that big house, save for a sleeping baby.

“I don’t know about you, but I’m going to kiss you again,” Jett said and grounded their crotches together, earning an immediate small grunt from April.

“Um, no, please, I mean, wait!” April hoped the urgency in his voice was enough to cut through Jett’s evident determination to do as he pleased.

“What for?”

“Jett, my dude, to speak your language, you’re straight, and I’m, um, well, a virgin.”

Jett smirked. “Would you like me to correct that?”

April bit the inside of his cheek a little. This situation was way out of hand already. “A hand job can’t really take away my virginity.”

“See? I don’t want anything extreme. Your lips on mine, and your hand on my cock.”

Just the way Jett said the word ‘cock’ made April feel funny. So, okay, he knew well what it meant to be horny since he was that almost half of his waking hours, but this was different.

It had to be because this was Jett, April’s first crush ever, and second to none. April had liked other boys throughout the years but always hesitated before doing more than kissing and a bit of petting. There was an explanation for that.

It could be that April had never gotten over Jett, and, obviously, that was bad since Jett was straight and even had a kid. Just putting reality into a sentence like that should have crushed any secret hopes and dreams he might have nurtured.

Instead, the reality was Jett crushing him and one inch away from kissing him with those maddening lips and tongue. What kind of reality was that? April wanted to pinch himself, only he couldn’t because he was thoroughly immobilized.

“What are you thinking about?” Jett leaned and bit April’s bottom lip playfully.

“This is weird. We shouldn’t --”

“Shut up, April,” Jett commanded softly. “Your mouth is a golden treasure when you shut up.”

“Sure, sure.” April scoffed and tried to move a little.

“I mean it. You have the most kissable mouth I’ve ever kissed.”

April licked his lips.

“Tempting,” Jett whispered and kissed him again, brushing their lips together, without tongue.

This was worse, in a way. It made April feel the need to take the initiative, and that was bad. The only initiative he had right now was to kiss Jett silly until he had his fill.

“Jett,” he protested and moved his head away.

“No wonder you’re still a virgin. You’re playing hard to get.”

“For the record, my being hard to get implies that you would want to pursue me romantically --”

Jett’s laughter stopped him. “Seriously, dude, who talks like that? It’s like you’re saying stuff from a book or something.”

“I’m just trying to be considerate,” April said, hoping the daggers he was shooting from his eyes were enough to make Jett back the fuck off.

No such luck. His daggers were blunt, or Jett had too thick skin for them.

“Considerate?”

“I’m not one of your girlfriends, Jett.”

“Sure thing you’re not.”

“I don’t have boobs --”

Jett snuck one hand under his t-shirt and pinched one of April’s nipples hard.

“Ouch! Hands off, idiot!”

“Sorry, my bad. What else do you have to say?”

“I don’t dare to say anything. Come on, dude, this is wrong.”

“It feels good.” Jett flashed another grin at him.

“It’s ridiculous, that’s what it is. You’re straight; I’m gay; we could never work!”

“Hey, I’m not asking you to marry me. I just want a handjob. If you hadn’t been so fussy, we could have been done by now.”

“Glad to hear that you wouldn’t take long,” April said dryly.



“That’s not what I meant,” Jett replied quickly. “Plus, if you’re so against it, why are you rubbing your cock against me?”

“I’m not!” April protested and froze.

Maybe he was. But that was hardly the point. The point was him not losing his head over this. For Jett, it was just a bit of fun, but for him ... Well, for him, it would be his most secret dream turned into reality only to become a nightmare.

“By the way, how big are you?” Jett questioned.

“How big --”

“Inches? How many?”

“I didn’t measure it, what the hell!?”

“Liar.” Jett grinned. “Let’s compare, April!”

“Are you going to let me go if we do?”

“Yeah.”

April knew he couldn’t trust a word coming out of that sexy mouth that was driving him insane with just a brush of the lips, but at least there was a chance he could make a run for it since Jett needed to get off of him for the presumed comparison of cocks.

He sat gingerly on the sofa, as Jett released him. The guy had no modesty. Jett pulled his cock out of his jeans and gave it a few tugs to make it grow to its full potential. He was obviously proud of it. April stared in fascination.

“Seriously? Never measured yours? I thought gay dudes were into cocks. What kind of a gay dude are you?”

April didn’t reply. He was chewing his bottom lip, looking longingly at Jett’s cock, a wonderful thing, really, not extremely long, but thick and equipped with a mouth-watering mushroom. He swallowed a few times.

He made a move to jump off the couch when Jett reached for the waistband of his pants. “I can do it on my own,” he said.

Hurriedly, he whipped out his cock. There was no need to rub it to make it hard because the thing was stiff as a rod.

“Nice,” Jett said and wrapped his hand around it.

April squirmed. That was Jett's hand on his cock, pulling the skin and making it go over the head. "Hey," he whispered, "we were supposed to compare or something."

There was sweat pooling at the small of his back, but what Jett was doing to him wasn't all unpleasant. Jett stood up and pulled him to his feet. Then he pushed his jeans down a little and freed his balls, too. April looked, trying hard to convince himself he didn't, really, he didn't want to touch that heavy delicious sack.

Jett's hand was inside his pants, too, and this time, April didn't protest. Jett pressed their cocks together, aligning them. April watched at the difference in skin tone, surprised at the darker color of Jett's cock and how white his own looked in comparison. Also, Jett's cock looked like it had seen plenty of action, a bit more rugged, with thick veins crossing over, while his was smooth and pale, and definitely thinner.

There was little comfort in the fact that his cock was a bit longer. He was about to say something, to stop everything, when Jett began talking.

"Wow, dude, I think you're sporting eight inches or something."

"I wouldn't know," April mumbled.

"Damn, this feels good." Jett grabbed both cocks and began rubbing them together, up and down.

"That's, um --"

April thought he was about to lose his balance when Jett caught him and kissed him. The other hand continued its task. Damn, the pressure, it was awesome, and for his poor dick that had seen no action lately, not even the slight touch of a neglectful hand, it was too much.

Also, Jett's tongue was in his mouth now, and April didn't even care about why he was against it. It felt good, right?

He would just worry about that later. Right now --

Oh, no.

April squirmed and protested and moaned, as he came. Jett interrupted the kiss and looked down. "Wow, so fast."

April bristled. "I don't have time to jerk off all day long like you," he said, his breathing harsh and unforgiving.

The climax had been too short, but that wasn't the issue. The issue was how to run away so that he could wallow in shame without an audience.

"Do me," Jett whispered to him.

April put one hand over Jett's cock, unsure of whether he could do it. He was still trembling a bit. But the thing was pulled away from him.

"Here, some lotion to help you," Jett joked and wiped his fingers full of April's cum over his own cock before pushing it again into his hand.

That was odd. And hot, in capital letters. April's only regret was that he couldn't get another hard-on so fast. Boldly, he began moving his hand up and down, as he still worked to gain his breath back.

Jett rested his arms over his shoulders and proceeded to kiss him again. This time, he was taking his time, and April realized he was pretty much doomed. Therefore, he should enjoy it while it lasted.

He cocked his head to one side so that he could allow Jett to kiss him deeper, better. In the meantime, he got busy by grabbing Jett by the balls, in the most literal sense of the phrase.

By the satisfied hum coming off Jett, he wasn't doing a half-bad job. At least, he had some experience with jerking off, and having his hands full with Jett's manhood, all of it, felt oddly satisfying. It was like his hands couldn't get enough of it. They moved, rubbed, rolled the balls, pulled and went at it like April's life depended on that.

Jett withdrew but kept his hands on April's shoulders. "Fuck, man, your hands are so fucking good. Yeah, like this, fuck, don't stop. Right there ... Ah, fuck, fuck, fuck!"

That was Jett's way of issuing a warning. April didn't stop. He closed his eyes, though. There was only this much he could take; his fantasies had never been this vivid, obviously, and nothing beat reality.

Jett was sexy, fucking hot, handsome, and had an awesome cock that April was squeezing of everything it had right that very moment. There was something wrong with that picture, and April only hoped he could make light of the situation as soon as they were over.

Which was now. He blinked and withdrew, wincing at the viscous liquid on his fingers. "I need like a tissue or something," he mumbled and scurried away.

Jett was breathing hard, and he blinked at April's words, but he didn't say anything and didn't stop him from running away.

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Jett was still in a pleasant daze minutes after, but the fact that April didn't seem to care about coming back was starting to cut through that languid laziness and piss him off a little. April's hand on his cock had been frigging amazing. And the one on his balls. April was a virgin, but at least he knew what to do with the male equipment when needed.

He had acted on instinct mostly, but Jett admitted to himself that it was more than that. He could just tell himself that it was convenient since they were housemates of sorts, and there was not much he could do to get off. But that wasn't it. Maya had called him, and a few other girls who were into having a good time as much as he normally was had called, as well, but he had declined each time.

The only person he was in the mood to get freaky with was April Summer. As much as he was a dweeb, he was cute as hell, and he looked so much like Theo that it fucking hurt to look at him. Theo was gone, and who knew if Jett could ever meet him again, so April was the closest thing to his most secret fantasy; that was the only chance at making it happen in his entire life.

Jett wouldn't admit that to April, though. The dweeb had been clear about wanting to save his cute ass for someone special, just like a chick reading way too many romantic books or whatever.

Jett had no business with that. There was this, and there was that, meaning that he couldn't see himself romancing a dude. Even with girls, he sucked at the romance stuff. He just went at it, and then let the flow take him wherever the fuck it wanted because there was no other way.

He caressed his cock, not yet willing to put it back. April would learn soon that jerking off was part of Jett's life, and since he was so good at handjobs, he would have to be an enthusiastic participant in that routine.

All right, so he was lying to himself a little. While he had enjoyed being jerked off by April's smooth hands, he had actually liked it more when he had made April come. So maybe it wasn't all clear, and he liked to see April's cock more and feel it, too.

He had never held another dude's cock in his hand, and that had been much better than expected. Even more, he had liked the feel of April's cock against his. It was remarkable how different they were. Jett had a mind to ask April to get naked so that he could look at him and explore him all over.

Now those had to be some pretty gay thoughts, right? Jett shrugged. He had never been a bigot. Unlike other straight dudes, he had never felt challenged or threatened, even when some gay dudes had come right at him. Actually, that experience had helped even if he had said no. Because that was that gave him courage when he had proposed April to jerk off together.

Why the hell wasn't the dweeb coming down? With a displeased wince, Jett put his cock into his jeans and went upstairs. April was just sitting on the floor, next to the door to the bedroom where Jay slept. His arms were wrapped tightly around his knees, and he seemed startled when Jett appeared.

"You don't have to guard the door, you know?" Jett made an attempt to joke.

April stared at him, a bit confused. "I wasn't."

"Then what are you doing here, like this?"

"Just sitting."

Jett frowned in thought and then he moved to sit by April's side. "Dude, are you freaked out?"

"Freaked out?" April echoed his words, his voice weak.

"Yeah, about jerking off together," Jett went straight to the point.

"I'm not."

"You look like you are." Jett put one arm around April's shoulders and sighed. "Look, it was fucking it, do you get it? I've never gotten a handjob like that."

April snorted. "You can't seriously mean that. Are you buttering me up for something?"

"Yeah. For doing it again."

April squirmed and looked away. Jett felt sort of bad.

"All right, I thought it could be fun. But we don't have to do it if you're this squeamish."

"Squeamish? Do you think I'm grossed out or something? I can't be, because you're hot, and actually --" April swallowed his words. "Don't you have the feeling that we have this conversation in reverse?"

"Reverse? Like how?" Jett asked.

He liked to keep April close like that. He could feel his warmth, and there was more to that than he cared to admit. April smelled nice, not only because he seemed to be into long showers and washing his hair, but it was because it was just that. Nice.

"Dude, you're sniffing my hair. Are you secretly a dog?"

"Way to derail the conversation. What do you mean by 'reverse'?"

"I actually wanted to say ... Hey, aren't you the one supposed to be freaked out? You're the straight dude, after all."

"I'm not freaked out," Jett said matter-of-factly. "I liked what we did. And I like kissing you. It feels good."

"So you're not straight-straight?" April questioned, and turned his big eyes toward him.

Jett shrugged. "I've only kissed girls before."

April sighed and buried his head into the crook of his shoulders. From there, his voice came out muffled. “So it’s like I’m a girl to you or something?”

“Nah. Told you. With that cock? And no, before your overactive imagination pushes you to ask me if I’m into chicks with dicks, I’m not, okay?”

April peeked at him from below, half turning his face. “Are you into me?”

Good question. Jett pursed his lips and thought. “You have the best lips,” he pointed out.

“But I’m gay,” April said. “Besides being a dude, which doesn’t seem to bother you.”

“So? I have nothing against gay dudes. They have done nothing to me.”

“Are you going to tell me now that some of your friends are gay?” April asked.

“No.”

“So besides me, you don’t have any gay acquaintances.”

Jett sighed. “I do. My best friend is gay.”

April made a face.

“He is,” Jett insisted.

“How is that possible? You seem all macho and stuff.”

“I thought you said my bun shows how much I’m in touch with my feminine side.”

“I don’t really think that. But how come you’re best friend with a gay guy?”

“It’s not like I chose him from a catalog. He’s just a cool dude.”

“Has he ever had a crush on you?” April questioned further.

Jett looked at April, a bit surprised. “Why do you want to know that?”

April shrugged. “No reason.”

“Yeah, like I’d believe that. But, to satisfy your curiosity, I’m not his type.”

“Really?” April’s eyes grew wide.

Jett smirked. “But I’m yours, right? Come on, dweeb, just relax. I’m not going to jump you, but if you ever want to share a handjob, I’m game.”

April moaned and buried his face again into his arms. “It’s all so simple with you, isn’t it?”

“Why shouldn’t it be?”

April sighed and appeared to relax. “What’s your friend like?”

“What? Do you want to date him or something? I’m not hooking you two up.”

“Why not?” April asked and looked up again.

“Because you’re my house pet, that’s why. I don’t want you running off into the sunset with that guy.”

“Hey, I don’t even know his name, do I? What makes you think I’d do that? And now, look who’s speaking from books.”

“I was making a joke, dweeb. As for what makes me say that it’s simple. You’re just Zane’s type.”

“Zane? His name is Zane? That sounds pretty cool.”

“It doesn’t. It’s just a frigging name,” Jett protested, suddenly annoyed with April’s interest in his best friend.

“How does he look like? Does he come here often?”

Jett stared at April, and then he smiled. April the Fool was not that big a fool, after all. He was pulling his leg like an expert. He ruffled the spiky blond hair. “You’ll meet him. But be warned. The moment he sees you, he’ll try to get into your pants.”

“Like you?” April teased, and flashed a smile at him.

“Hey, I only want a handjob. This dude wants it all, the whole enchilada.”

“Do you mean anal sex?” April leaned closer and whispered in his ear.

“Is this where you suppose the straight dude will make a run for it? You’re a virgin, dweeb. You have nothing on me.”

“It was worth a try,” April said airily.

“Come on, stop sitting here, like you’re oppressed or something. Come make me food.”

“Ah, so that the real oppression can begin,” April replied.

“Move your sweet ass already. And, if Jay starts crying, don’t worry; I’m on duty.”

“Should I count on you?”

“The alternative is to let me cook, and you don’t want us to go there. The kitchen might end up in flames.”

“Well, since it’s all so risky, okay. Leave the cooking to me. Do you need me to show you how to change a diaper?”

“Change a what?”

April laughed and pushed himself up. Then he offered one hand to Jett, taking him by surprise.

“Don’t worry. We will figure out everything. And you will learn how to change diapers.”



## *Chapter Eight – Fetch!*

It was suspiciously silent upstairs. April mixed the pasta with the carbonara sauce he had just made and carefully turned off the stove and wiped his hands on a towel. The kitchen needed a bit of cleaning up, just like the entire house, but he had been too busy to start. There were just so many things he had to do.

One of them was to convince Jett that he needed to go to classes. For some reason, Jett was seriously against that. Was it because he wasn't in college? Somehow, April couldn't imagine Jett being jealous over such things, but who knew?

It was strange enough to feel so familiar around Jett, yet to try coping with the fact that they were grownups now – sort of – and not the same as their thirteen-year-old versions. The truth was he felt at ease, and that could mean that Jett hadn't changed that much.

Or maybe he was projecting his wants and dreams onto this gangster-type Jett of whom he knew nothing about. If Jett had a gay best friend, he should have, at least theoretically, tested already whether he was attracted to guys or not.

But, if he were to listen to what Jett was saying, the guy had never attempted anything with another boy, which meant ...

What the hell did it mean? April still couldn't get his head wrapped around having had jerked off with Jett. It was like that was from another movie, or better said a dream, and he was bound to wake up soon.

Jett had been cool about it, too. How could a straight guy be so unbothered by being jerked off by another dude? April shook his head. It was a premiere for him, too, only that he was pretty much shaken if he thought about it.

He went upstairs and knocked softly on the door. There was laughter coming from the inside, so he went in.

Only to witness Jett throwing toys toward the edge of the bed while lying casually against the headboard. At the same time, Jay happily crawled to get the thrown toys.

“Good boy, now bring it back,” Jett said, and it looked like his kid was listening to him and was hurrying back with the toy clutched in his mouth.

April remained nonplussed for a second, and then he moved quickly. “Jay, give me the toy.”

The boy looked up at him. April sighed and made a move to remove the toy. Jay turned away, shaking his head just like a puppy up to no good. Exasperated, April caught him, tickled him a little to make him release the toy, and then grabbed the squeaky thing and threw it straight to

Jett's head. The object made a high pitched sound as it connected with the crown of Jett's head and ricocheted, bouncing against the wall above the bed.

"Your kid is not a dog!"

Jett stared at him and then burst into laughter. "Come on, man. He's so good at taking directions; it's frigging amazing!"

April pursed his lips and balanced Jay on his hip, as he had seen his sister doing with his nephews. "Have you any idea how ridiculous that looks?"

"Really? Look at him. He's happy." Jett pointed at Jay, who didn't seem bothered by being interrupted, and now tried to eat some of April's hair.

"He's growing teeth, and he would chew anything. That doesn't make him a dog! And I thought you were going to change his diaper. Oh, god, what's that smell? Great! You didn't change him."

Jett shrugged and put his arms up, his hands under his head. "You're the mommy."

"I didn't know we were playing house," April pointed out. "Get off the bed. Bring me that thing over there."

"This blanket-like thingy?" Jett asked as he kept the object in his hand and stared at it dubiously.

"It's a changing pad, and seriously, since you bought everything, how could you forget already?"

"I just showed the shopkeeper your list, and she put everything in a basket."

"Of course. Always minimum effort with you, right?"

"Oh, fuck, why does he smell so bad? And why is he laughing?"

"Obviously, because he is a bit of a punk, just like his daddy, and he enjoys this."

April worked efficiently, hoping Jett wouldn't realize that he could count on the fingers of his hands how many times he had done that until now.

"Now," April said, after scooping Jay into his arms, "we need to talk about your responsibilities as the father of this baby."

"I don't know for sure if I am, though," Jett protested. "But the kid is fun."

"The kid is not fun," April said in an even, hopefully menacing voice. "He is a responsibility, and first of all, yours. And hey, we can establish that. We need to send some DNA samples from you and Jay and see if they match. You know, send them to one of those websites they use on TV."

Jett looked away. "What the hell do we do if they don't?"

"Maybe we start digging more to find out who left Jay on your doorsteps. Don't worry; we won't give him away, just like that. Don't you want to know?"

Jett seemed to ponder. "I suppose. But it takes a while until we get the results back, right?"

"It could take a couple of weeks, I think. But we should do it. In the meantime, no dog training for Jay. How could you have the heart to treat him like that?"

"Hey, we were both having fun until you showed up. You really don't like to party, do you?"

"Not really, no. I hope your tastes go beyond playing fetch with human beings," April said.

"All right," Jett said with a sigh. "But he's my kid."

"We'll see about that."

"Yeah, we'll see. But I know he is."

"Do you now?"

"Yeah. I just feel it."

April stopped for a moment. That was a pretty sweet thing to say, and coming from someone like Jett, it meant a lot.

"Also, he wants to kiss you, just like me," Jett pointed out with a smile.

"Ouch!" April pulled away. "He's trying to bite me, just for the record."

"See? It's better if he chews on toys, and not your cheek."

"You're such a joker. How about you go on a little trip to the store to get a crib and some teething rings? I forgot to tell you about those," April said, feeling secretly guilty. He still depended heavily on Google, and he still didn't know everything.

"I'm hungry," Jett replied.

"All right. I wonder who the bigger baby here is. Let's get downstairs."

"Why are you taking Jay with you?"

"You're obviously not the only man in the house I must feed," April replied over his shoulder.

"Hey, you left something here," Jett said.

April looked only to see how Jett was pointing at the used diaper carefully wrapped and put in a plastic bag. He watched it like it was something of an alien nature. "It's packed. So throw it away. You won't lose a hand."

"Me? Seriously?"

"Yeah, you. Having a baby is not all fun." Damn, he was such a fraud pretending to know everything about raising babies and whatnot. But somehow, he wanted to annoy Jett just a tiny little bit.

"Can we potty train him already?"

April made a mental note to ask Google about potty training, too. "I think he's a bit too young for that," he said promptly. "Ah, and get a diaper pail from the store, too, okay?" he hurried to change the topic a little.

"This kid is going to ruin me," Jett said, shaking his head.

"Better him than strange girlfriends," April replied.

"Strange? Where did you come up with that?"

"They must be. One of them left Jay, this beautiful little baby, at your door. Seriously, who does that?"

"Maybe she had a reason."

"Yeah. She hated your guts and wanted you to suffer by getting you to change diapers and endure having pureed food thrown in your face."

"Good thing I have you," Jett said, and his grin became larger.

"Yeah, right?" April said in the most sarcastic voice he could muster.

It was a bit unfair that he couldn't be upset with Jett. It was enough to look at him with those pretty eyes that somehow looked at home on his face, despite his punkish exterior, and April was sold.

He had always been, but that was a different story, from another time, and he needed to stop thinking of that.

"Are you daydreaming?" Jett asked. "We're hungry."

April rolled his eyes. "One can't have a peaceful moment around here, can he?"

"Not when we're hungry."

“Funny how you now include Jay in your demands.”

“It’s easy. We are your men, and you should take good care of us.”

April sighed. “All right, men,” he said the last word with another roll of his eyes. “Let’s get you fed already.”

They were playing house, joke aside, April thought as Jett placed one hand on his shoulder and guided him toward the door.

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It was completely normal to watch April feeding Jay. Jett had a feeling Jay played at being fussy only because April doted on him so much. He would have liked to see April fussing about him, too. The dweeb was too easy.

“Let me try,” he said, after a while, seeing how April had half of the food from Jay’s bowl already in his hair. The kid was having way too much fun torturing April.

“Be my guest,” April said and passed Jay over, then pushed the bowl across the table.

“Shouldn’t he have his own chair or something?”

“Yeah, a high chair,” April said while fiddling with his phone for some reason, his eyes buried in it. “I’ll put it on your shopping list, too.”

“Damn, expenses just never end with this kid, don’t they?”

“I guess not,” April said with a shrug. “Now, let me see your technique, daddy.”

Jett smirked. He somehow liked it when April teased him like that. “Watch and learn, dweeb.” He turned toward the baby. “Jay,” he said in the most serious voice he could muster. “You’re old enough now, buddy. One year old is like ‘yeah, I should start eating on my own now’, get it?” Jett handed the baby the spoon. “This is the thing you eat with. And that’s the food. Dig in.”

He turned toward April and grinned in satisfaction. Who said parenting was hard? April crossed his arms over his chest and watched him, his lips pursed. Even when he was pissed, he was cute. Jett wanted to reach across the table, grab him and kiss him, just like that.

He was about to say something when something warm and mushy landed on his face. April started laughing, grabbing the table with both hands. Jett needed to think this through. He scooped some of the food in Jay’s bowl, and then lobbed it onto the kid’s face.

“Jett, what the hell?” April jumped to his feet.

“He started it!”

“He’s just a baby!”

“And? He can take one in the face!”

They both stopped and looked at Jay. His bottom lip was trembling, but he wasn’t crying yet. April took another step, but Jett put one arm up to stop him. “I read a little about that. They’re like animals, but a little more clever,” Jett whispered. “He needs to know who the pack leader is.”

“Are you for real?” April replied, but he whispered, too.

“If we let him do what he wants, he’ll think he’s the boss,” Jett continued.

“But look at him, he’s almost --”

“A-ha, almost. Not yet. Let him get this.”

Jay looked at the two adults in the room with curious eyes. He no longer seemed upset about the glob of food descending his nose. Instead, he put his tongue out and grabbed the pureed carrots.

“Whew, gross,” April protested. “Is this what you want to teach your kid? To eat with his nose?”

“Hey, at least he’s eating,” Jett pointed out.

April sighed, and then his eyes grew wide. “He’s grabbing the spoon! OMG, he’s doing it!”

Jett puffed out his chest, careful to balance Jay on his knee. “That’s my boy.”

“Oh, no,” April said and seemed to deflate all of a sudden.

“What?”

“Look at him. And here comes a new bad habit.”

After studying the spoon in his hand, Jay placed it, along with its contents, on his nose, and then put out his tongue. April smacked his forehead. “Just look at him.”

Jett shrugged. “Hey, he’s not throwing everything in your hair. Be thankful for it. And we’ll take baby steps, okay? Get it? Baby steps for a baby boy.”

April dropped on his chair. “I guess it’s better than nothing.”

“Now that I made the kid eat, put some food in me, too.”

“All right,” April agreed as he stood up. “Just make sure not to eat with your nose, okay?”

“It won’t happen if you feed me with a spoon. Hey, we could eat together.”

“We’re sitting at the same table. Of course, we’ll eat together.”

“Nah. My hands are busy with Jay. And I have a free knee. Come here and feed me. I’m not kidding.”

“You’re serious,” April confirmed as he looked at Jett.

“Come on. It’s not like I’ll let you starve. Get food and a spoon. You’re going to feed me and you both.”

“With the same spoon? What the hell am I talking? The same fork. It’s pasta.”

Jett laughed. “I had my tongue in your mouth. Now you can’t stand the idea of eating with the same fork?”

“Let’s just say that I’m starving, and that’s why I’m making this compromise.”

“You said that out loud,” Jett teased him.

“I did?” April said, but he smiled, too.

Jett was satisfied to watch April fill a bowl with what looked like pretty tasty pasta and coming back with it and a single fork.

He didn’t flinch as April sat down hard on his knee, to make a point. A fork wrapped in spaghetti was pushed into his face. “Eat.”

Jett didn’t protest. He let out a moan of appreciation as his taste buds were regaled with the tastiest food he had ever had. “Are you sure you’re still single? I’d marry you,” he said.

“Shut up, moron,” April mumbled. Jay pushed his spoon toward April. “I’m not going to eat from your spoon, Jay,” he warned.

“I think he wants to be fed, too. See? It’s all about setting an example,” Jett said.

“Fine. Babies,” April agreed and took Jay’s spoon to feed him, too.

“Don’t forget to eat, too,” Jett advised him. “Except for your juicy ass, you’re all bones.”

“I just have a fast metabolism.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Shut up. I mean, open up, ‘cause here it comes.”

Jett let April push the fork into his mouth again. “You know your thing, April. This is the best home meal I’ve ever had.”

“Good to know I’m better than the worst fast food places around here.”

“Hey, I eat at restaurants, occasionally.”

“Let me guess. When your girlfriends want to be treated right.”

“Are you jealous, dweeb? You want to know a lot about my girlfriends.”

“One of them might be Jay’s mom. I mean, she has to be.”

“Sure. And that’s the only reason? Keep that food coming.”

April skipped his turn and offered Jett another mouthful.

“Nah, nah, you should eat now. Don’t tell me you want to be skinny for someone special.”

“Yeah, right. I’m not a girl.”

“But, you’re a gay dude.”

“I didn’t come from Mars. I’m just like any other guy, just that I like guys, that’s all,” April replied.

“You’re not like any other guy. You’re way prettier.”

Jett hadn’t intended to let that compliment slip, but if it was out in the open, he didn’t care to take it back. After all, April had to understand. Jett wouldn’t kiss him or do naughty stuff with him if he didn’t think that.

“I’m curious more about Zane than your girlfriends.”

Hmm, April had dodged the compliment. Jett decided to take a small break from talking as he chewed his food.

“Why are you tight-lipped about him? Are you guys still friends?”

“Yeah. Why do you want to know about him, again?”

“I am curious. Since you seem to apply some particular knowledge to me, I can only assume Zane is responsible for it. How is he, for real?”

“About the same height as me ... Hmm, his eyes are ... some color ... And he has dark hair.”

“Wow. So many details. Are you sure you didn’t just describe some random person you saw today?”

“I don’t stare at my friends, dweeb.”



“Because you’re straight,” April concluded.

Jett couldn’t explain it to April. No, correction. He wouldn’t. Because then he would have to talk about Theo, about that kiss, and how he ... No, he wouldn’t go there at all. April might look like Theo, with his now dyed hair and big green eyes, but otherwise, there was no reason for Jett to start pouring his heart out.

“What color are my eyes?” April asked.

Jett stared at him, and April had his eyes closed shut, and he was squeezing his eyelids shut. “Green,” he replied right away.

April opened his eyes and turned his head to look at him. “How do you know that, and you don’t know what color your best friend’s eyes are?”

“I don’t know,” Jett said with a shrug. “I never wanted to kiss him, I guess.”

“Ah, damn, you make me so curious about him,” April said, and continued to feed Jay.

“Me next,” Jett asked right away. “You’ll meet Zane. He had to be somewhere these last few days, but as soon as he’s back, he’ll be all over the place, drinking my beer, and now probably eating your food, too.”

“Have you thought about asking him to take care of Jay?”

“Zane?” Jett snorted. “He’s not that kind of gay guy.”

“Really? What kind of gay guy is he?”

Jett pondered. How was he going to say that? “What did you call me when we looked for Jay’s mom through my pictures?”

“A womanizer?” April asked.

“That. Zane is like that, but the gay version. He hits on guys faster than I hit on women.”

April sighed. “You’re two peas in a pod, then, I guess.”

“Hey, I’m good now,” Jett protested. “I only slept at home for the past two days. And I didn’t bring anyone over.”

“So, that’s a record?” April asked, and he appeared impressed.

Jett grinned. “It must be.”

“Well, it’s tough when you have a kid, isn’t it?” April teased him.

Yeah, there was Jay, sure. But that wasn't the only reason. Jett now had what he wanted at home, and there was no need for him to go out to hunt.

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"There is something I want to talk to you about," April said, decided that he had to get it all out in the open and establish some ground rules.

Jett had been to the store and came back with the supplies for Jay, and now the baby was sleeping happily in his crib.

"Step into my office," Jett joked and pointed toward the living room where he plopped on the sofa as soon as they were inside. "You can come to sit on my knee," he offered.

April shook his head in exasperation. "I can't quit school," he said in one breath.

Jett shrugged. "You can't go."

"Dude, you can't ruin my life. I need to go to school."

"Why? Who the hell likes school?"

"I do," April said matter-of-factly.

He didn't like at all the way Jett's eyes were darting away when college was brought up.

"Well, tough luck," Jett replied. "You need to take care of Jay."

"Not all the time. And you seem to have a flexible schedule, the way I see it. We could decide on something that could work for both of us."

"My schedule is none of your business."

Jett was impossible. April wanted to scream in frustration. "Why are you so annoying? I really have to go to school. I understand that you don't care about getting an education, but I --" He stopped himself in time.

"You're right. I don't." Jett seemed upset.

Great. He was terrible at negotiating. April placed himself in front of Jett. "Look, I didn't mean it like that. To each their own. I have crypto and college; you have your job that's all about breaking bones and many girlfriends."

"Are you going somewhere with this?" Jett asked and cocked his head to one side.

The way Jett was looking at him made April feel self-aware. A stupid quote from an old movie about certain men's abilities to undress the object of their interest with their eyes came to mind.

“I am trying. Come on, Jett, what would you like me to do so that you’d let me go to school?”

Since Jett looked away again, April squatted and tried to catch his eyes from below.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Jett asked, and there was a hint of a smile on his face.

“Like what?”

“Like you want me to kiss you.”

“I’m not!” April protested. “Jett, pretty please, let me go to school!”

“Nope.”

“Why are you so unreasonable? Are you afraid that I would abandon you and Jay? I’d never do that.”

“Afraid? I’m not afraid of anything.”

“Of course, you’re not. You’re Jett,” April said and looked away, too, not wanting to keep eye contact for too long.

“April,” Jett said, “come sit on my lap.”

“Your mind is a one-track thing,” April complained, but moved and plopped himself on one of Jett’s knees.

“How much do you want to go to classes?”

“What? Hasn’t my begging convinced you that I’d stop at nothing for that? Well, maybe not at nothing, there are plenty of things I wouldn’t do --”

“Sleep with me,” Jett interrupted him.

“What?” April tried to get up, but Jett caught him by the waist and held him down. “You can’t be serious!”

“Why? What’s so outrageous about sleeping with me?”

“Are you pulling my leg? I get it about the handjobs and that --”

“You do? Are you in the mood right now? If you let me kiss you, I could get it up,” Jett said.

April moaned and dug the heels of his palms into his eyes. “You are a complete joker, an absolute prankster, an incorrigible --”

“Hey, what do you think I mean by sleeping?”

“Hmm, sex?” April said, in a voice he hoped sarcastic and filled with righteous anger to the brim.

“Nah. When I sleep, I sleep.”

“Seriously? So you want me to ... what? Sleep in the same bed with you?”

“That’s the idea.”

“But I can’t leave Jay alone. He’s just a baby.”

“He has his crib, and so far he sleeps like a log. Also, you have that monitor thing. I bet I can set it up to have a loud alarm that could wake up the dead.”

“It’s true, but --”

“Hey, do you want to go to school or not?”

“I do.”

“Then problem solved. Sleep with me, and I’ll let you.”

“Fine, but just tonight.”

“No. Every night.”

“Are you sure I’m not going to cramp your style? Where will you put your girlfriends when you bring them over?”

“Hey, I’m a dad now. I have responsibilities. I won’t bring anyone over.”

“But you might sleep at their places, right?”

“Nope. I like my bed. With you in it.”

“I thought you said we were just going to sleep. Hey, why do you want me in your bed, anyway?”

“I’m a child at heart. I need a fluffy toy to hold so that I don’t have nightmares.”

“You can’t be serious.”

“It’s true. You’d be a good replacement for my body pillow.”

“Your body pillow?” April asked. “You don’t strike me as the type.”

“Forget about that. I’m just pulling your leg.”

Jett looked sideways, and from the corner of one eye, April noticed that, too.

“I’d say we should go to sleep,” Jett said.

“It’s not even nine o’clock,” April pointed out.

Jett squeezed him in his arms. “I’m tired. All this going back and forth with Jay and you --”

“Jett, you’re beating people up for a living. How could we have managed to tire you?”

“You have. Jett, take us to the park,” Jett made a lousy impersonation of April, “now let’s play fetch, and who’s going to change diapers, and now make a run to the store --”

“Are you going to complain all evening? And I didn’t ask you to play fetch with Jay.”

“I’m cranky when I’m sleepy. Let’s go upstairs and sleep together, April.”

The last words were spoken as a whisper against the back of his neck, and April shivered. This wasn’t a good idea, was it?

## *Chapter Nine – When I’m Around You*

April spent a long time in the bathroom, pretending that he needed a long shower after such a long day. When they were joking to one another like that, everything appeared to be normal. But the thought that he would spend his entire night wrapped around –

No, that wouldn’t happen. No, no, no.

But Jett had said that he wanted to use him as his personal body pillow. All right, so he wouldn’t be the one to do the wrapping around stuff, but the situation wasn’t better.

Jett wouldn’t jump his bones, right? Right. Handjobs were one thing. Sleeping together had nothing to do with sex. Everything was simple, really. April should know that he had nothing to worry about. Right?

“Why?” he asked his reflection in the mirror. “Why this guy?”

*Why haven’t I gotten over him?* April kept the last words to himself; he couldn’t share them even with his reflection. It was uncanny how fast they had fallen into a familiarity that could only be explained by the fact that they knew each other. Of course, Jett didn’t know that, and it appeared that his original suspicions had evaporated since no one could tell twenty-year-old April was the same with thirteen-year-old Theo. Jett probably blamed it all on some weird coincidence and uncanny resemblance. For a short while, April had been scared that Jett had figured it all out.

Maybe he could go ahead and tell Jett. It was an idea.

No, not a good idea. April could feel his feet getting cold, only thinking about it. What could go wrong? Well, a lot of things. For starters, Jett was just fooling around with him, and handjobs aside - and hot kisses! - he was still as straight as they come. Secondly, they hadn’t parted on good terms. What was he thinking? Jett had made it pretty clear that time and thirteen-year-olds couldn’t lie, right? They had to hate one another. Not that April hated Jett, and he hadn’t done that, ever. He had been upset, sad, but hate hadn’t been among the emotions he had experienced. He had no idea what had gone through Jett’s mind all these years, and he was no psychic. Probably Jett hated him. No, not him-him, but Theo. That wasn’t the vibe April got from Jett, but he wasn’t willing to risk it.

Moving on. It was a bad idea because the chances were he would have to leave, and that meant he wouldn’t see Jett again, probably. And there were other pressing matters, like maybe the fact that Jett had paid his debt toward the Z brothers, in exchange for April taking care of Jay. If Jett were still pissed at Theo for *that* thing, April would be left out to dry.

Great. He was good at fooling himself rather well. “You are a damned coward, April Summer,” he said to his reflection in the mirror.

“You could say that again.”

“Fuck!” April jumped. “Are you a frigging ninja? How did you open the door without making a sound?”

Jett grinned as he stood in the door. “It’s a skill. Nah, I’m playing with you. Dweeb, you were so lost in thought that you didn’t hear me, that’s all. What’s this about you being a coward? Are you afraid I’m going to jump you or something?”

“Truth be told, yes,” April replied and tried to save a smidge of dignity by squaring his shoulders and trying to walk by Jett.

No wonder there, Jett grabbed him by the waist and looked at him. April felt so lost when they stood so close, and he was overly conscious of Jett’s hands on him.

“I won’t. It’s a promise. Of course, if you want me to jump you --”

“Why would I want that?” April protested.

Jett was leaning in, and their mouths hovered close. “Because you like me.”

“And?” April tried to pretend he was unaffected.

Jett’s grin grew broader. “You don’t deny it.”

“You’re handsome.” April could feel his cheeks growing hot. “You’re a great kisser, and I would be a liar if I said you didn’t turn me on. But --”

“No ‘buts’. I like what I hear. Just keep it at that.”

“I’m sorry, but your huge ego must hear this, too,” April replied. “I’m not just saying that I want someone special in my life. Fooling around with you --”

“Fooling around? What do you mean by that?”

Now April could feel Jett’s hot breath on his cheek. Damn, it was hard to focus. “You know, all this kissing, and teasing, and touching each other’s dicks --”

“It’s all in good fun.”

“Exactly. But it is also dangerous.”

“Dangerous, how?”

April drew one deep breath. And then he released all the words, part of the fears he kept inside in one go. “For you, it’s just fun, but for me, it’s not. I could fall for you, and that’s not an option because you’re straight, and I would just sign up for a lot of heartache, not to mention you’re a gangster and a punk, and I have no idea what you do all day when you’re not around, and you

could get in real trouble, and if that happens, I don't know what I should do, and there's also Jay, and you scare me, and --"

April gasped as Jett kissed him. The hands on his waist were no longer there; they were in his hair, grabbing strands of it and guiding April's mouth into the kiss, which was maddening and so unfair. Was Jett ever listening to anything he was saying?

He put his hands against Jett's chest, but didn't push him away. He let them there, feeling the hard muscles moving underneath the t-shirt and thinking for the umpteenth time that this wasn't fair.

Jett broke the kiss and then stared into April's eyes. "I like you, dweeb. Stop worrying so much. I like to kiss you and to hold you like this. But this doesn't mean I'll steal your heart or pop your cherry."

April rolled his eyes at that. But Jett seemed serious, in his punkish way, so he needed to listen.

"I've only known you for a few days, but I like you. So don't fret about what I might do to you. Look, I'm making a promise right now. I won't fuck you unless you ask me to."

If there was a moment when he needed to be entirely and utterly dumbstruck, that was it. "I won't ask," April said.

"Fine by me. But think a little. You'd want a bit of experience until you meet that Mr. Perfect or whatever. The least you could learn is how to give a proper handjob."

"I don't remember any complaints," April said airily.

"There's room for improvement."

"Jett, you can't teach me anything. You have no experience with gay sex whatsoever."

"That doesn't mean that I'm not game if you want to practice on me."

"Really?" April smiled. "What if I want to fuck you?"

The look in Jett's eyes spoke volumes. It was something between a deer caught in the headlights and a hedgehog wondering about the meaning of life on Earth while a truck was speeding toward its spiky self.

"Don't worry. I wouldn't jump you," April said with a smirk.

Jett wasn't the only one who could rattle the other's cage. Now he had something to worry about, and April felt better.

"Why?"



The question caught him unawares. “What do you mean ‘why’? Lots of reasons. First, because you’re straight. Second, because I don’t do such things. Three, I still want to do that with, well, Mr. Perfect.”

“So you’re not a bottom? You look like a bottom boy to me.” Jett’s eyes were thinning now and gauging April’s every reaction.

“I am yet to find out, right? Plus, when I fantasize about guys, I see myself in both positions. That’s all.”

“So why wouldn’t you jump me? I’m not your type or something?”

*You have no idea.* Before, April hadn’t had a clue about how Jett looked like now, so his fantasies were pretty fuzzy, but now, it was a blessing and a curse to see Jett in all his manly glory. “That’s not the idea. Don’t you hear a word I’m saying?”

“You don’t hear a word I’m saying. I make you hard, and I like you, too. So why won’t you fuck me?”

“We’re talking hypothetically here, right?” April threw Jett a dubious look. “What are you getting so worked up about? It’s not like we would fuck anyway. So no one is fucking no one.”

Jett pursed his lips. “We’re going to watch some gay porn, and you’ll show me exactly your type.”

“What? Watch gay porn?!” April could feel the upper hand from earlier slipping through his fingers.

“What are you into? Daddies? BBC? Twinks?”

“No, no, no, this must be wrong,” April complained and put his hands over his ears. “How do you know about stuff like that?”

“I live on this planet, and also Zane,” Jett explained it right away.

“Zane. Right,” April murmured. “Well, I’m not into anything. First, I need to meet this special someone. And it doesn’t matter how he looks.”

“But it would be cool if he were hot,” Jett pointed out.

“Yeah, but that’s not the point. Let’s not watch gay porn, Jett. Please.”

Jett shrugged. “Okay.”

Good. April exhaled. Crisis averted.

“Still, why don’t you like me?” Jett insisted.

“I do like you. It’s your personality that sucks, but your physical appearance is, um, --”

“Dweeb, I’m going to show it all to you.”

“Show what?” April asked, but Jett was already dragging him away to the bedroom. “Wait, did you check on Jay?”

“Yeah, but you can do it, too. Also, I set the monitor to alert us very very loudly if the boy wakes up.”

April just nodded. Jett seemed a little more serious about taking care of Jay then before. Baby steps. Yes, he needed something like that, too, or Jett would make him lose his mind.

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“Um, what are you doing?”

Jett observed with satisfaction how April’s eyes were following him as he pulled his t-shirt over his head, and then proceeded to take off his tracksuit pants, too. “I don’t like pajamas. I sleep naked. Also, I promised that I would show it all to you. So, take a good look, and tell me again why you wouldn’t fuck me.”

April’s eyes were going up and down, to and fro, like lottery balls before landing in a winning row. Jett was getting a bit worked up over April’s resistance. Not that he had thought things through, and he couldn’t see himself putting his ass up so that April could fuck him with that nice tool he had between his legs, but still, his pride was at stake.

“I would fuck you, okay?” April exclaimed and threw his arms to the sides in surrender. “You’re hot. You have six packs, no, eight packs, actually. Also, you have a great cock, and your ass is fantastic. Are you satisfied now that you tortured the gay dude? I really want to sleep.”

Jett laughed. “It’s not even nine o’clock,” he said, mirroring April’s words from before. “Let’s fool around.”

He jumped on the bed, making it creak. April stared at him and shook his head. “Flaunting your cock like that in front of me won’t work. I’m not built that way.”

“Really? How are you built, then? Hey, off with the clothes. I showed you mine, now show me yours.”

“Why? I don’t have any packs to show,” April said and crossed his arms over his chest.

Jett wouldn’t take ‘no’ for an answer. Also, he could barely wait to see April completely naked and have the time to look at him, truly look at him. “I don’t care about any packs. I want to see your cock. And your ass.”

“Obsessed much? We already compared dicks, right?”

“It wasn’t a conclusive test,” Jett replied. “Off with the clothes, or I’ll tickle you until you pee yourself.”

“Is that your idea of foreplay? Jeesh.” April was still mumbling, but he got to his feet and began undressing.

Jett plopped on the bed and rested his head against one palm, the arm bent from the elbow. April had nice skin and little hair on his body. His nipples were a delicious shade of light pink, and Jett could feel his teeth tingling only looking at them.

April was lean, and while he didn’t have muscles like him, he had a small waist and broad shoulders for his body frame. And, of course, he had that bright future behind him, as well as a nice looking cock in front.

“Turn, turn,” Jett gestured, “I want to see more of that ass.”

April made a face like he was about to protest, but turned. Jett couldn’t take it anymore. He jumped from the bed and caught April from behind, grabbing his butt. “I think you’ll make a gay boy very happy one day, April,” he whispered into his ear. “I bet the guy will be a top who would love to tap your juicy ass.”

April grunted, but didn’t pull away. “I bet you say that to all the ... well, gay guys you invite to your bedroom for dick comparison and review.”

“That’s true since you’re the only one. Let me play with your ass.”

“No way.” April pulled away this time.

“Then let’s jerk off, and kiss a lot. I told you. I will be a good boy, and I won’t fuck around, but you have to help me. Plus, you do it by yourself anyway. Why not with me?”

“Reason is wasted on you,” April said. “Come on; let’s jerk you off so that we can finally get to sleep.”

“I’m not in the mood for sleeping,” Jett replied. “Not when I have you in my bedroom, like this.”

“You know I only do this because I want to go to classes.”

“Ah, about that. You can go, but I’m taking you there and back home. No wandering around, get it? Also, make sure to keep a low profile while you’re there.”

April frowned. “A low profile? Like how?”

“I don’t know. Don’t invent the cure for cancer or something.”

“I’m not in med school, I study --”

“Computer science. I know,” Jett said.

April seemed impressed with the fact that Jett knew about that. “How --” he started.

“I looked at your textbooks when I hauled your stuff here. Don’t worry. All is in the basement, and you can pick it up from there.”

“Thanks, I guess. But why are you chaperoning me?”

“Bad guys might try to kidnap you,” Jett said and opted for a bit of truth that would surely pass by April completely unnoticed.

April grimaced. “Dan has no intention to kidnap me. He’s just a stupid idiot.”

Jett pulled April close and began caressing his ass, something that immediately made the dweeb blush. “I don’t take any chances. You’re too good for Jay.”

April looked up, and he was the cutest when he smiled like that.

Jett pushed some rebellious strands of hair out of his eyes. “You’re good for me, too.”

With that, he leaned in and kissed April, and there were no protests and no resistance. It was clear as day that they both enjoyed that.

Jett liked it all, how April hurried to kiss back, how his lean body fit against his, how his hands never stood still. Zane would laugh so hard if he saw him right now. Jett had told him about Theo, and about how he could never look at any other guy like that, because that was a pure memory and sex had nothing to do with it. But Zane had laughed, asked him if he felt comfortable in the closet, and bought him that horrible body pillow for his eighteenth birthday. Apparently, Zane wasn’t at all fazed about the number of chicks going through Jett’s bed. He was still sure that Jett would cave in as soon as a boy he liked walked into his life.

That seemed to be happening. Of course, Jett wouldn’t scare April away and tell him about Theo and how he didn’t like only girls; if he were to think of it, no one had compared to Theo, the boy from his memories, and that was maybe the reason why no girlfriend had put up with him for too long. Except for Carina, but that was a different story, too.

Right now, he needed to make April see that their fooling around could get to another level. Did he want to fuck April? Jett didn’t know. He liked kissing him, and holding him, and touching him everywhere as he did now, but actual butt sex was uncharted territory.

April had a great ass. Jett was sure that he felt bold enough to navigate those territories protected by a fog of war, but April was testy, and, for now, kissing, and holding, and rubbing against each other, seemed pretty awesome.

They landed on the bed, Jett making sure that he was on top. April's lean legs wrapped around his, and their dicks touched. It wasn't ideal since it didn't feel like there was enough friction, but it still felt great because they were so close. Jett pressed his chest against April's, enjoying the little teasing he got from rubbing his nipples against the paler skin of his bed partner. Also, April's nipples were perky, and they felt great on his skin, too.

April knew how to kiss. That meant that he had kissed boys before, and that thought was making Jett a bit jealous. Could he take April's word that he was still a virgin? It had to be because April looked like Theo. Sometimes, Jett saw the resemblance right away. Other times, when he tried to convince himself that it was only wishful thinking on his part, the similarity seemed to fade away.

Maybe April was Theo's weird doppelganger, and it was only coincidence that they met like that. Theo hadn't been from Lynn and only in passing during that summer vacation, and April had said, loud and clear, that he had never been there.

Then Jett had to admit defeat. Zane was right, sort of, and Jett had a type when it came to guys. April was his type because he looked like Theo, and there was no point to overthink things, not when he had a hot body pressing against his, and a nice cock rubbing against his own.

"For the record, April," Jett breathed out as their lips parted, "I would so fuck you, man."

"Not going to happen," April replied, but he was the one to kiss him first now.

Jett grabbed April's hips and began pushing against him. It was so teasing and frustrating that it was making him groan. "Why not?" he asked, as they took another break from kissing.

"Because I want to do this with my boyfriend," April said, but his lips were moist, and his eyes were glassy, and his chest was rising up and down fast.

The dweeb was frigging horny, hot for Jett, but he was still holding on to his cherry like it was his lifeline or something.

"I can be your boyfriend." Jett didn't stop the rocking of his hips, enjoying how April was opening his mouth to let out small gasps.

"You can't. You're a straight guy who happens to be forced into celibacy because he has a kid. It's like with the guys who fuck each other in prison," April tried to reason, maybe more with himself. His voice was coming out in short bursts of words, and he was panting and squirming.

Jett moved one hand to tease April's nipples. It was nice to catch the small buds between a thumb and a forefinger and torture them gently. April's breath became deeper and hoarser, and he closed his eyes.

"I can still fuck girls," Jett pointed out. "It's not like I'm in jail or something."

“Then, why don’t you? What do you need me for?” April asked.

“I suddenly don’t want girls. I want you.”

“Are you always this stubborn when you want something? I don’t want to be your experiment, Jett. You could fuck me once, decide you don’t like it and go back to business as usual.”

“I won’t.”

“You can’t know that.”

Jett pursed his lips in annoyance. It was hard to argue with the dweeb while rubbing against each other, and humping like two teenagers who wanted to save themselves for marriage or something. “I know that I like this.”

He resumed their kissing. April had no qualms with sticking his tongue in his mouth, poking him, and making him want to suck on it. Jett wrapped his tongue around it and teased it more. He liked kissing with a lot of action, and this was so sweet that he couldn’t get enough of it. At least, April liked that, too, and he wasn’t against it.

But Jett wanted more. Yeah, he wanted to be able to sink his unbearably hard cock in April’s cute ass, but since the dweeb said ‘no’, that wasn’t an option. He would work on that later. Right now, he needed to make do with what was offered.

April stopped him. “Jett. We’re going to break the bed. Don’t you want me to jerk you off? This doesn’t work.”

Jett moved and sat on his ass. He pulled April toward him, wrapping one hand in his hair and kissing him hard. He took April’s right hand and placed it on top of his cock. “Just do it then, but do it hard.”

If April teased him more, he would explode, and not in a good way. But it looked like April got the message because his hand began to move up and down while squeezing hard. Jett felt his cock getting harder to protest against the pressure, but it was good like that. April was a skinny dude, but his hand was firm, and his grip was awesome.

Jett searched for April’s cock, too, and began pulling at it. By how April moaned right away, he wasn’t the only one who couldn’t deal with the constant teasing anymore. Warm cum landed on the inside of his thigh, and he came in April’s hand like a frigging fountain, too.

April let go of him and plopped on his back while making a strange sound like a dying whale or something. Jett looked at all the cum on his thigh and smirked. “April, my dude, you are soooo into me.”

“Shut up,” April mumbled, surrendered on the bed.

Jett grabbed him by one ankle and then landed on top, making April gasp. “You came all over me.”

“Really? It happened only because it was convenient. You were there.”

“Right. How many guys have you jerked off with, then?”

“I told you. I don’t do stuff like that. With anybody. And you’re crushing me, and we’re both kind of sweaty, you know?”

“I don’t mind. I like your smell on me. And your cum.”

“You don’t talk like a straight boy.”

“Maybe I’m not so straight when I’m around you,” Jett replied.

“You’re just saying. I’m just a convenient hand for you. And a convenient mouth. For kissing. I didn’t mean anything else,” April hurried to explain.

Jett remained unmoved, and his cock twitched as spent as it was. He hadn’t thought about that. Usually, he wasn’t the biggest fan of oral sex. For him, penetration was the real deal.

But the thought of April’s lips and tongue -- His cock was doomed. He needed another handjob, or he wouldn’t be able to sleep all night long. Could he ask April about that? He had said that he had never sucked off a guy, either.

That meant there was another topic for April to study, using Jett for experiments, without having to worry so much about his virginity. But how could he break that to April?

Damn, he wanted that. He wanted a blowjob from April and his awesome sweet lips. If that tongue knew so many things when they were kissing –

“You’re crushing me, and you have a weird look on your face. Don’t tell me,” April moaned. “Is your cock getting hard again? So fast?”

“Do you like eating bananas?” Jett asked.

“Yeah. I mean, I’m not crazy about them, but, hey, they are a good source of potassium --”

“What about stick ice cream?”

“This is one weird-ass conversation to have after just jerking off. Are you hungry?”

Jett was hungry all right, but not for food. “Do you like having things in your mouth? You know, to suck on them?”

April stared at him for a long moment, and then he blushed. “Tell me you’re not thinking of that!”

“I’m not thinking of anything!” Jett protested.

“Get off! I’m going to wash again and sleep in another room!”

“Come on, don’t be mad! It’s just that your mouth is so sexy!”

“I’m not putting my mouth on your dick, you moron!”

“Why not?”

“Do you really have to ask?”

“Yeah. Don’t tell me you don’t like blowjobs.”

“I think there’s a difference between being the receiver and the giver in this case!”

“Zane likes giving head,” Jett explained. “I thought all gay guys like it.”

“If Zane likes it, then go ask him to blow you.”

“No way. I don’t want that from him.”

“But you want it from me,” April continued his protests while struggling to escape.

“Of course I do. You have the best lips ever; I told you.”

“That’s not enough reason.”

“All right, I get it. I won’t ask again. Geesh. Let’s just go to sleep.”

“I smell of you.”

“All the better. I like your smell on me.”

“You’re something for a straight dude.”

“Told you. I don’t feel too straight around you. Don’t go, April.”

Jett wrapped himself tightly around April.

“All right.” April sighed and patted his back. “But I can’t sleep like this. You’re heavy.”

“Sorry,” Jett said, and moved away but just enough so that he wasn’t crushing April anymore, without removing his hands and the one leg he had thrown over the other.

“Please don’t mention blowjobs again.”



“I won’t.”

“Okay.”

“Okay.”

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

Jett pulled April as close as possible. This was torture. He couldn’t go to sleep now. April turned his head and kissed his cheek softly. “Sweet dreams, Jett.”

He smiled. April wasn’t Theo, but he was a close second. He would find a way to get for real in his pants. And not only there.

## *Chapter Ten – Stop Trolling Me*

April moved in his sleep, trying to make sense of the noise penetrating his ears in the most annoying of ways possible. Was that some kind of alarm?

Alarm! He pushed himself up like a jack in a box and shouted. “Jay!”

“What the hell is this? Throw that shit out the window!” Jett ordered in a sleepy, but angry voice.

April moves his head from one side to another. “Baby, diapers, things.”

Now he was almost entirely awake.

On the bed, Jett groaned. “What time is it?”

“Time for me to get in shape. And for you, too. Get up!” April said, and began dressing up quickly.

He ran out the door in a heartbeat, and it took him only two steps to reach Jay’s bedroom. The baby was crying; no wonder there. Probably he had waken up and seen himself all alone in that big room. April bounced him gently, shushing him, but for the moment, Jay appeared impossible to appease.

Damn his brain. He had been too high on fooling around with Jett that he was obviously experiencing some sort of delayed thinking pattern. He needed to check the boy’s diaper and change him.

Right.

“Jett!” He started yelling.

“Yo,” Jett replied, still half-naked and only half inside the room like he didn’t dare to come in.

“Come on, help me with Jay.”

“What’s wrong with him?” Jett scrunched his nose and didn’t put one step inside.

“He needs a change of diaper, obviously.”

“Don’t make me do it.” Jett put both his hands up and took a step back.

They weren’t getting anywhere like that. “Come in and shut the door. Put the changing pad on the bed and grab the diaper bag. It’s there,” April pointed out, getting gradually annoyed with Jett’s unresponsiveness.

“Why don’t you do all that?”

“Because he’s crying,” April said and continued to coo soft words to the baby.

“Then give him to me.” Jett gestured for April to hand the baby over.

April hesitated, but then he thought about how he couldn’t deal with Jett, too, right now. He handed the boy to Jett, but Jay began crying louder. For one second, they both stood there, Jett with a frown on his face, and April somewhat horrified by Jay’s cries.

“You’re scaring him,” April whispered angrily and took the boy back from his father’s arms. “Can’t you stop frowning like this? You almost make me pee my pants, let alone a baby this small.”

“I don’t like to wake up at six in the morning,” Jett said, but he did go after the diapers, which was pretty much a victory.

“Me neither, but that’s life with a baby,” April replied. “Diaper, now.”

Jett even placed the changing pad on the bed without being told to. That was progress, but April had no time to enjoy that thought. Jay refused to be comforted, and April was getting a little case of cold feet. What would he do if the baby didn’t stop crying? His knowledge came straight from the digital womb of Google, and right now, he was a bit too far from his phone to start asking questions that hopefully, search engine robots knew how to find answers for.

“Why is he crying like this?” Jett asked.

*I don’t know* was the right answer, but April preferred to grunt instead. “You wouldn’t like to wake up drenched in your own piss, would you?”

“I supposed not. Do you need me here?”

“Do you have somewhere you need to be? At this hour?”

“I can’t stand crying,” Jett replied.

“Seriously? Babies cry, FYI.”

“Yeah, and it pisses me off.”

“Are you for real?” April stopped for a second to give Jett a stare that he hoped could drive home a point better than words.

Jett moved from one foot to another. “I don’t know what to do with it, that’s all. If someone hurt Jay, I’d beat the crap out of them, but that’s not the case, is it?”

“Not everything in life can be solved with your fists,” April pointed out.

“It’s worked for me so far,” Jett replied.

“Okay. Just go. But bring me my phone.”

“What do you need your phone for?” Jett appeared suspicious, and that wasn’t good.

“Just bring it. I have some remedies for growing teeth and aching bellies in there. I don’t know everything by heart,” April said, opting for half a truth.

Jett appeared half-convinced, too, but he went anyway. April focused his attention on Jay, and after changing him, he reached for one of the teething rings bought by Jett the day before. After a bit of convincing, Jay appeared to take to one of them and began chewing on it.

April touched Jay’s cheek and frowned. Was he supposed to be this warm? Could it be he was running a fever?

Jett was back with his phone, and April took it, without removing his hand from the baby’s cheek.

“He doesn’t cry that much,” Jett said.

“He might have a fever,” April said quickly.

“So, we need to take him to a doctor?”

“I think so.”

“Can’t you just make him better?”

“Do I look like a doctor?”

“No, but you’re the one who knows about babies.”

April felt suddenly the need to be honest but didn’t get the chance to talk.

“I don’t know any doctors,” Jett continued.

“So, we go to the hospital.”

“And tell what? That we have this baby that we can’t prove is ours?”

*Ours?* April shook his head. “They might ask us questions. Now, seriously, Jett, we can’t just sit around and hope for the best.”

“People might take him from us,” Jett pointed out. “Can’t you make him pop some aspirin and stuff?”

“It doesn’t work like that. We could ask at the pharmacy for advice, but I’m afraid to go this route. What if we’re wrong?”

“Then we need to go to the hospital and think up a good lie that makes sense,” Jett said.

April smacked his forehead. “Wait. I have a solution. You might not like it, but --”

“Just shoot,” Jett said while throwing nervous looks to Jay, who was starting to cry again.

“My dad --” April began.

“No.” Jett’s frown was deepening.

“He’s a nurse.”

“I’m not letting you leave with Jay and go who knows where. You’re not from around here, you said.”

“I’m not leaving. I’m just calling him and ask for advice. I sometimes wonder how your mind works. Also, he could come and see Jay.”

Jett appeared to be even more suspicious. “Will your dad hop on a plane to check on a baby just because you said so?”

“It’s only a ... one-hour drive, and my dad would come to check on a baby because I said so,” April replied.

How hadn’t he thought before of that? Maybe he had been too caught up in playing house with Jett to realize that help was only a phone call away. True, he should have waited for Jett to leave and then call his dad, but this was an emergency, and he was a bit scared.

“How are you going to explain that you stay here? Are you going to tell him I kidnap you or something?”

Jay began crying again, not as badly as before, but still enough to make both adults turn their attention to him right away.

“No. I’ll just tell him that I’m babysitting.”

“And it’s normal to babysit at six in the morning?”

“Jett, my dad can help. So don’t be stubborn.”

“Tell him I’m your boyfriend.”

“What? You’re not my boyfriend! And for the record, that doesn’t explain why there’s a baby with us.”

“Tell him he’s ours.”

“Wow, wow, wow, slow down, will you? I talked to my dad one week ago, and he would be very much surprised to find me with a boyfriend and a baby.”

“Do you tell your dad about your love life?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

*And he would know who you are, the moment he learns your name.*

“You know what,” April said, “you’re right. Let’s just take Jay to the hospital, you say you’re the father, I’m the babysitter, and --”

“Do you want to keep your father from meeting me for some reason?”

The suspicion was back in full force in those beautiful caramel eyes. April looked away and grabbed a toy, pretending to be busy to distract Jay from his suffering. “It’s like you said. Too many explanations needed.”

“Call your dad.”

“I could tell him you kidnap me.”

“And I could tell him you took money from some sketchy guys.”

“Ugh, point taken. Okay.”

April knew he had to play this right. So, there would be no school for him today. Good thing his father didn’t work in a hospital or anywhere crowded. He was sure his father would be able to tell Mr. Ford he had an emergency and come over.

“I’ll call him. But can I have a bit of privacy?”

It would be hell to explain to his dad why he lived under the same roof as Jett Huntsman, his first crush and heartbreak, and took care of his child. But his dad would understand, April tried to encourage himself.

“No way. Who knows what you’re going to tell him? Hell, no, you’re leaving Jay and me!”

“Is this a tantrum? Aren’t you a bit old for that?” April protested. This wasn’t good. He needed to give his dad the heads-up. Jay’s crying left him no choice. “All right. Stay here, tyrant, if that’s what you want.”

He threw one cautious look toward Jett before choosing his father’s number from the list of contacts. “Hey, dad. Sorry to trouble you so early, but I have a bit of an emergency.”

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Using his dad's advice, April managed to soothe Jay a little. Jett was pacing through the house, suddenly in the mood to clean, but it looked to April that he made more mess everywhere he went instead of making things better.

He checked his phone again. A message would have to do, so he began typing fast.

*"No time to explain, dad. It's about what I couldn't tell you earlier when we talked. I'm at Jett's house, and I'm babysitting his kid. And yeah, he's THAT Jett. Just don't act surprised. Please pretend you don't know who he is. I promise to take you to that ice cream place I told you about. Yeah, I know I'm bribing you, and it's lame, but this is serious."*

April waited nervously for a reply. Between trying to help Jay, watching Jett walking around like a headless chicken, and imagining what his dad would say, he felt like a huge mess.

His phone pinged.

K.

Oh, shit. His father used one-letter words only when he tried to pull his leg and imitate the way young people talked, or when he was too pissed to care for a longer answer. April had a feeling he knew which one was this time.

"Jett, could you just please stay in one place? And when my dad arrives, just let me get the door, okay?"

Jett mumbled something under his breath. Then he talked. "What are you trying to hide?"

"Hello, there's a baby crying who was left on your doorsteps only a few days ago, I have a mining rig in your basement, and you're a frigging gangster! Don't you think we should play this cool?"

"I'm not a gangster; I'm just a guy who handles repossessions --"

"Repossessions, ha!"

"Yeah, I'm repossessing money dweebs like you should never borrow," Jett said, his eyes squaring on April like he was the enemy.

"Whatever. My dad is bound to be suspicious. I call him first thing in the morning with something like this. He will have questions."

"So let me deal with him."

"No. I'm honestly afraid about what you might tell him."

"I'll tell him the truth."

“No, Jett, no. The truth is bad, okay? In this case, it’s very, very bad.”

“I’ll tell him we’re boyfriend and boyfriend.”

April snorted. “Right. What’s with the obsession anyway? We just fooled around a little.”

“You’re the only one I’m sleeping with right now. That makes you my boyfriend,” Jett replied promptly.

“Until yesterday, you were straight.”

“Sometimes, you just know.”

“Stop trolling me, for real.”

“I’m not.”

“Jett, my dad doesn’t like liars.”

“And yet, you would lie to him about what we are.”

“Oh, damn. This is really not a good time. What’s this about?”

“It’s about making things clear. Idiots like those at your school would leave you alone if you had a boyfriend.”

“But you’re not my boyfriend.”

“Do you want a formal request? You’ve done more sex stuff with me than with others in your entire life.”

April tried to reason with him. “Still. It’s just fooling around. It doesn’t mean a thing.”

“I can’t believe you can be so cold-hearted.”

“Cold-hearted? Now I know you’re really trolling me.”

“Just think about it. Your dad walks in, sees you here, and starts to wonder. He wants to swing by your place, but that’s empty. If you say that you moved in with me, it will make sense. Plus, if he asks why you’re babysitting when you have your crypto --”

“He doesn’t know about that,” April said quickly.

“Ah, so you do lie to your dad.”

“I’m just omitting certain things.”

“Tell him you omitted saying anything about having a hot boyfriend.”



Now Jett was really teasing him. “Hot, huh? What else do you want me to add to your list of qualities?”

“Amazing in bed.”

“Ugh, stop it. It’s really not the time. My dad doesn’t need to know about such things.”

“Jay seems a little better,” Jett said and walked over to the baby. “Your dad’s advice worked.”

“He knows his stuff,” April admitted. “Jett, please, just don’t tell my dad that we’re together. He’ll read you like an open book and, in the off chance that he really thinks you’re my boyfriend, he’ll start lecturing me about dating a punk. He won’t hesitate to say it right in front of you. You’ll also hear a lot about safe sex. I know I have. My dad has a lecture on safe dating even.”

“You don’t play that safe around me.”

“Because, obviously, I lost my mind.”

“All right, dweeb. Then you’ll have to explain what you’re doing in my house and why you left your old place.”

“I’ll just tell him we’re roommates. Housemates. Whatever.”

April wasn’t sure Jett would listen to him. He was in for a lecture, anyway, so he needed to better prepare.

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Jett had no intention to let April welcome his dad alone. Also, Jay’s crying, being up at six in the morning, and clearly having the hots for April were messing him big time. The dweeb thought Jett was teasing him, but his best ideas always came on the spot like that.

If April were his boyfriend, a lot of things would fall into place. April wouldn’t be bothered at school by idiots, and Jett would have an explanation at hand about why April lived in the same house with him if anyone asked. Also, he would have all the more reason to ask April to get freaky with him, something he was sure now he wanted, a lot.

His brain was no longer foggy after sleep, but all through the night, he had dreamed of April. Not that he would admit that to April since he would be probably made fun of, but the truth was he hadn’t thought of much else ever since the dweeb had walked into his life.

Zane would laugh. Big time. Let him laugh. Jett was a simple guy. He had wanted Theo for so long, in a way that was hazy and unclear about what it meant. Now he wanted April, and that wasn’t that hazy and unclear. Jett wanted to kiss April until they couldn’t breathe no more. He wanted them to sleep in the same bed and do all the sex stuff they could come up with.

Jett had always had a healthy appetite, but this was different. It was like there was a fire lit under his ass, and the more April told him he wanted someone else, the more Jett wanted to convince him otherwise.

His adventurous sex life seemed like a faded memory. He had gone through one-night-stands, one-week relationships, and full-fledged relationships, like they didn't mean anything, with little exceptions. He had been on the run, sliding through his own life, coasting on his drive to do more, fight more, fuck more, make more money, as he hurried toward a destination that was constantly moving, without letting him touch it at all, grab it and call it his.

As much as the last few days had been a rollercoaster, the truth was Jett had started to feel different. April was a riot, cute, sexy, and fun, and Jay was amazing, smelly diapers aside. And Jett, well, he felt at home, really at home.

He wouldn't tell the dweeb a thing. April was a scaredy-cat, and Jett didn't even know what he wanted to say. Did he want April to be his boyfriend? Yeah. But just saying it as an idea to save the day had put April on guard. Jett needed to be careful so that he could buy time and decide what the hell was happening to him.

Fuck. He needed Zane to talk about this. The idiot would make fun of him, but that was his only shot at sorting out the mess in his brain.

Had it been Theo in April's place, all would have been clear. Jett hadn't considered the possibility of being attracted to guys since Theo was something else to him, something special. Yet, there he was, attracted to April, big time, and wanting, no, needing to sleep with him for real. And that was new and strange and awesome, all at the same time.

He raced April to the door when the bell chimed, announcing a visitor.

"Jett, please, don't blow it, please," April whispered.

He had no intention to do that. By how April had talked to his dad on the phone, they seemed to have a great relationship. Jett couldn't imagine bothering his father for any reason. If he were to call his dad and tell him the truth that he had a baby and a boyfriend, he would have to cross the border and change his name.

But there was no way in hell he would miss meeting April's dad. For some reason, it seemed important, and not only because the man was a health care professional and could figure out what was happening to Jay, but also because he was April's dad, and that was pretty huge.

He let April get the door. Jett stared at the visitor, a man in his forties, tall and slim, dressed in a light sweater and dress pants, carrying a leather bag in his right hand. He searched for resemblances, but maybe April took more after his mom because his dad had salt and pepper hair

that seemed taken out of a magazine, light blue eyes, and a charming smile that was nothing like April's way of making his lips twitch like he was just about to drop some joke.

"Sidney Summer," the visitor said and offered Jett his hand, as April introduced them. "Everyone calls me Sid, though. Where's the little fellow?"

April hurried to guide his father up the stairs. Sid took his son by his shoulders and kissed his forehead. "Are you okay, pumpkin?"

Jett put one hand over his mouth. Still, some weird sound came out because April looked at him over his shoulder with murder written all over his cute face. His mouth drew the words. *KILL U*.

Jett just mouthed one word. *Pumpkin*.

"Do you need any help from me, Mr. Summer?" he called after their visitor.

"Sid, please. No, that's all right. You kids can wait here or wherever it's comfortable for you. April, don't you have school?"

"I can't leave when Jay needs me."

"It's okay. I'm here now. You can go."

"I'm already kind of late," April tried to argue with his dad.

"April, Jay is in good hands now. Go to school."

April deflated. Probably he wanted to skip school, Jett thought. But no, that couldn't be the case. The dweeb loved going to school. "I'll take you there fast," he offered. "Would you be all right by yourself for half an hour or so, Sid? I'll give you my number, in case there's some emergency, or you need me to buy something on my way back."

"Sure. Let's see what little Jay is up to, and I'll let you know. April, get ready for school. When did you decide to have a makeover?" Sid pointed at April's hair.

"It was something I did on impulse," April said quickly.

"It's okay. I've never been crazy about you dyeing your hair, but it looks like it suits you."

Jett caught the small detail right as it flew free into the world. "Have you dyed your hair before, April?"

Another murderous look was the answer.

"He has," Sid replied instead.

Interesting. Jett would have to interrogate the dweeb about that later.

April took his father to Jay's room, and Jett searched for his jacket and his car keys. So April did like to dye his hair, after all.

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"What does your dad say?" Jett asked.

"Babies seem to develop a bit of fever when their teeth grow. Nothing major, but he started checking Jay for other symptoms. So far, so good. I think we pissed our pants for nothing."

April had his bag on his knees and was looking straight ahead through the windshield. He seemed rigid, and he talked rapidly like he was afraid he wouldn't manage to let all the words in his head out through his mouth.

"Are you freaking out again? Jay is going to be fine. You trust your dad, don't you?"

April didn't look at him. "Of course. I trust him with my life, and I'm not just saying. He wanted to be a doctor and even studied for a while. Life happened; I mean mom and us kids, and he didn't pursue that career. In case you were wondering."

"You are freaking out. You're one step from trembling like a leaf. What the hell is wrong with you?"

"I don't know. I don't tremble. I'm totally in control."

"Look, you don't have to worry. I won't tell a thing about us being boyfriends to your dad."

"Yeah, that. Good. That you're not telling. Why did you think of that, anyway?"

Jett shrugged. "I told you. It's like we are, anyway."

"Two handjobs were enough for you to have an epiphany like that? I'm sure you required much more from your girlfriends until, well, they did become your girlfriends."

"I've never had a boyfriend," Jett said. "We crossed a bridge or something, didn't we? So there must be something."

"Yeah, sure. Pals with benefits. How does that sound?"

"Wrong. I don't need that. If I needed that, I would ask Zane to give me a handjob."

"You're so stubborn when you want to be. Just let things how they are. I'm, sort of, your prisoner. I'm paying back a debt to you. I mean, by taking care of Jay. Not by, you know."

April seemed uncomfortable. He was even blushing. Jett smiled to himself. "Okay, dweeb. We're here. Text me when you're almost done so that I can come to pick you up. I hope your dad can stay with Jay for several hours."

“He took the day off. His boss is pretty cool.”

“All right. Go learn your computer science. And don’t let any guys get into your pants.”

April rolled his eyes. “I really am here to learn, and so are the others. No one will try anything like that.”

“If you say so.”

April reached for the door, but Jett put one hand on his knee.

“What?” April turned toward him.

Jett threw a quick look through the windshield. A few girls and one dark-skinned dude Jett guessed he was Indian were looking at them. “Kiss me.”

“What?!” April’s eyes grew wide.

“I won’t let you get out until you kiss me.”

“We’re here and not moving. I could make a run for it.”

“And I could run after you, tackle you, and kiss you.”

“Run? Who? You, with your nicotine-filled lungs?”

“You’ll have to come back home eventually.”

“Is that a threat?” April stared at him, but his sexy lips were already twitching, obviously fighting a smile.

“Nah. A promise.”

“Fine.” April drew a deep breath and leaned toward him.

“Wait,” Jett stopped him, “with tongue.”

April rolled his eyes. “How about I straddle you, and you can give it to me while in front of the entire student body?”

“That’s not how I imagine our first time.”

April blushed and looked away.

“Tick-tock, weren’t you already late?”

“Okay,” April mumbled and put his lips over Jett’s.

Fuck it. Jett pulled him close and kissed April for real, with tongue and everything. When he pulled back, April's eyes were shiny glass. "You're free to go," Jett whispered.

April straightened up and cleared his throat. "See you later. If anything happens, call me."

"Yeah. When you're almost finished, text me. I'll come to pick you up."

"Yeah, yeah," April kept repeating the same word and nodding.

April licked his lips quickly and looked away. Jett followed April with his eyes, as he jogged toward his friends who were staring at him, their mouths slightly open. Jett waved at them and smiled.

The girls appeared to giggle. The Indian dude waved back.

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"Now I understand the whole hair color change stuff," Raj said, as April stared after Jett's car.

"Um?"

"You got a boyfriend!" Gabriela punched him in the shoulder. "Nice going, dude!"

"And he's hot!" another girl chimed in.

"He's not my boyfriend!" April protested.

"Really? Who is he then?" Gabriela asked.

"Just someone who drove me to school," April said, opting for a lame lie.

"Do you always kiss your Uber drivers?" Raj stared at him, in fake consternation. "I totally get the gig economy, but I'm not sure about this new method of payment."

"Aren't you all a bunch of nerds?" April bristled at the entire group since everyone was laughing openly. "You're supposed to be above gossip and stuff like that."

"Not when it's one of us getting a boyfriend," Gabriela replied.

"Or a girlfriend," Raj added.

"Let's just get to class already," April hurried to shut up his friends. It was an impossible task, but he needed to try.

\*\*\*

Jett walked into the house and ran up the stairs. April's dad had texted him, asking for some medicine for Jay.

Sid thanked him. “The boy is all right. He’s asleep now. But I bet he’ll not be too happy for a while with the new teeth he’s growing.”

“That’s great to hear. April freaked out. Big time,” Jett replied.

“And you didn’t?” Sid looked at him with an amused smile.

“Nah. I mean, yeah. A little. Thanks for everything, Sid.”

“You’re welcome. But now, young man, you and I need to talk a little.”

## *Chapter Eleven – Everyone But Us*

Jett just nodded and remained silent. Sid seemed to observe him for a couple of seconds, without adding anything. That was unnerving. It wasn't a judgmental look, the kind that told him that he fell short on imaginary standards, the kind he was most used to. It was ... kind.

Still, he shifted from one foot to another and cracked his neck, as usual.

"That's not a healthy thing to do," Sid said right away.

"I know," Jett replied with a smirk. "So April keeps telling me."

"And you're not listening to him because --" Sid let the question mark in the air.

"Could we go downstairs?" Jett chose not to answer that. "Jay needs to sleep now, right?"

Sid nodded and smiled. "I was supposed to say that."

Jett smiled, too. Something about April's dad made him feel at ease. Maybe it was all because of those kind eyes. Normally, he should shake in his boots because Sid wanted to ask him some serious questions. But he didn't feel anything like that. Actually, he looked forward to speaking to April's dad. He had some questions, too.

He offered Sid a beer, but the man declined and took to making his own coffee, after searching through the cupboards for everything he needed. Jett couldn't be of much help. "April just put all the things away. I think he has a system or something," he explained.

Sid just laughed. "I know. I suspected it."

Jett sat at a table, and now he started to feel nervous. Sid took a sip from his coffee.

"So, Jett, what's going on between you and April?"

Jett hesitated for one moment. "We're boyfriends!"

He had said that a little too loud. Sid just quirked an eyebrow and smiled again. "Jay is your son, correct?"

Jett nodded.

"And where is his mother?" Sid asked.

At least he wasn't asking about him and April being boyfriends. Sid appeared to take that news without any questions.

Jett scratched his head. "It's a bit complicated. I don't know."



Sid nodded as if that made perfect sense. “Did you ever have a boyfriend before April?”

Jett just shook his head.

Sid looked straight into his eyes. “Last week, April didn’t have a boyfriend. Before him, you didn’t have one, either. And yet, here you are, raising a baby.”

“Yeah,” Jett confirmed and shrugged, crossing his arms defensively across his chest.

Sid appeared lost in thought for a few moments. “Forgive me if I find all this a little hard to believe.”

“Why?” Jett asked.

He needed to play this one cool. Why on earth had he blurted out about them being boyfriends? Now it didn’t look like such a good idea.

“Because I know April to be a cautious and responsible young man,” Sid replied.

Jett frowned. “And his being with me makes him reckless and irresponsible or something?”

Sid laughed. “A little, yes. But you’re what I imagined as April’s first boyfriend.”

*And last.* Now, where had that come from? Sometimes, he surprised himself. Being with April felt good, even if they weren’t really boyfriends. Everything fell in place when they were together. Jett could not remember having felt like that before, with very few exceptions.

“Wait. For real?” He realized with some delay what Sid had just said.

Sid nodded. “Let’s say that I might know my son better than most dads know their sons. Not that I brag. And let’s just say that I also happen to know his type,” he added, putting his hands up and doing the quotation sign.

Jett grinned. It wasn’t like he could help himself. “I’m totally his type,” he said, but his words came out wrong, not confident, but like he was coming to that particular revelation only because April’s dad said so.

“That doesn’t mean that I’m not intrigued by what looks to be quite a fast evolution of your relationship.” Sid cut through his enthusiasm immediately. “What gives? To make it clear, I know April lives here with you.”

“How could you tell?” Jett asked.

“All three pairs of sneakers he likes to wear at the door. Should he just be visiting, there would be no need for all his shoes to be here, right?”

Jett just nodded.

“Also,” Sid continued, “I couldn’t help but notice the whole eye dialogue the two of you kept when you thought I wasn’t watching.”

“Wow,” Jett barely managed to say. “You’re like a detective or something.”

Sid laughed. “When you’re a parent, you develop certain abilities, without a doubt. How long have you two known each other?”

For a second, Jett felt like that was a trick question. “For a week or something,” he said, deciding to remain vague.

“And how did you two meet?” Sid asked.

“I was looking for a babysitter,” Jett replied.

Now he was starting to sweat. He needed to be careful about what lies he was saying, and the easiest way was to keep as close to the truth as possible.

“Hmm,” Sid said. “And April just offered?”

“What can I say? He needed some extra cash.”

“So, you’re now paying your boyfriend to take care of your baby?” Sid asked.

Jett shifted in his chair. Sid seemed like a kind man, but he was grilling him like he was the frigging FBI. “Not now. I mean, he doesn’t have to pay for anything while staying here. I can provide,” he added quickly.

“Ah. Well, that brings me to my next question. What are you doing for a living, Jett?”

“Security,” Jett said quickly and looked away.

“Security,” Sid repeated the word as if he was trying to see if he got it correctly.

“Yeah,” Jett said.

“All right, Jett, it’s time for you to stop worrying. The interview is over,” Sid said with a small, all-knowing smile.

Jett exhaled.

“I just wish April told me he got himself a boyfriend,” Sid added. “There are usually no secrets between us.”

“So, you’re not going to tell me to leave April alone or something?” Jett asked, still not completely comfortable.

“Why should I? I trust April. If that’s his decision, I will respect it. Of course, if you hurt him in any way --”

“Will you have my head?” Jett asked.

Sid laughed and shook his head. “No. What I wanted to say is that I trust April to come to me and tell me what he learned from this experience. I know that I gave him all the teachings I could as a parent. But, of course, he can always count on me and know that I won’t judge him.”

Jett felt a bit relieved. “Thanks.”

“For nothing,” Sid said. “Although I do need to tell you a little about safe sex.”

Damn. April had been right. Jett stood straight in his chair and listened carefully. Twenty minutes later, his cheeks were in flames, and he was in terrible need of drinking a glass of water. April’s dad was pretty thorough, and he didn’t miss a thing.

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“Is it okay for him to be out and about like this?” Jett asked as he watched Jay playing with some leaves.

Sid stopped Jay just in time as he tried to put the leaves in his mouth. “He’s not actually sick. It’s just some little teeth giving us a hard time, right, Jay?” He scooped the baby into his arms, and Jay giggled.

Jett squinted. “Man, he’s getting so many teeth. Now I see. How the hell did I miss it?”

“It’s like that with babies,” Sid explained. “They grow fast, but it happens so that we don’t quite realize when all the changes happen. You’ll get used to it. Are you searching for Jay’s mom?”

Jett scratched his head. It was weird to be in the backyard like that. It was just one of those places he didn’t care about. “I tried, but nothing came out. April suggested that I should send some DNA samples to see if Jay is mine. But I know he’s mine.”

Sid nodded. “I do think he looks like you.”

“Really?” Jett kicked some fallen leaves and watched as they settled slowly back on the ground.

“It’s mostly the chin. And the forehead.” Sid gestured for him to come closer.

Jett watched attentively. “Yeah, if you put it like this, I think I see something.”

Jay reached for him with both hands. “Dadadadadada.”

“And he knows you’re his daddy.” Sid handed Jay over to Jett.

He took the baby carefully. “I thought he would call April dad first. He’s really great with Jay.”

“That’s quite surprising,” Sid said. “I mean, he played on occasion with Dana’s twins, but, otherwise, he didn’t have much contact with kids.”

Jett stared at Sid to see if he was being played. So April had no experience with babies? Go figure.

“Maybe he’s a natural,” Sid explained. “He has always been good-natured, even as a kid. Maybe a little quirky at times, but it was always all in good fun. April has a good heart, Jett. I just want you to remember that.”

“Sure thing I will,” Jett promised. “I think he takes after you.”

Sid laughed. “You’re good at flattery, I see.”

“I really think you’re the coolest father-in-law I could hope for. All that talk about sex ed, phew, man.”

“What did you call me?” Sid asked, and it looked like he could barely keep from laughing.

Jett froze. “Um, I mean, you’re cool. For a dad. Someone else’s dad. April’s. I really have no idea why I said that.”

“I have one, but I won’t share it with you,” Sid said, his eyes lit with amusement. “Now, how would you like some pancakes? Has April ever made pancakes for you? There is a recipe that’s been in our family for generations. I swear. Best kept secret within a one-mile radius from our home.”

Jett laughed. Well, it was easy to feel comfortable around Sid. “He hasn’t. But I’ll taste them first and let you know what I think.”

“And this little fellow will have a meal with us,” Sid said and gestured for Jett to hand Jay over. “Now that he feels a little better, it’s time to have him eat a little, too.”

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“Psst, Summer,” someone called for him from behind.

April turned and saw Dan gesturing at him from behind the corner of a building. The crowds of students were wearing thin, and April was about to text Jett to come to pick him up. Maybe it wasn’t that great an idea to go over and talk to Dan, but it was an issue he needed to address and fast.

“What do you want?” he asked, and remained at a fair distance from Dan, although he took steps in his direction.

“Come closer. I won’t do anything to you.”

April sighed, but moved a little closer. Still, he stopped and walked a little to the right to peek around the corner. “Are you and your buddies ready to give me a beating?”

There was no one there.

“No,” Dan protested. “This isn’t high school.”

April shrugged. “Could’ve fooled me. What do you want, Dan?”

“Look,” Dan started, “I want to apologize for the name-calling and that.” He moved from one foot to another and looked sideways like he was waiting for someone to jump him.

“Seriously? Have you gone to some crash course on sensitivity or something? Wow, impressive results.”

Dan snickered but then became serious again. “That before, it was just, you know.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” April said.

“It’s hard. Being on the team, and everyone expecting, you know, for you to be, like, I don’t know, like them.”

April nodded. “Not something I can relate to, but anyways. It must be tough to be so popular and get invited to all the parties. Oh, I should say that it’s only the beginning. It only gets worse from here.” Maybe it wasn’t the best idea to be sarcastic, but he couldn’t help it.

Dan’s eyes grew wide. “Worse? Like how?”

Not the brightest tool in the shed, April thought. But it wasn’t his place to judge anyone. “I’m just pulling your leg. Keep it up, and you might get places, playing for a big team and all that. There’s life after college, and since I did see you playing, I believe you have great potential. Not that I’m an expert or anything.”

“Do you really think I have great potential?”

A clear case of selective hearing, April decided. “Yeah. So what’s so hard, anyway? Everybody likes you.”

“Yeah.” Dan’s eyes darted sideways, again. “Do you like me, April?” This time, the blue eyes set on April, and they looked hopeful.

Not Summer, not girlie, not whatever stupid name Dan’s friends must have invented for him. Dan called him by his name, and that seemed a bit weird and even dangerous.

April looked away. What was he supposed to say to that?

“I know what you’re saying. That I have, like, this incredible life. All guys want to be friends with me. All girls want to be with me.”

Each of Dan’s statements was punctuated by April with ‘Ohs’, ‘Ahs’, and ‘Ums’.

“But what if it’s not what I want?” Dan seemed to be a bit in pain saying that.

April scratched his head. “Ah, so that’s the hard part, right?”

“What if I want ... this?”

April didn’t have enough time to react. Dan reached for him and placed his lips over his. For a second, it felt good, but April put one hand on Dan’s chest and pushed him back firmly. “Not a good idea, man.”

Dan was still holding him, and the look in his eyes told the entire story. “Why? I thought you were into me.”

“I have a boyfriend,” April said brightly.

Later, he could blame Jett for planting stupid ideas in his head.

“Really? Who? That gangster dude you’re babysitting for? I heard your friends saying something. Sorry to break it to you, April, but that guy looks straight to me, no matter what he says.”

“And you’re an expert in telling who’s gay or not how?” April asked.

“Come on, April. The dude has a baby. How come he has a baby? Where’s his wife or his girlfriend anyway?”

“Gone,” April said and even made a small gesture as if Jett’s girlfriend had dematerialized in thin air.

“She’s dead?” Dan seemed shocked.

“No, no, no, that’s not what I meant. She just, you know, left.”

“All the more reason to stay clear of that guy. He must have been abusive with her or something.”

“Really? Yesterday you were calling me names and low-key threatening me,” April pointed out.

“I don’t see you scared.”

“Scared? Why should I be?”

“You shouldn’t. I’m a good guy,” Dan said.

April quirked an eyebrow.

Dan looked away. “I’m sorry, okay? I just got scared, that’s all.”

“You could have just said nothing,” April said. “It would have been better than calling me names.”

“Someone saw us at that party, and some gossip started. You must have heard it.”

“Yeah,” April admitted. “But you could have just shrugged it off if you thought it was a mistake.”

“I panicked,” Dan confessed. “And I don’t think it was a mistake. Ever since, I’ve only thought of, um,” he ran one hand through his hair, “kissing you again.”

“Sorry about that,” April replied in a flat tone. “I have a boyfriend, as I told you.”

“Were you with him when you kissed me?” Dan asked, and he seemed wounded now.

“No. I was yet to meet him.”

“And did you just decide to go out with him? Just like that?”

“I would have done the same thing with you if you hadn’t panicked,” April said, and this time, he looked Dan in the eyes.

The other took a step back. “I see what this is all about.”

“You do?” April sighed in relief. He reached for Dan to pat him on the shoulder. “Look, Dan, I’m here if you have questions --”

Dan swatted his hand away. “You’re pissed at me for treating you like that. It’s okay. I will prove myself. And I don’t need your pity. There’s no way that dude is your boyfriend.”

“Dan, seriously, he is.”

Dan just shook his head, and his eyes darted sideways, his nostrils flaring as if there was an opponent in front of him, and he needed to go through him.

April crossed his arms over his chest. “Don’t turn this into something it’s not. Okay, so we made out a little --”

“I barely got to kiss you,” Dan said with reproach.

“And by how you pulled away the soonest you heard someone coming, you clearly are not prepared for this. I’m sorry, but I’m not in the closet. If you are, that’s fine, but that’s not for me. If you’re just confused, that’s okay, too. And if it was just because you were drunk, that’s a non-issue, as well.”

“I wasn’t that drunk,” Dan said under his breath while looking down and studying his kicks for some reason.

“Anyway, it doesn’t matter. I have a boyfriend, and that’s final.”

“We’ll see about that, Summer,” Dan started talking loudly.

April stared at Dan and was about to say something cutting. Dan moved past him, pushing against his shoulder. When April looked after him, he got it. One of Dan’s friends was there and smirking at him.

April just rolled his eyes. He didn’t care about outing Dan or whatever. But the whole thing was pissing him off. “We won’t see anything because I’m not talking to you ever again,” he said loudly.

“Oh, we’re shaking,” Dan’s friend mocked him. He put one hand over his chest. “You really hurt our feelings, Summer.”

“If I wanted to hurt your feelings, I would hit you lower,” April said. “You guys are all balls, but not much else.”

Dan caught his friend by one arm, and April did take one step back. Maybe he had gone a little too far this time around.

“Let him be. He’s not worth it,” Dan said and shot one last look at April, something mixed, with both longing and hurt.

“Nah, let’s just teach him a lesson.”

“Dude, we could get into trouble.”

April took another step back and pulled out his phone. Now was a good time to call Jett.

“Hey, I thought you would text or something,” Jett’s voice came through.

“There are two guys here, at school, who want to beat me up,” April said loudly.

“What? Go straight for the balls, then run. I’m on my way,” Jett said quickly.

Jett had cut off the convo, but April continued to talk. “Yeah, I think you should bring your piece, too.”



Dan and his friend froze in place.

“Is this dude for real? Are you bluffing, Summer?” Dan’s friend tried to take another step further.

Dan appeared to squeeze his friend’s arm harder. “His boyfriend is some gangster dude. I don’t think he’s bluffing.”

“Gangster? He’s just lying.”

“No, dude. I saw him. He must have a gun.”

There was some more hesitation, so April continued his charade. “Are you going to break their legs? It’s a little harsh because they’re football players. I don’t know if they mind if they skip this season. My boyfriend wants to ask you something,” he said, looking at Dan and his friend.

He held out his phone. He was totally insane to bluff like that, but both jocks jolted back as if April’s phone was a loaded gun.

“Yeah, not worth it,” Dan’s friend said to save face. “Just be careful, Summer.”

“I’m always careful,” April said and smiled. “Buh-bye.”

Now that felt good. It had been completely insane on his part to confront those two like that, but it was nice to have a guard dog on speed dial. April shook his head. He hadn’t just thought of Jett as a giant dog, had he? He was more like a giant bear, given his stature. No, he was pure muscle, April continued his musings, as he walked toward the exit. Maybe he was more like a dog, after all. A Rottweiler with killer instincts and bloodshot eyes. Yeah, that was more like it.

He waited in front of the school, looking for Jett’s car. No one seemed in the mood to bother him again.

A screeching sound of tires made the few people around stop and look. April stared in disbelief at the vehicle, rushing toward him like he’d been shot out of hell.

Jett jumped out of the car almost the same moment he killed the engine. For a moment, April thought he would witness a movie-like sequence where the main protagonist walked smoothly out of a moving car and let it crash while he marched toward the bad guys.

“Mad skills,” he said as Jett hurried to him.

“Where are the assholes?” Jett asked loudly.

Now they had an audience. Only then April realized Jett was making a scene – a movie-like scene, but still – and he was the culprit for it.

“No assholes,” April said quickly.

“Are you hurt anywhere?” Jett grabbed him and began to feel his body.

That was downright weird, and the passersby were getting obviously more and more curious.

“No. Jett, wait. I’m fine. I was just checking your response time,” April came up with a quick lie.

Jett stopped for a moment, and then he threw a murderous look around. “What are you looking at?” he shouted at a poor nerdy guy who squealed and ran away. The other people took a step back, too. “Checking my response time? How about my response time to strangle you?” Jett turned on him his murderous intents.

April waved with both hands in surrender. “No strangling, please. And you were fast, really fast. Great.”

“So, no one was threatening you?” Jett walked closer and grabbed April hard. “Do you have any idea how many traffic rules I broke on my way here?”

“Shit,” April whispered. He looked around. “Are the police after you?”

“No, dweeb. I know how to lose the police.”

Of course.

“Now give me a good reason not to kick your ass,” Jett said.

Well, he needed something fast. April grabbed Jett by the shoulders and kissed him on the lips. The hard muscles under his fingers seemed to relax a fraction as he deepened the kiss. Jett kissed him back without one moment of hesitation.

Their bodies glued together. A few cheers and hoots made April realized they weren’t supposed to hump through their clothes in front of the school. “Let’s just get home to Jay,” he said, and grabbed Jett’s hand, dragging him toward the car.

“Okay, but keep that thought,” Jett agreed.

“Sorry about that, everyone,” April said quickly, to the people still staring at them.

Okay, he hadn’t thought this through at all.

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Jett looked ahead, trying to focus on driving. “So there was really no one bothering you at school? Like that guy?”

“No one,” April said quickly. “And that guy is just in the closet and, well, you know.”

“He wants you to go out with him or something?” Jett asked.

“It doesn’t matter. I told him I have a boyfriend.”

Jett grinned. That meant April would not get pissed over the news that Jett had told Sid precisely that. “Yeah? And didn’t he ask who your boyfriend was?”

“I told him that’s you.”

“Good. I told your dad the same thing.”

“What?! Jett, what the hell, man?”

“Hey, you go around telling people we’re together. I have the right to do the same, okay?”

April fell silent for a moment. “It’s okay, I guess. You’re right. It makes everything easier. As long as we know that’s not true, I’m fine with it.”

“You’re fine with everyone but us knowing we’re boyfriends?” Jett asked just to get it clear.

“Yeah,” April confirmed.

“You kissed me there,” Jett pointed out.

“I was just saving my ass. You were about to start kicking it.”

“For real? You’ll have to do more than that to save your ass,” Jett said.

April wouldn’t save his ass. But it wasn’t a kicking what Jett had in mind.

“Like what?”

“I’ll think of something.”

Of course, he couldn’t go at it directly. April was too bent on saving his cherry for someone special. Jett only needed to make him see he was that special someone.

## *Chapter Twelve – Applied Education*

“What happened?” His dad welcomed them with a worried look on his face. “Jett ran out the door as if there were a fire, somewhere. Are you two boys okay?”

April swallowed hard. Well, there had to come a moment when he needed to start lying to his dad about the heavy stuff, anyway. “I just --” he began.

Jett hurried to help him out. “I forgot what time April finished his classes.”

He squeezed in a short, grateful look, hopefully quick enough so that his dad wouldn’t catch wind of what was going on.

“That’s some dedication. I wonder, though, what you meant by,” Sid allowed one moment for his words to sink in, “the words ‘go for the balls’, though. Whose balls?”

“I’m kicking balls at school.” April made a small gesture with one arm as if he had to muscle through his studies like they were heavy lifting.

“Kicking balls? I thought the expression was ‘kicking ass’. I’m getting older by the minute, it seems.” Sid shook his head in mirth, but his eyes stayed on his son.

April fidgeted in his place. His dad wasn’t that easy to fool.

“Also, there are other things I don’t know these days. Like how you got yourself a boyfriend,” Sid continued.

“Ah, that,” April said flatly. “It was, just, you know, it happened.”

“And you didn’t think to call and share the news?”

“I didn’t think it would last,” April said, in the same deadpan voice.

“Really?” Jett intervened. “What makes you say that?”

“Geez, I don’t know. You’re a womanizer, and seriously, your phone is --” April bit his tongue.

“His phone is what?” Sid asked affably, but now April could tell his dad was having fun on his account.

“Old. His phone is old.”

“It’s not old,” Jett protested.

April threw him a short look.

“Ah, well, okay, I think it’s pretty old,” Jett added quickly. “Like last year or so.”

“Ancient,” Sid said and smiled. “Is the latest technology a criterion for choosing your boyfriend now, April?”

“You know me, dad. Nothing but the latest smartphone model does it for me,” April replied and smiled all the same.

His dad winked at him. “I believe we two have a little catching up to do. Jett, would you mind taking care of Jay a little while I talk to April?”

“We have that monitor thing,” Jett replied.

April threw him a short look of gratitude this time. Jett didn’t want to let him alone to face his dad.

“Are you sure you want to stay for a repeat of the lecture from earlier?”

Jett’s face fell in a comical way. April would have laughed if he hadn’t realized Jett would bail on him now. “What lecture?”

“That lecture,” his dad said.

“Ah, damn,” April moaned. “Is this what you want to talk to me about now?”

“Among other things.”

April just nodded and patted Jett on the back. “You can go now, Jett,” he said in a theatrical voice. “Tell Jay I love him, and I hope that he’ll remember me.”

“Just Jay? What about me?” Jett protested. “Wait, you’re not leaving, are you?”

“He’s not,” Sid intervened. “April here has a flair for the dramatic. It is his way of saying he might not escape alive. Of course, it’s not true. But he is due a lecture, anyway.”

Jett grinned. “Take care then, fool,” he joked and ruffled April’s hair.

Yeah, he was alone in this. But sooner or later, he would have had to confront his dad, anyway.

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“So, let me understand,” his dad started.

They were out of the house, walking slowly on the sidewalk. The autumn leaves gathered in front of them, and April couldn’t resist the temptation to kick the larger heaps with his feet the same way he had used to when he was a little boy.

“Jett has no idea who you are. How did this happen?”

“Long story,” April replied.

“I took today off. I have time,” his dad said.

How much of the truth could he allow himself to say? If he told his dad he got into trouble over that cash borrowed in not entirely legal ways, he would be in even bigger trouble.

“I thought about making some cash, and I answered an ad for babysitting,” he said.

Jett had brought him up to speed with what his father knew of them.

“And? When you realized it was Jett who put up the ad --”

“I didn’t realize,” April blurted out. “It took me a while. By then, it was weird to say anything. And Jett doesn’t remember me from that time.”

His dad looked at him with eyes that told him his bullcrap didn’t magically sprout wings overnight. “If I remember correctly, that time, as you say, he decided not to be your friend anymore.”

“Yeah, but ... people change, right?”

“Jett says he has never had a boyfriend before you. Isn’t that an unsettling thought?”

“I think Jett is honest to a fault. He might really like me,” April said quickly.

“I don’t doubt that,” his dad said. “I want to make sure you realize it, too. You should go ahead and tell him the truth about who you are.”

April winced, as a falling leaf smacked him gently in the face. “I don’t know, dad. It would be weird.”

“It would be honest. Didn’t I teach you well?”

“Yeah, I know,” April said and sighed from the depth of his lungs. “But I, Jett, and honesty don’t mix well.”

“You’re the one who said people change. If Jett is so attracted to you that it took you two less than a week to become boyfriends, he must have. After all, he was just thirteen at that time, and maybe just startled that another boy liked him.”

“He was more than just startled,” April replied tersely. “He was downright mean. He let me down. After all --” he swallowed his words.

“And this new version of Jett is different how?” His dad chose not to antagonize him further.

“I guess we’ll wait and see,” April said. “Right?”

“Don’t ask me. I already offered you what I believe to be good advice.”

“I’m sorry, dad. It was like, really messed up to see Jett after such a long time.”

“How do you really feel about him? Aren’t you a bit too much in a hurry to consider him your boyfriend? Have you two been intimate?”

“Daaaad,” April moaned. “Seriously, let’s not talk about this.”

“I’m not letting you off the hook that easily. Have you been waiting for Jett all this time?”

“All this time? I’m only twenty,” April complained.

“If we were living in Victorian England, I would even suggest for you to wait another ten years or so,” his father joked, “but in this day and age, you were long overdue to have your first boyfriend. Wait, is that some strange thing young people do that I don’t understand? Are you hooking up with Jett?” This time, Sid appeared to choose his words carefully.

April made a horrified face. “No! I’m not the kind to hook up!”

“Good. I was already thinking about making some addendums to my sex ed lecture.”

“It’s ... um, I guess I will figure it out. It’s --”

“Complicated. I get it.” His dad raised his hands in surrender. “Now I must ask since Jett is turning himself into wallpaper the moment I mention Jay’s mom. Where is she?”

“We don’t know.” April offered the simple truth. “Someone just dropped the baby by Jett’s door. Then he needed a babysitter,” he added quickly.

“Sooner or later, you need to find her.”

“Yeah. If she wants to be found. She left a pretty angry note along with the baby.”

“That’s an extreme thing to do,” his dad commented.

“Yeah. It’s pretty intense,” April confirmed.

“And doesn’t it bother you? Jett must have angered Jay’s mom quite severely for her to take such a step.” His dad looked at him carefully as if he waited for April to give himself away.

“That’s one theory. I still think she must be pretty nutso to have left a baby this small in front of a house without knowing if Jett was home. Who does that, anyway? And Jay is at least one year old. Has she waited this long to decide Jett should become involved with his son? That’s a pretty long time to hold a grudge without doing anything about it, isn’t it?”

“I don’t know. Jett’s your boyfriend, not mine,” his dad said with a sly smile. “I do trust you, April.” He stopped and put one firm hand on April’s shoulder.

It was pretty damn hard to look his father in the eyes and lie to him like that. But, for the moment, it felt like the only thing he could do. Later, someday, he would confess to everything.

“Thanks, dad.”

“I had a feeling you never really got over your first love,” his dad said and took him by the shoulders, walking again.

April blushed. “It wasn’t like that! I mean, I was pretty dumb to like someone like Jett at that age. He has always been a punk.”

“Well, it appears that you didn’t change that much either if it’s still him you like after all these years.”

“I don’t like him!” April protested, and then almost bit his tongue through.

“You don’t? Then I must say that relationships today are much more complicated than back in my days.”

“Oh, sure, dad, you’re ancient.” April rolled his eyes.

“I might even understand the hooking up part. But being boyfriends with someone you don’t like ... You don’t hate-friend him or something, I hope.”

“There’s no such thing as hate-friending someone,” April replied. He knew his dad was teasing him, but Sid had a pretty important reason to do so. Now April really felt guilty.

“Then it’s your last chance to enlighten me. Since you are both back home, I don’t want to lurk around, making everyone feel uncomfortable. What’s the deal with you two?”

“We’re, um, just trying to figure things out. Maybe we’re not quite boyfriends,” April said.

“We’re more like pals with benefits.”

“Just for the record, April, that sounds even worse. You’re not the type,” his dad warned.

April deflated. “Then, he’s my boyfriend.”

“All right. Let’s get back so that I can go back home. But no more radio silence, okay? You’re always glued to that phone, anyways. Call me, text me, and not only when there’s an emergency.”

“It’s obvious why I haven’t gotten a boyfriend until now,” April said lightly, to clear the air a little. “I’m too busy texting my dad all the time.”



“You punk,” his father said and laughed. “That’s not why, and you know it.”

“I do. Hey, I’ll see how things work out. And you’re right. It’s not like I can wait forever to see how it is to have a boyfriend.”

“Something tells me Jett wouldn’t be too happy to learn that he’s part of some trial and error process.”

“Why? What do you mean?” April asked.

“You’ll figure it out.” His dad winked at him. “Now, let’s get you back to your boyfriend. I think he’s already pacing the floor, thinking that I took you back home with me.”

“Jett wouldn’t worry that much,” April replied.

No, Jett would freak out big time if April were not to return. He had made it quite clear. Seriously, even for a boyfriend, Jett was pretty possessive. What was the deal with that? Yeah, there was Dan at school, and he was kind of an asshole, but April wasn’t afraid. Jett was overreacting. But, truth be told, he could barely wait to be back home with him and Jay, too.

“Thank you, dad. For coming in such short notice and, you know, for everything.”

“You can always count on me, pumpkin,” his dad said with affection in his voice and squeezed the back of his neck a little.

“Could we give up on ‘pumpkin’, though?”

“Really, why?” His dad feigned being hurt.

April snickered. “I think it comes with the territory. I got myself a boyfriend, so I can’t be a ‘pumpkin’ anymore.”

“I guess so,” Sid said with a small laugh. “It’s okay. It will take some time, but I’ll get used to it.”

“Thanks, dad.” April embraced his dad and enjoyed being embraced back, like always.

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Jett thanked Sid and shook his hand, wishing him a safe trip back home. April was obviously studying him as he did so as if he had suddenly grown another head. “What?” he asked as soon as the door closed.

“I didn’t know you had manners,” April said.

Jett examined his roommate, aka fake boyfriend, from behind his eyelashes. “What’s that supposed to mean? Did I mistreat you or something?”

“Hello,” April said in an exaggerated voice. “You just kidnapped me from my home, tied me to a kitchen chair with rope, and stuck your tongue in my --”

April seemed to become a mute, all of a sudden. His eyes were also darting sideways like he was trying to run from something.

“Continue. Did I stick my tongue where?” Jett approached April carefully, measuring his steps. He didn’t want to come across as too eager, but he didn’t want to allow his prey to escape either.

April bristled. “You know where!”

“I forgot. Remind me. Preferably, with a physical demonstration.” Swiftly, Jett caught April by the waist and pulled him close.

“Let me go, you monster.” April struggled, but Jett could tell he didn’t really mean it.

“I won’t. You kissed me earlier. Your father thinks we’re boyfriends. You’re the only one who’s playing hard to get.”

“Jett, we’re not really boyfriends, and we covered that,” April protested. “I get it all about handjobs and all that, but --”

“Oh, you get it? That means you like it, too. Yeah, you were pretty quick to get off your clothes to jump in bed with me, all naked and stuff.”

“Because you’re just so insistent,” April explained. “Wait, have you looked after Jay while I talked to my dad?”

“He’s sleeping. He must be exhausted after all that crying.” Jett used a serious tone to distract April’s attention and smiled when he reached his goal. With a short shout of triumph, he grabbed April’s phone from his pocket and took a few steps back quickly.

“What are you doing with my phone?” April protested immediately.

“Just curious about something,” Jett replied.

“Give it back.” April seemed restless now.

Jett shrugged, and April lunged at him. Good thing he was quick to act, as always. He began running around the kitchen table with April’s phone in his hand. April was sprinting, and Jett knew he would be caught. Size-wise, April was no match for him, but speed-wise, the tables turned.

He stopped abruptly, and April almost crashed into him.

“Give me my phone back,” April said and reached for it.

Jett held his arm up, enjoying how April rubbed against him, in his futile tries to get his phone back. “On one condition.”

April stopped, and his pretty eyes squared on Jett. “What condition?”

“I get to see your search history.”

“No way. I mean, I always wipe that clean.”

“Hmm, really? Okay. Then I’ll go straight to the point. Your dad told me you don’t have experience with babies whatsoever.”

“He did? Ah, damn!” April moaned and stepped back.

Jett caught him again by the waist. “For a noob, you did great. So I’m not mad.”

“Ah, great,” April breathed out the words.

“But this doesn’t mean that I’m going to let you off the hook that easily.”

“I should have known that,” April said and crossed his arms, trying to put some distance between them even if Jett held him close.

“First, let me return this.” Jett continued to hold April with one arm and pushed the phone into a back pocket of April’s jeans. He patted April’s ass, a bit lower than the back pocket. Damn, his fingers were itching, but he had promised himself he would play things a little cooler than this.

Who was he kidding? There was no way he could be cool around April. Jett Huntsman was not known to keep from taking what he wanted. He let his hand slid upward on April’s back and buried it into the spiky hair. All he needed right now was a kiss. No plays, no complications, nothing but a kiss.

April’s lips opened to his, as always. No matter how much the dweeb ran his mouth, he wanted this as much as Jett wanted it, which was a lot. No, it was fucking everything.

He moaned as he felt April’s hands reaching for his hair. Deft fingers worked at untying his bun, letting the hair loose, and then blunt fingernails ran across his scalp, making him shudder.

“There’s no way you’re a virgin, dweeb,” he complained as he pulled from the kiss. “How do you know my weak spots?”

April snorted. “Weak spots? Is that why you keep your hair in a bun? You don’t want anyone to touch your head or something?”

Jett grinned. “Got me there. Do it again,” he whispered against April’s lips and caught them quickly into a soft bite.

April laughed, a bit embarrassed, and pulled away. “I don’t want to touch your spots, Jett. I have a feeling it wouldn’t end in a good way for me.”

“You’re reading too much into things. Nothing will happen,” Jett lied through his teeth.

“I’m telling you ‘no’ to butt sex --”

“Hmm, butt sex,” Jett drawled the words, “you make it sound so sexy.”

April sighed. “There’s no winning with you. C’mon, Jett, I’ll do whatever, but not that. Or oral sex. That’s not included, either.”

“It’s all right. I have other things in mind. Let’s watch porn, April.”

“Wow, how quickly we evolved,” April said with a small, cute snort. “Nothing excites us anymore, so we need to watch porn.”

“Hey, it’s only for educational purposes,” Jett replied.

“Oh, no, is it that thing about gay porn again? I won’t tell you which guys are my type.”

“That’s not it. You told me I don’t know anything about gay sex. Technically, neither do you.”

“But I watched gay porn. There’s nothing to learn from there,” April protested, clearly wanting to weasel his way out of that situation. “You know how porn is. Completely undependable for educational purposes, as you say.”

“Well, we need to start somewhere. And you owe me for lying to me about knowing how to take care of babies.”

“I’m wondering whether you’re not a bad father for letting me in charge of Jay when I don’t have a clue about such things.”

“Your father said you’re a natural, and I believe him. Jay loves you.”

“He’s a baby. Anyone who feeds him and changes his diaper must be the center of the universe.”

“Nah, he loves you.”

April fell silent. His lips twitched in the cutest way and his eyes were a bit moist.

“Dweeb, are you having an emotional moment?” Jett squeezed his hand.

“What the hell are you talking about? And seriously, are we going to watch porn in the middle of the day?”

“When Jay wakes up, we’ll go to the park again. And then you’ll have to cook some food for us. By tonight, you might be too tired for sex stuff.”

“Jett, we’re twenty. We almost never sleep. Except when we sleep in, but with a baby in the house, it’s not like – all right, you convinced me. Let’s get this over with. I bet once you look at some guys going at it, you’ll want to run for the hills.”

“Keep that thought.” Jett grinned and let go of April’s hand only so he could sneak his own and grab April’s ass hard. “Nah, I don’t think there will be any running.”

“Jett, seriously, there’s nothing to learn from those videos.”

“So teach me. Ah, wait, you’re a total noob.”

“I’m not that noob,” April protested. “I’ve read about it.”

“Oh, really?” Jett opened the door to his bedroom and pushed April inside. “Did they have pictures in those books?”

“There were more like articles and stuff,” April replied. “But yeah, there were pictures.”

“So you just looked at porny pictures, anyway. Get undressed and in bed.”

“Wait, aren’t we going at this a little too fast?” April asked and put his arms around himself as if Jett was about to tear his clothes off.

“I saw you naked. You saw me naked. C’mon, dweeb, it’s not like there are secrets between us.”

April seemed uncomfortable at that. “But it’s light outside!” He pointed at the large window behind him.

Jett went and drew the curtain. “Better now?”

“Now I can’t see much,” April said. “But it’s better.”

Ah, April didn’t have that good eyesight, Jett remembered. Well, he wouldn’t need his eyes that much for what would follow. He didn’t hesitate to take off his clothes fast and plopped on the bed, next to April. “You’re not undressed, yet.”

April appeared to be squinting. Ah, the dweeb wanted to look at him.

“I could pull the curtains back, you know,” Jett said.

“No need,” April said quickly. “In semi-dark like this, I can at least pretend this isn’t really happening.”

“Come on, April, off with the clothes.”

Jett had no trouble seeing in the dark. It was easy to pull the zipper down on April's hoodie, and then hurry him to take off the t-shirt, too. He inhaled as April pulled the t-shirt over his head. There was just something about April's smell, which he enjoyed like a madman. It made him want to sniff April everywhere and then rub his body against him until their scents mixed and mingled.

April mumbled something in protest as Jett pulled at his jeans.

"Hey, not my fault you wear jeans this skinny," Jett warned.

He liked that April wore tight jeans. They showed off his ass nicely. It was a real pleasure to watch him walk around. With confidence, Jett hooked his fingers into the waistband of April's underwear and pulled it down. A hard cock sprang out.

Jett laughed. "We haven't even started." He wrapped his hand around April's cock and rubbed it slowly. "So, you like what you see, or something?"

April was lying on his back, stiff as a board, and looking at the ceiling. "I don't see much, you know. I don't wear my glasses in bed."

"Good. Then you're going to feel more."

April snorted. "Let's watch your gay porn. I know I can't see your face well, but I must warn you that I will laugh my ass off when you run out of the room, screaming."

"Not gonna happen," Jett said.

He kept from jumping April on the spot and went to grab his phone. April waited, almost without breathing, by how still and charged the air in the room was. Jett lay next to him and hooked one arm over his shoulders. "You'll have to work stereo for this. I'm in charge of the entertainment."

"Stereo?"

"One hand on my dick and one hand on yours. I know you don't need that much guidance," Jett said.

"All right," April said with a sigh, pretending to be bored with all that.

*Bored my ass*, Jett thought. The fingers wrapping around his cock were eager and even trembling a bit. He needed to make April more acquainted with his cock and overall, with them being together naked.

"What do you say about this?" Jett asked and showed April a video of a slender twink being taken hard by a muscled young man.

April seemed lost in thought. "I don't know," he said.

“You’re prettier than this guy,” Jett pointed out. “There’s no reason for you to get jealous.”

As his arm lay hooked over April’s shoulders, he let his hand roam lower. April grunted when Jett’s fingers brushed by his nipple. “What we’re doing here, it’s absolutely insane,” he complained.

“Because you like it?” Jett asked.

“Yes.”

Sometimes the dweeb was surprisingly honest.

“That’s okay. I like it, too,” Jett replied. “How about we look at some bj videos?”

April shrugged, and then tensed. “I am so not going to blow you, Jett.”

“Stop getting your panties in a twist. I’m not going to make you do that or anything.”

There was something else Jett had in mind. His fingers continued to torture April’s nipple as he reveled in the small sighs and grunts coming from his bed partner. Jett could feel his own nipples getting hard at the thought of April’s mouth on them. Never before had he thought about such a thing. Now, everywhere April touched was a weak spot.

Right now, April, whether he was aware of it or not, was moving his hand on Jett’s cock fast. On the screen, a beautiful blond with green eyes was swallowing to the hilt another guy’s long cock.

“Fuck, he’s like a sword swallower or something,” Jett whispered.

Usually, Jett wasn’t one for gonzo style porn videos, but, under the circumstances, it was pretty cool to watch the blond on the screen sucking that big cock from that angle. He could only guess what April was thinking. The hand on his cock was getting desperate. Jett stole a quick look at April’s other hand and saw it standing still on his cock.

That looked a bit painful. It was so obvious April was just moments away from blowing, but he didn’t want to do that.

“This guy really likes what he’s doing,” Jett commented, letting his whispers drop lower and blowing hot air over April’s cheek.

“He’s a porn actor. He does what he’s paid for,” April replied, his voice strained and weird.

“I don’t know. Just look at his eyes. He loves that cock in his mouth.”

April’s small grunt of distress was almost funny. Almost, because Jett could feel his own cock growing harder and harder and the pressure in his balls building. He stopped the video and put his phone on the nightstand.

“What? Enough for you?” April clearly wanted to joke about it, but his voice was hoarse and deep.

Jett didn't say a word. He just turned on April and kissed him hard on the lips. As he slid down, he bit a nipple playfully in passing and then went for his prize.

April cursed in an unintelligible language when Jett swallowed his cock. There was a sound like something hitting wood, and Jett looked up only to see April smacking one hand hard against the headboard of the bed. April used the other to bury it in Jett's hair, trying, apparently, to stop him.

That was all the more reason for Jett to insist and continue. He ignored the hand pulling at his hair and swallowed April's cock as much as he could.

It looked like whatever the blond in the video was paid for was worth it because swallowing a dick took skill. But Jett was hungry as hell, at this point. He tasted April's cock, enjoying the sensation. It made his determination grow. He grabbed April's cock hard and pushed it as much as he could into his mouth.

With the tongue, he ran circles around the head and then sucked it hard into his mouth with a smack. The distressed sounds from April were only growing in intensity, turning into shouts. At the same time, April continued to smack his hand against the headboard, like in a futile effort to escape.

“Jett, please, I'm going to--” April breathed out.

Good, Jett thought, finally. April's cum began shooting into his mouth, and, for a second, he stood there, frozen, unsure of what to do.

It wasn't bad. It wasn't good. It was just ... something and Jett just decided to go with the flow and began swallowing. At the same time, he rubbed his own hard cock against the coverlet, in a desperate attempt to get off.

“Dude, you're insane,” April moaned as Jett finally let him go.

Jett felt pretty smug about himself but winced when he looked up, and surely he made quite the face. April snickered, then controlled himself, and his eyes grew wide. “How does it taste like?”

Jett considered for a second. “Like licking a battery or something.”

April guffawed, and then he seemed to get serious again. “I haven't licked a battery in I don't know how many years.”

“Yeah, me neither,” Jett said.

For a couple of seconds, they stared at each other in the semi-dark of the room. They could mostly guess what the other was thinking.



“Do you want me to ... you know?” April asked, in a weak, vulnerable voice.

“No,” Jett said quickly.

“Wait,” April said and reached for him. He caught Jett by the shoulders and whispered in his ear. “That was pretty awesome, Jett.”

“Really? It was my first.”

“Maybe you’re a natural.” April giggled in his ear.

“Shut up, dweeb. I just wanted to do it.”

“Why?”

April was so close, and his cock was still hard. Plus, now he had April’s taste on his tongue. If he thought about it a little, he liked it.

“Because I want to taste you everywhere,” Jett said in a low voice.

April shuddered for a brief moment. “Let me do you, too, Jett.”

“All right. Just don’t put your mouth on it.”

“How am I supposed to do it?” April asked, and, to Jett’s ears, he sounded disappointed.

“With your hand.”

“But that’s not --” April started to protest.

“Hey, according to your dad’s lecture, I think it’s safer if I get some bloodwork done or something first.”

“But you did swallow mine,” April said.

“You’re a virgin, dweeb. I used to plow the fields up to Antarctica. Didn’t you say so?”

“Yeah, but ...” April protested. “Before, you said you used condoms--”

“I know. And I did test whenever I went steady with someone. Wait, didn’t you say you wouldn’t put your mouth on my cock?”

“I changed my mind,” April said breathily.

“Well, it kills me, but use your hand. And give me a free blowjob card after.”

“A what?”

“Yeah. Like a promise that you’ll blow me eventually.”

“Okay.”

“Okay? I thought you would protest or something.”

“No.”

Jett had a mind to question April more, but his cock was getting handled, and he forgot all he wanted to say. April put his mouth on his and began kissing him with something that tasted like vengeance.

So the dweeb wanted to suck him off, after all. That was good to know. If he hadn't been so hard, he would have laughed his ass off, but right now, it was like his body was a self-activated spring, pressed at one end by April's firm hand on his cock, and fused at the other to April's hot lips.

No one, ever, had the right to kiss those lips. Jett sank one of his hands in April's spiky hair and kissed back, too, using all his strength, wanting and needing that to show the other what he really meant.

April was going at it now, and Jett knew it would be over soon. But he didn't mind; he was in for the long game, so coming fast or slow didn't matter. What mattered was for April to kiss him like that until none of them had lips anymore.

Their tongues were busy playing catch up when he came. Jett moaned his satisfaction into April's mouth, and April just kept on kissing him.

When they finally broke their kiss, they were both panting. April's lips were moist and red, and his eyes were out of focus. Jett looked down and wondered at his cum-covered belly. “Dude, look at this huge load!”

It was embarrassing to say something romantic, given the circumstances. So it was safer to go for something he knew.

“I know,” April replied with a small, hoarse laugh. “Look here,” he added, keeping his hand up and showing Jett his sticky fingers.

“Let me get you something for that.” Jett stumbled out of bed and removed an entire drawer looking for some tissues.

For some reason, his heart was so big it threatened to go out of his chest if he just stood there, staring at April.

“It's fine. I'll go wash my hands.”

Jett looked at April as he got out of the bed, completely comfortable, as it seemed, in his nakedness. He stared after the perfectly shaped ass as April walked out of the room. As soon as the door closed behind him, Jett slumped against the wall.

Hell, that had been great. But now what?

### *Chapter Thirteen – Domestic Negotiations*

His brain was made of cotton candy, and all his thoughts were rivers of melted fudge. April could still not get his head around what had happened earlier between him and Jett. He had had his cock sucked for the very first time in his life, and while he didn't have a practical basis for comparison, that had been the absolute everything.

Jett had gone at it like April's cock was the tastiest food in the universe. Definitely, that was not aligned at all with what April thought of Jett. His heart squeezed a little. What if Jett was lying? What if he had been with guys before? It was enough he had a caterpillar long Facebook wall of gorgeous women for April to worry about. Handling male competition, on top of it all, would be just too much.

But Jett had been serious. April would not just go and call him a liar. Maybe his dad was right, after all, and he needed to think of a way to tell Jett he was the same guy as the boy he had known at thirteen.

Maybe. The most complicated word that had to be in the dictionary. Truth be told, April was sort of scared to think of that. What if Jett got pissed? What if it was all some sort of experimentation, and being the sexual creature that he was, Jett wouldn't care anyway? What if he ruined what could be a good thing?

And what if, just if, Jett still hated Theo? No, no, no, one hundred and eighteen reasons were telling him he didn't need to tell Jett a thing. Maybe Jett didn't even want to remember those times. After all, they had been only boys, and out of the blue, April/Theo had decided to kiss his friend on the lips, like in the movies. By how Jett had behaved after that, it was clear as day that, at thirteen, he didn't appreciate being kissed by boys.

And, of course, now, at twenty, he had plenty of sexual experience not to count a little bit of gay experimentation as a threat to his sexuality.

He was just complicating things by telling, April thought. It was just in everyone's interest if that particular thing remained hidden. If it was only fun for Jett, April could play it cool. If it were to evolve into something else – damn you, wishful thinking – then it was best for April to be sort of a brand new acquaintance in Jett's life, not the live-action version of an awkward kid from eons ago. But that was just him projecting his secret wishes.

Either way, he needed to keep such things to himself.

April winced when something light and fluffy bounced off his head. He turned his eyes on Jett, who was having fun teaching Jay how to bombard April with popcorn. "Are you two having fun or what?"

"You're dreaming with your eyes wide open," Jett said and smiled lazily.

How could he think of Jett as a giant dog? Now he seemed like a giant cat, probably a lion, as he stretched, stifling a yawn.

“Well, certain activities may be strenuous. But it does Jay good to come to the park as often as possible. We might not enjoy many days as beautiful as this one.”

“You can’t count being on the receiving end of a blowjob being strenuous.”

“Hush,” April hissed at Jett, pointing at Jay. “Not in front of the baby.”

“Damn,” Jett complained, as he lay on his back, and took Jay to bounce him off his stomach, “it’s like we’re married. Okay, darling, I’ll keep the dirty talk for the bedroom.”

April just shook his head. “You’re incorrigible; you know that, right?”

Jett looked at him, and his eyes were filled with a warm light. April took out his phone and aimed it at Jett.

“Whatcha doing?” Jett drawled.

“I just want to take a picture of you,” April explained.

It was enough for Jett to extend one arm and catch him. Jett brought April close together, making him slump against him. With ease, he arranged Jay so that the baby was between them. “It’s high time for a wefie,” Jett explained.

“I don’t think we’ll manage to take any picture if we all move around like that.”

“Yeah. You should stay still or something.”

Jay reached for April’s phone, fascinated with the toy over which the grownups seemed to have a feud. Jett grabbed the phone eventually and began snapping pictures of them.

“All right, I think that’s a lot of wefies,” April said. “Hey, what are you doing?”

“Just posting some on your social media. #atthepark, #withmyfamily, #justchilling, #parentingisfun, um, what should we add?” Jett seemed to ponder.

“Give me that back!” April reached for his phone.

“Oops, I think it’s all posted now,” Jett said and laughed. “Don’t make such a face. Only your friends can see your pics, right?”

“And don’t you think that’s enough for my social media suicide? What will they think?”

“Hey, your nerdy friends were all like, okay, when I kissed you in the car this morning. They won’t be surprised. Plus, they’re clearly cool dudes.”

“They are mostly girls,” April pointed out.

“All right, dudes and dudettes then,” Jett said.

April straightened up and punched Jett playfully in the shoulder. “This is really fun for you, isn’t it?”

“Why shouldn’t it be?” Jett examined him with his beautiful eyes.

April needed to stop staring into them. He had a strange tendency to lean forward and fall into them. “Maybe because it’s just a way of having fun for you.”

“What if it’s not only that?”

“If?”

“It’s not only that,” Jett said with determination.

April pulled down the zipper of his hoodie. He was getting seriously hot. “What do you mean?”

“Be my boyfriend, April. For real.”

He searched Jett’s face for any signs that the guy was pulling his leg. There were none. “You can’t be serious,” he protested feebly. “You have just so many girls on that wall and --”

“And I don’t care about any of them. I like you, and I’m not some complicated guy. What do you say?”

“I shouldn’t,” April replied and shook his head. “I don’t know what this is.”

Jett reached for him, but this time he just squeezed his shoulder in sympathy. “Why don’t we just figure it out then?”

April looked at Jett with longing. Wasn’t it what he had dreamed about since thirteen?

Jett’s face fell. “You don’t have to look so miserable. It’s okay if you don’t want to.”

“Miserable? This is not my face when I’m miserable,” April protested.

“It isn’t? Then what were you thinking about?” Jett asked.

“I was thinking about ... how I wish we try this,” April said, stumbling out the words like stones in his mouth.

Jett smiled. “You’re a weird dude, April Summer. Do I have to make it formal or something? Should we change our Facebook relationship status or something?”

April winced. “You know, I’m not the kind all open for this social media exhibitionism. I’d rather we be cool and keep it to ourselves.”

“Your dad knows. Your friends know.”

“Yeah, we lied to them.”

“So let’s not lie to them anymore,” Jett offered. “We just tell them the truth.”

“Which is not different from the lie we told them.”

“If this is how we roll,” Jett said with a small shrug.

“I just don’t get it how come you’re attracted to me,” April thought out loud. “I mean, men don’t just suddenly decide that they might like dudes, too.”

There was a small hesitation from Jett. “It took me about a week with you to know that. So it wasn’t sudden.”

“We knew each other literally only for several hours when you kissed me the first time.”

“Then maybe it was sudden,” Jett said, shrugging again.

“You really are uncomplicated,” April said and shook his head. “So, you just like me?”

“I just like you,” Jett said solemnly.

“You’re not just teasing me,” April added, wanting to make sure.

“Cross my heart.”

April winced a little. That expression again. “All right. Let’s give it a try, I guess.”

“Wow, good thing you’re more enthusiastic when we get naked and freaky, ‘cause I’d think I’m setting you up for torture or something.”

“It’s sort of weird, that’s all,” April explained.

“Don’t you like me, too, dweeb?”

“What’s not to like?” April snorted. “You’re any gay man’s or straight woman’s wet fantasy.”

“Besides that,” Jett said.

April studied Jett’s face carefully. It was a bit hard since Jay was just discovering how fun it was to slap his daddy’s face with one open palm. Jett pretended to bite Jay’s hand playfully, something that made the baby silent for a second, only to burst into laughter the next one.

“Besides how I look, what do you like about me?” Jett asked again.

So he wasn't off the hook. “Other things. Like your response time.”

“Are you making fun of me?” Jett asked, and his smile was a bit crooked.

“I'm serious. It shows I can depend on you if I'm ever in trouble. And you took care of my debt, so you're a pretty generous person, too.”

“Ah, you actually pay for that by babysitting Jay.”

“Shut up, Jett. You know what I mean,” April said, and this time he cocked his head to one side and smiled at the other. “Now it's my turn to ask. Do you care about being boyfriends only because, you know, the physical stuff?”

“That's part of it. Even right now, I want to kiss you.”

April blushed and cleared his voice. “Let's not scandalize the local gentry.”

“I would if you were game.”

“I'm not,” April said, a bit too loudly.

He totally was, but it was the closest park they could go to, and Jay needed to have a place to play in the open air and see pets and other kids.

“I like your big heart,” Jett said quickly and looked away.

“My big what?” April wasn't sure he heard it right.

“Come on, don't make me say sappy things. It's weird. Well, your food is edible. How's that?”

“All right. Damn, it feels like we're ticking things off a list.”

“Stop overthinking everything, dweeb. I like you. Let's try this boyfriend thing.”

“Let's,” April said and sighed.

“Just for the record, we will take the next step, right?” Jett asked.

“What do you mean?” April blinked a few times.

“You know, the bu ... the home run,” Jett said, stealing a quick look at Jay.

“Home run? Do you want us to play baseball?”

Jett threw him an exasperated look. “You're the one who says not to talk about se ... stuff in front of the baby. We hit the third base, now figure out what's next.”



“Ah,” April said as the realization hit him. “Home run. Now I get it. Wait, I don’t think I’m ready.”

“No way, dweeb. We agreed. We’re officially boyfriends. There’s no backing down now.”

“Damn,” April said and pursed his lips. “You are such a player.”

Jett smirked, probably knowing well how sexy he looked like that. “Not with you. I’m all in with you.”

“If you say so,” April replied and looked away.

“Don’t worry. Until I get the bloodwork done, you’re off the hook. But after, I’m going to be all over your ... you know what? Do you think we can buy some earplugs for Jay?”

“No. You’re not getting off the hook that easily. You learn how to talk correctly in front of a baby. And you’re so going to learn how to change diapers.”

Jett fell on his back again and moaned. “Not that. Anything but that.”

“You can’t have only the good parts of being a dad.”

“All right. But don’t complain if Jay won’t like it when I do it. Buddy,” Jett said as he took Jay close, “isn’t it that you like it best when April changes your diaper? Just blink if you agree. He blinked!” He said to April, pointing at the kid.

“The sun is getting in his eyes. Of course, he blinked,” April protested.

“I could learn how to cook,” Jett offered.

“Let’s not risk food poisoning.”

“I could,” Jett seemed to ponder, “vacuum clean.”

“I guess,” April said with a sigh. “But you do know that carpets and corners are also areas of the floor that need cleaning.”

Jett made a face. “That vacuum cleaner works only on hard floors or something.”

“Literally, Jett, you only have to press that thing on top to make it work on carpets, too. It even has that design so that it glides around the corners to clean everything well.”

“Really? I had no idea.”

“I have so many things to teach you,” April said, shaking his head in mirth.

“Or it’s better if you do them. You’re better at them, anyway.”

“Ha, nice try. You won’t escape that easily.”

“Hey, I’m bringing home the dough.”

“And? We’re like some fifties commercial or something? Do you want me to put on an apron and a neurotic smile?”

“Hey, it’s like that thing with splitting work. We’re more efficient.”

April laughed. “Admit it. You’re scared of diapers.”

Jett grinned, and his eyes smiled, too. “Yeah. It’s like the scariest thing in the universe. I don’t know how you do it.”

“Magic,” April said and smiled, as well.

“I knew it had to be something about you.”

“Why? Because I made you stray from your straight ways?” April teased.

“Maybe.” Jett winked at him. “Are we ready to go home? I’m hungry.”

“You just had two hamburgers from that fast food place we’ve been to earlier. How can you be hungry?”

“Obviously, I’m hungry for your cooking.”

“You either try to flatter me or turn me into your slave.”

“Or maybe it’s not food I want.”

April gulped and looked away.

“We’re boyfriends, so get used to it,” Jett said, and his voice was dipped in honey.

“It?” April chose to risk it.

“You know I can’t tell you what ‘it’ is in front of Jay,” Jett said with fake reproach. “But you’ll know it when you see it.”

“Okay. Then I think we’re done here,” April said and stood up.

It was totally weird and also insane on his part, but he wouldn’t say ‘no’ to Jett’s ‘it’. The past was the past. And maybe, just maybe, he could needle Jett for information on Theo and what had happened that summer, long ago, that made Jett so cold and angry. He couldn’t directly ask for it, so he would have to think of a way to learn about Jett’s true feelings. In the meantime, April believed he would have some fun. After all, there was nothing wrong with that, right?

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Jett was over the moon, but at the same time, he knew he had to play it cool, like really cool. It was never a good idea to show the other he was too much into them since that could come off as strong. So he just hooked one arm over April's shoulders as they walked into the house.

It felt good even if they just stood so close to each other. It was enough to feel April next to him, and it was like everything was right in the world. At first, he had been pissed at April, at his hippy name, and how much he looked like Theo. But it had been what had drawn Jett to him, so that could not be discarded that easily.

April only looked like Theo. No, he almost had the same personality, too. But those things didn't matter. April was April, and Theo was Theo. And Jett needed to be careful about slips of the tongue. He needed to make it so that April never learned about Theo; Jett didn't want April to think that he was some replacement for someone from his past. It was enough that April knew what a ladies' man he was.

Correction. What a ladies' man he had been. So few times before he had felt he could make things work with someone else. Carina had been ... he wouldn't think of her now. She was part of the past, and nothing else. And right now, all he wanted was to focus on April and truly make things work.

Zane would laugh at him so hard; Jett was sure of it. But it was like, with April, everything fell into place. For the last days, he had been horny, challenged, slightly pissed, but pretty much excited with everything around him like he could not remember feeling in a while.

Now all he needed was to keep Zane away from April as much as he could. At least, until Jett could tell Zane to keep his mouth shut about Theo.

They were barely inside and getting out of their shoes when there was a short rap on the door. It was slowly getting dark outside, and usually, evening visitors often had only a couple of things in mind. They were either girlfriends or ... frigging Zane.

"Could you get the door?" April asked as he struggled with the straps of the carrier to get Jay out.

"Hush," Jett whispered and moved quickly as if he were about to hide behind the door. "Who the hell comes visiting at this hour? Just let them leave, whoever they are."

April stared at him, and his eyes thinned. "It's just a little after seven. It may be a little late for Jay, but still. Just get the door."

Jett remained unmoved. What the hell was he supposed to do now? He couldn't text Zane this fast, and he couldn't explain things with April around. "Aren't you going to take Jay upstairs? He needs a change of diaper, I bet. Phew, I can tell from here."

April appeared to become even more suspicious. “Is it one of your girlfriends? Ah, sorry, don’t let me get in the way.”

“It’s not one of my girlfriends!” Jett raised his voice, and then almost bit his tongue.

A second round of knocking followed, and this time, when he didn’t react, April just reached for the door and opened it, with a pretty pissed expression on his cute face.

An expression that instantly changed into surprise.

“Hey, beautiful,” Zane’s drawl could be heard. “Is Jett home?”

April looked behind the door at him. “Let me see if he still needs to hide, seeing how it’s not one of his girlfriends at the door.”

“I’m Zane, Jett’s friend,” the visitor offered. “And you are?”

Jett came out of hiding – which was totally not what he was doing – not at all prepared for Zane and his big mouth, but determined to stop him from saying anything.

“Hey, man,” he said, and Zane walked inside and hugged him like usual.

He had interrupted April from telling his name, and he had a smidge of hope that Zane would be all business-like tonight so that he didn’t feel the need to get cozy.

“I see you got yourself a housemate,” Zane said, looking at April again. “Two, actually.”

“Hi, I’m --” April started.

“I’ll be damned!” Zane exclaimed.

It was like one of those moments when an accident happened, and all you could do was sit there and stare. Jett reached for Zane, hoping to make him stop, but Zane dodged him with ease, bent on ruining things, the idiot.

Zane grabbed April and looked him in the eyes. “Theo, is that you?”

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April gaped like a fish. He hadn’t been prepared for this. So this attractive guy was Zane. The moment he had answered the door, April had to admit that he had been a little surprised. Zane was almost as tall as Jett, but unlike him, he was more slender and had the charm of a fifties movie rebel hero, with his leather jacket, dark jeans, and midnight eyes staring at others through a fringe of curly eyelashes. The hair on his head was smoothed back, slick as only an experienced hairdresser could make it be, with only one, apparently rebellious curl dropping over a tall forehead, just because.

But that wasn't the biggest shock. Why the hell was Zane calling him Theo? April was lost for words.

"He's not Theo, moron," Jett said roughly. "His name is April."

"Really?" Zane asked, and he looked hard at April, with something akin to amusement in his dark as sin eyes. "I would have bet --"

"Take your fucking bet and shove it up your ass," Jett said and frowned.

"Seriously, dude? What crawled up yours?" Zane asked, finally releasing April, who was still in a bit of shock.

But he was getting his bearings back, and he needed to clear the air. "Guys, there's a baby here. How about you two stop yelling profanities at each other?"

Zane looked at him, and he seemed unconvinced. "April, huh?"

"Yeah, April Summer," April offered his hand boldly. "Nice to meet you. I've heard a lot of great things about you."

"Really? Probably you haven't talked to Jett about me, then," Zane laughed. "And why so formal? I don't remember a dude telling me it was nice to meet me in forever."

"Probably because you never stuck around to get a fair review on your ass fucking abilities," Jett said.

"Ass fucking," April mumbled under his breath. "I'm just going to take Jay away from this polluted atmosphere."

"Jay?" Zane's attention turned on him again. "That's the little fellow? Is he kin to you, April? Don't tell me he's yours?"

"Actually --" April started.

Zane nudged Jett playfully with his elbow. Jett grunted as Zane's elbow connected with his ribs. Apparently, the nudge hadn't been too playful, after all. "Jett, what the hell are you doing with such a beautiful boy under your roof? Don't think that the fact that he's straight and has a baby will stop me from trying my luck."

"How about a punch in the face from me? Will that stop you?" Jett said menacingly.

Zane's eyes grew wide. "What the hell, man? I was just kidding. And let your housemate decide if he wants to go out with me."

April shook his head. He had to be in some strange dream. "Actually --" he started again.

“That baby is mine, and April is my boyfriend,” Jett said.

Zane stood there for a moment in stunned silence. “Is this some April’s Fool joke?”

April rolled his eyes. His name came up in conversation when it was and wasn’t about him. “It’s true.”

Zane looked at him again and grinned. “Oh, then allow me to congratulate the lovely couple. Are you guys up for a threesome, or is it too early?”

April bit his lips hard, trying not to laugh out loud. Zane was a riot. “Definitely too early.” He was almost tempted to make a joke about having to watch porn to get things going but stopped. That was pretty intimate, and by Jett’s eyes, burning in flames now, it was better if he just saw about Jay, who was giving signs of restlessness because of all the ruckus around him. “I should see about Jay and his diaper,” he said as he bounced off Jay in his arms, to soothe him.

“Sure,” Zane said. “Hope to see you around, April.”

“Yeah, me too.”

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“Can’t you fucking text or call before coming over?” Jett exploded, the moment April was gone.

“I sent like five texts and called twice.” Zane shrugged.

Jett pulled out his phone and frowned. His battery had died, and he hadn’t even noticed or cared. April was fucking up his head real good, not that he was complaining.

Zane wanted answers, too. “What the hell was that, dude? Are you sure that’s not Theo? He looks exactly like Theo.”

Jett pursed his lips. “And how do you know that, huh?”

“Because of that picture you showed me. Yeah, he’s like several years older now, but still. The resemblance is fucking uncanny.”

“Just stop talking,” Jett warned. “And don’t ever mention that name in this house again if you don’t want to piss me off.”

“Aren’t you in a mood? Don’t tell me. You didn’t get laid today or something.”

“Stop being an asshole, Zane. Just don’t mention that fucking Theo ever again.”

“All right, jeez. April is damned fine, though.”

“Yeah, he is. Just in case I wasn’t clear, hands off. Okay?”

“Sure. Ready? We have a job.”

“Sure.”

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*That fucking Theo*, April said to himself, as he stood hidden at the top of the stairs, eavesdropping. He had been right. Jett was pissed at Theo and had always been. So, he really needed to keep his mouth shut about it. Even if it felt even more wrong now.

## *Chapter Fourteen - A Pair Of Jokers*

“Man, you sure are full of surprises,” Zane commented as they walked into a dark alley with only a light at the end, above what looked like a shabby door. “All that talk about Theo--”

“Hey, didn’t I tell you to stop mentioning that name?” Jett said in a low voice and flexed his fingers around the brass knuckles, his hand hidden in the right pocket of his jacket.

“You gotta tell me what’s going on,” Zane pointed out. “I’ve listened to you for years talking about your first crush.”

“April doesn’t need to know about Theo.”

“Why not? Jett, for real, you have a child. You had it with one of your exes, yeah? And April is taking care of that baby like Jay is his own. I seriously think he’s past any kind of jealousy. He seems like a pretty cool dude. He won’t get scared of some crush you had on a boy at thirteen.”

“Oh yeah? I’m not risking it. I’m sure he’ll ask about Theo the moment I get back.”

“I don’t get it. Why shouldn’t April know?”

“Zane, my dude, we’re here to break some bones, not to talk about my boyfriend.”

“This isn’t over, just so you know,” Zane said, and pulled the half mask over his face, while Jett pulled his hoodie lower and his balaclava higher, and clasped the weapon in his hand harder. Tonight, he was pretty much in the mood to smash some schmuck’s face in. If it hadn’t been for frigging Zane and this stupid job, he could have been home, getting freaky with April. It didn’t matter; April wouldn’t get much sleep, the moment he got back.

“Pizza delivery,” Zane announced in a whiny voice after knocking hard on the door.

“We didn’t order no pizza,” someone yelled from the inside. “Go the fuck away.”

Zane gestured with his chin at Jett. Jett nodded and, after taking a few steps back, he launched himself with one shoulder forward against the door. A thump followed, and there was movement inside.

Zane began laughing, imitating the same voice from before. He picked some pebbles from the ground and threw them at the door, to make more noise.

“Fucking kids,” the annoyed guy from inside said out loud so that he could be heard.

Jett stopped and for a second, they waited. The door opened, and in a second, Jett was through it and the guy behind it. Zane followed. This time in a nasal voice, he shouted. “Time’s up! Pay or make way!”



Jett wanted to roll his eyes at Zane's antics. He just grabbed the guy who got the door by the front of his shirt and shook him. "The Z brothers need their loan back. With all the due interest. Clear?"

Two other men were inside and they approached them carefully. Jett shook the one he was threatening. "Tell your goons to fuck off, or I'll start breaking things."

One of the goons pulled a switchblade.

Jett groaned. "I don't fucking have time for this."

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April startled at some muffled noises coming from downstairs. What the hell was going on? He checked his phone and moved silently so he didn't wake Jay. Without Jett home, he had seen no reason to sleep in his bedroom alone, and leave the baby by himself, too.

It was frigging two in the morning. He opened the door and snuck out, making sure not to make a sound. Hopefully, that was Jett downstairs. Who else could it be? He chided himself for getting scared for no reason.

It wasn't entirely for no reason. Whatever Jett was doing to make that kind of cash April had noticed around the house while vacuuming, it couldn't be squeaky clean. April also knew that the guys he had borrowed money from weren't squeaky clean, either.

So there could be a stranger in the house, someone who didn't like Jett at all. April stopped for a second, considering his options. It wasn't like he was equipped to face some criminal. And there was also Jay.

"Where the fuck do you keep the booze?" Someone said, loud enough for April to hear the words clearly as he stood at the top of the stairs.

Another voice hushed the first. April sighed and began descending. There was light in the kitchen, so he went there.

Only to witness Jett and Zane looking a little bit worse for wear. The right shoulder of Jett's jacket was torn, and Zane was limping around the kitchen while huddling his left arm.

"What happened to you two?" April asked out loud.

Jett jumped from the chair and turned toward him. April gasped. There was a red gash above Jett's right eyebrow, and there was blood.

April caught his stomach with one hand. "Now I know why I didn't want to go to med school, like my dad wanted."

“What are you doing up?” Jett asked roughly.

“I thought there were some burglars, making away with the silverware.”

Zane snorted. “Silverware. I can see why you like this dude, Jett.”

“I’m going to the bathroom to bring the first aid kit,” April said, shaking off the first shock.

Without another word, he ran up the stairs.

“We don’t have a first aid kit,” Jett called after him.

“Yes, we do,” April shouted over one shoulder and then caught himself.

Jay was soundly asleep and April wanted to keep it that way. He slowed down, but still tried to move as fast as he could without making too much noise.

He was back downstairs in a heartbeat.

“Can I drink that?” Zane asked, pointing at the bottle of rubbing alcohol.

April slapped his hand away. “Why aren’t you at some hospital? I don’t even want to know what the hell you two were up to tonight. How badly are you hurt?”

Zane winced. “It’s just bruises, mainly, but they hurt like a bitch. Are you sure I can’t have some of that? It’s alcohol, right?”

“For external use only.” April slapped Zane’s hand again.

“Is this how you usually treat the wounded?” Zane complained.

April found the painkillers, took two from the blister pack and handed them to Zane with a glass of water. Then he turned his attention on Jett. No surprise there, Jett backed away from his touch.

“Stay still or we’re going to have a problem,” April said in a stern voice.

“You’re not in med school,” Jett replied.

“Yeah, but I still know a few things from my dad. Let me see.”

He was gentle as he used a damp cloth to wipe away the blood from Jett’s cheek and eyebrow. April was relieved to see that the gash wasn’t deep. With quick and sure moves, he cleaned it and dabbed at it carefully. He took out a Band-Aid and placed it over the broken skin. There would be a small scar, maybe. Jett was quite the trooper, not saying anything, neither good, nor bad. That was good enough for April.

At least, the two bad boys seemed not so badly hurt. He did a cursory examination of Zane's arm, but gave up on examining his leg, after Zane joked about not wearing underwear in case April wanted him to take his pants off.

"Who the hell beat you two up like this?"

"Well," Zane started, "there were supposed to be only three assholes inside, but there were actually six."

April looked at Jett. "Seriously? Two versus six? Do you really want me to believe that? And are you two completely insane?"

"That's what we do," Jett replied. "Have you played nurse enough for tonight? Go to sleep."

"Ha," April said. "Like I could. Seriously, what were you two thinking?"

"I was thinking about a sweet ass I almost hooked up with yesterday while waiting in line to get my latte," Zane replied promptly. "Your boyfriend over there was thinking of your sweet ass, obviously."

"A pair of jokers," April mumbled to himself. "Jett, take some painkillers, too." He offered Jett water and pills.

Somewhat grudgingly, Jett took them. His eyes were stormy and he seemed in a foul mood. Could it be that he was still thinking of Theo because Zane had reminded him by correctly identifying April with Jett's summer friend from that time? Maybe that had caused him to lose his concentration or something. Not that April had any idea of what Jett's MO usually was.

"What can I do for you two?"

"Some booze will be nice," Zane said.

April stared at him with reproach. "No. Those painkillers might make you feel a little too relaxed soon enough. You're spending tonight here, right?"

"If you're included in that offer, I might," Zane joked.

April snickered, but the laugh died on his lips when he looked at Jett. He was still frowning, and his mood was deteriorating with each passing moment. For a moment, April felt pissed. Then he worried. What if Jett was hurt more than what he could see with the naked eye?

"You two should get checked by someone who knows what they're doing. Jett, are you okay?"

Jett put his right hand on the table, and April winced at the bruised skin around what looked like brass knuckles. Without a word, he hurried and took Jett's hand in his. Slowly, he removed the

scary looking weapon and looked at the damage. With sure moves, he began treating it and felt it for any signs of broken bones.

Luckily, all seemed okay, but April was getting more worried about Jett's mood. "What can I bring you?" he asked softly.

Zane continued to search the cupboards for booze.

"A smoke," Jett replied.

April was about to protest, but he searched for Jett's pack of cigarettes and lighter in his jacket. He took one and put it between Jett's lips, then lit it. He looked around quickly for a clean ashtray. There was nothing he wanted more but to ask Jett what was on his mind, but Zane was there, and April had a feeling Jett didn't want to talk in front of his friend. Maybe he didn't want to talk to him, either, but it was worth a try.

April sat gingerly on one of Jett's strong thighs and took the cigarette from his mouth to let him blow smoke. Then he put it back, allowing Jett to enjoy his vice.

"I still have my left hand unharmed," Jett said in a deep voice when April removed the cigarette from his mouth again.

That particular hand was busy feeling up April's skin, right above the waist, the arm slyly snuck around. April shuddered as Jett's rough fingers brushed over his abdomen.

"Are you two going to fuck in front of me?" Zane asked, making April jump. "Not that I mind but I don't think I can get it up to jerk off properly. You know what? You two go at it, I'll just record everything for my personal spank bank."

Jett growled, and April wasn't sure whether he was serious or just joking.

"Zane, let me set you up with a pillow and some blankets so that you can sleep on the sofa," April said brightly. "I think the best you two can do now is catch some rest. But if you feel worse in the morning, you need to go to a doctor or something, okay?"

"Yes, boss," Zane replied playfully.

April took Jett's cigarette and stubbed it into the ashtray. "You can go up and I'll be with you in a second."

"No way I'm letting you alone with Zane."

"All right. Wait till I'm done with setting the bed for him, and then I'll help you up the stairs."

April was in no mood to fight over such things. It was two in the morning, no matter which way he looked at things. And the two brawlers with whom he happened to share the same roof needed their rest. There was no point in antagonizing Jett.

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Jett felt the pain fading away and his muscles were finally getting soft after being tensed for hours now. But the most pleasant part wasn't the absence of pain. It was April undressing him and touching him everywhere.

"Do you usually do this? Get into brawls?" April asked as he pulled his jeans and socks.

"I sleep naked," Jett pointed out. "Like completely naked."

Maybe April wouldn't do it, but a man had to try. With a short sigh, April grabbed a hold of Jett's underwear and pulled it down, too.

"You scared me tonight," April said as he slid under the covers next to him.

"You should sleep naked, too."

"You're trying to avoid this conversation, aren't you?" April said, but again, he followed Jett's suggestion and took off his clothes.

Jett sighed in satisfaction when April glued to him and placed a hand over his chest and a leg over his.

"Tell me if I'm too heavy or I hurt you anywhere."

"You can't hurt me," Jett said, and his words were starting to slur.

April placed his head against his shoulder. His hair was pleasant against Jett's skin as short as it was. Maybe he shouldn't have cut April's curls. The thought of April's hair caressing his chest, his skin all over, lower, made him smile.

April was right. He was avoiding the conversation, whatever it was. The truth was that something had happened. Usually, he and Zane would just shake the debtors for their cash and make scarce as soon as possible. They could fight, but that didn't mean that they weren't practical men.

But tonight, some schmuck had dared to mouth off at him. It had been the usual crap, but the moment the asshole threatened his family, regardless of the fact that he couldn't know who Jett was, he had seen red in front of his eyes. The idea that someone would try to hurt Jay and April had made him go almost mad. For a second or two, Zane had shouted at him to wrap things up and get the fuck out.

When Jett hadn't back down, Zane had realized shit was real. Like the true pal he was, he had fought side by side with Jett, making a real mess of those assholes. The Z brothers didn't care if they used excessive force, anyway.

No one could threaten his family and get away with it. April said he had been scared tonight. Well, he hadn't been the only one.

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A muffled sound made its way through the pleasant dream he was indulging in. He was at the beach, and April wore some minuscule swimwear that could hardly qualify as swim shorts. Jett opened his eyes with much difficulty and looked around him.

April raised his head, peeking over the edge of the bed. "Are you awake? Sorry. Just go back to sleep."

"What are you doing?" Jett asked, his voice still drowsy from sleep.

April appeared a bit guilty. "I need to go to school. Jay's monitor is on the nightstand."

Jett shook his head. "I'm supposed to take you to school."

"Don't annoy me. Just rest. And take care of Jay until I get back."

"What do I know?" Jett complained. "What if he starts crying?"

"I've already changed him and given him something to eat. You only need to make sure he doesn't get bored. You could use getting engaged in less dangerous games, too."

"I don't like you going by yourself."

"Nothing is going to happen. There's a bus that can take me there, you know. And when I'm done, I'm back here. You won't even know I was gone."

Jett stood up and winced a little at the pain in his shoulder. "Stay home. Play hooky."

"No," April said firmly.

"I might throw a tantrum," Jett said, as he moved toward April who took a few steps back until his back hit the door. "I might get bored."

April rolled his eyes, and Jett got closer. He was about to lean in for a kiss, when April placed one hand all over his face and stopped him. "Seriously, dude? Morning breath."

Jett sighed. "Okay. But come straight back home when you're finished. And, if it's any trouble, any, do you hear me --"

“I hear you.” April seemed to blush as he wiggled his way out from Jett’s trap.

Jett grinned. April’s eyes kept darting down, and he knew what they were looking at. He took April’s hand and placed it firmly over his naked dick. “There’s a close friend of mine here that can’t wait for you to come back.”

“Who? Zane?” April teased him and pulled his hand away. For a second, though, his fingers had curled around Jett’s cock.

Jett’s only reply was a small growl. “I hope that asshole is already out of my house.”

“No. If you still remember, both of you came back home last night looking like some extras from a gangster movie. I left some omelet for you two on the kitchen table. There’s ketchup in the fridge. Also, there’s juice. Make sure Zane doesn’t take a liquid breakfast. He kept asking me last night about booze. He doesn’t know that I hid it all.”

“You did?” Jett asked, surprised.

April shrugged. “There’s a baby in the house. You need to keep everything dangerous away from babies. They have a way of finding bad stuff to put in their mouths.”

“And do I get to know where you stashed the liquor?” Jett asked.

April considered for a moment, and then said with determination. “No.”

“No?”

“You and Zane count as two extra babies right now. If things still hurt, I left some more painkillers on the kitchen counter for the both of you. But no booze. Okay, now I really need to go. Just play with Jay.”

“What should I play with him?”

“There are all sorts of toys in his room. Just pick something, okay?”

Jett shrugged. “Don’t blame me if he starts crying for you.”

“Well, you’re his daddy. You’ll figure out something.”

“I’ll text you like a madman if anything happens.”

“Only if it’s an emergency,” April said and pointed a finger at Jett. “Now, put on some clothes.”

“Why?” Jett asked with a sly smile.

April smiled, too. “Do you usually walk around Zane in the buff?”

“No,” Jett said right away.

“Good. I might start worrying about your cherry,” April said and his eyes were like a cat’s in front of a bowl of milk.

“What cherry?” Jett snorted. “I fucked like hundreds of times and --”

“Really? And has anyone gotten to score with you *that way*?” April said with a large grin.

It dawned on Jett. “Of course not.”

Yeah, he needed some clothes on. April laughed on his way out.

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“So, when are you going to tell us everything?” Gaby sat to his right, and Raj sat to his left.

April groaned. He was thoroughly cornered. “Guys, let’s just enjoy our college life, studying or something.”

“You got yourself a boyfriend, and you weasel away every time we try to ask you anything.”

“Because there’s nothing to say,” April said a bit too loudly. A few students from nearby tables turned toward him and watched him a little warily. He made himself small in his chair and slurped his juice through the straw. “Guys, do you have any idea why are people looking at me like that?”

“Like what?” Raj asked, apparently completely oblivious to whatever April was pointing out.

“Hello, you just got yourself a boyfriend,” Gaby replied. “Of course, people are talking.”

“Talking? They seem scared or something,” April said.

Gaby just shrugged. “There’s a rumor that you’re dating some made man for a mafia family. Or is it some Japanese yakuza group?”

April chocked on his juice. Raj slapped his back, helping him regain his voice after a fit of coughing. “Yakuza? Seriously? Gaby, you’re reading way too much manga.”

“She is,” Raj confirmed, shaking his head in righteous disapproval.

“Shut up, you closeted otaku,” Gaby said, addressing Raj. “I know for a fact that you have the entire collection and even several figurines representing a certain magical gi--”

Raj stood up abruptly, went behind Gaby’s chair and put one hand over her mouth. Gaby flayed her arms theatrically. “That collection might be worth millions one day. Millions!” Raj declaimed, his voice thunderous.



April made himself even smaller in his chair. His friends' histrionic manifestations were now drawing even more attention of the wrong kind to their table. Eventually, Raj returned to his place and began devouring his panini sandwich.

Gaby asked in a mysterious voice. "Have you checked his pinky fingers, though? Does he have them both still?"

April rolled his eyes. "Gaby, my boyfriend is not a gangster."

He was about to add something when he noticed the group of jocks, Dan among them, heading over. Straightening up in his chair, he added. "Well, he's pretty dangerous. And possessive. He told me that if anyone as little as touches a hair on my head, he's going to teach them a lesson."

Gaby stared at him in shock. "All right, April, I get the bad boy appeal, but still. Is he a violent person?"

"Not towards me," April explained. "He's just very jealous. I can't go anywhere without him. If a guy as little as looks at me --"

"This kind of jealousy might seem cute, now," Gaby said, "but soon enough it will become a bore. Also, what was with the baby?"

"Oh, the baby is his."

"Really?" Raj asked.

The jock group sat at the table closest to them. April cursed inwardly. His friends would hear some more about how messed up Jett was, no matter how untrue that was. He would explain later. Or not. His relationship with Jett was pretty complicated.

"He has a baby?" Gaby exclaimed. "And you're okay with this?"

April shrugged. "Why shouldn't I? It's not like I can get pregnant with him, too."

"But it says certain things about him," Gaby insisted, much to April's discomfort.

He had no idea how to gesture at Gaby to turn her voice a little lower. It was clear as day that Dan was eavesdropping. "Like what things?"

"First of all, that he also likes women. I'm not against anyone, but don't go for the flirty type, April. Also, where's the baby's mom?"

April wanted to slap himself silly. He had dug his own grave. Gaby was in full motherly mode now. "She's just gone," he said the first thing that came to mind.

"Dead?" Gaby covered her mouth with both hands. "April, I'm so sorry."

“No, not dead,” April hurried to correct his mistake. Dan needed to hear the same version, or else he would be suspicious. “Just not around.”

Gaby shook her head. “And besides babysitting, what else do you do for him?”

April looked at her. “I don’t do anything,” he protested. “Well, maybe I cook a little. And clean.”

Gaby gasped. “He’s turning you into a housewife!”

Raj snickered. April slapped his friend’s shoulder. “That’s not it! And, as you can see, I’m here, at school.”

“This is how it all starts,” Gaby said, nodding mostly to herself. “Honey, can you do the laundry? Just today? Honey, how about you cook all this week? I hate going out. Honey, do you think you can stay at home and make seven kids and take care of all of them while I go to work and screw my secretary?” At the end of her tirade, she was heaving.

“Gaby, breathe,” April said and pushed her juice can into her hand. “Has anyone asked you to make them a sandwich lately or something?”

Gaby drank from her juice and shook her head.

“She’s not even dating anyone,” Raj replied. “Seriously, though, there are no Marlon Brandos throwing radios out the window and behaving like ape men for you to worry about.”

Gaby shot Raj a dirty look.

“What?” Raj raised his shoulders, in defense. “I don’t see how a guy would even have such requests from a girl in this day and age.”

“Yeah,” Gaby replied. “And how am I supposed to get all rightfully enraged if no one does?”

April scratched his head. Raj stared at Gaby as if he was trying to decipher some long-forgotten mystery.

Gaby just rolled his eyes. “I was just jumping at the opportunity. Seriously, you guys, you can’t take a joke anymore. April, I saw your man. Frankly, if he asks for a sandwich, just go for it. He looks like someone who needs daily protein or might just faint. I heard that love goes through the stomach or something like that. But don’t let him get all medieval on your ass or something.”

“All medieval on my ass? Wait, I don’t even want to know what you mean by that.”

“Hey, do you want to hang out after classes? I have some tickets for the science fair, courtesy of my dad,” Raj said.

April shook his head. “My man,” he opted for Gaby’s words from earlier for the sake of being heard by Dan, “wants me to get back home as soon as I finish here.”

Gaby gasped. “What? That’s some hardcore stuff, April! Don’t tell he doesn’t let you wear sexy clothes, either!”

“Is she a little too invested in my love life or something?” April asked Raj, seeing how Gaby was still busy playing some role. If a career in STEM was not what she wanted, she could always opt for Hollywood.

Raj just nodded. “That’s what happens with people who don’t have one.”

Gaby punched Raj in the shoulder, her arm stretching fast in front of April and almost knocking his juice.

“Hey,” April protested.

Gaby grinned. “Shut up, housewife. And you, Raj, you’re going to take me to the science fair since April is married with kids.”

“Kid. Only one,” April said.

Gaby threw him a knowing look. “You two are young. You have all the time in the world for more.”

April just sighed and looked around casually, to observe whether Dan had moved from his place or not. He hadn’t, and now he was staring directly at him. Suddenly, Dan got to his feet and stormed away.

Gaby noticed. “What’s with Frasier?”

April shrugged. “How should I know? We don’t mix with their kind.”

Gaby nodded. “I guess. But I’m pretty sure he was listening to our conversation.”

“Maybe he was just bored.” April stole one quick look at Raj. His friend noticed and closed his mouth, as he was just about to say something.

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“Hey, you guys, I’m home,” April said as he opened the door to Jay’s bedroom and observed the scene before his eyes.

Sitting in a circle on the floor, Jett, Jay, and Zane were caught in a game of cards. The grownups had focused expressions on their faces while Jay was busy munching on a card.

“What are you doing?”

“Hush,” Zane said, “we’re studying Jay’s poker face. He’s perfect. Nothing fazes him.”

April just shook his head. “Poker? Isn’t he a bit too young? Jay, come here.”

Jay forgot all about the card he was munching on and got on his feet. Giggling, he stumbled toward April who caught him deftly in his arms.

Zane hurried to turn the cards that had been in front of Jay. “Damn, I can’t believe he beat us again! Look, Jett. The moment the kid is old enough, we need to bring him in.”

“You’re not bringing anyone in, whatever that means. How are you two feeling?”

Zane leaned back on his elbows and stared at April from below. “Now that you’re here, pretty good. Give me a kiss, and I’ll be one hundred percent fine.”

“Do you want a kiss from my fist, too?” Jett asked.

“Do you two always fight like that?” April asked.

“Always,” Zane replied. “Do you happen to have a brother, April? Cute like you?”

“Only a sister, sorry to disappoint you. And she’s married.”

“Just my luck.” Zane pushed himself up. “Then I leave you two lovebirds to catch up. April, consider a poker player career for Jay, though. The kid is absolutely gold.”

April just smiled at Zane. “See you around, Zane?”

“Absolutely. Your man and I work together.”

“Oh, that,” April said. “All right, then.”

So Zane thought of Jett as being his man, too. Maybe they were all getting a bit ahead of themselves. A look at Jett told him they weren’t off the mark. The caramel eyes were set on him, and April didn’t need some universal translator to realize what they were saying without words.

## *Chapter Fifteen – There’s No Workout Like Studying Computer Architecture*

“How was it all by yourselves?” April asked as he continued to look at Jett.

Zane had said that he knew the way to the door, so now they were alone in Jay’s bedroom, Jett still laying lazily on the floor, propped against his elbows and staring upward at April. There was definitely something unnerving in those eyes, and April wanted to shake off the feeling.

“We managed,” Jett replied. “Now I know for sure Jay must be mine. He’s an expert at poker. And even more, he has a boatload of luck.”

April smiled. “So, you don’t need the DNA test, after all?”

“We’ll get the results next week. Guess what other tests will be finished by then.”

April blushed but pretended to be preoccupied with Jay. “I suppose Jay is tired enough for his afternoon nap. Poker must be an exhausting sport if I take after how his eyes are closing.”

Jay was propped against April’s shoulder, and he looked like he was about to doze off any moment.

“You look good with Jay in your arms,” Jett commented and got up to his feet. “Get the boy to sleep and then come to our room.”

There was a now familiar trepidation climbing up from his stomach at Jett’s casual words. “I should study for a while. If we start playing --” April bit his lips. What was he saying?

“Study?” Jett quirked an eyebrow.

“Yeah. Unlike what you may imagine, there’s studying involved when one’s in college.”

“Do you have any exams coming up or something?”

“Some tests, yeah,” April confirmed. “There’s still time, but I like to be prepared. So I’ll be in the basement, on my computer.”

“Great. I’m coming with you.”

“Jett, I’m going to study. Are you going to stare at me or something? You’ll get bored. Wait. Don’t tell me you want to study with me.”

Jett snorted. “No, dweeb. I thought you’d start fiddling with your computer soon, so I took my training equipment down.”

Training equipment? April stared a little at Jett to see if he was joking or something.

“Why do you look at me like that?”

“I thought that, for you, training meant only beating up people.”

Jett grinned. “Well, in between, I need to keep in shape.”

April closed his eyes. He really needed to study. Only the thought of Jett pumping iron ... He shook his head and proceeded to place an already sleeping Jay into his crib, murmuring endearing words.

“Let’s go, then,” he said casually.

Jett gestured for him to go out of the room first. April walked away stiffly. He would be in hell soon. Fuck.

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Computer architecture used to be such a fascinating subject, April thought, as he tried to concentrate on his studying. As expected, it was impossible, since Jett’s steady grunts filled the room. April began munching on a pencil, although he had no idea why he had one since he only had to use his computer to study. Anyway, at the moment, the pencil seemed particularly tasty, as April brushed it against his lips.

He had never doubted that Jett was a perfect example of the male anatomy. But it was one thing to touch those perfect muscles with the tips of his fingers and just in passing or guess the perfect planes and corners in a dimly lit room, and another to have the opportunity to observe the said anatomy at work.

Jett wore a black top that fitted to his body like it had been molded on him, and matching shorts, pretty tight, too, so there was little room left for the imagination. Nonetheless, April had plenty of imagination in reserve, as his eyes followed Jett’s muscled arms moving steadily while following some bench press routine that seemed right now much more engrossing than computer architecture had ever been.

April began rubbing the pencil in his hand with his thumb, his eyes never leaving Jett. Oh, he was now breaking a sweat, and April sighed reverently.

“Yo, April,” Jett called for him at the end of his reps.

April shook his head. “I’m studying!” he said automatically and turned toward the screen. Computer architecture lingo was suddenly Chinese.

“Like hell, you are. That pencil is going to come all over your face if you go at it like that any longer.”

April looked at the pencil in his hand with a startled look. He threw it on a desk, in a gesture he meant nonchalant. The pencil bounced and landed on the floor.

“That’s not nice,” Jett said and snickered. “After so much teasing, the poor fellow gets the boot.”

“What teasing?” April asked and pretended to be engrossed in the text and diagrams on the screen of his computer.

From the corner of his eye, April could make out how Jett was adjusting his cock through the tight shorts.

“April, come here,” Jett said softly.

April shook his head. No, no, no, he needed to study.

“You can always study after.”

“After what?” April made the mistake of asking.

“Come here, and you’ll see.”

“You’re not going to let it drop until I do, right?”

“Yeah. Just blame it on me. I’m the one who’s not letting you study, ‘kay?”

April stood up and walked over to Jett. He stopped a couple of inches away from the bench press so that he could pretend he wasn’t affected by the sight of a perfect, sweaty Jett. “Do you want me to spot you or something? By the way, I have no idea what that entails. I just heard people talking about it.”

“Come sit on my dick.”

April stared at Jett. “Really? Is that part of your exercising routine or something? Someone sitting on your dick?”

“Yeah. It needs the exercise, just like the rest of the body,” Jett explained. All the while, he didn’t stop grinning.

“I will just go back to studying,” April said, trying to resist the temptation. As coarse as Jett’s bed manners were, he also wanted nothing else but to sit on Jett’s cock right at that moment.

Jett caught his arm and dragged him fast back, making him land with his ass right on top of him. April wiggled, and Jett grunted. “Yeah, that’s the spot,” Jett joked.

“You’re such a joker,” April said and attempted to get up.

Jett had other plans, and this time April landed with his face down on top of him. To avoid sliding down, April adjusted his position, basically straddling Jett. Now their cocks were touching through their pants, and April could bet that must have been precisely what Jett wanted.

They stared each other in the eyes. April gasped when he felt Jett's hands on his ass, grabbing and squeezing his buttocks. "Do you wear anything under these jeans?"

"Of course. What do you think?"

"Have you ever worn skimpy underwear, April?" Jett asked as he continued to rub their bodies together without letting his ass alone.

"Not that I recall," April replied in a voice he wanted dry as sandpaper, but came up wet and drooling. He licked his lips fast. Damn, Jett's smell after a workout was something. April wanted to bury his head in the hollow of his shoulder and taste his skin.

"What if I got you some?"

April made a small weird sound, and his cock twitched, as pressed as it was against Jett's. He had done some dry humping in his life, guilty as charged, but now he was pretty sure it had never been so sexual. They were indeed fucking each other through their clothes.

"Where is this coming from?"

"I had a dream of you wearing some micro swim shorts or something," Jett replied promptly.

"Ha-ha, I only wear knee-length shorts when I go to the beach. I wouldn't be caught dead near things like those you're talking about. Although they do look nice on some guys," April admitted.

"Take off your jeans," Jett said.

"My underwear is nothing like you imagine, Jett. I wear briefs."

"Tight enough to fit under these skinny jeans, right?" Jett asked.

"I suppose," April said with a small shrug. Jett released him enough so that he could get to his feet and undress. "It's not fair," he pointed out. "You're not in your underwear."

"Right. And I can't be. I don't wear anything underneath these shorts."

It wasn't like he hadn't guessed that, April thought, as he let an appreciative glance roll off Jett's body, resting on the unmistakable bulge. Damn, if he looked longer, he would start drooling again.

"But let's not put you at a disadvantage here," Jett said and got rid quickly of his shorts.

April went for the hard cock that sprang as soon as Jett got rid of his shorts. Jett stretched on the bench press like a lazy tomcat, enjoying the attention. "When will the test results come?" he croaked.



“Next week. Why?” Jett asked in a low, deep voice.

“I’m dying to suck you off,” April said, his own voice reduced to a murmur.

An almost pained gasp was Jett’s immediate reply, as April pushed down the skin and held his cock by the base, letting it pulse into his hand.

“Ass to me,” Jett ordered. “Straddle my chest.”

April obeyed without a word. If he wanted to mouth off, that had to be gone already. His mind was blank, and all he could think of was how to enjoy the delight that was Jett’s cock in all possible ways.

Jett snuck both hands under April’s briefs, pushing them up, and began kneading his buttocks with renewed vigor. Although he knew he was forbidden from taking Jett’s cock into his mouth, April still attempted a small kiss right on the head. Maybe they were overly conscious there, but Jett had undergone April’s dad sex ed lecture, and there was no coming back from it.

Jett cursed and sank his teeth into one of his buttocks, startling him. He shivered, as Jett’s bite turned into licks. April got to work, rubbing Jett’s cock like a madman. His helpless cock was rubbing against Jett’s chest, still clad in the tight top. But there was someone else’s need bigger than his, and it wasn’t just a figure of speech.

It was, indeed, a true delight to play with Jett’s cock like that. He could also look at it from up close, and it had to be the most beautiful cock he had ever seen. Right, April had mostly seen cocks in porn, and not real life, but still.

Jett’s balls were heavy in his hand, and he loved playing with them. It was so nice to have those huge coconuts at his mercy, and, while he continued his rubbing, he moved his head so that he could kiss them and lick them, too. At the same time, Jett appeared completely engrossed in lavishing his buttocks with all the attention he could while stretching the fabric of the briefs to the point of breaking.

“I can’t anymore,” Jett said with finality and straightened up.

April slid downward, on his legs, and then he was manipulated like a toy. Jett turned him so that they could face each other and kissed him hard on the lips. Then he grabbed the hem of the briefs and pulled at it, revealing April’s cock, too.

“Jerk me off,” Jett said in a strangled voice, and April’s hand returned to its task. At the same time, Jett caught his cock and began returning the favor. “Come all over me, ‘kay?”

April acknowledged the request with a small gasp. It felt so good, and Jett was so close to him, and the smell of his skin was too much, and he let go. His rhythm on Jett’s cock must have slackened because Jett took it from his hand.

April watched as Jett continued to massage his now empty balls through his briefs and started shooting all over them. They were both breathing hard, looking down, between their bodies, at the mess they made.

“You can’t study in this underwear now,” Jett said matter-of-factly and began pulling at his briefs.

April obeyed as Jett managed to undress him. He was way too spent to care. Jett stood up and then lifted him in his arms. “Oh, wow, what are you doing?”

Jett placed him on his chair in front of the computer. He kissed the crown of April’s head. “Now you can go back to studying, dweeb.”

“I’m only wearing my t-shirt!” April protested.

“Nice,” Jett said, giving him an once-over, and licking his lips.

“At least, let me have my jeans.”

“I shouldn’t, but I’ll let it slide this time,” Jett replied and handed him his pants.

April was overly conscious of his nudity, as he pulled his jeans up and zippered them up, wincing as the cold metal slid over his heated skin. “Do you really expect me to study in the buff?”

“You could wear a t-shirt. I don’t mind,” Jett said and pulled him into a kiss.

April wasn’t one to miss on being kissed, but he knew he needed to get the upper hand and fast. He slid his hand down and reached Jett’s naked butt. That was a pretty nice ass, all muscles and gorgeously shaped. “Isn’t this the moment when you should become afraid that I might attempt at your anal virginity?”

Jett laughed and pushed him away playfully. “I’m not scared of anal, dweeb.”

“Really?” April felt his throat getting instantly dry. “Do you mean, um, that I might, um --”

“Don’t get your hopes up just yet. With that ass, you’re totally my bottom boy.”

That ass? Obviously, Jett had no idea what kind of ass he had. April needed to put his mind to it and convince Jett his ass was a gay man’s fantasy come to life.

He was still considering his options when Jett kissed him quickly on the cheek. “See you later, dweeb. I have some work to do now, but I’ll be home before five so that we can go for a short walk in the park, too.”

April stood there, watching longingly after Jett's perfect ass as the guy walked up the stairs, seemingly unaware of what he was doing to April's desire to learn about computer architecture.

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Jett counted the money while thinking of ways to probe the Z brothers about April and what they had in mind for him. Henry the Fatso was playing with his enormous white cat, as usual. That man had an unhealthy love for felines.

"So, about that other job," he started.

Henry looked at him, waiting. The look in his eyes was placid, but Jett knew better. That meant the mofo probably suspected something. "Yeah?"

"Summer went back home," Jett said promptly.

Henry just nodded. "We'll tell you when we need him. Then you go and pick him up."

"Right," Jett said dryly. "What's that thing he needs to hack, anyway?"

Henry shrugged. "That's the client's business. We just deliver the tool."

"I don't know if he's that great a hacker. I heard he sucks. Doesn't have a clue. He's just a nerd."

Henry petted his cat and spoke to him in the language people usually reserved for children. "Nerds break into NASA and shit, Huntsman," he said. "That's what they do, all day long, on their little computers."

"Does your client want Summer to break into NASA?" As a figure of speech, that made no sense at all.

"Break into something, that's for sure. But it's not bones, so we don't call you for that." Henry must have thought his joke to be the shit because he started laughing and coughing, as the chair under him croaked a swan's song. The tomcat seemed displeased with his master's fit of laughing and sank his claws into his hand. Henry stopped laughing.

For a moment, Jett thought he would strangle the cat or do some other awful thing. But, instead, Henry began talking to his cat in an appeasing voice, apologizing for disturbing him. The man was fucked up in a weird way; it was all Jett could think.

"Good job last night, Huntsman. But I heard it turned into a damned bloody war," Peter said.

"They pulled knives on us. We taught them a lesson."

Peter just shrugged. "That's good. Lessons are good. Some people never learn, but lessons are good."

Jett just nodded. Now he had a feeling Peter scrutinized him, but maybe he just knew he had plenty to hide, so he was paranoid. With a short farewell, he walked away, still overly conscious of the eyes on his back.

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“Did you manage to study?”

Jett took in April’s body, splayed on the bed. They were back from their walk in the park, and now in their shared bedroom. April had followed him, without protesting, after putting Jay to bed.

“Seriously, between Jay and studying, the latter seems pretty manageable.”

“He’s so full of energy,” Jett commented. “And then, he suddenly lays down and goes to sleep.”

“I think we might just be to blame. Maybe we excite him way too much.”

“Maybe. But it’s way too much fun, right?”

“You still shouldn’t beat him when racing him.” April stared at him through his eyelashes.

“Hey, he needs to have a competitive spirit. It’s best if he starts young.”

April laughed. There was something inviting in those beautiful big eyes, and Jett wanted nothing but to get rid of all his clothes and jump in bed with his boyfriend. It was only this much restraint he could show. One sultry look from April like that, and he was turning into a walking hard-on.

“Who’s Theo?”

Jett grimaced. Fuck, he had forgotten about the mess Zane had caused when he had mentioned Theo. “Nobody,” he replied automatically.

“Really?” April propped himself against his elbows and looked at him.

“Yeah, really,” Jett said, working his jaw. “Someone from a long time ago.”

“A boyfriend?” April seemed to tease him.

Jett could feel his jaw hurting now. “Nah. I told you. Never had one of those, until you. So he’s nobody.”

April frowned slightly. “You just said he was someone, not nobody.”

“Would you drop it?” Jett said, a bit more aggressively than intended.

April’s face fell. “Do you hate this guy or something?”

Fuck. Talking about being between a rock and a hard place. Jett felt guilty. Okay? He felt guilty. But the chances of meeting Theo again in his entire life were slim as hell, and now April was there, and he was real, and Jett wanted more than just to fuck his brains out. Hell, he wanted the whole boyfriend experience or whatever it was what they were doing. He wouldn't sacrifice that for the ghost of a memory. Shit, he felt guilty toward Theo while thinking that.

"Jett?" April asked hesitantly.

"Yeah, I guess you can say that," Jett said half-heartedly. "I guess I hate his guts, and I don't ever want to hear about him."

"That sounds pretty intense," April said, and he appeared fidgety and nervous. "What did this guy do to you?"

*He stole my heart and ran away with it, somewhere I could never find him. And it was all my fault!* But these weren't the words that left his lips. "Nothing much. But he was a huge pain in the ass. Really annoying. And an asshole."

Damn, he felt like a total tool now. But how could he admit to April that he was a replacement for Jett's first crush ever? How would April feel about that? Probably used and hurt. They barely knew each other. If Jett told her that, he would be a total ass, so April didn't need to learn anything about Theo. What good would it do? Maybe later, when they were deep into each other, maybe even in love or something, he could joke about it and maybe, just maybe tell the truth.

No, right now, he didn't need to say a thing. The only outcome would be hurting April and losing him.

"Okay," April whispered. "Sorry I asked."

Jett shrugged. "I need to go see Zane."

He felt like crap and needed to disappear for a bit.

"Some last-minute ass-kicking gig? I thought you said you'd be in tonight. Not that I care! I mean, I do care! Just that not like a nagging wife or something!" April's face was getting red with each word.

"Yeah. Well, it's nothing. I'll be quick," Jett said quickly.

He made a one-eighty and walked out of the bedroom. There was some strange rage growing inside him at the thought of what had happened those many years before. And he only had himself to blame.

April didn't need to see him messed up like that. Jett was no longer that kid. He now knew what he wanted, and April's lithe body glued to his was high on that list. April's hands on him and his laugh and his bad puns were what he wanted.

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April swallowed hard as he watched Jett walk away. The entrance door slammed shut, and he startled as if that was directed at him. Well, it was, and it wasn't. It was against Theo, so it was against him, but Jett had no idea he was Theo, so it wasn't against him. The whole situation was complicated like hell.

So Jett had been truly mad then. Not that April had had any strong doubts, but he couldn't get his head wrapped around how now Jett was all willing to jump in bed with a guy - no, not just any guy, him - but he could still hold a grudge against a boy kissing him at thirteen.

There was no way he could probe Jett further. The moment he mentioned Theo, it was like he was striking a nerve. A raw, exposed nerve that had never healed.

An honest person wouldn't be in this situation, April thought. They would tell the truth, consequences be damned. But he was a total coward, and he was crushing on Jett just as hard as at thirteen, if not harder.

Definitely harder, April decided, because now he knew how Jett's kisses really were, how his hands felt on his skin, how hot his mouth was on him. Or how it was to walk in the park like they were a couple. Or how it was to raise a baby together.

In a nutshell, April had everything, and the horrible coward he was, he didn't want to lose any of it, not even a single speck.

Maybe one day, he could tell Jett. After this heat growing between them would turn into something else, and they were older and wiser, maybe he could tell the truth. Maybe that day, April would no longer be a coward and could live with the consequences of his own actions.

Now there was nothing he could do and live with it, too. For lack of anything to do, April stood up and began tidying up the room. So far, while cleaning, he had taken care of most of the house, but once he got into Jett's bedroom, things tended to happen, and cleaning was surely not among them.

Keeping his hands busy also did him well. Jett's room was pretty much a mess as if the teenager hadn't yet decided to allow enough space for the young man to grow. April could relate to that; after all, he was hung up on his first crush, as if he hadn't grown a day over thirteen. So he wasn't one to judge.

He collected the t-shirts thrown haphazardly all over the room and folded them, stacking them in an orderly pile. Even if they ended in the hamper for washing, there was no point in letting them scattered around.

April sat on the bed, twiddling his thumbs. Maybe he could go downstairs and play some video games on his computer. Or maybe he could just try to go to sleep, even if it was early. Where was it that Jett kept the blankets?

He checked the closet, and when he pulled open the doors, a huge body pillow almost smacked him in the face. Obviously, the offending object had been pushed in there, and the doors forced against it.

April took the body pillow and stared critically at it. There was some weird imprint on the cover, he noticed. It looked like some anime character in almost life-like size. He checked it with curious eyes. It was obviously an attractive young man, and April couldn't keep in a small sound of surprise as he noticed his features.

Despite the usual anime rigors regarding the large eyes and almost non-existent mouth and nose, it was clear as day that the character carried an uncanny resemblance to someone he knew well, for like the last twenty years or so. The character had spiky blond hair and huge eyeglasses.

April rubbed his face. What kind of a weird thing was that? Not that he hadn't heard of body pillows, and he suspected both his close friends, Gaby and Raj, having such things stuffed in their closets, away from prying eyes. Still, Jett was nothing like a weeaboo or an otaku, so that was pretty damn strange.

Maybe it was just an unfortunate coincidence, and Jett must have gotten that as a prank. And it was probably some well-known anime character that just happened to look like him. Well, the blond version of him, at least. Shaking his head, April began pushing the pillow back, but he made the mistake of turning it on the other side.

His surprise had no measurement unit for describing it. In the same tradition for making body pillows for anime fans, on one side, the character was dressed in some regular attire, and on the other, he lay in a lewd posture and considerably fewer clothes.

In this case, it was pretty damn graphic. April stared in disbelief at the cute anime character turned with his butt toward the looker, his pants dropped just enough to show his crack, and with a moe expression on his face. There was even a small message, drawn in a bubble with playful letters. *Theo needs something in his butt, master Jett.*

Shit. April couldn't be faster as he tried to push back the body pillow. But the damned thing didn't want to obey and appeared to expand, its fluffiness turned into a living thing that wanted to fight him with all its might.

“Just stay there!” April yelled.

“What’s going on?” Jett rushed into the room, taking April completely by surprise.

The body pillow fell between them. April watched with horrified eyes as Jett looked at the thing on the floor. It was like all happened in slow motion. Jett’s frown deepened.



## *Chapter Sixteen – Let's Play*

“I wasn't prying!” April didn't want to sound defensive but, right now, he wanted nothing else but for the damned body pillow to disappear.

Jett took the body pillow and went straight at the window with it. April stared in undisguised shock as Jett threw it out and calmly shut the window. Wow, that was a bit extreme. Jett really hated Theo's guts that he couldn't stand the sight of him, even in the shape of a benign object that carried some resemblance.

April felt lost. If that was how Jett truly felt about Theo, about him, what was he doing there? Jett took him by surprise, cupping his face and making him look up, into his eyes. “Theo doesn't matter. Do you hear me, April?”

It was hard to nod when his face was held like that. “Yes,” he replied with an audible gulp. The look on Jett's face was intense, dark even. It made him feel fidgety and anxious. He couldn't tell what would follow next.

“That was just Zane's idea of a joke, nothing else. I don't care about that guy. I care about you, okay?”

“Yes,” April said again, his voice meek and lost.

He blinked and could feel his eyes were moist, but it wasn't like he would cry now. Jett kissed him gently, and he stood there, unmoving. Jett's firm lips brushed over his, coaxing him into opening his mouth to allow him in. He didn't seem mad, at least not as he had been when walking out the door earlier, and April felt a small ache squeezing his chest.

Jett's hands were equally gentle as he pushed away strands of hair away from April's face. He wasn't touching him anywhere else just yet, but any move seemed loaded, charged with something deep and sensual. April gasped as Jett moved his hands away only to grab his butt and lift him in his arms. He grabbed Jett by the back of his neck, to steady himself, and their lips continued to devour every patch of skin they touched.

April released Jett's hair from its bun, knowing he was allowed. His fingers ran through the silky hair, letting his blunt fingernails ran across the scalp, eliciting small sounds of pleasure from Jett.

They were on the bed, kissing and rubbing against each other.

“I can't wait to be inside you,” Jett whispered as his hands snuck under April's t-shirt, reaching for the nipples and pulling playfully at them.

“Then don't wait,” April said softly.

“Not until I'm in the clear.”

“We could use a condom,” April said. “You have some, right?”

Jett kissed him again. “I want this to be special. I want to be inside you, raw.”

April fidgeted. His skin was burning. He knew for a fact that Jett’s desire was as strong as him. “I didn’t peg you for the romantic type,” he said, trying to joke.

Jett’s beautiful eyes were trained on him. “You’re my boyfriend, right, April?”

April nodded.

“You’re my first,” Jett added.

Jett’s first. How much April wanted to believe that, because Jett was his first, his first crush ever, his first kiss, and soon his first man, too. But he wasn’t Jett’s first, in any way, and that hurt, although it made no sense. For Jett, that summer hadn’t meant the same thing as it had meant for him. It had always been his choice.

But that left April feeling vulnerable and open, even if Jett couldn’t guess what went through his mind. It was all right. He wouldn’t regret it. Just one of the things he had learned from his mom, a long time ago, was with him; he might get hurt, but, right now, he would get love, too, and it was all worth it. He wasn’t sure if she would agree with his lie, though. It was just an omission, and he did nothing but lie to himself, too.

“That’s a nice thing to say, Jett,” he whispered and let himself revel into another kiss.

“I don’t think you would find me that nice once I stuff your cute butt with my cock,” Jett said and smiled.

April felt relief washing over him. Jett seemed his usual self now, playful and naughty, and he would rather have this version than the all-serious one who hated Theo. “Oh, you sure? You know that I could turn the tables on you and, you know, do the penetration.”

Jett laughed. “Pretty boys like you get fucked. Make no mistake, April. I know you want it.”

“Aren’t you full of yourself? By the way, you have a perfect fuckable ass. I would do you in a heartbeat.”

“Who knows? Maybe I’ll let you.”

So Jett knew how to be a teaser.

“Is there a point in making me all hot and bothered now, seeing how you don’t want us to do it?” April complained.

“For a virgin, you really have no patience.”

“Maybe because I’m fed up with my virginity,” April joked. “You’re not helping,” he warned as Jett increased the teasing of his nipples.

“Good. I want you to want it really bad. You’re sexy when you say the truth.”

“About wanting to get rid of my virginity?”

“About wanting me to help you get rid of it.”

Jett stood up and began undressing. April enjoyed the show and grabbed his cock through his jeans.

“Come on, off with the clothes,” Jett said to him. “We’re going to play all night.”

April groaned and closed his eyes. “You are such a player.”

“I only want to play with you and you only. I told you, didn’t I?”

“A man of your appetite, I thought you would jump at the opportunity to bang me, even with a rubber. But that’s off the table now; I’m totally chicken.”

“I bet that it’s enough for me to touch you, and you will start nagging me about fucking you right away.”

“Not fair,” April complained.

“Hey, I know,” Jett said and snapped his fingers as if some genius idea hit him. “I’ll play with your ass.”

April swallowed hard. “Oh. I mean ... What?”

“Yeah.” Jett caught his hand and pulled him up. Right away, he started to undress him. “I have to get acquainted with your butt anyway, so it’s good if I start now.”

“So, it’s all about practical aspects with you.” April allowed Jett to undress him, pretending the small shivers of pleasures at being touched anywhere were caused by something else.

“Do you shiver because you’re chicken about this, too?” Jett teased him.

“I’m not chicken! Wait, what do you want to do to me?”

“Stop worrying so much, dweeb. A little bit of exploration, and I only plan on using my fingers, anyway.”

That didn’t make the situation any better. April could feel a small tremble climbing up his spine. What if he hated it? What if he showed it, and Jett would be disappointed in him? Damn, how

had he not thought about it? Next week, Jett would want to put it in, for real, and it would be too late to back down.

“Okay,” he said and exhaled while closing his eyes for good measure.

Jett was quick to undress him, and April only moved enough to make that operation easier, without opening his eyes.

“Hey,” Jett whispered and placed himself on top of April. “You don’t have to be so scared. So, you like never played with yourself? Like ever?”

“I have played with myself,” April protested but squeezed his eyes shut further. “I know how to masturbate.”

“I know,” Jett replied and seemed amused. “You have a nice technique. I like how you grab my cock like you never want to let it go.”

“Then there you have it,” April said dryly. “I know how to play with myself.”

“Yeah, but I was wondering,” Jett said, and this time, he moved enough to allow one of his hands to slide between their bodies.

April shivered as Jett’s hand snuck between his legs, barely brushing by his cock and balls, aiming at the one place he feared now to be touched. What was he thinking? He was dying to be touched there.

He could feel one of Jett’s fingers, probably the middle one, pushing between his buttocks.

“You know, if you plan on squeezing your butt cheeks so hard, I might worry that you plan on breaking my dick when we’ll finally get to the real thing,” Jett joked.

April responded to that provocation with a grunt but allowed the wandering finger enough room.

“That’s more like it,” Jett agreed and began brushing the tip of his finger closer and closer to April’s hole. “Hmm, you know what. I’d like to see what I’m doing.”

“What do you have in mind?” April mumbled.

“Get on all fours. I want to see it.”

“What? No!” April was utterly mortified. He couldn’t even say why since he had been quick to jump naked in bed with Jett before. However, the idea of exposing his ass completely and allow the penetration, even if just it would be with only one finger, scared him.

“Why? Come on, don’t be stubborn. What are you scared of?”

“I don’t know.” April fidgeted. “What if, you know, I don’t like it?”

Jett appeared puzzled at that. “How can you not? When did you first realize you were gay?”

April was about to tell the truth but quickly reconsidered. “Many years ago.”

“So, it didn’t occur to you that you would end up with your butt up and a guy behind you?” Jett asked. From his voice, it was clear that he found it all very funny.

“Yeah, but, you know, reality is a different thing. I didn’t have time to prepare mentally for it.”

“Damn, April, minutes ago, you want me to slap on a rubber and do you. Just get your butt up, and I promise I won’t do anything that hurts. The moment you feel that it hurts, you say. I’ll back off. I promise.”

April exhaled. “Okay.”

It took, however, proper and gentle coaxing from Jett for him to turn and finally put himself on all fours.

“Oh, nice,” Jett said in a low, sexy voice.

“Really?” April asked.

“I can take a picture,” Jett offered.

“No, I’m good. I don’t trust my butt being in full naked display in some pictures on your phone.”

“Now, you’re hurting my feelings. What do you think I’d do with them? Sell them to porn sites or something?”

“I doubt anyone would be interested in paying for my butt.”

“I would. Wait, practically I am,” Jett said and laughed.

April threw him a murderous look over one shoulder. “I thought you weren’t paying me for that.”

“You’re easy to tease. And I like teasing you. Now, where was I?”

Jett appeared to assume a pensive position while staring directly at April’s ass.

“Hmm, interesting.”

“What?!” April asked, now alarmed. “Is my asshole weird or something?”

Jett placed his hands on April’s buttocks and parted them. “I think I’ve never seen a cuter asshole in my life.”

April sighed in relief. “Wait. Are you sure? I suppose you’ve seen plenty of --”

Jett slapped his ass playfully. "I'm not comparing yours to others, okay? Oh, I think it's talking to me."

"Talking to you? Jett, if you're going to do something weird --" April let his warning open.

"It's totally talking to me," Jett said and played with April's buttocks, parting them and pushing them together.

"Oh, really. And what does it say?" April asked, somewhat caught in Jett's shenanigans.

"I think it says... Lick me."

April was about to protest when he felt something moist and firm right against his asshole. He cursed instantly and grabbed a pillow into his arms. "What are you doing, Jett?" he moaned.

Was this rimming? Oh, fuck, it was rimming. April shuddered as a myriad of sensations exploded from that secret center of his being. Jett was indeed, licking it, his tongue insistent and practiced. April wouldn't think of how Jett got that particular practice right now.

"It's so pink and nice," Jett commented as he interrupted his lavish treatment of April's asshole.

April moaned softly, half-dropped against the pillow in his arms. His buttocks were bucking backward just a little, an almost unconscious move. "You're killing me," he said slowly, keening a little.

"Let's not exaggerate," Jett said. "It's just a little rimming. Now let's see if I can make it bigger."

April braced himself as Jett snuck one finger in and began moving it slowly around. "Oh, oh, oh, fuck," he whispered.

The sensation was not at all that unpleasant, but, after all, it was just a finger, and more, the idea scared him than what was happening. Jett seemed encouraged by his reaction and especially by how he was pushing now his buttocks apart, grabbing them with his hands.

Therefore, a second finger attempted an entrance.

"You know, I now get it why lube is needed," Jett commented.

"What are you getting out of this?" April asked, slurring the words, as his face was into the pillow, his body prone, and his ass as up as he could manage.

Jett hit the sole of one of his feet with something that April could only imagine it had to be his hard cock. "I'm not complaining," Jett pointed out. "Do you see how hard I am?"

"Hard to miss," April attempted a joke. "So, you're doing nothing about it?"

"I'll think of something, don't worry," Jett replied.

The fingers probing him withdrew so that Jett could add spit to his asshole. April inhaled as the next second, he was stuffed again. This time, Jett appeared to be more relentless and didn't withdraw as April's breathing became harsher.

Instead, he began biting April's butt cheeks and licking them, drawing his attention from the sharp pain growing with the fingers pushing harder and deeper.

It was working. Jett was also using his other hand to pull at his balls and cock, and the messed up sensations pooled into a single one, of heightened pleasure. Jett's fingers curled inside him, exploring him, and April was now moaning into the pillow, no longer afraid of letting out.

"Fuck, Jett, there, it's like it's something there," he whispered.

"Here?" Jett asked and curled his fingers more.

April gasped and pushed his ass back into the fingers penetrating him. His cock was getting harder, too, and there was a funny sensation he couldn't quite describe. It was like a growing wave radiating from inside his body, threatening to explode, come out of his skin, more intense in his well-stimulated cock, which Jett didn't forget or forgive.

He was shivering, and his entire body was shaking as the climax hit him. "Oh, Jett, oh, fuck." His voice was raw and ragged, and his speech turned into a mess of slurred words as he shot and shot without stopping even to breathe.

When he finally collapsed, and Jett's fingers slid out of his ass, April was still slightly shaking. "What did you do to me?" he moaned and hid his face into the pillow.

"I have no idea, but I read a little about it," Jett admitted.

Usually, April would be surprised that Jett bothered to do that, but he was too euphoric to form any intelligible ideas and voice them, on top of everything else. "You should totally try this," he eventually said. "It's everything."

Jett laughed. "I told you, April. You're the bottom boy here."

April unglued his face from the pillow and looked at Jett with a small smirk. "You have no idea what you're missing."

"Hmm," Jett said with a secret smile of his own, "I'll just take your word for it. You should better focus on the idea that next week, you'll have a much bigger thing inside you. Well, at least now we know that you like having something in your cute butt."

"Were you worried you might not be able to fuck me or something?" April rolled on his back but remained there, spent and happy.

“I would have found a way,” Jett said and came to rest next to him. “If you hadn’t liked it, I would have learned even more about it until I got it right. So, was it really that good?”

April just grinned and nodded, his eyes at half-mast. “It must be because it was you,” he whispered.

Jett kissed his cheek and then began to pepper small kisses along his jawline until he caught April’s lips. Their kiss was first slow and sated. “You know, you’re the one who sounds like a romantic now,” Jett whispered, his voice low and filled with longing.

“You’re an amazing lover,” April said.

Jett burst into laughing. “Sometimes, you talk like an old person, dweeb.”

April blushed. “Hey, I just thought to compliment you. But, if you don’t want it, I’ll take it back.”

“Don’t you dare,” Jett warned and growled, mostly like a joke, but not entirely. “Tell me more about how great I am.”

“Not as great as your ego might make you think,” April said, decided to sting Jett a little. Still, there was too much melted honey in his bones to care about popping anyone’s balloon. “Or you might just be.”

He raised one hand and brushed its back against Jett’s chest, letting the back of the fingers touch one of the nipples getting hard under his casual touch. “There are so many things I’d like to do to you,” he whispered.

Jett’s eyes were hooded, dark, as they met his. “Like what?”

April smiled. “How about I tell you while I jerk you off?”

Jett just nodded, and April moved so that he could grab hold of that magnificent cock he absolutely loved. Slowly, he began to whisper into Jett’s ear. “I’d taste you everywhere, too.”

“Would you lick my ass, too?” Jett asked, as his voice became hoarser.

“Yes. I’d eat you up. But especially your cock. I’d lick it and take it as deep as I can. And I would love to eat your cum, too. You could feed it to me all day long, and I wouldn’t mind it.”

All right, so he was better at this than he thought he was. Enthusiasm drove him to repay Jett for the treatment from earlier, but it was also about something more. It felt real, and there was no one else but them. If Jett laughed at him, he would stop, but Jett was far from laughing. He was breathing hard and seemed taken with April’s confessions.



“I’ll hold you to that,” Jett warned him. “But most of all, I can barely wait to fuck you, to fuck your cute little butt and shoot deep inside you.”

April could feel a prickling sensation all over his skin at Jett’s rough voice, filled with desire that he would have matched if he hadn’t been so empty down to the last drop of spunk. He was also lost for words, his hand moving fast, as fast as he could. Without thinking, he leaned against Jett and licked his neck. As the thing in his hand grew harder and began pulsing, he sank his teeth into Jett’s neck.

It might have been that Jett had a small thing for pain because he didn’t pull away, but instead began grunting his climax, in low, masculine growls, as April’s teeth continued to bite his flesh.

“I’m sorry,” April said as he released Jett from his grip. He watched at the trails of white on Jett’s abdomen and dipped one finger in them, spreading the cum around.

“You might leave a mark,” Jett said and laughed, still fighting to gain back his breath. “You got some teeth on you. And words.”

“Was it any good? Or did I sound like a major phony saying that stuff?” April asked, curious about the answer.

Jett grinned. “I’ll hold you to every word you said.”

“Seriously? You know that I have basically zero experience with anything.”

“Then, why did you say all that stuff?”

“I thought,” April played with Jett’s cum, “that it might make you hot.”

“It did,” Jett admitted. “Now, tell me what I’m going to do about the hickey.”

Jett rubbed his neck, and April looked at the mark of his teeth as soon as Jett moved his hand away. “Oh, damn, it might show.”

April touched Jett’s neck, tracing the lines of the old tattoo, stretched with the passing of time and the growing teenager, later young man. It was still clear and visible, and April felt his heart twitch. It was better if he let it go, but he wanted to hear Jett talking about it.

“When did you get this?”

“Many years ago,” Jett replied.

“A sextant,” April said. “I feel like it’s some history behind it.”

Jett’s eyelids fluttered. “It is.”

“Good or bad?” April continued to run his fingers over the fading lines.

“A mixed bag, I’d say.”

“Hmm,” April said, not wanting to ask, but dying to.

“Are you curious about me, dweeb?” Jett turned his head and looked at April.

There was something in how Jett looked at him like he wanted April to expose his soul bare. Or maybe after sex, they were a bit too honest, a bit too intense.

“Yeah, I am,” April admitted. “You’re my boyfriend, right?”

Jett nodded. “So, what do you want to know?”

“The tattoo. Why did you get it?”

Jett looked straight at him, and April’s eyes darted away. “Something about never losing my way.”

“Sounds serious. What does it have to do with that mix of good and bad?”

“Aren’t you laying it all a bit too heavy, Summer? We’re not going to talk about feels and whatnot, right?”

Jett seemed flippant, playful, and April knew he didn’t want to talk about it, not really. “All right, Huntsman, let’s not get all too heavy if it’s too much for you. And what’s this about feels? I’m not going to talk about such stuff, either.”

“Good. ‘Cause I thought getting freaky with a dude spared me of all that bullcrap.”

April managed a small smile as he turned his head to face Jett again. “So, you’re not in touch with your feminine side, despite the bun?”

“I don’t think I have one of those,” Jett replied with a grin. “You’re good in the sack, April the Fool.”

“Are you attached to your plaything?” April joked as he pulled at Jett’s spent cock. “Or can I relieve it from duty?”

“I’m seriously attached to it,” Jett replied. “And, you know, I can do pretty wicked things with it.”

April grinned. “Just lose the nickname, gangster boy.”

“I’m not a gangster,” Jett protested. “All right, you’re not a fool, okay?”

“I’m glad we’re in synch about this.”

“This is where you say that I’m not a gangster, either.”

“I don’t know about that. You’re coming home, covered in bruises, and with murder in your eyes. Someone got you good or something?” April asked.

“Someone spewed some bull is all,” Jett replied.

“And you taught him a lesson.”

“That’s right.”

“Then let’s hope I won’t ever get on your bad side,” April said.

“You can’t do that because you’re all over my good side.”

“I am?”

“Yeah.”

“You know, that sounds like feels to me. Aren’t you afraid your masculinity will suffer as a result?”

Jett was quick, turning and pushing April down to straddle him. “I want to know everything about you too, Summer. Like how good you are in bed for real.”

“I thought we established that,” April replied with a huge grin. “I’m a total firecracker.”

Jett leaned in and bit his lips gently. “I can’t wait, April. Tell me you can’t wait, either.”

“Hello, tonight, I almost begged you to fuck me with the rubber. But you want to make it special.”

“Don’t you? It’s your first time getting dicked.”

April cleared his throat. They were joking and being all casual about it, but again, it hit him, the reality of what would happen. “Yeah.”

The only thing he worried now was how not to make a total fool of himself when that moment came. He would lose his virginity to Jett, and that was a fact.

### *Chapter Seventeen – We Are Not Party People!*

“So, what are your plans for the weekend? There’s a partay at that guy’s, Williamson, house!” Raj was yelling into his ear, putting way too much emphasis on the word ‘partay’ which meant one of two things. That either Raj had a date, or second, he didn’t, and wanted to convince April to go, too, so that he wasn’t alone.

April sighed and moved his phone from one ear to another. “I can’t, man. I have a baby to take care of.”

“Ah, your boyfriend’s baby. I just keep forgetting your domestic arrangement. I guess it’s a bit too new for me. That’s a bummer, man.”

“For you or me?”

“Well, you know, both,” Raj said somewhat reluctantly.

“You should ask Gaby. I’m not good at parties, anyway. I went to one and immediately got in trouble.”

“Do you mean Frasier-trouble?”

“Yeah,” April admitted. “I should know better than kiss random dudes.”

“I don’t think he has the guts to do anything to you. You know, since your boyfriend is part of the mafia and stuff.”

“You and Gaby both are going to be the death of me with your crazy assumptions. He’s not mafia.”

“It doesn’t matter. As long as Frasier thinks that, he’ll stay away from you.”

“Raj, ask Gaby. I’m sure she wants to go.”

“And how about you? I mean, will you go through college now without going to any parties? Can’t you get like a babysitter for the little one?”

“I’m the babysitter,” April said. “And frankly, I don’t trust a stranger with Jay.”

“What a possessive parent,” Raj joked. “But you know, just bear in mind that, once he’s over eighteen, he’ll still have to leave the nest sometime.”

“I know,” April replied. “I’m not worried about empty nest syndrome just yet.”

“Empty nest syndrome? Sometimes, you sound like an old person, April.”

“Funny thing, you’re not the only one telling me that. I guess I spent too much time with my dad. His verbal mannerisms rubbed off on me or something.”

“So no partying, huh?”

“Nah, and anyways, I think these parties are overrated,” April said.

“Aha, says the guy with the kid. See what marrying young gets you?”

April smiled, knowing well Raj couldn’t see him. It was more like a smile for himself. He was perfectly content with not going to any party. Jett would keep him busy anyway, and when that didn’t happen, he had to take care of Jay and study, so he was pretty much doing everything he liked.

“What am I saying? I’d love to have a girlfriend, go to science fairs with her, watch anime together, and cosplay ...” Raj sighed. “Then I wouldn’t have to go to stupid parties.”

“Do I sense a little regret there? You always say you love parties.”

“I have to, or I’ll never meet new people.”

“Then maybe you should consider meeting new people where you love going, like science fairs, anime conventions, and so on,” April suggested.

Raj fell silent for a moment. “Actually, April, that’s pretty brilliant. I might do that. But I’ll still go to this party.”

“Don’t forget to call Gaby,” April said to remind his friend.

“Are you playing some matchmaker role or something?”

“No,” April denied right away. “I just think that you two have a lot in common.”

“I just don’t know, man.”

“What? You don’t like Gaby?”

“Of course, I do. But I don’t think she likes me.”

“Then there is one way to find out. At least one,” April corrected himself right away.

“Yeah, I suppose you suggest that I ask her out, but I’m afraid she’ll say ‘no’, and then we will be all awkward and stuff.”

“Actually, I wanted to suggest that you do some project together, and see if you guys click.”

“How is that supposed to take me to the point where I find out whether she likes me or not?”

“Raj, my man, Gaby as a project partner is an absolute fiend. I haven’t even managed to have her studying side by side with me. She’s chewing gum. Loudly. It drove me nuts completely, and she’s my friend.”

“I don’t mind that,” Raj replied right away.

“See?” April said. “You’re already half-way there.”

“Thanks for the tip, my dude. So you’re planning a quiet weekend at home?”

April smiled again. His head was completely spinning, and in a good way, since the night before. Jett never ceased to surprise him, and he was supposed to be the straighter guy in their relationship. So far, he was doing everything, and April felt good, but also way too virginal for that. Well, that, too, was going to change, no matter how tempting it was to freak out about it all.

“I guess. Don’t worry about me. Just go and have fun.”

“Worry about you? You got yourself a handsome boyfriend who’s in a gang or something.”

“This myth is growing stronger and stronger, I see. See you on Monday, and don’t drink too much, ‘kay?’”

“Sure thing, dad. Geez, April, sometimes I think you were born in the middle of a parental responsibility course.”

“I don’t think such a thing exists.”

“It has to because you do.”

With that last laugh, Raj finally cut off the convo, and April stretched lazily on the sofa. Jett was still out and had been so since early morning, which had left him with all the other domestic stuff. He had made pancakes, Jay was fed and happily playing in his playpen, and now all he wanted was to share some late breakfast with Jett.

But where was he? April had a mind to call him, but he didn’t know whether Jett was on one of his bone-breaking missions or something, and having his phone go off could be some unwelcome distraction.

Also, although April wasn’t keen on admitting it, even to himself, he was a little worried when Jett was out for hours. That night had been a little too much of a glimpse into Jett’s way of living, and April knew he had plenty of reasons to feel that way.

He was getting entangled fast in Jett’s business. But how could he not? April grabbed a squeaky toy and drew Jay’s attention. Observing the small child learning while playing was eye-opening for April. He was a lot of work, sure, but April didn’t complain. His dad had taught him a love for things that were tough and complicated. Maybe it was cheesy to think stuff like ‘love will

help you go through anything' or stuff like that, but April found it a pretty healthy outlook on life. He knew well how things must have been plenty tough on his dad, much more than on him.

And he also seemed to crush on a man who was tough, too, although maybe not that complicated. At thirteen, April had been a little scared of Jett. He clearly had the aggressiveness's gene in his DNA and used it as a solution to almost anything. But April knew there was so much going under that rough exterior.

So far, their relationship was going pretty good, April thought. He didn't have anything to complain, and he was pretty much floating on cloud nine.

"Jay, what do you say about helping me set up my rig, buddy?"

As much as he enjoyed watching Jay play, just sitting around and thinking where the hell Jett was didn't work for him that well. He had a hunch Jay would be quite the assistant while he took care of his crypto mining rig.

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"Wipe that grin off your face, and help me choose," Zane said as he was staring at two bottles of scotch as if on that choice depended the fate of the universe.

"I'm not going to wipe anything," Jett replied with satisfaction. "Man, I'm telling you, April is the best."

"And, did you tell him about Theo?"

Jett threw his best friend a murderous look. "Zane, do you need me to beat you up to stop yapping your mouth about that?"

"That, my friend," Zane said with conviction, "is your crush for the last seven years or so."

"I told you it wasn't like that. Theo was ... he was a good friend, okay? And I blew it. So I feel guilty about that and shit."

"I'm going to buy them both. You're clearly in a mood," Zane said and grabbed both bottles from the shelf while they continued to walk.

"Who's in a mood, you ass? I'm just telling you to keep it zipped about Theo."

"All right. April won't find one thing about that from me. But, between you and me, man, you got a crush on Theo, and you haven't forgotten about him for the last seven years. Hell, I can't quite remember the first guy I fucked."

"Yeah, well, we're not all field players like you," Jett said and punched Zane in the shoulder, and not in an entirely friendly way.

“Like you haven’t played the field for years,” Zane pointed out.

“Yeah, but I’m totally good now. I’m a saint. I have a kid, a boyfriend, you know, I got settled.”

“Huntsman, you’re head over heels. Did you fuck him yet?”

“I’m gonna,” Jett promised. “But I’m not going to tell you about it, you creep.”

“How I’m the creep? Hey, I always tell you about the guys I get freaky with.”

“Even if I don’t give a rat’s ass about that. Have I ever told you about my getting freaky with anybody?”

“Until now, I haven’t been interested, not being into hetero sex and all that. Now I am because April is a total hottie.”

“Hey, don’t use that word to describe my boyfriend,” Jett warned.

“What? Do you want me to say he’s not hot?”

“He’s dorky and wears glasses. He’s hot only for me.”

“I bet.” Zane wiggled his eyebrows and laughed.

“Other dudes have no business staring at him and thinking that he’s hot.”

“All right, man, suit yourself. Does he know we’re throwing a party at your place tonight?”

“Not yet. We were too busy doing other stuff if you know what I mean. I forgot to tell you.”

“What the hell are you two doing if you’re not fucking?” Zane said out loud.

Jett offered a forced smile to a middle-aged female customer who eyed them with disdain. “We make out, obviously. And there’s plenty of jerking off.”

The customer moved along, shaking her head.

“It’s like high school,” Zane pointed out.

“That will change soon.”

“All right. But are you sure he’s fine with us partying at your place? I’m not an expert at relationships, but I think you should call him or something.”

“Why wouldn’t he be fine?” Jett shrugged. “He might be a dweeb, but even he parties.”

Zane appeared to want to say something but then closed his mouth. Jett continued the shopping, dropping into the cart anything that he thought suitable.



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April was getting a bit nervous, as he checked the hour. His mining rig was in place, and now he and Jay were in the kitchen, eating a late lunch. Again, he considered calling Jett but stopped. The last thing Jett wanted was for April to start behaving like a nagging wife. Also, even if his line of work was what it was, April had no right to meddle.

Maybe he would call after Jay's afternoon nap. By then, maybe it would seem natural to call. It wouldn't be nagging, but interest in one's whereabouts, April thought. Damn, Raj was right. Not only he was talking like an old person; he was thinking like one, too.

After getting Jay to sleep in his crib, he began to clean the table when the doorbell rang. Jett obviously had a key, so could it be? For a few seconds, he debated whether it would be okay for him to get the door. After all, that wasn't his home, and whoever was ringing the doorbell had to be interested in seeing Jett, who wasn't in.

Then an idea struck him. What if it was Jay's mom? Maybe she had a change of heart, but she didn't have Jett's number. April almost flew toward the door.

He just stared in surprise, seeing who it was. "How did you get here?"

Dan had a sheepish look in his eyes. "Uber."

April pinched the bridge of his nose. Was Dan trying to be funny? "How did you know I live here now?" he asked.

Dan grimaced and shifted his weight from one foot to another. "Can I talk to you, April?"

April peered into the street, feeling a bit awkward about it all. "Did you just follow Jett's car or something --"

"Or something," Dan confirmed, with a short nod. "I really need to talk to you."

"Well, that's kind of difficult. I'm taking care of Jay ... the baby. And Jett's not at home, so I can't exactly invite you in."

Suddenly, Dan dropped to his knees, and April squealed, taking a step back. "What the hell are you doing?!"

"April, please forgive me. I'm an asshole, and I shouldn't have treated you badly. But if you leave your gangster boyfriend, I promise I'll never do that again. I'll come out to the team; I'll do anything. Go out with me. Please."

April stared in disbelief. "All right, get up. Geez, we only half-kissed, Dan. And I'm not traumatized by your calling me names and stuff."

Dan remained on his knees. "I know that you have no reason to trust me."

April put one hand on his shoulder. "Dan, my dude, it's okay. I have nothing against you. I mean, yeah, you were an ass and all that, but I don't hold it against you. And I don't want you to come out for my sake. Do it for yours, okay?"

"How come you kissed me, and then, in a few days, you got hooked up with this guy?" Dan asked in disbelief. "I know how you look at me. At least, used to. Ever since school started ... I mean, I thought you had a crush on me or something."

April sighed. "I'm sorry I got you thinking the wrong thing. But could you please get up? Jett could be home at any minute."

"And are you afraid of him? Is that guy abusive toward you or something? Well, I'm not scared of him. I can take him."

Dan seemed a little more courageous now than before, but April decided not to dwell on it. "Look, he's not abusive. We get along. He's cool and --"

"I can be cool!" Dan was sort of sweet, and April knew why he had liked him before, at least the times when he didn't act like a total douche. Well, that had been until meeting Jett Huntsman again and having his life turned upside down.

"Dan, it's not about that. How can I say it ... He's my boyfriend now. I'm sorry it didn't work out between us." It was ridiculous even to say such words, but, apparently, for Dan, that half-kiss had been enough to upend whatever beliefs he had.

Dan seemed conflicted, and his pretty face was ruffled as he was clearly trying to get a hold of his feelings.

April sighed again. "Please, just get up."

"But I thought a grand gesture would impress you," Dan said and appeared lost, his eyes clean and bright.

April just hoped the guy wouldn't start crying or anything. He was not prepared for that. Jay crying was enough of a challenge for him. He didn't need a grown-ass man doing that. "I am impressed. But I happen to like this guy." April pondered for a second and realized he needed to say something more to convince Dan to drop his romantic pursuit.

"Do you like him? He's a gorilla!"

"I do," April said, and winced a little in apology, "and I kind of like gorillas anyway. The animals, you know. They're pretty smart."

"But you like me, too," Dan protested. "I can lift more, go bigger if that's what you like."

“It’s not the size,” April said, gesturing with his hands as if he was measuring something. Realizing how weird that was, he put his hands behind his back. “It’s, you know, his personality.”

“Really?” Dan threw him a weird look, cocking his head to one side. It was still strange and ridiculous that they carried that conversation with Dan kneeling. “He’s a gangster. Ah, do you like the bad boy type? I can be that.”

April covered his face, rubbed his eyes, and exhaled. “I can’t explain it all. It’s like ...” he searched for the right word, “madness!” Damn, he should have taken some theater classes or something. “Yeah, I’m madly in love with this dude! It can’t be explained!”

“Madly in love? With that dude?” Dan seemed flabbergasted by April’s confession. At that moment, for some reason, they were both shouting.

April opened his arms wide and said loudly. “Yes, I’m madly in love with Jett!”

Taken by his own artistic performance, he closed his eyes. Hoots and whistles brought him back to reality.

Shit, his brain supplied the immediate and appropriate response. He stared at Jett and Zane, just a few steps away, their arms filled with bags ... Was that liquor? April squinted.

Jett just pushed Dan away and planted his bags on the ground. Then caught April by the waist, and kissed him hard on the lips. “Baby, really? Are you madly in love with me?” he drawled, as soon as he released April. “Do you want me to take out this trash?”

April stared down at Dan, who seemed too much in shock to get up and was sitting on his ass. “No. Dan was just ... dropping some homework.” He smiled in assurance as his eyes turned to Jett.

Jett stared at him through his eyelashes. “Homework? Whatever, I don’t care. Let’s get rid of this asshole --”

They both looked at Zane, who was helping Dan up. His shopping bags were also abandoned on the lawn.

“And who are you?” Zane asked directly as he gave Dan an once-over that left no room for guessing what the purpose of that was.

“He’s just an asshole,” Jett replied.

“I like assholes,” Zane said, without taking his eyes off Dan. “Let’s get inside. Help me with these?”

Zane slung one arm casually over Dan's shoulders like it was the most natural thing in the world. Dan seemed to be in some trance and accepted the bag Zane picked from the ground and pushed into his arms.

"How did he get here?" Jett asked.

"Uber," April said in a deadpan voice. "Wait, what's with all this stuff?"

Jett let go of him to pick up the bags he had abandoned on the ground. "It's party time!"

April opened his mouth and then closed it. "No, it's not," he eventually managed to voice.

"Yes, it is," Jett replied with a wide grin.

"Are you nuts?" April whispered, after allowing Zane and Dan to get inside.

"Hmm, I have a feeling you don't like to party or something," Jett said.

"Jett, we have Jay to care about."

Jett shrugged. "He'll be asleep the whole time. And that thing has a vibrate function. If anything happens, you can go see what's wrong."

April rubbed his forehead. "Sometimes, I wonder how it would feel to strangle you. I might have to put all my strength into it, but it could be worth the effort. Let me spell it for you: no party," he enunciated every syllable.

"That's not spelling," Jett pointed out.

April groaned. "That's not the point. We can't have a party with Jay here."

"Do you want to send him away while we have fun? That's heartless," Jett joked. "Now, let's get inside. Not that I don't appreciate you letting the entire street know how much you're into me."

April huffed in annoyance and followed Jett back into the house and then into the kitchen. Zane was not there, but the bags were, so he wondered where he and Dan might have wandered off. "For the record, I was just exaggerating. I needed to make a point to Dan."

Jett seemed to remember something. "Did you give that asshole my address?"

"No, of course not."

Jett grimaced and cracked his knuckles in a threatening way. "Then, I need to kick his ass."

"Wait, wait." April hurried to stand in his way. "He's harmless."

"I don't care."

“Don’t spill blood in this house. It’s a pain to take off carpets.”

Jett stared at him as if he was thinking of something. April wasn’t sure he liked that look. Then Jett smiled. “I think Zane is taking care of him right now.”

April straightened up, and he was the one trying to get out of the kitchen. “Then, I need to find them.”

Jett stopped him, grabbing him by the waist. “No, you don’t. What you need to do is to explain to me why you said you’re madly in love with me, and then took it back.”

April wiggled in Jett’s embrace. “I told you. It was like a figure of speech or something.”

“Figure of speech, huh? Let me try one of my own.”

It was too damned much, how good a kisser Jett was. April melted gradually, as Jett kissed him, sticking his tongue into his mouth and challenging him to fight back. How could he? Jett’s kisses were the best.

Jett’s tongue wasn’t the only thing daring and ambitious. When a rough hand cupped one of his buttocks, not adequately protected against such attacks, since he only wore some sweatpants, April got a hold of himself. “Wait, wait, wait.”

“I’m horny,” Jett said.

“Well, you shouldn’t,” April replied promptly.

“You are, too,” Jett pointed out, sneaking one hand into his sweatpants, the drawstring apparently not that much of a hindrance for what he had in mind.

April smacked his mouth with one hand, in his hurry to stop an instant moan, as Jett played with him. “Well, I shouldn’t, either,” he replied eventually. “Why the hell did you decide to throw a party? With a baby in the house?”

Jett seemed a bit irritated now. “Because it’s my house, and if I want to throw a party, I do.”

April stiffened at that. Well, yeah, it was none of his business, but still. “Yeah, that’s right.”

It was a bit difficult and probably funny for anyone watching, the way he struggled to get out of Jett’s arms.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Jett asked, throwing his arms to the sides like it wasn’t fair of April to react like that.

“Nothing. I’ll be upstairs. Until this party of yours runs its course. I hope your guests don’t have the bad habit of wandering around and mistaking the bedrooms as brothel accommodations, or

worse, the bathroom. And, tomorrow, don't expect me to clean the puke off the walls or whatever. There's only one person under this roof who's allowed to puke anywhere, and that's your son."

April hoped his stride had every bit of rightful indignation he imagined and that it had some sort of impact on Jett. At least, he was allowed to walk away, and that was a relief. After all, he didn't want the conversation to wander back to his stupid declaration of love. It had been Dan's fault, really. He hoped Zane wasn't roughing him up too much.

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Jett had not one ounce of good mood left, with April out of the room. What the hell had gotten into the dweeb, anyway? He scratched his head and grimaced. Did the dweeb dislike parties so much? And why? That argument with Jay was pretty weak. That kid could sleep through anything. And the party would just be downstairs.

Well, he needed to tell the others to steer clear of the bedrooms upstairs. Usually, there was just one room that remained off-limits at all times, but now April was barring the entire floor for access.

Now, he was a little pissed, too. He hadn't imagined that April didn't like to party. Jett would have much liked to see him with a bit of alcohol in his system. Something told him April was a funny drunk. Maybe he would find out another time.

There were still some hours to kill until the others came, and he had hoped to get April to help around. Not because Jett wanted to exploit him or something, but because he had imagined how it would be to spend those hours glued to April's slender body, keeping him from filling bowls with crackers and complaining about not having enough glasses around. Who needed glasses, anyway?

Maybe April was pissed about how Jett had heard his confession. It had been pretty awesome, Jett mused, as he took out the booze and placed the bottles on the table. The dweeb was in love with him, madly or not, or he wouldn't have said that.

But was he in love with April, too? Jett stopped. He didn't dwell on stuff like that, usually. Feelings were complications. He felt good with April, but Jett didn't do feelings. Maybe it had been that made him behave like that, years ago, toward Theo. Still, it had felt awesome to hear about someone else's feelings, feelings nurtured toward him.

Damn, why the hell did things have to be so complicated? On top of it all, Jett felt something stirring inside him, too. Maybe he was getting a little soft. Between a baby and a boyfriend, some exterior layers were starting to peel off. He shook his head. It was only April's fault. What business did he have to say he loved Jett like that?

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“Tonight, there will only be you and me, buddy,” April said, as he sat on the bed, and watched Jay sleeping in his crib. “Your daddy throws a party downstairs, but we don’t need that. We’re not party people.”

## *Chapter Eighteen – No-Fun April*

Jett let the booze on the table and went to find Zane, mostly because he was still too pissed at April, but also because he wanted to throw that unwanted guest out of the house. He walked into the living room, to find Zane with one arm slung around Dan's shoulders, and Dan with an almost terrified expression on his face. In one glance, he noticed Zane's thigh next to Dan's. Also, Dan was tapping the floor nervously with one foot. Maybe he would just let Zane deal with that fucking stalker, Jett thought.

Still, he needed to make things clear. "Listen here, buzz cut," he said. Dan's head snapped up and looked at him like a poor rabbit caught in the line of fire. "April is my boyfriend," Jett pointed at his chest, "and you have no business trying to get into his pants."

"I'm not doing that!" Dan protested. "I just thought he was in danger."

Jett's eyes narrowed to thin slits. "Why the fuck would he be in danger?"

"Because you're some kind of mafia," Dan blurted out. "I heard April talking to his friends. Do you even still have all your fingers?"

Jett stared at his own hands, a bit surprised, and then he shook his head. "The fuck you're talking about? I work security, asshole."

Dan didn't appear convinced. He was still seconds away from pissing himself, but at least Jett could give him points for standing his ground. That meant that Dan had, indeed, some feelings for April. Whatever, it was not like Jett would go out of the way to let this schmuck waltz in and steal April away.

"I won't give up on April," Dan replied. "I don't care what you do or what you are."

"Do you really want me to kick your ass?" Jett cracked his neck.

As usual, that did the trick. Dan's face looked like a white paste. "I don't care that you have a gun, either!"

"Do you have a gun?" Zane intervened in the conversation, although he had remained silent until that moment.

Jett grimaced. It looked like April's friends had some weird ideas about him. But as long as buzz cut boy was scared of him, anything worked. He had a hunch that messing Dan up wouldn't sit well with April, and right now, he wasn't in his boyfriend's graces, which was a total bummer. So he could solve this without unnecessary violence.

"Maybe you should hit the road," Jett said to Dan.



Zane tightened his hold on his prize, and Dan turned his head to stare at him. For a couple of seconds, Dan struggled silently to get away from Zane, but it appeared that he had not one chance to do so, which was funny seeing how big he was. Zane was having fun, the asshole.

“I’ll just stick around and watch over April,” Dan eventually said, to avoid admitting defeat. “I heard you’re throwing some mad party.”

Zane was now holding him with both arms and appeared very satisfied. “Can I have him, please?”

Jett frowned. “What do you want with this schmuck, Zane? He’s not even your type.”

Dan was still trying to get away from Zane, and Jett shook his head.

“He might not be, but hey, I’m suddenly in the mood for some vanilla goodness,” Zane said as he stared at Dan from up close.

“Vanilla, what? Whatever, I don’t want to know. Just keep an eye on him,” Jett warned his friend.

“I won’t have eyes for anyone else; I promise,” Zane said with a huge grin. “This party is going to be so awesome.”

“Could you please let go of me?” Dan demanded, but Zane just shook his head. “Hey,” he called after Jett, “are you going to leave me alone with this weirdo?”

Jett didn’t even spare him a glance as he walked out.

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April woke up to the sound of booming music. He had no idea when he had managed to doze off, but, apparently, reading in bed had the effect of a sleeping pill, even if it was barely – he checked his phone – ten pm.

So the party started, and Jett didn’t care about even coming around to check on Jay. April was trying to tell himself that he was pissed at Jett for being an irresponsible father, but there was something else nagging him. He was actually upset because Jett hadn’t thought at all about talking to him about the party. It wasn’t about asking his opinion, or permission, or whatever, because that would have been too much, but about just talking to him. He had obviously had the time to talk about the party with Zane, and even go shopping with him.

April sighed. He didn’t know Jett at all, and aside from the great time they had in bed, there wasn’t much they could share. Oh, they got all right when going to walks in the park, or taking care of Jay together. Also, they seemed to be somewhat in synch, how they walked around the house. And the day before, Jett had even put the plates in the dishwasher.

What was he thinking? He liked Jett. Or worse. Maybe he had exaggerated when yelling stupid things in front of the house earlier, but he was a bit, okay not much, maybe, a little, in love with Jett. He had always been, so there might have been some residual feelings and ...

April groaned and buried his face into the pillow. Good thing Jay was such a heavy sleeper. Although the music was loud, he didn't stir. April had managed to give Jay his bath and his dinner without bumping into Jett at all. Good thing that there was another bathroom downstairs because April didn't want drunkards stumbling around and making a mess.

Maybe he was a bit judgmental. Maybe Jett's friends were cool people who didn't puke all over the place.

And maybe, by now, the place was swarming with all kinds of people, including girls who could charm Jett and steal him away. April turned and covered his face with the pillow. Great, now he was jealous, too. Had he any right to be, though? Yeah, apparently, he was Jett's boyfriend, but seeing how quickly Jett was usually moving from one relationship to another, it wouldn't be far-fetched to believe that he had been a temporary solution.

April remained under the pillow, although it was almost impossible to breathe. All right, he wouldn't asphyxiate himself just because Jett was getting busy with his lady friends. He threw the pillow away. Maybe if he hadn't been such a stuck-up about the party ... But hey, as far as Jay was concerned, he was right. The baby seemed to sleep like an angel, but what if things got really wild?

Someone needed to be the adult. April was okay with that. He was not much of a party person, anyway. Truth be told, he hadn't been that much of an adult when he had decided to borrow money from the wrong people. With that, he had put in motion a veritable domino effect, but without doing so, he would have never met Jett again.

If it wasn't to be, if Jett still found lady friends much more enticing than the prospect of playing house with April, he was okay with it.

No, no, he wasn't okay with it. How could he be? April sighed and turned on one side.

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"Hey, Jett." A girl in tight jeans walked over to him and placed a small peck on his cheek. "I feel like I haven't seen you in forever."

"Hey, Daisy," Jett replied, barely sparing the girl a look.

"Denise," the girl said, and she seemed a bit annoyed that he didn't remember.

"Yeah, right, whatever," Jett said and took the bottle from the table and walked away before Denise could squeeze in another word.

So far, this party was the pits. Yeah, sure, everyone was having fun, drinking, dancing, and getting freaky (he had had some trouble trying to make everyone steer clear of the rooms upstairs); only he felt like crap.

April hadn't cared about coming down and talking to him for hours. Probably he was still pissed, but Jett was pissed, too. He took another swig straight from the bottle. Not even booze had the effect he wanted.

That was it. He needed to go upstairs and sort April out. How exactly, he had no idea, and the thought that he didn't know how to deal with a pissed April – pissed for real – stopped him from taking another step.

What, was he a coward now? Without getting rid of the bottle, he began walking up the stairs.

“Hey, Jett, mind if I come up, too?” The girl from before took his arm.

Jett looked at her and frowned, searching for an excuse. Then he realized that he didn't need to invent one. “Look, babe, I have a boyfriend now.”

“A boyfriend?” She seemed shocked.

“Yeah. And now, he's mighty pissed at me.”

Denise, oh, yeah, that was her name, frowned a little. “What did you do?”

“Nothing!” Jett said, quite defensively.

“It's not nothing if he's pissed at you,” Denise said. “Where is he?”

“Upstairs, watching over our son,” Jett explained.

“Son?” Now Denise seemed to have the impression that Jett was totally pulling her leg. “Do you have a baby in the house?”

“Yeah,” Jett said and shrugged.

“And you're throwing a party?”

Jett now stared at the girl, at the glitter covering her cleavage and cheekbones, and the revealing clothes. Really, now his own party people were judging him? “Yeah, he sleeps like a log,” he explained.

Denise shook her head. “And your boyfriend takes care of the baby? Wait, who's baby is it?”

“Ours,” Jett said in the most natural voice possible.

“Give me a break, Jett. I get it that you got yourself a boyfriend since Zane always threatened us the girls that one day you’d walk into the sunset with some dude, but I can’t buy it that you got this dude knocked up.”

“No, I didn’t knock him up,” Jett finally realized what he was saying, “April is just taking care of Jay. He’s mine. The baby. And April. April is mine, too.”

“Wow, so possessive,” Denise said. “Okay, tough boy, now go upstairs and apologize to your boyfriend. I’d say you should turn off the music and send everyone home, but it took me half an hour to get into these jeans, I can’t sit down, so I need to dance. Tootles!”

She turned on her heels and left him there, wondering why the hell he had to apologize. Whatever, Jett thought and began walking up the stairs. April had to apologize for acting like a granny or something.

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A sound startled April, who got on his feet and tiptoed to the door. Hadn’t he been clear enough when asking Jett to keep the guests away from the rooms upstairs? Having to fight off some drunk people was not exactly on his list of priorities, especially since he expected to be somewhat on the losing side. If Jett’s friends were as big and mean like him, April was in serious trouble.

The first reaction was to hold the door. Could that door be locked? Sure thing it could, but April didn’t remember anything about a key. Now he didn’t have time to look around since the knob was turning.

He propped himself against the door, and, for a couple of seconds, whoever was on the other side stopped.

“This room is already taken! We’re fucking here!” April said out loud, hoping that sort of lie was enough to send the unwelcome visitors away.

The door pushed against him so hard and fast that he was almost sent flying across the bed. Just in time, he managed to preserve his dignity and managed to land on it, his arms and legs splayed.

“Who are you fucking?” A voice boomed from behind him.

April turned, feeling righteously angry. He stopped upon seeing Jett, who slammed the door shut behind him and began to search the room in a frenzy. “What are you doing? No one’s fucking anyone,” he said. Like on cue, Jay started crying. “Great.” April stood up and went to the crib. “Do you see what you did? Slamming the door and shouting obscenities.”

He took Jay in his arms and began shushing him gently. Jett appeared to have calmed down because he stopped his frenzied search and came behind him. “Why did you say you were fucking someone?” he whispered into April’s ear.

“I just wanted whoever it was to go away,” April whispered back. “And let’s stop with the f-word in front of Jay. I’m afraid that would be part of his vocabulary from a too young age.”

“You used it first,” Jett hissed at him.

“Yeah, sorry, my bad. I panicked. Where the hell is the key to this room?”

Jett moved and grabbed the key from the top of a bookcase. He then went and locked the door. Then April noticed the alcohol bottle left on a chest of drawers. He returned to his job of calming Jay since he had no idea just yet what Jett could want, walking in there, with a bottle of booze, and an attitude.

Jay seemed to calm down gradually, and April thanked heavens for having such a good-natured child in his care. He eased Jay slowly into his crib and whispered some endearing words for a while, and tried to sing a lullaby, despite having no apt voice for that kind of thing. All this time, Jett was silent, which was unnerving big time.

Finally, April had to move away from Jay’s crib and face Jett. “So, how’s the party?” he asked casually, in a low voice.

“It sucks,” Jett replied with a shrug.

“Why?” April asked, looking at Jett, and wondering again why he had to be in love with such a wild man. His dad could have told him that such questions never had answers. People loved who they loved, and that was it.

“Because you’re not there,” Jett replied in a heartbeat.

April’s jaw went slack. Also, something was melting, right in the middle of his chest. It had to be his righteous anger. The look in Jett’s beautiful eyes was enough to melt an iceberg, let alone April’s mild annoyance.

Yeah, mild. Half an hour ago, he was trying to suffocate himself with a pillow.

“Are you here to convince me to go party with you, then?” He tried to sound casual, and crossed his arms over his chest, in an effort to resist that ice-melting look in Jett’s eyes. Smoldering eyes ... April shook his head. He needed to be a little firm, though, smoldering eyes notwithstanding.

Jett nodded. “Yeah. Then the party won’t suck no more.”

April sighed. “I can’t.”

“You’re no fun,” Jett reproached.

April rolled his eyes and then stared at Jett. “Really? Jay was crying, like one minute ago. Are you that irresponsible?”

Jett frowned. “I’m not. He’s okay now, isn’t he?”

“Yeah. But it’s because he knows he’s cared for. I can’t just abandon him and go party,” April said.

“Because you’re no fun, and you just like to exaggerate,” Jett replied.

“And you’re trying to piss me off for some reason. Okay, I’m no fun,” April admitted. “Now that we established that, please, go back to your party.”

“Not without you.”

“Then sorry to disappoint you, but I’m not coming.”

April plopped down on the bed and began playing with his phone. Jett came and lay next to him. He placed his head on April’s shoulder, apparently very interested in how April was smashing little monsters on the screen.

“You play without sound,” Jett pointed out.

“For the umpteenth time, baby in the room,” April said, pretending not to be taken with Jett’s smell, cigarette and alcohol, and other things that were bad for him.

Jett moved away and went near the crib. April observed him from the corner of one eye. There was a small smile on Jett’s face and fondness, too. “Do you love Jay more than you love me?”

The question caught him by surprise. “Yeah, of course, I do love him more.”

It was mostly to tease Jett, but the reply that came was even more surprising. “That’s the right answer, April Summer.”

“Really?” April put his phone aside. “Aren’t you going to throw a tantrum because you’re not number one?”

Jett smiled as he looked at him. “No, because that means you just admitted that you love me, too.”

It could be all right to be a little pissed at being tricked like that. But instead, he smiled. “So you’re pretty sharp, huh? And you just pretend to be a big oaf when it suits you.”

“Big oaf.” Jett snickered. “You can just call me an asshole, you know? You don’t have to try to be so correct all the time.”

“Hey, I’m no-fun April.” He shrugged like it was nothing. But it had been on his mind sometimes how maybe he wasn’t that much of a fun guy, at least not as much as other people his age.

“Oh, that.” Jett moved slowly toward the bed.

There was a dip in the coverlet as Jett climbed on it. April stared and felt a little vulnerable. Jett kept his eyes on him, and suddenly, it was like the sound of the party downstairs was far away.

“I think you’re plenty fun, dweeb,” Jett said as he reached him and caught his lips in a short but sweet kiss. “It’s just that’s not on the surface like it’s with other people.”

“Does imbibing usually do this to you? You’re suddenly almost polite and considerate,” April teased him.

“I’m trying to be romantic, you sexy fool,” Jett replied.

“I had no idea you had it in you.”

“I hadn’t, either.”

Jett had a way of kissing that made April lean into it like he needed more contact. His bottom lip was caught and tortured. Jett was lying on top of him, and April was holding onto his phone because he was afraid, so very much afraid that if he let go of it, it would cut the only link he had with reality.

Jett withdrew with a sigh. April held the phone up, like a shield, but then he lowered it. “You know you’re heavy, right?”

Jett just smiled. It wasn’t a grin, there was no smugness there, and April could feel himself melting into the bed, dropping a few inches in, just because Jett stared and smiled at him like that.

“I’m pretty sure you can handle everything.”

April bit his lips. “Thanks for the confidence, I guess.”

“You may look like a dweeb, but you’re stronger than what you’re letting on.”

“Does booze bring out the psychoanalyst in you?”

Jett let his eyelids droop, and the smile now did seem just a tiny bit smug. “Don’t knock it until you try it.”

“I don’t get what you’re hinting at,” April said in a small voice.

“You know, I have a confession to make.”

April could feel his ears pricking like a dog catching the sound of hooves in the distance. “Really?” His voice was as tiny as his heart now.

Jett nodded. He rested his chin on the back of his hands and pressed onto April’s chest with them. “Taking care of Jay, getting in touch with this crazy idea, you know, that I’m a dad, I couldn’t have done it without you.”

“We met by accident. Don’t say that. Then I should be the one saying that you’re stronger than you think.”

Jett laughed softly. “You’re cutting me a lot of slack, April Summer. You know how you are to me?”

April finally let go of his phone. He was disarmed, that was what he was now. He shook his head slowly.

“It’s like this weird thing inside,” Jett began. “It’s all shiny and perfect on the outside. But there’s a crack, you know?”

A crack? April blinked a few times. He didn’t know if he could bear for Jett to go back to that. He never visited that place if he could help it.

“There’s this crack,” Jett continued, “and you’re like putty, the kind that people who build houses use to fill up all the cracks, and you’re the good kind, you know?”

April could hardly breathe now. “I’m putty. Okay. Not what I was expecting.” Tried as he might, there was no way he could make light of the situation. Jett was slightly drunk; that was all that was to it.

“You fill that crack. You make that thing inside whole and perfect,” Jett concluded, ignoring his little attempt to jab.

“Glad to be of help,” April mumbled, although he almost felt like crying.

“So, you see, you can be as no fun as you want.” Jett moved only enough so that he could free one hand and touch April’s cheek slowly. “It’s not about fun. Hell, I could live with no booze and cigarettes forever.”

“I should hold you to that,” April said. “How much did you have to drink, anyway?”

Jett didn’t answer. His lips tasted like bad good things, or good bad things, as he closed the distance between them and kissed April again.

April knew he was getting all confused in his mind, too. But it didn’t matter. That had had to be a gigantic leap of faith for Jett to cover. He had done it in his own peculiar way, but April



understood it. At thirteen, at twenty, and he was sure at ninety-nine, too, he would still understand it. The link between them had to be so strong that it was bound for them to happen.

“Jett,” he whispered softly. “Maybe --”

Someone rapped on the door hard. “Man, are you in there?”

Jett pushed himself up and went to open the door. “What the fuck you want, Zane?”

“Condoms, obviously.”

“Fuck you,” Jett said simply. “Wait, are you --”

April couldn't see Zane, but it had to be something that the guy was doing or whispering that Jett sighed in annoyance and went out the door.

Was it a good idea to tell Jett everything? It felt like something that would break the spell. Jett could say anything he wanted. The thing was that it didn't matter. April would love him either way.

He was a bit startled when Jett came back. This time, he was grinning year to year.

“What are you so satisfied about?”

Jett plopped down on the bed and took him by the shoulders. “I think your stalker will get his cherry popped.”

It took April a few seconds to understand what Jett was saying. “Oh, no. Jett, that's not a good idea.”

“Why?”

“Because Dan isn't even out, and come on, it's like, Zane just met him today, right?”

“And?” Jett seemed genuinely confused.

“Dan must be vulnerable!”

Jett burst into laughter. April hushed him. It was a miracle Jay could sleep through all that.

“That dude? Vulnerable? Which inch of his six feet and a half is that?”

April huffed. “He's not that tall!”

He climbed out of bed. “Where are they?”

“April, dude, don't be the cockblock police.”

“I can’t let him make such a mistake!”

Jett frowned. “Do you have feelings for this dude?”

“No! Not that kind of feelings! It’s just, I’m responsible! If it weren’t for me, he wouldn’t be here.”

“Well, trust me, a guy as big as that could get away from Zane if he wanted. My guess is he doesn’t want to get away.”

“But --” April tried to insist.

Jett continued to frown. “You go there, you tell them to stop, and that asshole will think you’re feeling for him. For real. And then, he’ll be my pain in the butt. Do you know what I do about pains in the butt?”

“Apply ointment?”

Jett’s smirk was almost feral. “If you want me to put that dude in his place, go ahead and cockblock him and Zane. But the next thing I do, I’ll make sure he understands he’s not to come within one mile of your ass.”

“We go to the same college. That would be tricky.”

“I have a solution. If he ends up in the hospital, he won’t have to go to school.”

“Jett, you’re an ass,” April replied. “And I can’t believe you! Are you serious?”

Jett stood up. “If you’re willing to test me --”

April put his hands up and crossed his arms, forming a defense. “I will not be bullied.”

Jett caught his arms and put them down. “All right, fine. Buzz cut boy won’t get a beating from me. But you don’t go around, making decisions for him. You’re some bully yourself if you do that.”

April opened his mouth but found no words of rebuttal. Jett was right, after all. He had no right to interfere. Dan was old enough to look after himself. “Wait, what if he’s drunk or something?”

Jett sighed. “Zane likes his partners sober enough and willing. He won’t fuck some unconscious dude. He’s my friend, and I vouch for him.”

April could feel his shoulders dropping. “All right. I trust you. But if you do me wrong --”

“I’ll go and check on them, okay?” Jett said. “If buzz cut boy is too gone to know what he’s doing, Zane will put his dick back into his pants. Okay?”

“Okay.” April nodded shortly.

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Jett wanted to strangle Zane for his weird taste in dudes. Now he wouldn't disappoint April, and he would check on those two. Good thing he knew all the places Zane would pick for fucking.

After checking three of them, he finally headed for the basement. It was easy to tell by the smooching sounds coming from down below that he had hit the jackpot. Usually, seeing how Zane was already at it, he would back away and not ruin the fun. But he had a promise to honor to April, so that left no room for negotiations.

All right, so maybe he wasn't keen on letting Zane do the nasty with buzz cut boy all over his bench press where they were currently sitting.

He didn't make a lot of noise as he went down the stairs, but now he needed to draw the attention of those two love birds. He cleared his throat once, then twice.

“Seriously, dudes? Can an army walk on you, and you don't give a fuck?”

The smooching finally stopped. Zane turned toward him with murder in his eyes. Buzz cut boy looked like a deer caught in the headlights. Jett studied him carefully. He looked a little flushed.

“What the fuck, Jett?” Zane complained.

“Just one thing, and then, I let you two fuck. Although you could use a blanket or something. Buzz cut, how much did you drink?”

Dan looked terrified as he looked at him. “One beer and a half. Why? Are you going to charge me or something?”

Jett waved. “All right. So would you say you're perfectly capable of pushing this guy away if he tries to stick it into your butt, and you don't like it?”

Dan blushed so hard, Jett was almost sure he would soon see steam going out of his ears. “Is this a fucking prank or something?” He stood up, ignoring Zane, who was trying to stop him.

Jett put one hand on his shoulder. “I just need to know that you can agree to sex.”

Dan pushed him away. “I don't know what April sees in you. You're just a fucking bully.”

“That's rich, coming from you,” Jett pointed out.

“What the hell, man?” Zane jumped to his feet, too. “Since when do you know me to fuck passed out guys or something?”

Jett put his hands up. "Sorry, man. It's just that April was worried buzz cut boy here might not be capable of saying 'yes'."

Zane looked pissed as hell as he walked over to him. "He said 'yes'. Like twenty times or so. Tell him, Dan."

Dan was moving backward toward the stairs. "You guys are a bunch of freaks. Just leave me the fuck alone. I'm getting out of here." He was about to climb up when he turned. "Is April really worried about me?"

Jett cursed under his breath. Just what he expected. Damn April and his righteousness.

"Dan," Zane called after him. "Come on, man. It was just getting good."

Dan turned back on his heels. "Whatever. April likes me!" He threw quickly over one shoulder as he hurried out.

Zane pushed Jett away so hard that he stumbled back a step or two. But he didn't go after Dan. "Seriously, man? Cockblocking me? What's gotten into you?"

"April is just worried."

"And? Couldn't you tell him to let us enjoy ourselves?"

Jett shrugged. "Better I cockblock you than him."

"He likes Dan or something?"

"No! Of course not."

"Then what's his deal?"

"He just thought Dan was vulnerable or something. You know, not being out and all that which I don't know about," Jett explained.

Zane exhaled. "All right. I would punch you so much right now. But it's all right."

"You're taking it well."

"I got his number." Zane grinned as he looked at him.

Jett grinned, too. "So, are you going to chase his dude a little?"

"Yeah, why not? It's better that way. But tell April he owes me big time for making me let that juicy perfect piece of ass go like that."

"Sure," Jett agreed.

“You know I’m talking about your boyfriend.”

Jett pushed one finger into Zane’s shoulder. “And you know that, too. So stick to asking him to cook your favorites this week or something. No funny business or I’ll whoop your ass.”

“Okay, boss. But April will work hard to help me hook up with Dan, for real.”

“Be my guest,” Jett said in an amused voice.

“All right, man. I’ll keep you to that.”

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Jett snuck back into the room and took in April as he lay on the bed. He supported his head with one stretched arm, and he was snoring softly. Jett had been away for a little while as he had had to appease Zane by drinking a few shots with him.

He kissed April softly as he lay next to him. April moved and put his head on Jett’s shoulder. “How is Dan?” he asked in the drowsy voice sleepy people used.

“His cherry is intact, so don’t worry. Although he wasn’t drunk or anything. By the way, Zane will send you a list to your phone.”

“What list?”

“His favorite foods. You know, payment for cockblocking him.”

“I can live with that.”

“You must also help him with Dan. Zane likes that asshole.”

“Okay. It’s fair.”

Jett smiled. It was so like April to be so cool. Maybe he needed to rattle the cage a little. “I know someone else’s cherry that won’t be intact for long, though.”

As sleepy as he was, April stiffened a little. “Yeah, I know.”

Jett kissed April’s forehead. “Good. I don’t want you to forget.”

April wrapped a leg around him. “I could never.”

Jett sighed, this time in satisfaction. Well, it would be hell to sleep like that since his dick got hard as soon as April was close, but he could live with that, too.

## *Chapter Nineteen – Perfect Little A*

April was covered in flour, not because he couldn't handle himself in the kitchen, but simply because Jay's invaluable help manifested mainly through grabbing handfuls of the white powder and throwing it into the air, in all directions. So far, April had managed quite easily to get in the line of fire a little bit too often, which could only make him question whether Jay was gunning for him on purpose.

“With such an angelic face, how could I suspect you?” April smiled fondly at the boy.

Jay seemed pleased with the attention and just stretched his arms.

“Oh, do you want a little hug?”

In his own language, Jay agreed with April's interpretation. He wrapped his tiny arms around April's neck and allowed to be lifted from his high chair without making a fuss.

“I have a hunch that you would be more helpful if you slept through my entire making dinner process,” April talked to the boy while taking him upstairs for a bit of cleanup.

Jay had slept enough already, so April felt guilty if he were to make him sleep because he was in the way. Probably he could keep Jay away from the table and the flour. That sounded like a good idea, only that Jay enjoyed playing with it so much and got quickly excited over whatever April did, that it would have felt like a reprimand to stop him.

He was back with a much cleaner baby boy, and he had managed to get most of the flour from his hair, too, when the front door opened to allow Jett and Zane inside.

“You two are unusually early.”

“And hungry,” Zane said as he walked into the kitchen. “Damn, has the third world war started already or something?”

Jett kissed April and placed a small kiss on top of Jay's head, too. “We need to get rid of Zane and fast.”

April questioned him silently with his eyes. Jett just showed him his phone. Apparently, there was some official e-mail regarding ...

April gulped. “All right,” he said. “But dinner is far from ready.”

“Just stuff his face with a sandwich and send him packing.”

“Why didn't you do that already?”

“Because you owe it to the guy to feed him this week.”

“What are you two whispering in the hallway?” Zane called from the kitchen. “Jay, buddy, I need you to spy on your parents for me.” He came over and shook Jay’s hand in a mockery of a manly gesture.

Jay seemed curious about Zane. He seemed to take well to strangers, and he did tolerate Zane, so it was all good.

“Will you be okay with a turkey sandwich?” April offered. “I thought I would be able to make something tonight, but Jay had a personal vendetta against most of the flour.”

“I can see that,” Zane replied and looked around. He grinned broadly. “Hey, did you talk to my crush?”

“Weirdly enough, he wasn’t at school today.”

“Are you sure you’re not trying to protect him from me?” Zane eyed him carefully, but the amused glint in his eyes was nothing to be worried about.

“I think Dan is a big boy,” April said promptly.

“Funny thing, you didn’t believe that two days ago.”

“Well, I thought he might be upset and in the mood to do something wrong.”

“Ouch. That hurts, you know?” Zane pressed one hand over his chest and shook his head.

“Not my intention,” April hurried to say. “What would you like me to add to your sandwich? Do you like mayo?”

April had to admit that he didn’t know precisely how he could help Zane. It was true that Dan had skipped school for the day, but if they had met, April wasn’t sure what he could have said to him. He had promised, and that meant that he would keep his word, but he was a bit at a loss.

“Hey, Zane,” he said, after he moved Jay to his daddy’s arms, “could you, you know, give me a run around of your biggest assets?”

Zane exchanged an amused look with Jett, which wasn’t lost on April. “Assets?”

“You know. I need to paint you in flattering colors so that Dan would be interested in going out with you.”

Jett and Zane burst into laughter at the same time.

“Ah, well, let me think.” Zane rubbed his mouth, probably to hide how amused he still was, as April was shooting daggers at him, annoyed with how much the others thought him to be a comedy act. “I’d say that my tool,” he pointed between his legs, “should be on top of the list.”

April rolled his eyes. "Is this conversation going to be X-rated?"

Zane plopped down on a chair and slung one arm over the back. April stole a quick look at him. Tempting as sin, that was what Jett's best friend was. Sure thing, he had enough temptation in the shape of a wild boyfriend, and that was too much to handle already, but that was an honest appraisal.

"Maybe you could take Jay on a small tour of the house, Jett."

"He lives here," Jett pointed out.

"I know, but you need to keep him busy while Zane and I have an adult conversation."

"You know that we've talked smack in front of Jay like hundreds of times."

"Much to my chagrin and perpetual shame. A few licks of the eternal fire that awaits will surely be for that."

"And why would an angel like you burn in hell?" Zane asked him and threw him a seductive look.

Probably that was Zane's second nature, and flirting was too easy for him to be hindered by the fact that he was barking at the wrong tree.

"Most probably, because of my loose tongue and certain bad things, I tend to do with it. My high school teachers used to call me 'The Tormentor'. It looked like I always had something extra to ask. I guess I was pretty annoying. Thus, the punishment should fit the crime."

"I could live with your loose tongue and whatever bad things you want to do with it," Zane said, continuing to be a total flirt.

"Hey," Jett frowned, finally realizing what was going on, "are you trying to get into my boyfriend's pants, Zane? 'Cause there's only room for me there."

Zane moved his eyes from April to Jett, in the same languid, feline-like, manner. "A guy has to try."

"And I can try to put my foot in your ass. Grab your sandwich and fuck off."

"Jett, language," April said with a sigh. "Look, let's just try to use euphemisms so that Jay doesn't pick up any bad words."

"That if he didn't pick up all the dirty vocabulary possible already," Zane said. "With a daddy like Jett, Jay will grow up to curse like a sailor. Just live with it, April. Consider it friendly advice."



April began making a second sandwich. "I am the lamest patron saint of lost causes, or so my dad tells me."

"I don't think your dad told you that," Jett protested.

"Well, he didn't say 'lamest', that's true. And he meant that as a compliment," April added, after a short moment of pondering over that particular exchange he had had with his dad.

"I'm hungry, too," Jett said.

"Who do you think I'm making this sandwich for?" April offered Zane his sandwich on a plate and took out another to offer Jett his, as well. "Now, I need to know what you want me to tell Dan. Remember. Euphemisms."

"It's like we're playing a social game or something. You know, like our grand-grandparents," Zane said. "How about Monopoly? I bet I can kick all your asses combined."

"Let's stick to our little vocabulary game," April recommended. "So, Zane. What intentions do you have regarding Dan?"

Jett was almost doubling over laughing, the only thing stopping him being that he needed to hold Jay. Zane was no better. "Are you a time traveler, April?" he asked, rubbing his eyes, and hiccupping with laughter.

"Am not. Hey, look, I'm just trying to understand. And all right, it's because of my dad and his idea of trying to wean me off my sci-fi reading by stuffing some old romantic books down my throat. Apparently, he wasn't happy with my desire to become an astronaut. Something about wanting to make sure that at least I remained on the same planet with him."

"Did it work?" Zane questioned.

"I'm here and not on the International Space Station. I'd say it worked."

"And this dude is a virgin at his age, so his dad's shock therapy must have worked in other ways, too," Jett chimed in.

"Hey, this game is called 'let's get Zane to hook up with Dan' and not 'let's see how much we can laugh at April', all right?"

"He gets it," Zane said, flashing a broad grin at Jett. "Hook up. Yeah. That's the idea," he added, as he turned toward April.

"All right. So why should he hook up with you?"

Zane looked at his best friend again, but he appeared a little lost. "Tell me April's joking right now, okay? I may look like I don't give a --"

“Euphemisms or support the consequences,” April intervened.

“All right. I may look like I don’t offer a rodent’s furry behind to anyone interested, but I do have feelings. How was that?”

“You have seventy points,” April said.

“Hey, what are we playing on?” Jett was suddenly very interested.

“It was just a form of encouragement for Zane to keep it going.”

“So,” Zane continued. “I’m, you know,” he stood up and made a full three-sixty to show off, “any gay guy’s drenched in sweat and other bodily fluids dream. How many points do I get?”

April teased him. “You might be on the negative now. Lack of modesty drags you down. All right, so you are attractive. But a lot of guys are attractive.”

Zane snorted. “Not like me.”

“There’s no wonder the two of you run together.”

“Hey, don’t put me in the same league with this f--”

“Rules of the game!”

“All right. With this good for nothing piece of sh--”

“Jett, really. One more time and you’re out,” April warned.

Jett seemed to ponder. “All right. Here is one from my big heart. Zane is a good guy. If Dan wants a good ... All right, if he wants to get some, Zane here can totally deliver.”

April nodded thoughtfully. “Good point, but I need more. Plus, it would sound weird if I lay it down to Dan how Zane is perfectly capable of sustaining intercourse.”

Jett and Zane were snickering like two schoolboys.

April felt a bit entitled to consider himself affronted. Still, he knew who he was dealing with. “Maybe if it’s more than just a ... one-night-stand or something?”

Zane stopped laughing. “Dan didn’t answer any of my calls. Are you trying to say that he might think I’m the ‘kiss ‘em and leave ‘em’ type of guy? Just for the record, April, since you’re new to this scene, most gay guys in their twenties like us don’t think of tying the knot. Just tell Dan that I’m fun. A lot of fun.”

Jett cleared his throat once, then twice.

“Do you need a glass of water?” April asked.

“No,” Jett said quickly. “Anything this guy here says, it’s all on him, okay?”

April just shrugged. “Sure. It’s not like I would have thought otherwise.” He returned to Zane. “I’m not sure Dan is the same type, though. Maybe a good idea would be to see if you two are on the same page.”

Zane seemed to ponder. “I could do more than a one-night-stand. I could stand,” he emphasized the word, “about three or four.” He counted on his fingers as if that was complicated math.

It was April’s turn to laugh. “Does this speech usually work on boys you like, Zane?”

Zane nodded with confidence.

“Then, all I can do is to tell Dan you’re interested in him and that it would be more than a one-night-stand.”

“And that I’m fun. Write it all down so that you don’t forget,” Zane added with the same charming grin.

April knew when his leg was pulled, and right now, little was needed for it to be dragged out of the room. “All right, maybe I’m at fault for cockblocking --”

“Euphemisms!” Zane and Jett exclaimed at the same time.

“My bad!” April put his hands up. “I’m at fault for standing in the way of you two getting to know each other better. So I will do my best so that you two can hook up and have fun. Damn, it is a bit exhausting to use other words. I wonder what I’m going to do when Jay grows up and starts with the questions.”

Zane threw him a look full of meaning. “So I might not be the tying the knot kind, but you two, hmm, hmm. When’s the date of the happy event?”

“If you’re talking about your funeral, I’d say it would be ten minutes from now because I’m about to kick your ... forget it. Zane, out. April and I have serious business to discuss,” Jett said.

“Like planning your wedding?” Zane made one last attempt.

April blushed. The idea of a wedding was ridiculous, and that wasn’t why his cheeks were glowing red. In the hilarious to and fro with Zane, he had forgotten what serious business Jett wanted to discuss with him.

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“So,” April started.

He had just closed the door after Zane, and he could feel Jett's eyes drilling holes in the back of his head.

"How long until Jay's sleepy time?"

April turned to face Jett. "Not long. He needs to eat and his bath."

The conversation was stilted and did nothing for his nerves. There was something in Jett's eyes telling him all he needed to know. How come such an important thing still managed to fly out of his mind? It had to deal, most probably, with how natural everything felt between them. April didn't have to think of having sex, as they were already making out like crazy. It compensated the wait, so it didn't feel like it, either.

"I'll help you," Jett said courteously.

April offered a strained smile. "I should also clean the kitchen and --"

"No. If it doesn't concern Jay and there's no hurricane raging outside, I don't care. You have nothing else to do."

"Okay," April said.

He was suddenly overly conscious of himself as he moved past Jett and went to prepare Jay's meal. From the corner of one eye, he inspected Jett, but it looked like Jett was busy talking to his son, bouncing him on his knees, and making him laugh. He even offered to be the one to help Jay eat, and April didn't protest.

But that left him with nothing to do, so he just stood there and watched Jett. He appeared to be particularly cautious and calm as he carefully helped Jay to each little spoonful. Jett even wiped Jay's face after a few mishaps. Jay loved the attention, too.

"If you offer to change his diaper, I might suspect that someone ate the real Jett, and now I'm standing in the same room with a clone."

The only reply was a charming smile and a direct look that made April shift from one foot to another. Yeah, the beast was still inside, and not so dormant under that veil of civility. No, he was unfair. Jett seemed to take pride in helping Jay eat everything.

"And now the bath, right?" Jett asked, and April just nodded.

Jett preferred to let him deal with that task, on the grounds that April had softer hands, and Jay was already used to that particularly tormenting experience to be carried out by his babysitter. Still, he remained in the bathroom, watching him with thoughtful, intense eyes. April was happy to have done the same thing enough times already because that look fixed on him unnerved him.

Minutes later, he was cradling Jay in his arms and placing him down into his crib. The feeling that Jett was waiting for the perfect moment to pounce was growing stronger. Still, Jett appeared to be quite the master of restraint and showed not one sign of impatience.

He was like almost a different person.

April wished Jay 'sweet dreams' and then gestured for Jett to tip-toe out of the room. Without a word, Jett obeyed, and April followed closely after him.

They were barely out when Jett caught him by surprise, taking him by the shoulders and pushing him into the wall. April whimpered in protest, but Jett's lips on him made his eyes roll in his head instantly.

"You know what's going to happen now, right?" Jett's breath was hot on his face, and April just nodded.

"Did the DNA tests come back, too?"

Jett nodded shortly.

"And?" April managed to push him gently away. "Are you going to keep me in suspense here?"

"I had no doubts. Of course, he's mine," Jett said impatiently. "Now move your sweet ass into the bedroom, or I'll start biting something. It took me everything to wait for you to be finished."

"Ah, so you were boiling on the inside," April said.

Jett turned him and slapped his ass playfully. "You know me well."

April didn't add anything; he didn't even protest against having his ass slapped. He didn't have it in him. After all, now the thought that he would, indeed, have sex, real sex, for the first time in his life, was too overwhelming to leave room for anything else.

Jett pushed him gently through the door and then closed it behind him. April looked at him, and Jett smiled.

"I was fucked all day, you know? The moment I saw the e-mail."

"Ah, so you fucked already," April joked. He attempted a small laugh, too, but that came out like a weird, forced sound.

Jett grinned. As he moved closer, April tried to take a step back. Then, Jett suddenly frowned. "Wait. Are you scared?"

April just shook his head nervously.

“You are,” Jett said matter-of-factly, and with something like surprise in his voice. “Hey, you know me by now, right?”

“Yeah,” April said. “But it’s all kind of a sudden.”

“We’ve been both waiting for this,” Jett said. “Right?”

“It’s not like you to be wishy-washy. Let’s get down to it,” April said, with confidence he clearly lacked.

Jett embraced him and nuzzled the back of one of April’s ears with the tip of his nose. “You know, I got to learn some pretty wicked things while reading about how to make a bottom boy feel in heaven even if it’s his first time.”

April swallowed hard. “I didn’t know you were the reading type.”

“Really? What gave me away?” Jett stuck out his tongue and began licking April’s ear slowly, teasingly. There were only little licks, playful, but April could feel his entire body trembling.

“So, you know what to do, huh?” April asked. He shuddered as Jett bit his ear.

“Yeah. Now it’s time for the practical test, though.”

April said nothing and closed his eyes. He didn’t react as Jett pushed him gently on the bed and lay on top of him. But that was short-lived. As soon as Jett began kissing his lips, April opened up. So far, so good. Kissing was good, and Jett was good, touching him lightly and focusing more on the kiss.

“I think it would be better if we got naked,” Jett suggested.

“Sure,” April agreed.

His fingers were back at trembling as he struggled with the fly of his jeans. Good thing Jett had no troubles with undressing himself. April felt lost as he watched the broad chest, the way all those muscles stretched and moved as their owner saw about his business. Suddenly, he had trouble looking under the midsection line.

Jett was big. He had a huge thing between his legs, and that thing would soon be inside him. How was April going to deal with that? At that moment, it felt impossible.

“Let me,” Jett said and helped April out of his jeans. “Fuck, you’re nice,” he added, as he moved his hands on April’s naked thighs, reaching between them with his thumbs. “Can I see it?”

“Um, what?” April asked.

“You know,” Jett said with a small smile. “Your asshole.”

April blushed. “Sure. But it’s not like you don’t know it.”

Jett winked at him and plopped down on the bed between April’s legs. He laughed as he kissed April’s cock and balls a few times.

April gasped as his hips were pulled suddenly, and then his legs were bent from the knees.

“Ah, so nice,” Jett commented, as he had engaged April in all those gymnastics with the goal of ending up face to face with the current object of his fascination. “Hello, there.”

“Jett, this is a bit embarrassing,” April protested.

“Why? You’re pretty down there.”

“Right.”

“You are. This is pretty,” Jett took April’s cock into his fist and gave it a slow rub, “and these are pretty,” he added as he cupped April’s balls. “And everything here is pretty.”

“Did you learn how to be corny from those materials you read?” April asked. Well, at least one part of him wasn’t nervous. His cock was happy to receive the attention and was getting hard quickly.

Jett seemed a bit taken aback. “I thought about showing my appreciation a bit. After all, you’re the one who’s going to take it up the ass.”

April gulped. “Up the ass. Right. Okay, what should I do?”

Jett pushed himself up and jogged to the chest of drawers, only to come back with a tube of lube. “I don’t think you have to do much.”

“Just lie here, looking pretty,” April said. His loose tongue and his bravado wouldn’t get him anything good this time around, either.

Jett kneeled between his legs and looked at him. “On a scale of one to ten, just how scared are you right now?”

“Probably off the scale,” April admitted.

“Then I must be doing something wrong,” Jett said and seemed to ponder over something.

The thinking didn’t take him long, and Jett was again on the offensive, stretching over April’s body and kissing him again.

April could feel some of his nervousness melting. It wasn’t only because of the kisses, which were maddening, pleasant, intense, and mind-blowing. He could smell Jett, and that was comforting, as it was Jett’s weight on him, keeping him pinned to the bed.

If he were to imagine this exact moment, he should be at the peak of his scare right now. He couldn't move, and Jett's hard cock was poking the inside of his thigh. Yet, everything felt good. Actually, it felt perfect. His chest rose and fell as he sighed into Jett's kiss.

"So, dweeb, seeing how you're always learning and stuff, haven't you thought about how to prepare for this?" Jett teased him when they stopped for a breather.

"Actually, I just tried to prepare, you know, emotionally."

"And? How do you feel now?"

"Maybe ... you could put it in?" April ventured.

Jett laughed. "I could. Wait, you're not just saying, right? Are you still scared?"

"I'll live," April said, feeling quite the stoic.

His reply didn't seem to be to Jett's liking. "I don't want you to live; I want you to like it."

"Well, we can't know until we get to it, right?" April said, feeling a tad impatient.

"All right." Jett moved only so he could coat his fingers with lube and pushed one hand between April's legs.

April didn't protest as the cold substance made contact with his ass. It was getting warmer quite fast, and he let out a small gasp as Jett's fingers moved against his asshole.

"Is this okay? Does it hurt?" Jett asked.

"You had your fingers in my ass before," April pointed out. "And are we going to spend all night moving this slowly?"

Jett grinned and kissed him quickly. "I'm dying to be inside your ass, April. But I want to make it like, super-right."

"Thank you," April replied, quite in a formal voice.

He was keeping his hands on Jett's shoulders. It felt so nice to move them and follow the shape of the perfect muscles underneath his fingers.

"Hey, dweeb, getting a bit emotional and stuff?"

April could put on a brave face. He could say something flippant and untrue. But instead, he just nodded. Jett's fingers were already moving slowly inside him, opening him up.

"It's okay to be." Jett's reply floated to him. To hide his weakness, April had closed his eyes. Soon, Jett's breath was on his face again. "Does it help if I'm a little, too?"



April's eyes snapped open. "For real?"

Jett smiled at him. From up close, April could melt in those caramel eyes.

"This is important. Us. So yeah. I feel pretty messed up right now. Just don't tell anyone, okay?"

April smiled and brought Jett close for a kiss. "Let's just say that this is between you and me."

He wasn't crazy about Jett moving away from him again but gasped instantly as he felt Jett's hot mouth on his cock. It was easy to ignore the insistent fingers inside him, probing him, gently but firmly, as his cock got to see that kind of action.

It was clear as day that Jett knew how to be a teaser. He was licking April's cock, sucking only from time to time, without going too deep or too fast. It was excruciatingly pleasant and not enough.

Eventually, Jett moved again, and soon, April felt something else against his ass.

"Oh, wait, is that...? Oh."

Oh, indeed. April squeezed his eyes shut again. Jett let out a small grunt as he was fighting to get inside. It looked like the proverbial lock and key didn't quite fit. A bit impatiently, April snuck one hand between them and began guiding Jett's cock.

"Fuck. I'm too big," Jett commented, and April could read the frustration in his voice.

"No way. Stop boasting about the size of your cock and get to work." April knew it would hurt, at least a little. And Jett didn't know that he had read plenty about it. That's why he knew that if he relaxed, at one point, nature would take its course.

In other words, he was in no mood to postpone it anymore. April lifted his knees higher. "Do you get a better angle like this?"

Jett moved away. April was about to protest when Jett began talking. "You look really sexy like this, April."

"And yet, you're running away from me as we speak," April replied.

"Let me just put in a little more lube," Jett said.

April couldn't understand how Jett wasn't more frustrated. His cock was obviously as hard as a rock. April knew his own must have chilled a bit with the tries for penetration from earlier, but on the inside, he was ready.

Jett coated his cock with lube again, and added some on April's ass, too. His fingers were getting sloppy as they made April's asshole a little bigger. Oh, finally, he wasn't the only impatient one.

“Ready for me, babe?” Jett asked.

“As ready as I’ll ever be,” April replied. “And seriously, babe?”

Jett was busy aligning his cock with April’s ass. April was holding it as open as he could.

“How would you like me to call you? Sugar? Honey? My ... fuck ... perfect little ...”

April’s breath hitched in his chest. Well, it looked like there was progress. His ass was stretching, and Jett was getting in slowly. “Please don’t call me a perfect little asshole or something.”

Jett seemed happy, although the activity he was engaging in seemed plenty strenuous. “I’m almost in, babe!”

April ground his teeth. “Almost? I thought you were half in by now!”

Jett caught his lips into a kiss, and the worries melted again. April gasped, as Jett’s cock made room for itself, but any small groans and protests were swallowed by the hot mouth on his.

Oh, fuck, oh, fuck. So that was fucking. April struggled to keep his body as relaxed as he could, but it looked like his perfect little asshole was, unfortunately, not a big asshole. It compensated with attitude, as it was fighting every step of the way to push Jett’s cock out.

It was a good thing that, at this point, Jett seemed relentless. April didn’t have it in him to pretend he was brave. But the stretching wasn’t so bad anymore, and, instead of the stinging and painful sensations, something else was growing and making headway.

Jett moved very slowly, without freeing his mouth. April would have probably shouted some obscenities, so it was a good thing that his mouth was busy. Oh, all right. Jett moved, and something stirred, and now April had a term of comparison from when Jett had worked him with his fingers.

Oh, yes, he thought to himself, as Jett managed to touch that pleasant spot with his cock again. Oh, yes, oh, yes. His mind was a mess, and he was digging hard with his fingers into Jett’s shoulders.

“Fuck, April, this is --” Jett lost the ability to speak, giving in to small grunts and gasps as he was fighting himself not to push or move too fast.

“Yes,” April said in a meek voice. “I guess you could say --” He could not keep order in his thoughts if it cost him an arm and a leg.

The pleasant sensation was growing, and April was the one to pull Jett close for a kiss. He made sure to bite Jett’s lips, small revenge for his ass being stretched like that. There were far from

managing a real pounding, the kind that April liked best to see in porn movies because he found it hot, but there was something sweet in how Jett was treating him.

He was not the same as the gorilla that had come that day by his place to shake him for money. Instead, Jett was busy caressing him everywhere he could touch, and he was patient and careful while his cock begged for being given what it wanted.

April moved his legs to link them at the ankles at the back of Jett's back. "You can, you know," he whispered half a sentence.

At this point, they didn't seem to have a need for more words. "More? Like harder?" Jett asked.

April just nodded. He half cursed, half moaned, as Jett finally impaled him with his cock. It was overwhelming, but April knew he had been right about one thing. He would live. And by all the signs, he would like it, too.

Jett was now getting a little more forceful, but he was trying to compensate by cradling April's head with one arm and kissing him with everything he had. April didn't plan to lie there and take it; he began moving his hips, too, and that caused Jett to moan, quite loudly, into the kiss.

The bed was creaking loudly now, and April tried hard not to think how many times before the walls in that room must have heard that tune before.

"Oh, fuck, babe, you're so tight," Jett whispered. "I just want to --"

"Blow if you must," April said, squeezing his eyes shut, a bit frustrated with how his pleasure was still building.

"Not before you," Jett said in a strangled voice.

April used one hand so that he could rub his cock. He had heard about hands-free climaxing, but he wasn't sure they could pull that kind of thing from their first time together. The problem was he couldn't control his moves too well, and also Jett's hard body was in the way.

Jett realized his predicament and pushed back a little, grabbing April's hips and dragging his ass into his lap. Then he took April's cock from him and began to pump it to the rhythm of his own fucking.

Oh, good, April thought. Now that was really good. His hands searched for creases in the crumpled sheets so that they could hold on to something.

He and Jett were like two gears trying to fit right now, and fit they did because Jett's rubbing was awesome, and April could feel the amazing sensation in his ass growing with the steady pounding of that gorgeous cock that knew the deal.

"Fuck, Jett," he managed to say when the two sensations met for an intense explosion.

The pleasure was so rough and raw that April felt like he was losing control over his entire body. He could still hear Jett's labored breath and his messed up words of praise. By how the hot thing inside his ass pulsed, April could tell Jett was coming, too.

And he was coming inside him, which was frigging awesome and more than anything April had ever dreamed of.

Jett was still breathing hard when he dropped by his side. April rolled toward him. "That was fucking great, Jett!"

Jett looked pretty exhausted when he turned his face to him. "Thanks. Your ass is --" He just lifted one hand and made the okay sign.

"That large?" April joked.

Jett grinned. "Shut up, dweeb. That ass needs some work. Squeezing the life out of me."

"Shut up. You practically impaled me with your cock. I didn't know if I was going to die or have the best orgasm of my life."

Jett laughed. April placed one arm over him. For several seconds, they looked each other in the eyes.

"Was it --"

"Did you --"

They laughed.

"It was good, right?" April asked. "I don't have any term for comparison."

"It was everything," Jett replied, and he put one hand over April's as it lay there, on his chest.

"Good. So no regrets?"

"That's a weird thing to say. And I should ask you that."

"No need to ask." April could feel his eyelids getting heavy. "It was more than everything I've dreamed of."

"So you've dreamed about it for what? The last few days?"

April felt something going through him like melted honey. "Or forever," he added without thinking.

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“Huh? Forever?” Jett waited for an answer, but all he got inside was a soft snore. “You are so weird, April Summer. But you know what? I think I’m all into the weird type. I’m all into you. And, since you’re not listening,” Jett’s voice dropped to a whisper, “I can tell you this. I didn’t do to you all those wicked things I told you I read about because they went out of my mind the moment I touched you. There, you know it now. I’m kinda lost whenever I touch you.”

## *Chapter Twenty – Playing It Cool*

April smiled as he felt soft lips brushing against the skin between his shoulder blades. It took him a few moments to blink and struggle to wake up. “What time is it?”

It looked like the sun was still far from breaking through the windows, and the blue and purple tint bathing the room was enough to tell April morning was around the corner, but not there yet.

“Five-thirty,” Jett replied, and his voice was soft, just as his lips caressing April’s back.

“Why are you up so early? What’s wrong?”

“I’m up all right,” Jett mumbled the reply as he snuck one hand to caress April’s chest and reach for his nipples.

April hissed at the sudden contact with arousal, and Jett’s cock nudging against his ass. “So it’s that ‘up’ we’re talking about. And here I thought, you wouldn’t be able to wake up if an army marched through the door.”

“An army marching through the door can’t make me horny,” Jett pointed out. “Can I, April? A little?”

April pushed his ass into Jett’s crotch. “Even a little more, I think,” he said and snickered.

“Fuck, babe, you’re killing me,” Jett complained but adjusted his position so that he could rub the head of his cock against April’s asshole.

“Damn, this ‘babe’ thing is what’s killing me,” April replied, masking the small shiver of desire coursing through him with a bit of sarcasm.

“Do you hate it?” Jett asked.

“I imagine you’re using it on all your girlfriends. You know, just in case you forget their names, it’s better to go with a safe word, right?”

Jett stopped for a second, and April wondered if he hadn’t just guessed one of the guy’s best-guarded secrets. “You have no idea what a safe word is,” Jett said. “But, all right, I’m not going to call you ‘babe’.”

“Thanks,” April said back.

Jett was playing around, without going in. There was still some moisture inside him from before, but April felt his ass was in no mood to be stretched without more lube. The thing was, he felt everything, and the intensity of all those sensations was scaring him a little.

“I think,” Jett said, as he continued to play with April’s ass, testing it for its abilities to get fucked, most probably, “that I’ll call you the tormentor of my nuts.”

April forgot, for a second, about his worries of accommodating Jett’s big tool in his ass and burst into laughter. “Really? And how am I tormenting your nuts?”

“Do you have to ask? All day long, you’re shaking that booty in front of me.”

“I’m not shaking anything! And by the way, that booty needs some lube unless you want me to get hard on your nuts and give you a real reason to complain.”

“Right,” Jett said and moved from the bed immediately.

April sighed as he felt Jett working him from behind, this time with enough lube to take the edge off of being stretched. “Jett,” he called softly, as he still tried to control his body and his voice, “why were you emotional? You know, when we ... did it?”

Jett kissed his shoulder and then rested his chin on it. “Zane talks stupid stuff. But sometimes, even idiots might get it right.”

“What’s Zane got to do with anything?” April shivered as Jett used one hand to begin rubbing his cock.

“I imagine you, telling Jay this and that, answering his questions, you know, years from now.”

“If you’re trying to be romantic, you’re failing.” April tried to laugh it off, hopeful and scared, at the same time, of what Jett meant. “You keep bringing up your best friend and your kid. Are you sure you want to have this conversation right now? Your cock is,” April inhaled and stopped breathing for a second, “halfway inside me, I believe.”

Jett kissed his shoulder again, but harder, like he wanted to make a point but without using real force. “I want that, April. I want you to ... stay.”

He could laugh it off. But he knew exactly what Jett was saying. So his voice came out a bit strained, as his body was invaded, and the hand on his cock was finding the perfect rhythm. “For as long as you want me, Jett.”

Jett made a small, almost desperate sound and began moving faster. April had to reach back and hold Jett’s hip, or else their moves threatened to become too uncoordinated. It was even better than the first time, his body happily accepting to be used, and now already acquainted to Jett’s large manhood.

“I want you so damn much,” Jett said through his teeth, obviously fighting to last.

It was a good thing that April was getting there and fast, too. “Let’s just go together,” he whispered.

Jett's small grunts were music to his ears. April wanted to slam back into Jett, to show him how awesome it was to get screwed like that. It was like getting a fix of something good, not that April had any terms of comparison since he didn't even drink as much as the average college student.

But that was how it felt to him. For so many years, he had thought of Jett, as their summer together, not like this, not like lovers, but as friends that could be, sometime in the unclear future, something more.

The future was there, it had become present, and April knew, with a fierceness he was incapable of putting into words, that it was everything he had wanted for a long time, and even more. Jett wanted him, he had asked him to stay, and April had no desire of being anywhere else on the entire planet or the known universe.

He was the first to go, Jett's closed fist around his cock an instrument of pleasure, hard and unforgiving. Jett moved and pressed him into the mattress, moving harder and harder, and keeping April's body under him for several incredible long seconds.

"This ass," Jett commented as he straightened up a little, squeezing April's buttocks around his still hard cock and giving it a small massage.

"This ass is attached to a body, and you're practically crushing it," April said, but his laugh was lazy, and his words were slurred.

"Really?" Jett moved his hips and April gasped as he felt a small nudge inside, due to the position.

"Let me get this right. You came, right? How come your cock is still this hard?"

"It doesn't want to go down. Your ass is too good," Jett replied. He slapped April's ass and got off with a roar of laughter.

"You're so noisy," April complained and hid his head under a pillow. "You're going to wake up the entire house."

Jett seemed to consider the reprimand right away and fell silent. April peeked at him from under his pillow, and Jett came face to face with him.

"Let's take a shower together. But be quiet, okay?"

"Funny you're asking me that," April said, with a small huff. "Weren't you laughing out loud two seconds ago?"

"I don't want to wake up Jay. One hour or so left, and then you won't be mine any longer."

"What do you mean? I'm totally yours," April said without thinking.



Jett's face changed, his features moving like a fascinating animated photograph. "Mine," he said, and his eyes, as much as April could tell in the dim morning light, were gentle, shiny new mirrors he wanted to look at from up close.

"I guess we both need a bath, indeed," April said and sniffed himself.

Jett pushed his head into the hollow of April's shoulder and sniffed, too. "You smell so nice, April."

"I smell like I need a shower right now," April deflected the compliment. He had a feeling that fooling around would make them end up fucking again, and right now, his ass demanded a well-deserved break.

"Then let's go already," Jett said playfully and stood up first.

April took his hand without hesitation and laughed, too. It was hard to be all cool and keep the persona while his heart was full, and he felt like laughing out loud. Jett placed one hand over his mouth, but giggled, too, and then they stumbled over to the bathroom.

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April flashed a grin at him, as he continued to soap his body. His beautiful lips were stretched into the smile, and his eyes were bright and shiny. Jett chased away a few suds from his spiky hair, enjoying April's hands on him, touching him everywhere.

Any worries he might have had before were fading memories now. Even while losing his virginity, April had been the same, honest, and brave, and Jett loved him for that.

Or maybe, he just loved him, period. Jett loved April. He could picture the etching on an old tree trunk, the crude scribbling made with a short used knife. The name was different, the second one, but that small confession, made in secret, for no one to know, was still part of Jett's memories.

It was only fair. April was not a memory. He was flesh and blood, not the shadow of a boy from a long time ago brought to life. Jett had kept that memory for as long as he could remember, but it was the right moment to let go. Maybe April looked like Theo, but that wasn't important.

April was good for him, in so many ways. The fact that they had slept together and felt so damn good just came to complete that.

Jett wanted to say the words. It wasn't like him to hesitate. The only problem was that he had never said them before, not even as a joke, or a strategy to get into some girl's panties. So he couldn't risk sounding like a wuss. April was smart-mouthed, too, and something told Jett that he wouldn't bear to hear April making fun of him. For now, he would keep his mouth shut. After all, April had said he was in love with him, but only as an act when talking to that stalker.

Immediately after, he had denied it, and Jett had wanted so much for it to be true that it had been hell to hide his disappointment.

“Having fun there, dweeb?” He blinked lazily, enjoying April’s hands taking his cock and rubbing it.

“You have no idea.” April’s smile was, literally, ear to ear. “Can I, um, suck you off?”

Jett stood up to attention in a fraction of a second. Caught as he had been in making love to April, he had forgotten about that particular desire. As much as he enjoyed having April’s cock in his mouth, having that favor returned to him sounded pretty frigging great.

Still, he needed to play it cool. “Sure, knock yourself out.”

Fuck. He needed to close his eyes if he didn’t want to lose it. April was quick to rinse him with the showerhead and knelt in front of him. Jett opened one eye and stared. As much as he was afraid he would nut in seconds if he saw April in that position, he needed to check and have it stored for later.

“You know, you’re a little bit intimidating,” April said. “Why are you staring at me like you’re some one-eyed pirate?”

“Just making sure you’re not going to bite my dick off or something.”

April’s eyes grew wide. “Why would I do that?”

Jett didn’t have a reply for that. So he put one hand on April’s head, pretending to be pushy. “Get to work,” he said playfully.

April batted his hand away and laughed. Then he took Jett’s cock, placing one hand on his balls, too. After that, he just stood there, staring and rubbing the hard thing in his hand excruciatingly slowly.

Jett breathed in and leaned against the wall. He parted his legs a little to allow April as much room as possible. He had his eyes closed now. Soon, tentative lips were touching his balls.

“You’re good at this,” he whispered. “Fuck.”

“I haven’t started yet,” April replied. “I’m just, you know, kissing your balls.”

“You’re good at kissing my balls.”

April snickered, and then Jett felt a persistent tongue playing around. He squeezed his eyes shut and groaned.

April stopped. “Am I too rough or something?”

“No. Just take my cock in your mouth.”

That danger, of nutting prematurely, was looming on the horizon. Jett knew that he needed to chill. Blindly, he searched for the showerhead.

“Ouch,” April shouted. “That’s cold water!”

Jett hadn’t aimed for April, only a bit for his cock, but apparently, he had managed to catch the other in the crossfire. “Sorry my bad.”

“Just put it away and let me suck you off. Or give it to me.”

Jett allowed April to grab the showerhead and put it back in its hook. The green eyes studied him for a brief second. Then, April’s face fell. “You don’t like it. I suck at this, right?”

Nope. Not it. Jett searched quickly for an excuse. “You haven’t even started. Come on, dweeb, it’s not rocket science. It’s just cocksucking. You need the practice. Let me show you.”

Maybe if he took things in his own hands, it would be easier. Yeah, he could play it cool if he was in charge. Jett grabbed his cock by the base, squeezing enough to let it know that he wasn’t playing. Then, he took April by the back of his head and guided him toward his cock.

“Wait. You’re not going to stuff this thing down my throat, right?”

“You’re getting me in the mood to do just that,” Jett said.

All right. At least, April’s fooling around was helping to cool down his arousal.

“I might try to get it all, but I think I need to practice first,” April said matter-of-factly.

April depthroating him. All right. Now, his cock was a lost cause because it sprang in his hand as it had just been promised the ability to shoot forever. “Just put your mouth there already, damn it,” he ordered shortly.

“All right, all right,” April mumbled, and then, suddenly, he took Jett’s cock halfway into his mouth.

“Fuck!” Jett groaned. The hand he kept on April’s nape flexed.

April withdrew. “Am I that horrible? Just tell me what to do.”

*Play it cool, play it cool,* Jett repeated to himself like a mantra. “Dweeb, you can’t do it wrong. Just ... keep your teeth out of the way or something.”

“Teeth, right.” April moved his lips over Jett’s cock, and the awesome heat was engulfing it again.

There were no teeth, but there was definitely a tongue, and it was doing things that made Jett curse again. But this time, he didn't let April get away. He held him in place with one hand and used the other for his cock, making sure to move it in and out April's mouth to the rhythm he knew he could endure without blowing too fast and making a fool of himself.

"I'll shoot in your mouth," he announced. April's tongue was still doing crazy stuff. It was too late, anyway. "Please let me shoot in your mouth."

The only reply from April was him clamping his lips harder on Jett's cock. Nothing else was needed. Jett continued to curse as he came. Coming in April's ass had been amazing, but coming in his mouth had to be a close second. It was too good, and April's very active tongue was telling him that the dweeb didn't mind it at all.

Jett caressed April's hair and breathed out, managing somehow to stand, although his legs were willing to let him crash down.

"Wow," April said. "I had no idea it could be so hot to suck off a guy. I mean, I did enjoy watching it in porn --"

Jett grabbed April and pulled him up to his feet. Then he kissed him hard on the lips, pushed him back only slightly, and stared him in the eye. "It's only hot if you're sucking me off. Not just any dude, okay?"

April looked at him, and then, he burst into laughter. "Are you insecure, Jett? I'm choke-full with your cum both ways."

Yeah, he was insecure. But April was a bit of an asshole, laughing at him like that. No way in hell would Jett say 'I love you' first.

"Just making sure that you know whose boyfriend you are."

"Yours, obviously." April rolled his eyes, and then licked his lips. "Now, tell me, how is it for you when you suck me off?" The tone of his voice was conspiratorial like they were sharing some big secret.

In a way, it was a big secret, Jett agreed inwardly. "Why don't I show you?"

"What, now? I'm not sure ... Oh, okay." April gasped as Jett got down on his knees and took his cock in his mouth in one fell swoop.

Jett wouldn't lose to this dweeb even if he were his boyfriend, and there wasn't a competition of who sucked it better.

April made all sorts of sounds, cute and surprised, and bucked his hips into Jett's mouth as he was given head. Jett had to admit that it was probably an acquired taste, but in his case, it didn't take him long to acquire it. If it came from April, it had to be awesome good.

He was taking no prisoners, either. April's cock was long, but not very thick, which meant that Jett could play with it to his heart's content without making himself choke. It was also good that he was learning fast what April liked, and right now, he was polishing the sword, so to speak, with both his lips and his tongue.

"Fuck, I think I'm going to return the favor," April said, forcing each word out as he grabbed handfuls of Jett's hair and filled his mouth with cum.

Jett didn't forget the teasing from earlier. So, in turn, he teased the head of April's cock with his tongue all through the release, which had to feel pretty fucking intense.

When he stood up, he was pretty satisfied with himself. To tease April more, he stuck his tongue at him. April surprised him by sticking out his tongue, too, and then pressing it against his, in a weird, open mouth kiss.

Jett didn't wait for an invitation. He grabbed April hard, pushed him into the wall, and kissed him. It was weird to taste himself on April's tongue, and yet continue to taste his cum, too, at the same time, but it was all okay.

"So, who's the best sucker?"

April laughed. "Tell me you didn't just ask that. If I said you were, you'd be all full of yourself. If I said I was, you'd keep me on my knees forever. Am I right?"

Jett was too happy and spent to fight over something like that. "All true. But you'll still spend some time on your knees. Or maybe we'll do a sixty-nine."

"Fine by me." April's smile was so bright they didn't need a light bulb in the room.

"So," Jett asked, "how would you say it was? You know, the whole thing?"

"I'm not telling."

"For real?"

"I'm afraid your ego would get so big, there would be no more room in the house for anything else."

"That good, huh?"

April leaned into him and snuck his arms around Jett's waist, bringing him closer. Then he stared with those big green eyes at him, his smile never leaving his face. "Better than good. Nothing in the whole world can be better."

For the moment, Jett could live with that kind of confession. After all, he only needed to bring April to say the words, and then he would jump in with his confession, too. Some could call him a coward. He only thought he was good at planning. At least, in this case.

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His feet were barely touching the ground. The spring in his step was enough to make him reach the point of tumbling forward, so it took some serious balancing on the heels of his feet, and back again, just so that he didn't end up making a complete fool of himself.

"Someone's in a good mood." Raj fell in step with him, and April noticed the big grin on his friend's face right away.

"It looks like I'm not the only one," April said.

Raj scratched his head, looked embarrassed for a second, and then burst into laughter. "She said 'yes'!"

"Gaby?" April didn't need much to put two and two together.

"Yeah," Raj said dreamily. "Mind you, only to going together to the next anime con, but still, it's a win, right?"

"Definitely," April said to encourage his friend.

"So what's with the face-splitting grin on your face?" Raj questioned.

April looked away, blushing a little. What was exactly customary to tell your friends when something like that happened? He had a mind to ask his dad next time he would call, but he couldn't see himself talking about something like that with his dad, either. "How's that saying ... A gentleman never tells or something."

Raj burst into laughter. "So you and Jett did it?"

April could feel his ears catching fire. He groaned. "How come everyone in the world is more sexually active and totally 'kay with this topic, and I'm not?"

Raj joked. "Hey, don't hate on the rest of us 'cause we're prettier than you. Just joking. Even as a straight dude, I have no qualms with admitting that you're quite pretty, for a guy."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," April said brightly.

He looked around him and sighed contently. Everything seemed so bright and cheerful; nothing could bring him down. A dark sports car rushed down and stopped abruptly right across the street from them. April frowned for a second.

Raj noticed right away. “What? Did you see a ghost or something?”

“No.”

A man in his forties got out of the car and hurried to hold the door for someone. April exhaled when he saw a woman climbing out of the vehicle, dressed up to snuff. Ah, not a woman. Just a girl in her twenties pretending to be older.

Raj followed his eyes and snorted. “I guess that’s what you get when you have a sugar daddy to sponsor your tuition.”

“Don’t be mean,” April said right away. “Maybe that’s her uncle or something.”

“Sure. Anyway, none of my business. Do you know her, by chance? You’re still staring at them.”

“No.” April shook his head. “I just got this weird sensation that I’ve seen this type of car before. It doesn’t matter. It’s not like it’s that special.”

“Expensive, though,” Raj commented. “Now, let’s get some studying done, or we’ll never end up driving that sort of thing.”

“Do you want to drive that sort of thing?”

Raj shrugged. “Maybe. Nah, just pulling your leg. I’ll probably drive some insane electric car that runs on solar energy.”

“That’s more like you,” April said. “Now, let’s just go.”

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“Hey, April.” Dan jogged to him as he was heading for his next class.

“Hey, Dan.” April moved his bag from one shoulder to another. “I wanted to talk to you.”

Dan’s face lit up with a smile. “Cool. I wanted to talk to you, too.”

“All right,” April replied and began walking, with Dan by his side.

“You still like me, right?”

The question took him by surprise. “Um, what gave you that impression?”

“You sent your boyfriend to interrupt, um, you know,” Dan replied and quickly looked away.

“Ah, that. I felt responsible. I didn’t want you to get drunk and do something stupid.”

Dan laughed. “See? That’s what I’m talking about. Why would you care if I got, um, whatever, something, with another ... guy?” The last word was spoken so quietly April wasn’t sure he had heard it right.

“I care because that’s what I do. All right, so that came out a little condescending.” April made a small gesture with his thumb and forefinger to illustrate his words. “You were there because of me. So I just thought it would be on me if you did something you would later come to regret.”

“You don’t like me?”

There was something so wounded in Dan’s hesitant voice that April stopped and placed both hands on his shoulders. “I like you as a friend. How is that?”

“Lame.”

“Look. I’m trying here. I’m with Jett and ... Ah, I remember what I wanted to talk to you! Zane, you know, the guy who --”

“I don’t care about that guy!” Dan worked his jaw and looked away, but didn’t shake April’s hands from his shoulders.

“Why not? He’s funny, sexy, um, loaded, I think --” April couldn’t remember what he was supposed to tell Dan to make him open to Zane’s advances. “Ah, he’s not only into one night stands. He’s like, into more than one night.”

Dan stared at him, squinting like he couldn’t see April, although they were so close. “Are you making fun of me? Is this what all is about with you people?”

“I don’t know who you’re referring to, but I’m not making fun. Ugh, I’m so bad at this,” April complained. “Look, Zane likes you. He just wants you to pick up the phone.”

“That guy’s a player,” Dan said.

“True,” April admitted. “But don’t you want to play a little?”

“With you, yes. Not with him.”

“Sorry, man, it’s just not going to happen. I’m all into Jett. What would it take for you to believe me?”

“I don’t know.” Finally, Dan moved away from him and kicked away an invisible stone in his path. “I just don’t understand what you see in that guy.”



April snorted. He knew a few big strong things he saw in Jett. Well, he wouldn't share them with Dan, that was true, but he knew them. It would have been impossible not to since he had felt like walking a little funny from the moment he had gone out the door in the morning.

Something caught his eye as he waited for Dan to pour his heart out once and for all so that they could all move on. Was that sugar daddy – April addressed a sarcastic 'thank you' to Raj – waiting for his sugar – what? baby? – whatever to finish her classes now? It was a bit weird how the guy was looking around as if he was trying to photograph each person going in and out of the inner yard.

“What are you looking at?” Dan turned to see what April was staring at.

“Who's that guy?” April asked mostly to himself. He wore dark clothes and sunglasses, although there was no need for that accessorizing, given the late fall weather.

“He's Sabrina's dad,” Dan said matter-of-factly. “Don't tell me you're into older dudes, too.”

“What? No! Wait, is he someone's dad?”

Dan looked at him and frowned. “Yeah. Why wouldn't he be?”

“Ah, it was just something stupid Raj put into my head. I thought he was that girl's sugar daddy or something.”

Dan's frown deepened, but it didn't seem to be pointed at April now. “That girl knows a thing or two about sugar daddies.”

“For real? Gosh, I can't believe I'm gossiping. What's wrong with me? But, still, is this dude her dad-dad, or some other kind of dad?”

“That's her real dad. You know. Divorced parents, all that. He's trying to impress her or something.”

“The guy is giving me the willies. It's like he's from the mafia or something.”

“Seriously, April? And what's your boyfriend doing for a living?”

“Security,” April said brightly. “Dan, just listen. Pick up the phone, talk to Zane, see if you can hit it off with him. I guess that's the message I had to deliver.”

He watched with a bit of unease as the guy in sunglasses walked over to them casually. There was something in his stride that appeared a little tense.

“Hey, boys, do you know where I can find a certain April Summer?”

April felt the muscles in his cheeks going slack. Unconsciously, he grabbed Dan's hand and squeezed it. "No idea."

Dan looked at him, obviously surprised. The man remained unmoved and was carefully watching both of them from behind his dark lenses. "No idea, no," Dan confirmed, too.

"He's not much at school these days. He's like, skipping classes and stuff." April continued to squeeze Dan's hand.

"Do you know when he might come back?"

"No idea." April shrugged in what he hoped that it looked convincing and not like he had early onset of Parkinson's disease.

"Are you close friends with him?"

"Not really. But no one really likes him," April said quickly.

He could feel the man's eyes behind the sunglasses like lasers scanning him for his DNA.

"We're the closest to him and have no idea where he's off to," Dan chimed in, saving him from the scrutiny.

"I see. Thanks for the info. Have a good day, boys."

"Hey, Mr.," Dan called after him, "why do you need Summer?"

"Just a small favor I wanted to ask. But it's fine. I'll find him."

The man hurried to welcome the young woman from that morning and accompanied her to the car.

Dan turned toward him. "Are you wanted by the mafia now because you hang out with that dude?"

"What mafia? Didn't you say this guy's Sabrina's dad? The real dad, not the one with the sugar on top?"

"Yeah. So why did you lie to him?"

"Because I know where I've seen that car," April said under his breath.

"If you're getting in trouble because of that stupid boyfriend of yours, I'm going to kick his sorry ass."

April sighed. "It doesn't have anything to do with Jett. Chill, man. But thanks for your concern."

“Well, I guess I’ll answer Zane’s calls.”

“Really? Yes! Mission passed!” April closed his fist in a small victory gesture.

“Not for what he wants, but because it’s clear, I have to keep my eyes on you.”

“Oh, come on. It’s nothing.”

“Really? Then what does Sabrina’s dad want from you?”

“Beats me,” April said.

He had no idea. But it had been like a strike of self-preservation had hit him when the man had asked about him. That car had been parked in front of the warehouse where the Z brothers operated at least once. April knew it because it had been a way too nice looking car to forget so easily.

Great. Now he needed to find out what those loan sharks wanted with him, and that in the most surreptitious manner possible. He could ask Jett for help but seeing how crazy he was getting over April just going to school, that had no chance of working. April was pretty sure Jett would just put him under lock and key, and he would never see sunlight again.

Also, Jett could get in some serious trouble since the Z brothers were sort of his employers. No, this was a mission for April Summer, detective extraordinaire.

## *Chapter Twenty-One – I'll Show You Yours If You Show Me Mine*

“What are you doing?” April threw a nervous look over his shoulder at Dan.

“What does it look like? I need to make sure you’re okay.”

“As you can see, I’m completely fine.”

“You’re wanted by the mafia or something.”

“Can you stop it with that? You’re the one who told me that guy is that girl’s father.”

“But you knew his car, right? That’s what you said. So he’s Sabrina’s dad, and also a mobster.”

“Look, Jett will be here any minute. I really don’t want you two to get into some scuffle. Also, you can’t tell Jett anything.”

Dan snorted. “Like I’d talk to that guy. April, if strange men in shades want to know who you are, it can be only because of that asshole you’re dating.”

“You don’t know anything,” April insisted. “Jett is a good guy, okay?”

“When? When he sleeps?”

*Not even*, April remembered how Jett had woken him up that morning. “That’s his car, see?” He pointed at the approaching vehicle.

“I’ll keep an eye out for you.”

“You don’t have to.” April needed to pull Dan out of that equation, or things were bound to get messy. But, come to think of it, Dan could have some uses. “Maybe you could tell your friends to pretend they don’t know me if anyone asks about me, like today.”

“Done.” Dan was still standing too close for comfort.

Jett pulled his car in front of them. April turned toward Dan. “Make sure you call Zane,” he said loud enough for Jett to hear as he climbed out of his car.

He offered the most well-behaved smile he could manage to Jett and hurried to him, without one look at Dan. No wonder there, Jett looked over April’s shoulder and kept his eyes on Dan, putting on his ‘don’t mess with me’ face.

“I was just telling Dan that he should call Zane.”

For a couple of seconds, Jett seemed to be short of hearing and continued to look at Dan. April didn’t dare to turn and see how the other boy received that stare-down. He could only hope for the best at this point.

“See you around, April,” Dan said to him.

April waved without turning. “Are you ready to go home? Wait, where’s Jay?”

Jett pointed at the car, and April looked through the window. Luckily, Jay slept like an angel in his car seat.

He climbed in the back seat and pretended to be busy with watching Jay sleeping until Jett got in front.

“What’s the deal with this guy?” Jett asked right away.

They were exchanging glances in the rearview mirror. “Just as I said, I was telling him about Zane. He might call him.”

“He looks at you like you’re frigging dessert.”

“You imagine things. It’s nothing like that.”

Jett grimaced and turned the car. “I’m telling you like it is, April. That dude still digs you big time.”

“Well, that’s not my fault, right?”

“Just don’t make him believe he has a chance.”

“Or what?” April challenged his boyfriend, watching warily the frown etched on Jett’s face, reflected by the rearview mirror.

“Or nothing. But you don’t want to make Jay cry, right?”

April was quite puzzled at that. “Why would I make Jay cry?”

“And me.” Jett threw him a short glance in the mirror. “We would both cry a frigging river if you left.” The frown disappeared and turned into a smile.

April slapped Jett’s shoulder. “You’re such a joker. I’m not leaving you. Not you, not Jay, and not both of you combined. Is that better?”

“A little,” Jett offered. “I just don’t like him tailing you like that.”

“He’s not. I think Zane has a fair chance with him. I guess.”

“Zane plays the field. So he might keep buzz cut there a bit busy, but not for long.”

“Maybe you’re wrong. Maybe Zane would like Dan more than he liked others before.”

“He’d better,” Jett replied and took a sharp turn, making April lean to one side.

“Are you trying to kill us today?”

“I’m dying to get home.”

April watched Jett’s expression in the mirror and blushed, realizing what was eating his boyfriend. It wasn’t Dan, and that was a relief. But it was not like he hadn’t thought about it, at least a few dozens of times while he was supposed to focus on algorithms and their meaning in the grand scheme of things.

His current state of mind could be described as a straight line. From A to B, all it took was a ride by car, and with Jett at the wheel like that, the destination was supposed to be soon in sight.

“I need to give Jay something to eat first,” April said, hoping his voice wasn’t as loaded as it sounded to his ears.

“Done,” Jett replied.

“And I should change him.”

“Done.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“We can’t just send him to his room to sleep.”

“Hey, who’s his dad? I can.”

“Don’t be cruel.”

“That should be my line. Of course, if I talked like an old man.” Jett threw April a lopsided grin in the mirror.

“Shut up,” April replied.

“You shut up. You’re thinking what I’m thinking. Check on the boy as much as you want, but you’re mine all afternoon. After, we can go to the park and all that.”

April shifted in his place. Jay was deep in the land of dreams, which was surprising seeing what a crazy driver his daddy could be. “After what?” he asked.

Jett’s eyes were speaking volumes. April sank into his seat and pretended to watch the scenery. His heart was beating too fast, and his mind couldn’t stop playing porn scenarios with them two as the protagonists.

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“I’m quite surprised you managed with the diaper.”

“I read some online tutorials. See, you’re not the only nerd in the house.”

Nothing spelled ‘nerd’ in Jett’s physique, which April took his time to admire.

“See something you like?” Jett teased him.

April shook his head and pretended to be busy looking at some peeling paint. “Why are we in the basement?”

“So that you don’t have to keep your voice down,” Jett replied.

April turned his head fast. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Jett came close to him, stopping less than an inch from April’s computer chair, and making him look up and crane his neck. There was an intensity in his eyes as he raised one hand and caressed April’s lips.

“Hmm, is there something you want?” April asked.

“Yeah.”

“My ass --” April started.

“Is there something wrong with it?” Jett’s concern was genuine.

Of course. April wanted to slap himself. Jett was a sex fiend. Sure thing, he would be concerned over his partner’s ass not being able to take it. “Not wrong, per se. But in no shape for a dicking, I think.”

Jett’s disappointment was palpable. “When will it be?”

“How should I know? I’m new to this, by the way,” April said with a small snort. “A couple of days, I suppose.”

Jett grimaced. “Did I overdo it?”

“I don’t know about that. But, you know, whenever I sit down, I can still feel you.”

That was enough to put a smile on Jett’s face. “Nice.”

“Yeah, sure. If you’re you. If you’re me, it’s a pain in the ass.”

Jett laughed. “I could kiss it and make it all better.”

“Sure thing, you should kiss it. But no putting anything inside until, you know.” April had always thought that whoever he would have sex with, he would have trouble discussing so openly such stuff. Apparently, if it was Jett, words just came quickly.

“It’s okay. Let’s do a sixty-nine,” Jett proposed.

April swallowed. “Wow. And I thought I was off the hook.”

Jett caressed his jawline slowly. “Is that what you want? To be off the hook?”

Sometimes, it was okay to admit to what he wanted, April thought to himself. “Not really.” He stole a glance at Jett, as the guy still towered over him. “So, where?”

Jett gestured with his head toward the bench press.

“That’s a working out I can agree to,” April said.

Jett offered him one hand, and April took it. It was weird how he could sense everything, feel the warm touch of Jett’s hand, hear their breathing, smell the somewhat stale air. Maybe they could use better ventilation.

He opened his mouth to speak, but Jett said down on the bench press and pulled him into his arms. Upgrading the existing AC was out of April’s mind like it had never been there. He straddled Jett and soon their lips were locked into a hungry kiss.

Jett’s hands were firm on his ass, kneading his buttocks through the jeans, and April regretted, at least for one moment, that he had said ‘no’ to anal. But just for one second. He had been right to tell Jett that he could still feel like something was still inside his body. Not that he had any regrets. His body and whatever was happening to it were new to him, but it was a change he could welcome.

His ass was left alone, but the rough squeeze on the back of his neck told him that Jett was in no patience mode. It was fine. After all, it was all he could think of, too, and he hurried to make Jett get rid of his t-shirt.

Jett mimicked his moves, and now they were both naked, chest to chest, and April wondered if he could hear the rhythm of their hearts, beating in synch. From his position, Jett could manipulate April as he wanted, and soon, his lips were traveling down, teasing April’s neck, stopping for a second in the hollow point, where they dipped for a small lick.

It looked like Jett had many things figured out. When he took one of April’s nipples between his teeth, all was lost. April threw his head back and moaned, quite loudly.

“I knew it,” Jett said with satisfaction. “You’re loud.”

“Shut up.” April pushed him away playfully. “And stop biting me.”



“No, I won’t.”

“Why, because you never do what you’re told?”

“Nah. Because you like it.”

Jett had a point. April just nodded and then gasped as Jett stood up with him into his arms. “Now you’re just showing off.”

“Actually, I want to do this.” Jett put April down, his back to the bench press, and kissed his chest, going down until he reached the fly.

April snickered, as Jett struggled to open it with his teeth, without much success. “Wait. I think I can help.”

“In my imagination, it was supposed to be hot,” Jett replied but allowed April to pull down the zipper. He buried his head in April’s crotch, teasing the fast hardening cock through the fabric of the underpants.

April caressed Jett’s hair. “Isn’t this supposed to be a sixty-nine?” His voice quivered, as his cock came to its full length under the expert teasing of Jett’s mouth.

“Hungry for my cock?” Jett’s eyes flickered to him, full of amusement, but fondness, too.

April thought about a smart comeback, but it was hard to be witty and hard at the same time. “Yeah,” he whispered.

“Hmm, really? I guess you have to show it to me.”

Jett straightened up, and, with lazy moves, he opened his fly, too. April licked his lips as he watched Jett pulling out his one-eyed monster. He instantly snickered. One-eyed monster. He didn’t just think that, did he?

“What’s so funny?” Jett was rubbing his cock slowly.

April was fascinated by how hard that thing was. “I just called your cock a one-eyed monster. In my head.”

A raised eyebrow was the reply.

“Well, it’s a monster, that’s for sure,” April explained, “but the thing with the eye is a bit weird. I mean, I want to stick my tongue in there, and ... well, I shouldn’t think of it as an eye, right? Maybe a little ... mouth?”

Jett shook his head and came closer. He used his cock to paint April's mouth with precum. April opened his mouth, trying to catch the head. All he did was to lick haphazardly as Jett didn't stop moving.

"Dweeb, you really should turn off your head from time to time."

"And you should stop playing. Give me that cock," April said, pretending he was more in charge than he was.

"Hey, it's a sixty-nine, right? So off with the pants."

April was sure he could break some record for the fastest undressing as he hurried to pull down his jeans. Jett was doing the same, getting rid of the rest of the clothes he was wearing.

"I think you should be on top," Jett said matter-of-factly.

April squinted as he watched him. Could it be that Jett was the one more in control? Well, he had more sexual experience, that was for sure. But that didn't mean that April didn't want to compensate and fast.

"Sure." He got to his feet and waited for Jett to lie down. "I should straddle your chest or something," he said as he pondered about the fastest way to find himself face to face with the object of his desire.

"Hop on," Jett said shortly.

April watched Jett's cock, strained, looking as it wanted to burst out of its skin. "That looks a little painful," he joked. He gasped as Jett reached quickly and grabbed his cock. "Look who's the hungry one now."

Jett began moving his hand slowly, thumbing the head from time to time. April looked at him, and their eyes locked.

"All right," he said brightly. "I guess we should get to work."

"Why so fast? I could stay like this for a while," Jett teased him.

"Sure. If you want me to shoot prematurely, go ahead."

Jett removed his hand from his cock fast, and April snickered. But he didn't plan on letting Jett struggle with his unattended erection for too long, so he quickly straddled him.

No wonder there, Jett took things into his hands, literally, as he grabbed April's ass and pulled it close to his face.

April groaned in pure, but unexpected pleasure, as Jett began to lick his ass. “What kind of sixty-nine is this?” he asked.

“You said that I should lick your ass. Any wish of yours, it’s what I do.”

April cursed softly and leaned to meet Jett’s cock head first. Without one more second of hesitation, he took Jett’s cock from the base and stuffed as much as he could into his mouth. It was Jett’s turn to say a few naughty words as April got to work with determination.

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April was too good with his mouth, Jett thought. Eh, he wouldn’t lose, not to a virgin boy. Well, no longer a virgin since Jett had taken care of that. Damn, just licking April’s ass was enough to make his cock unbearably hard. It was good, then, that April had his mouth on it now and was sucking it like he wanted to extract gold from there.

He adjusted April’s position and helped himself to the hard cock dangling not far from his eyes. April’s tool was long, not too thick, and Jett felt a little challenged. It looked like April wanted to finish the race first, and that wasn’t an option. Jett grabbed April’s ass to make him descend with his cock into his mouth.

There was a strange satisfaction in having his mouth full like that, while, at the other end, another mouth was working his cock. Whoever had invented sixty-nine must have been a fucking genius. It was awesome to be able to give and take pleasure like that.

April’s ass cheeks were flexing, and it looked like he couldn’t stop himself from wanting to push more into Jett’s mouth. That was why Jett had wanted April on top, besides not wishing to crush him. Like this, it was easier for Jett to gauge April’s reactions. These days, that was the most important thing. It wasn’t often that Jett found other people indispensable. But April was, and not only because of the hot sex, or his taking care of Jay.

“You know what I’m thinking?” He let go of April’s cock. His voice was hoarse, deep.

“How can you be thinking while I’m doing this to you?” April emphasized his words by licking the head of Jett’s cock and then taking it into his mouth again.

“When I come, don’t swallow.” Jett ignored April’s teasing on purpose.

“Wow, you expect me to swallow?” April took a break, too, and looked over his shoulder at Jett.

“Yeah. Every time.”

April laughed. “But not this time?”

“I’ll show you yours if you show me mine,” Jett replied.

April made a small sound as if he had conjured that image in his mind. Without another word, he got back to his task at hand.

Jett didn't wait, either. That was an agreement, and he didn't need to hear the words. April's cock in his mouth was amazing, and he wanted it all. It was hell not to push his hips up to meet April's sweet mouth on him, but there was no point in forcing things. They were no porn actors, after all.

He used his hands to tease April's balls and ass, and by how both their breaths grew shallower and desperate, they were both getting there quickly.

Jett allowed himself a little risky move and pushed down April's ass to force more of his cock into his mouth. At the same time, April's mouth on him became a crazy vacuum, and Jett couldn't recall if he had ever felt like this in his entire life.

He would only come in April forever if he could. And he wanted to because there was no way he would find another who could make him feel like that.

The cock in his mouth jerked and released its juice, and Jett collected it carefully, making sure not to swallow. That was enough for his own balls to trigger the release.

Next time, he needed a mirror or something. He wanted to see April with a mouth full of his cock. Or maybe, for the sake of lasting longer, he needed to postpone that idea.

They were both making all kinds of crazy sounds as they shot for long seconds. April moved first, with much difficulty, dragging his body down Jett. He managed to get to his feet, and then turned toward Jett, with a funny expression on his face.

Jett couldn't talk, so he just questioned with his eyes. April just stuck out his tongue, showing him just what he wanted to see. He did the same, sticking out his tongue playfully. The look in April's eyes was a bit wild. Jett just watched him as he closed the small distance between them and then pressed their mouths into a dirty kiss.

He grunted as April pushed his tongue inside. It was easy to grab him and get the upper hand, but, instead, Jett chose to lie there and let April have that.

When April withdrew, Jett said nothing. The wildness in the green eyes was appeased, leaving room for the usual playfulness.

"For the record, that was sick," April said, his mouth stretched into a broad grin.

"Sick? So you do know how not to talk like an old man?"

April slapped his chest playfully and then climbed on top of him. Resting his chin on the back of his hands, he looked at Jett. "I know words, my dude."

“Yeah? And what else?” Jett placed a possessive hand on April’s ass.

“Hmm, what else I know? The list is long.”

“And you just added cocksucking to it.”

April’s eyes closed lazily, and Jett could see a bit of red coloring the height of his cheeks.

“Don’t tell me you’re embarrassed or something.”

“I’m not!” April protested, but he was blushing more now.

“You are! You so totally are!”

“Well, not everyone has the kind of experience under his belt like you.”

“And what experience is that? I haven’t fucked any dudes before.”

April smiled. “Are you a born again virgin or something?”

Jett laughed out loud. “Born again virgin? Is that a thing?”

April blinked. “Hmm, maybe. That’s what you’re saying, right?”

“What? You mad ’cause you’re my first dude?”

“Your first?”

The question was loaded. “And last.”

“Ah, so, after this, you’re going back to chasing girls?”

“There is no ‘after this.’” Jett couldn’t believe he had let that out.

April’s eyes grew wide. “Hmm, are you saying that --” The monitor bracelet on the desk beeped, and April stood up fast. “Duty calls. Jay is up.”

Saved by the bell, it seemed. Jett exhaled. If April had asked him, point-blank, he couldn’t have denied it. So he needed to buy Jay a beer or more once he got old enough to drink.

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Had Jett been close to a confession? April felt a bit like an asshole for running away like that. It was true that Jay wasn’t a pretext, but that had come at the right and wrong moment at the same time.

If Jett said those words, April would have to tell him the truth about Theo and all that. And it felt like he couldn’t do that. Not without knowing all the truth about that summer, not without

knowing why Jett had acted like that after they had been the closest two people on the face of the earth.

Any outsider could have said that April was reading too much into things, that he was childish to believe that their bonding that time could have meant that much. They were children; it was just normal to feel like that toward someone who shared the same pain, without false pity and expectations.

The thing was: he had been the only one to feel like that. Jett had turned his back on him. And he had said it, clear as day. Theo didn't matter. He was just someone Jett had used to hate if April were to read the writing on the wall.

But how could he feel that, the same oneness experienced that long time ago while living a lie? April knew that he had to call his dad and ask for advice. But he already knew what his dad would say; he would tell him to tell the truth, to be brave, and prepared to face the consequences.

April wasn't sure he was prepared for any of it. For now, there was no need for confessions, from either part. He would have to take his time and figure out how he could make himself able to tell the love of his life that he had been the same boy from so long ago who had held his hand and thought it would be okay to kiss him. How to make himself able to prepare for Jett not wanting to have anything to do with him over something like that.

He stood next to Jay's crib and played with one of the squeaky toys the boy liked best. Jay moved his little arms, trying to reach the toy. "And there's also you I should think about, right?"

"So, you guys are ready for the park?" Jett called from behind.

April jumped. "Do you always have to move like a tiger in the jungle?"

Jett growled playfully. "I'm not that silent."

He only wore a pair of jeans, not bothered with putting on a shirt. April inhaled Jett's now familiar scent. Jett came closer and embraced him.

"We're not getting all romantic now, right?" April said although he embraced Jett back.

"Why not?" Jett asked and kept him close.

"We're guys. Right? None of the things you do with girls then." April needed to keep his head screwed on right until he could safely blurt out what he wanted to say.

"Is there a manual I could learn from?" Jett asked, without letting go.

"I don't think so. But, I'd say, since we're both dudes, we should be all cool and stuff."

“Cool. Sure.” Jett let go of him. “Make sure to be down in five, then, or I leave without you two.”

“Five?” April asked, alarmed.

“We’re dudes.” Jett shrugged. “So you don’t need to put on makeup, and I don’t need to stare at my closet for half an hour to choose how to dress. You said it. Bro.”

Bro? April wanted to smack his forehead. Well, he had told Jett to avoid any romantic stuff. But seriously, bro?

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He knew it had been way too early. Jett wanted to throw a punch at himself. Of course, April acted like he was old-fashioned and had read romance books, but it wasn’t like he could have fallen in love with him in just two weeks.

So they needed to wait. Well, since they were bound to fuck like crazy in the meantime, he could live with that. Also, he needed to keep his trap shut. There was no way April wouldn’t laugh if he told him that he reminded Jett of someone he had used to love for years.

There was no way he could explain to April what had happened to him that summer, not without opening a door he needed to keep shut. No one but Theo in the whole world could understand that. But Theo wasn’t there, and April was, and Jett loved him, not a ghost of the past.

So the door had to remain shut. And Jett would have to time any stupid confession. Or, as he had thought before, he could just let April say the words first.

## *Chapter Twenty-Two – Between Bros*

Something was off, Jett could tell, as he stole a glance at April. Maybe the dweeb had been put off, like seriously put off, by Jett's almost confession. That was all the more reason to keep his mouth completely shut; while April boasted about being all about meeting the right one and all that, there were no guarantees that Jett was that for him.

Therefore, he needed to chill, keep the distance, and play it cool. Not an easy thing to do, Jett thought, as he watched April playing with Jay. Yeah, the problem was, as usual, that he had a type, and he had had a type since thirteen.

*Thanks, Theo, for ruining everything.* If he were honest, things weren't so bad. For a virgin, April surely was open to everything sexual that crossed their minds. The earlier afternoon was proof enough for that.

Usually, Jett would have no reason to complain whatsoever. But it pissed him off that April seemed to get lost in thought now and then, forgetting to answer a question, or failing to hear him altogether.

The dweeb was preoccupied with something, and Jett hoped that it wasn't that April was thinking about how to let him down or something.

Yeah, he needed to make it sure that nothing like that happened. One way was to show April that he wasn't some wuss getting all head over heels after they fucked a few times.

"What?"

April's question took him by surprise. "What?" he asked right away.

"You're staring at me like I'm your biggest enemy or something. Is it about work? Are you worried about something? You know, people who get their bones broken might hold a grudge. All that negative energy can take a toll on you."

Jett threw a small squeaky toy at April. "I'm not stressed about my," he made the quotation sign, "work."

"What's bothering you, then?"

"Since when you're my wife? Stop pestering me. A dude should have his time to think about stuff."

"Okay." April waved in surrender. "Far from me to consider myself," he also did the quotation sign, "your wife."

"Good. 'Cause we're both dudes, and no one's the wife."



“Yeah,” April agreed. “Nobody’s the wife.”

“Although you’re cuter in an apron.”

The squeaky toy smacked Jett right in the face. Jay laughed and clapped his hands, most probably pleased with the little dispute between his parents.

“I had a feeling something was holding me down. I had no idea it was you,” April joked.

“Yeah, it was me all along.”

Jett moved slowly and then pounced. April yelped as Jett pressed him down into the blanket and kept him there, growling. Jay began growling, too, which prompted April to burst into laughter. He didn’t manage to laugh for long as Jay stumbled toward him and threw himself all over April’s face.

Jett picked the boy like a mother cat would pick a kitten to get him off April. On cue, Jay started crying.

“Why are you making the baby cry?” April scolded him right away.

“He was suffocating you. Also, he could injure himself or something.”

April took Jay into his arms to baby him. Jett shook his head. He could swear even through his tears, Jay was looking at him with triumph written all over his small face.

“This kid is bad,” Jett said, pointing at Jay.

“How can you say such a thing? He’s an angel,” April said.

Jay’s bottom lip was still quivering.

“If you always take his side, you’ll spoil him. Give him to me for some man-on-man talk.”

“No way.” April held Jay away.

Jett frowned. “You two are getting on my nerves big time today.”

“Really? I didn’t know you were so sensitive. Okay.” April murmured something to Jay. “Now, let’s hold your daddy a little because he’s acting like a bear that caught a spin in his paw.”

Jett didn’t manage to protest as April, together with Jay, pushed him down, and landed on top of him. Jay had already forgotten he had cried until moments earlier. He was now giggling along with April, and Jett put his arms around them both.

“Are you hugging us?” April asked, a small challenge in his pretty eyes.

“Yeah. It’s a bear hug. Any moment now, I’m going to crush you.” Jett growled again, and Jay imitated him right away.

“So, I’ll be living from now on with a pack of animals.”

“You reap what you sow, dweeb. And hey, do you need any more proof that this little fellow is mine? Look how easy he takes after me.”

“I can see that. It will be a lot of trouble to wean him off your bad habits. But I will do it, nonetheless.”

“My bad habits? What, you don’t like me now?”

Jett had tried to make the question casual, but now he waited for the answer with his breath held.

“Of course, I like you. I have no idea why you would say such things. Jay,” April said to the baby, “let’s give your daddy a kiss.”

Jett laughed as Jay put his small arms around his neck and kissed him on the cheek. And he let out a deep breath when April kissed him on the other.

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What the hell could that man in shades want with him? April was eating his fingernails raw, and it wasn’t only that trouble that was on his mind now. Even since that near confession, Jett had behaved strangely. Maybe he didn’t mean it, and now, he had no idea how to take it back.

April wanted to believe Jett did have such strong feelings toward him. But in all truth, ever since their little reunion – something Jett had no idea of – only a couple of weeks had passed, and anyone in their right mind would have said that they couldn’t fall in love.

For April, the situation was different, and also painfully clear. He had always been in love with Jett, so he had the advantage, or better said, the disadvantage of continuity. Nothing like that happened to Jett. For him, everything was new, and probably he had just let himself a bit taken by the flow.

Still, that whole ‘bro’ thing was annoying. April had no intention until he figured out how to tell Jett everything, to let their relationship evolve into some ‘friends with benefits’ thing. So there were a few things he needed to make clear.

At the same time, he was still debating how to go about finding out what the hell that man wanted with him. Tomorrow, at school, he would try to get close to Sabrina and see if she knew who April Summer, aka he, was. He betted that she didn’t. That made things a bit clear, yet a bit complicated at the same time. It meant that either the guy didn’t want to get his daughter

involved in whatever he wanted with April or that he had already asked her, and she had told him she didn't know April at all.

That was very little to work with, as far as sleuthing went. Could it be that the Z brothers considered he still had some unfinished business with them? But that didn't make sense. Except for his gut instinct telling him the man in shades had to be dangerous and that he had seen that car before, April didn't have anything to justify his reaction.

That man couldn't work for the Z brothers. His car was too expensive, and he dressed way too well to be in that line of work, at least as a grunt. But he probably had a connection with those loan sharks, and that made April feel unease.

"Great," he murmured under his breath. He was quick to judge others when he had been an idiot to borrow money from those people.

Maybe he could ask Jett, casually, if his debt had been paid in full for real. It could be a start, although he doubted that Jett hadn't taken care of that.

No, April thought and gave up on the idea. Sabrina's dad, whoever he was, had to have some strange business with him, and the connection to the Z brothers could be merely coincidental.

The thing was, he trusted his gut. And his gut was telling him that man was bad news. In the meantime, he also needed to figure out what was wrong with Jett and that without triggering any confessions that were much desired and much to be avoided at the same time.

"Hey, April," Jett called from behind. "You done?"

April turned and looked at his boyfriend. "Yeah. Ready to go to sleep?"

"Sure," Jett replied with a shrug.

Was he imagining things, or Jett was trying a bit too hard to appear nonchalant? Maybe it was his imagination. Jett slung one arm over his shoulders, and together, they walked up the stairs.

The moment they were inside their shared bedroom, April knew something had to be off. Jett undressed quickly and got into bed, without one look at him.

"All right. This is weird," he said out loud.

Jett stared at him, from under the blanket which he had pulled to his chin. "What?"

"You."

Jett quirked an eyebrow like he had no idea what April was talking about.

"Look, I don't know what's gotten into you, but I'm not your bro."

The blanket was pushed lower, and April sighed at the sight of Jett's naked chest. In turn, Jett knew well what he was doing because he raised his arms, crossing them over his head and making his pecs flex.

April licked his lips. "Definitely not your bro," he whispered.

"Then what?"

"Your, um, lover?"

Jett snorted. "You make it sound like something from an old book."

"You're right," April said brightly. "What was I thinking?"

"Come 'ere," Jett said.

April climbed on the bed, making sure to straddle Jett. "Am I close enough?"

Jett made a small gesture for him to move closer. April shuffled his knees, pretending to be playful. There was no need for that. Jett reached for him and pulled him by the back of his head. Automatically, April closed his eyes and opened his mouth, waiting for the kiss that usually followed when Jett did that.

When nothing happened, April opened one eye, and then both. Jett was staring at him, and the look in his eyes was intense.

"What do you want, April?"

April swallowed hard. "I was expecting a kiss," he said matter-of-factly.

"A kiss like between bros?"

April huffed. "I'm telling you. I'm not your bro, and I don't intend to be."

"So, we're not friends?"

"I'm not saying that!"

"You're messing with my head, dweeb."

April exhaled. "Look, it's all new. Truth be told, I have no idea how to behave. Sure, I've read some relationship advice. And I've also watched porn. A lot. But that doesn't mean I know ... You know. About stuff like this."

Jett grinned. "You've watched a lot of porn? And now you're saying it?"

"What can I say? I'm bad like that."

“You’re not bad.” Jett now brought their lips together and kissed April softly. “You’re good.”

“Mmm,” April played along, “really?”

“Really.”

“You’re good, too. Too good,” April said under his breath, as Jett kissed him gently again.

“What’s that?”

“I’m not saying.”

“You better.”

Jett used his superior power to turn April with the back on the mattress and him on top. Unfortunately, there was still the blanket and April’s clothes between them.

“Or what?” April challenged Jett.

“I’ll think of something.”

April helped Jett in his frustrating struggle to get the blanket away. He gasped when Jett hiked his t-shirt up and began teasing his nipples. His hands were frantic when he pushed down his jeans, something Jett didn’t help with because he was too busy to try to reach inside April’s underwear.

“April, you’re killing me.”

“I’m sure whatever is happening right now, it has nothing to do with killing.”

Jett grabbed one of April’s hands and pushed it to his cock. “I think all the blood that should be in my head is here instead. Who knows what might happen if it stays like this for too long?”

“Let’s not risk it, then.”

Finally, he was out of his jeans and free to turn the tables on Jett a little. Jett didn’t protest as April wrapped one leg around him and then pushed him so that he could be the one on top.

Jett massaged his ass, something easy to do from that position. “Ah, damn it, I wish I could fuck you.”

April caught one of Jett’s nipples and pulled hard, earning a small hiss, which could be interpreted as discomfort, but also as pleasure. “You know, there is something we can do.”

Jett grinned. “Do you want another sixty-nine?”

April bit his bottom lip. Proposing what he truly wanted would be tricky, so a direct approach was better. “Actually,” his voice dropped lower, “I was thinking that I could, you know, do the fucking.” He kissed Jett quickly to stop him from refusing point-blank.

Jett was surprised as his mouth remained immobile for a couple of seconds as April kissed him. Well, maybe that was enough time for Jett to consider it, at least.

Eventually, April had to interrupt the kiss and learn the answer. Jett’s eyes were dark as they looked at each other. He held his breath. Maybe it was too soon. Maybe Jett didn’t think, for a moment, that he could be in that position. Maybe it was all a bad idea.

“Okay.”

The single word had been spoken so softly April wasn’t sure he had heard it. “Are you sure?”

“Stop looking at me like you’ve seen the light or something. And get to work already before I change my mind.”

April straightened up, a bit panicked now. He hadn’t expected a positive answer.

“How do you want me to sit?” Jett asked.

The darkness in his eyes was burning now. April had the vague sensation that he was dealing with something dangerous, but he felt like an adventurer ready to delve into uncharted waters, heart, and soul.

“Maybe you could turn,” he said quietly.

“Okay. Could you move a little, though?”

April tripped on his members as he tried to move away. Jett laughed, unnerving him further.

He allowed himself to admire the perfect curve of Jett’s muscular back. As his eyes traveled lower, he realized what he was getting himself into. But now was no time for hesitations. With a steady hand, he grabbed a pillow and pushed it under Jett, making him lift his perfect ass in the air.

“This is, wow,” he barely managed.

He cleared his throat and coughed.

“Dweeb, don’t tell me my ass is leaving you speechless.” Jett laughed and looked over his shoulder.

“Shut up,” April mumbled. “I’m going to lick your ass,” he announced, in a more solemn tone than he intended.

“Good. What are you waiting for?” Jett teased him.

April put himself in position. He fondled Jett’s ass for a while, willing the beating of his heart to calm down. By how Jett’s breath was deepening, he wasn’t the only guy in the room a bit unnerved by the situation.

Well, he was the only one responsible for his predicament. Now was the chance to go beyond his dreams. Given the lack of experience and the conviction that porn movies couldn’t be considered a good starting point for what could be doable in real life, he had not quite clearly envisioned what topping a sexy guy would entail.

Now, it was the moment for some hands-on experience. And it wasn’t only that. If he only thought of the idea that he would top Jett, of all people, it was enough to feel his cock experiencing seizures or something of the kind.

No, he needed to calm down. Yes, that was the man he loved, sprawled, and surrendered in front of him, waiting for April to have the most intimate type of sex possible with him. But he needed to remain calm if he didn’t want to make a total fool of himself.

April inhaled and then delved with his tongue between Jett’s buttocks.

“Oh, fuck!”

Jett’s shout made him raise his head. “What? What’s wrong?”

“Do it again,” Jett said curtly.

April smiled and now put his tongue as far in as he could. Dirty words began pouring from Jett’s mouth, a reward in themselves for a job well done. And what a job that was. April was sure the rimming was among the best things ever since Jett had done it to him, but sensing the other’s pleasure, the soft quiver in that strong body made him feel invincible.

Jett was breathing hard when April finally let him be. Now he needed to make that tight entrance a bit looser, right? April couldn’t deny that his hands were trembling when he finally found the lube and got back on the bed.

“Wow, April, that was like, awesome,” Jett praised him.

“Keep that thought,” April replied as he coated his cock with enough lube for three, most probably.

Jett became suddenly quiet when April touched his hole with lubed fingers. How could he tell Jett how amazing that felt? Words weren’t enough. That moment, April realized. He wanted Jett to feel everything he had felt; he wanted their experiences to be the same, to bring them closer.

The truth would have to come to light. But, for now, April wanted with so much intensity that physical closeness that he was sure he would die if he didn't get inside Jett and soon. But he couldn't hurry. Jett's ass was tight, promising later pleasure like no other, and April made small, labored sounds, as he struggled, using the other hand, to stop his cock from coming just by thinking of how it would feel to fuck that perfect behind.

"I think that, maybe ... C'mon, April. Do it, or I might jump up and run," Jett complained, springing him into action.

No, he wouldn't be denied that, April thought, and he pushed against the tight entrance that offered back heat and opposition. It wouldn't be easy, but giving up now would make him the perfect coward.

"Are you playing, or are you going to fuck me?"

There was sweat gathering at the small of Jett's back, but his words were valiant. April had to give it to Jett. Of them two, Jett was the braver one, in all ways. April promised himself inwardly that he would find a way to tell everything.

For now, happiness was within reach. He steadied his trembling hands on Jett's hips and began pushing slowly inside. Could it be that Jett had felt the same during their first time? He didn't have the energy left to ask. Everything, down to the last cell in his body, was focused on penetrating Jett's ass, getting inside him, enjoying the tightness and the squeeze.

"Oh, oh, oh." He couldn't say any other words, as his vocabulary now belonged to a different species, one that didn't customarily use language.

"Fuck," Jett said through moans and grunts. "Did your cock grow overnight or something?"

"Stop joking," April whispered as he struggled to find a rhythm while trying to convince himself he wouldn't shoot so fast, even if it was his first time, and it was Jett there, and he was having sex with the one he had always wanted.

April covered Jett's back with his body. He licked Jett's neck, hoping that was enough of an apology for the pain he was inevitably causing. The immediate response from Jett was a buck of the hips into him, causing more friction.

"Jett, your ass is so good ... You are so good; I can't, I can't ..."

April knew the battle was lost. He grabbed Jett by the shoulders, pumping into him, ashamed that he was so fast and that he didn't even manage to care about his partner's pleasure.

His release, the first of that kind, shortcircuited his brain. He collapsed and then slid down, away from Jett. He covered his face, too overwhelmed with everything.



“Ha-ha, dweeb, you came so fast,” Jett teased him.

“Do you have to rub it in?” April protested meekly. “It’s only because of you. I hadn’t expected you to say ‘yes’, and then your ass squeezed me so good, and then I --”

Jett laughed. “Well, it wasn’t all that bad.”

April let his arms drop and stared at Jett. He looked relieved. “Oh, are you trying to say that, um, you didn’t hate it?”

Jett moved and landed on top of April. “It’s still better when I fuck you. But actually, my ass doesn’t feel that bad.”

April snuck his arms around Jett and began playing with his crack. He sighed in satisfaction as he felt the cum squeezed out of Jett’s ass. “This is mine. I came in you. Wow, so I’m not a virgin anymore. In all ways.”

“Well, you know how it is between bros,” Jett joked.

April stuck his fingers inside Jett’s ass. “Shut up. If that’s how it is between bros, you’re not allowed to see Zane anymore.”

“Zane is not my bro.”

“Oh, really?”

“He’s never been this close to me like you are now.”

April closed his eyes, to hide what Jett’s words did to him. “Has anyone ever been?”

“How can you ask that? Couldn’t you tell my ass was a complete virgin?”

April snickered. “I could. I think ballistic tests could prove now that my cock was in your ass.”

Jett frowned for a second and then relaxed. “Always a dweeb. But I like you this way.”

“I’m glad. Because I can’t be anyone else.”

“I wouldn’t want you to be anyone else, either.”

“Are we getting emotional now?”

“No. But I’m hard. So, you know, you still have a job to do.”

April nodded and kissed Jett deeply. “You know, there is just one emotional thing I have to say. And then I’ll shut up and suck your cock. You’re terrific, Jett. I wouldn’t be with anyone else. So no more ‘bro’ stuff, okay? We’re more than that.”

“Ah, damn. And I had so many jokes up my sleeve about bros and all that.”

“Sorry for ruining that for you.”

“Can we get from emotional to physical already?”

“Sure.” April nodded enthusiastically.

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April was busy at work between his legs, sucking his cock with enthusiasm, and Jett felt like he was on cloud nine. It wasn't only because April was getting better and better at that. Jett had been happy about going through the ass fucking without complaining.

Actually, not only that it hadn't been as bad as he had expected, but it had been pretty good. There was no time right now to deal with that, and he would be sure to tease the hell out of April to make him do it again.

The cause of his happiness was different, and, strangely enough, it wasn't directly related to how April's lips and tongue treated his cock. April didn't want them to be some weird friends with benefits. He wanted more, and, for the moment, Jett was happy with that. They had time to grow into something else. And, since he was also new to all that feelings stuff, he was glad April wanted to take his time.

They would get there. Jett caressed April's spiky hair. Now the hair dye was there to stay. But he would like to see him with his natural hair color after that stuff with the Z brothers would get solved.

For now, he could enjoy April's mouth. And he would enjoy his company, and every day kisses and slowly falling in love.

Everyone, from Zane to the last of his girlfriends, would laugh so hard. That wasn't, however, Jett's last coherent thought as he came in April's mouth. He didn't think anything at all.

### *Chapter Twenty-Three – Wednesday, I’m In Trouble*

The next day, in school, April was sitting a few feet from Sabrina and watching warily as she played with her hair, running her fingers through the same strand over and over again. He was still debating how he should go about asking the girl about her dad when she suddenly looked at him. Her eyes were painted in dark colors, and she looked a bit scary. Probably it was a sexy makeup, but April wasn’t sure. He went for scary.

“You’ve been standing there, staring at me like a psycho, for the last five minutes. What do you want?” Sabrina asked. Her eyes thinned as she took in April, seemingly seeing him for the first time in her life. The confirmation of that particular supposition came right away. “Do I even know you?”

“You’re Sabrina DeLouise, right?”

Sabrina rolled her eyes. “Whatever these idiots around told you, I’m too expensive for the likes of you.”

April opened his mouth, unsure of what the proper course of action could be, given Sabrina’s cold attitude. “Oh, it’s not about that.”

“That?” Sabrina continued to examine him. “Do you even know what you’re talking about? You look to me like you have no idea what you’re talking about.”

April put his hands up in surrender. “I might not have any idea what I’m talking about.”

Sabrina stared at him a bit longer and then burst into laughter. “You seem harmless. So, what do you want?” She leaned against the wall and crossed her arms over her chest.

“Do you really not have a clue who I am?” April asked.

Sabrina threw him a suspicious glance. “Are you someone important? I know this place is teeming with would-be geniuses, but you seem a bit too cool to be that nerdy.”

“Thanks. I guess. It must be the hair.”

Sabrina laughed again. “And you have a sense of humor, too. So, who are you?”

“Nobody.”

“C’mon, you didn’t come to see me just to tell me that, right? What’s your name?”

With bored moves, Sabrina pulled a lighter and a pack of cigarettes from her bag and lit herself one. She offered the pack to April, but he refused politely. There was no point in telling her she wasn’t supposed to smoke in the hallway. But, seeing how there was no one else around, she

wouldn't listen to any word of caution anyway. Sabrina sort of reminded him of someone, someone he lived with at home.

"My name is weird."

"Try me."

Ah, he needed to find a weird name and fast, and, of course, one that wasn't the one he actually had. "Wednesday," he said. A day of the week should count as being stranger than a month of the year, and it was obscure enough to be considered weird.

"Wednesday?" Sabrina examined his face, searching for signs that he was pulling her leg.

"Yeah. My parents were weird like that."

"Parents are weird," Sabrina confirmed. "And what's your last name?"

"Adams," April replied right away, as his mind stopped at the first letter of the alphabet, and at a railway engineer about whom he had happened to read the day before.

Sabrina looked at him, and then, her eyes grew wide. "Your name is Wednesday Addams? Get the fuck out!"

It took him a few good moments to realize his mistake. He began shaking his head. "No, no, no! I'm Adams, you know, with just one 'd'!"

Sabrina was holding her purse against her belly while her body shook with laughter. "Your parents have to be completely off their rocker!"

In his mind, April addressed his quick apologies to the one who had actually named him. "Yeah, I guess. Parents. What can you do?"

Sabrina dragged from her cigarette as she dabbed at her eyes, still wet from laughing so hard before. "You're telling me?"

April considered that it was okay if he moved to stand to Sabrina's right. "My dad can totally drive me nuts sometimes."

"My folks are divorced." Sabrina appeared pensive as she said those words. "You know how it is. Or you don't. Which might be better."

April felt a small familiar squeeze in his chest but didn't let his mind go there. "I don't."

"Well, my mother is busy doing her nails, or her hair, or whatever needs doing, and after that, she takes off somewhere so that others can do her," Sabrina said matter-of-factly. "And my dad, ugh, he's just such a case."

April considered his next words carefully. “How so?”

Sabrina yawned. “He tries to control me. He’s barely back in my life for, I don’t know, two months, and he wants to know everything. Can you believe that I caught him trying to get into my phone?”

“Was he away?” April asked.

Sabrina snorted. “You can say that.”

“For how long?”

“For how long people get put away for fraud,” Sabrina replied promptly.

“Oh, sorry. I shouldn’t have asked.”

Sabrina looked at him and leaned slightly toward him. “So, are you here for me, after all, Wednesday? We could ditch whatever courses you might still have and have some real fun.”

“Ah, I’m sorry.”

“What? I’m not your type or something?”

“It’s not personal. I’m, you know, gay,” April replied simply.

Sabrina looked at him, maybe to check for signs that he was lying, and then smiled. “What do you think of this nail polish?” She stretched one hand in front of him, taking him by surprise.

“I’m afraid I have no clue.”

“I thought so. This blond hue is totally last year.” Sabrina pointed at his hair.

April touched his hair unconsciously. “Yeah, sorry about that.”

“If you’re not here because you want us to hang out together, why are you here?” Sabrina asked him.

For the next lie, April felt pretty awful. “You seemed lost in thought and a little sad. I thought I could, you know, cheer you up a little.”

Sabrina ruffled his hair. “I see. You’re part of the species threatened by extinction called ‘good guys’. Consider me cheered up. I’ve never met anyone called Wednesday.”

April knew he had to take a long bath after he got home. Although lying about his name seemed harmless, he felt terrible about doing that to Sabrina. It was clear as day that she was trying hard to put on a brave face, but she seemed pretty lost and sad, just as he had said.

“Then, if you don’t care about ditching your boring courses, I’ll be on my way,” Sabrina said, pushing herself off the wall.

“Where are you going?”

“Nowhere kids called Wednesday should know. My latest boyfriend promised to take me to some five-star restaurant or something.”

“Five-star, according to Yelp? You can’t really trust those guys,” April pointed out.

Sabrina laughed. “See you around, Wednesday. You’re a cool dude.”

April stared after Sabrina for a while. So, he had learned that her dad was fresh out of jail, where he did time for fraud. Also, he tended to try to get into his daughter’s phone. Now, what was April supposed to do with that kind of information?

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“Zane and his boyfriend are hanging out at our place,” Jett informed him as April climbed into the car, in front.

“And you left them to take care of Jay?” April asked.

“I told them to text if anything happened,” Jett said with a shrug. “What? You don’t trust Jay to be tough enough for those two?”

April caught the bridge of his nose between his thumb and index finger. “That’s not quite what crossed my mind. Do you trust those two to take care of a baby? Wait, who’s Zane’s boyfriend?”

“Your stalker. Buzz cut boy,” Jett replied promptly.

“Ah, cool.” April exhaled. “Give me your phone.”

Without even asking why, Jett reached for his phone and handed it to him. April felt a little guilty. Jett obviously trusted him completely, and he was keeping secrets. But he had a feeling Jett would just go ballistic and forbid him from going to school, so holding back information – which wasn’t lying! - was okay for now.

He checked for any messages from Zane, but there were none. Still, he needed to make sure everything was fine, so he called. Jett stared at him for one second, and April felt the same familiar pitter-patter he got whenever Jett looked at him like that. Could it be that Jett was falling for him, for real?

“What’s up, daddy?” Zane drawled the words as he answered.

“Oh, it’s April, actually. I’m just calling from Jett’s phone.”

“What’s up, daddy number two?”

April snickered but quickly regained his composure. “Do you guys keep an eye on Jay? No fooling around, and letting the boy hit his head against the furniture, or fall from the bed or a chair or --”

“April, my dude, chill. The boy is fine. I’m holding him as we speak. Also, I’m teaching him how to smoke.”

“Zane! I’m going to --”

“Kiss me and tell me you’re going to leave Jett for me?”

“No.” April scowled, and Jett now stole a glance at him, slightly concerned. “I swear to God; you’re such a joker, Zane.”

“That’s okay. Then you know I’m joking. Look, I’m putting Jay on, and he can tell you all about what good boys we all are, sitting here and waiting for you to give us something to eat.”

April was about to point out that Jay couldn’t possibly speak, let alone speak on the phone when he heard low encouragements from Zane, and then the child’s voice. “A-pa. A-pa ...a-pa ...”

He remained nonplussed for a couple of seconds. “Jay,” he said softly. “How are you doing, buddy?”

The same iterations continued, this time with more enthusiasm. Zane came back on the phone. “I think he totally knows who you are.”

“He said my name,” April said in a heartbeat. He rubbed his forehead and sniffled. “He said my name.”

“Get out of here!” That was Jett, who seemed as impressed as he was. “He did?”

Zane confirmed from the other end. “He totally did. So hurry up home, daddies, because we’re starving.”

“There is food in the fridge, some leftovers from last night, and also, you can make some omelet --”

“Nah, it’s better if you come and do all that,” Zane replied.

“You can’t tell me you guys are all that unacquainted with kitchen utensils.”

“Give me the phone,” Jett said.

“You’re driving,” April pointed out.

“Then, just put it to my ear.”

April obeyed.

“Zane, you mofo, get your ass and make some food right now. April’s not your wife. He’s mine.”

April put carefully back his jaw, which had dropped at Jett’s most probably unconscious choice of words, and removed the phone so that he could talk to Zane.

“All right, if you two are going to be like this,” Zane said. “We’re just going to order some takeout. Does Jay eat Chinese?”

April just shook his head, although he knew Zane couldn’t see him. “Jay is only eating baby food.”

“And? The Chinese are billions, so they must have a lot of babies,” Zane replied promptly.

“Don’t order Chinese. I’ll make something fast, the moment I get home. I hope everyone is finally happy this way.”

“Maybe not everyone. Just to be sure, ask your husband.”

Of course, Zane couldn’t just drop that juicy bit.

“No need to,” he said abruptly. “We will all sit at the table and eat like normal people without fighting.”

“Ah, it looks like you don’t need to cook after all,” Zane said.

“Why?” April asked, puzzled over Zane’s words.

“Dan looks really cute while getting busy around the kitchen,” Zane whispered.

“Dan is cooking?” April whispered, too, although he had no idea why.

“He just opened the door to the fridge and is staring inside, but I think he’s up to something.”

“You guys, it’s no trouble. Just wait for me, and I’ll take care of everything.”

“I don’t know. Dan seems pretty determined. Ah, he’s looking at me, and I’m not sure if it’s a ‘fuck me’ or ‘fight me’ look.”

“Zane, stop talking dirty in front of Jay,” April said, alarmed.

“Gotta go, sugar lips. See you,” Zane said quickly and cut the conversation.

April stared at the phone and then sighed. “I suppose we’re all going to be fine.”



“If buzz cut boy is cooking, I’m not eating,” Jett warned him.

“They will just probably manage to warm up the leftovers,” April said. “And I seriously doubt he would try to poison you.”

“That guy is still after your ass,” Jett said with conviction.

April groaned. “You just told me he’s Zane’s boyfriend.”

“And? I bet he gets freaky with Zane, just so that he can be all up in your hair.”

“And I can’t believe you can be so jealous. How many times do I have to tell you that I’m into you, big time?”

The light changed, and Jett hit the brakes. The look he threw April was something between pissed off and a tad anxious. April didn’t know what to make of it. “What is it?”

“You didn’t kiss me when you got into the car.”

“Is that eating you? All right, you big silly, just come here.”

Jett just sat in his chair and looked ahead. April wouldn’t let that drop, though, even if he could tell Jett was embarrassed big time for telling the truth. So he reached for Jett, as much as his safety belt let him and kissed him hard on one cheek. Jett turned toward him, and then April kissed him on the lips, this time softly and long.

Car horns blasted from behind, and April let go of Jett immediately. “This may count as more dangerous than texting and driving, right?”

Jett laughed. “I guess. But don’t worry, dweeb, I got it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means that you’re too chicken to tell me that you’re crazy about me.”

“I literally just told you I’m into you, big time.”

“Nah, you’ll have to say the words.”

“I’ll have to say the words?”

“Yeah.”

“All right. When I’m ready, then,” April replied.

That was good in a way. He could bid his time, solve everything first, kick himself in the ass for being a coward, and then tell Jett everything. It sounded like a plan.

“So?” Jett asked, interrupting his train of thought.

“What?” April asked. “Wait, I’m not going to say them now.”

“Why not?”

“Well, because we’re in traffic, and it’s not romantic, and there are a thousand things on my mind right now.”

“I thought you weren’t into that romance bullshit.”

“Yeah, but still. Just wait a little.”

Jett began laughing. “I’m just pulling your leg. I can wait. Especially since you don’t deny it at all.”

April sighed. He was no good at this game, obviously. Jett only had to lay a trap, and he would walk into each one, blind-folded.

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Dan had managed to put together some food, after all, and April took care of Jay, while Zane and Jett bantered and laughed. April could tell Dan was trying to get his attention, and it wasn’t only one time that their eyes crossed over the table. After he would put Jay to his afternoon nap, April needed to find a way to talk a little to Dan. Could it be that he had learned something about Sabrina’s dad?

So far, what April had found out wasn’t encouraging. The guy was an ex-convict, even if he had gotten in jail for a non-violent crime. Still, April couldn’t shake off the feeling that Mr. DeLouise was trouble. Usually, he would not have cared less about other people’s business, but, in this case, he had a feeling that whatever business Sabrina’s dad had, it had to do with him, and that was an unsettling thought.

Finally, he managed to get Jay to sleep, and, taking advantage of the fact that Zane and Jett were busy talking outside about something that only concerned them, he got close to Dan, who was methodically wiping a plate.

“You don’t have to do all these,” April said.

“It’s okay,” Dan replied. “I’m not helpless.”

“So, you and Zane?”

Dan looked away. “Not really,” he mumbled under his breath. “As I told you, I need to keep an eye on you. These guys are trouble, like big, big trouble.”

“Why do you say this?” April dropped his voice. He had an inkling what Dan thought, seeing what line of work Zane and Jett shared.

“They’re beating up people and shit,” Dan replied.

April threw him a look that he hoped could spell sarcasm. “So, they’re tough guys. Aren’t you tough, too?”

“I’m playing football.”

“Which is pretty tough,” April replied. “Look, Dan, if you don’t like Zane, it’s okay. Don’t be so worried about me. Don’t feel obliged to hang out with Zane.”

Dan pursed his lips. “I asked around about Sabrina’s dad. He did time.”

“I know.” April leaned in closer. “I talked to Sabrina.”

“You did? And what did she say? What does her dad want with you?”

“I didn’t ask her directly that. She doesn’t know who I am. So, if you happen to hear her calling me Wednesday, just don’t act surprised.”

“Wednesday? Whatever. There is some other stuff. He’s trying to recruit people for some scheme or something.”

“A scheme? What kind of scheme?”

Dan shook his head. “Some guys told me he asked about who knows most about computers and shit. So it has to be a scheme since he was in for spindling some money from a private fund or something.”

That made some sense. April rubbed his chin in thought. “Don’t tell me those guys told Mr. DeLouise that I’m among those who know about computers.”

“I don’t think they told him any other name than yours.”

“Seriously? What about Raj? Or Gaby? And these are just my friends.”

Dan shrugged. “I don’t know. Those dudes are pretty invisible to most people.”

April rolled his eyes. “And I’m not?”

“With a name like April Summer, not really. I doubt most dudes can even pronounce your friend’s name, you know, the Indian dude.”

“It’s not that difficult. And, as I told you, there are others.”

“The thing is that guy wants you for some shady scheme. And I bet because he heard you’re dating a gangster. See, you’re a gangster, too, by association.”

“Dan, I seriously doubt Mr. DeLouise knows who I’m dating, or that he believes I’m a gangster. I think it’s just some stupid coincidence.”

“Either way, you need to lay low. I told everyone to hold their tongues if anyone asked about you.”

“That’s great. But how did you manage to convince them?”

Dan looked at his feet. “I had to lie. I just told them that we should, like, play a game of pretending that we don’t know you at all.”

*And they fell for that?* April decided not to ask that question. “Ah, you don’t have to feel bad about that. Just like my friends, I bet I’m invisible to all those people anyway.”

“You’re not to me.” Dan looked at him, and his eyes were filled with hope.

April sighed. “Dan, just give Zane a chance.”

“Why won’t you give me one?”

“I can’t. I’m not a two-timer.”

“I’m not asking you to be one.”

April ran one hand over his face. “I meant every word I said that day. I’m really in love with Jett, and I don’t think that’s going to change. Ever.”

Dan laughed, but there was no humor in it. “We’re twenty. How can you know you’d love this dude forever?”

“I just know,” April said quietly.

*I’ve always had and always will,* he thought but kept those words to himself.

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“So, did you manage to get into buzz cut boy’s pants already?” Jett asked.

They were sitting in the backyard, on the remnants of what once was a small stone wall, now covered partially by dried moss. Zane stretched his legs and winced. “Not yet.”

“Are you losing your touch or something?” Jett teased him.

“Who knows?” Zane said, and then grinned. “Don’t worry about me. Tell me about your wife.”

“What wife?”

Zane laughed out loud. “April. You told me on the phone that he’s your wife.”

“I didn’t mean that. I wanted just to tell you to fuck off and make yourself some food.”

Zane slapped his knees. “Ah, Jett, my man, you’re getting in this so deep I’m not sure if it’s funny anymore.”

“Shut up, mofo. Tell me more about how buzz cut boy gives you a bad case of blue balls. At least, I fuck.”

“Man, what can I tell you? Dan is a bit of a challenge, yeah.”

“So, why don’t you drop him? I’m not exactly crazy about seeing him around April.”

Zane snorted. “Well, it’s not like we don’t do anything. It’s just like you were with April in the beginning. You know, like a week or so ago. We just jerk off together.”

It was Jett’s turn to laugh. “Zane, you don’t jerk off. You fuck.”

Zane just shrugged and smiled. “What can I say? The guy has a strong grip.” He made a small gesture with one hand, to emphasize his words.

“What’s keeping him from jumping in bed with you, then?”

“He still likes your wife better than me,” Zane said matter-of-factly.

Jett jumped to his feet. “I knew it! That fucker, he’s now alone with April --”

Zane caught his arm. “Have some faith in April, man. He digs you, big time.”

Jett remained standing, still debating whether he needed to go and check on April. “So he keeps saying, too.”

“So, what’s the problem? Dan told me as much. He’s sure April loves you, for real, so he feels pretty down. And, you know, I’m all for comforting a broken heart. Although I can’t really remember ever talking so much about feels in my entire life.”

“He’s talking to you about feels?”

Zane crossed his legs and appeared to be lost in thoughts for a second. “You know me, right?”

Jett offered a non-committal grunt in reply.

“I was never confused. Ever since I saw River Phoenix in *My Own Private Idaho*, I knew I was gay. Don’t even ask me what that movie was about, though. I didn’t get a thing. I just wished I

was Keanu Reeves when River said, 'I really want to kiss you, man.' I would've said 'yes'. I was ten, and my sister didn't know I was watching, too. She just thought herself interesting in renting art-house movies. I think she slept through it. I didn't."

"Wow, thanks for the info, man," Jett joked. "Glad you were never confused."

"The thing is Dan is confused. And that confuses the hell out of me. I don't do confusion well."

"What are you confused about? Don't tell me you think yourself straight. Maybe it's time you watch some fancy indie movies again."

Zane laughed. "Nah, I'm not confused about that. I'm just confused over how much I want this guy. And it feels like it's not all about getting into his pants, although there's that, of course."

"What? Do you want to marry buzz cut boy now?" Jett grinned as he stared at his best friend.

"Shut up, asshole. Not everyone wants to tie the knot like you and April."

"We're not tying any knot. But your confused boyfriend better decides he likes your cock better than my boyfriend's ass," Jett said and pointed at himself.

"I'm working hard at it. Although I never thought myself able to listen to some dude pining over another for hours."

"For hours? That's it; I'm going into the house. If Dan touches April with one finger, I'm going to break his hand."

Zane rushed after him. "Not if it's the right hand! That's the better one!"

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Jett rushed into the kitchen and took in with unease how close to one another April and Dan stood. They also seemed to whisper something to one another, like they had some big secret to share. He could almost taste the guilt that shone in April's eyes as he looked up. Also, Dan was staring at him with a mix of defiance and fear, and Jett couldn't care less if he was scaring buzz cut boy.

"Are you hungry again or something?" April asked.

Maybe Jett was good at reading people only when they were on their knees, pleading not to get beat up too hard, but right now, he could tell April was hiding something from him. So he stood there, staring.

April shifted his weight from one foot to another and then slowly moved away from Dan as if he just realized what the cause for that stare from Jett was. Good. At least the dweeb knew he had done something wrong.

“This little party is over,” Jett said curtly. “Zane, see you tonight.” On purpose, he said nothing to Dan, but he walked over to April and took him by his shoulders in a possessive gesture. As he kept April with his head close to his chest, he stared Dan down.

Zane was quick to grab his boyfriend and bid them goodbye. Jett waited until the entrance door was shut and then squeezed April tightly.

“Hey, you’re suffocating me,” April protested.

“Good. What did you and buzz cut boy have to talk about?”

“Homework,” April said, his voice muffled by Jett’s chest. “You know, I’m not that short, and this position sucks.”

Jett allowed April to breathe, and then looked into his eyes. “If it’s just homework, why do you look at me like this?”

“Like I’m pissed? Of course I am. You chased Zane and Dan away like they were a bunch of thieves or something.”

“I know Zane. But I don’t trust your stalker. He’s bad news. And do you really have to talk homework while looking at each other like that? And stop bullshitting me with the homework. You’re not in high school.”

“We still have plenty to study,” April said promptly.

“I don’t buy it. C’mon, dweeb, spill it, or I’ll have to fuck the truth out of you.”

April sputtered. “Fuck the truth out of me? Is that your idea of torture because I’ll sign up for it on my own accord?”

Jett grinned. “You got balls, April Summer. It’s okay. I like you like this. But let me warn you. I won’t stop until you tell me everything about what you talked about with that asshole.”

“Hah! Are you trying to say that you won’t come? All right. Challenge accepted. I bet I can make you come before you can make me.”

Jett looked at April to see how much he was joking. Not so much, it seemed, by how the green eyes were shining with mischief. “You can always just tell me what you were talking to him about. See? I’m giving you the easy way out.”

April snorted. He pushed one finger into Jett’s chest. “It was homework. So there’s nothing to tell unless you want to hear about math and shit.”

“Keep that thought, dweeb. Actually, you can tell me about math. I guess it will help me last longer.”

“Ah, really? Do you need help with that?” April teased him. “What if I’m talking like this?” He dropped his voice low, making each word sound like a dirty whisper.

Jett grabbed him hard. “Are you going against me, dweeb?”

April just kissed him shortly, crushing his lips a little. “You can bet your ass I am.”



## *Chapter Twenty-Four – Unemployment, Unlocked!*

Jett was good; April had to give it to him. But he had the wrong approach to win, so he could safely rejoice on the inside. Soft lips peppered small kisses across his jawline, while unhurried hands undressed him.

“Did you think I didn’t have enough restraint in treating you gently?” Jett whispered in his ear.

“Um-hmm, I was betting on it,” April confirmed, while barely keeping in a laugh.

It was challenging to do that, seeing how Jett’s mouth on his skin made him tremble with growing desire. Maybe he should have considered this carefully. As much as his secret fantasy was to be held down hard and pounded into the mattress, this wasn’t any better. The thing was that even slow and gently like this, April was pretty sure he would lose his head and fast.

And that was not an option. The secrets he kept were getting a bit too many, and April already had to think up a way to break the news to Jett that he was actually sleeping and being boyfriends with the same guy he had known at thirteen, during that faithful summer.

Now, he needed to keep it a secret that Mr. DeLouise had some crazy online Ponzi scheme or something lined up for April to orchestrate from behind a computer screen and keyboard. He had no idea what Mr. DeLouise wanted him for, but it couldn’t be anything good, seeing how the man had been away in jail for fraud, and his only daughter didn’t see him in a good light, either.

Right now, his problem was just getting bigger. Jett’s fingers were busy feeling up his cock, released from his jeans, and they were too good. They were rough, but the touch was gentle, and April moved his head to be kissed on the lips without protesting. Jett obliged right away and broke the kiss, only to look him in the eyes. “I can go like this for hours, and drive you crazy.”

“You’re just saying,” April teased. “Also, who’s going to feed, bathe, and sing Jay a lullaby?”

“Oh, I can allow you breaks. And, really, sing a lullaby? I saw you using an app for that.”

“Too bad there isn’t one for changing diapers,” April said and snickered.

“No more talk of diapers. Let’s see how I can make you say the truth once and for all.”

Jett’s hand stilled.

“What?” April asked.

“Here’s your last chance. You can tell me right away what you always seem to talk about with buzz cut boy.”

“Homework,” April said in a deadpan voice.

Jett grinned. "I hate easy victories."

April gasped as Jett suddenly changed tactics and pressed both lips and teeth against his neck. "Ouch. You'll leave a mark," he complained.

"Good. The more, the merrier. Then others will know not to try getting in your pants, especially when they know you're taken."

"Taken." April snorted, but quickly his protests turned into small gasps and moans as Jett took his cock and began pumping it hard. "Wait. You're not allowed to blow me."

Jett scoffed. "Really? Are you making rules as we go at it like this?"

"You know I can't resist if you put your mouth on me. You either make me come first by fucking me, or I win," April said matter-of-factly.

"What if I let you fuck me?" Jett asked.

"I can't resist that, either."

"Good to know."

April was about to offer more arguments, but Jett turned him, making him face the coverlet, in a move that seemed easy, but was probably the result of Jett's superior strength and his experience in plenty of hand-to-hand combat.

He put one hand over his mouth as Jett dragged his jeans down, and then stuck his tongue in his ass fast and hard. Now, he was really at his mercy, and April wasn't that sure that he was to enjoy that so much if he wanted to win. Right now, his chances of achieving that were growing slim.

Therefore, he needed to get a hold of himself and resist the sensory assault launched by Jett. Right now, his boyfriend, the boy he had loved since forever, was busy making a meal out of licking his ass, and it was only this much he could manage without shouting his pleasure so that everyone could hear him on at least one-mile-radius.

Still, as long as Jett played the gentle card, April was reasonably safe. The only thing he needed to do was to think how much was at stake, aka his possibility to attend college like any typical student, and he would be fine.

"Ready for me?"

"I've been ready for at least the last five minutes," April pretended to complain.

"Hmm, then I must be amazing," Jett said with self-importance, making April snicker. "Let me put some lube in you, and let's get this show on the road."

“You’re so sure you’re going to win.” April took one pillow and put it under his belly so that his ass could sit comfortably and at just the right angle for the fucking Jett had in mind for him.

“Of course I’ll win. I love your ass to the moon and back, but I need the truth more.”

“More than coming in my ass?” April wiggled his butt suggestively.

“More. If buzz cut boy wants your ass, he won’t have it. So, you see, important stuff is at stake. I’ll make sure to win.”

April gasped when Jett grabbed him by the waist and lifted him a bit higher. He risked one look over his shoulder. As much as they joked, the expression in Jett’s eyes was far from being that. It was serious, and April couldn’t help thinking that, for Jett, it wasn’t a game.

Which meant that he needed to think up fast a way to tell Jett the entire truth. Before they got in too deep, before it would be too late, and their happiness would be built on shaky ground.

April shook his head. He would find a way. And, if he couldn’t, he would just blurt out the truth. Just like that. It sounded like the only solution, even if it were to hurt, and even if Jett ended up hating him for lying about it.

Maybe, as April, as his real self, he had proven himself enough, and whatever Jett had against Theo would be easy to overcome by what they had now.

And what they had was pretty amazing and even a little insane. April let out a small keening sound as Jett began pushing inside him with care.

He had been wrong about liking it rough; he had no idea if he really wanted that since it was just a mere fantasy and nothing more. There was a possibility for him to be worn down with kindness, too. Jett snuck one hand across his chest and then caught his chin swiftly, making him turn while draping April’s body with his. Their lips locked as April turned his head, and his mouth met Jett’s in a passionate, hot kiss.

April loved to be kept down so hard. It made him feel loved, and it looked as much as if Jett was hanging on him, as he was holding him, and that meant their need for one another was equally significant on both sides of the equation.

Then, Jett changed the rhythm. He still held April by the chest, and he still kept their lips locked, but his hips moved amply, and the next second, April could feel Jett’s hard cock hitting hard his hidden bud of pleasure.

His mouth slid away, and he began moaning. Nothing was lost on Jett. He held April steady and began to pound into him, slowly at first, but then harder and faster. April was sure he was speaking in tongues now, his mind lost completely, as Jett moved, his body one with April’s, connected and made whole.

Jett was as close to him as they had ever been, and also, he knew how to give April the pounding he had been fantasizing about for so long. His cock was rubbing helplessly against the pillow under him, as April voiced his surprise, but above all, the extreme pleasure he was experiencing at the moment.

Jett straightened up and caught April's hips hard. "Fuck, April, fuck," he whispered. "Do you like this? Do you like it hard?"

"Yes, hard, please," April said breathlessly. "Jett, yes, please, just do me hard!"

The stakes and whatnot were forgotten. What mattered now was Jett's heavy breathing, his own moans of pleasure. April was lost between the sensations he could feel irradiating from the hidden place inside his ass, responsible for the myriad of feelings meant to drive any man insane, and the delight caused by Jett's voice, the praises he whispered, the words of affection, everything he had ever hoped to hear and even more.

At thirteen, April had had a vague idea of what he wanted, an illusion of love, but now, that ghost of a memory had taken shape, and it was material and physical, and it made his heart ache. "I lost," he whispered, and he buried his head into the coverlet, as his entire body quivered and let itself go.

Jett's was a shout of victory, but one dipped in just as much pleasure, and April registered the rough fingers digging into his hips faintly, and the hard member pulsing in his ass, allowing its own release.

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"I won," Jett whispered and laughed. He pulled April hard and fast to him, kissing him, too busy with preventing his boyfriend from breathing even one small word of protest, for fear that his triumph would be denied.

April squirmed a little. He appeared a little miffed, as he stared at Jett from his curled eyelashes. "You sure did. How did you know I like it hard?"

"I didn't." Jett pushed away sweaty strands from April's forehead. "You seemed a bit too sure of yourself while I took you gently. I just thought that I should try something different. You know, in any couple's life comes a time when you have to try a bit of spice --"

April snickered. "We've been together for so little time. When have we had the time to grow bored with one another?"

"I just need to make sure," Jett replied. "You know, some people might try to steal you, so I have to prove my worth."

Some of the amusement faded from April's face. "No one's trying to steal me. You don't have to worry about that."

"Then, since I won, out with it. What do you have to talk about with buzz cut boy? Zane told me Dan's still into you."

"And how does he feel about that?"

"Don't change the subject. Come on. Time to spill, or I'll call you a cheater and a chicken all your life."

"All right," April said and rolled on his back. "But you have to promise me that you won't get mad. And also that you'll let me go to school."

Jett could feel his aftermath pleasure dissipating. He pushed himself on one elbow and faced April. "I can't promise you that. If that asshole is trying --"

"It's not about him. Actually, Dan's been helping me."

Jett could feel unease growing inside him. "Helping you with what?"

"This guy came to school and asked about me."

"What guy?" Jett could feel the frown on his face cramping all his muscles.

April shrugged. "All I know is that he's the dad of one of the students, Sabrina DeLouise. Also, that he did time. For fraud. Also, Dan heard that he had asked some students about those better at programming and stuff. Dan suspects that this dude is up to no good and wants to put together some scheme to continue, you know, his career as a master of fraudulent business or something."

Jett ran one hand over his eyes. So that was what the Z brothers wanted April for? But how could he be sure it wasn't some weird coincidence?

"What made you think this guy was bad news? Did you know him from before?"

April shook his head. "No. But I tend to remember all kinds of things, at random. And when I saw his car, I knew I saw it parked in front of the warehouse where the Z brothers do business usually."

No coincidence. This was it. Jett got to his feet and began dressing up.

April pushed himself up on his elbows and watched him warily. "Where are you going?"

"So DeLouise, that's the name?" Jett asked.

“Yes. Sabrina says that he’s kind of douchy, trying to get into her phone, and see who she’s talking to and stuff. He’s all over her since he’s been away from her life for so long. You know, trying to make up for lost time or whatever.”

Jett waved. “I don’t care if he wants to annoy his daughter. But I’ll take care of him.”

“You’ll take care of him?” April now pushed himself up on his ass. “Jett, this guy did time. He’s in cahoots, or not, with the Z brothers. What do you want to do?”

“I’ll think of something.”

“Jett, don’t do anything stupid or dangerous. Or both.”

“Don’t worry so much about me. You know I can handle myself.”

“Actually, I don’t think I do.” April stood up, and Jett had to look away, because April naked was distracting enough even if he had a mission now, and he had just come buckets in his boyfriend’s ass. “I don’t know if you can handle yourself!”

Jett grabbed April by the back of his neck, looked him in the eyes, and then kissed him hard on the lips. “I can. And I have Zane to back me up.”

“Wait, Jett,” April said and hurried after him.

“You’re naked,” Jett pointed out.

April stopped dead in his tracks. “Wait, Jett, I have to tell you something!”

“Later,” Jett threw over his shoulder. “We’ll have all the time when I get back.”

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April remained on top of the stairs, looking after Jett as he rushed out of the house. Maybe Jett wouldn’t be so fast to get in harm’s way if he knew he had fucked Theo all this time. He needed to make sure Jett wouldn’t do anything stupid. So, he had to dress up and ...

No. He needed to take care of Jay. And he had to see if he could ask someone to do that for him in such short notice. He grabbed his phone and checked his friends’ social media quickly. While he wasn’t really on any platform, he had fake accounts on all, just in case. And Raj and Gaby were at some fair taking place in a location dozens of miles away.

It wasn’t like he could leave Jay with just anyone. Then an idea hit him. Quickly, he posted a quick message on Dan’s profile.

“Dan, it’s me, April. I know, don’t ask. Just call me. Here’s my number.”

He waited, biting his nails. From his room, Jay started crying, so he hurried there. As he began to soothe the boy, his phone rang, and he rushed to it. “Dan, hi, I know this is in such short notice, but I really need someone to babysit Jay, not for long, but --”

“April, I’m sorry, but it looks like Zane is hurrying off somewhere to meet your ... boyfriend, and it seems like it’s something bad. I’m going to follow him,” Dan said with finality.

“No, no, no! Dan, this could be dangerous!”

“And? I’m tough, too, didn’t you say so?”

“Yeah, but --”

“Where do you need to be in such short notice? I bet you want to hurry after your boyfriend,” Dan said, with a small tinge of resentment.

“Yeah, I thought --”

“You want to rush into a seriously dangerous situation. No way. I’m going after them, and there’s nothing you can do.”

April could feel his heart squeezing in his chest. “Dan, listen, please don’t do this. I’m ... I can’t love you, okay? What you want to do right now may be heroic and brave, but I could never --”

“I’m not doing it only for you.” Dan sounded tense, and April could hear street noises in the background.

“Dan,” April whispered, “are you ... doing it for Zane?”

“Gotta go, April. Zane just got into an Uber. Bye.”

April sighed, but decided to call Jett’s phone and convince his boyfriend to stop whatever he wanted to do. He frowned as he was sent straight to voicemail.

Now, all was left for him was to pester Dan with phone calls so that he could be held in the loop. “Dan, it’s me again,” he said impatiently. “Please, could you just make sure that those two don’t do anything stupid?”

“I can’t promise you that. But I’ll have their backs, whatever it is that they want to do.”

“Dan, the last thing I need is to have three friends in danger, instead of two. Could you just, be safe?”

“I’ll be. You can trust me. And don’t worry. I may play football, but I’m not that hard in the head. I’ll call the police if something bad goes down.”

April's heart sank. Yes, the situation could get to that point, and he worried sick now for Jett. His hands were tight, and he was responsible for Jay, anyway.

"Be careful, okay. And call if there's something new. Or anything I can do."

"Yeah. But I'll have my phone on silence. Something's telling me these two are getting into something bad."

"Why? What have you heard?"

"Nothing," Dan replied quickly, which told April right away that he was lying.

If only he hadn't gone that day to borrow money from the Z brothers. Sometimes, he was just plain stupid. But, if he hadn't done that, he would not have reunited with Jett again.

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"Are you sure about this, man?" Zane asked and gave him the duffel bag.

"Yeah," Jett said with a curt nod. "Now, when we get there, you can just wait outside."

"No way. I'm going in with you. Brothers, right?"

"Yeah. But, you know, I guess I'll have to hand in my resignation," he joked.

Zane shrugged. "All for the better. I wanted a change of scenery, too."

"I have some dough put aside. I'll help you out."

Zane waved. "No need. I have plenty, too. You know, I might think myself an investor or something."

Jett laughed. "So, ready to rumble?"

"Lead the way, brother," Zane said in a theatrical voice.

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"What's up with you, two?" Henry Zabinski stopped petting his cat and looked them up and down.

Jett threw the duffel bag on the floor. "I know about DeLouise."

Peter came from the shadows. "What exactly do you think you know about DeLouise, boy?"

"I know all about it," Jett bluffed, "and I know what to do with that info, too."



The game was on, and Jett knew it was risky. But he had gone into the fire with less than that many other times.

“So?” Henry made a broad gesture with his fat hands, and his cat tried to catch one of them with the front paws. “What do you want?”

“I want him and you to leave April Summer the fuck alone.”

There was a small exchange between Henry and Peter that wasn't lost on Jett. He glanced at Zane, and his friend stared back, too.

“Why?” Peter asked. “What's in it for you?”

“That's none of your business,” Jett replied sharply.

“What's in the bag?” Henry asked.

Jett took the duffel bag and opened it, showing the contents. Henry quirked an eyebrow, and Peter nodded. “You can count it. I'd say it covers whatever money you could have made by giving Summer to that guy.”

Henry seemed convinced. Peter, not so much. “What exactly do you think you have on DeLouise?”

Jett grinned, showing teeth. “You know well what. But I know who to go to with it.”

“The police?” Henry laughed, and his cat, annoyed with all the ruckus, decided to climb down from his lap.

“Nah,” Jett said. He allowed one second before adding. “His daughter.”

It was thin ice he was walking on, but DeLouise seemed pretty much interested in playing dad to his daughter, according to April. It was worth a shot. The next hand Jett intended to play was blackmail, and he hoped he wouldn't have to get to that.

Henry looked at his brother, and Peter grimaced. “Sure. Just leave the money here. And don't come back, Huntsman.”

Jett shrugged. “It's okay. I quit, anyway.”

“Me too,” Zane added quickly.

“Can you believe these kids?” Henry pointed at them but looked at Peter.

“All grown up and shit,” Peter replied and shook his head.

Jett didn't like the look in Peter's eyes as he said that. "Whatever. It's time for us to move on, anyway."

"What's Summer to you, Huntsman?" Peter asked.

"None of your business," Jett said again. "Let's just say he's important to my business," he pointed at his chest, "and I'm not in the mood of sharing assets."

"Hmm, you think you can join the grownups' table?"

"Not interested in that," Jett replied. "I'm making my own table."

"You're just a no-brain gorilla," Henry said with a snort. "Don't come running back to us, with snot under your nose."

"Don't worry. I won't. Ready to head back, Zane?"

"Sure."

"If DeLouise comes within a yard of April Summer, I'll know," Jett warned. "And his daughter will learn all about her daddy."

There was no reply, but Jett didn't need one. He just hoped his message had been clear enough. In the meantime, he needed to watch April like a hawk.

Zane high-fived him the moment they were out. "Damn, man, I didn't wake up this morning to become unemployed, but," he tapped his chest, "it feels good, man. What was the deal with April and that DeLouise dude?"

Jett shrugged. "I totally bluffed. I have no idea what that douchebag wants with April, but he's bad news. Good thing it worked, telling them about the dude's daughter."

"Yeah," Zane replied but looked back at the heavy warehouse door with a bit of unease. "Do you think this is it?"

"If these dudes know what's best for them, it better. It didn't come to blackmail, but I have plenty of aces up my sleeve if it ever comes to that. Plus, they know it, too. I don't know how many people they have up in their business, but they don't manage loose ends well."

"Wow, I don't get a thing of what you said," Zane said.

"Do you remember how I told you that I paid April's debt?"

"Sure thing."

"Let's just say that April is not the first person in debt I've ever done that for. So, let's just say that I've managed to cultivate some good relationships along the way."

“Wow. So those are the aces up your sleeve?”

Jett nodded. “Some lawyers, guys who have family in the force, and some others who can hurt the Z brothers if they want. You know, the whole enchilada. I rarely beat up people. I am actually a smooth talker.”

Zane laughed. “I’ll believe it when I see it.”

“No need for that now. Seeing how we’re happily unemployed.”

“Yeah.” Zane grinned.

“Hey, Zane, isn’t that your boyfriend?”

Dan was rushing toward them from across the street, holding a phone tightly in his hand. “Are you two okay?” He seemed a little shaken.

“Yeah,” Jett said.

Zane embraced Dan shortly. “Were you worried about me?”

Dan pointed at his phone. “April called me. He was scared.”

Jett puffed out his chest. “He doesn’t have to be. Not anymore. I took care of things.”

“And what did you need Zane for?” Dan asked, pointing at his boyfriend, who was hanging on him with a broad smile plastered on his face.

“He just wanted to tag along,” Jett said airily.

“Whatever,” Dan replied. “Now, I need to call April and tell him you are all right.”

Jett caught his arm. “You don’t have to do that. I’ll call him.”

Zane took Dan into his arms and started to pester him.

The phone began to ring.

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April had taken Jay outside in the backyard since they couldn’t go far. He needed to know that Jett was all right, but calling Dan over and over again wasn’t exactly an option.

He placed the phone on the kitchen table and, cooing at Jay, who was strapped to him in the baby harness, he began preparing something to eat for the baby.

With the corner of his eye, he caught movement. Instinctively, he put one arm around Jay, to protect him, but it was too late.

He was caught from behind, and there was something sharp against his neck.

“What are you doing with my baby, motherfucker?”

At that exact moment, his phone began to ring.

## *Chapter Twenty-Five – Assault With A Kitchen Weapon*

“Wait, don’t kill me just yet!” April shouted, frozen in place. He would have put his hands up, but he felt completely immobilized. “You’re Jay’s mom, right?”

The sharp thing at his neck pressed a little closer to the skin, and April gasped. It would have been pretty stupid to end up bleeding to death on the kitchen floor before being able to tell Jett the truth. And a little funny if he were into dark humor, which he wasn’t.

“Who the fuck are you, and why do you have Jay?” the woman asked.

He needed to think and fast. His phone kept ringing hysterically.

“Carina?” April said tentatively, hoping that he wasn’t committing another blunder, one that his assailant would take as another offense.

There was a small moment of hesitation right there. “How do you know my name?”

“If you just stopped trying to stab my neck, I would tell you everything I know. I promise I have no intention to hurt Jay. And he’s about to cry.”

“How would you know when Jay’s about to --”

On cue, Jay started to bawl. The contact of the sharp object against April’s neck eased. “I will just turn slowly, and you can take Jay.”

The woman hesitated for just another moment, but then she removed her hands and the deadly weapon she was wielding abruptly. “Turn,” she ordered shortly.

April turned slowly and kept his hands high so that Carina could see them. He came face to face with the woman with the spiky hair he had seen in that picture with Jett. It was her all right; however, her hair was no longer spiky, but long and straight, and the bewildered expression on her face made her look vulnerable, yet still a little dangerous. As he looked closer, April noticed the object in her hand.

“Seriously, did you just try to stab me with a fork?”

Carina threw him an unnerving look. “Do you want me to see if I can do it?” She waved the fork at him.

April pointed at the kitchen utensil. “It’s made of plastic.”

His phone stopped for a second and then started again.

“Kill that shit and don’t look who’s calling,” Carina ordered.

April knew he could just answer quickly, but it wasn't a good idea to do that since Carina seemed like she could be deadly even with a plastic fork. He saw Jett's name, but he turned off the phone nonetheless.

Carina watched him like a hawk, and, as soon as he was done, she tried to pick the crying baby from the harness. Jay just started to cry louder.

"Wait, let me help you," April offered. "It's a little tricky," he explained as he began to unlatch the straps.

Carina was impatient, still trying to pull Jay free from the harness.

"You could just put down the plastic fork," April said. "And I think we should talk more quietly."

Carina finally managed to grab Jay and hugged him tightly. At the same time, she was still clutching the fork in one hand and had a wounded look in her eyes. Jay was as disconsolate as before.

"It's fine, Jay," April whispered, but without daring to get too close. "Your mommy's here."

"Did Jett put you to steal my baby?" Carina asked.

April tried to hush her. "Please, a little less loud, okay? Jay is not crazy about shouting adults."

Carina frowned. "What do you know? And who the fuck are you?"

April made an appeasing gesture with his hands. "I'm just the babysitter. And Jett didn't steal your baby."

"Really? And how the fuck do you explain Jay being here?"

"Please, easy on the word 'fuck'. I'm afraid Jay is picking up enough bad words as things are. Not that I don't protest when people around," he was unclear on purpose, "use such words."

"Don't tell me how to talk in front of my child!" Jay began to fret, as he was obviously upset with his mom's distress. "Hush, baby, I'm here. Your mommy's here."

"Just what I said," April added promptly. Carina threw him a pissed off look. April put his hands up again. "Would you just listen to what I need to tell you?"

Carina continued to coo, gently this time, at Jay, preoccupied with the crying baby. "Are you really the babysitter?" she finally addressed April again.

"Yes. Jay might be upset about his diaper situation, too, if I think about it."

Carina examined April carefully, some of her agitation from earlier slowly dissipating. “Do you have any spares?”

“Upstairs,” April said. “I also have a changing pad and other clothes, just in case.”

Carina’s upset was slowly turning into stupefaction. “You really are the babysitter!”

April shrugged. “I am. Would you like to come with me and change Jay? We can talk after. Let’s just take care of the baby’s needs first.”

Carina nodded. She still looked a bit harshly at April and didn’t let go of the fork in her hand, but she seemed to understand the situation better now. April walked up the stairs first, followed by Carina, who was talking to Jay, keeping him tightly in her arms and kissing his head.

April pointed Carina to the room dedicated to the baby, and they entered.

“Did Jett let you use his father’s room?” Carina asked, as soon as they were inside.

“It looks like it,” April said matter-of-factly.

Jett’s father’s room? That explained why the room had been clean and kept much better than the rest of the house when April had first arrived.

Carina began to take care of Jay, who was now a bit calmer and appeared to recognize his mother a little. “No one is allowed in here,” she said, seemingly still surprised.

“Well, Jay is some VIP guest, so I guess it’s fine,” April said.

Carina snickered, and she turned a little to look at April. “I’m impressed at how many things for babies you have here. You must be one hell of a babysitter. Did you come highly recommended or something?”

April exhaled. It looked like the storm was averted for now. The plastic fork had been abandoned on the chest of drawers, and it looked like Carina no longer considered him a threat. “It was one of those things that just happened.”

Carina looked closely at him and then returned quickly to dressing Jay. April hurried to take the used diaper and put it into the pail.

“Wow, you even have one of those expensive models,” Carina said, pointing at the pail.

“Jett does nothing by half when it’s his son involved,” April explained. “And, just to make it clear, he didn’t steal Jay. He had no idea you’re the mother.”

“Really? And how come you knew who I was? You were still with your back to me.”

“It was sort of a lucky guess,” April admitted.

Carina chuckled and shook her head. "You're one strange guy." Then she looked at him again. Her eyes seemed interested in finding something, as she searched April's face. "You look familiar."

April shrugged. The last thing he needed was another person to confuse him for Theo. No, confuse wasn't the right verb, but those were details. "I just have one of those faces," he said quickly, waving like it wasn't an essential detail that Carina thought she knew him from somewhere.

"Nah," she said. Her voice was throaty, and she was attractive in a rough way. April could understand what Jett must have seen in her. "I feel like I've seen you before."

Could it be that Carina had seen the same picture as Zane? April could still remember when the photo was taken, and the circumstances, but he wouldn't have expected Jett to keep it. His father had been right; he had postponed telling Jett about who he really was, and now, with Carina in the picture, it felt like it was too late.

"That's not important," he said. "What's important is that Jett found Jay one day in front of his house, strapped to a car seat, with a message that he was an asshole. I suppose you didn't write that note, right?"

Carina frowned again. "I've never called Jett an asshole. Even when I've been pissed at him."

April just nodded. "Who did, then? And who could have taken Jay from you like this?"

Carina seemed embarrassed for a couple of seconds.

April realized what was going on right away. "Wait, weren't you in prison?"

"You know about that, too?" Carina asked, alarmed.

Now it was also April's turn to become panicked. "You didn't escape from prison, right?"

Carina snorted. "Are you watching too many movies or something? I got out on good behavior. And, so that you know, I wasn't in for something bad."

April thought better and gave up on asking what she had been in for. "Carina, who did you leave Jay with?"

Carina's face changed. "That bitch," she said through her teeth.

"Who?"

"My fucking stepsister," Carina said. "She must have been the insane asshole who took my baby and brought him here."



April exhaled in relief. “So, you believe me now? Jett wouldn’t do something like this to you. He didn’t even know he had a son. Why didn’t you tell him?”

Carina looked away. She grabbed Jay again and held him close. Jay leaned against her shoulder, but he stretched one arm toward April. “Appa, Appa,” he repeated.

“What’s your name?” Carina asked as she stared at her son with fondness on her harsh face.

“It’s April. April Summer.”

“Is Jay calling your name?”

“Yeah. He just started talking a little.” Carina made a small sound that sounded like a sob. April put one hand on her shoulder. “It’s okay. And Jay, this is your mommy, so be good to her, okay?”

April knew Jay understood much more than adults thought. The baby looked at him with his bright eyes, and then he turned his face toward his mom, staring at her. He circled her neck with his arms, and Carina sobbed again.

For lack of anything useful to do, April just continued to rub her shoulder. “You couldn’t have known. But how did you know to search for Jay here?”

Carina seemed able to rein in her emotions. “I went home, and Jay wasn’t there. My stupid step sister said someone just grabbed him on the street. I yelled at her, asked her who did that, and she just played stupid.”

“Really? Something like this happens, and she doesn’t go to the police to report it?” April snorted.

Carina sighed. “I know. I wanted to kill the bitch on the spot, but I had to find my baby. So I came here to ask Jett to help me find him.”

April pondered for a moment. “Were you going to tell him about Jay being his son?”

Carina appeared uncomfortable. “I didn’t think things through. I just knew that if anyone in his whole shitty world could help me, it would be Jett. So I just let myself in, and I was ready to wait for him, when I saw you walking in from the backyard, with Jay in your arms. Ah, sorry about the fork thing. I tend not to think things twice. I guess that might explain how I ended up in the can. And with a baby, but I don’t have any regrets about that.” She was talking quickly and nervously now.

April waved. “It’s all right. And I’ve never been assaulted before with a kitchen weapon. It should count for some crazy adventure to recount when I’m old and gray. And I understand you completely about not having any regrets about Jay. He’s a wonderful kid.”

Good-natured as he was, Jay was already playing with his mother's hair, trying to munch on it. Carina laughed and pulled her hair away. "I guess I should be thankful he was in good hands. Not that I don't trust Jett, but he doesn't seem like the responsible type if you know what I mean."

"Having a child taught him a lot, I believe," April said. "And I guess he was responsible enough to hire a babysitter."

Carina looked around some more. "Quite a dependable babysitter. Was Jay all right? How much time has he been here?"

"Around two weeks, give or take," April replied. "He's been great. We had a little bit of an episode with a fever caused by some pesky teeth that want to grow, but, otherwise, we were fine."

Carina smiled as she looked at him. Then, the dawn of realization lit her face. "I know where I saw you! In a picture!"

"What picture?" April asked with dread and tried to act naturally.

"A picture of you and Jett. But, wait," she appeared confused, "your name is April, right?"

"And it has been since the day my mom decided to name me," April said. He couldn't just blurt out the truth. Not before he talked to Jett, and now that Carina was back into Jett's life and the mother of his kid, April didn't hold much hope that he would stick around for too long. There was no need for him anymore. Carina was there to take care of Jay, and, probably, once she cleared the skies with Jett, not only of Jay.

"That's weird," Carina said. "That guy's name was Theo, Jett told me. He was some childhood friend."

"It's a bit farfetched to think I'm that guy," April replied. "After all, it must be some old photo."

"Really weird." Carina shook her head gently. "Fun fact, I've always thought Jett must have been in love with that kid when they were little."

April's heart squeezed painfully. Talking about missed chances. But no, he needed to think of Jay, who now had his mother back, of Jett, who had Carina back and had a shot at real happiness, and not of himself and his own selfish needs.

"Carina, I don't want to annoy you, but why didn't you tell Jett about Jay?" He chose to change the subject and pretend all he was learning about Theo and Jett's feelings for him didn't matter. After all, neither Zane nor Carina could really tell what was in Jett's heart. That was something only Jett knew.

Carina sighed deeply. She sat on the bed, cradling Jay in her arms. “If you only knew how many times I grabbed the phone to call him. But it didn’t feel right. I was upset with him, but the news that I was pregnant didn’t come as some kind of curse, as most girls my age might think it is. We were usually careful, and I was on the pill while I was with Jett. I was careless a few times, and it happened. And I was afraid, I think, that he might just tell me to, you know, get rid of ... my baby. God knows plenty of people around me told me as much. And I didn’t want to, and since I took that decision by myself, I didn’t want him to think, for one moment, that he owes my baby or me anything.”

“Jett is better than that,” April said.

Carina seemed weary. “Now would be a good moment to tell me that I should know Jett and don’t just presume how he would react.”

“I wouldn’t tell you that, but, in a way, I guess that, yeah, as his girlfriend, you must have come to know him.”

The immediate reply was a derisive snort. “If he only let me. But that’s a coward’s answer to everything, isn’t it?” Her voice sounded self-deprecating and sad.

April leaned against the wall and watched Carina, taking in how happy Jay looked in her arms. It hurt a little, not much, but it showed him how he couldn’t be part of that picture. The only person missing from it was the dad, and he should be home soon.

Carina continued, as her eyes became misty and unfocused. “I did love him.”

April noticed the past tense immediately, but it wasn’t like he could count on that. He wasn’t that kind of person, or, at least, he could keep up the appearances, and not allow the jealousy he felt inside get the better of him. “What happened?” he asked as the silence stretched.

“He was never mine,” Carina said matter-of-factly. “I suspected that he might be in love with someone else. But he wasn’t a two-timer. It was just in his heart. Don’t ask me how I knew it. Just blame it on the good ol’ female intuition.”

“Did he ever tell you anything?”

“There was no need. He just kept things to himself. I knew that there was a place inside him I had no access to, where I wasn’t welcome. No matter how much I tried, I couldn’t compensate, you know, for the love that’s always been missing from his life.”

April just nodded.

Carina laughed sadly and pushed away a tear with the back of her hand. “But why am I telling you all these? You’re just the babysitter, right? It’s not in your job description to comfort me.”

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“Man, slow the fuck down!” Zane shouted at him while holding to his seat with what looked to be all his might.

“April turned off his phone!” Jett could feel the adrenaline pumping in his blood. “Why would he turn off his phone while I’m calling him? That fucker DeLouise better not got to him already, or I’ll be pissed!”

“I think I’m going to be sick,” Dan complained from the backseat. “Maybe he just needed to put Jay to his nap or something!”

“April never turns off his phone! Anyone who has a problem with my driving, get out!”

“At eighty? Are you fucking nuts?” Dan yelled. “Just stop the car, and I’ll get out!”

“I don’t have to deal with your shit! Zane, why is this asshole with us?”

“Hey, easy! And if the police catch us, we won’t get back to your house for hours. So slow the fuck down and don’t call my boyfriend an asshole!”

“April could be in danger, and you’re worried I’m hurting your feels?” Jett shouted at his best friend.

“Slow the fuck down, and we’ll get there!”

“That’s it; I have to open the window!” Dan lowered the window and stuck his head out.

For a couple of seconds, Jett and Zane just listened to Dan retching.

Jett shrugged. “At least, he didn’t do it inside.” He knew Zane had a point. With a curse, he slowed down. The last thing he needed was to get pulled over.

The rest of their wild trip was spent in silence. Dan’s face was pale. Zane just stretched one arm between the front seats to grab his boyfriend’s hand. Dan just took it meekly. Jett had no idea why he paid attention to all that stuff. Maybe he needed to distract himself from the fear he felt inside. If anyone hurt April, they would be in a world of pain.

Half an hour later, they were in front of the house, and Jett got out and broke into a sprint. Like a tourniquet, he was inside. On the kitchen table, April’s phone lay, dead. Jett took it, stared at it, and then threw it back on the table.

“April! April!” he called out loudly.

Zane and Dan hurried into the house, calling for April, too.

April appeared on the top of the stairs. “Hey, guys, what’s with all the noise?”

Jett exhaled. He jumped the stairs, three by three, his eyes set on April. “Why the fuck did you turn off your phone?”

He was just happy to see his boyfriend; Jett stopped in front of April, and then he noticed the strange look in his eyes. The sense of high alert kicked in. April wasn't asking him where he had been; he didn't even seem worried, like before. He just stood there, motionless, and his face was unreadable.

“What's wrong?” he asked aggressively.

“There's someone here to see you, Jett,” April said and pointed at the door behind him.

Jett frowned. “Fuck. Don't tell me; my old man is home.”

April just shook his head.

The door to his father's bedroom opened. “Hi, Jett.”

For a moment, the world stood still. He stared in disbelief at Carina, who was holding Jay in her arms.

Zane and Dan were on the first floor now, too, and witnesses to all the drama.

“Carina,” Jett said. “What are you doing here?”

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April just made himself busy in the kitchen, preparing a tea for Dan who looked a little bit worse for wear, and something to eat for Zane. It was much easier to do that rather than feel depressed.

“Would you please sit?” Zane said. “Why is she here? Is she Jay's mom?”

“Yes,” April admitted.

“And why did you turn off your phone? Your boyfriend almost killed us on our way back.”

“There's been a bit of a misunderstanding,” April replied. “And I should ask you where you all were. Dan is sick; you've spent minutes without teasing me or joking, and ...” April trailed off.

“We just took care of some business. By the way, you won't have any trouble with that DeLouise dude. It's over.”

“Why is that?”

“Jett took care of it. You should have seen your boyfriend, telling the Z brothers off for you. I should have recorded that stuff. If you hadn't been love with him already, you would have fallen for him now.”

“How did he take care of things?”

“He paid the Z brothers to close the deal with DeLouise without giving him squat. Ah, and he quit.”

April turned and looked at Zane in disbelief. “What? Why? I mean ... I know it was dangerous, and I’m glad, but, for him --”

Zane put up one hand. “Any complaints you have, take them with him. And I quit, too. Not that it looks like that is making anyone happy.” He threw one meaningful look at Dan.

“Seriously, dude?” Dan complained. “I’m green in the face. Your pal drove like a madman here.”

“Is that why you’re sick?” April asked Dan.

Dan just nodded. And then, he looked at Zane. “And I’m glad you no longer work for the mafia or something.”

Zane smiled. “April, my man, what can you bring to my boyfriend here? I’d kiss him, but he looks like he might puke again at any moment.”

“I keep all the medicine upstairs,” April said anxiously. “But I guess the worst came to pass. Dan just needs a tea that’s good for his stomach, and I have that right here.”

“Ah, you don’t want to overhear them talking,” Zane said and nodded thoughtfully. “So Carina is the kid’s mom, eh?”

“It looks like it,” April confirmed. “I mean, she threatened me with a plastic fork. I don’t see why she would have done that unless she was afraid I was hurting her baby. Also, Jay knows her and is happy in her arms.”

“Carina,” Zane said and shook his head. “Kind of a wild beast, that one.”

April was torn. On the one hand, he wanted to hear more about her, while on the other, he preferred not to know anything at all.

“So, this dude is straight? Why is he fucking April?” Dan intervened.

Zane threw his boyfriend a brief look, and Dan mumbled something under his breath. April felt pretty much out of the loop; apparently, everyone around knew more than him.

“Jett loves April,” Zane said matter-of-factly.

April pretended to be busy with the tea and didn’t say a word.

“Carina is here, so it’s good that little Jay has a mom, after all. But that doesn’t change anything,” Zane continued.

Those words should have been like a balm to his soul, but instead, April felt more depressed. The person who should have said them wasn’t present. And, regardless of Zane’s good intentions, there was no way any of them could know what Jett was thinking right now.

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Jett closed the door behind him and stared at Carina for a few long moments. “Care to tell me why on earth you didn’t tell me you got pregnant and had our kid?”

Carina sighed and sat on the bed. “Care to tell me why the hell there’s a guy who looks just like the boy you used to love under your roof?”

That was going to be a long and painful conversation, Jett thought.

## *Chapter Twenty-Six – Don't You Want To Fight For Me?*

Carina caressed Jay gently and then looked up at Jett. "Who should talk first? Me or you?"

"You start." Jett crossed his arms over his chest.

"All right. Where?"

"From the beginning. Why didn't you tell me you were pregnant?"

"I didn't want to."

"Just like that?"

"Just like that." Carina squared her eyes on him. Now that Jett was thinking of it better, Jay tended to give him sort of the same look when he was annoyed with his daddy. In hindsight, he should have seen it.

"I could've taken care of you. And of our son, of course," Jett replied.

"How was I to know that?" Carina said sharply, but without raising her voice. She was bouncing Jay in her arms, and he seemed very pleased with that. He was giggling and playing with his mother's hair.

"That little you know me?" Jett frowned.

"I don't know how much I know you," Carina said reproachfully. "Do you recall our last fight, what was it about?"

Jett looked away.

"Thought so," Carina replied instead of him. "It's kind of hard to rely on the man who told you that he had never loved you."

"That wasn't what I meant," Jett said quickly.

"It was exactly what you meant," Carina said. "Don't worry; I'm not here to have another fight with you. I don't know why you didn't love me while I did love you, but that's something for you to think about, not me."

"Still," Jett said aggressively. There was no point in trying to lie to Carina. She had read him better than anyone else, as much as she said that she didn't know him. "I had the right to know about this."

This time, Carina looked away guiltily. "I know. But I didn't want to hear you telling me to get rid of the baby, like everyone else."



Jett flexed his fingers, pulling his hands tightened into fists by his sides. “I wouldn’t have told you that.”

“Maybe not, and I was afraid of that, too.”

“Why?”

“Because I didn’t want you to think that I was trying to pull you back to me, to blackmail you with this kid so that you would stay with me.”

“I wouldn’t have thought that of you, either.”

Carina smiled sadly. “You and me, Jett, we’ve always been heading to some clusterfuck. It was my pride that got in the way. Is that what you want to hear?”

“I want to hear the truth. How little do you think of me?”

“Oh, come on, Jett, don’t play the responsible dad card to me. How many times did we get fucked up together? At least, we didn’t do drugs, so let’s give ourselves that. We were as responsible as two people like us could.”

“You not calling me to tell me about the baby was fucking irresponsible.” Jett pointed a finger at her.

“And? Does it surprise you? What could I have said? *Ah, hi, baby, remember me? It’s that stupid chick crazy in love with you that you don’t love back like the piece of shit you are. Guess what? We’re going to be parents!*” Carina said in a mocking voice that was getting on his nerves big time.

Jett ran his hands over his face. “We would have thought of something.”

“I couldn’t risk it. I couldn’t bear to hear you telling me you didn’t want the baby just the way you didn’t want me.” Carina’s shoulders slumped, and she looked more her age and less the badass she had always fought to be.

“All right,” Jett said in a gentler voice. “I get it, and it’s okay. Let’s just focus on the present. Jay is awesome, okay? I can’t know what I would have said if I had known. But I would have helped you; you know that, right?” The last words were said in an anxious voice that he could barely recognize as his own.

Carina wiped away a quick tear. “I just don’t want you to believe I want to tie you up with this baby. I didn’t when I decided to keep him, and I don’t want it now, either.”

“Okay,” Jett said, “okay.”

“And I didn’t want you to come back to me because you pitied me or something.”

Jett snorted. “You don’t take pity from anyone, Carina. You would’ve kicked my ass if I offered that to you.”

Carina laughed at that. It was easier for him to deal with her when she wasn’t breaking down. That was something he wasn’t any good at. Picking up the pieces wasn’t something he knew how to do; his hands were too big and too clumsy.

“I guess.” Carina smiled now. “So, I guess that was the story of me having a baby without telling you.”

“I guess. How did you end up in the can?”

Carina looked away. “I stole some things. I needed them and --”

“Okay, I get it that you’re pissed at me for being a lousy boyfriend, but if you needed money, you should have come to me.” This time, Jett spoke in a stern voice.

“I wanted to get by without any help,” Carina explained. “I guess I was stupid.”

“I guess so.”

“Fucker,” Carina said in the same voice she used when joking.

“Hey, I’m not the one who got in jail. Did they let you out?”

“Just like your babysitter, you think I escaped? Come on, Jett. You know me. I’m good at brawling, not so much at planning such a thing.”

Babysitter? Jett frowned. That must have been how April introduced himself or something.

“The thing is I got out quicker than expected. I pleaded enough, I think, with the judge to let me out sooner to see my baby. But, of course, that means that I need to keep clean. And now, I don’t even have a place to stay. If I go back to that bitch, I’m going to strangle her, and then I’m back in the can.”

“Are you talking about your sister?” Jett asked.

“Yeah, the bitch. She was supposed to take care of Jay until I got out. As your babysitter told me, she just decided to leave Jay on your doorsteps. What if you weren’t home? I want to drop that bitch so badly.”

“Chill,” Jett said shortly. “She told me you were in the can when I called. But she didn’t mention squat about leaving Jay here. I had no idea you were the mom.”

“She kept nagging me to give Jay up for adoption. I should have known better, but there was no one else I could leave Jay with in such short notice.”

“Really? No one else?” Jett stared at her.

“Because you’re so damned responsible,” Carina shot back. “Actually, if I look around, Jay looks like he’s living in some luxury aisle for baby products at the supermarket. All this shit must have cost a fortune.” She looked around, whistling.

“You know money’s no issue with me.”

“Yeah, but I couldn’t just call you and tell you I got arrested, and you must take care of our baby. I just had to think fast.”

“You should have called. At any moment,” Jett replied. “And when you got in jail, you still could’ve called. And how come your stepsister decided to leave Jay here, all of a sudden?”

“She did the math and knew you must be the father. She’s just such a basic bitch. At least, she didn’t count on me getting out so early. Probably she thought I would just accept that my kid got kidnapped off the street just like that.”

“Is that the lie she served to you?”

“Yeah. Then I came here to ask you to help me. And I found the babysitter with Jay. I’m sorry I threatened April with a fork. You can tell him that again.”

Jett rubbed his forehead. All that information was a bit too much. Also, it irked him to no end that April hadn’t told Carina they were boyfriends. But he wanted to set things right and fast.

“Now, I guess it’s my turn,” Carina said. “Your babysitter looks just like that guy in that picture. Theo, right?”

Jett just nodded.

“Is this some fricking coincidence? I could swear it’s the same hair, although, now that I looked at it from up close, I noticed it was dyed. Ah, don’t tell me you told him to dye it so that he would look like Theo. Jett, fuck, is that what you did?”

Jett waved, feeling irritated all of a sudden. “No. It was just something that happened.”

“Something that happened? This boy who looks like Theo just happened to become a babysitter for Jay. You happened to tell him to dye his hair blond. All these coincidences smell fishy to me. So, out with it. What’s going on with you and this guy?”

Jett schooled his face into a neutral mask. “He’s my boyfriend.”

For a couple of seconds, Carina looked as if she had seen the best magic trick in history revealed in front of her eyes. “Your boyfriend?” she sputtered.

“Yeah. Like in the guy I fuck.”

Carina adjusted Jay in her arms, as the boy was falling asleep, not at all interested in the conversation between his parents. “Now that’s new, Jett. I mean, I know you must have had a crush on that boy Theo, but this is on a whole new level. And did it just happen that you ended up with your dick in his ass, or was it the other way around?”

“Don’t be an asshole, Carina,” Jett said, now pissed off.

Carina began to laugh and then shook her head. “Well, pardon my French, Jett, but you’re the asshole. Why the hell you never told me you liked guys? It would have been so much fucking easier for me! And I struggled so much to make you love me when what I was missing was an actual dick in my pants!”

“It wasn’t like that!” Jett protested.

“Not that Zane didn’t say plenty of times that we, girls, should watch out for you. I thought he just wanted really bad that his best friend batted for the same team. I thought nothing of it. So, who else did you fuck? I mean, do I even know these other guys? Oh, no, was it Zane? All that time --”

“Oh, just shut up already,” Jett said. “I’m telling you it was nothing like that. April is the first guy I’ve ever slept with.”

Carina stopped and now stared at him, blinking a few times. “Are you doing this because April looks like Theo? I don’t know this guy, but he seems pretty nice, and it fucking looks like you’re using him.”

“I’m not using him.”

“Then, you love him?” Carina asked him directly.

“Yeah,” Jett replied simply.

Carina sighed, and a big smile lit her face. “For the love of all that’s holy, I hope you’re saying the truth, Jett Huntsman. That boy is way too sweet and pretty for you to make a mess out of him.”

“You don’t know him,” Jett said, feeling the need to protest. “How do you know he’s sweet and pretty?”

“First, I have two eyes, and second, we had quite the conversation until you got back. Hey, he didn’t tell me he was your boyfriend. Why?”

“I’d like to know that, too,” Jett said promptly. “In the meantime, you’ll stay here with Jay.”

“In your father’s room? If he comes home --”

“We’ll get to that when it happens. You said you had no place to go. So just stay here. Jay is already familiar with the place and with April.”

“At least, he won’t have to babysit Jay. He lives here, right?”

“Yeah,” Jett admitted.

“I could tell that the house is no longer a pigsty, and I just thought your old man must have been around.”

“No, that’s all April. He likes to vacuum and stuff,” Jett said evasively.

Carina shook her head and smirked. “You’re about as irresponsible as you were when I last saw you, right?”

“Hey, I’m just not good at chores. But I know how to make Jay eat,” he said as he pointed at the baby.

“I guess that’s a relief,” Carina said, and her eyes were shining with amusement now. “What does April do for a living? I suppose he’s not a real babysitter.”

“He’s studying,” Jett replied. “And mining crypto in the basement.”

“Ah. Interesting. Are you still breaking bones for those whack jobs?”

“I quit today,” Jett said matter-of-factly. “I’m a free man.”

“That’s good to hear. So that means that I’ll have to find a job fast, right? Baby clothes this nice must cost a lot.”

“If there’s one thing you’ve always been good at was getting on my nerves. I still have money. You stay here for as long as you need.”

“I’ll still need to find a place and a job. I’m not just going to live here and mooch off of you.”

“There’s enough room.”

“Yeah, but still there isn’t,” Carina said and smiled mysteriously.

“What’s that supposed to mean? April sleeps with me in the same room, and you can sleep here with Jay.”

“And April will start plotting how to poison my morning coffee while I waltz around like a forgotten princess.”

Jett stopped for a moment. “April’s not jealous!”

Carina snorted. “Sometimes, I wonder what I saw in you. You’re pretty to look at, but not much else. Come on, Jett, use your head for a moment here. He’s the boyfriend, and I’m the mother of your child. He’s probably thinking right now that he shouldn’t have gotten into this shit at all. Or that he needs to find a way to get rid of the competition.”

Jett huffed. “April’s not some girl. He’s not going to get into a catfight with you or something.”

Carina laughed. “He seems too sweet for that. But, still, I don’t want to wreck your happy home. I’ll be here only as long as it’s needed, not a day more. And I will tell April he’s got nothing to worry about on my part. But you should be the one to convince him of that.”

“I guess I should, yeah,” Jett said, somewhat aggressively.

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April saw Dan and Zane to the door, as everyone around seemed to chill a bit. Now that the guests were off his hands, he needed to think about packing up his stuff and heading back to his place. He would just take the necessary stuff and come back later for the crypto mining equipment, preferably when Jett wasn’t around.

Carina’s appearance was a big-time event. Now Jett would see what he was missing and warm up to the mother of his child. April wanted to believe that things would be different, but he felt selfish and evil for thinking such a thing. Jay had a right to both parents, and April didn’t want even to think of the possibility of being the one to wreck that happy home.

It was one thing to fool around with Jett with no other woman in the picture. April realized that his dad would scold him for feeling so insecure, but Carina was important to Jett. Even if he had been upset when he had seen her, it was clear as day, at least to April, that Jett cared about her. There was that glint in his eyes that April knew so well, something he had hoped it was only reserved for him.

He would make things simple and go away. Now, there was no need to tell Jett all about Theo and how April and he were the same person. It would just complicate things for no reason. If he stayed, he would only make things a lot messier than they were already. It was high time for him to prove that he could be a grownup about it all.

With a sigh, he began walking up the stairs. He needed to be extremely quiet so that he didn’t disturb the intense conversation between Jett and Carina that had to be still underway. Also, he needed to be quick to grab what he needed from Jett’s bedroom, where he had lived for so few days.

On some level, April was well aware that he was a coward. But he needed to do this, or he couldn’t forgive himself for doing something against Jay and his happiness. He was just so little

and in no way guilty for the mess in his parents' life. Without April around, Jett and Carina would have a real chance at making things work between them.

Ah, and he was a coward, too, and, at least to himself, he could admit it. He opened the door to Jett's bedroom slowly and then snuck inside like a thief. Once there, he began pushing things at random into a bag. Preferably, he should be out before Jett finished his conversation with Carina. It appeared that Jett had been in his father's room with Carina for a long time, so that had to be a good sign for them.

Not so much for April, but that didn't matter. With one last look around, he grabbed the stuffed bag and took one step toward the door, which opened abruptly in front of him. Jett stared at him and then entered, closing the door behind him.

"Going somewhere?" Jett asked, and now the glint in his eyes was dangerous.

April tried to play it casually. He moved the bag from one hand to the other. "I thought about going to my place."

Jett looked from his face down to the bag in his hand. "Did you forget something there? And what's that?"

"I'm moving back, Jett," April said with all the determination he could manage at the moment. "Carina's here, and Jay doesn't need me anymore."

Jett frowned and took another step toward April. "No shit."

April took instinctively one step back. "Yes shit," he said as soon as he realized that he was cowering in front of Jett for no reason at all. "She's his mom."

"And? What makes you think Jay doesn't need you anymore?"

"He has his mom and his dad. I don't see why a third person should be in the picture."

"Are you a fucking moron or something? What about me?" Jett pointed at himself.

April swallowed hard and felt like his voice was suddenly incapable of creating words. There was a small weird sound coming out of his throat. "You don't need me."

"Like hell, I don't. April fucking Summer, are you my boyfriend, or you just wanted to fool around with me? Don't you want to fight for me at all?"

"I am your boyfriend, I want ..., I mean, wait, but Carina --"

Jett, apparently, was not a man of many words, but more an action man. He grabbed April fast, he tore the bag away from his hand and threw it, and then locked lips with him. April didn't even manage to protest, as Jett pushed him on the bed and climbed on top of him.

He tried to move his head away. “Jett, wait, Jett --”

Jett was having none of his protests and just kissed him again, hard and with lips only. April struggled for a while until he realized he couldn’t win such an unbalanced fight. Whenever he succeeded in freeing one hand, Jett was quick to immobilize it again. So, in the end, he just went limp.

That was the smart move, as it seemed because Jett finally let him breathe. For a few seconds, they stared into each other’s eyes, none of them willing to back down. Eventually, April looked away with a huff.

“Were you really thinking about ditching me?” Jett’s voice was deep and dangerous.

“Why should I stay here?”

Jett scoffed. “For a guy that’s supposed to be a hacker or something --”

“I’m not a hacker!”

“Whatever. You’re supposed to be smart, but you’re a dumbass. So, what if Carina is here? Finally. She needs to own up to all the shit she did by not telling me about Jay.”

“Were you hard on her? She was beyond grief when she realized Jay wasn’t home when she got back from jail!”

“Yeah, I was hard on her. You don’t know her. That’s the way she knows best.”

“Still, she’s Jay’s mom.”

“I’m not cutting her any slack. And I’m not cutting you any slack. Where do you think you’re running? There’s no getting away from me.”

“Aren’t you a possessive ass now?” April asked.

“Yeah. So what? You’re all over me all the time. I can’t even take a piss in the morning before you wake up because you’re like some snake wrapped around me, choking me.”

“Ha! So, let me leave, and you can take all the piss you want to take whenever you want!”

“Shut the fuck up already. I can’t sleep without you, and you know it.”

April remained silent. “I don’t actually know it.”

“When you study late in the evening, do you think I don’t want to sleep? But I wait for you until you’re done.”



“Ah, sorry if my studying ruins your beauty sleep. If you didn’t keep me so busy during the day - --”

“Do you mean with the fucking? It’s okay. We can fuck in the evening before going to sleep, like boring couples.”

“Jett, you fuck me in the morning, in the afternoon when Jay is sleeping, and at night, too. Who the fuck has the time to get bored?”

“Hey, I’m not nailing your ass that often!” Jett protested.

“Okay, so I fuck you, too, and we also suck off each other --”

“And yet, you want to go out the door like a fucking coward only because Carina is here.”

“But what would she think if I were around? I told her I was the babysitter!”

“Big fucking lie, if you ask me. I told her you’re my boyfriend.”

“You did? And how did she receive that news?”

Jett shrugged. “It’s over between her and me. I mean, we’re not involved anymore.”

“But she’s Jay’s mom!”

“That she is. And what’s that got to do with anything? I’ll take care of her and Jay both. Don’t tell me you don’t want that.”

April was horrified at that accusation. “How can you even think such a thing!”

“I don’t. I’m just pulling your leg, dweeb.”

“But wouldn’t she be jealous? I mean ... or upset that I’m here?”

“Funny how you and her think the same. She’s afraid you might want to poison her coffee when she’s not looking.”

“I wouldn’t do that!”

Jett laughed. “She knows that, too. The thing is she doesn’t want you to feel threatened by her. She’s not into me anymore.”

“I wonder why,” April said in a sarcastic voice.

“No need to wonder. When we broke up, I told her the truth.”

“Which was?”

“That I didn’t love her.”

“You mean ... not at all?”

“Not like that.” It was Jett’s turn to look away. It was clear that talking about such things as feelings was pissing him off. “I care about her. For some time, she was my best friend. So, I do love her, but I’m not in love with her. Is that enough for you, or do you need me to pour my heart out more like I’m on some stupid TV show?”

“I guess I understand. She’ll stay here with us?”

“Yeah. Until she finds something, and I’ll help her.”

“But that means that she will take Jay with her.”

Jett nodded.

“And how do you feel about that?”

Jett pushed himself up and huffed in annoyance. “You still want to talk about feels,” he said in an accusing voice.

April hugged his boyfriend from behind. “It’s all right. You can tell me you’ll miss Jay.”

“Oh, shut the fuck up, dweeb.” Despite his words, Jett didn’t push him away but leaned back into April’s embrace.

“I will, but I feel the need to comfort you. Have you talked to her? About how you want to be a part of Jay’s life?”

“We’ll figure things out. I just need to make sure she doesn’t end up in some mess again. Also, I have to keep her from going after her stepsister.”

“Ah. That’s who left Jay by your doorsteps.”

“So it seems. That woman is not right in the head.”

“Like for real?”

“She’s always been an asshole,” Jett confirmed. “But Carina needs to keep away from her. If she gets anywhere near her sister, there’s bound to be blood. And Carina should stay away from the can.”

“Why was she there in the first place?”

“She stole some stuff because she had no money.”

“Shoplifting?” April asked tentatively.

Jett said nothing for a while. “Don’t worry about Carina. She thinks you’re sweet and pretty.”

It felt like Jett was leaving something out on purpose. What could it be?

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Jett had to admit that it annoyed him how much Carina’s words had hit close to home. Was he using April? Only because he looked like Theo? But that wasn’t it. April was like Theo in many ways, and maybe Jett just had a type when it came to guys.

He wasn’t using April in any way. Getting rid of memories was impossible, though. They had a way of worming up inside his soul, and he couldn’t tear Theo away from there, as much as he wanted.

One of these days, he needed to man up and tell April the entire story about Theo, Jett thought. But it would take a lot of guts, and that meant Jett had to muster all his courage to do it. Opening closed doors, especially those behind which more than just feels lay, had never been on top of his list.

## *Chapter Twenty-Seven – Just When Things Were Going So Swell*

“Hush, hush,” April urged Jett as his lover’s soft grunts had a tendency of getting louder and louder.

Jett pushed inside him and grabbed hold of his hair; then, he nuzzled April’s ear.

“You’re slobbering all over,” April complained, but in a quiet voice.

“You’re something, dweeb,” Jett whispered in his ear. “The moment you said ‘yes’, you knew I was going to fuck you.”

“With the promise that we would be silent,” April said back. “Jay doesn’t need to hear us rutting like animals.”

“You mean Carina. You had no problem with Jay hearing us before, as I remember.”

April managed with much difficulty to stifle a cry of pleasure of his own.

“See?” Jett teased and bottomed out in April’s ass again, without letting go of him. “You’re one second from making like a cat in heat.”

“I protest against that. I sound nothing like a cat,” April said, preferring to joke and try to take the edge off. Jett really knew what he was doing, pounding his ass slowly, but deep and hard with each thrust.

“No. You sound like you. So give it to me. Let me hear you.”

“No way,” April protested vehemently. “I’ll die of embarrassment in the morning when I see Carina at breakfast.”

“You know, she’s old enough to imagine on her own what we’re doing here.”

“The key word is ‘imagine’. Let’s leave it at that and not fill in the blanks for her. What could she think of me?”

“I think she thinks swell of you. Give her a few days, and I might have to worry about you two hooking up.”

As if that could be a real danger, Jett began to move faster while keeping April in a deadlock.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” April said in a strained, quiet voice. “You’re going to kill me, you ass.”

“I’m just going to make you come, and that’s all there is to it.”

“I could live without a pounding tonight,” April complained, his speech slurred and peppered with soft gasps and groans. As much as he was trying to fight it, his pleasure was building up. His whole skin was prickling, goosebumps everywhere.

“I couldn’t,” Jett replied, but his voice was just as strained.

“Then you should have told me, and I would have fucked you,” April said.

“No way. You needed putting in place, dweeb. Thinking about ditching me and all. No way you leave this room without an ass full of cum.”

“Is that your way of telling me you’re into me?” April teased, although he had no idea how he still had resources for something else than experiencing the insane pleasure coursing through his entire body.

Jett adjusted their position only slightly, pulling April more to him. For a second, April thought that the fucker would have mercy on him and give his dick a few friendly rubs. Instead, Jett pinched one of his nipples hard, and April was done for. He didn’t have to look to know that his cock was bobbing helplessly up and down and shooting without being touched. That was Jett’s signature move, so that meant April was right.

Jett was insecure. That was the fleeting thought crossing his mind as he succumbed to his pleasure. That made two of them, and it was a simple fact.

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For long minutes, Jett remained on his back, listening to April’s heavy breathing and murmured complaints.

“My ass, you wrecked it, you fucker,” April moaned.

Jett laughed and slapped April’s butt. It was way too perky and drawing attention as April lay on his stomach, spent and, Jett hoped, happy.

“I should be the one to complain. Your ass is squeezing me till my eyeballs pop out.”

April moved to stare at him. “What are you taking me for? I can clearly see that your eyes are just where they’re supposed to be.”

“Ah, really? They must’ve gotten back in.”

April rolled his eyes. Then, he suddenly moved and straddled Jett, taking his arms and pushing them up. “You make me in the mood to give it back to you with interest.”

“Oh, you gave it all right. Guess what day is tomorrow? Laundry day.” Jett was joking, but the hands on his wrists were hard, and it hurt a little.

“You know, now that Jay is off my hands, not completely, I suspect and hope, I guess I see things clearly now. You are exploiting me.”

Jett grinned. “For someone as smart as you, you’re slow on the uptake. Soooo sloooow,” he drawled the words on purpose.

“Shut up,” April said and looked down at him. “You should do the chores for a while. Since you’re no longer the breadwinner in this house.”

Jett snorted. “I have plenty of money left.”

“It’s a wonder how you didn’t spend it all on booze and who knows what else,” April said.

“On women, you mean.” It was high time to take the bull by the horns. April must still have felt insecure about Carina being around, so Jett had to make things clear.

“That, too.”

“Are you insecure still? You’re on my spent dick, crushing it with your balls.”

“I’m not crushing it. My balls can’t do that.”

“They’re balls of steel,” Jett commented and winked at April.

To his relief, April burst into laughter. “You’re just saying. But it’s all on the crypto mining now for money coming in.”

“I’m telling you. Don’t worry about it. And I’ll find something to do.”

“Maybe you should consider better life choices for a while. Like you shouldn’t get the same job as before,” April said in what appeared to be a cautious manner.

“If you have something you want to ask me, go ahead, dweeb. Don’t dance around it.”

“Fine.” April squeezed Jett’s wrists and looked him in the eyes. “Don’t go around, breaking people’s bones and stuff. Become an upstanding member of society.”

Jett roared. “Member. You said member.”

“Oh, fuck, is that everything you understood from what I said? Stop being a thug, Jett.”

“Why? I’m good at it.” Jett chose to tease April for a while, just to see him getting all worked up.

“I’m sure you’re good at many other things. It’s dangerous.”

“I love danger. You know, it gets all my adrenaline pumping and stuff.”

“So go bungee jumping or something. There are many other ways to get a thrill. You don’t have to beat people up.”

“I didn’t beat you up.”

“But you could have,” April pointed out.

“You ran like a fucking rabbit. But then you pushed your naked ass right into my face, and I was sold.”

“I didn’t push anything! Come on, Jett, that’s not how things happened. You just pulled down my pants for some reason.”

“Maybe, unconsciously, I wanted to see your ass.”

“Unconsciously, right.” April snorted.

“See? You agree with me. That’s the story we’re going to tell everyone.”

“Are we going to give other people that amount of details? That’s too much info, so that you know, Jett.”

“But it’s how we met. Of course, we need to stick to all the details.”

April turned silent for a while, and Jett thought, in the nightstand light, that he noticed a small shadow passing over his face. “Stop worrying about Carina,” he said.

“I’m not worrying. I mean, I do worry a little, because she’s in a vulnerable place and --”

“April, my dude, make sure that this is not the tune you sing to her. She gets pissed when people call her weak.”

“But I’m not doing that! It’s just that, you know, she must have cared for you a great deal. She had your child.”

“It was her choice, and I respect it. But I won’t pretend I’m in love with her, not when ... Look. As my girlfriend, she’s old news. As my friend, she’s it. As Jay’s mom, I’m glad she’s the one. Is that making things clear for you already? I feel like I haven’t talked so much about feels in a thousand years.”

“Which means never.” April giggled, and Jett took advantage to bump him up and make him lose his balance.

In a second, Jett was back on top and between April’s legs. He liked it how April’s long legs wrapped around him immediately, giving him instant access to his body. Jett kissed April slowly. He was welcomed by soft, pliant lips, and a not so pliant tongue.

Jett didn't know how to talk about feels, maybe. But he knew that April could make him rock hard and that without even trying. When he was trying, like right now, Jett was done for. He had no way to escape. Getting into April's pants was everything. Good thing April didn't even wear anything at all in bed, let alone pants. Jett had taught his boyfriend well.

He moved only as it was needed so that he could stick his cock into the pleasant heat of April's ass. Now it was pretty much lubed, too, and that was awesome because he slid in with little resistance.

"Yesss," April hissed as Jett moved on top of him.

Jett liked to fuck April in all possible positions. It was good to go on all fours, too, as earlier, but it was good like this, too, since he could look into April's eyes without holding back. Not that April wasn't good at fucking, too. Actually, on some days, Jett just needed to feel that April wanted him the same, and it was then that he was teasing his boyfriend until he got in the saddle.

Tonight, Jett felt that, too, but he also felt that April needed to know that he didn't want Carina, even if she was Jay's mom, and had once been his girlfriend. Jett just wanted April and no one else.

April knew how to move to meet him in the middle, and that helped him build up his pleasure more. It was nothing short of amazing how large April's eyes were, how they darkened with desire, and Jett was happy to know that he was the reason why that was happening.

In due time, he would tell everything. He would be able to share with April all that still scared him sometimes. That moment couldn't be far.

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"Morning," April said cheerfully, as Carina sat at the table with Jay in her arms. She looked like she could have used more sleep.

"Morning to you, too. How can you be so chirpy? I'm dying for a coffee."

"Coming right up," April replied. He placed a cup of steaming dark liquid in front of her and a bowl filled with Jay's breakfast.

"Oh, you're such a keeper," Carina said. She took a sip from her cup and then looked at April. "Is this what you're giving Jay?"

"Usually, yes." April stood up and took the box to hand it to Carina. "It's a pretty good mix."

She just waved. "I trust you. Jay looks good and healthy. I think I have you to thank for that. Would you like to feed him?"



April said nothing, and then he smiled. “Yeah, I would. You just drink your coffee.” He took Jay gently from his mother’s arms.

Carina smiled at him. “I can tell Jay really likes you. And since you won’t have to worry about dirty t-shirts stained with baby food after I’m gone, I think I can offer you the opportunity to worry for a little while longer.”

“You could stay here,” April offered.

Carina blew into her cup and then smiled again. “Thanks for the offer, but three is a crowd, as they say.”

“We would be four,” April said.

“Even so. I need to build a life, too, and I can’t do that if I only rely on Jett, who’s not my boyfriend anymore.”

“I guess you’re right,” April admitted. “But you’ll come to visit, right? With Jay?”

Carina nodded and then threw him a strange look. “Hey, did Jett ever tell you about a boy named Theo?”

April swallowed hard. “He said something.”

Carina looked at him carefully. “You’re the real deal, right, April? I think Jett’s crazy about you.”

April grinned broadly before he could stop himself. “He’s not that crazy.”

“Hey, I know that guy, and he is. I’m just telling it like it is.”

“I feel a bit guilty toward you,” April confessed.

“Why?” Carina examined him with unhidden curiosity.

“You must have had strong feelings for Jett.”

“It’s in the past. I want him to be happy. And I want to be happy, too. That’s why I’m not interested in holding him or myself back.”

“You have Jay together. He’s a wonderful kid.”

Carina smiled and bumped the back of her hand against his cheek. “Don’t worry, April. I’m fine with Jett being into you. It was sort of surprise seeing how many girls he had been with, but I guess the heart wants what it wants. Right?”

April just nodded. He felt like such a huge fraud right now. “What do you want?” he asked directly.

“Frankly, right now, it feels good just to sit here and enjoy a cup of good coffee. I’ll figure things out and then get out of here.”

“Until then, we’re housemates, right?”

Carina nodded. “Now tell me, April, does Jett let you do everything around here? You can tell me.”

“What do you think?” April rolled his eyes.

“I knew it,” Carina whispered. “You should put him to work. When he has nothing to do, he tends to find something.”

“Like what?”

“Like working for those fuckers. He has so much bottled energy, and he should put it to good use.”

There was at least one use April knew Jett was putting his energy to, as his ass could attest. “So, I should make him vacuum and stuff?”

“That’s a start. I think you can be a great influence on Jett’s life. You know, positive and stuff. Make him get a real job or, I don’t know, start something on his own that doesn’t include breaking bones. I know you can do that, and I put all my faith in you.”

“I’m not sure. He’s stubborn, but I guess you know that. But I’ll definitely try,” April whispered, too.

“What are you two talking about like you don’t want me to hear?” Jett asked from the kitchen door.

“About making an upstanding member of the society out of you,” April replied promptly.

Carina burst into laughter. “Member? It’s okay. Jett is already a dick.”

April shook his head. Carina was much like Jett in some ways.

“Hmm, it’s funny how a bunch of freeloaders thinks it’s all right to laugh at me,” Jett said in a menacing voice.

“We only want what’s best for you,” April said. Then, he said to Carina, “I actually call him an ass from time to time.”

Carina laughed again. Jay was happy with each spoonful April was shoving in his face and began giggling excitedly, glad to be a part of the fun.

“You know what else is funny? How right I am all the time. You two annoyed me that you wouldn’t like each other, and here you are, conspiring against me.”

“It’s all for your own good,” April pointed out.

“Dweeb, I can take care of myself. Don’t you worry about who’s going to be the breadwinner in this house.”

“Why are you calling him a dweeb?” Carina intervened. “April’s pretty cool.”

“He’s a total nerd. He wears glasses and studies computers all day long,” Jett said.

“Then I suppose you keep him busy at night,” Carina said with a small, knowing smile.

April got red in the face. He hid his face behind Jay’s golden head. But he couldn’t stay hidden for too long, as Carina stood up and took the baby from his arms. “Now you come to mommy and let April have his breakfast, too. He needs his strength to study all day long.”

Jett kissed Jay’s head before Carina headed out and back to the upstairs bedroom. Then he looked at April with a broad grin on his face.

“What are you grinning about?” April asked.

“Nothing. It’s just so much as I thought. Just don’t let her convince you that I should start cleaning around the house. I can’t do that. I have two left hands,” Jett said, lifting his arms as if that proved a point.

April looked at him and shook his head. “I know. You’re totally useless.”

“Hey!” Jett protested.

“When it comes to house chores. Don’t worry; otherwise, you’re totally the best.” April hurried to appease the beast, as Jett was already making a face. “Don’t tell me the fact that you’re unemployed hurt your manhood or something.”

Jett walked over to him and ruffled his hair aggressively. “It wasn’t a real job.”

“Oh, but am I glad to hear you say that! Good. Because you have to find a real job. No lazing around the house or who knows what ideas might get into your head.”

“Look who wants to exploit who now,” Jett said. “You want me to get an office job or something.”

April snickered. “You don’t strike me like the cubicle type. You might create a toxic work environment just by being present.”

Jett smirked. “You know me. Not fit for that kind of life.”

“I’m not letting you become a thug again,” April said quickly. As much as they were joking, Carina was right. Jett couldn’t be let to his own designs, or he might get some weird ideas again. “You might even get a college degree.”

A snort was the immediate answer. “I’m not going to end up with my nose buried in books like you, dweeb.”

“There are many majors that could put your physical abilities to good use. And then you could work as a coach or educator.”

“Pff, you really want me to settle down,” Jett replied. “Do you see me teaching kids how to throw a punch?”

“I wasn’t thinking about anything that aggressive.”

“Ah, but why not? I could teach the little maggots to stand for themselves.”

“Let’s leave education jobs aside,” April said, now alarmed by Jett’s perspective on things. “Maybe you could start a security business. After all, in a way, you have plenty of expertise.”

Jett smiled at him and then caught him by the back of his neck. “Are you thinking about me that much?”

“Of course, I do. You’re my boyfriend. I want you to be safe. And to do something that doesn’t involve beating people up.”

“If I work security, I’ll pretty much have to beat up some people.”

“I believe that prevention is what those guys do most. I don’t know how much beating they carry out.”

Jett shrugged. “Too bad. Being able to beat people up might just convince me to take up an honest job.”

“You’re incorrigible,” April complained. “Do you want anything to eat?”

“Don’t you have to get to school? Let’s just grab a bite on our way there,” Jett suggested.

“Is this part of your strategy to let me off my household chores gently?”

“Don’t make me change my mind,” Jett said, wagging a finger at April. “I could make you toil in the kitchen in nothing but an apron.”

“And scandalize Carina in the process.”

“She’s not easily scandalized. But, on second thought, she might like what she sees too much. Let’s not go there. Wear clothes, many clothes.”

April shook his head, and then he took Jett’s hand. “Zane told me about what you did for me. Thank you.”

“Sure thing. I won’t let anyone hurt you.” Jett’s eyes on him were intense.

April cleared his voice, the emotion climbing up his throat a bit sudden.

“Oh, no,” Jett complained. “Are you going to cry now?”

April bristled right away. “Who’s going to cry?”

“Good. I got enough talking about feels yesterday. Let’s not for a while.”

That was too bad. Because April was planning to do that and as soon as it was possible. As much as he feared that moment, he needed to face the music, regardless of consequences. Jett really cared about him, and April had no reason to continue with keeping up with a lie.

But he needed to bid his time. While hurrying to get to school was not exactly good timing.

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April was playing with Jay on the sofa in the living room while explaining to Carina all that had happened in the baby’s life while he had taken residence in his daddy’s home. Jett was not yet back from wherever he was, and April could barely wait for him so that they could talk.

Carina pushed herself up. “Gotta use the little girls’ room. Back in a sec.”

“Take your time,” April said and took Jay in his arms.

The sound of the front door opening made him smile, but also a small tinge of pain squeezed his chest. It was now or never.

He cooed to Jay, looking down at the baby and playing with his small hands. “Your daddy’s home, Jay.”

“What are you talking about, boy? And who are you?” A harsh voice made April snap his head up so fast that it hurt him.

In front of him, a man in his late forties, dressed in a military uniform, with a heavy bag in his right hand, measured him up and down with eyes as harsh as his voice.

April's jaw grew slack. The man had Jett's eyes, but the hair on his head was cut short and grey, and his face was cut in stone. He was handsome in a rugged way, and April knew right away who was standing there, looking like he wanted to break some bones, just like he knew who.

"Jett's dad?" he asked in a weak voice that came out like a whisper.

"Yeah, I'm Jett's dad," the visitor replied, and, for a second, there was the ghost of a smile on his face, but it was soon gone, leaving behind the same frosty countenance. "I'm asking the questions here. Got it, kid?"

April just nodded, too lost for words.

Jett's father examined him for a moment. "Wait, are you a boy or a girl?"

"A boy," April whispered.

"Louder!"

"I'm a boy," April said a bit louder, stopping right on time from adding 'sir' to his reply.

The sharp eyes, sheltered by bushy eyebrows, looked him up and down again. "Jett likes the tomboy type."

Was that an offer for an apology? April wasn't sure. Jay slapping one hand over his face, playfully woke him up from his mental questioning.

"Whose baby's that? Jett's?"

April was now like a deer caught in the headlights. He hadn't expected such a direct question.

"I asked you a question, boy."

"Y-yes," he stammered. He didn't think Jett would keep such a thing from his father, regardless of how estranged they had to be.

"What's your name?"

"April."

"Are you sure you're not a girl?"

Carina walked in right that moment. "Mr. Huntsman," she said in what April thought immediately that sounded like the impersonation of insolence.

"What are you doing here? Did you mother this child?"

Carina shrugged and plunked herself down on the sofa, next to April. "Yeah. What of it?"

“Is Jett the father?”

Carina glanced at April, and he just nodded imperceptibly. “Yeah.”

“Hmm,” Mr. Huntsman said noncommittally and began walking up the stairs.

Carina grinned and looked at April, who sensed his blood rushing back into his cheeks after dropping to his feet seconds earlier. “Just wait until he sees his room filled with baby toys.”

April had many questions.

“What on earth has happened to this room?” Mr. Huntsman bellowed from upstairs.

Carina seemed satisfied with that. “Told you.”

April was lost for words. He needed to tell Jett his old man was back home.

“What are we going to do?” he whispered.

Carina winked at him. “We’re going to spectate. When those two are in the same house, there’s nothing you can do, trust me.”

April ran one hand over his face. “This is bad.”

“I can barely wait for Jett to tell his dad you’re his boyfriend. Have nine-one-one on speed dial. We might just have to call an ambulance.”

There was noise upstairs, and April didn’t want to know what it was all about. “Shouldn’t we see what he’s doing?” he asked Carina in a low voice.

“Let him figure it out.”

“But he’s probably throwing all of Jay’s toys out on the hallway.”

Carina seemed undisturbed by the turn of events. “If he does that, I bet Jett won’t like it.”

April felt dizzy. Was that really happening?

Mr. Huntsman was back downstairs, and without a word to them, he headed for the basement.

April exhaled, relieved that they hadn’t been yelled at. That wouldn’t last long.

“What the hell is all this shit?” Jett’s dad shouted from the basement.

Fuck. The mining equipment. He got to his feet and handed Jay to Carina. He was about to go to the basement when Jett entered the house.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, the second he saw April.

“Your old man is home,” Carina said from behind them.

“Fuck,” was the only reply that came from Jett.



## *Chapter Twenty-Eight – Under Assault*

“What are you doing home so early?” Jett turned toward his father, the moment he was back in the living room.

April was trying to make himself small on the sofa, while Carina was bouncing Jay on her knees, and had a crooked smile on her face.

“Do I have to report to you now?” Mr. Huntsman said to his son, crossing his arms over his chest and taking an aggressive stance.

Jett mimicked him, although April believed that he wouldn’t like being told how much like his dad he looked, especially in this confrontation that was threatening to escalate to an unknown scope.

“A phone call would have been enough,” Jett said, as he stood his ground.

His father didn’t appear interested in replying to that. With a jerk of the head, he pointed at the sofa, where Carina, Jay, and April sat. His eyes never left Jett while he did that. “What’s with these people in the house?”

“You know Carina,” Jett said first.

Mr. Huntsman looked at Carina, measuring her with cold eyes. “I do. Why did you have to make the girl pregnant, Jett? Was it to get on my nerves?”

“That’s on me, Mr. Huntsman,” Carina said and waved at him.

With frightened eyes, April searched Carina’s face. She looked back at him and shrugged. “What happened to the spectating part?” he whispered.

“How’s that on you?” Mr. Huntsman asked, his irritation visibly growing. April didn’t dare to look at him directly, for fear that he might notice a throbbing vein or something. He needed to have his phone ready to dial nine-one-one, as Carina had suggested. “Did you have the kid by yourself?”

“Of course not,” Carina replied with a snort.

“Then shut up. Is there no end to your recklessness, boy?” Mr. Huntsman turned his attention to his son once more.

Carina looked like she was about to talk again, but, instinctively, April grabbed her arm and shook his head, mouthing a ‘no’. Jett’s dad looked like he was a moment away from having a heart attack. He was red in the face and seemed royally pissed.

“What’s it to you?” Jett asked defiantly and set his chin high.

For a moment, it seemed that Mr. Huntsman had some harsh words for his son but then chose to be silent. Not for long. “How old is the baby? It’s a boy, right?”

“One year, three months and ten days,” Carina replied promptly.

“Didn’t I just tell you to shut up? What? Jett can’t talk anymore for himself now that he has a wife?”

There were so many places he could have been right now, April allowed himself a short moment to fantasize. So many places without angry men who had just discovered that they suddenly were grandfathers. And that was not the end for the string of surprises expecting Mr. Huntsman at home.

“I’m not his wife!” Carina protested right away.

“She’s not my wife!” Jett said at the same time.

For a couple of seconds, Mr. Huntsman gave the two young parents a stare that could blow up mountains. “So, you don’t want to provide this child with a normal home after behaving like you two didn’t hear of contraception in your lives?”

“If by a normal home, you mean this one --” Jett started.

“Don’t give me attitude, boy! I won’t take it from you. So, you got your girlfriend pregnant, and she had the baby. When were you going to tell me? The child is one year’s old, for fuck’s sake!”

Ah, so the older Huntsman had no issues with using the f-word, either. April needed to consider giving up on trying to shield Jay’s young ears. The adults in his life were all a bunch of lunatics. What was he thinking? That wasn’t by far the most important thing to worry about at the moment.

“Are there any other children of yours I should know about? How many girlfriends have you knocked up?” Mr. Huntsman continued his assault.

“Just this one,” Jett said with confidence.

“I’m glad that you’re sure,” his father said scathingly. “You don’t intend to turn this house into a stable, do you now? And what’s with the boy?”

“His name is Jay,” Carina said.

“And your grandchild,” Jett added.

For a second, Mr. Huntsman looked like he was about to thaw a little. But then, he quickly regained all his rightful anger. “I wasn’t talking about the baby. Who’s this boy?” He pointed a finger at April.

Great, April thought. Now he really needed to take out his phone and try to be surreptitious about it. Things were about to get even messier.

“That’s April,” Jett replied as if that explained everything.

“I know his name. Why is he named like a girl? Is he a girl?” Mr. Huntsman looked at April as if he was trying to put two and two together. “A very flat-chested girl.”

Carina snickered at that. April nudged her side with a well-placed elbow, and she fell silent right away.

“He’s not a girl. He’s my,” Jett looked directly at April, “boyfriend.”

Everyone in the room, except, maybe, for Jay, held their breath. Or, at least, that was how it felt to April who could only hear the beating of his heart in his ears. Jett had done it. He had gone head-on and said it, to his father, of all people. And, while April didn’t recall Jett ever talking much about his old man, he knew there was painful history there, and that it took great guts to say that out loud.

“Is this some joke? I warn you, Jett --”

“No joke,” Jett said in a deadpan voice. “April’s my boyfriend.”

April wished again he could make himself even smaller on the sofa. In the most fortunate situation, the couch would have swallowed him already. Unfortunately, such magic had yet to be invented.

Mr. Huntsman inspected April, his eyes shadowed by furrowed eyebrows that were now knitted together, almost forming a thick line. “Did you make him pregnant, too?”

“Dad, he’s not a girl!” Jett shouted.

The reality of it all seemed to finally catch up with Jett’s father. He threw a confused look around. April suddenly felt sorry for him. It was like the man had come back home only to find it turned into ashes and his entire family eaten by zombies.

“Is there a place in this house where I can sleep?” Mr. Huntsman finally said.

Oh, so, for the moment, the danger was averted, and Jett’s dad was simply choosing to ignore the situation.

“You can sleep in my room,” Jett said.

“And where will you sleep then?”

“On the sofa.”

“And your wife?”

“Carina’s not my wife, dad.”

“Whatever.”

“She sleeps in your room with Jay.”

“And where’s your boyfriend sleeping?”

April felt his skin pricking with apprehension. The word ‘boyfriend’ sounded like poison in Mr. Huntsman’s mouth.

“With me on the sofa,” Jett said promptly.

That was hardly a practical idea, April thought, but he was willing to take it. Maybe they could put an inflatable bed on the floor or something like that.

“What’s that shit in the basement? It sounds like there’s a factory in there or something.”

“That’s April’s mining rig,” Jett explained.

“Oh, yeah? What is he mining? Oil?”

“Crypto,” Jett said.

“What the hell is that?”

“I’ll take it out of there,” April intervened.

“You shut up,” Mr. Huntsman said and looked at him with icy eyes. “Did you get permission to talk?”

“Dad, April doesn’t need permission from you to talk. He’s not one of your grunts.”

“That’s for me to decide.”

“I’m giving you my room. How long are you going to stay?” Jett asked.

Was that it? Were they not going to address the enormous elephant in the room?

“A few weeks,” Mr. Huntsman said. “And I’ll have you clean up this mess, don’t you think I won’t.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Jett said stubbornly.

April knew Jett had to put on quite a brave face right now. But he must have been angered, and messed up, and pissed at his old man. April could only be happy for having such a great dad himself. He had no idea how Mr. Huntsman intended to have Jett clean ‘this mess’ as he said.

“You have no idea what I’m talking about?” Mr. Huntsman got into Jett’s face, and April winced instantly. If they got violent, he had no idea what he could do. Carina, regardless of her attitude, couldn’t be of much help either. Suddenly, it felt like there was a need to have nine-one-one on speed dial more than ever.

“None,” Jett said, without budging an inch.

“Until I leave, your boyfriend must disappear --”

“No one disappears,” Jett replied, his voice getting louder.

“Jett, this is not how I raised you. What’s this? A phase? How do you go from making a girl pregnant to having a boyfriend? Do you think this is how you can piss me off more?”

“This has nothing to do with you,” Jett said sharply. “The sun and the moon don’t gravitate around you. And I don’t remember much about how you raised me. You ditched me, just like someone else did.”

There was a muscle ticking in Mr. Huntsman’s jaw as he was looking at his son. “It was for your own good.”

“Are you sure? Don’t you mean your own? Good thing I had someone who didn’t care to ditch me.”

“You didn’t want to come with me, live on the base. I could have taken care of you. You wouldn’t have turned into such a thug.”

“Sure. You couldn’t bear to face the complications,” Jett said, and he was the one to get into his father’s face now. “Your career was more important.”

“I could have taken you with me by force, and I didn’t!” Mr. Huntsman raised his voice. “You were my kid, and I could have done it! Instead, I let you have your own way. I can only see how wrong I was to do that.”

“Good thing you did that,” Jett spat. “Because I couldn’t have taken another day looking at you.”

“Are you still throwing blame around like it’s fucking candy?”

“No, dad. Just like you, I’ve given up on that, on you, a long time ago. You don’t even care to know what I blamed you for. You drew your own conclusions. Live with them now.”

April was sure he had lost the ability to breathe sometime along the conversation between Jett and his dad. Even Carina was white in the face, and the smile she offered April when he looked at her, was strained and unsure.

“I can live with them,” Mr. Huntsman said. “What I wonder is whether you can live with the consequences of your actions. So, get rid of the boy and make things right by the girl and your child.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Jett asked.

“You’ll marry her.” Mr. Huntsman pointed at Carina now, as if there could be any doubt who he was talking about. “You’ll raise this child properly.”

“I’m not going to marry Jett,” Carina protested.

“Why not?” Mr. Huntsman asked her.

“Because I don’t love him, and he doesn’t love me.”

“Oh, is that right? You should have thought about that when you made a child together. What will he learn from you two?”

“He will learn that he is loved,” Carina said and hugged Jay tightly in her arms, making the baby squirm a little.

April was astonished by how Jay had yet to start crying with all the yelling around. Maybe he had gotten used to Jett talking loudly, or he just felt safe enough in his mother’s arms.

“While you struggle as a single mom, and this hooligan right here goes around, leaving other girls pregnant?”

“Jett is not a hooligan,” Carina said through her teeth.

April stared at her in admiration. “He really isn’t,” he added.

“Why are you talking?” Mr. Huntsman scolded him. “And you? How can you be okay with all this? Why don’t you find yourself a nice gay boy who’s not my son and get out of this situation while you still can, huh?”

“I don’t know what’s the situation you’re talking about, Mr. Huntsman.”

“Sure thing you don’t. I’m surrounded by deaf people who don’t know the first thing about how hard life can be. If you don’t want to make this mess bigger, I suggest you better leave Jett alone.”

April felt a bit weird out by talking to Jett's dad like that. At least, the man wasn't outright homophobic, and he hadn't started yelling slurs at him. "I can't leave Jett alone. He is my boyfriend, and any mess that comes with him, I'll deal with it."

"Famous last words," Mr. Huntsman said, with sarcasm clear in his voice.

"I am already dealing with it," April continued. "For a while, I was the babysitter."

"Is this how you got involved with this boy? Did you sleep with the nanny? Sometimes, I don't know how come you ended up so wrong, Jett," Mr. Huntsman said, his attention back to his son. "And you," he turned toward Carina, "how did you let this happen?"

Carina shrugged. This time, the color was back to her cheeks. "I was in the can."

Mr. Huntsman made a sound that caused April to reach for his phone. "In prison?" he sputtered.

"Yeah. That's how people call it," Carina said.

"What for?"

"None of your business."

Mr. Huntsman looked around him again as if he saw things in a whole new light that didn't make things any better. "What kind of criminal are you, then?" he then asked April.

"Criminal? What? I'm not!" April protested.

"Not yet, seeing what kind of people you're hanging out with. You three," Mr. Huntsman pointed at them, staring each of them down, "will come up with a way to make this child live a normal life. You," he said to Jett, "will man up and assume responsibility for the girl you made pregnant and her child. You," he said to Carina, "will remove your head from your ass and will do the right thing by putting on a nice little white dress and walking down the altar with the good-for-nothing you chose as your man."

"A bit late for a little white dress," Carina said with a snort.

"Quiet!" Mr. Huntsman ordered. "And you," he finally turned to April, "will find someone like you and forget about a married man with a child."

"And if we don't do what you say?" Jett asked.

"Do you want me to threaten you? Is this how you think this is going to go down? No. I'll make you see things my way if it takes the last of my breath. Do you want to make a mess out of your life? Fine. But don't you dare to make a mess out of that baby's life."

With that, the speech was finally over, and Mr. Huntsman walked up the stairs, probably to set himself up in Jett's room.

"Now that went well," Carina commented.

"You think?" Jett shot at her.

"Hey, at least he didn't throw all of us out."

"Like I'd let him do that," Jett said.

April scratched his head. "Jett, maybe we should let the man cool off for a bit. And we can't sleep together on the sofa. It's too small even for me."

"We'll find a way, don't you worry," Jett said. "Does he think he can come here and declare war? Well, then it's war he gets."

April didn't know much about wars, especially one carried in the midst of a family, but he had a feeling he was about to find out.

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A terrible sound made April wake up with a start. He fell on the floor, rolling from Jett like a ball of dough. Jett stood up on his ass as if activated by a spring.

"What's this?" April began asking. He was completely disoriented and searched the small coffee table for his glasses.

"It's begun," Jett said in a hollow voice that gave April the willies instantly. "The war."

"What?"

April watched in disbelief Jett's dad descending the stairs with his phone in one hand. On the top of the stairs, Carina stood with a crying Jay in her arms.

The only calm person was Mr. Huntsman. He appeared to be quite amused with the infernal noise coming off his phone.

"What the hell is this?" April asked again and put his hands over his ears.

Mr. Huntsman finally decided that the torture was enough and stopped the tune blaring from his phone. "That was a bugle, son," he said cheerfully.

April had a mind to point out that he didn't exactly know what a bugle was and also that he had a dad who was nothing like Mr. Huntsman. For the moment, though, he was starting to become more curious than frightened.



“You, come down, too,” Mr. Huntsman yelled at Carina.

With a roll of the eyes, Carina began walking down the stairs. In the meantime, Mr. Huntsman was already in the living room and was sitting straight, his hands at his back, ready to inspect the troops.

He waited a bit impatiently for Carina to join. Both April and Jett were on their feet now and staring at Jett’s dad.

“Quiet!” Mr. Huntsman bellowed.

April stood straight, Jett cursed under his breath, and Carina began to coo at Jay. Apparently, the baby had no idea he had just been enlisted.

“Sorry, Mr. Huntsman,” Carina said, but April could tell there was a bit of satisfaction there. Still, she was trying to comfort Jay as much as she could.

“Maybe he needs his little teddy,” April suggested.

“Go get it, then!” Mr. Huntsman yelled at him.

April hurried up the stairs, without protesting. Behind him, Jett started to berate his father. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?”

“I’m putting order in this chaos!”

April didn’t hear the rest clearly as he began searching for Jay’s teddy through the mountain of toys. Carina had obviously had too little time to organize things. Finally, he grabbed the plushy and hurried back.

Mr. Huntsman was walking slowly, inspecting Jett, Carina, and Jay with vulture-like eyes. “You young people today think it’s fun to have a child! You think that he’s some kind of toy!”

“I don’t think that!” Jett protested. “Carina, either.”

“Sure, sure. You’re a thug, and she’s an ex-con. What a pair!”

“We’re not exactly a pair,” Carina added.

Mr. Huntsman turned on his heels, but not to chastise Carina. His attention trained on April, who felt ill-equipped to face danger, armed as he was, only with a plushy. “Of course. There’s also the girlish boy. Damn hippies,” he muttered under his breath.

Probably that was aimed at him, April thought, even if Mr. Huntsman had used the plural. Yes, he had sort of a hippy name, but, otherwise, he didn’t know what exactly qualified him for that categorization.

“Move and appease the child,” Mr. Huntsman ordered.

April didn't say a word and handed the plushy to Carina. Jay grabbed the toy and, annoyed with it, threw it on the floor. Then he hid his face into the crook of Carina's shoulder. One look at Mr. Huntsman was enough to tell April that the situation was getting frustrating for him with each passing moment.

“Hey, Jay,” April called softly for the little boy. He caressed the golden head, and Jay turned slowly at the sound of April's voice. “Let's be good for a minute, okay?”

His soothing tone had the beneficial effect of making Jay's crying subside little by little.

“Are we done already with all the childishness?” Mr. Huntsman boomed.

April put his hands over Jay's ears right away. “Could you please not yell so much, Mr. Huntsman? Jay's just a baby. He doesn't know or understand that you're pissed at us, young people.”

For a moment or two, Jett's dad observed April as if he was debating whether April was making fun of him or not. In the end, he decided that April had to speak the truth because his next words were said in a normal voice. “I'm going to have order in this house, whether you like it or not.”

“It's plenty of order,” Jett replied.

“There are a crying baby, an ex-convict, and a boy with a hippy name under this roof. Also, infernal machines are doing some suspicious work in the basement.”

“It's not suspicious. It's just cryptocurrency,” April said as he tried to explain.

“Then it must be something illegal. Don't think for a moment that I believed you when you said you were no criminal, boy. You're just one of those modern types. A hacker or something,” Mr. Huntsman concluded.

Something told April that he wouldn't be able to change Mr. Huntsman's mind, so, for the moment, he decided not to waste his breath. He got in line and looked at Jett's dad, curious again about what he wanted from them.

“First of all,” Mr. Huntsman continued, “this house is a pigsty. Not as much as I expected to be, but still a pigsty.”

“We vacuumed,” Jett pointed out.

Now wasn't the moment for April to remind Jett that he was the only one doing all the vacuuming.

“You, kids, have no idea what real cleanliness is. I'll teach you.”

“But I have school,” April said, alarmed.

“And I have Jay,” Carina added, lifting Jay higher in her arms to make a point.

“And I don’t want to clean anything.” Jett was the last to speak.

“You,” Mr. Huntsman pointed at April, “go to school. After, you come straight back here. You won’t escape your chores just because you go to some hippy school.”

“It’s not a hippy school. I study computer architecture,” April explained.

“I don’t see why those two words must stay together,” Mr. Huntsman commented after a long stare at April. “So, it’s not some artsy bullshit school?”

“If you’re asking if I study liberal arts, I don’t. It’s a career in STEM I want to pursue.”

The immediate answer from Mr. Huntsman was a noncommittal grunt, but April could sense a small shift in his demeanor. Apparently, not studying liberal arts was a positive point in Mr. Huntsman’s book.

“You,” Mr. Huntsman turned toward Carina, “will take care of the baby, but as soon as he falls asleep or doesn’t need you, you report for duty.”

“Why should anyone listen to you?” Jett said.

“I think it’s simple. If you bunch of young idiots don’t want to clean, I will. But I will strip the walls and change everything, but the kitchen sink and you can all sleep on the lawn. How’s that for motivation?”

April didn’t need to consider the alternative too much. Sleeping on the lawn didn’t sound like fun at all. “Maybe I shouldn’t go to school today and help clean the house, instead,” he offered.

“Wasn’t I clear? Grab your books or whatever you need to grab, and walk out the door right now!”

“But it’s still early,” April pointed out. “And I could make breakfast for everyone.”

“No breakfast until the house is clean.”

“But Jay needs to eat,” Carina pointed out.

“That’s for you to deal with. But you don’t get to lazy around. Take care of the baby, as I told you. What are you waiting for?”

April didn’t need another invitation. He stole a glance at Jett, whose face looked like thunderbolts and lightning, and then hurried to get his backpack. Then he was out the door. He hadn’t even gotten to brush his teeth.

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*“How is it?”*

*“It’s a fucking nightmare. I’m expecting any second now for him to tell me to grab a toothbrush and clean the toilet.”*

*“Seriously? Please don’t use mine.”*

*“Stop pissing your pants, dweeb. You got away easy.”*

*“What are we going to do about your dad, Jett?”*

*“I have no fucking clue. How long till you get home?”*

*“Just one more class, and I’ll hurry back, as instructed.”*

*“Don’t let him get to you.”*

*“I don’t. I just worry about the rest of you. And I need to think of something.”*

*“He’s my dad. If he thinks he’ll wear us all off, he’s wrong. I’ll make sure of that.”*

*“Okay. Gotta go. Bye.”*

*“Bye.”*

April sighed as he pushed his phone back into his pocket. What could they all do against Mr. Huntsman? That man was a force of nature. But things couldn’t stay like that. Plus, he didn’t want to be lectured on how he needed to find somebody else for a boyfriend.

One thing Jett’s dad was right about. They were all a bunch of kids. But that didn’t mean that no one could stand up to him. Of course, if they tried anything, there would be sleeping on the lawn for all of them.

So, what they all needed was, actually, a pretty logical thing. Since it was a war and they were under assault, they needed reinforcements.

## *Chapter Twenty-Nine – How Do You Like Your Potatoes Peeled?*

Jett examined his dad from under furrowed eyebrows.

“What do you think he’ll ask of us next?” Carina whispered, taking him by surprise.

“Stop creeping on me like this. I’m thinking.” Jett turned to his observation of the enemy.

His dad was inspecting each surface with a magnifying glass. If there were one speck of dust he found, Jett would eat it, that sure he was that the house was pristine clean now.

“Yes, ‘mkay,” his dad mumbled and then stood up and stared at them. “It could be better, but it’s livable now.”

“Would it kill you to say ‘good work’?” Jett asked, crossing his arms over his chest.

“That’s something I will say when it’s some good work to praise. This,” his dad pointed around, “is basic. This house needs to be clean if you want to raise a baby here.”

“Oh, so it was your concern as a granddad that made you torture us for half a day,” Jett said, making sure that the sarcasm in his voice was pretty clear.

His father seemed to ponder for a second. “Sure. But it was also fun. Kids like you, you need to learn what hard work is. You take everything for granted.”

Jett tried to exchange a glance with Carina. She rolled her eyes and made a small sound like she was already fed up with all the speeches on responsibility in the world.

“Young lady, this kind of attitude won’t get you far in life,” Jett’s dad said to her, wagging a finger.

Carina just shrugged. “It worked swell so far.”

“Sure. You had a baby out of wedlock, and ended up in prison for God knows what. Wait, was it for some violent crime?”

Carina grimaced as if she had ingested something foul. “Not yet,” she replied aggressively. “I just stole some things, okay? I needed them.”

“Haven’t you heard of honest work?”

“Dad, stop busting Carina’s balls,” Jett said, without thinking.

“Balls?” His dad stared at him in disbelief. “Is she a boy, too?”

Jett waved impatiently. “Just a way of saying. Get off her case, will you already?”

“No. My grandchild will not live with an irresponsible mother. She,” he pointed at Carina, “will learn to lead an honest life from now on. Starting this moment, no excuses.”

“You don’t get to tell her all that. You’re not her dad,” Jett said, feeling his irritation growing. He couldn’t say that he was more annoyed with the fact that his dad cared about straightening Carina up, but not him. In his eyes, he had to be a completely lost cause.

“I’m her father-in-law,” his dad said promptly.

“For the last time, dad, no one’s getting married. I’m with April now.”

“So? Are you going to marry him?”

Jett hesitated for a second. He hadn’t thought that far, but he didn’t think the idea to be as funny as his dad was trying to make it be, grinning hard and showing his teeth.

“Thought so,” his dad said with satisfaction after receiving no answer.

Jett cursed inwardly. So far, things weren’t going too well for them. His dad had taken him by surprise, but that didn’t mean that he wouldn’t push back. “Just leave Carina alone. It’s me you have a beef with.”

“I don’t have a beef with you, son,” his dad said directly. “I see that I must make you get your life straight, and, speaking of that, you need to get rid of that Summer boy. If he doesn’t have a place to go, I’ll cover for his rent for a month or so --”

“I’m not getting rid of April,” Jett said through his teeth. “And don’t you think I could help him if need be? What business do you have with him?”

“My only business with him is that he managed, somehow, to fool you. He’s a bright kid, he seems. I still don’t trust the mining computers or whatever those are in the basement, but he seems smart. So I have nothing against him. He should just find a boy who’s just like him.”

“And what, exactly, do you mean by that?”

His dad pursed his lips, but he didn’t seem to take the bait. Jett needed only one reason, one strong reason. But it looked like his dad was more interested in leading numerous battles rather than fight a decisive one. “You’re young and naïve. Yeah, he’s pretty to look at, I’ll give you that. But just look at her,” he pointed at Carina.

Carina comically quirked her eyebrows.

“What don’t you like about her?”

Jett blinked hard. What was his dad trying to say now?

“She’s a nice young lady. You have a child with her. It’s true that she stole some things and ended up in prison, but that doesn’t mean that she’s all that bad, right?”

Jett bit his lips hard. His father trying to sell Carina to him was at least half funny. Carina had no problems to hide, though. She was snickering, covering her face with both hands.

“You two, stop laughing! That little boy sleeping upstairs is a joke, too?”

Suddenly, Jett and Carina stopped laughing. “He’s not a joke,” Jett said. “Just unexpected is all.”

“Then you can handle a few more unexpected things. Do what’s right, Jett. Tell your boyfriend he needs to find a place to live. Make things work with the mother of your child. A simple life is a happy life.”

“Oh, and you care so much,” Jett said and scoffed.

“I do, son,” his dad said solemnly, and this time, he looked Jett in the eyes.

Jett looked away. Maybe he did; at least, for years, Jett had hoped that was the case. His father didn’t have to come home when on leave. He had money to go anywhere; he could have fun on some exotic island, get drunk, meet people. But, instead, like clockwork, he came every year and spent a few weeks with Jett, whether Jett liked it or not.

And, during those visits, his dad had always tried to make him bend to his ways. To no avail, Jett admitted, not without pride, but it proved, indeed, that he still cared. That, no matter what harsh words they exchanged, he still cared.

“Dad, me and Carina, not happening,” Jett explained in a heartbeat.

“Why, son? She’s prettier than the boy. And she’s a girl!”

“Don’t you think I know all that? I’m not blind, you know. It’s just that we happened quite a long time ago and we don’t work together. That’s all.”

“A long time ago? How long?”

“Less than two years or something.”

“Hmm. And that’s a long time? Try seven years,” his dad said. “You, young people, are so quick to kick at things you believe you don’t want.”

Jett bit his lips hard, and this time it wasn’t to keep himself from laughing.

“Mr. Huntsman,” Carina intervened, “you’re wasting your breath. Just so you know, even if Jett were still into me, I wouldn’t. He doesn’t love me, and I don’t love him.”

“Love.” Jett’s dad scoffed like that word had been invented by some lunatic on the spot. “Life is more than just about love. It is about commitment and doing the right thing. How are you going to raise the little boy? All by yourself? Do you think that’s easy?”

“No, I don’t think that’s easy,” Carina said and put her chin up in defiance. “Even more. I know that it’s not easy.”

“I’ll help her with everything I can. We haven’t talked just yet, but I will be part of Jay’s life. Carina won’t struggle by herself, no matter how much you try to scare her.”

“And your boyfriend? How does he fit in all this?”

“For your information, April loves Jay. He took care of him for weeks, until Carina came here. And he’ll continue to care because that’s who he is. If you’re so sure you care, too, you should understand.”

His father was moving his weight from one foot to another. It looked like he didn’t like losing this fight. “Young people,” he said under his breath. “You,” he pointed at Carina, “go to the kitchen and make some food.”

“Dad, don’t order her around, what the hell?” Jett protested.

Carina shrugged. “If you people like food with human thumbs in it, sure, I’ll go.”

“Are you trying to tell me you don’t even know how to make food? How have you been feeding that baby?”

Carina made an amused face and patted her chest discreetly. Jett shook her head, trying to gesture at her to cut it off. “This,” she said, “and also, all the baby food I’ve used so far comes in boxes with instructions. It’s not that hard.”

“That might be, young lady,” Jett’s dad said, clearly not wanting to leave the battlefield just yet, “but you’ll have to learn. You won’t raise my grandchild on takeout and other junk food.”

“Sure, I’ll learn. Until then, I’m quite happy to go to the kitchen and prepare something that might just poison you. I don’t say that I’ll do it on purpose, but, you know, shit happens,” Carina said airily.

“Never mind,” Jett’s dad said with unhidden disgust. “Young people today. They can’t boil an egg, but they believe they can be parents,” he added, throwing his hands in the air and walking toward the kitchen.

“If you like that egg extra hard, I can boil it,” Carina said, as she followed him.

Jett caught her by the elbow. “Let him be. At least, if he’s locked in the kitchen, we’ll have a breather.”



“I’m going to watch,” Carina explained. “I’d like to know how to boil an egg. Are we going to eat boiled eggs, Mr. Huntsman?” she called loudly.

“No! We’re going to eat real food! That if you managed to at least buy some groceries!”

Jett was about to argue with Carina some more, but he was interrupted by April coming through the door.

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April took in the house and whistled in unhidden admiration. “Wow, you guys, you really did clean the house. Man, was that corner always there? I don’t quite recall --”

Jett was making weird gestures at him, and April instantly curbed his enthusiasm. “I mean, it’s pretty clean. Good job.”

Jett pulled him by one arm into the living room, not even allowing him to say hello to the other people in the house. “Don’t praise the tyrant,” he said through his teeth. “And it’s not like he did everything. He worked both Carina and me to the bone while you had fun with your classes.”

“Fun is not exactly a word I’d use to describe my experience in school, but nonetheless, I must commend you on really great work. I mean, I had no idea the house could look this good. Wait, did you wash the curtains, too? Suddenly, it doesn’t smell that badly of cigarettes around here.”

“Washed them, dried them, put them up,” Jett said impatiently. “Look, April, you must not fraternize with the enemy.”

“Jett, he’s your dad, not the enemy, and seeing the results, while I do question his methods, I must admit that he’s on to something. I mean, this really looks like a livable house.”

“Yeah, a livable house where he doesn’t want you to live. Now, listen to me. He’ll try to convince you to take a hike. Don’t do it, no matter what he promises you. Or if he threatens you. He wouldn’t do that, but, you know, come to me if he says anything like that.”

“All right, all right, you must chill a little. First of all, I won’t give in, no matter what, as long as you want me here.”

“Of course I want you here. It’s not like I’d ever let you go.”

“See? Same here. I mean, I’d never leave, either. So there’s nothing he could say to me to convince me. Is it better like this? You have nothing to worry about. Wait, where is everyone? I mean, I saw Carina rushing to the kitchen, but --”

“My dad’s cooking us lunch or breakfast or whatever meal of the day this is since we had nothing since we woke up. Carina said she wanted to watch and learn how to boil an egg or something.”

“No way! How come he didn’t force you and Carina to cook for everyone?”

“Carina might have said something about food poisoning. Not that she would do it on purpose, but, you know, shit happens.”

April just shook his head. “Okay. I’ll wash my hands, and change and I’ll be back. I can’t miss watching your father cook.”

“It’s nothing that fascinating. He just grumbles a lot to himself.”

“Hey, it might just make him look a bit human, so that’s why I want to see it. Do you know if he threw all our clothes somewhere or --”

“No. He folded everything and assigned each of us drawers and part of the closet. You’ll find everything you need upstairs.”

“But that’s his room now, right?”

Jett shrugged. “Maybe he didn’t like the idea of ruining the house he made us clean with a pile of clothes thrown on the floor.”

“Maybe.” April smiled. Maybe the enemy wasn’t all bad, after all, and some negotiations were possible. Although he didn’t know Mr. Huntsman at all, he liked to see the good in people. His dad had often told him how he would lose the good in himself if he ever failed to do that. He was making no exceptions for Jett’s dad. There had to be something good in him.

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“Can I help you with anything, Mr. Huntsman?” April asked directly, as soon as he was in the kitchen.

“I need soldiers on duty for peeling vegetables. Don’t cut your fingers, and don’t do like her.” Mr. Huntsman pointed at Carina, who was staring quizzically at the potato in her hand.

If April looked closer, he could see the potato had been turned into some modern sculpture.

“What am I still doing wrong?” Carina asked, and she seemed pretty pissed.

April wasn’t sure if she was pissed at Jett’s dad, or herself for not being able to peel a damned vegetable. Maybe both. “Here,” he hurried to show Carina, “like this.”

Mr. Huntsman looked over his shoulder. “Keep it up, young lady. No wonder Jett likes this boy better. He knows, at least, how to peel a potato.”

“I’m sure that’s the reason,” Carina said brightly and nudged April playfully with one elbow. “Jett really likes his potatoes peeled.”

“Joke all you want. That’s how you end up single and with a baby in your arms.”

“Cool story,” Carina said and snickered.

At least, she hadn’t called Jett’s dad, ‘bro’. That would have been terrible, April thought.

“Mr. Huntsman, what are we making?” he asked.

“What I’m making, you want to say. Cream soup with healthy vegetables and a hearty stew with some grilled chicken on the side. I must admit that I was surprised to find the fridge full. Who of you two convinced Jett to buy groceries once in a full moon?”

April exchanged a short look with Carina. He made her a sign to remain silent, but it seemed that Carina didn’t care that much to hold her tongue. “April’s a great cook. He does the groceries. Well, he does put Jett to buy everything, but he makes the list and all that stuff.”

Mr. Huntsman turned from the boiling pots on the stove to look at them. His curious glance told April that he firmly believed they were both pulling his leg.

“Just basic stuff,” April hurried to say. “I mean, that’s what I cook. If the chicken is already defrosted, I can try a bit of marinade. Nothing fancy,” he babbled, “just something to make it taste better.”

Mr. Huntsman stared at him for a few seconds. “You mean, season the chicken. That will hardly be a marinade, or we’ll have to wait for hours to eat.”

“Sure, sure.” April didn’t want to contradict Mr. Huntsman.

“Be careful with the salt. Anything else goes,” Mr. Huntsman replied and returned to his pots.

“He’s starting to like you,” Carina whispered to him.

April didn’t say anything. He liked to believe that, too, but, in this case, he wanted to be as cautious as someone in his position could be. After all, the in-laws had to be tough, and a father-in-law was the toughest of them all.

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Jett threw the ball, and Jay hurried after it, squealing in delight. He had stubbornly refused to join April in the kitchen, as he believed that his dad would believe that to be a victory of some sort. Also, he was a bit pissed at April for being so carefree about the whole situation. His dad wouldn’t let things go; he would relentlessly go at it until someone cracked.

Jett knew he wouldn’t crack. But April didn’t seem the type to take head-on someone like Major Thomas Huntsman. Sid was nothing like that; he was gentle and a cool dad, and there was no way April had the right training to face the war of attrition Jett’s dad was going to launch at him.

It pissed him off that he couldn't convince April to lay back. It seemed as if April wanted to get in Jett's dad's way somehow, armed only with that bright-as-the-sun smile. Damn, he would be in for some rude awakening, but Jett wasn't ready at all to fight with April over that. Either way, he was bound to do something wrong.

So, he was spending his time here, with Jay, and, as always, it was fun. If he could just make his dad leave already ... But no, he had promised himself a long time ago that his dad would be welcome under this roof, always, no matter how much at odds they were.

Jay brought the ball to him and let it fall in his lap. Then, with one tiny hand, he caressed Jett's cheek. For a moment, Jett just stood there, not knowing how to react. Then he laughed and grabbed Jay while imitating a wild animal, which triggered an immediate bout of laughter in the kid.

Great. Now even Jay thought he cared too much about feels these days.

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"Lunch or whatever meal this is is ready," April announced.

He stopped as soon as he noticed Jett and Jay sleeping together on the bed. There was something so peaceful in how they lay there, Jay on top of his dad's chest, gone to the world. Even Jett was smiling in his sleep, so April tiptoed to the bed and carefully took Jay to put him in his crib.

"Hey," he called softly and touched Jett's face.

Lazy eyelids opened, and the beautiful caramel eyes stared at him.

"Let's eat. You must be starving."

Jett smiled and pulled April quickly into his arms.

"Jett," April warned, but in a whisper since he didn't want to wake up Jay. To make himself clear, he grabbed a handful of Jett's hair and pulled hard.

Jett mouthed an 'ouch' and then reached for him. The kiss shut him up all right, but April wasn't sure that was a good idea, especially since Jett had every intention to make it a kiss-kiss.

"Jett," he said as he managed with difficulty to extract his lips from the kiss. "If your father finds us like this --"

"That would be a good thing," Jett said aggressively. "He'll get it then."

"Wouldn't be easier if we all just got along?"

"And held hands and sang Kumbaya," Jett said and pushed himself up.

“We made food together. He’s actually quite a good cook,” April said.

Jett grunted. “Yeah, he is. The greatest. I mean, after you.”

April was ready to jump at any opportunity presenting itself. “You don’t have to say that. He’s obviously used to cooking, much more than me. So you like your dad’s cooking, right? Then let’s go and have a peaceful meal, all of us.”

“Peaceful it will be, but only because he doesn’t let anyone talk with their mouth full,” Jett said. He massaged his stomach that grumbled loudly.

“See? You’re hungry. Let’s go, and we’ll see after that what we’re going to do. Maybe he’ll warm toward us,” April said.

“And pigs will fly,” Jett said with a sigh. “Just get ready, April. Is all I’m saying. Just you wait. Enjoy the food, ‘cause a lecture will follow after.”

“I can deal with it,” April replied. “Believe it or not, my dad used to lecture me a lot, too. He did that because he cared for me to turn up well, but he could be a little annoying at times.”

“Trust me, April, Sid’s lectures are a damned breeze compared to what my dad can do. Plus, your dad doesn’t have some agenda to break us apart. This guy has.”

“This guy,” April said, “is your dad, and I can’t believe that he’s all bad. After all, his genes are alive in you, and you know, I like you quite a lot.”

“You do?” Jett’s eyes lit up at that. “Okay, then. Let’s go and eat. Then we’ll see what he has in store for us.”

April was content with small victories. Seeing how Mr. Huntsman had been civil almost the entire time they cooked together and even praised them a little at the end, he believed things could be better.

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“You go take care of the child,” Mr. Huntsman said curtly to Carina.

She stood up from her chair. “You know, Mr. Huntsman, you don’t have to tell me that. I know what my responsibilities are.”

“I just make sure you don’t forget,” Mr. Huntsman said with a broad smile. “This is how you build discipline.”

Carina shrugged. “Thanks for the meal, though. Pretty good.”

April was already busy washing the dishes. He knew that leaving Mr. Huntsman and Jett to stare at each other over the table seemed like a bad idea, but he was actually in the same room even if he had his back turned for the moment.

“Now that I have the two of you here, let’s make things clear,” Mr. Huntsman started.

“Here we go.” Jett sighed audibly. “What more do you have to say? April’s not leaving, okay? You can’t do anything to make that happen.”

“You can’t keep the boy here against his will,” Mr. Huntsman said. “Why don’t you ask him if he likes the current situation?”

“He already told you, and this is just your trying to wear everyone down with your stupid ideas,” Jett said.

“Stupid ideas? Is it stupid that I want my grandson to have a family with his mom and dad both at home? What? Do you want him to grow up with mom, dad, and dad?”

April stopped wiping the plates for a moment. Even if put wrongly, the thought was touching. Not that he saw himself as some sort of surrogate dad for Jay. Jay already had a dad, an awesome one at that.

“Carina is going to find her own place. And, whatever, it’s not like you can understand. You must have been born straight into your military boots,” Jett replied. “And April is not leaving, okay?”

“April,” Jett’s dad addressed him, “don’t you think Jay will grow up hating you for stealing his dad from his mom?”

April managed to put down the plate in his hands without breaking it. He turned and looked at Mr. Huntsman, who was staring at him with a sly glint in his eyes. “I don’t think so,” he replied, although he felt his confidence wavering a little under that gaze. “Why would he?”

“Because kids want both their mom and dad to be with them.”

“Yes, they do,” April admitted.

“So, don’t you think that you giving up on this little fling would give Jett and Carina the chance to work things between them?”

April stole a look at Jett and felt his heart stopping at the shadows, darkening his beautiful eyes. So that was what Jett had tried to tell him. “If they want that chance, they are free to take it,” he said with determination. “I won’t stand in their way, but I won’t get out of it, either, because they both told me, loud and clear, that there is nothing between them anymore, and it hasn’t been for a long time.”

He took one deep breath when he finished. This was harder than he thought.

“Hmm. All right, I wanted to save you some heartache since you look like a sensitive young man and you will surely hurt when Jett is kicking you at the curb --”

“I’m not kicking April at the curb,” Jett intervened this time.

“Yes, yes, you believe that you know everything, and then the next day, you do the exact opposite.”

“When exactly did I do that?” Jett said. “I remember always hating you just the same.”

April held his breath. He stole a nervous glance at Mr. Huntsman and noticed the hard-set jaw. Another look at Jett told him the same story. Maybe this was getting out of hand, no matter how much he wished for a peaceful resolution.

“Mr. Huntsman,” he said quickly to interrupt the unnerving silence, “I know how things might look to you from the outside, but we can work this out. No one will get hurt, I promise. I give you my word --”

“Hmm.” That was all Jett’s dad said before he got up and stormed out of the room.

“Told you,” Jett said as soon as his dad was out of earshot. “He’s an asshole.”

“Jett,” April said, and he couldn’t stop feeling upset. “Stop telling him things you don’t believe, even if you’re upset with him.”

“What things? I do hate him,” Jett said with finality, and he stormed out of the room, as well.

Slowly, April began putting all the plates back where they belonged. His phone started ringing, and he sighed in relief when he saw the caller’s ID. “Dad?” he whispered as if he was afraid someone might overhear him.

“The only one you have,” his dad joked. “What’s the emergency, pumpkin?”

“It’s quite complicated. Let me get somewhere I’m sure no one will eavesdrop. I really need your advice.”

“Sure thing, pumpkin. Anything for you.”

April squeezed the phone in his hand as if it were his lifeline. “Jett’s dad is home, and he’s ... tough.”

Things would be much better, once his dad knew everything. He would know what to do, because April surely didn’t want anyone to be unhappy, and that included Mr. Huntsman, too.

### *Chapter Thirty – Reinforcements Have Arrived*

April walked into the backyard, holding the phone tightly and looking carefully around to make sure that no one would notice. Actually, he cared about Jett's dad not to overhear his conversation. However, by how moody Jett was, April didn't want to be in the position to offer too many explanations to him either.

"We can talk now."

"So, Jett's dad is back home? I didn't want to comment on it since it wasn't my business, but I thought Jett was alone or at least estranged from his family. That house, even with your cleaning, looked a bit, how should I say this --"

"I know, dad," April said with a sigh. "Thank you for not saying anything at the time. Jett might not care about cleaning too much, but he can get super-sensitive sometimes."

"I know you two boys can figure everything out. After all, if you learn how to do things by yourself, that's great. But you called me for advice, so I'm here. What's going on with Jett's dad?"

"He's like this military type, and woke us up with a bugle – I had to Google that, you know? – and then he kept on trying to convince Jett to marry Carina --"

"Carina? Wait, who is she?"

"Oh, damn, so many things happened, and I forgot to call you and tell you everything," April moaned and covered his eyes with one hand. "Carina is Jay's mom."

"Oh, so the mystery got solved. Where has she been all this time? Was she the one to leave Jay by Jett's doorsteps?"

His dad's questions were all reasonable, given the circumstances, but April didn't want to have to explain to him how Carina was pretty much an ex-con. Taken out of context, it would just make her a bad girl, which maybe she was a little, but that was not that important, given how much she loved Jay.

"Hers is a complicated story. She was just away because of some, um, obligations, and her stepsister, who is a bit of a loony or something, just decided on her own to leave Jay with Jett. Anyway, she's here now and --"

"Does Jett still have feelings for her?" Sid expressed his concern right away.

"No, no, everything is fine. She's cool with everything, even us being together. And she just needs a place to stay since she doesn't want to live with her stepsister anymore, so she lives here



for the time being. She told me that she has no interest in Jett and she's a great mom for Jay and --"

"Son, breathe a little. I understand. You don't have to work this hard to convince me. So, the three of you, plus the baby, are living there. How did Jett's dad end up there with all of you? And is there enough room for everyone to sleep? It looked to me like there were not more than two bedrooms upstairs."

"Jett's dad is in the army. He's a major. And he put Jett and Carina to clean the house. I was allowed to go to school. Actually, ordered. He's bent on the idea that Jett should marry Carina, and that I, well, should go away."

There was a short silence at the other end.

"Dad?" April said, trying hard to keep in his impatience. "What do you think?"

"Do you want me to come and take you home? For a while?"

"What? No," April protested. "Wait, do you agree with Mr. Huntsman? Do you think I should just retreat and leave Jett --"

"April." His dad sounded stern, and that was only when he wanted to make sure April was listening. "The way things seem to be, you might get hurt. I don't want you to be subjected to some homophobic --"

"Oh, no, it's not like that! I mean, Mr. Huntsman is tough, but he didn't insult me or anything. He just thinks that Jett should become responsible and offer Carina and Jay a home where he also lives, or something like that."

"What does Jett say?" Now Sid seemed intrigued.

"He's pissed as hell at his dad. Just earlier, he told him that he hated him. I think Mr. Huntsman didn't take it well."

"I suppose not. Listen, April; it wouldn't be such a bad idea to give these people a bit of space --"

"But, dad," April complained. "How could I leave Jett all by himself here? What if ..." He hesitated. Did he really think that? "What if," he whispered, "Jett's dad wins and, you know --"

"If you believe in Jett and his feelings for you, you shouldn't doubt him. Have you told him yet about who you are?"

"Not yet."

"Son."

A single word, and it could express so much disappointment. April felt his heart growing small. “Now doesn’t seem like quite the right time to tell him,” he replied.

“If you think of things this way, there will never be a right time,” Sid said in a tone that brooked no contradiction.

“I know you’re right,” April murmured.

“And yet, you will still do things your way,” Sid said with a sigh.

“You taught me to be my own person,” April said.

“Your own person, yes, but not someone who doesn’t care about other people’s feelings.”

This was going wrong in so many ways. April moved the phone from one year to another and leaned against the old rock wall covered in moss. “Dad,” he whispered, “it’s not like that. Jett, that time --”

“It’s all right. You’ll do it when you think it’s the right time. You will also live with the consequences,” Sid added. “Look, April, I’m not upset with you. Well, maybe a little. But you’re getting yourself in a complicated situation there. And if Mr. Huntsman doesn’t want you under his roof, it’s a bit rude to stay there. Plus, you might end up only hurting the relationship Jett has with his dad, something that appears to be tense already as it is.”

April could feel tears welling up in his eyes. “I can’t leave Jett, dad. He’ll just think that I’m abandoning him. There must be some other way.”

“Son, I’m not telling you to break up with Jett. I only think that you should give Jett’s family a breather. I suppose that Mr. Huntsman was pretty shocked to discover that he was a granddad and also that his son was now in a relationship with another boy. That can be a lot to take in. I know that you two, young as you are, don’t think that it’s a big deal, but --”

“Really, dad? Was it a big deal to you when I told you I was sure I liked boys more than girls?” April felt the right to revolt a little against his dad.

“That’s not fair, April. I’ve always cared about you and your happiness. But I’m being honest here, and I do have the obligation, as a human being, to put myself in Mr. Huntsman’s shoes. But tell me once again. Are you sure he didn’t insult you? He didn’t call you names, threaten you --”

“No, nothing like that. But he tries to make me feel guilty about standing in the way of Jett’s, Carina’s, and Jay’s happiness. Is that what I’m doing? Am I selfish?”

“No.” His dad seemed a bit appeased now. “That is not what you’re doing, and you’re not selfish. If Jett and Carina considered that they still had feelings for one another, I think you would know. And that doesn’t seem to be the case. Still, April, I think if you just slept one night

at home, you would allow Jett and his dad to talk things through. They might hold back because you're there."

"Jett just told his dad he hates him. I don't think he is holding back. We're under assault here, dad, I'm telling you. Could you just come here and, you know, talk to Mr. Huntsman?"

"Talk to him? About what? How to raise his son?"

"According to Jett, Mr. Huntsman didn't do much of that. He's just away all the time, at his base or something. It feels like he's just visiting, and I don't want, as I told you, Jett to think that I'd bolt the moment things get tough."

Sid drew a long sigh. "All right. I'll see what I can do. I'll try to come this evening."

"Thank you, dad! You're the most awesome dad; you know that, right?"

"Of course. Since my son can manipulate me so easily to do his bidding, I suppose that I'm the greatest dad in existence."

"No, dad, it's not like that," April protested. Now he felt a bit guilty about insisting so much. It was only that so much was at stake. He lowered his voice. "I need you because I really don't know --"

"You don't have to say anything else. I will talk to Jett's dad. Only that I can't guarantee a positive outcome of the conversation I'll have with him. And if things get truly complicated there, I will insist that you let them solve their issues and come home with me."

"I still need to go to school," April pointed out.

"And you still have that place you rented, right? I would like to have you home with me for a couple of days. At least over the weekend."

"Why do you insist so much on this?"

"Because I don't want you to get hurt."

"What about Jett?"

Sid sighed again. "There is no one's business to come between a father and his son."

"Really? Even if the father is a --"

"April, don't. No matter how difficult Jett's dad is, it's not your place to judge anyone, okay?" The stern voice was back, and April felt little and chastised.

"I just want to support Jett," he explained.

“I know. And I want you to be safe.”

“I know, dad,” April mumbled.

“If everything works well, we’ll see each other tonight. Take care, son.”

“I will, dad.”

It was with a bit of a heavy heart that he ended the conversation. His dad rarely talked to him like that, in that kind of voice. That meant that he believed that the entire situation was much more serious than April thought it to be. It made things all the more complicated. He liked to believe that he could count on his dad, no matter what, but, in this case, he had a strong feeling that his dad considered the support he had to offer something different from what April had in mind.

His dad always wanted what was best for him. April wanted so much to make him understand the strength of the feelings he had for Jett. But, in this case, his dad just believed that his son’s happiness had to be above everything else. And that wasn’t possible when Jett needed him so badly, and April couldn’t even think for a moment to leave him to face his father’s continuous assault.

His dad was wrong, April decided. He wouldn’t leave Jett’s side, and he would find a good moment to tell him everything. If the feelings they had for one another were as strong as they believed, they would go through and get on the other side not so badly scathed.

Shaking his head, he walked back into the house.

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The atmosphere in the house was thick and heavy, despite the interdiction he had to smoke inside. Jett stood on the couch, playing with his thumbs, for lack of anything smarter to do. April sat to his right and placed a hand on his thigh. In any other circumstances, Jett would have just interpreted that as an invitation to do something naughty, whether that was what it was or not. But right now, his heart was just as thick and heavy as the air around him.

“Can’t you talk to him and tell him you’re sorry?” April suggested.

“Why should I be sorry?” Jett said, looking away from his boyfriend. “I meant every word. I hate his guts.”

“He can’t be all bad.”

“What’s with you?” Jett could feel his irritation growing, and it was guided now toward April. “Don’t you hear him when he keeps telling that he wants you out of here?”

“It’s just because he believes that it would be best for you. I don’t think he doesn’t like me in particular or something. Actually, we had quite a good time cooking together.”

“Good time? Really?”

“All right. Average. Neutral. A bit above zero, okay? I just think that he needs to get used to the idea. Sure, if you continue to contradict him and --”

“Contradict him? Is that what I’m doing? I’m on your side, you little ass!”

“Hey, let’s not fight. All right, it seems like whatever I say today, I somehow choose the wrong words because no one really understands what I’m saying.”

“No one? Who, besides me, doesn’t understand you?”

“My dad,” April said with a sigh. “I called him, and he’ll be here tonight if he can.”

“Why?”

“I think it will help if my dad speaks to your dad. You know, they’re both grownups, and they might just figure out a way to talk about important things without, well, getting into a fight.”

“And what did he say when you told him my dad wants you out of here?”

“He wasn’t happy.” There was a short moment of hesitation from April. “He was worried that I might have been insulted, threatened, and stuff like that.”

“My dad wouldn’t dare,” Jett said, feeling the darkness inside him growing. “It’s not his right to tell me who I should be with.”

April squeezed his thigh in sympathy. Then, he leaned in and placed a long, playful kiss on Jett’s cheek. Jett could feel the veil of darkness lifting a little. “I hope your dad doesn’t want to take you home with him just so that nothing happens to you here.”

April bit his lower lip, and Jett frowned. “He did say something. But I told him there was no way I would leave you alone to face your dad,” April hurried to say.

“I thought your dad would be on our side,” Jett said. He felt like a miffed kid, learning that his superhero didn’t share candy with his fans.

“He is,” April said a bit too brightly. “He just gets in this super protective mood from time to time. I mean, the only thing he wants is for me not to get hurt.”

“I don’t want that, either. And I won’t let it happen. When he comes, I’ll tell him.”

“When he comes, maybe it would be a good idea to let him talk to your dad. I bet that talking to another man his age would do your father good, too. Plus, I’m sure my dad will convince him he is wrong. He has his ways.”

“And my dad is a stubborn asshole.”

“Hey, don’t talk about him like that. It’s not nice.”

“Being nice is the last thing on my fucking mind now, April. Don’t sweat it, though. He’ll do his thing, he’ll blah-blah-blah, and then he’ll just go back to his fucking life like he always does. That’s why I want you not to give a damn about what he says. It doesn’t matter.”

“He’s your dad. I’d rather he accepts we’re together. It would be right.”

“Well, don’t hold your breath. As I told you, he’s stubborn like a mule. One idea gets into his head, and he doesn’t let it go like a mangy dog with a bone.”

“I think he cares about you,” April said. “I think that we should give him a chance to get accustomed to the idea of us together. I’ll do my best to make him like me. I’ll cook, and I’ll clean --”

“Don’t do all those for his sake. He’ll just think that you want to play the wife so that you could steal his son. Like anyone could steal me,” Jett said with a shrug.

“Yeah, I mean, they might have a huge problem trying to move you,” April joked.

Jett turned his head, and, for a few seconds, they locked lips. “Hmm, all right, your kisses have a way of convincing me ... what do you want me to do?”

“Try to stay clear of fights with him. If you don’t get riled up, I think he’ll go through all his ammunition quickly. Plus, he’ll see that nothing he says is effective, so he’ll give up.”

“You’re such a huge optimist, Summer,” Jett said, shaking his head. “But, all right, I’ll stay out of his way.”

“I’m not sure that was what I suggested,” April said with a small frown.

“You told me not to get into fights with him. This is the easiest way. I’m not in his way, and we don’t fight. Simple, right?”

“Well, it’s not such a big house,” April pointed out. “Are you sure you’ll be able to do that?”

“I know a place where he won’t look too much,” Jett said.

“Really? What place?”

Jett smiled.

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April could tell Jett was up to a little bit of mischief. But, as soon as they were in the basement, surrounded by the sounds of the mining rig, he understood. Jett’s dad had expressed his disgust

with the ‘infernal machines’ there, so he probably wouldn’t look in the basement unless there was an emergency.

Jett pushed him with his back against the wall, and April closed his eyes. They were way too used to each other and fucking whenever they felt like it, so having so many people around had definitely halted their sex life.

He was trying hard not to make any noises, but it was hard to do that while Jett’s hands were feverishly feeling him up everywhere. Now they were on his ass, kneading it, now they were on his chest, torturing his nipples through the t-shirt, now they were in his hair, while their owner was busy kissing him.

It was insane to think that he would spend even one day away from Jett. There had to be a connection between them, something that wouldn’t let one breathe without the other if they spent too much time apart.

Right now, though, April could live without breathing too much. The only thing he needed was for Jett to kiss him hard.

“April, fuck,” Jett whispered, making it known how urgent his need was. “I need ... inside you ... now.”

April pushed down his tracksuit pants and kissed Jett one last time hard before turning with his back to him. “Like this,” he whispered.

It would not be the smoothest ride, but April was used to Jett’s sometimes hurried ways, as he was to his lazy lovemaking when they had the time and in the mood for spending hours in bed.

Now wasn’t the time for the latter, though, so April bit down on his hand hard as Jett began licking his ass to get him ready. It seemed like Jett’s tongue was growing, extending, because April could swear it was touching inside deeper than he thought possible. Or maybe he was so horny that he was imagining things.

Jett added more spit and began scissoring his entrance. Abruptly, he stood up, and April pushed his ass toward his lover’s crotch, hungry to feel him all. Jett dug with his fingers into April’s hips and guided his cock toward April’s backdoor with insane accuracy.

Or maybe they were just so used to one another by now, that for Jett to dock his cock so easily inside April’s ass just came naturally.

Jett still took his time to get inside, although both of them barely kept in soft grunts of frustration. April exhaled and half turned so that he could grab Jett with one hand. “Move,” he ordered shortly.

The instant reply was a hard kiss on his lips and a cock bottoming out inside him. April mumbled small begging sounds as Jett continued to kiss him. It was just too good to have any coherent sound. Jett was a good rider; the silly thought came to him as his entire body was shaking with each powerful thrust.

No, it would be insane to spend time away from each other. Because this was pure bliss, even if it was done in hiding and it was stolen. April keened softly as Jett hammered him over and over again. "A bit more, a bit more," he implored, and Jett granted his wish, going deeper and harder, helping him fly over the edge.

It was a perfect shot, April thought as his dick pulsed and did its thing without being touched. Surely, there would be an unexplainable spot on the wall, but no one came to the basement anyway, so they were safe.

He was completely gone and done for, and his body was getting limp as Jett moved inside him a few more times.

"Yes, yes, this is everything," Jett whispered, as his breathing became harsher and erratic.

April stood there to receive everything his lover wanted to give him. It was simple happiness, and there was no way April could ever think anyone would rival Jett in this life or any other.

Jett embraced him, and they leaned against the wall, their breathing mingling.

"Don't ever leave, April."

"I won't."

"Promise."

"I promise. Don't ever let me go."

"Never."

Jett kissed his sweaty forehead and turned him slowly.

"I will go take a shower," April said and kissed Jett again. "I'll pretend to be casual about it since it's not yet evening."

"I don't care if he suspects anything," Jett said, somewhat aggressively. "It's better if he does."

April made a horrified face. "I'm not sure I want my dad or your dad to know we're having sex."

"Let me break it to you," Jett said and grinned. "They know that already."

"Well, it's one thing to know it, and you know, another to know it," April emphasized the last word as if that could make sense.



“You’re a total dweeb, and you still freak out about sex. Your dad kept me a long lecture on safe sex. My dad surely is secretly afraid that I might enjoy more having fun with you than with girls.”

“You can’t know that,” April protested.

“Hey, he kept praising Carina to me, telling me how pretty she is compared to you. But he even went out of his way to say that you’re pretty, too.”

“Okay, now things are getting weird. At least, let me pull my pants up while we’re talking about how your dad thinks I’m pretty.”

“Are you shy about it, dweeb? You’re pretty,” Jett whispered seductively, making April feel goosebumps everywhere.

“All right, all right, we already fucked. Let’s not make it a marathon, or, eventually, someone might come looking for us.”

Jett chuckled, but he was the one to help April pull up his tracksuit pants. “There, see? Now go take your shower, and I will casually take mine later.”

“Casually, huh?”

“Your idea, not mine.” Jett leaned in for another kiss.

At least, this time, it wasn’t hard and hurried. It was sweet and sated, and right in every way.

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“Who could be at this hour?” Jett’s dad mumbled as the knocking on the door repeated.

April exchanged one quick look with Jett. After they had talked for a little while, they had decided against telling Mr. Huntsman that there would be a visitor. They were counting on the surprise factor.

“Why are you two looking at each other like you know something?” Carina asked to know.

The four of them sat together on the couch, Carina with Jay in her arms. They were pretending to watch a stupid TV show, and Mr. Huntsman had appeared happy to see Jett seated between April and Carina. In his mind, that must have meant that his plans still had a chance to succeed.

Oh, how wrong he was, April thought with satisfaction. “Well, we do know something. I called for help and ... reinforcements have arrived,” he said in a low voice like he was presenting the stupid show on TV.

“Reinforcements?” Carina asked and blinked.

From the hallway, voices could be heard.

“Sid Summer,” April’s dad introduced himself.

“The boy’s dad?” Mr. Huntsman inquired.

“I’m sorry to bother you so late, but do you think you have a minute?” Sid said affably.

Carina turned toward April and mouthed. “Your dad? What is he doing here?”

April just shrugged, but he was sure his smile could be seen from space. They all fell silent and leaned toward the source of the sound, to hear the exchange.

“I have a minute, and it’s already up.” Jett’s dad seemed pretty pissed.

“Then, I’ll have to ask for one hour.” Sid’s reply was prompt.

“One hour?”

“I was wondering if you could join me for a drink, Mr. Huntsman.”

“We could talk here,” Jett’s dad said.

“Here, the children will have nothing better to do than to try to eavesdrop, as I bet they are doing right now.”

Like they were spring-operated puppets, Jett, April, and Carina straightened in their seats. For a couple of seconds, nothing but silence followed. Then, Mr. Huntsman was in the room, with a jacket on and already in his boots.

April wondered briefly how he could do that. It seemed not possible for a human being.

“I will be out,” Mr. Huntsman said shortly. “Don’t stay too late. Stop watching stupid shows on TV. That kid needs to be in bed already. You two, no mischief. I know you,” he pointed at April, “have school tomorrow. Jett, you,” he hesitated for a moment, “you have nothing to do, but you still need to wake up at six.”

None of them had it in them to comment on anything. The fact that Mr. Huntsman had accepted Sid’s invitation so quickly was a sign. But was it good or bad?

### *Chapter Thirty-One – Two Very Stubborn Men*

April couldn't sleep. Eventually, they had pulled the coffee table aside and placed a futon on the floor so that they could sleep without waking up with stiff necks or melded into each other. While that might have sounded interesting, being forced to sleep one on top of the other hadn't worked that well, so the futon was the solution.

There was another reason why April was thankful for their current sleeping arrangements. He could toss and turn without waking Jett up. His dad was right. He needed to tell Jett already about who he really was. Or, better said, who he wasn't. Or, better ...

April huffed in frustration and then quickly held his breath. It wasn't in his interest at all to wake up Jett since he still had no idea whatsoever about how he could tell Jett his current boyfriend and Theo were the same person without triggering some disaster.

The situation seemed a mess as it was, with Jett's dad back home. He trusted his dad but didn't believe in miracles. April could only hope that Mr. Huntsman's talk with his dad would change things, at least a little.

That hour his dad had talked about had expired for about other three, and that, for some reason, kept him awake, as well. What could they talk about at such length?

When could it be the right moment to tell Jett? How would he go about it? He could just blurt it out, but it sounded like a bad idea. Or he could cushion the blow by starting to confess his feelings first. It didn't matter that there hadn't been some huge declarations of love between them. Jett wasn't crazy about talking about feels, so April could be the one to start doing that.

He needed to assure Jett that he loved him. That had to be the first step. After that, April could say everything else. But maybe after things got a little clearer with Jett's dad. Yes, that was the last reprieve he would allow himself before saying the words and confessing to his deceit. Well, back then, Jett had been pretty hard on him, pushing him away and then pretending not to know him. That had been rough. Yet, somehow, at the moment, April didn't feel like that could hold as a defense for not telling the truth.

It all seemed so far away, a life apart, but still, if he closed his eyes, April could recall everything as if it had happened the day before. Maybe Jett had his own explanations to give. Maybe ...

But what if Jett that time had really hated Theo? What if he was now blinded by the love he had for Jett, and he didn't see some crack in the shiny bubble he imagined their life together to be?

No, no, no, he couldn't let such thoughts destroy his resolve. Jett must have an explanation for why he had done those things. And they were both so young, kids even! That was enough to explain even the stupidest things they had ever done.

Only that now he wasn't exactly a kid anymore, and keeping all a secret appeared to be more than just a childish mistake. There had to be a reason, one much stronger than both of them, why they felt like this toward one another, seven years after meeting for the first time in their shared history.

Jett had had plenty of time to grow up. He might not have liked being kissed by a boy at thirteen, but it was sure as hell that he liked it now. April turned and stared in the dark at Jett's profile. He couldn't make much of what he was really seeing, but it wasn't pitch black, either. More than seeing anything, he could hear Jett's steady breathing, and that was making his frantic mind a bit calmer, too.

Yes, now, Jett very much enjoyed being kissed and kissing back. He had been a real womanizer, but right now, he only had eyes for April. That was not something to sweep under the rug. Looking back, April felt a bit silly for not saying anything. Still, at first, he had thought Jett would kick his ass, especially since he seemed like such a thug.

Could Jett turn on him for not telling? Would he be so disappointed that he would instead end their relationship? April knew one thing; he didn't have all the answers. Some things were bound to remain unknown, and that sucked, but it was also how life went, or, at least, his dad would tell him that.

Slowly, he placed one hand on Jett's chest, making sure not to wake him up. If he focused enough, he could feel the heartbeat. April wanted nothing more but to cuddle next to Jett's larger body and enjoy his lover's warmth. But, at the same time, he felt like such a fraud, and he decided that he needed to punish himself a little. There would be no cuddling until he told Jett everything.

Also, if April thought a little more, Jett hadn't confessed being in love, and he was against feels, as a principle. He had said that much, April nodded to himself. Yes, at least for now, that was a good escape. Of course, he had nothing against being the one to confess first, and maybe Jett was too shy to say it first and ...

April felt the need to groan, but he either did that silently or only internally because making strange sounds in the middle of the night was bound to wake up Jett eventually, where all the tossing and turning hadn't succeeded, so far. He moved his hand slowly over Jett's chest. Confessing his love would be easy. Confessing to everything else was, well, something else. If he could live through that, through Jett's - what? - disappointment, wrath? - he could live through anything. What did not kill you made you stronger and all that. Only that April could have done without the trial of fire and wished he could be on the other side on that confession, stronger already.

Worrying about the future would bring him nothing good. Instead, he would focus on the present since he had plenty to deal with, as things were. Once Jett's dad was back to his base, he would take Jett aside and tell him everything.

With that decision taken, he could finally go to sleep. Jett's steady breathing was soothing and music to his ears and tired brain.

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Jett woke up to the sound of the front door opening and closing very slowly as if the person using it wanted to sneak into the house. A bit confused, and with his eyes still grainy with sleep, he looked at the window. It wasn't day yet, but it was no longer night, either. It had to be five am, at least. He disentangled himself from April's arms and tiptoed outside the living room, ready to intercept the burglar.

"What the hell?" Jett murmured under his breath.

In the kitchen, his dad was drinking a glass of water like that was the most natural thing to do at five in the freaking morning, after being out for the entire night.

"Where are you coming from at this hour?" he whispered angrily, although he had no idea why he was angry.

He closed the kitchen door after him.

"I'm not being held accountable by the likes of you," his dad spat, but he was whispering, too. "What am I? Twelve? I'm your father, and I can come home whenever I want."

"Oh, really? It didn't cross your mind that some people might worry, right?"

His dad grimaced and took another sip from his glass of water. "Don't take me for a fool, Jett. I know exactly how much you care. You made it pretty clear yesterday. Just to put your mind at ease, I'm in one piece, as you can see."

"I don't give a rat's ass about that," Jett said aggressively. "Where have you been the entire night? What did you say to April's dad? Were you with him all this time?"

His dad slammed the empty glass on the counter. Jett frowned. What the hell was that all about?

"That's none of your business, is it?" his dad said through his teeth.

"It is. April's dad wanted to talk to you for a reason."

"Yeah. He made that clear."

Jett stood in the door and crossed his arms over his chest. He wouldn't let his dad off the hook that easily.

"Out of my way, boy." His dad stared at him from under furrowed brows, and his eyes threw dangerous daggers.

"April is not leaving," Jett said slowly, to make sure his dad understood him.

"April this, April that," his dad said with obvious frustration. "Is there nothing else on your mind, boy? Like having a son? Living responsibly?"

"Living responsibly? What's that even supposed to mean? You care about Carina getting an honest job. You order April to go to school. It's me you don't care even to say anything like that!"

"I know what you are," his father hissed as he got closer. "Do you think I'm blind? You're a thug, and you're so spoiled for anything good in your life that you're not worth the trouble."

Jett ground his teeth hard.

His dad wavered. But he didn't take that back. Instead, he continued. "Just make right by that kid. Maybe your wife will manage to make an honest man out of you. God knows I tried."

"You didn't try enough," Jett said, closing his fists. That dark fog was coming over his eyes again.

"Says who? You? All you cared, all your life, has been to do the opposite of everything I've ever told you."

Jett stood there, seething with anger. It was so little needed for him to explode. But that would leave him exposed, and he didn't care about doing that. "Whatever," he said, feigning indifference. "April is not leaving. That's all I want you to understand."

He stepped aside, allowing his dad to walk out of the kitchen. He didn't get a reply, just an annoyed grunt that could mean anything. So nothing had changed. Whatever April's dad must have said to his dad, it hadn't worked. But that didn't mean anything. April didn't have to count on his dad for this; he had Jett, his boyfriend.

April would learn soon enough how much Jett loved him. It would be a damned annoying and embarrassing thing to do, but he would do it, once his dad was out of their hair and back to his base and his life. Then April would know that he didn't have to run to his dad and ask for help. Jett was strong enough to face his father.

And April wouldn't leave the house and him. Not now, not ever.

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“So, could you tell me what you two spoke for hours?” April asked after his dad picked up, and he greeted him.

Jett had said little about what had happened when Mr. Huntsman had come back home the night before at the break of dawn. April had awakened at the sound of doors slamming and noticed Jett’s dark frown when he had come back to their improvised bed. Except for monosyllabic answers, April hadn’t managed to get anything out of Jett.

For that reason, he needed answers. Also, he was a bit curious about whether Mr. Huntsman had really spent the entire night talking to his dad. And, if yes, what on earth could they have talked about?

“This and that,” Sid replied.

He seemed preoccupied and not much in the mood to talk, which April found strange. “This and that,” he repeated the words slowly. “Until morning?”

“Almost,” his dad confirmed.

It wasn’t like him to be so tongue-tied. Could it be that Mr. Huntsman had worn him down with who knew what arguments? Jett had said his dad was stubborn. Maybe his own dad had gone the extra mile trying to make Mr. Huntsman see reason. Now, Sid was beat tired, which could have explained the short answers that only rivaled with Jett’s. April’s heart instantly went to his dad. He was an ungrateful son, questioning his parent like that instead of letting him rest. It was, after all, still a workday, and that must have meant that his father had gone to work as tired as he sounded now.

“All right, dad. I just wanted to make sure that Mr. Huntsman didn’t eat you or something,” April joked. “It must have been tiresome to try to convince him of, well, anything that’s not on his agenda.”

He was still fishing for info, but his dad didn’t appear to take the bait.

“April, you’ll be fine,” Sid said, his voice warm and gentle. “I don’t think Jett’s dad will stand in your way to be with Jett.”

“Oh, so you convinced him!” April expressed his happiness a bit too loudly, and then reconsidered and turned down the volume of his voice. “I knew only you could. Dad, you’re the greatest!”

“Don’t thank me just yet. I didn’t do anything. We just talked.”

“Okay. But Mr. Huntsman got back home this morning in a bit of a mood. I think he got into a fight with Jett.”

“He did?” Sid asked, and his voice sounded tired now. “I guess it’s part of the process,” he murmured and seemed as if he was talking to himself.

“Process? What process?” April asked.

“It’s complicated, son. But I don’t see any reason – any real reason – why Tom would be against you two. So that you know, he cares about Jett a great deal.”

“He does? I mean, I guess so, he’s still his dad, and ... Wait, Tom? You call Mr. Huntsman Tom?”

“Yes, April. As much as it might surprise you, old people do address one another using their first names sometimes.” Now his dad was a bit amused.

April snickered. “Old people. Dad, you’re not old.”

“Much older than you, so I have the right to tell you goodbye now. I have a lot of things to do. Of course, if anything happens, just call. But I’d say things should work out now.”

“I believe you, dad. Even though Jett and his dad seem to be as much at odds as before.”

“People love in different ways. You shouldn’t judge them.”

“I don’t want to contradict you, dad, but if someone says they hate another person, I don’t really think it’s love involved.”

“Jett shouldn’t talk like that to his father,” Sid said matter-of-factly.

“I know, and I told him as much. But he’s stubborn.”

“Just like his old man.” Sid laughed. “I don’t know Jett well, but he might be the spitting image of his father.”

“So, you like Mr. Huntsman?” April asked.

“I really need to go, April. Talk to you soon,” Sid said quickly.

“Okay, dad, sorry to keep you.”

April stared at his phone, a bit intrigued by the conversation he had just had. Something was amiss, or his father wasn’t saying everything, which was weird. He and his dad had no secrets, and now it felt like there was one. But what could it be? The dads must have had one hell of a conversation since it had lasted for eight hours or so. April scratched his head. Well, now things were supposed to be all fine, according to his father. So, all he needed to do was to have faith.

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April walked back into the house only to witness another angry exchange between Jett and his father.

“Will you get off my case already?” Jett was raising his voice above the admitted limit.

“I told you I wasn’t going to let you off the hook.” Mr. Huntsman looked all doom and gloom, standing in the middle of the room, his arms crossed over his chest.

“And I told you, loud and clear, that nothing would change my mind.”

April stood there, frozen, unsure whether it would be better to get out again or stay.

“This boy,” Mr. Huntsman pointed at him, “has no business living with you like you two are married or something. I can’t let you do this.”

Oh, April thought. It was rare that his dad was wrong, and this had to be one of those occasions. So, Mr. Huntsman still didn’t want him and Jett together. Well, he hadn’t held his breath, just as he had promised himself.

“Why does it matter what you think?” Jett shouted. “You’re never home. You don’t care. April doesn’t leave, and that’s final!”

April sighed. Maybe his dad was right, and he could spend at least the weekend back home. That would allow everyone to breathe a little. If Mr. Huntsman didn’t have any reason to start a fight with Jett, then maybe things would work out differently. Right now, everyone’s emotions were running high, and April himself felt that it was quite difficult to keep a clear head.

“Maybe,” he raised one hand as if he was asking to be allowed to speak, “I could let you two talk about your, um, issues, on your own time.”

“April, you’re not leaving,” Jett said sternly, throwing him a dark look.

It pained him to see Jett like that. Despite the angry words, the attitude, April could recognize a bit of desperation, and even the thought was a bit scary. Not for him, as he would accept Jett with everything he had, but for Jett, who wanted so much to be strong and hold his ground in front of his father.

“Okay, but, you know, it’s your father’s house, and it feels like --” April started, trying hard to keep his voice steady and calm.

“It’s not his house,” Jett said with finality. “It’s mine,” he added, pointing a finger at his chest.

Oh. April fell silent.

“I was waiting for you to bring that up,” Mr. Huntsman intervened.

“Aunt Flora left it to me,” Jett said, his irritation growing with each word. “You sold your house.”

“Because it wasn’t a home. No one wanted to live there anymore,” Mr. Huntsman said slowly.

April could bet Jett’s dad sounded sad. He could understand that.

“That’s right,” Jett said aggressively. His hands were curled into fists, dropped by his sides now. “And that means I do what I want in my own house.”

“Hmm.” Mr. Huntsman shook his head. “Everything is about what you want to do, isn’t it? You don’t care that it’s wrong.”

“Wrong? What’s wrong? Wanting to be with April? Why? Because he’s a dude, and you can’t think of two dudes living together?”

April began considering again whether that was a discussion he wanted to be present to or not.

“If this is you trying to make me into some bigot, you’re wasting your breath, son.” Mr. Huntsman had a frown just as big as Jett’s on his face now. “I have nothing against the boy. You just have other priorities right now.”

“Like what? Carina and I will take good care of Jay, don’t you worry. We’ll do it our way.”

“Just as much as the baby is your son, he’s also my grandson,” Mr. Huntsman said accusingly.

“Your grandson? You’ve never held him once!”

April could feel his throat squeezing. That was maybe unfair, but Jett was right. He had never seen Mr. Huntsman acknowledging Jay except in conversations. He had never shown interest except for telling Jett to assume responsibility and Carina to do things she was already doing as the baby’s mother.

“I don’t need to hold him to care for his wellbeing,” Mr. Huntsman replied.

Jett scoffed and shook his head. “That’s you. All alone in your world. God forbid anyone touches that.”

“I lived enough to know what’s right.”

“You should have lived enough to know you’re wrong,” Jett spat.

“Think that all you want. As long as I’m here, I’ll do my best to put you on the right path.”

“As long as you’re here? Does that mean all this shit is going to stop if you leave? Then, you know what? You’re not welcome anymore!”

April gasped. “Jett,” he called in a strained voice.

Mr. Huntsman seemed surprised with Jett’s outburst, just as much as April. “Are you saying that I should leave?”

“Yeah, that’s what I’m saying. Pack your bags and go wherever you want to be in this world. Not here. Don’t come here anymore if all you want to do is make me bend to your will. I’m not doing squat.”

Mr. Huntsman set his jaw hard. “If that’s what you want.” He moved stiffly as he walked out of the room.

April hurried to Jett. “Jett, go and apologize to your dad right now.”

“Are you fucking mental? Didn’t you hear him just now?” Jett was still boiling, and April wasn’t sure if he was supposed to touch him at all right now.

“I heard him. But I still think that saying all those things was wrong. You need to work things out with him, not become more estranged. I’m sure he doesn’t want you to be unhappy. He just needs to understand that your decision is different from what he believes. You need to make him understand.”

Jett began pacing the room. “I tried that. Well, guess what? It didn’t fucking work. So, stop blaming me --”

“I’m not blaming you!”

“Stop taking his side!”

“I’m not taking his side!”

“Well, stop whatever the fuck you’re doing that’s getting on my fucking nerves!”

April inhaled, stopped, and exhaled. “Look, Jett, I want to stay here. But not if it means you’re pushing your father away.”

“Oh, really? You want me to pick him over you? How’s that supposed to work?”

April ran both hands over his face. His dad would have known what to say to be the right thing, but he was failing spectacularly. “Look, if you two just calm down a little --”

“No one’s calming down.” Jett stood with his back to him. “And you’re not leaving, and that’s final. Unless you want to pick that bone with me.”

In an instant, April saw what his dad had said over the phone. Jett was, indeed, the spitting image of his father. He was just as stubborn, and, as much as he cared for those around him, he had a

knack for pushing them away. Good thing April knew better than to believe that Jett really wanted to get into a fight right now. So, he moved toward him and embraced him from behind. He could feel Jett slightly shaking. That was not like him. April squeezed as much as he could and pressed his forehead against Jett's broad back. "I'm with you, Jett, no one else. You get it, right?"

There was no reply for a while, but, gradually, Jett relaxed and closed his hands over April's arms as they circled his waist. "He's just such a bastard," Jett said bitterly.

"He thinks he's doing the right thing. I think he cares about you."

Jett just laughed humorlessly. "You think too much of him. All his life, everything was about him."

April knew better than to insist. "Then know that I'll stay with you, even if I don't agree with you on this one. I still believe that you should talk to him and prevent him from leaving."

"Don't worry. He can afford the hotel. I don't even know why he bothers to come here, year after year."

"Because he's your dad and --"

"Because he wants to believe he does enough," Jett interrupted him sharply.

"Okay. I'm not fighting," April said. He held Jett tightly. "It would have been so much better if he agreed to us."

"At least, yours thinks we're doing nothing wrong."

"Yeah, my dad is like that," April agreed.

Now he was worried, nonetheless. He would call his dad again and tell him about what had happened. Maybe he had some words of wisdom, but if he were honest to himself, April would think that the worst had already happened, and there was little words could do to solve the situation, unless they came from Jett, and Mr. Huntsman would listen to them.

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"So, has Tom already left the house?" Sid asked in a worried voice as soon as April explained the situation.

"I think he is still upstairs, packing."

"That's disappointing."

"I know," April said in a meek voice. "Jett doesn't want to hear about taking back what he said."

“As I thought. Two very stubborn men,” Sid said and sighed. “Thank you for telling me about it, April.”

“Dad, what do you think I should do?”

“Just be happy, pumpkin. Enjoy what you have. Enjoy having Jett by your side. Everything else will come to pass.”

“Thank you, dad. But could you tell me what made you think that Jett’s dad would have a change of heart about us?”

“Not right now. But I will. There are just so many things I need to do right now.”

April didn’t want to keep his dad more than it was necessary. It looked like he was busy with something these days, and that was fine by him. For so many years, April had been the center of his father’s universe as he well knew. Well, he and his sister, only that Melinda had grown up before him and left home to build her own life, with a husband and kids. It was only normal for his dad to enjoy a little bit of freedom now, which meant he had his own stuff to care about, not obsess over his son’s love life and all that entailed.

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Jett could hear his father’s muffled voice through the door. Most probably, he was talking to someone on the phone. He could knock, go inside, and tell his dad that he didn’t need to leave. As long as he didn’t get in his and April’s way, he could stay with them. That was what he wanted to tell him, but he was still hesitating.

In front of April, earlier, he had been all ballsy, saying that he wouldn’t care if his father left, but he had his second thoughts.

“Come stay with you?” His father’s voice was raised, but more in surprise than anger or anything else.

So, his father already had someone he could go live with. That made things easier, but Jett’s heart sank. His hand, raised to knock, dropped. Maybe it was better if they both went their different paths. Nothing really kept them together.

### *Chapter Thirty-Two – Surprise!*

The atmosphere in the house was unbearable. There had already been two weeks since Jett's dad had left, and, as far as he knew, Mr. Huntsman hadn't made any attempts to call and repair things with his son. April stole glances at Jett, but his face was all a frown, and he was getting busy with a toolbox. Never before April had seen that, and it looked like that was busywork and nothing else. There was hardly anything that needed repairing so direly that Jett couldn't stop and exchange a few words.

Usually, April would have appreciated not having to talk to Jett while studying, but only because that often led to them getting busy, really busy, and that meant that he would eventually fall behind with his studies.

Right now, it wasn't like he could study anyway. At least, they were in the basement, and Jett could make as much noise as he wanted without disturbing Carina and Jay, too.

"Jett," April said.

There was no reply. Jett picked another tool and let it drop back into the toolbox with a deafening sound.

"Could you please stop for a moment?" April raised his voice, irritated with Jett's behavior.

Jett threw him a dark look.

April straightened up in his chair. "You don't impress me."

Jett pursed his lips. "What do you want, April?"

"For you to stop whatever you think you're doing so that we can talk a little."

"About what?"

"About how much you hurt over pushing your dad away. All is not lost. You can still call --"

"Shut up, April." The words weren't filled with hostility, but something else.

April could feel his chest squeezing. "Look, I don't think your dad is a bad man. Stubborn, yes, and well, I'm not exactly his biggest fan since he's not mine, either, but --"

"Out with it, dweeb. I really have work to do."

Jett was thawing, April could see. He never called him 'dweeb' when he was really upset. So, that was a good sign, and April intended to work with whatever he was given. "What work do you have to do?"

"Fix things. Stuff." Jett shrugged and proceeded to examine his toolset once again.

“It doesn’t look like it to me. What do you want to do with that drilling machine? This house doesn’t exactly need more holes.”

Jett ignored him and, seemingly just to spite April, he grabbed the drilling machine and tested it for its battery. Over the sound of the mining rig that April had already gotten used to it, that noise was a bit too much, though.

April stood up and came to stand in front of Jett. To make it clear that he wasn’t in the mood to be ignored like that, he parted his legs and crossed his arms over his chest. “Stop what you’re doing, Jett Huntsman, and talk to me right now about what’s bothering you.”

“I have nothing to talk about, April Summer,” Jett replied to him in the same manner. “Unless you’re the one who needs a fix, stay out of my way.”

“Ha. Are you trying to be funny now? Because I don’t think you’re funny.”

“Oh, you don’t?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Whatever. I don’t care.”

“Jett.” April was starting to lose his patience. “If you just want to vent, that’s okay, but don’t cut me off. You make me think you don’t exactly want me around.”

Jett scoffed. “I want you around. All I did was so that I could keep you around.”

“I know.” April was the one starting to thaw now. “I feel guilty about it.” He put one hand on Jett’s shoulder.

“Don’t. Don’t feel guilty. That man is a ...” Jett trailed off and shook his head. “It’s okay, April. Don’t mind me. I just need to get busy a little, or I’ll feel like I’m going crazy. You have school, and you need to study, and all, and Carina fusses over Jay so much that there’s no room, so ... I’ll just have to find something to do.”

“Okay,” April said. “But if you need me, just say the word. I’m here for you.”

Jett just nodded and stood up, armed now with the drilling machine. April gave up on asking him what exactly he wanted to do with that. Instead, he returned to his desk. No matter how much he felt like he needed to talk to Jett about their childhood and how he was Theo from that time long ago, now was the worst moment possible.

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He felt like crap. But Jett couldn't talk to April about that. After all, that was all because he cared so much about April, and he didn't want to make his boyfriend believe that he was some wishy-washy asshole.

If only his dad could see how much April meant to him. But who was he kidding? His father was a stubborn mule, and if he had gotten into his head that Jett should marry Carina and raise Jay together, he couldn't be made to see otherwise.

That didn't mean that breaking things off with his dad like that didn't hurt. Yeah, the man was a total asshole and set in his ways, but he was still ...

Jett cursed loudly and slammed the drilling machine against the working table. April was right. He didn't need a drilling machine to repair the things that were fucking broken in his life. But there was nothing he could do.

The thing was that he was a shitty partner for April these days. His boyfriend had been as sweet as always, caressing his hair and trying to get him to talk for weeks now, but Jett could only feel the anger inside him growing darker and darker. That was not how he wanted to live. He needed to get his anger out, and he couldn't do it in a house with a small baby, an ex-girlfriend who wanted to understand him, and a boyfriend who wanted to understand him even more.

"April's worried about you."

Jett shook his head. It was so like Carina to pop up whenever he didn't want to see anyone.

"You have nothing to say about it?" Carina insisted.

"Aren't you busy with Jay?"

"He's sleeping. You're not turning into your dad, I hope. I know how to take care of that baby. I've been a mom for a while now. And I have this thing." Carina held the receiver for the baby monitor. "It's you who's worrying me."

"I thought you said that April is worried about me."

"Me and April both. Jay would be, too, but thank God, he's too young for that. C'mon, Jett, out with it, or I'm going to get pissed."

"And? Whatcha gonna do?" Jett pretended to be busy with his drilling machine.

"Box your ears is the first answer that comes to mind, but no. I want to tell you that if you don't want to end up being all alone in this huge ass house --"

"It's hardly a huge ass house."



“Whatever. Listen to me, Jett. Whatever is eating you, it’s eating away at everything else around here. I can’t stand seeing April so sad. If you don’t do something, I’m going to comfort him. Who knows? I might steal him from you.”

Jett snorted. “Good luck with that. April is like one hundred percent gay.”

“I can be pretty convincing.”

Carina was teasing him, and Jett knew the reason. He sighed. “Look, I’m pissed, okay?”

“Okay. I get it. Your dad did a number on you. And you on him.”

“And now you’re going to tell me how I should go and talk to him or something like April does all the time.”

“No. That’s not you. I’d say you should just get this out of your system.”

“I know that. But how?”

“You know how. Grab your pal Zane and go shoot bottles or whatever it is that you two do whenever you get like this.”

“We’re not shooting bottles.”

“Whatever you do, as I said. I’d say it’s like going to the shrink for you.”

“Zane is as far as being a shrink as anyone could ever be.”

“I don’t care, Jett. Just sort your shit. April doesn’t deserve to see you like this. And I’m getting pissed with tiptoeing around just because you’re pissed.”

“No one’s telling you to tiptoe,” Jett replied.

“No. But that’s how it feels, and before I know it, I find myself walking across the room like a ballerina.” To make herself understood better, Carina mimicked a ballerina’s walk with her index and middle fingers pointing at the floor.

Actually, Carina’s advice was not half bad, Jett thought. He could get totally fucked up a weekend in Zane, and then he would be as good as new. What he needed wasn’t to talk to someone. April and Carina both wanted what was best for him, but they were all about feels, and he couldn’t stand that.

He didn’t want to talk to his dad. He didn’t want to cry on April’s shoulder or quarrel with Carina just to make himself feel better. What he needed was someone who didn’t give a fuck about feels.

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“So, you’re going with Zane where? Can I come, too, or is a thing between you two?” April questioned the moment Jett broke the news to him that he wouldn’t be at home over the weekend and that he was leaving as soon as he could.

“It’s just a thing between us.”

“I see.” April could only be thankful that Jett hadn’t said ‘us, guys’ because that would have pissed him off big time. So, Jett couldn’t talk to him about how much he cared about his dad, but he wanted to spend the weekend with Zane. That stung.

“Don’t worry about it,” Jett said as he picked a few things and stuffed them in a knapsack. “It’s just something I do so that I’m not ... you know.”

April wanted to say that he didn’t know and that he very much wanted to find out. What could possibly Zane offer that he wasn’t capable to? But even asking such a question would make him sound whiny, and he had a feeling that Jett wouldn’t care much about hearing him complaining at the moment.

“Okay,” April murmured. “Do whatever you need to do. I think I’ll go to see my dad. I haven’t been home in a while, and it would be a good moment since you’re away, too.”

“Carina will be alone.”

“Are you going to tell her that you think she can’t be on your own, or do you want me to do it?” April asked, quirked an eyebrow.

Jett smirked. “Let’s not risk it. She’ll be fine for two days, I think.”

April fell silent. It felt like all the words he wanted to say were dried up and impossible to revive. The feeling that he wasn’t enough for Jett came back in full force. “I think I’ll just go directly from school since you’re already leaving.”

“I could stay and take you back here from school. Or I could drive you to your dad’s --”

“No, it’s okay. Do what you have to do.” April didn’t want to sound snappy, but he couldn’t exactly control himself.

It felt like downstairs, on the futon, they had been closer than they were now, in their shared bedroom. He hiked up the bag on his shoulder, decided that he would just call an Uber to get to school today.

“Wait, where are you going? I’m taking you to school,” Jett said.

“You don’t have to. And I should write a note to Carina first so that she’s not surprised with me not being back home in the afternoon as usual.”

“I’ll tell Carina everything. And I’ll take you to school.”

April wanted to argue a little, but he knew he would be petty if he did that. So, he just nodded, and let his bag on a chair, waiting for Jett to finish.

But Jett was no longer interested in packing his things, whatever he needed for his weekend away. Instead, he was just standing there and watching April with keen eyes.

“What?” April asked, feeling unnerved by that steady stare.

Jett didn’t say a thing. Instead, he moved fast, grabbed April, and pushed him with his back against the door. Their lips locked quickly. It wasn’t like they hadn’t made love at all since Jett’s dad had left, but this felt more intimate than all those encounters together. Jett was there, really there, kissing April with his usual eagerness and also with real passion. He no longer seemed so preoccupied or far away, or sad or upset. That moment, they were only the two of them present, and that meant the world to April. Jett still belonged to him, and that was the only thing that mattered.

He was breathing hard still when Jett released him from the kiss. He didn’t, however, let him go from his arms, so April was squeezed between Jett’s strong body and the door. The caramel eyes bore into his, and April stood there in a trance.

“Dweeb, there’s no way I’m not coming back to you. I’ll think of you all the time.”

“So, don’t leave at all. I won’t leave, either,” April added quickly.

Jett just shook his head slowly. A faint smile, a bit wistful, painted his lips. “I have to. So that I can come back and be the usual me. I won’t take long.”

“Jett,” April stopped him. “You know you can be ... anything with me. No matter how low --”

Jett groaned and closed his eyes. “No. That’s not for you to see, okay?”

“So, you like Zane more than me? Is that it?”

“Are you jealous, dweeb? I only swing like this with you and you only. I won’t fuck Zane, don’t worry.”

“That’s hardly what I’m concerned about. Can you talk to him, but you can’t talk to me?”

“I’m not going to talk to him. That’s what I’m getting away from. I don’t want to talk. I want to be a little away from anyone who wants to talk to me.” Jett’s voice was getting strained with frustration now.

April swallowed nervously. “Okay. Then maybe you should go already.”

“Don’t be like this, April. I’m doing this for everyone’s good.”

“You can’t hurt me, and you should know it by now. I can take anything --”

Jett pushed himself away. “Well, don’t. Don’t take anything. And I’m not gonna show you my bad side.”

April looked down. “If that’s what you think, okay. I’ll Uber to school.”

“I said --”

“And I said I’ll Uber to school. Bye, Jett.”

April knew it wasn’t entirely fair to be like that, as he grabbed his bag and moved to walk out of the room. Jett stopped him again and kissed him, pressing his lips hard. “Be home by Sunday evening, or we’ll have a problem, dweeb.”

April sighed. That was Jett, and he could live with him, no matter how stubborn he was. And maybe, in the end, if Jett needed to meet his best friend and vent off with him, April shouldn’t stand in his way. After that, there was a chance that Jett would be more approachable, so April could live with not being everything Jett needed all the time.

Also, a visit to his dad would do him good, too. After so much straining with Jett’s moods and everything that happened, he could use being spoiled a little, as his dad usually did when he was home.

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“Wednesday, yo, Wednesday!”

Someone was shouting from behind, and eventually, April turned, a bit intrigued. Sabrina DeLouise walked over to him and stared awkwardly at him, or better said, at his ears. “Do you have those cool wireless headaches that just came out?”

Oh, right, April’s mind finally caught up with him. Sabrina knew him as Wednesday, which was one of the many sins he needed to confess at some point. There were piling up a bit, seeing how Jett still didn’t know he was Theo.

“No, sorry, just lost a bit in my own head,” April explained. “So, Sabrina, how are you?”

“Pretty good. I mean, I’m fine, yeah. Hey, Wednesday, I was wondering if you know some way to lock your phone so good that no one could break into.”

“Still having trouble with your old man? Is he still trying to read your messages or something?”

Sabrina rolled her eyes. “He’s on my case something nasty. He caught a whiff that I prefer the company of gentlemen of a certain age, aka as old as him, and he went completely ballistic. Let me buy you a cranberry juice or something. I’m not expecting you to secure my phone for free, you know.”

April had a mind to refuse her since he hadn’t even called his dad to tell him he would be home over the weekend. But he felt like he owed Sabrina as much, seeing how he had lied to her about who he was. “I guess I can help you pick a strong password.”

“I’m using face ID, but seriously, that thing must have something against my makeup. I’m a true artist, you know,” Sabrina said as she examined her fingernails. “Two out of three, my phone doesn’t recognize me as its lord and master. Mistress, whatever. So, I’d rather use a password, you know, the classic way, but I’m afraid that my dad could put someone to hack it either way.”

“There are a few ways to make your phone more secure,” April said, as his mind began to work. “Let’s go, and I’ll work with you to make your phone hacker-proof.”

“Great. You know what, Wednesday? I’ll throw in a sandwich, too.”

“Ah, you don’t have to. We’re friends, right?”

“We are?” Sabrina beamed at him. “If you say so, who am I to contradict you?” She hid her excitement right as if she was afraid April would take what he said back. “But aren’t you hungry? Studying makes me ravenous.”

“Actually, yeah, I am a little. But I hope you’re not taking me to some fancy five-star restaurant,” April joked.

“Never worry. Eat in one of those, and you’ll hurry home to stuff your face with three-month-old chips. I’m not going to punish you by taking you to that kind of place. We’ll have some burgers and soda. What do you say?”

“Sounds great.” It wasn’t like he had to hurry back home to Jett as usual. He had some time to kill, and his dad wouldn’t be home until later in the evening, knowing his schedule.

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“Have you tried, you know, to work things out with your dad?” April asked as he handed the phone back to Sabrina, hopefully now more protected against hackers than before.

Sabrina flicked her hair over one shoulder. “What’s to work out with that dude?”

April shrugged. “I don’t know. But still, he’s your dad. Maybe you could talk to him or something. Tell him that you need your space and all that. Then maybe he’ll understand.”

Sabrina snorted. “Like he would listen. He is a total scumbag, doing all kinds of bad things, leaving mom - who’s not perfect, okay? – and now he’s all ‘young lady’ this and ‘young lady’ that. God, he’s so annoying.” She rolled her eyes to make a point. “It’s not like I don’t want to have a cool dad, you know? But he has all these rules, and he thinks he can tell me who I should date, and that’s a major ‘no’. I mean, he couldn’t keep mom from seeing other guys while he was in the can, and he thinks he could do that to me? I mean ... oh no, I’m yapping my mouth like one of those stupid little dogs, am I not?”

April shook his head. “No. Actually, my boyfriend,” he confessed, “has the same issue with his dad. His dad doesn’t like that we’re together, and you can imagine the rest.”

“Who could be against someone as sweet as you?” Sabrina pinched his cheek like he was a two-year-old, but he didn’t mind. “Wait, is your boyfriend’s dad some homophobic asshole?”

“No, and that’s a bit strange, I mean, not that I complain. It’s just that,” April found himself talking, “my boyfriend has an ex-girlfriend and a child with her, and his dad believes that he should marry her and offer the child a real home.”

Sabrina stopped. Her eyes grew wide. “Did your boyfriend leave his girlfriend with a kid for you? You homewrecker!” She punched his shoulder now, but it seemed in camaraderie, not accusation.

“No, no!” April put his hands up. “It’s nothing like that! They had been through a long time before he and I met, and he didn’t even know until recently that she had a baby. I mean that they had a baby together. He didn’t even know that she had been pregnant with him. She kept it all a secret.”

“Wow, your life is quite exciting, Wednesday! But with a name like yours, I’m not surprised. So, she’s back to get him to marry her?” She slurped from her juice through a straw, making a gurgling sound. It was like she was at the cinema, watching a chick-flick that maybe combined romance with action and mystery.

“No. She’s cool with us, and she doesn’t want Jett to marry her.”

“Jett’s your boyfriend?”

“Yeah,” April said and bit his lips. He wasn’t supposed to give away so many details.

“Cool name. I bet he’s a strong dude, with a bad boy vibe, and at least two tattoos.”

“Only one,” April corrected her. The rest was pretty much accurate.

“Close enough. So, she doesn’t want to marry him. Then what’s his dad’s deal? Why does he want Jett to marry that girl?”

“He thinks that’s the logical thing to do. No, the responsible thing to do,” April corrected himself.

“Responsible.” Sabrina snorted. “We’re a bit too young to be responsible.”

April begged to differ, but he didn’t say a thing. “Anyway, they’re not talking now, at all. It was a big fight, and I don’t know, it seems bad.”

Sabrina nodded. “Parents can be so tough.”

“I guess.” April sighed. “Although my dad is awesome. I should show him how much I love him more often. He has nothing against me being with Jett, and he has always been like this. There are no secrets between us,” he added, feeling a bit like a show-off, but unable to help it.

“Parents always have secrets,” Sabrina said matter-of-factly.

“Not mine,” April said stubbornly. “Sometimes, I think my dad has done nothing but live for us, his kids, for years.”

Sabrina’s phone began ringing, and she apologized quickly as she took the call. Right away, she started laughing and throwing her head back coquettishly. April downed his juice and was already thinking of a way to say goodbye. He just had an idea about buying a cake for his dad, just to show that he cared. If he hurried, the bakery in his hometown would still be open, and he would manage to get something.

Also, he wanted to surprise his dad with both his visit and the cake, so he decided against calling beforehand.

“Sorry, Wednesday,” Sabrina said. “It’s just this guy, asking me out,” she added, with the same smile on her lips from before.

“One of those gentlemen of a certain age?” April asked.

Sabrina laughed. “No. To be honest, I think I do that sometimes just to piss off my dad. No, this guy is the real deal, I think. And he’s only three years older than me,” she said, a bit defensively.

April just smiled at her. “Good for you. And don’t worry, I’m not judging. Would you mind if I took off? I just remembered I have to do something for my dad.”

“You daddy’s boy, you,” Sabrina said and watched him with a fond expression on her face.

“I might be,” April admitted. “See you at school.”

Sabrina stood up and kissed both his cheeks, making sure to wipe the traces of lipstick from his skin before letting him go. “See you, Wednesday. You’re a cool dude.”

April nodded and hurried out the fast-food joint. He was just so lucky to have such a cool dad. He just hoped he would get the cake in time.

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April let himself in with his key. Until his dad got home, he could also cook something, depending on what he would find in his father's fridge. Usually, both the pantry and the refrigerator were packed since Sid was a fan of healthy eating and home cooking.

He balanced the cake in his hand as he closed the door behind him. Was there music coming from the kitchen? Then his dad was already home. And he seemed to be in a happy mood, by the upbeat rhythm April could clearly hear.

He walked toward the source of the sound, making sure not to make too much noise, as he still wanted to surprise his dad.

Just as slowly, he pushed the door open.

His dad was apparently cooking something, and for some reason, he had nothing but a pair of old jeans on and an apron. April knew his dad was lean and good looking, but that was still a surprise.

However, that wasn't the biggest surprise. As April opened his mouth to say something, someone else walked into the picture.

Someone who also wore nothing but a pair of jeans and came to embrace his dad from behind, making his face light up with a smile. April looked up the muscular form of the stranger.

He dropped the cake to the floor, and everything stopped in his universe with the soft, doughy thump.

“Mr. Huntsman?!”



### *Chapter Thirty-Three – Everybody Gets The Feels Sometimes*

“April!” His dad stood there, baffled for a moment, as the music continued playing. “What are you doing home?”

“Really, dad?” April shouted, not knowing, at the moment, how to react.

Mr. Huntsman hurried to turn off the music. That seemed to have the effect of a cold shower on Sid, who began moving right away, removing his apron and hurrying out the door, most probably to put a t-shirt on.

April followed him, and Mr. Huntsman was right behind him, as they all made a beeline for walking out of the kitchen. Although it was funny how each of them jumped over the dropped cake, April didn’t feel like laughing.

He was right. His dad grabbed a t-shirt and pulled it over his head fast. April was in so much shock that he didn’t know what to say. He turned to see what Jett’s dad was doing, but apparently, Mr. Huntsman had disappeared.

Sid ran one hand through his hair, then rubbed his forehead. He looked at April with guilt written all over his face. “Would you sit down?”

April sat on one of the armchairs in the room automatically.

Sid sat on the sofa and linked his fingers together. Then, for a couple of seconds, he stared at his hands, probably searching for the right words.

“What the hell, dad?” April murmured.

“Language, young man,” Sid said right away, but he didn’t look up.

“Language? You, Mr. Huntsman, I mean, Jett’s dad, I mean --” April sputtered.

The other dad in the house walked in and stood by Sid’s side, on the sofa, with the same guilty expression on his face, and, thankfully, fully dressed.

April felt like a schoolmaster who needed to straighten up two rambunctious kids. “Does that mean that now Jett and I are brothers?” he said the first thing that came to his mind.

“Are you sure he’s the bright one?” Mr. Huntsman reacted, turning toward April’s dad.

Sid sighed and chuckled. “He’s just joking. I suppose it’s a coping mechanism since he, well, walked in on us like this.”

Mr. Huntsman just grunted instead of a reply.

Sid finally looked up. “April, ah, damn, how do I start?”

April sank into the armchair, feeling too weak in all his bones to sit straight. "I'm not mad or anything, dad. Just frigging surprised is all."

Sid laughed. "All right. I suppose I'm glad that you're not mad. And this," he gestured between himself and Mr. Huntsman, "doesn't make Jett and you brothers. Just so that you don't worry."

"Thanks," April murmured.

He could look at his dad, but it wasn't the same if he tried to look at Jett's dad. It was as if he did that, he would turn to stone or something like that.

"Hmm," Sid started again, "you see, son, we didn't mean any of this to happen. It just did."

April wasn't sure he wanted to find out what his dad meant by 'it'. No, he wouldn't allow his mind to go there. It was just not something he could do. "Okay," he said in a faint voice.

"It's true," Mr. Huntsman said.

April's head snapped into his direction. "How can you be against Jett and me when you --" He choked on his own words. No, he couldn't let his mind go there.

"He's not," Sid intervened. "I've been working Tom up to gather the courage to talk to Jett for the last few days."

"The last few days? But Jett's dad has been away from home for two weeks! What did you two do all this time ..." April lost his voice and ended up coughing loudly.

The two men across from him shifted in their places, most probably not wanting to go there with the conversation, either.

April buried his face into his hands. "I can't believe it," he moaned. "Dad, did you even ever --"

"Son, don't question your father like this," Mr. Huntsman intervened, his voice as harsh as ever.

April bristled. "Don't call me 'son'. You're not my dad. Oh, wait, but if you marry my dad, oh, no --"

"April, April," his dad called for him gently, "just let us explain, okay? Tom, let me handle this."

"All right," Mr. Huntsman replied, but April could tell from his voice that he wasn't happy with the role of a simple witness.

"I've been alone for many years," Sid started. "Not alone-alone, since I had you and Melinda, but I haven't had a partner in so long."

"I've never thought of that," April admitted, now starting to feel guilty. "I had no idea you were lonely."

“I wasn’t lonely, even if I was alone,” his dad explained. “But you left for college, and I guess that sentiment eventually began to get to me.”

“I’m sorry, dad.”

Of course, the nagging question was why his dad had decided to end his loneliness by hooking up with Jett’s dad. Wait, was that what they were doing? Hooking up? April couldn’t believe he had even thought those words.

“Are you serious about my dad?” April found himself talking and addressing Mr. Huntsman this time.

“This kid has some nerve,” Mr. Huntsman said under his breath.

“He has a right to know.” Sid justified April’s question right away. “No, it’s not something --”

“Yeah, it’s serious,” Mr. Huntsman interrupted April’s dad.

“It is?” Both Sid and April addressed the question at the same time.

Mr. Huntsman didn’t seem that comfortable, shifting his weight on the sofa, and trying hard to appear casual as he spoke. “Yeah, it is.”

April eyed his dad carefully. Sid appeared a bit surprised. Well, at least, he was no longer the only one. “All right, all right, this is a bit too much for me. Mr. Huntsman, why haven’t you called to talk to Jett all this time?”

“Call me Tom.” That sounded like an order, not an invitation, but April didn’t want to dwell too much on such things at the moment. “Your dad’s been bugging me for days to do that. I was going to.”

“Jett is ...” April had no idea how to say it to be as accurate as possible. “He’s upset, big time.”

Tom snorted. “For what? Not having his way?”

“Losing you, I guess,” April replied in all honesty.

Sid put one hand on Tom’s arm. “I told you as much. It wasn’t possible for Jett not to feel a thing for you, his father.”

“You did tell me,” Tom admitted, but not without setting his jaw hard.

Yeah, it was right in front of his eyes. Tom was just like Jett. Well, the other way around, but nonetheless, that was the simple truth. “Jett would talk to you if you made the first step,” April said. “And now, since you don’t have anything against us ... I mean, do you still have something against us?”

“No,” Tom said sharply. “And I just wanted Jett to have a simple and happy life, nothing else.”

April shook his head. It was clear as day that he didn’t understand everything. “But he was happy with me,” he said in a meek voice as he looked down.

Sid intervened again. “Things are more complicated than they look, pumpkin. Grownups have their hung-ups, too. It’s not easy --”

“I didn’t want Jett to feel as caught as me between two worlds,” Tom said.

April couldn’t recall ever hearing Jett’s dad saying such a lengthy phrase without yelling or berating someone. The meaning of that statement caught up with him, and he felt a rush of something – he wouldn’t call it sympathy just yet – toward Jett’s dad. But was he right to believe that was what Tom was saying? He didn’t exactly have the guts to ask for more details.

“Was the same thing happening to you, dad? Being caught between two worlds?” April asked carefully, just to make sure he didn’t commit some blunder by asking such a question.

“No,” his dad said simply. “It was, um,” he ran one hand through his salt and pepper hair again, “rather a surprise. Let’s just leave it at that,” he added quickly. “I believe there’s a bit of a mess in the kitchen that needs tending to. Also, I should finish preparing dinner.”

“Sorry about dropping the cake,” April said softly. “It was supposed to be a surprise.”

Sid sighed, but when he shook his head, he was smiling. “I suppose it was a surprise, no matter how you look at it. But don’t worry about the cake. I’ll whip out some dessert, too.”

“No need to,” April said quickly. “I shouldn’t stay.”

“Nonsense. You’re home now, and you’ll stay here. Did you want to visit over the weekend?”

“Yeah, something like that. Jett took off somewhere with Zane --”

“Did he leave his child alone?” Tom intervened with a question of his own.

“Jay is with Carina,” April pointed out.

“You both left a woman and her child all by themselves?”

April did feel a little guilty now.

Sid was the one to come to the rescue. “I believe Carina is old enough to be on her own for a couple of days, Tom. Stop being so overprotective.”

“I shouldn’t have left,” Tom said under his breath.

“They’re all good kids,” Sid said calmly. “April, Jett, Carina, and even little Jay.”

“They need someone to watch over them,” Tom replied.

April stood there, not quite believing his ears. So Jett’s dad was a tyrant because he was overprotective? But it was clear that he hadn’t been around much. There were so many things April couldn’t get entirely.

“And? Where did Jett go with his friend?” Tom asked April directly.

“I’m not sure. He was so upset that he just wanted, I don’t know, some time alone.”

Sid snorted. “Like someone else we know. All right, guys. I have a dinner to prepare. April, I don’t even want to hear about your going back. You’re spending the weekend with us.”

“But won’t I be in your way?” April asked.

“You could never be.” Sid ruffled his hair. “It’s so seldom that I have you home, with me, lately. Let me spoil you a little.”

“But you’re not alone, dad,” April pointed out, and this time, he remembered to blush.

“It’s all fine by me,” Tom said, understanding the source of April’s discomfort. “And it’s a good occasion to get to know you better, April.”

Was he dreaming? Did he need to pinch himself? Mr. Huntsman, no, Tom, actually behaved like a human being.

“Should I call Jett and tell him --” April lost his words. That wasn’t exactly the kind of news to deliver over the phone.

“It’s better if I talked to him in person,” Tom said right away. “And let him have his time out with Zane.”

“Do you know Zane, Mr. Huntsman?”

“Tom. Yes, I do. I know more about my son’s life than he might think.”

April was completely confused now. He searched with his eyes for his dad, but Sid had already disappeared into the kitchen.

Great. Now, he was alone with Mr. Huntsman. Tom.

“So, what did you say you study?” The question came gruffly, the same as before, but April knew better than to be fooled again.

“Computers,” he replied in a faint voice.

Tom smiled at him, and April felt his heart melting. Jett had the same smile. Maybe everyone around was a little bit misunderstood, after all.

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“Man, I want so much to be pissed at you,” Zane complained as they walked up the hill.

“Feel free to be as pissed as you want. I’m counting on it,” Jett said through his teeth.

“Yeah, right. First, I want to know why.”

“Why? Don’t you know it, why you should be pissed at me? How’s that boyfriend of yours?”

“Hmm,” Zane replied with a noncommittal grunt instead of words.

“What? Did you fuck or not?”

“We did,” Zane said but didn’t volunteer any more information.

“Whatever. I don’t really care where you stick it, Zane.”

“That’s my BFF.” Zane chuckled under his breath. “The problem is what you got stuck in your ass. Don’t tell me April’s bigger than you.”

“It’s none of your fucking business how long my boyfriend’s shlong is.”

“Hey, it’s just basic curiosity. For the record, on skinny dudes like April, it may be an illusion. A nice illusion, but still.”

“Stop talking about April, already.”

“Why, did he kick you out of the house for being a dick? I don’t see him doing that.”

“It’s got nothing to do with April.”

“Ah, right. It’s your dad, then.”

Jett remained glued in place while Zane continued to walk past him. Everybody knew him better than himself these days. It was frigging annoying.

“Are you coming already? This was your idea, by the way.” Zane turned but didn’t stop walking.

“Coming,” Jett replied and started moving.

Usually, people went to the woods to bird watch, camp, or hunt. They weren’t going to do any of that. Instead, Jett was ready to blow some real steam, and train like a madman until his muscles were so sore and his mind so blank that he wanted to die a little. It had worked in the past, and it would work again.

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“I don’t remember seeing anyone setting up a tent so fast,” Zane commented, as soon as they were ready to start.

“Shut up and get ready.” Jett punched his gloved hands together, just to give his friend a bit of warning.

Zane jumped half a foot aside as Jett lunged. “Oh, man, this is bad.”

“I told you to shut up.”

“Why would I do that?” Zane danced around him, light on his feet, teasing him with small jabs. “It’s your fight, not mine.”

Zane had a point. But Jett wasn’t at all in the mood to agree with anything. Again and again, he chased Zane, trying to hit him, but his punches met nothing but air. Not many people could guess Zane’s real strength by just looking at him. He looked like Jett, someone who could throw and take a punch, but Zane was also a little vain.

He couldn’t stand anyone trying to mess with his face. That’s why he had first learned evasion tactics, meant to keep him away from getting hit, as he had explained to Jett the first time they had met. Zane didn’t always succeed in saving his pretty face, but, for what was worth, he did fine overall. If he had swung at least both ways, he would have been a lady killer.

Jett stopped and circled his opponent, trying to focus and find an opening. If he were to spend the entire day chasing Zane, he would still land a punch. There was no way he wouldn’t do that.

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“So, do you feel like you got enough or what?” Zane wiped his forehead with his t-shirt and fell next to Jett on the log they used as a bench.

Jett just grunted as he stared into the fire.

“Man, I’ve never thought that I would say this, but do you need to talk?”

Jett snorted. “I’m doing this because I don’t want to talk. Everybody around me wants to talk.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

“Huh? What did you ask?”

“I asked you if you needed to talk, not if you wanted to talk. There’s a difference.”

“Since when did you turn into a fucking shrink?”

Zane opened the bottle, took a sip, and then handed it to Jett. "Since I'm starting to have feels."

Oh, no. Not Zane, too.

"What? You don't get the feels. Nothing ever gives you the feels."

"Yeah, usually."

"So?"

"So what?"

"Aren't you going to say anything?"

"Say what?"

"Zane, I'm warning you. I'm already pissed. Don't push your luck."

"You're not talking either," Zane pointed out. "What? What's the matter? Your dad did what? You know what, Jett? You're weak, man. You're my best friend, but you're so weak. What, can't you take your dad or something? You're letting him walk all over you? Big news, my dude. He'll never like you. He'll never tell you anything like he loves you and stupid shit like that."

No matter what Zane's game was, Jett had enough of it. "Zip it, Zane. I'm going to kick your ass so bad if you don't stop," he warned.

"Are you getting pissed? Like, for real? By the way, all you did today, prancing around me like that, that was weak, too. Oh, you're getting mad, aren't you? Whatcha gonna do, huh? Beat me? Catch me if you can."

Jett jumped to his feet at the same time as Zane. "Dude, you're pissing me off."

"Ha, and what's new?"

Zane was getting on his nerves, and he knew it. Jett felt broken in parts of his body that he never knew that they existed, but he still had some rage left in him. With a growl, he rammed into Zane's chest, taking him down.

Zane pushed against him, and now they were both rolling down a hill, small bushes and old twigs beating their faces and scratching them everywhere there was a bit of exposed skin.

At the foot of the small hill, they were both breathing hard. Jett pushed himself up. "Come on, tough guy. Let's try again."

Zane stood up with a growl.



Jett rambled on. “Don’t hate me if I mess up your pretty face this time. What? Won’t your boyfriend like you no more? Don’t worry; he doesn’t need to stare at your face when he fucks you doggy style.”

The force of the punch made him see stars. He lost his balance and took a few steps backward. But soon, he rebounded, and this time, he came after Zane with a vengeance. They locked themselves in an awkward embrace and ended up again on the ground.

It was weird how Zane seemed to have more energy left in him. He gained the upper hand again, and this time, he pressed Jett down with a knee against his chest. “Do you give up already, asshole?”

Jett growled and tried to move, but Zane was keeping him down and was also holding both his wrists into a tight grip. He freed his hands, but just when he tried to hit Zane, another punch took him by surprise, making his head snap to one side.

“Oh, fuck,” he moaned.

Zane released him right away and stood up.

All right, so he had thought he had some anger issues, but Zane didn’t seem to be his usual cheerful self either. Jett groaned as he moved to one side. Zane hurried and offered his hand. Jett took it and then winced as he worked his jaw. “That was one mean fucking punch.”

“You deserved it, asshole,” Zane said in a low voice.

“I guess so,” Jett said with mirth. “This is going to bruise.”

“Well, I guess April won’t mind while you’re on all fours, taking it up the ass.”

“I guess not.” Jett laughed. “I need to make it up to him anyway, so I guess I should prepare my ass.”

Zane remained silent for a couple of beats. “Is April fucking you?” He offered his shoulder, and Jett leaned against him, as they began climbing up the hill, back to their fire.

“Yeah. Wait, does it surprise you or something?”

“Yeah. Aren’t you all macho and stuff?”

“What’s that got to do with anything? Wait. Did you get this mad because I said that Dan would have to fuck you from behind?”

Zane remained silent.

Jett started laughing. “Are you fucking kidding me, man? I thought you were versatile! Didn’t you say so? I mean, that dude, oh, fuck, I can’t remember his name now, wasn’t he fucking you? And that other one? Wait, ah, it’s because you hit me like a fucking truck that I can’t remember.”

“Yeah, I’m versatile,” Zane replied, and Jett could tell from his voice that the guy was really pissed still. “But only with guys who have, you know, small feminine dicks.”

“Feminine dicks?” Jett began laughing, but then he reconsidered as his entire body ached. Between trying to hit Zane for the entire day, rolling down a hill, and getting punched in the face twice, something had to give. “Are you even a gay dude? What’s that, a feminine dick?”

“The kind your boyfriend has,” Zane shot back, obviously rattled by Jett’s teasing.

“April doesn’t have a feminine dick,” Jett said. “Far from it. Actually, he’s pretty big.”

“Really? How many inches?”

“Shut up, man. I’m not disclosing that kind of info to you. Well, April’s dick is not small or feminine, whatever the fuck that means. I feel it when he puts it inside my ass.”

“I never thought I’d hear you say that you got fucked,” Zane said, and he sounded surprised. “And how does that feel?”

“How does that feel? Why the fuck are we having this conversation? Well, if you need to know so badly, it feels fucking awesome. I can’t sit the next day, but seeing how much dick April gets from me, I can’t really complain, or I’d be a total douchebag.”

Zane fell silent again. At last, they had reached their fire, but the bottle of booze was on one side, its content spilled almost entirely. Nonetheless, Jett grabbed it and drank from it until the last drop.

“You could’ve left something,” Zane protested.

Jett shrugged. “I’m the one who got beaten. Don’t complain, asshole. Wait, is your asshole getting shy about that dude’s cock?”

“His name is Dan. I hope you didn’t forget his name, too, like you did with the names of all the other guys I’ve been with.”

“Shut up, dude. You don’t recall their names, either.”

“That’s true,” Zane admitted.

Jett touched his face gingerly. “So, man, are you scared or something?”

“I’m not scared,” Zane protested right away. “Who says anything about that? It’s just my pride as a man. How can I let a guy with a bigger tool than mine fuck me?”

“Bigger than yours? Like how many fucking inches?”

“I’m not telling!”

“All right. But, man, is that what you’re upset about? You’re really something.”

Zane sighed. “You know me, bro. I fuck ‘em and forget ‘em. But this guy, he’s like, I don’t know, I like him.”

“So? Did he try to sneak on you and fuck your ass?”

“Nah, nothing like that.”

“Did he ask you to put your ass up then?”

“Not even.”

“Then what’s the fucking problem?”

Zane took the empty bottle from Jett’s hand and stared at it mournfully. “Did you really have to drink everything?”

Jett took the bottle back and threw it away. “You asked me that already. Yeah, I did. Now let’s get to it. What’s eating you?”

Zane looked away like he was suddenly taken with the surroundings. Aside from the fire and the faint light of the moon, the rest was pretty much pitch black. “I’m not sure I can keep this guy. I want to, but it’s not like I can say it.”

Jett felt surprisingly good after the two punches he got from Zane. And listening to someone else complaining was also a new feeling, and that wasn’t bad at all. “Sure you can,” he said matter-of-factly.

“Sure I can’t,” Zane shot back. “What would that make me? Begging for a dude to be my boyfriend or something?”

“Hey, we already joke around how buzz cut boy is your boyfriend. Joke until it’s real. It shouldn’t be so hard.”

Zane clicked his tongue in annoyance. “He runs his mouth about how good it must feel to fuck a tight twink’s ass.”

“Really? That’s what you two talk about when you fuck?”

“Not when we fuck. After. You know Dan’s not my usual type.”

“Yeah, you usually go for tight twink asses. Not that you’re too selective if I remember.”

At this, Zane snorted. “I like getting laid,” he said with a deep sigh. “I like getting laid when I’m with this guy. More than usual.”

Jett grunted as he adjusted his position. “Just go the fuck ahead and tell him you wouldn’t mind if he put his dick in you. Who knows? Maybe you’ll both like it.”

“Yeah, sure. You haven’t seen this dude’s tool. Dan is frigging monstrous.”

“Now you’re making me curious. What kind of gun is Dan packing?”

“I’m not saying anything more. You think all this is some kind of joke.”

“Far from me. I just think you’re chicken for no reason. C’mon, Zane, how do you prep those cute twink asses for your gun? Do the same for your ass. If all those guys took it from you without complaining --”

“They didn’t complain; they fucking loved it.”

“See? You’ll love it, too.”

“But I’m the top dog,” Zane complained.

“So? What’s that got to do with anything?”

“You’re frigging annoying, just for the record.”

“Come on, man, don’t be such a coward. Maybe Dan will love your ass, and he won’t dream of twink asses anymore.”

“Yeah, right. Who doesn’t dream of twink asses?”

“Apparently, you.” Jett patted Zane’s shoulder. “Dude, are we getting old or something? Since when do we talk about this stuff?”

Zane snickered. “Yeah, that must be it. Once you’re over that twenty mark, your brain goes to shits. Hey, man, what’s with your old man?”

Jett wasn’t expecting the question. It felt good to talk about another dude’s problems for a change. “What can I say? He’s a fucking tyrant, that’s what he is. He just keeps on telling me I should let April go and marry Carina, and stuff.”

Zane became serious. “He can’t do that,” he said solemnly. “Did you make it clear to him that you’re not going to let April go?”

“Yeah. And I told him some other stuff. And he left.” Jett picked a small branch from the ground and began to trace lines through the dirt.

“Just like that?”

“Not exactly.” Jett grimaced. Since they were talking about feels anyway, maybe it wasn’t the wrong time to get some things off his chest, either. “I told him to leave. I told him it was my house and if he didn’t like what I was doing, he had to leave. So he did.”

A few moments of silence followed. “I hate to ask this,” Zane started, “but how do you feel about it?”

Jett laughed humorlessly and shook his head. “Like crap, that’s how I feel.”

Zane sighed. “Maybe you should tell him you’re sorry.”

“So that he can laugh in my face? No way. And then he’ll just get back to telling me how I should live my life. No frigging way.”

“No, man. What I’m saying is that you need to be a man about it. You say, ‘sorry, dad, I want you home with me, but stop being a fucking asshole about me and April’, and that’s all.”

“He’ll only start again from the top.”

“Don’t let him. Be firm or something. He’ll give up.”

“He thinks I’m making a mistake. That I should be with Carina and raise Jay together.”

“What does Carina say about it?”

“She also told my dad she wouldn’t marry me.”

“Your dad thinks that both of you should sacrifice yourselves for the baby’s sake.”

It was Jett’s turn to fall silent. “You really think that?”

“Let’s say that’s my educated guess, as a shrink in training.”

“Zane, my dude, you need a license for that, and school, and stuff.”

“I will just practice on my friends.”

“Good idea.” Jett chuckled. “So you’re saying that he’s doing it out of care for Jay?”

“Something like that.”

“But he never held Jay once. Not once. What kind of a granddad is he?”

“A shitty one, I guess, but he still cares. You should just talk to your old man. And if he doesn’t agree with your choices, that’s fine. We’re grownups, too, now, you know? We should be able to live without our parents agreeing to what we do.”

“It’s easy for you to say. Yours are fine with your choices.”

“And you think they’ve always been? Did I ever tell you how I came out to my folks?”

“No.”

“I was in tenth grade, and some guy from the soccer team was giving me head on the sofa in the living room while we were watching some stupid match on TV. My folks walked in on us. It was a huge scandal.” Zane said that with satisfaction.

“Why the fuck you’re grinning? That must have been crazy.”

“Yeah,” Zane admitted. “My mom cried. My dad yelled at me for hours.”

“Really? And I thought you had the coolest folks in the universe.”

“Well, it was a shock for them. Also, I had burnt the carpet with cigarettes. All by mistake, but my mom loved that carpet. They bought it on their honeymoon or something like that.”

“Wait, did your mom cry for that carpet, not you being gay?”

“Maybe both. The thing is they vented and then they both sat down with me and asked me about me. I told them the truth. My mom cried a little more. My dad just remained silent for a while. But eventually, they told me that I should be careful who I bring home and to stop with the filthy habit of smoking cigarettes.”

“You didn’t stop smoking.”

“Yeah. But I haven’t burnt a carpet since, and I never brought home another dude for suck and fuck.”

“So is that all? They don’t see you doing it, so they don’t care?”

“Not really. My mom now worries that I’m too much of a flirt. Her words, not mine. She keeps asking when I’m going to bring home a date.”

“A date?” Jett laughed and then grabbed his jaw again in sudden pain. “And your dad?”

“He just keeps on giving me lectures about how boys should be treated with the same consideration as girls. It’s his way of telling me not to be a jerk.”

“And you did nothing of what they asked you.”

“That’s true. But they’re okay with me, and I know they care. I suspect my mom has secret fantasies about organizing a gay wedding. I saw some magazines on her nightstand.”

“You’re only twenty.” Jett shook his head. “Boy, do they want to marry you off young.”

“They married when they were nineteen. I guess that’s how they see me, you know, being happy and stuff.”

“So, whatcha gonna do? Will you bring home a date to mom and dad?”

“I might.”

“Dude, I was kidding. Wait, are you going to introduce Dan to them?”

“I might,” Zane repeated the words.

“Dude, you really are getting old.”

“Shut up. You have a baby and a boyfriend. Don’t tell me you’ll ever let go of April. And having a kid? Raising him? I guess that’s grownup stuff.”

“Yeah, I guess. But I think I’ll let April finish school before I propose and stuff.”

“What?” Zane expressed his surprise. “Are you really thinking of tying the knot? For real? Since when did you get gayer than me?”

“I don’t know, man. Maybe I’m a grownup, and you’re the kid,” Jett teased.

“Shut up, asshole. You can’t even talk to your dad like you’re ten. Give me a call when he sends you to your room.”

“Zane, do you still have anything left in you to fight? Because you can sit there, talking smack, all night long, and I won’t move to kick your ass.”

“Huh? I just did that. So stop asking for it.”

“You’re asking for it.”

They both started laughing at the same time.

“Dude, how could you pack just a bottle of that good shit?” Jett complained as he felt his bruised body.

“Who says I did that?”

“Are you fucking kidding me? Just bring it on already.”

Zane jumped to his feet, but he limped a little as he dragged his ass over to the tent. Jett had to admit. Carina was right, in a way. Talking to Zane was better than seeing a shrink. Not that he knew squat about that since all the info he had was from stupid TV shows.



### *Chapter Thirty-Four - I Know How You Got That Tattoo*

April stole glances in his dad's direction as he was over-consciously chewing his breakfast. His dad looked good. No, he looked fantastic. It was like he was ten years younger or something like that. April couldn't believe his eyes; was his dad in love or something? He couldn't ask such a question. It would have seemed childish coming from him, and what kids ever asked their parents that kind of thing?

For the moment, he needed to settle for what was happening in front of his eyes. First of all, after the initial shock and talking about the situation, now there was a lot of politeness. Tom asked very politely for the salt, and Sid passed it to him just as politely.

"You don't have to be like this for my sake," April thought out loud.

His dad quirked an eyebrow. "Like this, how?"

"You know." April shrugged. "Like you haven't, err, um, like you didn't, ah, like you don't know each other!"

"You don't have to shout each phrase," Sid said.

"Sorry." April hadn't realized his voice was getting louder for no reason. "I never thought I would sit at the same table as my dad's boyfriend."

"Boyfriend." Sid looked amused at his plate, then at Tom.

"I have no idea what's the right word," April murmured and pretended to be absorbed by the food in front of him. As usual, everything his dad cooked tasted heavenly. His mind just wasn't at breakfast. "Lover?"

"That sounds sort of old-fashioned," Sid replied.

"We're partners, son. How's that?" Tom used the same gruff tone, but April was getting more and more used to it.

"Partners, okay." He no longer minded being called 'son', either. In a way, he was Tom's son. Twice, actually, if he thought about it. Once, because Tom was his dad's partner. And twice, because he and Jett were together. Yeah, being called 'son' by that temperamental man sounded right.

"I am going to tell Jett everything myself. So I'd appreciate it if you didn't call him," Tom added.

"No chance of that. I think he went to an area with poor signal. Plus, it seemed like he didn't want to be disturbed."

Tom smiled. "You understand my son pretty well."

"They've been living like boyfriends for several weeks now. Although April still didn't find the courage to tell Jett a pretty big secret."

"Dad!" April protested right away.

Tom quirked an eyebrow and looked at him. April felt the need to duck under the table.

"Do you use grenades and stuff?" he asked all of a sudden, after a couple of moments of silence.

"Grenades?" Tom looked at Sid, most probably wondering how April's mind worked.

"Way to deflect, April," his dad scolded him. "April and Jett have known each other for many years."

"Really?" Tom asked, his eyes turning to stare April down.

"It was that summer."

Tom grunted in reply, and his eyes became shadows.

"They found some common ground, I believe," Sid continued. "Like us."

Tom grunted again. Now April knew that not liking to talk about feels ran in the family.

"Only that April," Sid stopped for a moment and let out a small sigh which he might have kept in for years, "told Jett at that time that he was called Theo."

"Theo," Tom said slowly. His eyes now became unfocused like he was searching for something in his mind. "Theo, Theo, Theo," he repeated. Then he snapped his fingers. "The missing boy!"

"The missing boy?" Sid and April both asked in surprise.

"Jett kept pestering me at that time about how one would go about finding a missing person. My mind wasn't quite on how to help him find such a person. But he mentioned the name many times at the end of that summer. For a while, I thought it could be some imaginary friend."

April made himself small in his chair. So, at that time, Jett hadn't hated him. At all. Why else could he have asked his dad how to find him? He stared down, feeling ashamed now.

"And you two just met again?" Tom asked.

"By accident," April murmured, "yes."

"And didn't he remember you?"

“He thought I looked like someone he knew. But I told him that no, I wasn’t Theo.” His voice grew so faint that Tom and Sid leaned over the table to hear him.

“Then you should tell him,” Tom said solemnly.

“Exactly what I told him,” Sid said.

“Great. Now no one’s on my side,” April complained.

“On this topic, I’m not, not the way you want me to be, at least,” Sid replied. “I think it’s long overdue, April. Not telling him is the wrong thing to do.”

“All right, I will,” April promised.

“Just curious,” Tom started, “why did you choose not to tell him?”

“I thought he would kick my ass,” April replied promptly.

“They had a bit of a falling out,” Sid explained. “They didn’t part as friends that summer, although April has had a crush on Jett ever since.”

“Dad!” April hoped the urgency in his voice was enough to have his dad drop the issue.

Tom appeared amused. “Funny thing, I thought Jett, too, might have had a crush on his imaginary friend. He was talking about him way too much to be only friendship, although, at that age, one can never know. Kids obsess over so many things. I believe the distraction was good, even if it lasted so little.”

It felt so surreal to hear Tom talk so naturally about his son’s crush on a thirteen-year-old boy from such a long time ago. Actually, hearing Tom talk naturally about anything was enough to make April stare and gape. He pushed his jaw upward with one hand.

“I will tell him,” he said softly. “Just don’t give me away, please.”

“I would never do that,” Sid promised.

“And it’s not my job to do that either, so it’s all fine by me. God knows I have my own secrets to tell,” Tom added.

April looked down again. There would be so many things that Jett couldn’t even start to fathom happening tomorrow.

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“It’s been a good run, right?” Zane punched him in the shoulder and shared with him an ear to ear grin.

“Could you just stop it with the punches already?” Jett massaged his shoulder. “You wrecked me, asshole.”

“Hey, it was totally your call because you needed it and stuff. Not that I didn’t enjoy kicking your ass big time.” Zane cracked his knuckles in satisfaction. “Now, I can barely wait to go back to my boyfriend.”

“So, serious about this dude, eh?”

“Told you. Serious enough to put my ass up for total destruction.”

“Let me know how that works for you.”

“Like hell, I will.”

“Just testing you.” It was Jett’s turn to grin. “Hey, don’t you want to get inside?”

“Nah. I’ve had enough of you this weekend. And I guess you want to be reunited with your pretty boyfriend just as much as I want. Tell April and Carina I say ‘hi’.”

“Will do,” Jett promised.

“It looks like it’s a party at your home or something. All the lights are on,” Zane pointed out.

“Yeah.” Jett stared at the house, a bit intrigued. “April and Carina might play hide and seek with Jay or something.”

“Hide and seek? All over the house?”

Jett shrugged. “What do I know? I can barely wait for Jay to be old enough to teach him how to throw a punch. You know, basic skills for life.”

Zane held his fist up, and Jett bumped it with his. “See you around, man.”

“Yeah. And don’t forget to tell me all about the wrecking of your ass.”

“Sure, sure. Maybe I’ll shoot a video, show you everything.”

Jett made a face. “Nah, I’ll settle for you telling me about it. I don’t want to look at your wrinkled balls.”

“Wrinkled? Is that what you see in the mirror?” Zane asked with a smirk.

“Just get out of here, Zane. I’m not up for a rematch on the front lawn of my house.”

“Too bad. As always, I would have destroyed you completely.”

“Dream on, fucker. Bye.”

Zane waved and smiled as he turned on his heels and began typing something fast on his phone. Jett could only suspect that Zane was already planning to meet with his boyfriend, and he couldn't blame him.

He walked toward the front door, still smiling. It was good to be back even if he had been away for no more than two days or so. Maybe April was cooking something yummy. That, if he had returned from his visit for some time.

His chest was no longer as heavy. Well, maybe it wasn't all okay, but he was reasonably fine. At least, he could be the same loving boyfriend toward April, a friend to Carina, and a dad to Jay, like he always wanted to be.

"Hey, you're back." April jumped in front of him, as soon as Jett walked through the door.

Jett held April in his arms and smooched him loudly. April pushed him away slightly and looked away. "What? Don't tell me you're still mad at me."

"Um, there's someone here who wants to talk to you," April explained.

Jett stiffened. Could it be that the Z brothers had sent some goons or something, trying to convince him to come back? He let April down from his arms. "Who?" he asked gruffly.

"Son, we need to talk." His dad appeared from the living room.

Jett set his jaw hard. "I have nothing I want to say to you."

"Please, it's important." April squeezed his arm, and Jett looked at him with hurt eyes. April winced, but he didn't look away this time.

"I don't see anything we could talk about."

"Maybe you need to open your eyes for a bit, then." It was someone else's voice who said those words.

Jett looked up and stared at Sid. April's dad was standing by his father's side, and somehow, that picture struck him as off. Why would both dads be here? Had anything happened while he had been away? The ground under his feet seemed to tilt. "What? Did anything happen to Jay? Carina --"

"No, everyone's fine," Sid hurried to appease his worries.

His feet descended back on the ground. Jett had no idea why his mind had chosen to go in that direction out of all things. Now he felt a little stupid. If anything had happened to Jay, April would have told him that first. "All right. What do you want to talk about?" He stared defiantly at his dad.

Tom shifted his weight from one foot to another. "Let's talk in the kitchen. It's kind of private." He scratched the back of his neck with the index finger and grimaced.

*I hope he's not ill*, Jett thought right away. That would be the kind of thing his dad wouldn't like to talk about in front of others. Jett steeled himself and continued his silent prayers that his old man's health was still good. He looked in perfect shape, but who knew about such things?

With a nod of his head, he followed his father into the kitchen. From the corner of one eye, he noticed April hurrying by his dad's side and the affection with which Sid ruffled his hair. That would never be he and his dad; at that time, Zane had just wanted to rile him up good, but there was truth in that, too. There was a pretty good damned reason why he never liked to talk about feels.

But his dad was still his dad. And he would do his best to help him if it came to that. He needed to be strong if anything happened to his parent.

Tom didn't sit once they were inside the kitchen. There was a pretty nice smell coming from the oven, so April, indeed, must have been hard at work to make something tasty.

Jett sniffed a little. It smelled like roasted pork. And smoked paprika. He didn't recall telling April how much he liked that dish. It wasn't like they talked much about food when they were together. And he would have eaten whatever April cooked anyway.

"I made your favorite," his dad said.

Jett plopped down on one chair and crossed his arms over his chest. "Well, you didn't have to. Now, what you wanted to say to me?" he asked gruffly.

Tom looked away and paced some more.

Jett could feel his resolve to act like a prick waning. "Shit," he murmured under his breath. "You're not dying, are you?"

Tom stopped his pacing and stared at him in surprise. "No. What makes you think that?"

Jett breathed out. "Good. I mean, I'm glad that you're not dying."

"It's good that you care."

"Stop making fun of me," Jett said, frowning and staring down.

"I'm not. I'm serious. I'm glad that you care."

Jett could feel a lump the size of a tennis ball lodging in his throat. He wasn't going to start crying now, right?

“What I want to tell you is not exactly easy,” Tom started. “You know how much I loved your mom.”

Jett shifted in his chair. Even his dad wanted to talk about feels. What the hell was wrong with everyone? Was something in the water? Someone had to call the health department. “Could’ve fooled me,” he replied eventually.

“I did. She was the love of my life.”

“Is this going anywhere?” Jett asked, hating how his voice sounded. There was only this much he could do to stop his mind from going all mush and flooded with things that needed to remain gated and buried. “Are you finally remarrying or something?”

“Or something,” Tom confirmed solemnly. “And I want you to hear it from me.”

“You don’t have to go through all this trouble. I wish you and the missus all the happiness. I might not attend the wedding, though. Not my speed. But I’ll make sure to send a toaster or something.” He was being a jerk, but he could hardly help it. After all, his dad didn’t want him to be happy with April. So, yeah, he couldn’t pretend he cared about his dad’s remarrying too much.

“It’s not a missus. And I’m not remarrying. Not yet, at least.”

Jett stared at his dad, blinking. “What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“Mind your language, Jett,” his dad barked.

Jett could think of a myriad of angry retorts, but he bit his tongue. The last thing he wanted was to get into another fight with his old man. The less he got involved, the sooner his dad would be on his merry way. “Whatever. Who is it?”

Tom appeared to have a tough time finding his words.

“Well?” Jett asked. “Wait ... not a missus ... Dad?”

“It’s Sid, okay?” his dad blurted out.

Jett was glad he was sitting. His jaw went slack. Was that a joke or something? “Sid? Like in April’s dad?” he shouted.

“Yes, April’s dad,” Tom confirmed, throwing his arms wide open.

Jett shook his head. It was unbelievable. It was fucking unbelievable. No, he couldn’t just believe that! “How the hell?” he murmured the question.

Tom sighed. “We didn’t plan for it.”

“Ha!”

“It just happened.”

“Seriously? Wait. All this time, you’ve been at Sid’s place?”

“Yeah. April walked in on us, and it wasn’t easy.”

“Walked in on you? Doing what? Oh, fuck. Were you fucking?” Jett was well aware his voice had over the admitted limit of decibels, but he couldn’t control anything anymore. His dad was calmly admitting to him that he was fucking another man! After all the scandal he had caused because he and April did exactly that!

“No. For God’s sake, Jett, pull your mind out of the gutter.”

“I can’t! You put it there!”

“We were just cooking together, but, well, I embraced Sid and --”

“Oh, fuck! I mean, what on earth ... Dad, why? I mean, all of a sudden, you discovered you liked dudes? And you’re giving me shit about April?”

Tom looked away, appearing very much embarrassed.

Jett ran both hands over his face. “Sid is not your first dude,” he said matter-of-factly.

His dad grunted in reply.

“Fuck,” Jett barely managed. “So why the hell couldn’t you see why I liked April?”

“I didn’t want you conflicted and unhappy.” Tom exhaled and shook his head, his hands on his hips, his fingers tapping nervously.

“But I’m not conflicted and unhappy! How blind can you be? I’m in love with April! I love him!”

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April covered his face and muttered to himself. “They don’t exactly keep it private, do they?”

His dad patted his knee in sympathy. “I suppose that’s not the way you wanted to hear Jett confess to you, right?”

April nodded, feeling all drained of energy. “He has said many things to me, but never something as direct as this.”



“Well, then that’s all the more reason for you to tell him the truth. You can’t hide forever, April. He might get upset with you, even angry, but you’ve heard him, right? He loves you. He’ll forgive you, of course, if you apologize with all your heart.”

“Thank you for the pep talk, dad,” April said dryly. “But you’re right. And I must tell him that I’ve always been in love with him, as well.”

“That should help you patch things up nicely,” Sid said with a smile. “And don’t forget you’ll always have me.”

“Thank you, dad.” April put his hand over his dad’s. “You have no idea how good it is to know this.”

On the other side of the kitchen door, the shouted conversation between Jett and Tom continued.

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“Why? Why have you been such a damned jerk about it when you --” Jett choked on the words, the realization that he was practically discussing his dad’s sex life hitting him hard. “And how long ... I mean, when mom --”

“No, never,” Tom said sternly. “But it is something I’ve felt for many years. I tried to push it away, to tell myself that it’s just something that didn’t really matter in the grand scheme of things.”

Jett stood there, staring at the floor, his hands linked in front of him, the chair pushed back from the table. This was all way too much. How could such things happen? “Why now? Why Sid?” he asked eventually.

Tom sighed. “We’ve found that we have a lot of things in common. We talked.”

“And then you fucked,” Jett said matter-of-factly.

“Crudely put, but yes.”

“That night, when you came late after meeting April’s dad, you two --”

“Did it? Okay, because you’re in shock over this, I’m going to indulge you, but this is the first, and the last time I’m talking about my intimate affairs with you.”

“Amen,” Jett said dryly.

“Smartass,” his dad retorted.

“But you were still a jerk at that time,” Jett pointed out.

“I guess I still couldn’t believe that it would be okay to, um, feel something like this.”

“What? Did you fall in love at first sight with April’s dad?”

“At our age, no one does that,” Tom replied. “But then we got into that fight, and Sid called me and asked me to stay with him until I needed to go back to my base.”

“And you just went.”

“Yes.”

“And you two didn’t say one word. You just kept it all for yourselves.”

Tom set his jaw hard. “Sid has been pestering me to talk to you. I guess April’s unplanned visit sped things along.”

“How long were you planning to keep it a secret?”

Jett noticed the slump in his dad’s shoulders. “I had to tell you eventually. After all, things between Sid and I got pretty serious during these last few weeks.”

“That’s frigging unbelievable.” Jett shook his head. “And now, what? Are you guys going to marry or something?”

“No.”

“So, you two aren’t serious.”

“We are. But it’s not like any of us sees marriage like you, young people, might. We were both married. We took our vows.”

The atmosphere in the room, no, in the entire house, felt lighter. Suddenly, Jett started laughing. He didn’t even know why, but he just did. His father joined him, although probably he had no idea why he was laughing, either.

“So, can I marry April?” Jett asked once he gained back his breath.

“Aren’t you guys hurrying a bit too much? April still has to finish his studies.”

“Yeah, I know. But it’s not like we’re going to do it now.”

“Have you already talked about it?”

“No, April doesn’t know. But this weekend, I just realized that I want to do it. Make it official and all that.”

“I’m surprised,” Tom said. “I guess you’re more responsible than I thought you were.”

“Yeah. I guess there’s a lot of stuff you don’t know about me.”

“Don’t be so sure.”

“So, do I have like your blessing or something?”

“Sure.”

“Just like that, huh?”

“I don’t know what you mean by it, but yes.”

“And you’re going to stop giving me shit about April.”

“That’s a given.”

“Sorry about laughing earlier,” Jett said all of a sudden, after a short silence. “I don’t know what came over me. It’s not something to laugh about.”

“You didn’t laugh about it, son, and I know it. You just experienced a bit of stress relief.”

“Oh, yeah? So that’s what you did, too?”

“Yes.”

“Why would you be stressed about?”

“Talking to you, first of all,” Tom explained.

“Really? Do I stress you out or something?”

“You’re a handful, Jett. But I guess you know that. Look, from now on, I’m not going to pester you any more about how to live your life. I think you’re old enough to make decisions and live with the consequences, too. You never listened to me anyway.” The last words were spoken with a small sigh, but they weren’t bitter.

“That’s true,” Jett confirmed. “But just so that you know it, dad, even if I didn’t listen to you, I still appreciated it.”

Tom quirked an eyebrow. “How’s that?”

“I knew you cared, and it mattered. And that’s all I’m gonna say.”

“So, you’re okay about Sid and me?” Tom asked.

Jett shrugged. “It will be kind of weird, but I’m okay. What April has to say about this? He’s totally a daddy’s boy, unlike me.”

Tom laughed. “That’s totally him, all right. He was shocked, of course. But a weekend of cooking all his favorites, watching the shows he likes, and even playing tabletop games with him, and I might have won him over. Well, his dad cooked, not me.”

“So, you thought about cooking something for me, too?”

“It worked to put April’s mind at ease about his dad and me. I thought to give it a try, too.”

Jett smiled and blinked a few times. “Am I dreaming all this or something?”

“I see you’re wide awake,” Tom said with a broad smile. “Now I should go. Sid and I need to drive for a while to get back to his home.”

“Stay here tonight.”

“There’s no room,” Tom pointed out.

“You two can sleep in our room. It’s not the first time April and I would sleep on the sofa or take the floor.”

“Was that a jab at me?”

“A little. But don’t go tonight, okay?”

Tom exhaled. “I’ll gladly stay here. I’ll have to check it out with Sid, though.”

“He needs to get to work in the morning, right? It’s okay; you can wake him up with the bugle.”

Tom’s eyes widened, and then he burst into laughter. “Now that’s something I didn’t know you to have. A sense of humor.”

“Trust me, it wasn’t funny at all,” Jett replied.

“For you, sure, it wasn’t,” his dad confirmed and laughed again.

Jett couldn’t believe his eyes and ears. To be able to talk like that with his dad, like everything was normal between them, it felt surreal. But his old man had given him his blessing to marry April, so it wasn’t like he could take it back now.

A shy knock on the door interrupted his thoughts. His dad went to open the door, and Jett saw April.

“Can I talk to Jett for a bit?”

Tom looked over his shoulder at Jett. “I guess he’s all yours now, son. And we’re okay since you must be wondering.”

April's face lit up with a bright smile. "We were wondering. That's great to hear."

Tom ruffled April's hair as he walked out of the kitchen.

"I can't believe he does that to you, but not to me," Jett said with a grimace.

"He might be afraid that you might bite his hand off," April replied.

"So, our dads, huh?"

"Yeah, that was quite the surprise," April said.

"Come 'ere," Jett said, gesturing for April to get closer. "I didn't get to kiss you properly."

April bit down on his bottom lip. "We'll get to that, but first, I need to tell you something."

"What? Don't tell me you're pregnant," Jett joked.

April looked at him, a little crossed. "You wish."

"Hey, I wouldn't mind."

"Jett, stop joking, or I'm going to kick your ass."

"All right, all right." Jett rubbed the back of his neck.

"That tattoo," April started.

Jett moved his head to one side and pulled down the lapel of his jacket. "This one, right?"

"It's your only tattoo," April pointed out.

Jett smirked. "So? Do you want me to get another? I didn't peg you for that type. What do you want? A little red heart with your name on it? If it means that much to you, I'll do it."

"No, that's not what I'm saying," April protested. "It's, oh, fuck, how do I say this?"

"Hey, tonight, I just learned that your dad is fucking my dad. So say whatever."

"How do you know it's not the other way around?"

For a second, they both stopped. April made a face. "All right, let's just stop imagining our dads having sex. I can't, I won't, and I'm forbidden to think of this kind of thing."

Jett put one hand up. "Agreed. Now shoot. It's not like anything else could shock me."

April took one deep breath. Jett shifted in his chair. What could be now?

"I know how you got that tattoo," April said in one heartbeat.

### *Chapter Thirty-Five – Who The F Is Wednesday?*

“Say what?” Jett asked, unsure of what he was hearing.

April looked guiltily away but only for a moment. His big beautiful eyes returned to Jett. “It was on a Friday night, and it was so hot outside, sweltering hot, although it was already after ten pm, and you just said you wanted it. But you didn’t know what to get, and I told you it should be a sextant because I had only read about it and you just said ‘yes’ and then asked me why, and I said,” he took one deep breath, “um, ‘If you wear it with you all the time, you’ll never lose your way’.”

Jett remained silent throughout April’s cascade of words, stuttered, broken at times, and his world tilted for a second time that evening. There was just one person in the world who knew that. He had never told all this, not word by word, not even in passing, not even to Zane, let alone another living soul.

Yet, April just stood there, and he was speaking Theo’s words from that time as if he knew them by heart. His jaw set hard. He blinked and blinked, his eyes moving all over the room, not daring to stop at April.

April? Theo? What the hell? “What the fuck are you trying to tell me?”

April linked his hands together and squeezed them so hard that his knuckles turned white. “From that summer. I am that boy. Theo. The one on the body pillow that Zane --”

“You’re kidding me, right? You just thought to pull some fucking prank on me, yeah? April, speak the fuck up!”

April didn’t budge from his place, but his eyes were begging. “I should have told you.”

Jett shook his head and blinked. What the hell? Then all this time ... had he been with Theo? Theo, who had kissed him and then disappeared? Theo, who had told him all those things he hadn’t even know existed? Theo? Of all the people in the world, Theo?

But it made sense. All the details, all the things he had just thought imagined and not real, they all made sense now. As his surprise faded, his anger grew. And also something else that he tried to push down.

“You should have, yeah,” Jett replied. There was a dam opening inside him, flooding. Was he really going to cry now? He hadn’t done that when talking to his dad earlier. But this was too damned much.

“I’ve been an idiot,” April said softly. “I think it was partly because I didn’t want to remember everything about that summer. But it’s not like you can forget stuff like that. That my mom died. That yours, too --”

No, he wouldn't think of THAT right now.

"April fucking Summer, I don't want to look at you right now!" Jett stood up and turned his back. "How could you lie to my face like that?" Anger was good. Anger was better.

"Jett --"

"Just get the fuck out!"

Whether he was angered and wanted to protect himself, or he simply didn't want April to see his tears, Jett didn't know at this point. All that he knew was that he couldn't bear the thought of anyone seeing him like that.

April was Theo, and he had lied about it. Maybe that summer hadn't meant anything for him, but for Jett, it had sure as hell meant everything, a reason to keep going, to know that he could still be happy.

Behind him, April moved. Jett squeezed his eyes shut to keep the tears from falling.

"We'll talk later," April said softly. "I get it ... that you're upset. I'll just go now."

Jett didn't reply. He didn't want April to leave, but he couldn't endure another moment, so he was thankful when he heard the door opening and closing. Then, and only then, he could break down for real.

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"Where are you going?" his dad asked the moment he was in the hallway.

April wiped his eyes quickly. "Just outside for a bit. Jett didn't take it well, my big revelation. He's pissed as hell at me right now. I think I just need to let him," he made a small gesture, "go through it on his own time."

"It's late," his dad said. "And Jett won't be upset forever."

"I can only hope so," April replied. "Look, dad, I won't be out much. I just want a bit of fresh air. And it's not like I'm a kid. I'll just walk a little. It's a safe neighborhood."

"All right," his dad said, although he didn't seem convinced. "Just make sure to come to see me when you get back from your walk. I won't be able to go back to sleep. You know what? I should get my coat and come with you."

"Dad!" April stopped. "I just want to be alone for a bit. It's, um, it's just something I need."

His dad was clearly disappointed.

“You should keep Tom company. Soon enough, he will have to go back to his base, right? So, don’t waste another moment,” April said cheerfully.

Sid didn’t appear to be fully convinced. “All right.” He sighed. “I guess you’re old enough, and I should stop pestering you so much.”

“Feel free to pester me as much as you want when I get back,” April said. “I won’t be long, I promise.”

“Okay, son, but take care.”

He stole one last look at the closed kitchen door on his way out. It hadn’t been a mistake to tell Jett; it had only been a mistake to keep it a secret for so long. What could he have expected? For Jett to just brush it off like it was nothing?

The air outside was calm, even if a little chilly. April shuddered and pulled his jacket tightly around himself. What was he going to do if Jett didn’t want to have anything to do with him ever again?

No, his dad would tell him not to dwell on the negative. No, he would tell Jett he loved him, and he was sorry until he was blue in the face. He should have started with that. Now, there was no do-over, and he needed to live with the consequences. But, first, Jett needed his time by himself, and April had to respect that.

He walked on the sidewalk, oblivious to the world around him. Why had he been such an idiot? All right, so, at first, he had thought Jett hated him. And then, there had been all sorts of conflicting details about Jett and what he thought of Theo, the boy from that time.

But then Jett had begun to prove his affection more and more. And what had he, April, done in return? He had just chosen to keep this big secret, knowing fully well that it would explode in his face sooner or later. Now that moment had come, and it hurt like hell.

April pushed away the tears running down his cheeks. Maybe he didn’t deserve to be happy, after all, because he was such a coward and a jerk. His dad would tell him to stop thinking like that, but he had refused his help just earlier tonight because he didn’t deserve to be comforted. No, if he wanted to be a real man, he needed to deal with the consequences of his own mistakes.

How long would Jett refuse to look at him? Could it be more than half an hour? A day? Maybe that was the kind of time and space he needed. Maybe April needed to pack up and leave. But no, his dad would tell him that would be nothing short of running. And what would Jett think then? He would just think April didn’t care about apologizing and that he didn’t care about their relationship at all.

And that wasn’t true, April revolted. He loved Jett with all his heart, and he needed to prove himself. He needed to tell Jett all about it, and he needed to make him happy. Jett was shocked



and angered for now, because who wouldn't be in his place? April debated with himself, as he began to walk faster and faster.

The houses were silent on both sides of the street, as people must have gone to bed already, seeing how a new workweek started in the morning.

For how long had he walked? April looked around, confused. He couldn't really say how far from Jett's house he was. All right, his stupidity aside, he needed to go back, especially since the temperature was also starting to drop, and his jacket wasn't exactly suitable for the chill he had begun to feel.

A dark car rolled by his side of the road coming from the same direction as him. The vehicle moved slowly. Maybe the people inside it just wanted to park. It had to be someone getting back from a fun weekend, April thought. But somehow, dark cars didn't appear to have anything to do with fun.

Especially when there was no light inside so that people outside could see the driver. What April noticed, though, was the red tip of a cigarette being flicked out the window.

The car stopped, and April stopped, as well. But, as the car door opened, an ominous feeling washed over him, making him begin walking again, and even speed up. He was now going even farther from Jett's place, but his instincts were telling him to run.

"April Summer?" a gruff voice called from behind.

All right, it was really time to run. April sprinted, and a loud curse followed his action. Next, heavy steps on the sidewalk fell in synch with his.

That was bad. April didn't have any idea what the hell it was, but it had to be bad. Men with gruff voices climbing out of dark vehicles and knowing him by name, although he didn't know them, had to be bad.

"Stop, you punk!"

Like hell he would, April thought to himself and began to search frantically for an escape. The houses with their dark windows seemed haunted in the streetlight. He veered right, hoping to make a run through the houses, and lose himself in one of the many backyards. If anyone had a security system in place, a blasting alarm was just what he needed.

Something blunt hit him in the back, and he lost his balance. He rolled down on a manicured lawn, and then he realized that he could just scream and wake up the entire neighborhood.

A heavy-framed man was on top of him just as he opened his mouth. A rough hand, gloved in leather, covered it. "Don't you even dare, you little shit."

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Jett rubbed his eyes and then splashed some water in his face. So April was Theo? Fuck, to think that he had been so blind. No, he hadn't been blind, he argued with himself; he had thought he knew April from somewhere, but April had chosen to lie.

Could he really blame him completely? That summer had hurt all over. And Theo, no, April, had been a true friend, like no one else could be or wanted to be. Other kids couldn't understand, but April had understood, even without words, and Jett had fallen in love with him for it.

And then April had had to kiss him, and Jett had been scared shitless, so he had pushed him away and called him names. And suddenly, he had disappeared only to appear in his life again, like through frigging magic.

For all that he had cried for some time now, Jett felt like laughing. It was fucking magic. All his life, he had hoped to see Theo again, and then April had shown up. If that wasn't a sign that someone up there loved him, what could it be? Jett shook his head. Of course, there was someone up there who loved him. Theo, no, April, had told him as much that time.

At thirteen, he had had no idea what to think of such words that seemed so wise for another kid his age. And April had sounded like he was reciting the words from a book; he had always been bookish, it seemed. Only that it hadn't mattered how clumsily the words had been spoken; they had put balm on his soul, and that was what had mattered the most.

Now, he really needed to confront April about his lying. Jett still felt pissed, but he felt lightweight, now. After all, that meant that all things were well. Oh, he would make sure that April would suffer for his lie, but not too much. After all, Jett knew that he had been a complete jerk to push April away after that kiss.

April would just have to kiss him a lot and confess to him, and that would make everything okay. With that newly-formed decision in mind, Jett walked out of the kitchen.

He found his dad and Sid on the sofa, which was kind of inconvenient since that was the sofa where he hoped he would kiss and make up with April. "What are you two doing up so late? Dad has a bugle," he added as he turned toward Sid.

It appeared that his sense of humor wasn't appreciated this time around.

His dad replied. "We're waiting for April to return. He has been out for a while now, and we're starting to get worried."

Sid wore a deep frown on his face. "What happened between you two?"

Jett swallowed nervously. He didn't want to share that kind of details with the parents. "Stuff," he said vaguely. "April lied to me about something."

His dad sighed. “We know about that Theo thing.”

“You know?” Jett frowned. “So he told you before telling me?”

Sid and Tom exchanged a look. “I’ve always known,” Sid said. “April doesn’t keep many things from me.”

*Except that he has a crypto mining rig he paid for with money taken from shady people.* As soon as the thought formed in his mind, an unpleasant sensation curled in his gut. Jett tried to push it away. “Where did he go?” he asked, hoping his voice didn’t give him away.

“He said he just wanted to have a bit of fresh air, but it has already been forty minutes,” Sid replied, as he looked at his watch and pursed his lips. “That’s a bit too long for a walk.”

Jett felt his gut roiling. No, he was just paranoid. April was probably upset, too, because Jett had told him to get away from him. He was just venting off by walking or something.

Jett took out his phone. No one seemed to be picking up on the other side.

“We also tried to call his phone,” his father explained. “Just five minutes ago.”

Without a word, Jett went to grab his jacket and put on his shoes.

“Where are you going?” His dad wanted to know.

“I’m going to look for him.”

“I’m coming with you.”

There was a sort of finality in his dad’s voice.

“Why? You should just stay here and go to sleep or something.”

“You look worried like hell, son.”

Sid was on his feet, too. Wasn’t it enough that he was worried? Did the dads really need to look as concerned as him? Jett had a grim premonition. And he could check April’s phone, to see where it was, using the tracking app he had used before.

“He’s a bit far from here,” Jett said with a frown, instead of replying. “But still in the suburbs. I should just go and bring him home. You two should stay here. We, me and April I mean, have stuff to talk about anyway.”

Sid and Tom didn’t look too convinced.

“So how do you know where April is?” Sid questioned.

Jett just pointed at his phone. "It's just an app that does this stuff."

Sid nodded, although he appeared a bit puzzled. Tom crossed his arms over his chest. "Are you spying on your boyfriend, son?"

Jett grimaced. "It comes in handy now, doesn't it? And I'm not spying on him; I just need to know where he is."

"Why?" Sid asked, looking more intrigued now.

Jett couldn't outright go and say why. First, it had been because he needed to make sure April wouldn't bail on him; then, because the Z brothers could be a problem. None of that was the kind of info he could share with the dads.

"It's just something everyone does today," Jett said promptly. "April knows how to track my phone, too," he added.

Tom frowned. "We're coming with you, son. There's something you're not telling."

"Oh, damn," Jett complained. "I need to make up with April. I sure as hell don't need you around when I do that. And will you both leave Carina here alone, with Jay?"

"Like you and April did for the entire weekend? I thought she was a big girl or something. And they are both asleep anyway. We'll lock the door on our way out."

Jett groaned, but then he shrugged. "Fine. Everyone, in the car. I suppose you want to come, too?" he directed the question at Sid.

Sid nodded, and now they were all out the door and soon in Jett's car.

"I wish you would be more honest with me," his dad started as Jett put his hands on the wheel. "Why are you worried?"

"I'm not worried, just pissed," Jett replied. "April is Theo. I mean, you don't know who Theo is -"

"I do know."

"Ah, right, April spilled his guts to you, too," Jett said, feeling his annoyance growing. "If he also told Carina, I am so going to kick his --"

"You're not going to do anything like that," his dad interrupted him. "Keep your eyes on the road."

"Don't tell me how to drive."

“Folks, please,” Sid intervened. “Emotions seem to be flying high tonight, so let’s just calm down. Let’s bring April home, and then we might organize something so that everyone can yell at everyone.”

“Not everyone,” Jett said with a snort. “I mean, I might yell at April, and my dad is already yelling at me, but you? You’re not going to yell, right?”

“Funny thing, I feel much in the mood to yell at my son, too, right now. He wasn’t supposed to give me a scare tonight or ever.”

Jett fell silent. What would Sid think of April’s shady loan taken from the Z brothers? Nothing good, that was for sure. He checked his phone from time to time, trying to call a few more times.

They got all out of the car the moment they reached the point where April was supposed to be. There was no one in sight, and Jett called April’s phone again. He felt ice in his veins when the chirpy sound came from the grass, only a few feet away from him. Jett rushed to it and took it.

Sid and Tom rushed by his side. “Is that April’s phone?” Sid asked, alarmed. “Why would he drop it here? That boy is glued to his phone.”

Tom crouched and checked something on the ground. “Someone rolled down here.”

“Rolled down?” Sid’s voice was more and more alarmed.

“That must be how April dropped his phone.”

“But why? If he got sick or --”

Jett closed his hands into fists. “He didn’t get sick.”

“What?” Tom asked. “What do you mean by that, Jett?”

It was impossible to keep it a secret now. Any attempts to throw the dads off course would cost him time, time he didn’t have if he wanted to reach April as soon as he could possibly could. So the words came from his mouth like a cascade, about how he had used to do for a living, about April’s mining rig, and his debts, and how they came to meet again, after so much time.

Sid exploded first. “Loan sharks? For what? A damned mining rig? I can’t believe April would do something like this!”

“And I knew you were a punk, but beating people up?” Tom followed with his own tirade.

Jett stared around and then just began walking toward the car. There was not one moment to waste if that was what had happened to April.

“Where are you going now?”

“To save April,” Jett said with determination.

“We’re coming with you,” Tom replied.

“Of course we are,” Sid added.

“No, you aren’t. It’s my mess, and I’m going to clean it.”

Tom and Sid climbed in the back the same time he got behind the wheel.

“Don’t try to make it just your own; April has a lot to answer for,” Sid said. “I thought I raised that kid better than this!”

“I don’t care that you two are all grown up and that I promised not to interfere with your life, Jett,” his dad added. “For this, you will be grounded until you’re twenty-five.”

“April, too. This can’t be happening. Shouldn’t we call the police?”

“No,” Jett said grimly. “If I go, I can negotiate with these fuckers, because I know them. They catch whiff the police are coming, they can make him disappear.”

Tom and Sid were both talking, making his head spin.

“Dads, please, just shut the f--, I mean shut up so I can drive!”

There was a short moment of silence, but they started again, this time more worried.

“I still think we should call the police,” Sid said.

“And I think while they’re there, they could bust both me and April, too,” Jett retorted.

His dad grunted. “The little punk has a point. Jesus, Jett, I can’t believe you. Was it about money? Don’t I send you enough?”

“I never touched that money,” Jett said aggressively.

“Why not?”

“Let’s calm down,” Sid intervened again. “And, Jett, slow down a bit. Do you even know where you’re taking us all? They could hold April anywhere.”

“Yeah, but these scumbags are usually at their headquarters. At least, when they have business.”

“I don’t understand. You said that you paid April’s debt in full. What more could they want with him?” Sid asked.

“They think he’s some hacker,” Jett replied.

Sid sputtered, “My son, a hacker? Wait, is he? I don’t seem to know my own child at all these days!”

“He’s not a hacker,” Jett said quickly. “They just thought he was because he studies computers and stuff. And it’s some girl’s dad who wants him for some shady stuff. At least, that’s what we think.”

An idea came to Jett at that moment. He reached for his phone.

“Son, leave the phone alone while you’re driving,” his dad scolded him.

“I need to call Zane,” Jett explained.

The moment Zane picked up, Jett began talking fast. A good thing with Zane was that he didn’t need many explanations.

“Yeah, Dan can find this girl, I think,” Zane said. “He’s right here, so you can talk to him.”

That was no wonder. In only a minute, Jett already had a plan in place. Maybe it was something else going on, with that fucker DeLouise and everything, but he wanted to have all the cards.

“Can you believe this boy? I raised a gangster,” his dad commented, as soon as he was off the phone. “I have plans for you, Jett. Don’t think I’ll let you run around like this, doing this kind of stuff anymore.”

“I quitted already, dad, didn’t I tell you?”

His dad seemed to suffer from a sudden case of selective hearing. “You’re going back to school, that’s what you will do.”

Jett groaned. “Why? I can earn my keep already.”

“Doing what? Being a frigging gangster? There is no way I can allow that.”

“I’m not a gangster!” Jett grabbed the wheel tightly. “And I have a child, and April to care about now, so I won’t do that stuff anymore! Isn’t that enough?”

“You’re going back to school, and that’s final!”

“I’m not going to be an army man like you!”

“I’ll let you pick the school you want, study whatever you want!”

“Fine!”

“It’s funny how you two still yell at each other while you reach an agreement,” Sid commented.

Tom snorted. Jett bit his lips not to laugh. Now it wasn't the moment for funny stuff. He had a boyfriend to rescue.

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"What do you want from me?" April demanded to know as soon as he was inside the warehouse.

Henry Zabinski was busy petting his enormous cat, as usual.

The goon who had brought him in pushed him forward. April had a mind to resist, but he thought against acting too rebellious for the moment.

"Nice disguise, Summer. Do you think we're fools or something?" Peter Zabinski emerged from the shadows like a creepy character.

"It worked for a while," April commented. "What does that make you?"

The goon slapped him upside the head.

"Don't be a smartass," Peter warned him.

"My debt is paid. I have nothing else to do with you," April said.

"Yeah. Well, it's not about that. There's a little favor we want from you," Henry said, putting his cat down. "It's not much. We can pay you for it."

"We can?" Peter asked, a bit surprised. "We didn't talk about this."

"Carrot and stick, my dear brother, carrot and stick."

"And if I do you this little favor," April asked, "then I'm free to go?"

"Sure," Henry said brightly. "Why not?"

There was a small exchange between the two brothers that April didn't like. What the hell did they want from him? To break into a bank? He didn't know anything about such things, and it was stupid of them to assume that, even if he did study computers.

"Here is what we want you to work on." Henry took something out of his pocket and put it on the table.

April walked closer. His eyes grew wide. He knew that phone. He had held it in his hand only a few days before. That bright shade of pink was not that hard to forget. "What's this?" he asked, hoping his voice was as neutral as possible.

"A phone," the goon talked into his ear like he was hard of hearing or in the head.



“I know,” April said back in the same tone and exchanged a look with the goon. “I’m not a time traveler from the nineteenth century.”

It took the goon a little time to figure out April’s joke.

“Whose phone is this, and what do you want me to do with it?”

“Unlock it,” Peter said shortly.

April crossed his arms over his chest. “And how am I supposed to do that?”

“You’re the smartass. You should know how.”

“Pete, Pete,” Henry hurried to appease his brother, “let me talk to him. Summer,” he turned toward April, “it’s a matter of life and death. A little girl could be in danger right as we speak if you don’t get inside this phone.”

“A little girl? What kind of danger?” April questioned. He had an idea about what kind of danger was involved, and it could only be Sabrina’s dad wanting to break into his daughter’s phone to see who she was dating.

“How long is this going to take?” an irritated voice belonging to another person intervened.

April stared at Mr. DeLouise coming out the same way as Peter Zabinski. Mr. DeLouise narrowed his eyes as he looked at him. “Hey, I’ve seen you before. You’re that college kid who told me he didn’t see April Summer in school for a while.”

“See?” April turned toward Henry. “You got the wrong guy.” He tried to appear as candid as he could while saying that.

Peter gestured at April and addressed his brother. “Do you still want to use the carrot with this little shit?”

Henry sighed. “I guess not. Okay.” He made a sign for the goon to step forward. “Convince him.”

April yelped as the goon grabbed his arm and twisted it at his back. “If you’re breaking my arm, how am I going to break into the phone?”

DeLouise shouted, “Leave him alone right now! Jesus, you people only know violence. Here.” He reached into his pocket and took a stack of money. He threw the cash on Henry’s desk. “Do this for me, son, and you’ll walk out of here unharmed and with some pocket change, too.”

April had a mind of telling Mr. DeLouise he wasn’t his son. He already had two dads, as far as he knew, and he didn’t really need a third. He was about to protest when the doors to the warehouse opened with a loud noise.

“Don’t you dare do anything to Wednesday, dad!” Sabrina came running, followed by a crowd, by what April could see.

His face lit up with a smile. With Sabrina, he could also see Jett, Zane, Dan, and both dads, and he couldn’t recall ever feeling so relieved.

“Who the fuck is Wednesday?” Peter Zabinski yelled.

Everyone stopped, feeling very much confused. The goon, in particular, was puzzled and scratching his head.

“We’re here for April! Who’s Wednesday?” Jett asked, too.

The question echoed through the room. Sabrina blinked and pointed at April.

There was no other thing to do but to admit. April put one hand up. “That would be me.”

### *Chapter Thirty-Six – That Summer*

“You’re Wednesday?” Mr. DeLouise questioned him. “Are you dating my daughter?” His eyes narrowed, making him look even shadier than before.

“I’m not dating Wednesday, dad,” Sabrina protested. “And this is mine,” she added as she picked her phone from the desk.

“Actually, my name is April,” April explained.

Sabrina looked at him, a bit cross-eyed. “And why did you say your name was Wednesday? By the way, your name still sounds out of whack.”

“It seems like he has a habit of pretending to be other people,” Jett intervened.

April froze. Jett was still upset. He had to be, but he had still come to the rescue, and that was all that mattered.

“This is not fucking prom!” Peter Zabinski seemed fed up with the entire drama unfolding in his warehouse. “Who are you, people?”

“Someone much in the mood to perform a citizen arrest.” Tom stepped up, and he seemed ready to take the Z brothers head-on.

“Good people,” Henry Zabinski said in a sugary voice, “let’s not make this more than it is. We were just having a friendly conversation with little April, here.”

“Friendly? You don’t seem too friendly to me,” Tom said as he stared at Henry. Despite his size, Henry seemed impressed by the man towering over his desk now.

“Did anything happen to the boy? Just ask him,” Henry continued.

“Well, not yet, but your goon here just tried to break my arm,” April said promptly.

Tom turned toward the goon, who took a step back and raised his hands in surrender. “You will pay for this.”

“Who are you? The boy’s dad?” Mr. DeLouise intervened.

“No, but I’m just the next person who wouldn’t mind kicking anyone’s ass over him,” Tom replied.

“I’m the dad,” Sid said. “And I’m very interested to hear what explanations you, gentlemen, have, for kidnapping my boy and bringing him here against his will.”

As the dads took the stage, Jett hovered in the back. To April, he looked like a caged animal. He was clearly in high alert, and April felt guilty. If it hadn’t been for his stupidity, everyone would

be in their beds right now, not facing a pair of gangsters, their goon, and their client who was as shady as they were.

“Are you okay, April?” Sid asked, appearing very much worried.

“I’m fine, dad,” April said.

“Good. You’re grounded.”

April opened his mouth to express his surprise at that, but seeing the stern look on his dad’s face, he decided to can it. Oh, damn. That meant that Jett had spilled the beans about everything. So the mining rig --

“And you can kiss that mining rig goodbye,” Sid added.

No hope there, April thought.

“I’m going to call nine-one-one,” Dan said.

That seemed to have the desired effect on the Z brothers, who began to talk quickly and affably. “There’s no need for such a thing. We can work something out, can’t we?”

Dan pulled out his phone. “You kidnapped and threatened April,” he said with finality.

Sabrina went directly to Dan and caught his hand. “Dan, no, please. I just don’t want my dad to go back to jail, no matter how much of a jerk he is.”

Mr. DeLouise made a sound as someone had just stabbed him. “Sabbie, please. I just worry about you. I needed to know if you’re in danger.”

“The only danger I’ve always been in was to remain without a dad, and that already happened,” Sabrina said bitterly. “Now, don’t you dare disappear again or do other shady stupid things because I will never forgive you!” Her raised voice made everyone else shut up. “April, please, can you forgive my dad? He’ll never do anything like this. Right, dad?”

Mr. DeLouise seemed much placated by his daughter’s attitude and just nodded.

“So, we’re not bashing anyone’s head in?” That was Zane. “I’m totally ready.”

Tom seemed ready, too. As for Jett, April didn’t dare to look at him.

“This is all my fault,” April said. “It’s my fault that I borrowed money to make my mining rig. And also my fault for not telling my dad I was in trouble. And I was wrong to keep from Jett that I was actually Theo.”

“Theo?” Zane asked. “Man, I totally knew it!”

“Theo? Who’s Theo?” Dan asked.

“I’m going to tell you later,” Zane promised.

“Don’t you dare,” was Jett’s reply.

“How many names do you have?” Sabrina asked him.

April sighed. “I’m just April Summer. I invent names sometimes.”

Jett snorted at that. April pretended he didn’t hear that.

“What’s this thing about this Theo?” Dan asked. “Should I call the police already? Wait, where are the bad guys?”

Everyone turned only to see the place at the desk where Henry Zabinski had stood until moments earlier empty. His brother and their goon were gone, too.

“I think they ran away,” Sid said. “Through the back.”

The sound of a car engine taking off confirmed Sid’s conclusion.

“Please, don’t call the police,” Sabrina begged. “Now it’s only my dad left, and he doesn’t need this. Please, April,” she added as she turned toward him.

“Seeing how I’m not without blame here, I should let it go. So, please, everyone, who’s in favor of letting Sabrina’s dad off the hook?”

Tom and Sid didn’t seem convinced. “Those two could make a lot of problems still.”

“They won’t,” Jett said. “With their headquarters compromised like this, they won’t return here. Also, I can talk to some people to make sure they stay away from our town.”

“Son, no more of this gangster stuff,” Tom said.

“It’s called connections, dad,” Jett protested. “If we called the police, we would have to explain a lot of stuff that’s not easy to explain.”

April could still see the hesitation in both dads and Dan, but he knew Jett was right. If all they had done came to light, he and Jett both would be in hot water, too. Especially Jett, and April couldn’t live with that. Plus, Jett had quitted, and he wanted to do things the right way now.

“Please,” he joined Sabrina, “let’s just let it go this one time. Please, dad? Tom? Dan?”

“All right, but you’re still grounded, young man,” Sid said. “Now, come, let’s get you out of here.”

“I’ll make sure to look into this so-called business those two assholes ran here. They better left the town, or it won’t be easy at all for them if they show their ugly faces around here,” Tom said. “And you,” he turned toward DeLouise, “you should listen to your daughter more. Dads should be with their families. And I’m talking from my experience with past mistakes.”

Sid took April by the shoulders, and Tom did the same with Jett. He could tell Jett wanted to talk to him but now wasn’t the right moment. Still, they stole glances at one another, and April could only hope that Jett had forgiven him, at least a little.

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That night, his dad scolded him for an hour straight before allowing him to go to sleep. Sitting there, in the dark, April couldn’t help his mind wander at that summer. The summer that had changed everything for him because he had met Jett and realized, as goofy as it might sound, that he would never love anyone else.

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Jett was sitting across from his dad, but he couldn’t focus anymore on what he was saying. Tom had gone on and on about being responsible and all that. And he knew, but he also knew that his dad had to say it, multiple times until he was sure Jett got it.

It was, however, the tenth time he was basically saying the same thing, but with other words. Jett’s mind was too full, too full of April, too full of Theo, too full of thoughts of that summer that had changed everything for him because he had met a boy and fallen in love.

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*Seven years ago*

*April stared at his reflection in the mirror for a long time. He couldn’t do anything about the glasses, but he looked kind of cool, like an anime character. Too bad he didn’t have any superpowers; he couldn’t multiply so that he could confuse the other kids who were all a bunch of pricks.*

*He couldn’t understand why they had to be here and why his dad wasn’t with them. He knew why his mother wasn’t, but, in a strange way, he felt more unsettled that he didn’t know where his dad was. Melinda had hidden her tears and scolded him when he had searched through her makeup stuff. She must have known something, but she wasn’t telling. Maybe because she was all grown up and he wasn’t.*

*April still wanted to know where his dad was. No matter how many times his uncle had told them that their father would be back with them by the end of the summer, April wanted to know right now. With their mom gone, he couldn’t bear even thinking where they would be without their dad, too.*

*Now, with this hair, he looked so different. He could leave his glasses at home, but it didn't sound like a good idea. He didn't see well without them, so he needed to keep them. As for his name, that could be changed, too. This way, he could be someone else, and that someone else could have what he didn't; a mom who wasn't gone, and a dad who didn't go somewhere he and Melinda weren't allowed to see him.*

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*Jett walked with his head down, kicking stones along the way. Why had everyone lied to him? Why had they said that she would get better? His hands curled into fists, and he walked faster. He had tried to be such a good boy, too; every day, he had done everything just so that she didn't leave. But it hadn't worked. Nothing did.*

*On the playground, a bunch of kids were laughing and shouting. Jett hated them right now. Why were their mothers well and not his? What made them good kids? He had tried everything; he had even eaten the green mush his aunt was making, which she said was good to make him strong. He didn't think that, but he had eaten it anyway. And he had brushed his teeth before going to bed, and never yelled in the house, or made any noise.*

*His aunt had sent him to the playground and told him he should be with kids his age. But Jett didn't want that; other kids were stupid, and they had to be really lucky because they could do all kinds of stupid and bad things, and their moms still were at home.*

*"It's called Metamorphosis," one of the kids in the noisy group explained.*

*"It's called that you have shit for brains," another replied, and the rest of them laughed.*

*Jett stopped. The kid who talked in that weird way seemed to be in a team of his own. The others were throwing bad words at him, but he didn't seem to care.*

*"Just go away; no one wants to play your stupid game," the kids shouted at him.*

*The kid put his eyes down and walked away. He looked like a loner, and his head was a bright clump of yellow hair that somehow made him look sadder. Jett stared at the noisy group.*

*"Jett, Jett," they started calling for him. "Come play with us! Why didn't you come all week?"*

*"His mom died," one of them said. "So, his dad didn't let him go out and play."*

*Jett didn't know what happened to him. He jumped the fence so fast, and the group cheered, but then he lunged at the one who had talked about his mom and punched him hard in the face.*

*Everyone fell silent, for a moment, but when Jett made a move to kick the one on the ground again, the others began shouting, hoping to keep him away. No one seemed ready to face him.*

*"Your games suck," Jett spat and walked away.*

*He was again alone in his thoughts, even though the kid he had punched had found his voice again and was hurling insults and threats at his back.*

*“Hey,” someone called for him from one side.*

*Jett stopped and saw the kid from before, the one with the shiny golden head. “Fuck off.”*

*The kid stopped for a second, but then he began walking fast to catch up with him. “You’re too young to say that word.”*

*“You’re too young to be this stupid,” Jett retorted.*

*“Why? Grownups are stupid?”*

*Jett hadn’t thought of things this way, but they could be. Otherwise, why would they say that his mom would get better? “Yeah.”*

*“Is it true?”*

*“What?”*

*“That your mom died.”*

*“Yeah.” Jett saw no reason to lie. He wasn’t ashamed of it. He was angry and sad, and he didn’t know what to think or do.*

*“Mine, too.”*

*Jett stopped and stared at the new kid. He had large green eyes that seemed even larger because of the huge prescription glasses he wore. And there was also that hair, so shiny and the color of gold. He could be a light bulb in a dark room, that shiny his head was. “Are you shitting me?”*

*“No.”*

*Jett shrugged and began walking again. He could go by the lake and throw stones. He didn’t want to go back to the playground and play stupid games with stupid kids.*

*“I’m Theo.”*

*Jett was surprised. He thought the kid must have gone by now on his way. “Jett.”*

*“Cool name.”*

*“My mom chose it for me,” Jett replied, feeling proud.*

*“It’s really cool. Where are you going?”*



*Was that it? Wasn't Theo going to ask him about his mother? Jett was sure as hell that he didn't want to ask Theo about his. He knew how that must have felt. "I'm heading over to the lake. I want to throw rocks."*

*"Sounds cool."*

*"Do you know any words besides cool?"*

*"Yeah. But then people say I'm a snob, and I try to impress them with my knowledge."*

*Theo was a strange dude, and he talked about strange things in a strange way. "What's a snob?"*

*"You wouldn't want to hang out with me if I told you."*

*Jett shrugged. He didn't need anyone, but Theo seemed good enough to have as company.*

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*The boy was scary, with his longish hair that seemed not to have seen the brush for at least a week and his black t-shirt that had an imprint of a metal band on its front. But Theo knew that being scared wouldn't cut it for long. He needed to make a friend, and Jett, as scary as he looked, seemed like a good bet.*

*Although he had hit that kid, and April had seen everything. Maybe the kid deserved it. He was a jerk.*

*"I can show you my superpowers," he started.*

*"You don't have superpowers."*

*"I don't, but I can make it look like I do."*

*Jett picked a rock and threw it, making it jump several times on the face of the lake. April didn't let himself deterred by his audience's lack of interest. He began to explain his magic ninja moves, explaining to Jett every move of his hands and fingers and what they meant.*

*For a while, Jett seemed uninterested, but then he began to ask questions. Happy to finally have someone interested, April began to tell all about his favorite anime show. Jett seemed fascinated.*

*"Where's your dad?" Jett asked him, out of the blue.*

*"He's home," April said, feeling defensive.*

*"Home, where?"*

*"Here," April lied.*

*“Mine is not. He has work. And a career,” Jett said. “That’s in the army.”*

*It sounded impressive. “Does your dad drive a tank?”*

*“I don’t think so. But he is in charge of some troops. Like soldiers.”*

*“Why aren’t you with him? I thought army people all stayed together with their families,” April said.*

*Jett didn’t say. He got back to his rock throwing. And then he began to explain to April how to do it, too.*

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*April had never asked for more than one good friend. As scary as he looked, Jett was that friend. Melinda was busy doing girl stuff that April didn’t understand, and their uncle wasn’t concerned with asking them where they both disappeared all day long. Their uncle was a taciturn man – April liked that word because it described their uncle to a tee – and he didn’t have a family of his own. But he was their closest relative, and that was why he got stuck with April and Melinda. Got stuck was his way of saying that he didn’t like that very much. It had to mean that their dad hadn’t really had any other choice.*

*He hung out with Jett every day. It was funny how Jett really liked all the games April could come up with. Being Theo and having that kind of hair must have helped. April felt less like his awkward self. He also felt cool, but maybe that was by association because Jett was the cool one.*

*“Do you ever think of your mom?” That was Jett asking, out of the blue, as they were at their favorite spot at the lake.*

*“Sometimes. When I’m alone. But I don’t like being alone.”*

*“Me either. That was why you tried to convince those kids that day to play with you?”*

*“They didn’t get my game.”*

*“But I do.”*

*“Yeah. Because you’re cool.”*

*Jett crouched and looked in the distance. The sky was full of stars, and they should have been in bed by now. It looked like Jett didn’t have someone to ground him for being late, either. “I don’t believe all that stuff.”*

*“What stuff?” April asked.*

*“That when you die, you go to heaven. Where is this place? Can you even get there?”*

*“Only if you’re dead,” April replied.*

*“When you’re dead, you’re dead,” Jett said with conviction. “There is nothing ... left.”*

*“I don’t think so.” April felt sadness wrapping against him like a veil. “There are more worlds than ours. So, something like heaven could be real. It’s like that thing with the planes of existence.”*

*“What are those?” Jett asked.*

*April didn’t understand too well, and he had read that book several times, but he did his best to explain.*

*“Theo, you’re such a weirdo. Sometimes, when you talk, my head hurts.”*

*“Sorry,” April mumbled. “I get that a lot.”*

*“I don’t care. You’re cool.”*

*“I’m cool?”*

*“Yeah, you are.”*

*April smiled. “See the sky?”*

*“Yeah.”*

*“We can’t see what’s there.”*

*“So?”*

*“So maybe just because we can’t see what’s there, that doesn’t mean that there’s nothing.”*

*“You could look at it with a telescope and stuff.”*

*“Yeah. But still, you can’t see everything. Not even with the biggest telescope.”*

*“And?”*

*“Maybe heaven, or a place like that, is there. And then it’s true that someone is always out there, looking out for you.”*

*“Did you read all this in a book?”*

*“Most of it, yeah. Some stuff, I just think it myself.”*

*“Such a freak,” Jett said and laughed.*

*“Is being a freak bad or good?”*

*Jett pushed him playfully, making him lose his balance. "For me, it's good. I like it that no other kids want to play with you."*

*"Why?"*

*"Because you're only mine."*

*April would ponder over those words for some time after that. He had never really thought that way, but it seemed true. They were each other's only friend, and that had to count for something.*

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*"How was that thing you said, you know, about how you should do something so that you didn't forget stuff?"*

*Just that morning, Jett had woken up from a nightmare. He couldn't recall his mother's face; it was like her face was all jumbled.*

*Theo looked at him carefully. He did that a lot; he was a strange kid. Or maybe he didn't see well, and he needed to gawk like that all the time. "Well, it could be a lot of things. Like a bookmark."*

*"Can it be a tattoo?"*

*"A tattoo? You're too young to get a tattoo."*

*Jett shrugged. "Says who?"*

*"Everyone." April looked around like he meant the whole world by that.*

*"I don't care. I'm getting one."*

*"No one is going to let you, I mean, get it done for you."*

*"I know a place. No one asks you anything if you have the dough."*

*That wasn't quite true. Jett knew someone at the tattoo parlor, a distant cousin. He was, he had heard his aunt saying it, the rebellious type. Jett often went to see him, and his cousin had asked him if he wanted a tattoo. At the time, Jett thought it was a joke, but now he wanted that tattoo. But admitting that to Theo might have made him look uncool, or at least less cool than a thirteen-year-old who had the guts to walk inside a tattoo parlor and have one done.*

*"What should I get?"*

*Theo seemed to ponder for a while. Jett listened to his words carefully. That would work like a charm.*

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*“That is so cool!” Theo touched his inked skin. “Does it hurt?”*

*“Not anymore,” Jett said proudly. “But right after, it hurt like a bitch.”*

*“Wow! Did your aunt notice it?”*

*“Not yet. She’s quite old and doesn’t see that well.”*

*“What will your dad say?”*

*“He will be pissed,” Jett said with conviction and satisfaction.*

*“My dad would ground me for like a month or a year,” Theo said, his eyes twinkling with admiration.*

*“I don’t care about being grounded. He can’t do it anyway. He’s at his base.”*

*“When does he come back?”*

*“When he’s on leave, but that won’t happen any time soon. He wasted too much time looking after mom when she got sick.”*

*Theo remained silent. Jett stared at the ground, his arms resting on his knees, and his hands crossed in front of him as he sat on the sidewalk. The weather was so hot, he could feel his t-shirt glued to his back. Theo sat next to him, and he was watching him intently, like usual.*

*“What?”*

*“What-what?”*

*“You’re staring at me. Are your eyes that bad?”*

*Theo shook his head. He was biting his bottom lip and seemed weird. Or weirder than usual. Not a leaf moved, the wind was that still. No one was around either, all people staying cooped up inside in that kind of weather.*

*“So quit staring. I don’t care about what my dad does.”*

*Theo hovered even closer. It was funny how many things Jett could notice from staring at Theo like that, too. His eyes were really big and really pretty. He had curly eyelashes, like a girl, and Jett felt something weird and unfamiliar in the pit of his stomach. Theo’s lips were pretty, too, and they were so close.*

*Theo leaned in, and Jett stood there, frozen, as his lips were crushed. There was a minty smell tickling his nostrils, and Theo’s lips were soft, but cool, which was weird in that weather.*

*The feeling in his stomach grew, and Jett suddenly felt like a bucket of ice had been poured down his back. He jumped to his feet and pushed Theo away.*

*“What the fuck, dude?”*

*“Nothing, just --”*

*Jett wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. His knees were shaking, and he felt ill. Thoughts of his mother and how she used to cuddle him flooded his mind. “Don’t ever come close to me again, you freak! I’ll break your fucking neck and all the bones in your body!” He began running, while new tears fell on his cheeks.*

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*April didn’t say anything to Melinda. He had gotten enough from her because he had stolen her hair dye, so they weren’t in good terms. If only his dad were there with him, he would tell him everything about Jett and the kiss. And he would ask him why it hurt so much that Jett had behaved like April was poisonous or something. Soon, they would be back home, and even if their mother wasn’t there, their dad would be, and things would be okay.*

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They were both seated on the futon placed on the floor in the living room, their backs against the sofa, and staring in the dark.

He had been first, and Jett had joined him just moments later. Now, they sat in silence, but April knew that he needed to talk. And he needed to start with the obvious. “I love you, Jett. I’ve always been in love with you.”

There was still silence from Jett, but April didn’t dare to move or touch him.

“You or Theo?” There was the hint of a smile in that question, and April put all his hopes in it.

“Both of us.”

“And Wednesday? What does he say?”

“He’s new to all this, but he finds you very sexy and ... What am I saying? He’s head over heels, too.”

Jett laughed softly. “Why the hell didn’t you say you were Theo?”

“I thought you would kick my ass, like real bad.”

“Why?”

“Do you have to ask me? You pushed me away, and you told me never dare to touch you again, or you’d break all the bones in my body. Do you remember that?”

“Kind of.”

“Kind of? Jett, you were a total jerk.”

There was another small silence. “Why did you kiss me back then?”

April sighed. “Because I fell in love with you, and I wanted to know how it would be to kiss you. Also, because of Eleanor Roosevelt.”

“What? What’s that got to do with anything?”

“I had happened to read a quote from her, something about doing a thing that scares you every day. And I did. I kissed you.”

“Were you scared to kiss me?”

“Of course, I was. You were scary, even as a kid. I mean, who gets a tattoo at thirteen?”

Jett laughed again. “Well, then let me tell you a little secret. When you kissed me, I got scared, too.”

“You, scared? Sorry, Jett, but I’m not buying it. I mean, you were so mean --”

“My knees were shaking,” Jett interrupted him. “You scared me so completely. You scared me into loving you.”

April pondered over his next words. “Why were you scared?”

Jett followed with another small silence. “That summer, after my mother died, I felt so angry. And do you know who I was angry at the most?”

“Your dad?”

“No, her.” Jett shifted in his place. “How could she do something like that to me? She promised not to go. I made her promise. But she still left.”

April put one tentative hand on Jett’s arm. “I can’t imagine how hard it must have been for you.”

“It was,” Jett confirmed. “With each day, there was less left of her. As if she disappeared little by little, and I couldn’t hold on to her.”

April squeezed Jett’s arm gently. “My mom’s death was sudden, so I guess it shocked all of us. I guess I dyed my hair and decided to have a different name because I didn’t want to be that boy whose mom died so young. I just didn’t. My dad,” April swallowed hard, “he suffered the most.

I've never told this to anyone, and I only understood it later, but he had to be hospitalized because of the severe mental breakdown he went through after the funeral. That's why we, the kids, were in Lynn that summer. Our dad couldn't look after us."

"Your dad seems so calm and balanced all the time. Well, less tonight, when I saw him really worried because of you."

"I need to make a ton of amends. And I'll have to give away the rig for charity. I don't know who would want such a thing, but my dad clearly told me that I couldn't have it. It was his condition to forgive me, so I took it, of course. Can you forgive me, too, for what I did? I will work hard for your forgiveness. Every day. I'll be an exemplary boyfriend. I'll even bring your sleepers."

Jett hooked one arm over April's shoulders and pulled him close. "Bring me my sleepers? What are you? A dog or a boyfriend?"

"I'll be whatever you want me to be."

"All right, then. I want you to be my --" Jett whispered the rest in his ear.

April felt his eyes getting so big that they could pop out of their sockets at any moment. "For real?"

Jett's kiss didn't allow him to protest anymore, which was too bad because he wanted to say 'yes'.



## *Epilogue*

“Do you know we’re grounded?” April asked, his voice barely a whisper.

Jett was busy pouring sweet nothings into his ear, so he couldn’t exactly think straight, not that he had ever done that, pun intended. “Um-um,” was the only reply.

“How’s that supposed to work? My dad will have to go back home, and yours will have to leave soon, right?”

“Why are you so concerned with our dads and their weird ideas?”

“Well, they’re in the house, for starters.”

“Yeah, and they’re in the bedroom upstairs, with the door closed. Don’t tell me you’re playing shy now?”

“It is kind of weird, isn’t it? What if they walk in on us? What if they want a glass of water or something?”

Jett chuckled, and April adjusted his position only slightly. Everything Jett said and did sent shivers up and down his spine, all of the pleasant kind. “We’ve made love like dozens of times. Why are you so freaked out?”

April bit his lips. “You said ‘made love’, not ‘fucked’. Are you getting all romantic?”

“Could be. Come on, dweeb, out with it. What’s with the cold feet, all of a sudden?”

“It’s not cold feet!” April protested. “Could you say it again?”

“I love you,” Jett said simply and then leaned in for another kiss.

“I know that part. The other,” April added.

Jett stopped and caressed April’s face, brushing his thumbs over April’s lips over and over. “The part where I told you I want to marry you?”

“That’s the part.”

“Wait, is it too much? Too soon?”

“No, no, it’s not ... it’s a surprise, I guess. We’re very young.”

“I don’t know about that. What? Do you think you might fall in love with someone else?”

“Jett, I’ve held a torch for you for the last seven years. I seriously doubt that.”

“Doubt more, because I’m sure I’m going to love you and only you for the rest of my life.”

April kissed Jett back. “Then it’s a ‘yes’.”

“Yes?”

“To your question. Weren’t you waiting for an answer?”

“Not really. I thought it was a given.”

“Aren’t you a presumptuous prick?”

“Ah, but you said ‘yes’, so I was right.”

“You are so full of yourself.”

“And I’d like you also to be full of me tonight if that’s possible, and this conversation doesn’t take us till morning.”

April snickered, and then he put his hands on Jett’s face, too. Because it was dark, they couldn’t see themselves, and they only guessed each other’s reactions and true feelings. “There’s going to be a lot of stuff to do. We need to organize things properly.”

“Stuff? What stuff?”

“I don’t know exactly, but every reality show on TV can tell you that a wedding is a very stressful thing. At least I don’t have to buy a dress. Also, it has to happen after our dads finish grounding us --”

“April, take a breather.” Jet laughed. “They can’t ground us, and they’re just talking. It’s their way to show that they care about us.”

“So, you’re on better terms with your dad now?”

“Yes, weirdly enough, I am. But let me put your mind at ease. We won’t get married until you finish your studies.”

“Ah,” April replied, and, in the dark, he made a face that Jett couldn’t possibly see.

“Are you disappointed? Did you think we would get married tomorrow?” Jett began laughing out loud.

“Hey,” April protested and pretended to strangle Jett by wrapping his hands around his neck. “You really got my hopes high.”

“I was really thinking of you and, you know, your needs,” Jett said in a falsetto voice as if he was reciting words that didn’t belong to him.

“My needs actually include you and your sexy body,” April teased in turn. “And it’s okay. I can wait until you decide to make an honest man out of me.”

“Honest, right.” A snort accompanied those two words. “Says April, slash Theo, slash Wednesday.”

“In my heart, I’ve always been true, regardless of the name I carried,” April declared like an actor on a stage.

“Dweeb, quit fooling around. Let’s fuck,” Jett said matter-of-factly.

“What if --”

“April, I’m not kidding. I’m going to start tickling you if you don’t get undressed right now.”

“Got it,” April said solemnly and pulled his t-shirt over his head.

Jett’s hands covered his chest, and they were warm. April reached out for a kiss.

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Jett could feel April’s warmth all around him as they embraced. It was the best feeling in the entire world to touch his boyfriend’s skin, so smooth and supple under his rough fingers. He moved his hands lower, sneaking them inside April’s jeans and filling them up with the plump ass he loved so much. As much as he enjoyed being versatile, tonight would be all about him topping April because he wanted to feel the reassurance of being wanted like that.

“I’ve always loved you, too,” he confessed tenderly as April helped him out of his t-shirt.

“That’s good to know,” April teased him.

Their hands were searching their bodies as they knew them for the first time. They didn’t have to ask any more questions from this point forward; their fingers became bolder with each touch. There would be time to know everything, down to the last detail, and the best part was that they had the rest of their lives to do exactly that.

April straddled him, pushing him down. It was only fair; this way, they would both be in control.

“Come here,” Jett said lovingly, and April got closer so that he could be pulled in for a deep kiss.

“Let’s just get naked for real,” April whispered against his lips as they teased each other with small pecks.

It took them little to get rid of the last clothes. At this point, they both giggled and tried to touch more of one another. Once more, April was back on top, and he was there with a mission, as it seemed.

They fumbled in the dark with the proper preparations, but finally, April was impaled on Jett's cock and seemed to be at least partially comfortable.

"Are you good there, baby?"

"Don't call me baby," April replied, but he laughed, so that meant that he didn't mind it.

"You would be the only one I would call that."

April moved a little, and Jett grunted at the pleasant sensation of having his cock squeezed by April's smooth and velvety channel of muscles. "I'll think of endearing names," April promised.

"You make my A-list, all of it," Jett said.

"You have all your cock in my ass right now. Are you sure you want to sound this cheesy?" April asked as he continued to move, finding himself the rhythm he desired.

Jett just steadied him with his hands. "Mm, so good, baby," he teased April on purpose.

"Call me that one more time and I might not want to move. I'll just keep your cock inside me like this." He illustrated his words by plopping down hard and staying there.

Jett grunted. "You know that I can feel your ass pulsing and giving me a really nice massage. If I focus enough, I might be able to shoot anyway. And then the joke's on you."

"Fine," April admitted, and it had to be because he didn't bear postponing his pleasure, either.

"Come on, just ride me like you mean it. I know you're extra good at this."

Jett grabbed April's cock because he wanted to have his hands full, too, and his boyfriend's tool seemed like the perfect idea. April was moving up and down with abandon, whispering unintelligible words and making Jett's pleasure grow.

"I can't believe you're all mine," Jett whispered, and he hoped he didn't sound lame or anything.

He couldn't bear just to sit there, doing not much, so he pushed his hips up and made April lose his balance.

"Not fair," April murmured. His protests were soon drowned by Jett's kisses.

Now, he could give it to April like he meant it. Good thing they were on the floor or a bed squeaking would have wakened up the entire house.

"You're so good, you're so good," Jett murmured as he hammered April's ass with all the strength he had.

"Jett, I'm going to --" April choked on his own words as his blunt nails dug in Jett's shoulders.

They fit each other so well. No one ever would come between them, Jett would make sure of that. April came, almost crushed under his weight, and Jett was thankful. All he wanted was to make April happy, forever.

They remained embraced, even if their bodies were starting to cool down. And they kissed, how they kissed, now that they knew that neither would ever go anywhere, ever.

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“Are you guys all right?” Carina asked them at breakfast, as she studied everyone with keen eyes. “It was quite the scandal last night.”

“Sorry about that,” Tom was the first to reply. “These boys needed some straightening up.”

Carina snickered. “Yeah, right.”

“It’s too bad I can’t ground you.” Tom wagged a finger at her.

Carina shrugged. “I have immunity. Whoever holds the baby in this house is like that.”

April and Jett exchanged a quick look.

“Maybe you could give Jay to me for a while,” Jett said.

Carina held Jay on her knees, and with one hand, she picked her toast. “No way. I heard that you two were grounded. But I want to know why.”

“It’s a long and complicated story.” Jett sighed.

“I don’t have anything to do, and Jay sleeps a lot. You could tell me.”

“Young lady, you will find something to do.” That was Tom.

“Dad, don’t play dad to Carina, too.”

“Actually, I don’t mind it,” Carina said as she bit on her toast. “What do you think I should do, Mr. Huntsman?”

April didn’t listen anymore. He was busy looking at Jett and taking in the reality that they were together now and that everything was all right in the world.

*Four years later*

April embraced his dad and shook hands with Tom, but his eyes were searching for someone else. “Where is Jett?” he asked when he finally managed to get a word in, as his dad congratulated him enthusiastically, and Tom was a close second.

“He said he would be here. He wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“Okay,” April said, but he had to admit to himself that he wanted to see Jett more than ever. He could barely wait to tease him over the fact that soon, Jett would no longer be the only breadwinner in the house.

Jett had done pretty well for himself. After two years of studies, he had started a security business, something that, at the time, had caused a lot of laughing since April remembered how he had used to tell everyone Jett was working security when he was actually busy doing something else.

All those years, however, April had kept one particular thought in mind. However, he didn’t dare to remind Jett too often of his promise, for fear of not jinxing it. But he couldn’t wait to hear Jett proposing to him again, now that he had his diploma and that had been their understanding, after all.

“I can’t believe that he isn’t here already,” he complained. “I want to tell him that I’m a computer engineer now.”

“He will be here,” his dad promised. “He just went to pick someone up.”

April smiled. He knew who his dad was talking about. It could only be one special someone that Jett wanted to bring along.

“April!”

April turned, his face all a smile, and his eyes grew wide when he saw Jett climbing out of his car. “Wow, you cut your hair!”

Jett ran one hand through his short hair. If anything, it only made him more handsome and a bit mature. “Do you like it?”

April grinned. “It’s awesome.”

“Jett’s finally growing up,” Tom said solemnly.

Sid touched his arm. “Let’s just leave the kids a little. We’re waiting for you at the diner across the street to start the celebrations.”

“Only start, huh?” April said.

“That’s right,” Sid confirmed. “We have many other things planned out.”

“Can we take the little one with us?” Tom asked. He was already playing with Jay, crouched in front of him.

“Not just yet,” Jett said. “We’ll join you in full formation. Just give me a second.”

April felt his heart skipping a beat. It was funny to feel like this while he knew for sure Jett wanted to live all his life with him. Still, he was secretly waiting for a gesture.

Their dads crossed the street, and April watched them for a couple of seconds. When he turned to Jett, he saw him crouched and whispering something to Jay. The boy nodded with all the solemnity a five-year-old could muster, and then he walked to April, holding a small card in his chubby hand.

“For you,” Jay said and looked up, squinting.

“How are you, buddy?” April ruffled his hair, and Jay smiled. His hair had gone darker, just as April had suspected, and every day, he looked more and more like his dad. Two steps behind, Jett was smiling, and by how he did that, April knew what that card had to be.

He looked at the cover and bit his lips to hide his emotions. It was hand-drawn, and it appeared that the artist was no other than the tiny messenger in front of him. It featured three stick figures with strange hair growing from their heads. It didn’t take too much for April to realize what the picture showed. It was little Jay between April and Jett, holding their hands. The taller beefier stick figure with something that looked more like horns than hair on his head had to be Jett. The smaller one on the right, with long strands of a dubious brown color, had to be him. April’s hair had eventually regained its natural color, and Jay had known him like that for a while now.

“Oh, that is such a cute picture of us!”

“Look on the back,” Jett said.

April turned the card and read out loud. “Be the father of this child!” For a second, he said nothing, his gears turning. Then, his heart filled with fondness. “Are you saying what I think you mean?” he asked Jett.

His boyfriend’s eyes were twinkling. Then Jay took April’s hand. “Daddy two.”

April laughed and scooped Jay into his arms. Jett walked to him and embraced them both. “I thought you needed more than the usual, dweeb. Since you waited for so long for me to pop the question again.”

“Are you going to wait for an actual answer this time around?”

“You would never say ‘no’ to Jay.”

“Sneaky.” April laughed. “But you’re wrong.” He snickered, seeing Jett’s expression. “I would never tell you ‘no’, either.”

**THE END**