

The container in the cabinet is empty.

A box flares, and others respond to the annoyance. I exit the command vehicle.

“Where are they?”

Alex looks up from the laptop at me. Another box shudders and I know his confusion is an act. Ten steps away, Emil pauses the spinning of his wrecking bar to watch.

“Where is what?”

The box sounds the alarm, and I see the smirk before he covers it up.

“Don’t mess with me, Alex.” I throw the container next to him. “You know exactly what I am talking about.” A new box joins it. “This is you getting back at me for the coffee machine, isn’t it?” I step in his direction as he picks up the container and opens it. I will remind him of who holds the power in this relationship. The only one with power in it.

“Dad.” Emil is before me, hands up, and I stop. Behind him, Alex sniffs the open canister. The alarms sound louder as he manages to almost keep some smirking.

“Dad!”

I focus on Emil, but my gaze is directed back to Alex by the box. He is—

“You need to calm down.”

“I am—” the growl in my voice stops me; causes me to notice the cacophony of lights and sounds. I breathe in. Hold it for a second, and breathe out silence over them. The alarm from my paranoia takes me putting a hand on it, shutting the cover tight, then lashing it with chains. After that, the annoyance simply requires a firm hand for it to go dark.

When I speak, my tone is neutral. “What did you do with them, Alex?”

“I didn’t do anything to your pemmican.” His expression is concerned, and I now know the other hints were my paranoia manipulating me.

“Alex, I know you’ve been angry I took away the coffee machine. This is exactly what you’d do to—”

“That was two fucking months ago. And if you’ll remember, I had you chasing you pemmican all over the van until you were pissed enough to fuck me senseless.” He grins. “That was my revenge for the coffee machine.” He raises the thirty-two once thermos. “This is how I dealt with it.” Along with the four others he doesn’t know I am aware of.

I frown. That was the compromise I reached with his addiction. Another fact my paranoia obscured. I control his intake by ensuring he can’t refill them more than every other day. The command vehicle’s fuel tank is large enough to allow that.

I look at Emil, who is still concerned. “Thank you.”

“You’re snapping more often.”

I review my actions over the last months, and he is correct. There is a trend toward not realizing the boxes are action up as quickly. “It’s all the interactions I’ve had to deal with. They are a distraction.” Alex snorts and I’m glaring at him by the time I slam the anger shut.

“Seems to me someone’s suffering from withdrawals.” He raises the container.

“Pemmican is food.”

“So is coffee,” he counters. “And how often have you claimed you want me to stop because you don’t like that my addiction is controlling me?”

“Caffeine is a documented stimulant with addictive characteristics. Pemmican is nothing more than the best sustenance food humans can make. It contains no additives.”

He snorts again, but my hand is firmly on the box. “Not according to the readings I’ve done. Most of the commercially available brands add things like salts to their to enhance the flavor profiles.”

“I don’t eat commercial brands. Those I have—”

“Had.”

I glare at him, and he smirks. “A specialist makes the one I order. If I had realized I was running low, I would have planned a round through Prior Lake, instead of following the Interstate ninety to Sioux Falls before going north.” I go over the map of this region. “If I take the two-twelve tomorrow, I can have us there slightly after noon. Two hours to ensure my storage locker hasn’t been tampered with, or is being watched. I retrieve the pemmican I have stored there, and we are back on the road, well away from major cities before dark.”

“Isn’t that a bit complicated,” Alex says, “you know, for someone who isn’t addicted.”

“It is impossible to be addicted to pemmican,” I snap. My fist falls on the box.

“Fine. How about this? When did you setup that locker? What are the odds it’s even still edible?”

“Properly made and stored pemmican has a shelf life in the decades. It is properly stored,” I say before he can speak. “And the last time I was in Minneapolis was fifteen years ago.”

“Oh? Which family were you avenging?”

I shake my head and can’t stop the flash of memory. The picture in the newspaper, my certainty it was Justin. The rush to reach Minneapolis before all traces of his presence vanished. The despair at not finding him.

“I can take my bike to Sioux Falls,” Emil offers. “We can’t be more than an hour away, and the hunting stores have to have the good kinds of pemmican.”

“I’m fine.” I fix my gaze on Alex. “I can stop at one of my other lockers whenever we are in their vicinity.”

“What are you going to have then?” he asks and I check that the box containing paranoia is sealed before glaring at him for the amusement in his tone.

“Rabbit!” Emil exclaims, bouncing on his heels. “We can set traps, and have a few before it’s dinnertime. I remember what you taught me,” he says defensively, misreading my amusement. “I kept practicing, I read up on other methods, I spent a year living in the —”

I place a hand on his shoulder. “I believe you, Emil. It’s your enthusiasm I found amusing, and yes, I think it would be a good idea for us to hunt our dinner.” I look at Alex. “You can even help us.”

He chuckles. “How about I leave the bush whacking to the two of you and I focus on what I know?” He taps the military laptop with a finger. “Since you aren’t letting Asyr do half the work, I need to put my nose to the digital grindstone.”

“You should come,” Emil urges him. “It’s fun.”

“Emil, I’m not like either of you. The only way I can envision myself traipsing through the bush is if I have the fuck to end all fuck waiting for me at the end.” He looks at me. “Have I earned that?”

I snort, slow to keep that box under control.

“So I’ll stay here, where it’s... let’s say comfortable. And get work done.”

“Your loss.” Emil runs into the woods and I follow after him.

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“Okay,” Alex says, stretching. “That was actually good.”

“There’s more,” Emil is eager to point out. He over did the number of traps, and there must have been a rabbit burrow in the area. I still have six rabbits to roast on the hibachi.

“Your dad can have them. I am stuffed.”

“Not yet,” I reply, and my hand hesitates over that box. Had he earned it? And another box chimes in. Does it matter?

I enjoy the sex. I no longer need to hold it in until that box is about to burst. Whatever aspect of it I need to deal with in the moment, Alex is willing. Is that why I am unsure? For so long, sex had to be something I dealt with to retain control. Even in the early days of my relationship with Alex, it was in part something I dangled for him to want. I took it when I could gain something from him, or when I needed to.

I look over my shoulder. And his expression is eager, worried. When was the last time I told him it would happen in a straightforward way? When it wasn’t in the heat of training, or an argument?

“You better be ready,” I state.

“And that’s my cue to head inside. Unless you two are going to do it in the van, then I’m sleeping out here tonight. The noise you two make is bad enough, but there is no way I can sleep through all that rocking.”

I put half a rabbit on his plate. “Eat first, you only had one. While Alex might be done eating, I am not.”

“Don’t worry,” Alex says. “You’ll know when things are about to get loud.”

“You know, there are treatises out there about how seeing your fathers naked is traumatizing to their son.”

“If that’s the case,” Alex replies, “the damage’s already done, *son*. You might as well stay and enjoy the show.”

Emil responds with gagging sounds, and I smile.

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Alex grabs the piece of meat off my plate and dangles it in the air. I narrow my eyes at him. “I am not a seal to get on a stool and chase food for you.”

“You think?” He unzips and puts the piece of meat in his pants.

“And that’s the signal,” Emil says. “Try not to scare the wildlife all the way to another state.”

“We make no promises,” Alex replies, while my gaze is locked on the exposed groin hair and the little of his shaft is visible. The idea of chasing the meat in there is surprisingly tantalizing.

My face is in his crotch with enough suddenness, he startles. The rabbits’ juices through his pubic hair are richer than on my plate. I lick, then down, grabbing his pants and pushing them out of my way. He raises his ass before I rip them off in frustration. Then I lick his shaft clean. It’s hard before I’m done, and I grab a piece of meat and rub it over the

head of his cock before wrapping my lips around it.

Alex moans as I suck the juices off.

“Fuck. Move, get out of those, I want in on that actions.”

I get on my knees and let him do the work as I lather his cock with more of the rabbit’s juices before licking it off, then swallowing it entirely. His hand tightens around my erection in response, then he moves, pulling my pants down. I raise one leg, then the other so he can take them off, and he kicks his off at the same time.

My utensils clatter, then something how and wet, that isn’t his tongue, runs the length of my cock. He licks it off.

“Fuck,” he says as I deep throat him. “How about we make this the new dinner routine?” His lips close around my cock and I grunt before thrusting until I hit the back of his throat. I stay there while I suck him off. He moans at first, even grabs my ass to push my cock in deeper. I massage his balls with a hand and bob up and down on his cock. The moans turn distressful when I don’t let him push me off. His cock grows stiffer in response.

I have strangled him often enough I know how far I can push him. How his body reacts, how hard his cock is. A box glitters and I wonder how hard he’d come at the moment of death. I close it immediately. Now isn’t—

There is nothing natural about the distant racket. My cock is out of Alex’s mouth. I’m crouched, taking my Desert Eagle equivalent out of the holster I set aside, knowing we were going to have sex.

Alex is still gagging as he gets to his feet. Taking his APX out of the holster at the back of his pants.

The sound is one of my alarms being triggered. Cans in a tree tied to a string were not my preferred method, even if Alex likes to joke about how low tech I can be. But with enough to encircle us, they are an effective advance warning system.

Alex looks at the command vehicle, but I shake my head. Emil isn’t needed for this. Another set of cans falls, nearly ninety degrees from the previous one. I motion that will take the first one. Alex is to go for the second.

He nods, and I run.