

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



Don't Read in the Closet Event 2013

ANYTHING FOR YOU SIR

Max Vos

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Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

ANYTHING FOR YOU SIR

By Max Vos

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what they do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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ANYTHING FOR YOU SIR

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Photo Description

Dom Daddy: Muscular, in shape, hairy bear of a man who is obviously very dominant. Our gentleman is a little rough around the edges. He wears a cock ring, has a Prince Albert piercing, and a pierced left nipple. He is wearing leather arm bands which partially cover tattoos on both upper arms. With his head lowered, he appears to be avoiding the camera, or is there more to it?

Story Letter

Dear Author,

This Dom is gruff and grumpy. He's rough around the edges and hard to please. Many even say he is too rough on his subs. What is his story? Is he too far gone to find love? And will his love be predictable in any way?

Sincerely,

Jason

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: grief, BDSM, bears, blue collar, toys

Word count: 53,090

Dedication

I would really like to thank Ms. Susan G. for turning me on to writing. She has been a big supporter and a great friend. Thank you Susan, it truly was a lifesaver.

I would also like to thank Lise Horton and the ever handsome Troy Storm for having confidence in me and pushing me to continue. And last, but not least, Ms. Diane B. who was a wonderful Beta reader for this project. It was wonderful to work with you Diane! Big smooches!

ANYTHING FOR YOU SIR

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CHAPTER ONE

The heavy cast iron bell over the front door clanked as someone came in.

“Never fucking fails,” Jerome Fontaine grumbled as he pulled off the welding shield from his head.

He picked up a gray, once white, rag and mopped his brow while walking to the front of the shop, the acrid smell of the arc welder hanging in the air like the wisps of the residual smoke floating from its tip.

“May I help you?” Jerome asked the younger man standing in front of the cluttered counter.

“Mr. Jerome Fontaine?”

“Yes, I’m Jerome Fontaine,” Jerome frowned, thinking this is another process paper server from the law office.

The young man dropped to one knee, his head bowed, hands behind his back. “Sir, I’m boy Jason. Master Sampson sent me, Sir.”

Jerome’s mouth opened slightly. It had been a long time since he had been given a full honor present, so long that he almost forgot what it looked like.

“Stand up, boy,” Jerome said huskily his throat dry.

Once Jason stood, his hands still behind his body, head bowed, Jerome took a long look at the young man. The light-green polo shirt fit him snugly; the arms stretched the fabric over large biceps. Nipples clearly showed through the stretched fabric of his shirt. The expensive looking khaki pants had a dark mark on the knee where the boy had knelt before him. Jerome noticed the leather loafers the man wore, and he knew that they were not cheap.

“So you’re the one that Sampson called me to say he was sending?”

“Sir, yes, Sir.”

“You’re early,” Jerome all but snarled. “You’re not supposed to be here until Monday. Unless I’ve totally screwed up, this is only Friday.”

“Sir, yes, Sir, that was the original plan, Sir.” Jason, his head still bowed, acknowledged.

“So why the fuck are you here now?”

“Sir, Master Sampson said that you were desperate for help, so I didn’t stop until I got here, Sir.”

“You drove?”

“Sir, yes, Sir.” Jason never looked up as he answered.

“You drove straight through from Arizona?”

“Sir, yes, Sir.”

“You never stopped?” Jerome’s voice cracked. He hadn’t spoken a word all day, not that that wasn’t unusual for him.

“Sir, I only stopped for bathroom breaks, gas, or to catch a quick nap to keep from falling asleep at the wheel, Sir.”

“Well fuck,” Jerome said, both shocked and irritated.

Jerome looked at Jason and shook his head, knowing he was going to have to shut down for the day now. There was no way this guy was going to be able to stand up for much longer if he’d driven from Phoenix to New Orleans, straight through.

“Well, come on back and have a seat,” Jerome huffed. “I’ll have to close up and get you back to the house before you fucking fall over.”

It didn’t take Jerome long to shut down the arc welder and put a few things away before he turned off the one light over the tool bench in the dark ironworks shop.

Looking over at the young man standing off to the side, he again shook his head, a frown crinkling his forehead.

“Come on, boy,” Jerome said flatly.

Jerome locked the front door and when he turned around he saw the nearly new silver BMW 750Li parked on the street in front of the shop.

Looking at Jason he pointed to the vehicle. "Is that yours?"

"Sir, yes, Sir," Jason replied, his head bowed slightly.

Jerome walked up to the almost new car and looked inside the tinted windows.

Turning back to Jason he said, "I can't ride in that thing." He knew that his soot and smoke covered clothing would ruin the upholstered seats.

"Sir, you may drive if it would make you more comfortable, Sir."

"Naw, it ain't that, boy," Jerome barked. "I'm not gonna mess up that car wearing work clothes."

"Sir, I can fix that, Sir."

Quickly, Jason popped the trunk with the key fob. He reached in and pulled out an old wool army blanket. He swiftly opened the passenger side door and spread it across the seat and the floorboard.

"Sir, I think this should work for you, Sir."

"Dammit. Okay," Jerome agreed, although reluctantly, as he got inside the pristine car.

Jason got in behind the wheel and started the engine. The air conditioning instantly started cooling the interior.

"Sir, where are we going, Sir?"

"Go 'round the block, and turn right onto Burgundy. Go for four blocks and then I'll show you the house. It's on the corner of Burgundy and Port," Jerome all but growled.

He didn't like being caught off guard like this. Jason wasn't due to arrive until Monday, three days from now, and Jerome wasn't ready. He *really* wasn't prepared for this guy. The two men rode in silence for the short distance.

“Here, pull into this driveway,” Jerome indicated with his left hand. His hands were like the rest of his body, covered in a light-gray dust.

Jason parked the car and jumped out rushing to open the door for Jerome, but Jerome was too fast for him. He was already out of the car heading up the five steps to the door, leaving the car door open for Jason to close.

“Grab your gear and come on inside, boy.”

Jason quickly grabbed his one suitcase and shoulder bag from the trunk of the car, scrambling to catch up to the dour-faced Jerome Fontaine.

Jerome had already dropped his keys on the counter of the breakfast bar and had two bottles of Voodoo beer in hand by the time Jason closed the front door behind him. Jerome came into the living area, pushed carryout containers to one side of the coffee table, setting one of the beers down.

“Drop your bags by the stairs then come sit down,” Jerome commanded.

Jason did as he was told, dropping to his knees beside the cluttered coffee table onto the floor, facing the older man. Jerome handed him a cold beer. Jason kept his head slightly bowed and waited.

“You said your name was Jeremy?”

“Sir, no, Sir. Jason, Sir.”

“Okay, this *Sir* crap needs to stop,” Jerome said snidely, smacking his lips after chugging half the beer. “This ain’t the military. One Sir will do. Think you can manage that, boy?”

“Sir... um, yes, Sir.”

“Go on, drink your beer. It’ll help you sleep better.”

“S... yes, Sir.”

Jason took a long, slow drink of the slightly bitter tasting beer, taking the opportunity to survey his current surroundings. The place was a wreck. Empty carryout containers cluttered the coffee table and the kitchen counters. Mail, newspapers and other types of papers were on most every other surface and on the floor. There were dirty socks and a couple of shirts tossed around the

room. It was obvious that the rug he was kneeling on hadn't enjoyed the company of the vacuum cleaner in sometime.

"Boy, you ever worked with iron?" Jerome asked, knowing the answer. He looked at Jason's hands and knew that boy hadn't done manual labor anytime recently, if ever.

"No, Sir."

"You ever done any type of work with your hands?"

"No, Sir."

"Then what the fuck are you doing here?"

"Master Sampson seemed to think that I would catch on quickly, Sir. I am a fast learner, Sir."

"Yeah, well I guess we'll have to see about that," Jerome grumped as he stood up, going to get another beer.

Jerome sat back down, not having offered another beer to Jason, since he hadn't finished half of the first beer yet. Once he had settled back down onto the black leather sofa, Jason asked, "Sir, may I ask a question, Sir?"

Jerome only grunted a response.

"Would you like me to follow the Power Exchange's protocols, or do you have other protocols you wish for me to observe?"

"Boy, I ain't that formal," Jerome snorted. "I don't have any set protocols. We'll make 'em up as we go along. See what works."

"Yes, Sir," Jason said. "Would you like for me to be naked while in the house, Sir?"

Jerome stared at Jason; one eye squinted, still scowling. "Did Sampson not tell you that this was a work only situation? I didn't want, nor need, a sex slave?"

"Yes, Sir, he did, Sir."

"Then I don't guess you being naked is a requirement, but feel free to wear or not wear whatever you want. I don't give a shit."

“Yes, Sir.”

Jason finished his beer, holding the empty bottle since there really was nowhere to set it on the coffee table.

“Get your stuff and follow me, boy, and I’ll show you where you’ll be sleepin’.” Jerome stood up and walked toward the narrow staircase.

Jason picked up his bags and followed the muscled man.

At the top of the stairs Jerome said, “To the left is my office and over here is your space,” he indicated, turning right.

Jason took in the room. It was a decent-sized room with a queen sized bed. The room itself was neat, but he could tell that it hadn’t been occupied or cleaned in some time. There was a coating of dust on every surface.

“There’s an air-conditioning unit in the window. It gets a little hot up here even with the central A/C running,” Jerome stated as he looked at the room. “I’d have cleaned up a bit this weekend, but you got here before I had a chance.”

“Don’t worry, Sir. I will make do, Sir.”

“Well... you get settled in, grab a shower if you want, and I’ll get us some grub rounded up.” Jerome went back down the stairs.

Jason let out a deep breath and sat on the edge of the bed. He was exhausted, and on edge.

Jerome dug out his cell phone from his dirty 501 jeans and immediately called Steve Sampson when he reached the bottom of the stairs.

“Sampson, Jerome Fontaine here,” he said, speaking into his cell phone.

“Hey Jerome, how’s it going buddy?” Sampson answered.

“Man, what the fuck is up with this kid you sent me?”

“What do you mean, Jerome?”

“This Jason boy you sent me hasn’t done an honest day’s work in his life!”

“Calm down, Jerome,” Sampson chuckled slightly on the other end. “Do you trust me?”

Jerome sighed heavily, rubbing his forehead. “Yeah, I trust you Sampson, you know that.”

“Then give Jason a chance. I think he is *exactly* what you need.”

“Sampson, I need someone who has a clue about what hard work is,” Jerome said as he paced, “*and* preferably knows his way around tools!”

“Jerome, you have no idea how hard Jason is willing to work. You’re gonna have to trust me on this one, okay?” Sampson cajoled. “Hey, you asked me to help find you someone and I have. I’ve known you, what? Ten years?”

“Yeah, more or less.”

“Then take my word for it. Jason is what you need right now.”

“Okay, I’ll give him a week,” Jerome grumbled.

“No, you’ll give him a couple of months,” Sampson said a little forcefully. “Jerome, there isn’t anyone who can learn anything in just a week. Now promise me you’ll at least give him a chance.”

“Fuck you, Sampson,” Jerome barked. “Okay. Fuck, I’ll give him at least a couple of months, okay? Happy now?”

Sampson laughed. “Yeah, I’m happy now. Tell you what, you keep him until Labor Day, and if after Southern Decadence, you aren’t happy with him by then, I’ll take him back with me.”

“What? Decadence is more than *three* months away!”

“Yeah, yeah, you’ll live, Jerome.”

“So you’ll be here for Decadence?”

“Yes, I’ll be there,” Sampson replied.

“Okay, I will plan on seeing you then.”

“You bet. Bye, Jerome.”

CHAPTER TWO

Jason stood at the sink at the top of the stairs, washing his face as he listened to Jerome's and Sampson's conversation, though only able to hear Jerome's part.

As Sampson had predicted, the man whose life he just invaded didn't want him here. He had been told that Jerome was a gruff and hard to reach kind of man, but to try and be patient with him.

Jason would like to be more than just patient. When he first saw the man, his mouth watered. Jerome Fontaine was everything he thought a hot daddy should be, bulging muscles everywhere. His gray hair made Jason's gut tighten, and the way his muscle T-shirt slid over to one side, exposing the furry pectoral with the pierced nipple made his knees weak.

"Boy, I'm goin' to the market, I'll be back in fifteen," Jerome bellowed up the stairs, causing Jason to jump.

"Sir, yes, Sir."

Jason could hear his new Sir grumble as he shut the door behind him.

Quickly, Jason pulled on a pair of onion skin running shorts and ran down the stairs. The one way to get this man to accept him was to make himself useful, if not indispensable. He gathered up all the trash from the living room and kitchen. The trash can next to the stairs was already overflowing so he changed out the liner and found the trash cans outside.

It didn't take Jason long to get the living room tidied up, the kitchen counters wiped down, and all the dirty dishes loaded into the dishwasher. He was hunting for the vacuum cleaner when the front door opened. Jason froze. Glancing towards the door he saw Jerome, his mouth slightly open. Jason, as taught, took a submissive stance, his feet shoulder width apart, hands behind his back and his head slightly bowed.

"Boy..." Jerome set a bag on the bar area of the kitchen and looked around. "Come and get it."

Jerome was about to open up the bag when he noticed his hands and how dirty they were. He then looked at Jason who was clean, as were the counter tops of the kitchen. Scowling, he got back up and went to the sink to wash up. When he was done, Jason handed him a clean towel to dry his hands. Jerome looked at the young man, who was more than likely close to thirty, and frowned. Going back to the food still in the bag, he pulled out a large bag of chips and several paper-wrapped parcels.

“Thought you might as well get a taste of N’awlins right off. Got a couple of muffalettas.”

Jerome set one of the sandwiches down on the counter for Jason. Jason then picked up the sandwich and walked away from the counter. When Jerome turned around to see where he was going, he saw Jason sit on the floor in the corner, while starting to unwrap the sandwich.

“What the fuck you doing over there?”

Jason looked up surprised. “Sir?”

“Why you sittin’ way over there on the floor?”

“Sir... I mean... a slave never sits with, or presumes that he will eat with, his Master,” Jason stuttered.

“First off, I ain’t your Master and I don’t want a slave,” Jerome barked. “A boy I might can handle, but this slave shit isn’t for me. Got it?”

“Sir, yes, Sir,” Jason stiffened.

“Now get your ass over here and sit down like someone who’s got a lick of sense.”

“Sir, yes, Sir,” Jason automatically replied jumping up.

“And what did I tell you about all that *Sir* crap?”

Jason opened his mouth and thought before he spoke, “Yes, Sir.” Before sitting he asked, “May I have some water, Sir?”

“Yeah, glasses are over the dishwasher,” Jerome answered, his mouth full from the first bite of his own sandwich. “And you don’t have to ask.”

“Would you care for any, Sir?”

“No, I’ll have another beer.”

Jason got the beer first then got a large glass of water for himself. He sat next to Jerome at the counter. He took a bite of the sandwich while Jerome looked on.

“Like it?”

Jason chewed then swallowed. “Wow, yes, Sir. It is very good, Sir.”

“It’s a staple here,” Jerome informed him.

The two sat in silence as they ate for a bit. Jerome looked to be about to ask a question when he started scowling at Jason.

“Boy, is your chest shaved?”

“Um... yes, Sir. My entire body was shaved as part of a going away ceremony just before I left, Sir.”

“You’re gonna regret that,” Jerome smirked.

“Why is that, Sir?”

Jerome smiled wickedly. “Boy, you know what kinda work I do?”

“No, Sir, not really, Sir.”

Jerome frowned at the extra “Sir”. “Ironwork, boy, I do ironwork. It’s hot and dirty work. There are miniscule metal particles flying through the air. When it’s that hot your pores open up and them little metal pieces start coating your skin. They make their way down and latch on to the hair follicles. The end result is intense itching, rashes. It can be downright painful.”

“Oh,” Jason said.

“You’ll see.” Jerome chuckled mischievously. “Until your hair grows out some, you’re in for a miserable time.”

“Yes, Sir,” Jason replied, a scowl on his face.

As soon as the two men had finished eating, Jason immediately cleaned up the trash and wiped the counter down once again.

“Boy, aren’t you tired yet?” Jerome asked shaking his head.

“Yes, Sir, I am.”

“Go on then and get some sleep. I plan on working tomorrow. Might as well get you started.”

“Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir.” Jason bowed slightly before heading upstairs.

Jason fell into the bed and quickly fell asleep.

“Boy? Jason?” Jerome stood over the sleeping man that had entered his life. Looking down he couldn’t help but notice how handsome he was. It wasn’t that he hadn’t noticed when he first saw him but now he was able to study him.

His heavy morning beard, so black it looked blue against his skin. The full pink lips relaxed with a slight upward curve at the corners. Jason was lying on his side, his muscled arm resting easily against his chest.

Jerome smiled wickedly. It seemed that Jason here was a little furball. There was now a definite shadow of hair sprouting across his chest. Jerome knew he was going to be very uncomfortable after a few days in the shop.

Jerome’s smile faded as he remembered a time now past, a time of laughter, a time of misery of a similar occurrence that they later laughed about. Of when his life was easier, when he was happy. It ended too soon. *Why did you have to go, Toby?*

“Boy!” Jerome barked. “Come on; get your ass in gear, time to go to work.”

Jason sat up, startled, looking around trying to figure out exactly where he was. He saw Jerome standing there, hands on his hips, frowning. Wiping the slumber from his face, he said, “Yes, Sir. I’ll shower quickly.”

“Boy, no need to shower just to get dirty,” Jerome all but snarled. “Just get dressed and come downstairs. I’ve got coffee made.”

Jerome turned and went down the stairs, his heavy work boots clunking on the wooden stairs.

Jerome could hear Jason upstairs stumbling around hurrying to get ready. He sighed before taking a sip of his chicory coffee. Already behind schedule by several weeks, Jerome was worried. He hoped that Sampson was right about Jason being a quick learner because he really did need the help. The challenge would be finding something for Jason to do that would be productive. He didn't have time to stop and train someone.

He turned when he heard Jason come down the stairs, not believing what he saw. Jason had on a bright blue golf shirt, a pair of designer jeans that he'd never even heard of, and bright-white running shoes.

“Have you lost your mind?” Jerome asked.

Jason froze, the slight smile on his face vanished. “Pardon me, Sir?”

“Don't you have any work clothes?”

“Um... Sir, these are as close as I have, Sir.”

“Fuck,” Jerome slammed his coffee mug down before stomping down the hall. “Stay there, boy.”

A moment later Jerome returned, throwing a wad of clothing at Jason. “Here, put these on,” he commanded.

Jason started to strip immediately. Picking up the T-shirt that was given him, he saw it was so thin it was almost sheer. He glanced up before pulling it over his head, as Jerome snickered.

“Boy, we're gonna have to go get you some work clothes this afternoon. By the way... you're gonna regret them silk boxers later on.”

“Why, Sir?”

“Best let you learn your lesson by experience. Trust me, you'll see,” Jerome smiled almost evilly.

Jason pulled up the jeans Jerome had provided. They were a little big in the legs and waist, but his belt took care of the waist issue.

Jerome was already waiting at the front door by the time Jason hustled out, pulling out his keys.

“You can just put those away. We walk,” Jerome said, locking the door.

They walked the four plus blocks to the shop. The heavy clank of the cast iron bell echoed in the dark shop when they entered. Jerome closed and locked the door behind them, not turning on the lights in the small reception area in front, or flipping the sign on the door to read open.

“As far as I’m concerned, I’m closed on the weekends to customers,” he answered any potential questions Jason may have. “I’m already behind and I don’t need any distractions.”

Jason remained silent, following Jerome into the dark shop area. He watched carefully as Jerome went and turned on a light over a table, the wall behind it covered with all kinds of tools.

“Over here is a chop saw. You ever used one?” Jerome turned on a florescent light over a large saw.

“No, Sir.”

“You’re gonna learn how today.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Gotta get some material first,” Jerome announced, throwing a pair of leather gloves at Jason. “Follow me.”

Jerome opened up the steel double doors at the back of the shop. For almost an hour they carried long iron bars into the shop, stacking them close to the chop saw. Jerome then set up the chop saw with what he informed Jason was a jig. He gave Jason a pair of safety glasses and ear protectors.

“Now, cut each one to this length,” Jerome instructed, as he showed him how to operate the saw.

“How many, Sir?”

Jerome laughed. “Until there isn’t any more of that stack left.”

Jason's mouth fell open. Looking at the chop saw, then at the stack of iron on the floor he quickly calculated that he would get four pieces out of every bar, and there was no telling how many bars there were. Closing his mouth, he picked up the first bar and started. As instructed, he picked up a brush and swept away the tiny metal shavings after every few cuts.

He didn't know how long he had been at it when he felt Jerome tap him on the shoulder. Turning, he pulled off the ear muffs.

"Take a break. I got us something to eat," Jerome let him know.

Following Jerome outside behind the shop, he was a little surprised at how bright it was and how hot it was getting and it wasn't even nine a.m. yet. There was a makeshift table and a couple of overturned five-gallon buckets to sit on. Jerome handed Jason a breakfast sandwich and a plate of beignets, still warm.

"Thank you, Sir," Jason said before biting into the sandwich.

"Have one of these," Jerome grunted pushing the beignets towards him.

Jason took a bite of the still warm sugar-coated treat. "Oh, my God!"

Jerome almost smiled. "I take it you've not had a beignet before?"

"No, Sir, I've not. These are wonderful. Thank you, Sir."

"When we get back inside, I'm gonna show you what you're gonna do next with what you've cut up already. Then you can go back and forth between cutting and bending."

"Bending, Sir?"

"This is an ironworks shop you know. I make ornamental ironworks."

"Um... yes, Sir."

"You have no idea what I'm talking about do you?"

"I think I have an idea, Sir."

"When we go out to get you some proper work clothes, I'll show you what I mean."

“Yes, Sir,” Jason said, his pink lips covered in powdered sugar. “Thank you for breakfast, Sir.”

“You’re welcome. Just don’t take too much time in eating it. Got a lot to get done today.”

Back inside, Jerome set up another jig. He picked up a piece of the iron that Jason had cut.

“Insert one end here,” he demonstrated, “then push it around this curve.” Jerome pushed the bar and it curved around the form. “Then step to the other side and pull it on around like this.” The muscles in Jerome’s arms bulged as he pulled the metal around, finishing what looked like a question mark. “Then take it out like this, turn it around and repeat on the other end.” He demonstrated, repeating the same steps as he did the first time.

“Wow, Sir. That’s cool,” Jason said admiringly.

“Okay, now you do it.”

Jason picked up a piece of cut iron, placed the end in the jig and pushed. Nothing happened. He took a deep breath and pushed again, harder this time. The bar barely moved.

Jerome burst out laughing. “Boy, you’re gonna have ta do a lot better than that!”

Frowning, a look of determination on his face, Jason gripped the bar firmly and pushed, putting his whole body into it. The bar started to curl around the jig.

“Good, now come around here and pull it on around, boy.”

Jason walked around to the other side of the jig and took hold of the bar. Now knowing that this was going to take some serious effort, he pulled. With a look of satisfaction he removed the piece from the jig and held it up for Jerome to see.

“Could be a little tighter, but it will pass,” Jerome squinted at the piece. “Think you got this?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Alrighty then. I’m going to go back to welding that gate piece over there. If you need anything, let me know.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Jason did the other end of the decorative iron piece with a sense of pride, thinking *I can do this*.

The morning wore on and the later it became, the hotter it became in the shop. Jerome had turned on a large industrial exhaust fan, which helped some, but it wasn’t long before Jason was soaked to the skin in his own sweat. When Jerome finally called time for lunch, Jason was exhausted.

The two men sat in almost total silence, just inside the open double doors as they ate. Jason downed several bottles of water before he took the first bite.

“Make sure you drink plenty of that,” Jerome advised.

“Yes, Sir. No problem there, Sir.”

After lunch they resumed. Jason didn’t know how much longer he was going to be able to go on. The muscles in his arms and back were screaming. He had been working steadily but still had only finished half of the pieces that he had cut earlier. If that wasn’t bad enough, he was starting to really itch. All over. From his ankles to his chest, he felt as if his body was on fire. Jason also knew what Jerome had meant when he said he would be sorry for wearing his silk boxers. They were sticking to the insides of his thighs. They were also bunched up under his nuts, chafing the tender skin.

About three thirty Jerome called it a day. He looked at Jason. “You gonna make it, boy?”

Jason glanced up after draining a water bottle. “Yes, Sir.”

Jerome chuckled. “All right, let’s go get you some work clothes.”

When they walked out of the shop the heat blasted up from the sidewalk like a furnace. Not even realizing it, Jason groaned softly.

“Boy, it’s only May! Better get used to this heat and humidity quick, ’cause summer isn’t even here yet,” Jerome exclaimed, half laughing. “Where you from anyway?”

“Philadelphia, Sir.”

“Yankee boy,” Jerome muttered shaking his head.

That was the extent of the conversation between them. Jerome led and Jason followed. They had walked for quite a while when Jerome steered Jason into a second-hand store. There he showed Jason what he needed for work clothes: T-shirts and jeans, all used but with plenty of wear left in them, nothing that Jason would have normally picked out, and he had never bought second-hand clothing before in his life. Jerome attempted to pay, but Jason insisted that he buy his own clothes.

They stopped at an athletic store around the corner. Jerome suggested that he might want to pick up several jock straps, unless he wanted to continue to wear his silk boxers. Jason bought ten jocks. He also picked up a pair of heavy-duty hiking boots.

Jerome gave a short tour on the way back to his house pointing out various ironwork. Jason was amazed at the beauty and art of the various ironworks. The elaborate gates and balconies, overflowing with flowering plants as well as the beautiful courtyards behind some of the gates, showed off the intricate ironwork typical of New Orleans.

Jason was dragging up the front steps once they got back to the house. Jerome looked at the man and almost felt sorry for him.

“Give me them clothes you just got and I’ll run ’em through the wash. Get that musty smell outta them,” Jerome ordered.

Jason complied without comment or offering to do the chore himself.

“Go take you a hot shower and then soak for a while in the tub with this.” He tossed a container of Epsom salts to Jason. “Get the water as hot as you can stand it.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Let me know when you’re done with that.”

Jason only nodded as he trudged up the stairs.

At the top of the stairs Jason stopped, not sure he could take another step. Taking a deep breath he continued on into his room. It was difficult, but he was able to peel off the wet T-shirt, his face scrunched up smelling the stench coming from the drenched fabric. He undid the belt that was holding up the soggy jeans. The jeans dropped to the floor of their own accord. Jason toed off his shoes and stepped out of the dirty jeans, leaving them on the floor. He grimaced as he was sliding down the wet silk boxers, peeling them away from his inner thighs as well as the bunched up fabric from behind his sore nuts. Jason sighed in relief when the cool air hit his exposed skin.

Jason wheezed loudly when he saw himself in the full-length mirror on the back of the bathroom door. His entire body was flame red, especially his chest, groin and inner thighs. When he rubbed his chest it was covered in fine grit. It was as if he was rubbing sandpaper across his overly sensitive skin.

“What the fuck?”

Doing as he was told, he got into the shower, the water as hot as he could tolerate. He washed himself thoroughly, watching the gray water swirling away, then finally replaced with clear, clean water. Switching the shower off, he started filling the tub, adding about a cup of the Epsom salts. Slowly he lowered himself into the hot water, wincing as he did. The hot water made his sensitive skin scream.

Rubbing his chest, he could feel the stubble of the hair growing back. He had only been shaved four days prior and was slightly surprised that it was growing back so rapidly. *I’ll have to do a quick shave when I get out*, he thought to himself.

After the water had cooled, Jason got out of the tub and gently patted himself dry, letting the A/C do most of the work. He pulled out his razor and shaving gel, preparing to give his body a quick shave.

“Don’t shave anything, boy” Jerome’s voice bellowed up the stairwell.

Jason sighed as he put away his shaving equipment. No sooner had he put the toiletries away, than Jerome walked in. Jason's first instinct was to cover himself, but he fought off that urge and stood there, fully exposed, waiting.

"Damn, boy, but you sure is red," Jerome chuckled. "That is why you don't want to shave. Remember what I said this morning? About the metal shavings?"

Jason nodded.

"Okay, that's why, so no shaving unless you wanna look like that and itch all the time."

"Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir." Jason understood why his skin was on fire. It made perfect sense now.

"Here," Jerome handed him a large bottle of baby powder. "Use this after every shower and even in between, especially while all your hair grows out. It won't cure what ails ya, but it will help." Jerome snickered. "Now get dressed. We're going to dinner."

"Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir."

Jason was in a bit of a quandary. He had no idea what to wear. He looked at what he had packed and hesitated.

"Casual, boy," Jerome bellowed up the stairs at him. "Jeans and T-shirt."

Jason smiled, thankfully.

CHAPTER THREE

They walked to dinner. Jason soon found out that the locals walked just about everywhere, if they were going to be anywhere near the “Quarter”, since parking was next to impossible.

Jerome was welcomed heartily as they entered a small eatery. The place was packed and very loud. The two found a table against a wall not far from the bar.

Seated, Jerome asked, “You like oysters, boy?”

“Yes, Sir,” Jason answered loudly to make himself heard.

A young black man came to the table, a pitcher of beer and two iced mugs in hand. “*Amis bonsoir!*”

“Ant, how’s it goin’?” Jerome greeted the man. “Ant, this is Jason. Jason, Ant.”

“Nice to meet you, Ant,” Jason said, holding out his hand.

“You too, Jason,” Ant smiled widely. He turned to Jerome. “*Gentil, très beau.*”

Jason was shocked to see Jerome blush. “He said you look nice.”

Jerome didn’t know, but Jason knew some French. What he had actually said was, “Nice, very nice.” Jason only smiled at the compliment.

“Nuff, Ant. Give us a bucket of oysters and Gumbo for two,” Jerome ordered for both of them.

“*Quelque chose pour vous, mon amour,*” Ant said to Jerome before bustling off.

Jason looked at Jerome questioningly. In his head, he loosely translated “Anything for you, my love.”

“What?” Jerome asked.

“Do they always speak French?” Jason questioned. “Is Ant his real name?”

Jerome laughed out loud. “Ant is short for Antoine, but that is his daddy’s name and his uncle’s name on his mamma’s side. So they shortened it to Ant to keep them straight. And Ant always speaks Cajun French with me.”

“Does he call everyone ‘love’ when asking what they want?”

Jerome only scowled, not answering, realizing that Jason spoke at least some French.

Just then a large black woman came to the table with a roll of brown paper.

“Pick up your beer,” Jerome instructed Jason.

“Jerome, you gets betta lookin’ ever times I see’s ya,” The woman smiled, kissed Jerome’s cheek and spread two layers of the paper on the table. “If’n I wasn’t a hones’ woman, I’d be a chasin’ afta you!”

“Marie, I couldn’t handle you. You’re more woman than I’d know what to do with,” Jerome flirted back. “Marie, this is Jason, my new helper.”

Marie took Jason’s chin in her hand and turned his head first left, then right. “He’s too pretty for you Jerome. Jason,” Marie said, with a definite accent, “don’cha go takin’ none of his lip now ya hear? If’n he gets outta line, you jus’ come tell ol’ Marie, ya hear? I kin set him straight.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Jason blushed.

“Ah, and he has manners too!” Marie smiled sweetly. Jason could just imagine that would be the same smile she would give one of her own children.

Marie put her hands on her hips and looked sternly at Jerome. “*Si vous chassez celui-ci, vous êtes un imbécile.* You hears me, Jerome?”

Jerome frowned at Marie, but nodded his head.

Jason struggled to remember some of the French that he’d learned while in France when he was in college. Best he could translate was something about chasing him off and calling Jerome either stupid or a fool.

Ant suddenly reappeared with what appeared to be a mop bucket full of oysters.

“Y’all ’njoy now,” Marie smiled, thumping Jerome on the back. “Hollars if’n you need sumpthin’.”

She and Ant left, the bucket sitting on the floor next to the small table. Jerome noticed the puzzled look on Jason’s face.

“What’s wrong?” Jerome asked with a bemused look on his face.

“I have never opened an oyster before,” Jason admitted.

Jerome threw his head back, looking at the ceiling shaking his head. “Opened?” He shook his head. “Boy, you don’t *open* an oyster, you *shuck* an oyster. Here, let me show you.”

Jerome picked up a flat looking knife and showed Jason how to shuck an oyster. Jason picked up the knife and attempted to do exactly as Jerome did. His first attempt resulted in him stabbing himself with the dull flat blade. Jerome chuckled, but left him to it.

Jason slurped the raw oyster from the shell and stopped. “Wow. That’s really good.”

“Yep,” Jerome grinned, as he put a couple of dashes of hot sauce on an oyster. “Probably was brought in this mornin’.”

It didn’t take Jason long to get the hang of it and soon he was shucking and slurping right along with Jerome. Before the bucket was half-empty, Ant appeared with two large steaming bowls, setting one in front of each of them, he grinned and winked at Jason.

“Just what the doctor ordered,” Jerome said before taking a big bite.

Jason smelled it, licked his lips, then took a big spoonful and put it in his mouth. Jerome watched as his eyes bugged out, his face turned red, and he reached for the cold beer. Once he had managed to swallow, he downed the rest of his beer. Beer drained, he started coughing.

Gasping for air he asked, “What the hell is in this stuff?”

Marie noticed the commotion and came rushing over. She took one look at the gumbo and turned a glaring look on Jerome, hands on hips.

“Jerome Fontaine, I should take you out back right now and tan yo’ hide! You didn’t even tell this poor white boy that gumbo had heat to it?” Shaking her head she motioned for Ant. “I knows you didn’t. I can tells by that hound dog look you gots.

She handed Jason’s bowl of gumbo to Ant. “Go on and fetch me a plate of that jambalaya I made. Not that which Antoine made, but what I done made. And gets some water too!”

When Ant scurried away she looked at Jason who had tears in his eyes and sweat pouring from his face. Again, she turned to Jerome. “I don’ knows what you thinks you was a doin’, Jerome, but tha’ weren’t one bit funny.”

“Honest, Marie, I didn’t even think about it,” Jerome defended himself.

“You is full of shit, Jerome Fontaine, and yous and I boths knows it.”

“Now, Marie, there’s no reason to go and get all bent outta shape. I said it was an honest mistake.”

“I has half a mind to takes you out back and give you a good ol’ what for,” Marie barked.

“Woman, don’t go making threats of a good time if you ain’t gonna follow through with them,” Jerome grinned mischievously.

“Boy...” Marie started, leaning onto the table with her meaty hands, her face only inches from Jerome’s. “Boy, I could beat you half ta deaf with my hands behind my back using only my big ol’ titties here.”

Jerome opened his mouth to respond but was interrupted by Jason’s laughter. Marie and Jerome both glared at Jason for a moment as he continued to laugh, holding his stomach.

“Do you two always carry on like this? If so, you need to sell tickets,” Jason gasped, trying to catch his breath.

Marie and Jerome looked at each other and started grinning.

Marie stood up smiling. “Yes, I guess we does do our share of fussin’.”

“Yeah, Marie and I have known each other for so long I guess we don’t even think about it anymore.”

“I think of Jerome like he was one of my kids,” Marie smiled broadly.

“Hmph, kids? I’m older than you, Marie!”

“Not likes you acts like it,” her hands back on her hips. “You acts like a spoilt child and it’s gots worse since yo’r daddy died.”

It was as if a black curtain had been drawn across Jerome’s face. His eyes turned dark before he looked down at his bowl of gumbo and started to eat. The chill in the air would freeze an Eskimo.

Ant was back with a plate and a large glass of ice water. Setting it down in front of Jason he looked between Marie and Jerome, rolled his eyes and hurriedly left.

“There, baby,” Marie said kindly to Jason. “You goes and enjoy that. I think that will be more ta ya likin’.” She glanced worriedly at Jerome and left.

Jerome hardly spoke through the rest of the meal. Jason would have thoroughly enjoyed the jambalaya had there not been so much tension at the table. As soon as they had finished, Jerome dropped some cash on the table and left the restaurant, Jason hurrying after him. During the walk home, Jason thought about trying to break the silence but decided against it.

As they walked through the door, Jerome said over his shoulder, “We’re working tomorrow, so get some rest.”

He dropped his keys on the counter without ever turning around, and stomped off to his bedroom at the back of the house. Jason stood there a moment before slowly making his way upstairs.

As Jason lay in bed, he thought back to what Sampson had told him. He had been right. Jerome was a deeply troubled man.

CHAPTER FOUR

Jason awoke with a start. He could hear Jerome downstairs making coffee. He groaned as he sat up, swinging his legs over the side of the bed, his arms stiff and aching. Standing up, he groaned again, his back sore and shoulders stinging with pain. Brushing his teeth seemed like a major ordeal, the pain in his arms and shoulders making him whine.

Downstairs, Jerome handed Jason a cup of coffee. He noticed Jason wince as he lifted the cup to his lips.

“Little sore this morning, are ya?” He asked with a sadistic smile on his face.

“Just a little,” Jason answered, trying to hide the pain that was shooting up and down his arms.

“Here,” Jerome said, tossing him a small pill bottle. “Take a few of those. It’ll help.”

Jason looked at the over-the-counter pain medication and took three. As he started to hand the bottle back to Jerome, he was told to put them in his pocket as he might need them later in the day.

Having finished their coffee, they walked to the shop. The day started where they had left off the previous day. Jason’s muscles screamed as he returned to using them in the same manner that had caused the pain in the first place. Luckily, it didn’t take long for the pain to subside and for him to be moving easier, working out the soreness.

Like the day before, Jerome brought in some breakfast. Neither spoke much. The sun was up and it was getting hotter by the minute. Jason’s shirt was already clinging to him despite the generous amount of talcum powder he had used before getting dressed.

Jason was bending a piece of iron when he heard church bells ringing. Looking over, he noticed that Jerome had stopped, also listening to the bells calling the parishioners to service. He had a faraway look on his face. When

they stopped, Jerome nodded his head, his welding shield falling back over his face. He resumed welding and Jason went back to his task.

As they continued to work, Jason continued to sweat. When his stomach growled, indicating that it must be close to lunchtime, the back door opened, spilling light across the dark shop interior. Jason looked up and saw two figures outlined by the sun at their backs.

Jerome also looked up, pushing back his welding shield, a frown on his face.

“Jerome.” An elderly man walked into the shop, followed by a taller slim man.

Jason almost laughed. The elderly man was wearing an honest-to-God blue seersucker suit. His hair was snow white and he walked with a cane. One glance at the other man caused his breath to catch. He looked just like Jerome, only thinner. He also was wearing a suit, just not a seersucker one.

“Uncle Bartholomew. David. And to what do I owe this unfortunate visit?” Jerome growled.

“We brought some papers for you to sign, Jerome,” the younger of the two, Jerome’s almost twin who must be David, spoke as he held out a blue legal-size packet of papers.

“Those taxes aren’t due for another three weeks,” Jerome stated flatly.

“Now, Jerome, you and I both know you won’t have the money for your share of the taxes due,” the man in seersucker said. “I covered for you last year and I thought I made myself perfectly clear that I would not be doing so again this year. It makes no sense for you to hold on to that property. You have no need for it.”

“My client will look these over and get back to you,” Jason said as he stepped between the two men and Jerome, taking the packet of papers out of David’s hand.

“Who the hell are you?” David asked as he made to take the papers back.

“I am Jason Corleone, Esquire. Mr. Fontaine’s legal representative.”

Although Jason had his back to Jerome, he could feel the surprise emanating from him.

“Jerome?” The elder, who must be Uncle Bartholomew, asked.

“What he said,” Jerome said from behind Jason.

“Now, gentlemen, if there is nothing else?” Jason asked, not batting an eye.

“Jerome, I expect to hear something from you by tomorrow,” David ground out, looking as if he had smelled something sour.

“As I said, gentlemen, I will look these over with my client and get back to you,” Jason said, standing his ground. “Now if you will excuse us, we have work to do. Good day.”

Jason put the documents in his back pocket and went back to where he had been working before they were interrupted. Jerome flipped his shield back down and picked up his welding torch, thus ending any further conversation.

With nothing else to say or do, the two men left. As soon as they were out the door, Jason took the papers out of his pocket and started reading them under the one shop light. He could feel Jerome standing behind him, saying nothing.

When he finished reading, he turned to Jerome, who had a slight frown on his face.

“Yes, Sir, I am an attorney,” he answered the question before it could even be asked. “And from what I gather from these papers, a Mr. Bartholomew Fontaine is basically taking ownership of a piece of property in which you both have a share, in lieu of you paying taxes.”

“Yeah, I don’t have the money to pay the taxes,” Jerome admitted with a look of sadness shrouding his face. “I didn’t have it last year, and Uncle Bart covered for me.”

“Do you want to sell this property to him, or anyone else?”

“One of the last things my daddy said before he died was to hold on to that land. No, I don’t want to sell it, but I don’t have much of a choice.”

“You do have a choice... Sir,” Jason quickly added the Sir. “He is basically buying the land for what you would owe in taxes. Do you know what the property is worth?”

“I have no idea,” Jerome shrugged. It was clear he had already given up. “It’s been in the family for as long as I can remember. There isn’t even anything on it anymore. The old family home was torn down years ago, not that it was worth much anyway.”

“I think it might be a good idea to at least find out what fair market value is before you sign it away,” Jason said softly. “Do you know why your Uncle Bart wants this property?”

“I guess because it’s been in the family?”

“I don’t think so, Sir.” Jason said as he looked at the papers again. “I have a gut feeling there is more to it.”

“What can I do?” Jerome asked.

“I don’t know yet, but it is worth looking into. I don’t have a license to practice law in this state, but my cousin Luciana may be able to help you. Her law firm has an office here, so I think we should be able to ask them to represent you. She is more familiar with this type of law than I am. I specialize in family law, whereas she practices corporate law. Let me call her first.”

As if punctuating his last sentence, Jason’s stomach let out a loud growl.

Jerome chuckled. “I think I may need to feed you first.” He sighed heavily. “I guess we can call it a day and deal with this.”

“I think that might be wise, Sir.”

On their way back to the house, they stopped and picked up a few sandwiches at the corner store. Jason ordered a whole muffuletta for himself. He also picked up a couple of legal pads.

While they were eating, Jason read over the documents again, asking questions of Jerome occasionally. He also took notes on one of the legal pads. When he had finished the entire sandwich he leaned back, hands behind his head, closing his eyes.

“What the hell, are you sleeping?” Jerome asked.

“No, Sir, just thinking a minute.”

“Oh.”

“The more I think about this, the fishier it all sounds,” Jason said, his eyes still closed. “Has your uncle ever asked you to sell him your share before?”

“Yeah, several times, but more so this past year,” Jerome answered.

Jason opened his eyes and stood up. “Okay, time to give Ana a call.”

He went upstairs and came back moments later, a cell phone in hand. Punching in a number, he waited.

“Hello, Ana... I’m fine cousin. I’m in New Orleans.”

Even Jerome could hear the squeal on the other end.

“Calm down,” Jason smiled. “Listen, I have a favor to ask.” He paused as he listened. “It’s professional, don’t worry I’m not asking you to speak to Father. It’s about a case that I’m taking on here... Yes a case... Ready?”

Jason sat down, pulling the documents and the legal pad closer. “First of all, it was drawn up at Fontaine, Shuster and Fontaine, Attorneys at Law. Look into them. Something doesn’t feel right there.” Jason flipped open the legal document. “It is about some property...” Jason gave the information on the property, and answered a few detailed questions.

“Hey cousin, do you think you can get me into the offices of your firm down here? Maybe hook me up with an attorney?” Jason waited for what seemed like forever to Jerome. “Sure, just let me know. These guys are trying to rush this and there is a three-week deadline to work around... That would be perfect, Ana. I’ll look forward to hearing from you... Bye. Love you too.”

“Well?” asked Jerome.

“Well, my cousin is going to put her people to work on it first thing in the morning. They’re pretty good at tracking all kinds of information, so I have a feeling we should know a little something no later than Wednesday.”

“What if Uncle Bart shows back up before then?” Jerome frowned.

“You just leave him to me, Sir.”

“Um, Jason, you know I can’t pay for any of this, don’t you?”

“Sir, I’m only paying you back,” Jason said.

Jerome looked dumbfounded. “What are you talking about?”

“Your letting me be here, learning from you, is payment enough for me, Sir.”

“I’ve worked you like a mule, and you’re thanking me?”

“Yes, Sir.” Jerome bowed his head slightly. “You have no idea how much I’ve needed something like this, Sir. To be in a place with someone who doesn’t know me or my family. To be treated like an average person, it’s really a treat for me.”

Jerome still looked puzzled. “Just *who* is your family, Jason?”

“The Corleones, Sir. My father and uncle, Ana’s father, own a restaurant chain in Philadelphia and other parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.”

Jerome looked blankly at Jason.

“Sir, it is a multibillion dollar business, and they are renowned in the entire region. Needless to say, most everyone recognizes my family name. Ana was smart. She took her mother’s maiden name professionally.”

“I see.” Jerome thought for a moment. “I guess I should thank you.”

“No need, Sir,” Jason said softly. “I would like to know a little more about this case, if you don’t mind?”

“Sure, what do you want to know?” Jerome stood up and got them each a beer.

“Can you tell me how you came to own this property with your Uncle Bart?”

“Daddy inherited it from his father, my gran’daddy. Even though he and Bart never did really get along, especially after Bart swindled Daddy out of what should have been rightfully his, he felt that it was his family duty to leave

half of the property to him.” Jerome sat down and handed a beer to Jason before he went on. “Daddy figured that I would never have kids since I was queer, and David has kids, so the property would stay within the family that way.”

“What do you mean he swindled your daddy?”

“After Gran’daddy died, Uncle Bart made a big fuss about everything being left to Daddy. Daddy was the eldest of the two and that was just the way things was done back in the day.” Jerome paused a moment, that faraway look back on his face. “Anyways, Bart talked Daddy into giving him some property that our gran’ mama had. She was a Fuche, a very old family here in Louisiana and in Georgia. I don’t think my daddy had any idea that the property in Georgia was worth anything. All we’d ever heard was that it was just pasture land with the ruins of an old plantation house that had burned down eons ago. Not long after that, though, Daddy found out that a huge mall was being built on it and that Uncle Bart had known about it the whole time. It’s where the Mall of Gwinnett stands now. Uncle Bart is part owner of it and has a hundred year land lease on the thing.”

“Holy shit,” Jason said astonished. “Your Uncle Bart is as shady as some of my family.”

“Yeah, well that ain’t all of it neither.” Jerome snorted disgustedly. “That other piece of land is now part of the port in Lafourche Parish.”

Jason whistled. “I think that may be it.”

“What may be it?” Jerome scowled.

“There is something going on with that property I bet,” Jason said picking up his cell phone again.

“Hey, Ana... I got something else for you. Check and see if there has been any current activity on that property—any kind of surveys or something along those lines. It seems that dear old Uncle Bart has a history of high-end land deals.” Jason waited. “Yeah, that’s right, so check on that too. Thanks, Ana—love you too, bye.”

Jerome sat, his eyebrows raised.

“She’s going to look and see if your Uncle Bart or anyone in his firm has ever been accused of anything illegal,” Jason explained.

Jerome snorted. “I’ll be surprised if there hasn’t been, but Uncle Bart is very well connected, so I doubt anything will pan out on that. If there was, I’m sure it’s been covered up.” He stood up and stretched. “Go grab you a shower, boy, we’re goin’ out. After all this, I need some serious bar time.”

Walking away, Jerome pulled the sleeveless shirt off over his head, leaving Jason to admire the man’s fine physique.

CHAPTER FIVE

Monday morning came and went much like the previous two mornings. Jason was falling into the routine easily, enjoying the physicality of working with his body for the first time in his life. He felt stronger than ever before. His mind felt clear and he felt... lighter somehow.

The previous night, Jerome and he had gone to a local watering hole where a jazz ensemble was playing. It was one of the most relaxing evenings he'd had in a very long time. He had never really appreciated jazz before, but now he was a new convert. He couldn't wait to listen to more.

Jerome had finished the gate he had been working on and had moved on to the posts and frames for it. Whenever Jason was on the pull side of his bending, he would glance over and with his eyes lowered, would watch Jerome. He enjoyed seeing the flex of muscles in his forearms as he maneuvered the torch. Jerome's sweat-covered body glistened in the limited light. Jason wanted this man more than any man he had ever known. The way his muscle shirt slid to one side exposing the pierced nipple, surrounded by the light dusting of fur, made Jason's mouth water. Yes, he was physically attracted to him, that was a given. He was exactly Jason's type. But now that he had gotten to know Jerome better, he found that he was attracted to the man inside as well. Getting past the thick walls the man had erected, as Master Sampson had warned him, was going to take some work though.

Jerome was just shutting things down while Jason swept up the shop when his cell phone chirped. He looked at the incoming call and motioned for Jerome to come over.

"Hey, Ana, I didn't expect to hear from you today," Jason answered the call. "Where are you?" Jason looked at Jerome, his eyebrows raised. "Pick you up at the airport? Here?" He paused as he listened to Ana on the other end. "Um... Okay. Go grab a coffee. It'll take me a few minutes to get there... See you shortly."

When Jason looked at Jerome, his face mirrored the surprise that must have been on his own.

“Ana is here at the airport and wants me to pick her up.”

“I gathered that much, but why is she here?” Jerome asked.

“She said that she needed to talk to us face-to-face,” Jason informed him. “That’s all she would say on the phone.”

“Well, go and pick her up then.” Jerome shrugged.

“Um... Sir, I don’t know where the airport is.”

“Awww shit, I didn’t think of that.” Jerome looked down, dusting himself off as best he could as he walked towards the front of the shop. “Let’s go then.”

Since Jerome’s truck would be too crowded for three, Jason insisted that Jerome drive his BMW. After all, he knew where he was going and it was the height of rush hour. This way, Jerome could circle the passenger pickup area while Jason ran inside to retrieve his cousin.

Jerome pulled around for the third time before he saw Jason and a petite woman in a business suit. Jerome knew nothing about women’s fashions, but he knew quality when he saw it, and this lady was nothing if not quality, as was her suit.

He pulled up and Jason opened the back door to allow the small woman to slip into the back seat.

“Hi, I’m Luciana Rizzo,” she introduced herself, offering her hand to shake.

Jerome turned, and took the small manicured hand. “Hi, I’m Jerome Fontaine.”

“The client?” She asked, slightly puzzled.

“Yeah, I guess that would be me,” Jerome pondered, not having thought of himself in those terms before that moment.

Jason opened the trunk to stow Ana’s one bag before getting into the front seat.

“Ana, this is...”

Ana cut him off before he could finish. “We’ve met. He’s the client?”

“Ana, I’ll explain after we get you settled in.” Jason put her off, not exactly knowing how he was planning to explain this odd relationship. “Where are you staying?”

“Tonight, with you,” she said matter-of-factly. “The corporate suites are occupied and there wasn’t a hotel room to be had until tomorrow.”

“Bayou Boogaloo,” Jerome said. “I forgot that was this week.”

“The what?” Ana asked, her eyes wide.

“It’s like a big neighborhood party. Lots of live music, food and basically another reason to have a party,” Jerome explained as he blew the horn at a taxi.

“Anyway, you are going to have to put up with me until tomorrow. I have a room reserved at the Loews for tomorrow.” Ana had pulled out a compact and was touching up her makeup. “God, I need a drink. This way you can tell me everything,” she paused, looking at Jerome’s reflection in the rear-view mirror, “and I do mean *everything*.”

Jason looked almost pained as he glanced at Jerome. One look at Jason’s face and Jerome knew what he was thinking.

“Yeah, she can have the sofa I guess,” Jerome all but growled.

“I’ll take the sofa and Ana can have my bed,” Jason volunteered.

“Thanks, cousin,” Ana smiled, obviously very fond of Jason. “Tonight, drinks and dinner are on me. Lord knows I need to find something to use this expense account on!”

“You two go and have a good time,” Jerome said.

“Oh, no you don’t,” Ana chirped. “You’re the one I need to talk to the most. Besides, I’ve already made reservations at the Court of Two Sisters for seven thirty.”

“What?” Jerome did growl this time.

Ana looked at Jason, “Is he housebroken?”

Jason couldn't help himself but laugh, which earned him a glare from Jerome.

When they arrived at the house, Ana followed Jason as he carried her bag upstairs.

“Okay, spill it,” Ana demanded, looking up at her handsome cousin. “And what the hell is up with your hair? Why did you cut it all off?”

“Listen, Ana, I want to be honest with you...”

“As well you should, now what the fuck is going on with you? First, you quit your job. Then you basically run away from home and go to someplace out west. Now you're here in New Orleans with some man who barely seems civilized!”

“He's not all that bad. A little rough around the edges, but he's really a good man, Ana.”

“We'll see about that. What is going on with you, Jason? Talk to me, babe.”

“Ana, it's hard to explain. I just couldn't take it anymore. I hate being a lawyer. It felt like I was living a lie.” Jason sat on the edge of the bed, his head in his hands. “I had to make a change or I was going to kill myself.” He looked at his cousin and she knew he was serious.

“I knew you weren't happy, but I had no idea it was that bad, Jason.”

“It was that bad,” Jason sighed. “Father will never accept me for who I am. He'll never be able to come to terms with the fact that I'm gay. You should see the way he looks at me. I'll never be good enough for him, no matter what I do.”

“I know you're right. I *have* seen the way he looks at you,” Ana said, sitting next to him. “But that's on him, Jason. You're a good man and you deserve to be happy. I hope you know I'll support you any way I can, but can you at least clue me in as to what you're doing here?”

Jason tried to explain the dynamics of what he had learned in Arizona at the Power Exchange as best he could; leaving out the grittier details. He told

her how he had come to Jerome as a favor to Master Sampson. How he craved being of service to an older man.

“You mean like in that *Shades of 50* or whatever that book is?” Ana looked a little shocked, which was something quite alien for her.

“Well, in a way yes, but not exactly,” Jason blushed. “Ana, for the past three days, I have worked my ass off and I’ve never felt better in my life. I feel like I can truly breathe for the first time... ever.”

“Jason, if that’s what you want, then go for it.” She hugged the man to her. “Jason?”

“Yes?”

“You stink!”

Jason laughed. “Yeah, I do and I love it.” He laughed harder. “I’ll jump in the shower and then I’ll leave you to freshen up.”

“Okay. I’ll go downstairs while you’re getting ready.”

“Ana, don’t poke the bear.” Jason chuckled. “He may bite.”

“I think I can handle my own, thank you very much!”

“Yeah, that’s what scares me,” Jason frowned.

Downstairs, Ana walked right up to Jerome, who was standing at the edge of the counter drinking a beer. “You break his heart and I’ll scratch your eyes out.” She took the beer out of his hand and chugged it.

“Lady, I don’t know who you are, but you are in *my* house, drinking *my* beer and you have the nerve to threaten me?”

“I’ll threaten anyone who breaks Jason’s heart.”

Jerome froze. “Do what?”

“Are you completely dense?” Ana went to the refrigerator and grabbed two beers, handing one to Jerome. “He’s falling in love with you, asshole.”

“He’s only been here three days!”

“Doesn’t matter. Jason has been so miserable for so long that it was bound to happen. He needs to be loved more than anyone I’ve ever known. If you can’t do that, then you need to send him on his way. Got it?”

Jerome just stood there in shock.

“Listen, I know Jason better than anyone else, and he is one of the good ones, and right now he’s more relaxed than I’ve ever seen him... ever.” Ana softened her tone. “So if he loves you and you can make him happy, then I’m all for it. Just don’t hurt him is all I’m asking.”

They both heard the shower turn off upstairs.

“I need to grab a shower.” Jerome drank deeply of the beer in his hand and left.

Ana smiled knowingly. *He may not know it, but Jerome Fontaine has feelings for Jason too.*

Jason and Ana were sitting on the sofa catching up when Jerome reentered the room. Ana let out a low wolf whistle. “My, but you do clean up well,” she complimented.

Jerome blushed as he wiped the palms of his hands on the tan linen pants. Jason couldn’t help but notice that the blue-gray golf shirt matched his eyes, and the blue blazer made his shoulders seem a mile wide. He licked his lips as he noticed that Jerome was hanging to the left. *Really* hanging.

“Shall we?” Ana asked, as she stood up. “I’m starved.”

Having been seated and with dinner ordered, Ana leaned forward, focusing on Jerome. “Let me tell you what I have found out, and then you can fill in the blanks. First off, that property that your Uncle Bart wants you to sell him has been tested and came back positive for a huge natural gas reserve. In other words, he stands to make a fortune off it.” She paused for a moment, letting that sink in.

“That son of a bitch,” Jerome snarled and drained the bourbon in front of him. “I’m not surprised; that is the sad part.”

“It gets better,” Ana smiled none too sweetly. “That property that Port Lafourche is now sitting on... isn’t legally his and never has been.”

“What do you mean?” Jason asked.

“That property belonged to a Fuche family, which was Jerome’s great grandfather’s, as best as I can determine. His will clearly states that only direct heirs could inherit. Since his only son was killed during WWI, the only surviving heir was Jerome’s grandmother, his *mother’s* mother. Following so far?”

Jerome and Jason looked at each other as they nodded that they did.

“Okay, there is an old law that deals with Inherent Land Trust. Boiled down, it means that only a blood descendant can inherit and own the property. In this case, old man Fuche set it up where the eldest male child would be sole owner until death, whereas it would then go to that descendant’s eldest male child, and so on and so forth. It would only go to a female if there were no males, which was the case with Jerome’s grandmother.” She watched the two men. Jerome’s mouth tightened. “Jerome, your father had no right to sell that property, which he probably didn’t even realize, *but* your Uncle *did*.”

“How could that happen?” Jason asked.

“Ah, this is where it gets really interesting.” Ana took a deep breath before she continued. “Dear old Uncle Bart knew that he had no real legal rights to the property, but he finagled it to where it appeared that he became Jerome’s trustee, which in turn made him the trustee for the property.”

“What?” Jerome almost yelled partially standing up. “He did what?”

“All these years, *legally*, it has been on paper that you, Jerome Fontaine, are the rightful owner of that property and that your dear sweet Uncle has only been the trustee acting on your behalf,” Ana said grinning like a Cheshire cat. She settled back into her chair and picked up her wine glass.

Jerome’s face was so red it looked like he might explode. His fists were balled up in front of him.

“I’m going to wring his neck,” Jerome ground out between clenched teeth. “Daddy worked like a dog, and when he got sick Uncle Bart never lifted a finger to help. I’m still paying the medical bills from when he was in the hospital and Uncle Bart never said a fucking word. Now, he’s trying to swindle me like he did my father? Wait ’til I get my hands on him.”

“Whoa there, cowboy,” Ana said. “Settle down. I’m also having that property in Georgia researched. If it has the same conditions attached to it, and Georgia’s law holds like it does here, then that may come into play as well.”

“What are we going to do?” Jason asked, smiling. He knew his cousin well enough to know that she had already devised a plan to get good ol’ Uncle Bart.

“We need to buy some time. There is still a lot of digging that we need to do,” Ana said as Jason reached over and ate one of her snails. “The main thing is not to spook him and give him a chance to destroy any records or go hiding money somewhere.”

“I don’t have much time,” Jerome said, before popping a fried oyster into his mouth. “Them taxes are due in a few weeks and I don’t have the money.”

“Yes, you do,” Jason said. “I’ll loan you the money for the taxes. Once all this is settled, you can pay me back then.”

“I’m not taking your money,” Jerome grumbled.

“You can and you will,” Ana said. “And that is final. I’ll draw up a promissory note this week, you sign it, and you take the money, *and* you pay those taxes. This will really throw ol’ Uncle Bart off the track and perhaps make him do something stupid. Make sure you let him know that Jason is your new boyfriend and that will, hopefully, throw him a curve. Also, you should allude to the fact that Jason isn’t licensed to practice here and has no interest in returning to practicing law anyway. This is an important key.”

Jerome started to say something, but one look at Ana’s face told him it would be of no use. Looking at Jason, who was staring down at his plate, Jerome could see a slight smile on his face. He knew that he would take the loan whether he liked it or not.

They had just finished dinner and Ana had paid the bill with a corporate credit card, when she stiffened.

Jason looked at her closely. “Ana, what’s wrong?”

“I’ll tell you outside. Let’s get out of here.”

Ana didn’t wait for her two dinner companions as she headed out the front door of the restaurant. She was pacing in front of the door on the sidewalk when Jerome and Jason came out.

“Now what the hell was that all about?” Jason asked.

“Charles.”

“Your Charles? Charles Whitcomb?”

“No, *not* my Charles anymore,” Ana hissed between clenched teeth.

“Oh. Sorry to hear that. I thought you two had something going,” Jason said sympathetically.

“Yeah, so did I,” Ana spat. “That was until he took a case right out from under me, once I had done all the work on it, and then dumped me, taking all the credit. I have a feeling that was his motive for seeing me all along.”

“Ouch, that’s harsh,” Jason said. “I’m sorry, Ana.”

“Yeah, well I should have listened to you. You told me to be careful... that there wasn’t something quite right about him.” Ana slipped her arm into Jason’s, then pulled Jerome close and did the same with him. Looking at Jerome she said, “Jason has always had like a sixth sense about people. He can unfailingly pick out the bad ones.” She smiled up at Jerome.

Jerome raised his eyebrows, not missing the not so subtle message.

Trying to quickly change the subject, Jason asked, “So, now what?”

“Oh, I’ve got a few tricks up my sleeve,” Ana smirked. “Of course, with Charles here I may need to mix things up a bit, at least until I find out what *he’s* doing here.”

“I’ve never known you to run from anything, Ana,” Jason said, stunned.

“I’m not running from anything or anyone. I just don’t trust that bastard,” Ana said, as if Jason had lost his mind. “The last thing I want is for him to spill the beans on why I’m here is all. The quieter we can keep this thing, the better off we’ll be. You know how lawyers are. They all gossip like old women.”

CHAPTER SIX

“If you don’t mind, gentlemen,” Ana started, as they walked into the house, “I’m going to call it a night. I’ve had a long day and these shoes are killing me.” To prove the point, she kicked them off.

“Yeah, I’m kind of beat myself,” Jason added as he covered his mouth, yawning.

“Goodnight then cousin,” Ana said as she kissed Jason on the cheek. “Goodnight, Jerome,” she also reached up, her hand around his neck, and pulled him down to kiss him as well, much to his obvious surprise.

Ana picked up her shoes and shuffled off upstairs.

Jerome slipped the blazer off. “Is she always so...?”

“Brash?” Jason finished for him, smiling.

“Yeah, I guess that word works.”

“Pretty much,” Jason said fondly. “It would be ill-advised to make her mad. She is pretty fierce when she’s pissed.”

“I can see that.” Jerome shook his head.

“Is there a spare pillow and blanket I may use, Sir?” Jason asked respectfully.

“Yeah, hold on a sec.” Jerome walked towards the master bedroom in the back of the house.

A few moments later Jason heard Jerome call his name. Having never been in Jerome’s bedroom, he was curious to see it. He walked back and found Jerome standing bare to the waist, having taken off his shirt.

“You’ll bunk in with me,” he said as he removed his socks. “That sofa ain’t at all comfortable. Besides, you’re as tall as I am and trust me; it’s too small to stretch out on.”

“Sir?” Jason became a little alarmed. He was afraid that his attraction to Jerome would become evident being that close to the man.

“It’s a king-sized bed,” Jerome said simply as he dropped his pants, leaving him standing there in a pair of boxers. “There is more than enough room.”

“I don’t mind the sofa, Sir.”

“Nonsense. I need you fresh for work tomorrow. You won’t be much good if you don’t get some decent sleep.”

With that, he went into the bathroom. Jason could hear him pissing into the toilet. He didn’t seem to have much of a choice in the matter. Jason quickly stripped down to his own boxers, folding the rest of his clothes and carefully placing them on a chair in the corner. He then slipped into the right side of the big bed. He had noticed the alarm clock and a book were placed next to the bed on the left side, so he took the right.

Jerome came out of the bathroom and stretched. The muscles in his arms and shoulders bulged, his heavy pectorals stretched tight. Jason could feel the muscles in his own stomach constrict with want. With his back to the bed, Jerome dropped the boxers, giving Jason a full view of his spectacular ass. A light dusting of hair feathered in towards the center, becoming a little heavier towards the valley of his tight butt.

Jerome set the alarm and turned off the light before he crawled into bed. He rolled to his side, pulled the sheet up and quietly said, “Night.”

“Night, Sir.”

Jason was so conscious of Jerome’s body lying next to him in the same bed, that he couldn’t fall asleep. Only after he heard Jerome start to snore, was he able to relax enough to drift off. Odd as it may seem, he found the snoring, which was a little loud, soothing.

Jason woke up with a start. Curled up behind him was Jerome, his right arm around Jason, holding him close. He felt Jerome’s warm skin against his back and his dick nestled in the crack of his ass. Even though Jason had kept his boxers on, he could feel the heat from the man’s groin.

Jason stiffened. He felt his own dick, which was semihard already, spring to a full, throbbing erection. How was he going to deal with this? Jason carefully tried to slide out towards the edge of the bed, but Jerome's arm only tightened around him, holding him closer. He ground his hips into Jason, pushing his hard dick against him, sighing heavily in his sleep.

He sighed to himself, recognizing that he was good and stuck. As much as he enjoyed being this close to Jerome, he was afraid. Afraid... afraid of what Jerome might think or do when he realized what was going on. He didn't have long to worry about it.

Jerome's alarm clock started beeping, rousing the older man. Jason felt him stiffen behind him as he woke up. Jason played possum, hoping that Jerome would just get up and not mention it.

"I know you're awake," Jerome huffed, his voice close to Jason's ear. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to invade your space."

Jerome rolled out of bed and left the room. Jason heard him start to make coffee. Jason closed his eyes, letting out a deep breath. *If he only knew*, Jason thought.

He crawled out of bed slowly and went to the bathroom. Just as he flushed the toilet, Jerome walked in, still naked. Jason tried to avert his eyes but failed miserably. Jerome was indeed hung, and hung well. His big swinging dick, still slightly plumped from his earlier erection, was uncut and sported a Prince Albert piercing.

"Coffee's ready," Jerome grumped as he started to urinate.

"Thank you, Sir," Jason said, hastily leaving the bathroom.

He poured himself a cup of coffee before going upstairs to get dressed for the day. He also took a cup up for Ana.

"Morning," Ana said stretching in bed. "Sleep well on that sofa?"

"I... uh... didn't sleep on the sofa," Jason said, as he pulled a jock and socks out of a drawer.

"Ooohhh, I see," Ana giggled. "How was it?"

“How was what?” Jason tried to play ignorant, even though he knew what she was hinting at.

“Oh, come on, Jason, you know? Was he *good*?”

“We just slept, Ana, nothing more.”

“Well that’s no fun,” she said, getting out of bed wearing an oversized T-shirt with “BITCH” printed on it in large, pink letters.

Jason didn’t answer. He went into the bathroom, taking his clothes with him. When he came out, Ana was sitting on the bed, coffee in hand.

“Thanks for the coffee, Cuz.”

“Welcome.”

“Jason?”

Jason stopped, turning towards her. “Yeah?”

“You’re going to have to make the first move you know?”

“What?”

“He won’t do it. He’s afraid,” Ana said softly.

“Afraid? Afraid of what?”

“He’s been hurt, Jason, and I’d say pretty badly. You’re going to have to be the one to take the next step. He won’t do it.”

Jason sighed, his head hanging. “I don’t know if I can, Ana.”

“Sure you can. Take the bull by the horns,” she snickered. “Remember what Momma always said? If you don’t ask, you don’t get?”

“Yeah, I remember.”

“Okay. If this is what you want, Jason... go for it.”

Jason walked over to the petite woman, her curly black hair all tousled from bed, leaned over and kissed the top of her head. “Ana, you always know how to cut right down to the bone. It’s what I love about you. Thanks.”

“Anytime.” She grinned, before slurping the coffee.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jerome and Jason were sitting at the breakfast bar sipping coffee while they waited for Ana. When she finally be-bopped down the stairs in a pair of jeans, tennis shoes, and a Cornell T-shirt, they both sat there with their mouths hanging open. Her hair was loose, and the tight curls bounced as she walked. She had minimum makeup on, which made her look very young.

“Ana?” Jason questioned.

“I’m going to use the library at Tulane so I thought I would try and fit in,” she grinned. “Like it?” She asked, twirling around.

Jerome only scowled, turning back to his coffee.

“Yeah, I guess,” Jason looked at her skeptically.

“I made some calls, and Charles is in town with one of the senior partners on some big hush-hush case. The last thing I want to do is run into him at the office, at least until I know what he’s up to.” She poured herself some more coffee. “This way I can get the work done that I need to do and not see him.”

“Whatever works I guess,” Jason said, sipping his coffee.

“So... Jerome...?” Ana sidled up next to Jerome.

“Uh-oh,” Jason muttered.

“Hush you,” Ana directed at Jason. “Jerome, may I ask a teensy-weensy favor?”

Jerome looked at Ana, one eyebrow raised and still scowling. “What?”

“Do you think I could *possibly* take advantage of your *generous* hospitality for a few more days?” Ana almost cooed.

Jason was barely able to hold it together. He’d seen Ana in action before and knew that Jerome didn’t stand a chance.

“It’s just that Charles is also staying at the Loews and I really don’t want him to know I’m here. Pleeeaaasse,” she said sweetly, gently rubbing his nearly naked shoulder. “And all the other hotels are booked solid.”

Jerome squinted his eyes at her then looked at Jason, who was doing his best to concentrate on his coffee, carefully keeping his face blank.

He looked at Ana, then said, “No.” He then turned back to his own coffee.

Ana stood there with her mouth open. Even Jason looked dumbfounded.

Recovering quickly, Ana, one hand on her hip, the other holding the cup of coffee, asked, “What? I’m helping you out pro bono and you say no? What kind of asshole are you?”

“I’m the kind of asshole who doesn’t care for such ploys from the female persuasion. Now if you can ask me like a fucking adult woman, instead of this little coy, pretentious, prima donna, the answer might be different.”

Caught totally off guard, Ana stood there completely shocked.

Jason sucked in air before he totally lost it. No longer able to hold back, he busted out laughing, tears streaming down his face. Jerome only glanced at Jason, a smirky grin on his face.

When Ana did recover, she glared at Jason and kicked him in the shin.

“Ow!” Jason howled, one hand holding his shin, the other his stomach. “Oh, Ana, you should have seen your face. That was priceless. I’ve never seen you so shot down.” Jason continued to laugh.

Jerome turned to face Ana fully. “Now, you want to try that again?”

Ana huffed, furious that she’d been so openly put down. “Jerome, may I continue to stay here in your home while working on *your* case?”

“Yes, you may, Ana.”

Jerome put his coffee cup down, walked over to a drawer and found a spare key.

“Here, come and go as you wish. Only rule is that if you drink all the beer, you replace it. You drink all my booze, you replace it. You wake me up when I’m trying to sleep, you’re outta here. Got it?”

“Yes, I got it,” Ana said through clenched teeth, snatching the key from Jerome’s hand.

“Good, now we have work to do. Come on, boy, time to get a move on.” Jerome rinsed his cup and put it in the dishwasher, something Jason had not seen him do since he’d arrived. Jason scrambled to do the same, then followed Jerome towards the door.

“Jason, I need to borrow your car,” Ana asked before he could leave.

“Sure, here are the keys,” he said tossing them to her.

“She sure don’t ask for much does she?” Jerome muttered, walking out the door.

“Barbarian!” Ana called after the two, just before the door closed.

Walking down the sidewalk, just past the house, Jason said, “Oh, Sir, that was priceless. I have never heard anyone talk to Ana like that before. Not even her own father.”

“That’s probably what’s wrong with her,” Jerome stated flatly. “Probably could use a good turning over the knee too.”

Jason actually stumbled. His mouth went dry.

“Walk much?” Jerome glowered.

Jason was so thankful he was wearing the jock strap at that particular moment. The thought of being over Jerome’s knee getting a bare-handed spanking made him instantly hard. Remembering the closeness that he’d shared with Jerome just that morning made him start to leak precum. Remembering the hardness against his ass and the heat that radiated from Jerome made his dick twitch. Remembering the spicy smell of him so close, and the image of his big swinging dick, made his mouth water. All of these thoughts came rushing back to him, almost overwhelming him. Then he suddenly realized that with Ana staying, he would more than likely be sleeping with Jerome again. At first he was thrilled, but then started to panic. *What if?...* then remembering what Ana told him, “Take the bull by the horns.” *Perhaps she was right* he thought to himself.

Before the end of the day, Jason was again exhausted, but very pleased with himself. He had finally finished all the pieces that needed to be cut and

bent into the desired shapes. He was so happy he actually did a little happy dance, making Jerome stare at him like he'd lost his mind.

Walking over, Jerome picked up several pieces and inspected them. "Not bad, boy, not bad at all. I actually thought that this might keep you busy for the rest of the week, and you've already gotten it done. Good job."

"Thank you, Sir." Jason smiled.

"Why don't we knock off a little early," Jerome suggested. "I'm feeling a bit better about where we are. Besides, it's a little late in the day to get you started on something else."

"Okay, Sir." Jason was all smiles.

On the walk home, Jerome mumbled something about waiting for Ana before going out for dinner.

"Sir, if you don't mind, why don't I just cook dinner?"

"Cook? You can cook?"

"Remember, my family owns a chain of restaurants and I am Italian after all. All Italians cook."

Jerome shrugged his shoulders. "Sure, fine by me. We'll have to go to the store though. As you know, there ain't shit at the house. I *don't* cook."

"Is there a decent Italian grocery or deli around?"

"Yeah, there's Central Grocery over on Decatur Street," Jerome answered.

"Let's go there then."

Jerome watched as Jason shopped for the items he wanted for dinner. He had no idea what Jason was planning on making, and he didn't ask. By the time they left, each was carrying five heavy bags of groceries.

Jason saw a cab and hailed it. "I don't want that butter to melt before we get home," he explained to Jerome. Jerome only nodded.

Jason unpacked the groceries on the counter, seemingly very happy.

“Um... while you’re doing that I’m gonna go up to the office and get some of the paper work done. I’ve put it off long enough.”

“Okay, Sir,” Jason smiled.

As Jerome plowed through the bookkeeping, which he detested, he could hear Jason downstairs, whistling and humming intermittently. Shaking his head, he concentrated on the task in front of him. The next thing he knew there was a delicious smell gliding up the stairs interrupting his thoughts. His curiosity got the better of him, so he went down to check it out.

“Hi, Sir,” Jason greeted him. He went to the fridge, got Jerome a beer, opened it and gave it to him.

“Thanks, boy,” Jerome took a long drink. “Smells good. I can’t remember the last time a full meal was cooked in this kitchen.” In fact he could, but he wasn’t going down that road.

“I think it’ll be good,” Jason said. “I called Ana and she should be here shortly. We can eat when she gets here if that’s all right with you, Sir.”

“Yeah, that’ll work.” He couldn’t make heads or tails out of what Jason was doing. “Best I just stay outta the way. Let me know when you’re ready.”

It wasn’t long before he heard Ana come in, followed by a female squeal, something he definitely wasn’t used to. Grimacing, Jerome shook his head and stood up. “Enough of this shit for one day.” He closed the ledger book.

“Oh, good, I was just about to call you, Sir,” Jason beamed. “Have a seat,” he indicated the vacant barstool.

Jerome sat down, looking at the large platter on the counter. Jason handed him a balloon glass of red wine.

“Um, I’m not all that fond of wine,” Jerome started.

“Tonight you are,” Ana smiled. “You’ll see. Just try it.”

Jerome took a sip, but wasn’t that impressed. He shrugged. “Yeah, not much into it.”

“Here,” Ana picked up a piece of Prosciutto and a piece of something that looked like fruit. “Eat this *then* take a sip of wine.”

Jerome did. His eyebrow shot up. “Yeah, that makes a difference. What is all this?”

“Antipasto,” Jason said as he popped a fig in his mouth.

“Prosciutto ham, fresh figs, baby mozzarella, fresh tomatoes with basil and bruschetta,” Ana said, pointing at each thing on the large dish.

Jerome tasted everything while sipping the wine. “This is really very good,” he admitted, setting the glass down.

“Thank you, Sir. I hoped you would like it,” Jason smiled, a smile that Ana didn’t miss.

“Is this dinner?” Jerome asked.

Ana laughed. “No silly. It’s like an appetizer, part salad.”

“Oh,” Jerome said simply.

“We eat this before the main course,” Ana explained. “If we were eating back home this would be the first course of, like, seven!”

“Seven?” Jerome’s eyebrows flew up.

“Italians are big on dinners. They can take all night,” Jason replied, a flash of pain on his face as he remembered being tortured by his father during such meals.

“I can’t wait for dinner, Jason,” Ana followed by popping a piece of fig into her mouth. “Mmm... can’t believe you found fresh figs.”

Jason smiled brightly. “Eat up, dinner is almost ready.”

The three continued to munch on the platter of appetizers. Before it was done, Jason told them to take a seat at the table. Although small, the table was comfortable enough for three.

Once Ana and Jerome were seated, Jason came out with two steaming plates.

“Oh, Jason, you didn’t!” Ana clapped her hands together as Jason set a plate in front of her. “One of my favorites.”

Jerome looked at the plate, the heavenly smell blasting him in the face.

“Hope you like it,” Jason said looking at Jerome.

Ana took a big bite. “Oh... my... God...! Jason, this is better than Mama’s and I didn’t think that was possible. How did you do it?”

“What is it?” Jerome asked, just before taking a bite. His eyes lit up.

“You like it?” Jason asked, still not having picked up his fork, having come back with his own plate.

“Hell yeah, now what the fuck is it?”

“It’s Veal Marsala. A traditional Italian dish, usually reserved for special occasions,” Ana answered him. “And trust me, this is the best I’ve ever had, and I’ve had my share to compare it to.”

“Maybe could have used a little more thyme,” Jason commented.

“Are you kidding? This is perfect, Jason.” Ana swallowed a bite. “How you made it better than Mama’s is what I want to know! Ohhh, wait until I tell her!”

“The secret is marinating the veal in the wine for at least thirty minutes before cooking it,” he smiled.

“This really is excellent, boy,” Jerome complimented, speaking with his mouth full.

“How’s the wine now?” Ana smirked at him.

“Okay, I admit it really is good with this food,” Jerome reluctantly conceded.

The rest of the meal consisted mostly of Jerome devouring his food, having seconds, and listening to Ana and Jason reminisce about their childhood, each telling stories on the other. Jerome learned a lot about Jason over dinner.

Jason insisted on cleaning up, not letting either of the other two help at all. They sat at the bar, watching Jason and talking. Ana coaxed Jerome into talking about New Orleans. It was Jason's turn to learn more about Jerome, and he soaked it up like a sponge.

“Who's ready for dessert?”

“You made dessert too?” Jerome asked, surprised.

“Oh, goody, I can't wait to see what you came up with,” Ana said excitedly.

“Voila!” Jason pulled out a tart, placing it in front of the two.

“No... you didn't?” Ana sat there with her mouth open.

“Yep,” Jason grinned like a big kid. Seeing the look on Jerome's face he said, “It's a strawberry jam tart,” he explained.

“I'm going to gain ten pounds just tonight,” Ana pouted. “Hell, it'll be worth it.”

Jason cut the tart and poured everyone a cup of coffee, adding cream and sugar to each.

Ana sat there shaking her head, “Jason, you have outdone yourself.”

Jerome, his mouth full, whipped cream at the corner, said, “What she said,” pointing to Ana with his fork.

They all laughed, enjoying the sugary treat.

“Learn anything more today, Cuz?” Jason asked as he rinsed the dessert plates before putting them in the dishwasher.

“Not a whole lot. I found out that all the cases that dealt with that lineage heredity Land Trust thing stood with the original intent. Oh, I did find out that Georgia will also uphold the same law,” Ana answered. “I've got someone working on tracking the ownership on that. Seems there is a lot of dodging and weaving going on there—leases from outside sources that lead to another lessee. It is common when trying to cover something up.”

Jason nodded and Jerome growled.

“Oh, I did find out one new thing,” Ana said, finishing her coffee. “The property in Georgia was linked to another property in Rome, Georgia.”

“What?” Jerome stood up looking at Ana. “Rome, *Georgia*?”

“Yes, is that important, Jerome?” Ana asked.

“I don’t believe it,” Jerome said, looking shocked as he sat back down on the barstool. “I thought that was just a story Gran’daddy used to tell. Hell, I thought he was talking about Rome, like in Italy.”

Ana retrieved the legal pad off the coffee table. “Tell me everything you remember, Jerome.”

“Gran’daddy used to tell me stories, you know, family stories. I was no more than eight or so. I never believed most of them, that one in particular.” Jerome sat looking stunned.

“Go on,” Ana prodded.

“Well, he used to go on about his mama being raised in a big mansion in Rome and how well off they were—that they were a well-known family in the area.”

“It was your great-grandmother who was a Fuche, so that makes perfect sense,” Ana pondered. “You know, it could very well be that whomever it was that set up the terms of the will did so on all the properties. I’ll get Diane to look into it. I sure wish we had the original will. I need to see if I can get a copy of it.”

“Diane?” Jason asked. “Diane Bayley?”

“Yes,” Ana smiled.

“If anyone can find out, it’s that woman,” Jason laughed.

Jerome looked puzzled.

Ana explained, “Diane is like a pit bull with a bone. She never gives up, and she can find a needle in a haystack.”

Jerome nodded, still looking a little stunned.

Ana stood up, placed her hand on his shoulder and said, “Don’t worry, Jerome, we’re going to get to the bottom of all this. Trust me.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Jerome yawned and stretched, flexing his biceps and broad shoulders, extending his arms to either side of his body. Jason instantly got hard. “Need to get to bed, boy. Tomorrow is a work day.”

“Yes, Sir,” Jason acknowledged. “Need to go brush my teeth and wash my face.” What Jason actually needed was a few minutes away to let his raging hormones settle down.

With one foot on the stairs, Jason heard Jerome calling to him from down the hall, “Might as well just bring all your stuff down here. At least while that *woman* is here.”

Jason froze for a moment. *Move his stuff? In with Jerome?* A feeling like electricity coursed through his entire body. He took the steps two at a time. Walking into the bathroom, he picked up his toiletries then headed into the bedroom to grab some clothes for the next day. He saw Ana sitting on the edge of the bed talking on the phone.

Jason got what he needed from the dresser. Before he could leave the room, Ana ended her call.

“Jason, your father is threatening to cut you out of his will if you don’t go home,” Ana said softly.

He turned with his arms full. “That’s his prerogative.”

“Aren’t you concerned?”

“No, not really,” Jason shrugged. “It’s time I started living *my* life, Ana. Not what my father thinks my life should be. I will never be able to be what he wants me to be, and I’ve come to terms with that.”

“What about the money?”

“Ana, I have my own money, I don’t need his.” Jason said stated matter-of-factly. “You know that Grandfather gave each of us grandkids a trust. What you may not know is that I actually inherited two trusts. Hell, I didn’t even know about it myself until my twenty-eighth birthday.”

Ana looked shocked. “Why did you get two?”

“He left me a letter explaining that he wanted me to be able to be who I wanted to be. That he saw things in me that he had seen in himself, but that he was never able to follow his own dreams.” Jason was transported to another time, a time when he would spend hours talking with his grandfather, enjoying their special relationship.

“You were always his favorite,” Ana smiled. “It was as if when you were around, no one else really mattered.”

“Really? I never noticed.”

“Of course not,” Ana smiled softly. “The two of you were always so caught up with each other.”

“I think Grandfather knew I was gay,” Jason reminisced.

“Could be,” Ana said.

“Anyway, that was the catalyst for me leaving Philly,” Jason said, smiling sadly. “It was time I did what was going to make me happy.”

“I’m glad, Jason, I really am.”

“Anyway... goodnight. Thanks Cuz.”

“Goodnight, Jason.”

Jason brushed his teeth and put away his few toiletries. Placing his clothes for the next day on the chair in the corner of the bedroom, he took a deep breath. He stripped off his T-shirt, hesitated, then removed his running shorts, the clothes he had put on after his post-work shower.

Jerome was already in bed and Jason could feel his eyes on him. Turning, he walked to the bed and climbed in.

“Night,” Jerome said, turning off the light. He turned his back to Jason, staying close to the edge of the bed.

Jason could reach his arm out, fully extended, and still not be able to touch Jerome, he was so far away on the large, king sized bed.

As he lay there, Jason concentrated on his breathing until he fell asleep.

Sometime during the night, just like the night before, Jason awoke with Jerome snuggled up behind him, his big arm holding him tight. As before, first Jason's body stiffened, and then he relaxed, enjoying the close contact. He loved the smell of Jerome, the heaviness of his big arm across his waist, his furry chest against his back. What Jason enjoyed the most however, was the security he felt while Jerome held him. He felt safe. He almost snickered when the thought of Jerome and his father going toe to toe flashed through his mind. Jason had a feeling that his old man might actually lose that fight.

Jason lay there, his eyes growing heavy again, just drifting back to sleep, when Jerome's hips suddenly pushed up harder into his backside. The heat coming from his groin felt intense. Jason remembered that same sensation from the night before. He wondered what it was that made that part of Jerome's body so much warmer than the rest of him.

"Toby," Jerome muttered in his sleep, pushing his semihard dick into the cleft of Jason's ass, pulling him in even tighter.

Toby? Who the hell is Toby? Jason wondered silently.

That thought quickly left his mind when Jerome's dick became fully erect and began jabbing him in the butt. Reaching behind, he took Jerome's fat dick and maneuvered it between his thighs. Jerome proceeded to hump him silently, using the friction between his legs. Jerome gripped Jason's hip as he thrust, but then suddenly stopped, mumbled, and was still.

Jason was very confused. Why did he stop? Once Jerome's grip loosened, he slid out from under his hand and slowly moved down the bed, under the light covers. Taking Jerome's still erect dick in his hand, he leaned over and slowly licked the head, tasting the saltiness of the dribble of precum he found there. Wanting more, Jason opened his mouth and took in the first few inches of Jerome's cock. He slowly bobbed until he had most of Jerome's uncut dick sliding easily in and out of his mouth.

Jerome began gently thrusting upwards, meeting Jason midway. He groaned, and his hands went to either side of Jason's head as his lunges into

the warm wetness of Jason's mouth increased in intensity. His hands gradually tightened on Jason's head as his hip action became a bit erratic. Jason could feel the swelling and further hardening of Jerome's cock, and knew that he was about to get a mouthful of the hot man's spunk.

Hips jerking and then before long, Jerome erupted. Although Jason was prepared to receive the load, he had not counted on the velocity, nor the amount. Jason gagged once, a little escaping his mouth and sliding down his chin. Jerome continued pumping out a huge load, and Jason was forced to swallow several times in order to catch it all. Just as Jerome's cock started to relax, his body stiffened and he pushed Jason roughly away and jumped out of bed.

"What the fuck are you doin'?" Jerome's face looked furious from what little Jason could see from the bit of daylight that was creeping in through the miniblinds.

Jason, caught off guard and slightly freaked out, had also jumped out of the bed, his own erection sticking out in front of him through the fly of his boxers, completely forgotten.

Jerome flew across the bed towards him then slammed him against the wall, causing Jason's head to bounce back from the body slam. "Don't you *ever* fuckin' do that again, you git me, boy?" Jerome screamed into Jason's shocked face.

The alarm clock suddenly going off had Jerome stomping back around the bed in a rage. He yanked it from the nightstand and threw it against the bathroom door, shattering it completely. Stepping over the mess, he stomped off to the kitchen, leaving Jason stunned and shaking.

Desperately trying to clear his head, Jason began to clean up the shattered alarm clock. Stepping around him, Jerome stalked back into the room and silently got dressed. Having picked up most of the mess, Jason took it to the trashcan in the kitchen.

Jerome passed by him already fully dressed and poured himself a cup of coffee into a to-go cup. As he walked to the door, he said, “I don’t need you today,” and left the house.

Jason’s face was burning, first with embarrassment, and then with fury. *How fucking dare he?* Jason could hear Ana moving about upstairs, getting ready to start her day. *Now what do I do?*

He poured himself a cup of coffee and went back to Jerome’s bedroom to finish cleaning up the mess. He dressed in the clothes that he’d laid out the night before then called Master Sampson.

Jason explained what had happened that morning. At first, Jason intended to go to the shop anyway, whether Jerome wanted him to or not, but Master Sampson talked him out of that. He said to give Jerome the day to calm down and think about what he’d done. He also reiterated that Jason needed to give Jerome more time. Jason hadn’t even been there a full week yet, and he expected that it would take Jerome longer than that to get used to him. Resigning himself to doing as Master Sampson suggested, Jason went into the kitchen, deciding to give it a thorough cleaning.

“Morning, Jason,” Ana said, walking into the kitchen in search of coffee.

“Morning,” Jason replied flatly.

“What was all the yelling about?” Ana asked, taking her first sip of coffee.

“Oh, nothing really. Don’t worry about it.”

“Mm, okay... Listen, I need to borrow your car again if you don’t mind.” Ana was dressed professionally today in an impeccably tailored suit. “I’m going to go over to the court house in Lafourche Parish. See if I can’t get a copy of Jerome’s grandfather’s will.”

“Sure, no problem,” Jason said. “You’ve still got the keys.”

“Okay, I’ll see you later then,” she said, walking towards the door.

“Ana?”

She turned back around, briefcase and coffee cup in hand. “Yes?”

“You spill that coffee in my car and I will shave your head!”

“Phft, I’d like to see you try!” Then she was gone, leaving Jason alone in the house for the first time.

Getting busy, Jason cleaned out one of the bottom cabinets, pulling everything out. He quickly realized that there was some serious kitchen equipment stored away.

“If Jerome doesn’t cook, then what is he doing with all this stuff?” Jason asked, realizing he was talking to himself.

There was a professional-grade food processor, a Kitchen Aid mixer, pizza stone and several other gourmet-type gadgets. Everything was in pristine condition, and really didn’t need cleaning.

Curious, Jason went through all the cabinets in the kitchen. It was a fairly large kitchen and he was astounded by all the equipment he found. “Someone was a serious cook here at one time or another. Could it have been this Toby?”

At eleven o’clock, his stomach grumbled. He hadn’t had anything to eat yet, since he’d gotten used to Jerome providing breakfast at the shop. He found some of the leftovers from the night before, and nibbled on the prosciutto and figs. It was enough to hold him over until he could go out and get something more substantial.

“The best way to a man’s heart is through the stomach, I’ve heard,” he said to the empty house.

He went upstairs, dug out his laptop, and changed into more appropriate attire. Sitting at the kitchen counter, he booted up his computer and did a search for oyster recipes. Knowing how much Jerome liked the local favorite, he found a few recipes and bookmarked them.

“All right, Mr. Jerome Fontaine, you’re in for a treat tonight!”

Finding another spare key, he left the house in a much better mood. The first thing he needed was something to eat, and he knew exactly where he was going to go.

CHAPTER NINE

Jason walked into the small restaurant and saw Marie. She motioned for him to take a small table close to the one that he and Jerome had used the night they were there.

“Well, well, well. How’s ya doin’ sugah?” Marie smiled at him broadly. “You gonna be waiting on that ol’ hateful bastard?”

“No, I’m here alone, Marie,” Jason answered her, taking the menu from her hand.

“I’s ain’t so surprised you done give him the boot,” she said shaking her head. “He runs off more folk than anyone I’s ever seen.”

“Oh, it isn’t that,” Jason quickly said. “He just gave me the day off is all.”

“Humph, I knows better ’n that,” Marie said, a sour look on her face. “He done gone an’ throwed one o’ his hissy fits is what it is. Listen, sugah, I knows that man better ’n my own husband. There ain’t a thang you kin do with him when he’s in that kinda mood. Jes let him cool off some.”

“I guess that’s what I’m doing,” Jason said quietly.

Marie took the menu from his hand. “Don’ worry, let Marie here fix you up sumpthin’ ta eat. Trust me now, I’s gonna take care of you, baby.”

Ant came over with a big glass of water for Jason, smiling, but saying nothing.

A few minutes later, Marie came out with a steaming plate. “Here’s ya go, baby. You jes g’won an’ gives that a try.”

Jason took a tentative bite of the stuff that looked like brown gravy, and his eyes rolled back in his head. “Oh, my God, Marie, what is this?”

“Étouffée, baby. One o’ my specialties,” Marie beamed.

“It is wonderful,” Jason said after another heaping forkful.

“You jes enjoys it,” Marie said.

“Marie?” Jason called to her as she began to walk away. She turned around and came back.

“Do you know who Toby is?”

Marie caught Ant’s eye and made a circle in the air, then sat down at the table.

“Who tole you ’bout Toby?” Marie asked, her large breasts resting on the table top.

“Jerome said it in his sleep last night, er... this morning.”

“You’s in his bed?” Marie sat back her eyes wide.

“It isn’t what you think, Marie. It was kind of forced on him. That’s a whole ’nother story.”

“Well chil’, you’d be the firs’ since Toby then,” Marie said shaking her head.

“So Toby and Jerome were together?”

“Toby was sumpthin’ to behold. He had Jerome minding his P’s an’ Q’s fer shore,” Marie chuckled. “Toby was a smooth operator... smooth as a baby’s ass, he was.”

“Can you tell me about him, Marie? What happened to him?”

“Tha’s part of the story, baby. It’s shore is sad.” Marie leaned back towards the table. “Less me start off ’fore Katrina tore up this city. Toby an’ Jerome bought that house an’ was workin’ alongside Mr. Fontaine. Now they wasn’ a man any better’n him, I’s tellin’ ya. Anyways,” she sighed heavily, “all was goin’ jes fine ’til Katrina. Toby loads up his truck an’ Mr. Fontaine an’ drives up to where his peoples is, up near’s Shreveport. Jerome was a still puttin’ ups wood on theys windows an’ all. Well, he took too long a doin’ it. ’Fore he was a done, ta roads closed up an’ Katrina was on top o’ us’n.

Ant brought over some tea for his mother, looked at her and nodded, understanding what she was talking about. *The Storm*.

“We’d all made it through that storm aw’rights. I means, there was so much damage in the streets, but it weren’t nuttin’ we’s ain’t done ’fore, ya knows?” She took another deep breath; her eyes had a distant look in them. “Then them levies broke. Tha’s when all hell broke loose on this town. People was a drownin’ in the streets an’ in they’s houses. They’d be animals jes’ floatin’ down the streets, it was ter’ble, jes ter’ble.” Marie wiped a tear away.

“I can’t even imagine how awful it must have been,” Jason sympathized.

“So’s, those of us’n’s that stayed an’ toughed it out faired ’nuff,” Marine went on. “Now Jerome were a big help. He made shore we’s was okay an’ boarded up the winders real tight. The big problem was that the whole city was shut off an’ nobody had no foods. We’d be take’n turns sittin’ up nights makin’ shore no one’s got in ta steal. We made it through though with the good Lord’s bless’ns.”

Marie started rocking back and forth in her chair. “Now’s is where’s it gits bad. When they’s opened up they roads, an’ folks started a comin’ back, they didn’t know’s what’s they was a comin’ back to. They was gangs roamin’ the streets an’ killin’ folk over jes about anytang, you sees. Toby was drivin’ his big ol’ truck, that still had a bunch of they’s stuff in the back, when one of them gangs highjacks ’em. They shot poor Toby in the head as soon as he was outta the truck. They knocks poor Mr. Fontaine in the back’s o’ his head with a bat an’ then they leaves ’em just lyin’ on the street.” Marie was sitting there, tears streaming down her full cheeks now.

“Oh... my... God,” Jason whispered hoarsely.

“Jerome jes ’bout went crazy,” Marie’s voice was soft. “Tha’ po’ man didn’t know’s if he was a comin’ or a goin’. His daddy was in the hospital, his brain had sumptin’ bad wrong. His husband was kilt dead in the streets by them thugs. The funeral homes was a booked so tight, almos’ no one was able to gits they’s family buried.”

“Oh, Marie, how awful,” Jason took her fat hand in his.

“I’s got’s a cousin who was able to take care of poor Toby, an’ I thought I might as well g’won an’ bury Jerome too.” Marie looked Jason in the eye.

“They’s was a part of Jerome that died that day, baby. Another big part of him died with his daddy not longs after. His daddy hung on fer months an’ months. They’d be times when he would’a seem okay, but they’d become less an’ less. Then one day the doctors tole Jerome that his daddy wasn’t able to breathe on his own no more’s an’ they’d done all they could. That was the day Jerome went an’ turned mean.”

“So Toby was murdered...” Jason stated to no one in particular.

“Yes, chil’ he was. Rights in the streets like a dawg.”

“But Jerome was happy before that?”

“Oh, yes, baby, he were ’nother man backs then,” Marie wiped her eyes again. “Now that Toby, he were a smart one. He knew how to handle Jerome. I’s known Jerome jes ’bout all our lives an’ they isn’t much he do that I don’ knows about. I knows all’s ’bout tha’ little spanky, spanky, smack, smack stuff he do. Why they’s them what wants to git hurts and them what wants to go an’ hurt others while’s they doin’ mattress dancin’ is beyond me, but it ain’t none o’ my business. I ain’t in that room, so’s I’s don’ care none. As long as they’s a both agreeable’s to it, ain’t none a my bees wax.”

“Spanky, spanky, smack, smack,” Jason hooted. “Oh, now that’s priceless, Marie.”

Marie scowled at him. “An’ you knows jes what I’s meanin’ too, so don’ you g’won an’ pretends you don’t. You’s the same way’s Toby was in that regard. I’s see’s it in yer eyes when ya looks at Jerome.”

“I have another question,” Jason said quietly, his face somber. “Did Toby cook?”

“Shoooooot, did Toby cook,” Marie’s eyes started to sparkle. “That man could jes ’bout out cook me, an’ I don’ go an’ says that too of’en now.”

“That explains all the equipment in the kitchen then.”

“Yep, that would’ve been Toby’s, shore ’nuff.”

“Thank you, Marie. I understand things much better now.”

“Jason, you gots a way’s ’bout you.” Marie took his hand back into hers, laying her other hand on top. “You’s ain’t Toby, and ya ain’t never goin’ ta be neither. Don’ try. You has to lay you own track now. If’n anyone can break Jerome outta his own prison, I thinks you’s the one thats kin do it.”

“Thank you, Marie. I plan to try.”

“One more tang... don’t cha go an’ be a skeered of that man now. When Toby stood his ground, Jerome would fuss ’n fume ’n carry on’s like a chil’. But Toby stood his ground an’ Jerome got over hisself. Mos’ time’s though... Toby maneuvered Jerome an’ let that man think it were all his own idea.” Marie laughed. “That boy knew how to work Jerome, shore o’nuff. His momma done right by him, she did.”

Jason smiled, knowing exactly what she meant. He had seen his own mother do that to his father. “I think I get it, Marie.”

“Jason... you need’s ta help him. He’s a dying inside. If’n you can’t git to him, I don’t know that he’ll ever come back ta the way he was.”

“I’m going to try, Marie. I am going to try.”

CHAPTER TEN

“Hey, Ana,” Jason greeted his cousin, the phone wedged between his ear and shoulder. “Can you do me a *big* favor?”

“What’s up?” Ana asked.

“Think you could grab dinner out somewhere?”

“You must have been reading my mind. I’m still in Lafourche Parish and was going to call and tell you not to wait on me,” she answered. “I do have a lot to share with you and Jerome though, but I want to do it in person.”

“Good news, I hope.”

“I wouldn’t exactly call it news, but it will shed some light on what’s been going on all these years with dear Uncle Bart.”

“Sounds juicy.”

“It is. Anyway, don’t worry about me busting up any romantic notions you’ve got, Cuz,” Ana laughed, just before she blew the horn at someone.

“Don’t wreck my car, Ana.”

“Oh, hush, I’m not going to wreck your precious car.”

“Okay, I’ll talk to you later then.”

“Sure thing, Jason. Bye.”

“Bye.”

Jason had everything ready. He had gone shopping and stocked the house with groceries. He had menus planned out for the next five days. He was going to make sure that Jerome was well fed.

The door opened and Jerome walked in, covered in grey dust, the whites of his eyes looking even whiter in contrast.

Jason grabbed a beer out of the fridge and handed it to Jerome.

“Um... thanks, boy,” he said gruffly, continuing down the hall towards his bedroom.

As soon as Jason heard the shower start, he turned on the broiler. When the shower shut off, he put the oysters in the oven and pulled out the savory scallop and shrimp torte. Then he tossed the salad and put it on the table.

Jason could feel, before he smelled, Jerome come up behind him. Without looking, he asked, “Are you hungry, Sir?”

“I could eat I guess,” Jerome mumbled.

“Have a seat then, Sir. Start on the salad. I’ll be right there.”

Jerome mumbled something that Jason didn’t quite catch.

“Pardon me, Sir?” He asked, thinking back to what Marie had told him that afternoon.

“Oh, nothing. Just talking to myself,” Jerome answered, embarrassed. He reached for the salad and started eating.

Jason walked out with two steaming plates. He set one down in front of Jerome and the other where he sat.

“Where’s Ana?” Jerome asked, not making eye contact.

“She’s still out working on your case. She said not to wait on her.”

“What’s this?” Jerome asked pointing to the oysters.

“Oysters Bienville, Sir.”

For the first time since coming home, Jerome looked Jason square in the eye. “How did you know?”

“Know what, Sir?” Jason asked innocently, before taking a bite of his salad.

“Never mind,” Jerome huffed. Then he took one of the oysters, blew on it slightly and put it in his mouth. His eyes closed as he slowly chewed.

“Is that okay, Sir?” Jason knew it was, just as he knew that this was one of Jerome’s favorites. He’d found a small notebook full of recipes in one of the cabinets and it had little stars next to each, rating them. It didn’t take long to

figure out that the five star ones were Jerome's favorites. Of course it had to have been Toby's notebook.

"It's very good, boy." Jerome looked up, an almost imperceptible smile on his face.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it, Sir." Jason flashed a big smile back.

When both were finished, Jerome started to get up.

"Oh, uh, Sir, we're not done yet," Jason said, picking up the plates then taking them to the kitchen.

Grabbing Jerome another beer, he came back with the main course. "Scallops and shrimp torte," Jason said as he set the plate down.

Jerome breathed deeply of the smell rising up from the plate then dug in. He didn't lift his head until his plate was clean.

"That was excellent, Jason."

Jason just sat there, stunned. He couldn't remember Jerome using his name except that first time, when he had gotten it wrong.

"I'm glad that you liked it, Sir," Jason said softly. "Would you care for some coffee, Sir?"

"No, it's too fucking hot for coffee," Jerome grouched.

"Then I have just the thing, Sir."

Jason took the dinner plates away and in a few moments came back with two bowls of vanilla ice cream with berries on top.

"Um, thanks, boy," Jerome said, clearly surprised.

Jason was surprised himself when he saw Jerome actually pick up the bowl and lick it clean.

"Boy, you keep feeding me like this and I'm going to get fat."

"I doubt that, Sir. You work too hard, and I sincerely doubt you could get fat."

“Yeah, but I don’t wanna push it neither,” Jerome said leaning back and rubbing his full stomach.

“Sir, can we talk about this morning, please, Sir?”

Jerome visibly stiffened. It was as if a wall fell down in front of him.

“Nothin’ to talk about,” he said standing up.

“I would like to explain my actions please, Sir,” Jason said, quickly getting up and picking up the bowls.

Jerome turned, an odd look on his face that Jason was unable to read. “If you have to, then fucking get it over with!”

Jason explained how he woke up to find Jerome humping him. Jerome turned beet red, then chugged his beer and turned to get another one.

Then Jason explained that he was only trying to service his new Sir. When he was finished, he just stood there, hands behind his back, head bowed. “If you feel you need to punish me, Sir, I understand and I’ll take that punishment.”

“I’m not going to punish you,” Jerome said, sighing. “Maybe I overreacted a little. Just don’t do it again.”

“Yes, Sir,” Jason secretly smiled.

For the first time since Jason had arrived, Jerome flopped on the couch, put his feet on the coffee table and turned on the TV. After Jason finished cleaning up the dinner dishes, he sat close by Jerome on the floor. They both stayed that way until it was time for bed.

When it was time to turn in, they each brushed their teeth, climbed into bed, said good night and repeated the routine from the previous two nights, with Jerome as far from Jason as he could get. Again, in the early hours of the morning, Jason woke up with Jerome curled up behind him, holding him. He smiled to himself, knowing what would be happening soon.

Jason didn’t have to wait long. Jerome started his humping session, his large, callused hand slipping down to hold Jason’s hip. Jason shifted around a

bit until he was able to trap Jerome's hard dick between his thighs again. Jerome moaned in his sleep while nuzzling Jason's neck.

Jerome's dick was sliding easily between Jason's thighs now, his precum having lubed the area. When Jerome shifted slightly it started jabbing Jason right behind his balls, one of his erogenous zones. He was becoming more and more turned on as the ring of Jerome's Prince Albert rubbed that sensitive spot just behind his balls. Jason's own dick was leaking profusely as it bobbed abstractly under the covers.

Jason could feel when Jerome's breath against his neck became ragged. He waited, wondering if he would stop as he had the night before. Jason didn't have to wait long for the answer. Jerome's grip on his hip tightened, he grunted, and Jason could feel Jerome's cock pumping out a load, smearing his thighs with his scalding hot cum. Jason smiled to himself. Jerome jerked awake and jumped backwards out of bed.

"Goddamn it, boy!"

Jason casually pushed back the covers, exposing his own hard dick as he got up. Jerome's load of cum was running down the inside of his thighs as he turned to face him.

"Didn't I tell you about this shit?" Jerome snarled.

"Sir, I did nothing. I was only laying there, Sir," Jason responded, before walking to the bathroom to clean himself off.

Jason stood at the sink in the bathroom waiting for the hot water, smiling. He wiped his legs, rinsed the cloth well, and then wet it again. He walked back into the bedroom, the warm washcloth in hand. Jerome was sitting on the edge of the bed, his head in hands that were propped up on his knees.

Jason dropped to his knees in front of Jerome. "Sir?"

Jerome looked up. He was clearly embarrassed. The look in his eyes caused a little start in Jason's chest. There was pure misery there.

"May I, Sir?" Jason asked gently, holding up the cloth.

Jerome only nodded, leaning back on the bed. Jason took the warm cloth and proceeded to clean Jerome's flaccid dick, which was still somewhat extended from the recent event. Jason wrapped the warm cloth around the appendage, cleaning it gently. He peeled the foreskin back and wiped the sensitive head clean. When he squeezed gently, a thick glob of cum oozed out of the small slit. He wiped it away, although he would have preferred licking it off.

Jason set the cloth aside and laid his head on Jerome's muscular, hairy thigh. He heard Jerome take a deep breath and hold it for a moment.

"Sir, I'm a good listener," Jason all but whispered.

Jerome didn't say anything. They sat that way for several minutes, neither saying a word. When it was obvious that Jerome wasn't going to speak, Jason got up and went to the kitchen. He'd heard the coffee maker start from when he had set the timer the night before. He poured each of them a cup of coffee. When he returned to the bedroom, Jerome was sitting just as Jason had left him. He handed Jerome the cup of coffee and knelt between his legs again, resting his chin on Jerome's knee.

Their peaceful interaction was interrupted when they heard Ana come in. It was painfully obvious that she was trying to be quiet, but she bumped into something and let out a stream of whispered curse words. Jerome was about to push Jason away, but Jason motioned for him to be quiet and smiled. They continued sitting there, listening as Ana tried to go up the stairs quietly.

Jason couldn't hold it in any longer. When he heard Ana moving upstairs, he started giggling. With some effort, he pulled himself together somewhat to look up at Jerome. He also had a smirky smile on his face too.

Jason stood up and offered his hand to Jerome, who took it. He pulled the older man to his feet. Without a word they both got dressed for the day, each in their work clothes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Ana was sitting at the breakfast bar in the kitchen when Jerome and Jason got back home that afternoon. There were papers spread out all over as she made notes on a legal pad. She had also opened a bottle of red wine.

“Starting a little early aren’t you there, Cuz?” Jason greeted her, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

Jerome stood on the other side of the counter from her, leaning on his hands. “How’s your little tootsies?” he asked, his face blank.

Ana’s mouth opened and shut several times but nothing came out. Jason chuckled as he handed Jerome a beer.

Jason came to her rescue. “Don’t worry, we were already awake.”

Ana scowled at Jerome. “Not *even* funny. I was *trying* to be quiet.”

Jerome only grunted in response before taking a long draw on his beer. Turning, he grumbled something about taking a shower then left the room.

“I swear I don’t see how you put up with him, Jason.”

“Ana, if you knew what I knew, you’d forgive him a lot too.”

“If you say so,” Ana said, her lips pursed. “Anyway, I’ve got a lot of information to go through. I need to ask Jerome a few questions to clarify a few details.”

“Can’t wait to hear what you’ve found out,” Jason said as he started dinner.

Jerome came back all showered. He was wearing a pair of Levi’s cut-offs and one of what seemed to be an endless supply of muscle shirts.

“My turn,” Jason said.

Jerome stood at the counter looking at Ana, a fresh beer in his hand.

Annoyed, Ana looked up. “What?”

“Why are you doing all this?” Jerome indicated all the work in front of her.

“Because Jason asked me to?” Ana asked, as if it was obvious.

“You always do what Jason asks?”

Ana put her pen down, picked up her wine glass, drained it and poured more.

“Of course not, but Jason is special. He never asks for anything unless he really needs it, Jerome. He must see something in you to have asked for my help. Something no one else seems to see,” Ana said a little snarky.

Ana saw a slight flush rise on Jerome’s cheeks.

“Besides, I think I have found out some things that may also be beneficial to me,” Ana added, then winked at Jerome.

“What in the hell could any of my family’s crap do to benefit you?”

“I’ll tell you when Jason gets back. He’ll want to hear this too.”

“Hear what?” Jason asked, walking back into the kitchen.

“Jason! What have you done?” Ana gasped.

“What?” Jason asked looking down at himself. He had on a pair of running shorts and nothing else.

“Your chest? It’s... you’ve shaved it... and it’s all red!” Ana looked alarmed.

Jason chuckled a bit. “Before I left Arizona they gave me a shaving ceremony, kind of a ritual there. Unfortunately, neither they nor I knew of the consequences of doing that before helping Jerome out in the shop.”

Jerome chuckled a bit.

“You think that’s funny?” Ana asked angrily. “Look at him!”

“It isn’t as serious as it looks, Ana,” Jason tried to soothe her. “Part of the redness is because I just got out of the shower. Trust me, it’s better than it was the first few days. Besides, my hair is starting to grow back.”

Ana looked between the two men, then settled her glare on Jerome.

Jerome threw his hands up. “I had nothing to do with it.”

“Come on, Ana, tell us what you’ve found out,” Jason said, changing the subject as he continued with dinner.

“The first thing I found out is that your cousin,” Ana said to Jerome, “is one fine piece of work. It seems he raped one of the parish clerks in Lafourche.”

“He what?” Jerome all but yelled.

“I’ll tell you quickly, but it has no bearing on your case,” Ana stated. “I was looking through this ancient microfiche, somewhat hidden by a large filing cabinet, when your cousin David and, get this, *Charles*, came in. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw this clerk go completely white and basically turn into a statue. I knew something was up then. Anyway, they were there to file documents dealing with getting permits for a shipping company to start shipping internationally.

“They seemed in fine spirits, which always makes me suspicious with Charles, that snake.” Ana drained her glass again and refilled it. “As soon as they left, the clerk ran out of the room. I had a feeling she was going to the ladies room and I was right. I followed her and found her in there crying her eyes out. It took a few minutes, but I finally got her story out of her. She said that one night late last year David walked her to her minivan after work. It was raining and she didn’t have an umbrella. He forced her into the van and did the deed.”

“Why did she not report it then?” Jason asked, as he put a salad on the table.

“He threatened her,” Ana answered. “It appears he has quite a bit of power in that parish, and from what I’ve gathered, both Uncle Bart and Cousin David control the docks, the trucking *and* the local shipping company there, which they are prepping to take international.”

“That asshole!” Jerome spat.

“Anyway, that is where I was last night. I stayed with Rebecca and her two kids,” Ana said, moving to the table. “She was a wealth of information.”

“Not Rebecca Durrand?” Jerome asked surprised.

“Her last name is Stapleton,” Ana answered.

“Oh, yeah, that’s her married name. I knew her as Durrand, her maiden name,” Jerome snarled angrily. “How could anyone hurt her like that? She was always so timid anyway.”

“How do you know her, Jerome?” Ana asked, as Jason set plates in front of them.

“I don’t know her so much as I know her mother,” Jerome replied, as he took a bite of the steak in front of him. “Her mother and I used to play together as kids when gran’daddy still lived in the old house.”

“I see,” Ana said thoughtfully. “Unfortunately, there’s nothing that can be done about the rape now. There is no evidence, and it would only be her word against his. That won’t hold any water in a court of law.”

“I’d like to wring that fucker’s neck,” Jerome growled around a piece of meat.

“Jerome... don’t do that. It scares me,” Ana frowned.

Jason laughed.

Jerome glared at both of them as he pushed a large forkful of salad into his mouth.

“So what else did you find out that is pertinent to the case?” Jason asked.

“The main shipping firm that operates out of the port is A&F Shipping. They control most of the cargo ships that come in, the trucking company that services the port, and somehow have been able to block most other shippers from using that dock, which in itself is highly suspicious.”

“Why would that be so suspicious?” Jason asked.

“Because the more shipping that comes into that dock, the more money dear ol’ Uncle Bart would make. Now why would he turn down money?” Ana asked. “From everything I found out about this man, he is not one to turn down money.”

Jerome snorted. “You got that right.”

“I see what you mean,” Jason added.

“I gave this information to Diane as well,” Ana informed them. “Right off the bat, she learned that they are working with another shipping company, which it turns out they also own, but that information is buried pretty deeply. You have to really go looking to find any connection. This other company does a lot of shipping in and out of Mexico.”

“Mexico?” Jerome asked looking puzzled.

“Yup. And guess what the number one export from Mexico is? Drugs!” Ana informed him. “Not a legal export, but the biggest one. Of course all the manifests say produce, which is widely ignored because of NAFTA.”

“Christ on a cross,” Jerome said, shaking his head.

“Here is where it gets fun...” Ana started taking a bite of her steak. “*If*, and it’s a pretty big if, but *if* Charles has any inkling as to what they are up to, he also can be held accountable. Knowing Charles the way I do, he is up to his neck in this thing. He is one greedy son of a bitch.”

“Am I missing something here?” Jason asked. “Don’t you have to have *proof* that they are importing something illegal?”

“Of course,” Anna scowled at him like he was dense. “That is where Jerome comes in. I didn’t know that you knew Rebecca, but now it makes things much easier.”

“How?” Jerome asked.

“The one hold that David has over Rebecca is that her husband works for the shipping company,” Ana said, as if it made perfect sense.

“Okay, what am I missing here?” Jerome all but growled, looking impatient.

“We just need to convince the husband to find out what, and or when, they are doing something illegal, and then we’ve got them.” Ana smiled sweetly, munching on her salad.

“Is it really that easy?” Jason asked.

“Listen, I’m pretty sure I’ve got them dead to rights on the property issue. That alone will, at the very least, get Uncle Bart some serious jail time. Then, Jerome will be able to take back what is rightfully his and receive any money that was made during that time *plus* some!” Ana looked pleased with herself. “Unless dear Uncle Bart has some hidden accounts we don’t know about yet, which I suspect that he does, that will more than likely wipe him out. However, it would also mean that David will get off free and clear.”

“Can’t we be happy with that?” Jason asked.

“That’s the rub here, Cuz,” Ana said. “If Jerome takes over the port, then this becomes *his* problem and then he can be held liable for the crimes as well.”

“I see,” Jerome said, pondering everything that Ana had said. “So if I can convince Rebecca’s husband to spy for us and he comes up with something, then what happens?”

“We all win,” Ana smiled brightly. “Uncle Bart goes to jail. Cousin David goes to jail. And the property is returned to you along with all the assets.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

Jerome and Jason got ready for bed. Each man crawled in, both grateful to finally be horizontal.

“Night,” Jerome muttered as he turned off the light.

Again, he turned his back to Jason, hugging his side of the bed.

“Sir?” Jason asked quietly.

“What?” Jerome grumbled.

“Isn’t this a bit ridiculous?”

Jerome sat up, turning to look at Jason. “What the fuck do you want from me? Want me to spank you and then fuck you senseless?”

“That would be a good start,” Jason answered casually.

Jerome sat there with his mouth hanging open.

“I mean seriously, you’re going to end up snuggled up behind me, so why not do it consciously this time?” Jason asked quietly, still lying down.

Jerome got out of bed. From the dim lights streaming in from the street outside, Jason could see him, his fists clenched and his jaw tight. Jason pushed the bed covering back, rolled over onto his stomach, pushed his butt into the air and smiled. He was hoping that Jerome could see his smile.

“You little fucker, you think you want to be spanked? Huh?” Jerome snarled. “Come on then, I’ll warm up that ass of yours.” He sat down on the edge of the bed, his back to Jason.

Jason scrambled across the bed to where Jerome indicated his lap. Jason, his dick already fully erect and beginning to leak, laid across Jerome’s lap, his cock jutting down into the air between Jerome’s thick legs. Jason had barely gotten settled when he received the first swat. It was much harder than he expected, and the sound echoed through the room.

“That what you want, boy? Huh?” Jerome swatted the other cheek just as forcefully.

“Sir, yes, Sir! May I have another, Sir?”

Another hard slap hit Jason’s already stinging right buttock.

“Sir, thank you, Sir! May I have another?”

Jason kept asking for more until there were tears streaming down his face and his ass was stinging. When he started to sob and quit asking for more, Jerome used his strong arms to turn him over and cradled Jason, stroking his head.

Jason hiccupped and looked up into Jerome’s eyes. “Thank you, Sir. I really needed that.”

Jerome smiled gently, shocking Jason with the tenderness that he could see in his face. “I guess I’ve forgotten what a boy needs sometimes. I’m sorry if I’ve been a bit selfish. I’ll try and do better by you, Boy.”

Jason could not have been more shocked.

“Why don’t we get some sleep?” Jerome suggested.

“Yes, Sir,” Jason smiled, his tears already drying on his cheeks.

This time when they got into bed, Jerome turned towards Jason, pulling him into his arms, spooning behind him. Jason squirmed a little as he adjusted his sore ass, then sighed contentedly and quickly fell asleep.

Jason smiled sleepily as he woke up to Jerome’s persistent dick poking him in the ass, in the early dawn hours. This time though, he was prepared. Stretching, he leaned over the bed to where he had stashed a bottle of lube. Popping the top open, getting some of the slick in his palm, he reached behind and took Jerome’s semihard dick in his hand, coating it as it grew to full hardness. He squeezed out a little more lube and coated his hole. Arching his back, he positioned Jerome and waited for nature to take its course.

Soon enough, Jerome pushed, and his dick popped through Jason’s anal opening, causing him to gasp slightly, and clench his eyes tightly. Normally he would never even have considered going bareback, but he knew for a fact that

he himself was clean and he was willing to bet that Jerome was also. He got the distinct impression from Marie that Jerome had been playing at being a monk for years now.

The shock of Jerome pushing in all the way until his balls pressed against his ass, took Jason's breath away. It felt so good, so natural, like it was a perfect fit. As usual, Jerome's hand slid down and gripped Jason's hip. He started with little pumps, barely moving his dick in and out. At the point when Jerome stopped, his hand relaxing a little, Jason knew that he was awake.

Jason held his breath, waiting to see what Jerome's reaction would be. When he pulled back, Jason was afraid that he was about to pull out completely. He was pleasantly surprised to feel Jerome pushing back in, the ring through the head of his dick scraping across that delicate gland, making Jason shiver with arousal.

"That what you want, Boy?" Jerome grunted into Jason's ear, his hand once again gripping his hip strongly.

"Sir, yes, Sir," Jason breathed softly. "Please, Sir."

Jerome pushed one of Jason's legs up as he pulled back. With a powerful thrust he slammed into Jason. There was a sharp intake of breath as Jason was filled again. Jerome pushed him over a little farther until he was halfway turned onto his belly. Jerome started finding his rhythm as he continuously banged into Jason's hot ass. Reaching up, he took one of Jason's nipples in his strong fingers and started pinching and twisting.

"Oh, yes, Sir," Jason hissed, pushing his ass back to meet Jerome's thrust.

"That what you want, *Boy*?"

"It's what I need, Sir. Thank you, Sir."

Jerome picked up the pace.

"Jack your dick, Boy. Get that nut ready," Jerome said between his teeth, as he chewed on Jason's earlobe.

"Yes, Sir," Jason obeyed. He didn't need to be asked twice. It had been over a week since he'd gotten off, and he was desperate for it.

Both men were covered in a fine sheen of sweat. Jerome's chest hair was plastered to his chest and Jason's back.

“What do you want, Boy?”

“Sir, I want you to breed my ass, Sir. Please, Sir!”

Jerome started to really pound into Jason, the ring in his dick driving Jason crazy.

“You ready, Boy? You ready to take my load?”

“Oh, Sir... Sir,” Jason's leg started to twitch, his feet were flexed. “Oh, Sir, please, Sir. I'm about to...”

“Here ya go, Boy!”

A resounding slap stung Jason's tender ass as Jerome slammed into him hard, grunting as he pushed as deep as he could. Jason could feel the fat dick in his ass twitch and the warmth of the hot cum that was flooding his insides. That was enough to put him over the edge too.

“Fuck me...” Jason yelled, his ass locking down on Jerome's cock, as he pumped out his own load, making a mess on the sheet beneath him.

Jerome pushed in and out of Jason a few more times, prolonging Jason's orgasm and making him groan through the last moments of bliss.

Jerome started chewing lightly on Jason's neck, holding him tightly against his body. He didn't let go until his dick softened and fell from the warm confines of Jason's butt. Jerome rolled out of bed and padded his way into the bathroom. He returned with a warm wash cloth which he handed to Jason.

When Jason took the wet cloth, he saw what appeared to be a wicked-looking smile on Jerome's face. He rolled over before reaching back to wipe the lube and cum from his ass. A surprised gasp escaped his lips when Jerome pushed him flat, face first, onto the bed and smacked both ass checks again, hard.

“Ouch,” Jason yelled into the pillow. The two swats on his already tender ass really smarted.

Jason rolled over and saw the sadistic grin on Jerome's face.

"Be careful what you ask for, Boy. You just might get it!"

With that, Jerome walked to the kitchen, his big dick swinging out in front of him, leaving Jason grinning from ear to ear.

They each had a cup of coffee, and then got dressed to go the shop for the day. Ana had finally come downstairs, her hair awry, still in the T-shirt that she had slept in.

"Morning," she greeted the two men, yawning.

"Good morning, Ana," Jason smiled broadly.

"Oh, shut up, Jason," she grouched.

When Jerome growled at her, her eyes opened wide as she hurried around the counter away from him.

"What's up with him?" She asked with a frown, pouring her own cup of coffee.

"I don't know what you mean?" Jason grinned.

Ana eyed both men suspiciously.

"Anyway, we'll see you tonight Cuz," Jason said cheerfully as he followed Jerome to the door. "Have a good day."

"Jason?" Ana looked at her cousin funny.

"Yeah?" Jason turned, his hand on the doorknob.

"Why are you walking so funny?" Ana smirked, thinking she'd get a rise out of Jason.

"Try shoving a huge dick up your ass and see how you walk!" Jason's smile was as big as she'd ever seen. "Bye, Cuz, have a great day!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Jerome and Jason broke for breakfast at nine, and instead of Jerome going off by himself, Jason went with him in order to open a bank account. He figured he was going to need some cash while in New Orleans, and it would make paying the taxes on Jerome's portion of the property in Lafourche Parish much easier.

Jason saw the look on Jerome's face when he asked to have twenty-thousand dollars wired into the new account from his bank in Philadelphia. He felt a little embarrassed because he knew how tight things were for Jerome.

Jerome was shocked, and more than a little pissed, when Jason dropped ten grand into his own account.

"We need for you to be able to write a check from your account for those taxes. That way Uncle Bart can't say a thing about it," Jason explained.

Jerome only nodded, his lips so tight they almost disappeared.

Several minutes later, while Jerome was getting some beignets, Jason's phone rang.

"Hey, Ana," Jason answered.

"Hey, I just got off the phone with Rebecca," she immediately started. "Is Jerome there with you?"

"Yes, he is, but he's getting beignets right now." Jason explained. "He'll be here in just a minute."

"Okay, when he gets back, put me on speaker," Ana said.

"Sure," Jason answered.

Jerome came over with a bag to where Jason was sitting in the open café area.

"It's Ana, she wants to talk to us," Jason said as he put the phone on speaker. "Okay, Ana, we're both here and you're on speaker. We're in public so keep it clean."

“Yeah... right, Jason. Hey, Jerome,” Ana was all business. “I just got off the phone with Rebecca, and Hank, her husband, is going to be off work tomorrow. Think you can make it out to Lafourche?”

“Aww hell, that means I’m going to lose a day’s work,” Jerome complained.

“Jerome, this is important remember?” Ana chided.

“Hey, this is perfect actually, Jerome,” Jason chimed in. “We can stop off and pay those taxes while we’re out there.”

“Yeah, I guess that does make sense,” Jerome said, giving in.

“You’ll have to bring my car back, Ana.”

“No she don’t, I’ve got the truck. We can go in that.”

“Okay, then that’s all set. What time do you think you can be there?” Ana asked.

Jerome and Jason looked at each other, but it was Jerome who answered. “Somewhere between nine thirty and ten.”

“Perfect, Jerome. I’ll tell them,” Ana said. “By the way, I think I’ll stay the night again out here. I’m going to do some more snooping around at the courthouse. I’ll see you guys tomorrow.”

Jason disconnected the call and reached for the bag, when Jerome promptly smacked his hand away.

“What?” Jason almost whined.

“Wait until we get back to the shop,” Jerome gruffed as he stood up.

“You ol’ meanie,” Jason pouted.

Jerome laughed heartily. It was a joyful noise to Jason, one he hoped to hear more and more often.

As they were walking back, Jason commented, “At least going to Lafourche tomorrow will kill two birds with one stone.”

“How you figure?” Jerome asked.

“You can take care of the business with Ana first, and then we can go take care of the taxes,” Jason explained, reiterating the point of getting the taxes taken care of.

Instantly, Jerome got quiet and his face tightened back up. Jason decided to let it go for now. As they turned the corner heading back to the shop, things went from bad to worse real quick.

“Awww, fuck,” Jerome gritted out.

Jason looked down the street to the car parked in front of the shop and knew, without being told, who it was: Uncle Bart and his rapist son, David.

“Let me handle this, Jerome,” Jason spoke softly. “Just go into the shop. Don’t say a word to them.”

Jerome looked at Jason, his face relaxed a bit, and he nodded okay.

As they approached, Jerome did exactly what Jason had told him to do. When Uncle Bart and David started to follow him inside the shop, Jason stood in front of the door, not allowing them entrance.

“Get outta my way, boy,” Uncle Bart commanded.

“I am representing Mr. Fontaine, sir, so you will deal with me and me only,” Jason said calmly.

“I had you checked out, and you don’t have a license to practice here,” David sneered.

“Ah, but I do have a proxy with a firm here who does have a license and who will be filing any documents that I deem need to be filed. So gentlemen, to what do I owe this unexpected and unneeded visit?” Jason asked, folding his arms across his chest.

“I said stand aside,” Uncle Bart tried to push past.

“Sir, if you insist on pushing this issue, I will have no other choice but to call the police and inform them that you are committing assault,” Jason stated firmly, pulling out his cell phone.

Uncle Bart raised his cane as if to strike Jason, but David held him back.

“Again, I will ask, what business do you have here?”

“We came to get Jerome’s signature on these documents,” David said, patting the inner pocket of his suit and smiling snidely.

“Not going to happen,” Jason reiterated. “I guess you gentlemen have wasted your time.”

“Boy, you have no idea who you’re dealing with,” Uncle Bart started.

“Oh, but I do, Mr. Fontaine,” Jason said smugly, as he looked down his nose at the shorter man. “I know all about both of you, and I must say, I’m not impressed.”

“Why you!” Uncle Bart started forward, his cane raised again.

Jason didn’t even flinch. “Is there anything else?” he asked.

When neither of the men said anything, Jason followed up, “Then I will bid you good day, gentlemen.”

He turned on his heel, walked into the shop, then closed and locked the door.

Jason hadn’t even rounded the corner when he ran into Jerome, who was grinning from ear to ear.

“‘I’m not impressed’, oh, that was priceless. The look on Uncle Bart’s face was...just priceless. I don’t know any other word to use,” Jerome laughed.

“You saw *and* heard, I take it?” Jason smiled.

“Yeah, that air vent over the door is open and I could see out if I stood just to the side. With it being dark inside, no one can see in,” Jerome explained.

“So I’m assuming that you’re okay with the way I handled your Uncle Bart and Cousin David, Sir?”

“Oh, hell yeah!”

Jerome grabbed Jason in a big bear hug, shocking the hell out of him, and lifted him off his feet.

“That was sooo worth it,” Jerome said, putting Jason back on the floor.

“What was it worth, Sir?” Jason asked, not following.

Jerome turned somber. “Taking your money.”

“It’s a loan Sir, just a loan. Pretty soon you’ll have money of your own and then you can pay me back,” Jason reminded him. “Remember, Ana is going to draw up that promissory note?”

“Yeah, I know, but it still doesn’t make it any easier to swallow,” Jerome added. “But what you just did with that ol’ asshole did my heart good. I’m taking you out to dinner tonight.” Jerome beamed. “Where ya wanna go?”

“No brainer,” Jason smiled. “Marie’s.”

Jason was on his knees laying out the cross pieces to the fence they were working on. Jerome walked over and corrected him on a piece, having him turn it the other way.

“You see the pattern there,” Jerome pointed out, using the toe of his boot to indicate the pieces he was talking about.

When he did that, his crotch was only inches from the side of Jason’s face. Jason could again feel the heat that came from the man’s groin area. He turned his head and could see the outline of Jerome’s dick, hanging to the left. He took a deep breath smelling Jerome’s scent, unconsciously licking his lips.

“Boy, you payin’ attention to me or just dog sniffin’ my dick?”

“Sorry, Sir. I can’t help it,” Jason blushed at being caught.

“Damn, you like my dick that much?” Jerome actually seemed surprised.

“Oh, yes, Sir, I do, Sir.”

Jerome started to step back, but stopped. He seemed to be thinking. “What do you want, Boy?” Jerome’s voice was low, sounding so sexy to Jason.

Jason looked up into Jerome’s eyes. “Sir, I would like it if you would fuck my face, right here, right now... Sir.”

Jerome's eyes seemed to fog over and the heat index went up all around him. He put his hands behind his head, his furry wet pits exposed, biceps bulged.

"If'n you want it, Boy, get it out." Jerome's voice was even lower, deeper, making Jason's insides vibrate.

Jason wasted no time. He quickly undid Jerome's belt and popped the buttons of his 501's. Jerome's dense pubic bush and the thick root of his cock came into view. Again, without even realizing he did it, Jason licked his lips. Taking Jerome's jeans in his hands, he pulled them down, almost to his knees, exposing Jerome's cock and low hanging balls. Jason reached for the object of his lust.

"I said get it out, I didn't say nothin' 'bout touchin', did I?"

Jason frowned, "No, Sir."

"Open your mouth, Boy."

Jason did as he was told. Jerome stood on tiptoe letting his dick lay across Jason's bottom lip then pushed it slowly into his waiting mouth.

"You keep them hands of yours to your sides, Boy," Jerome growled.

Jason didn't answer verbally, only nodded once in understanding.

Jerome took Jason's head in both of his big hands and slowly rocked back and forth gradually feeding Jason a bit at a time. Jason groaned as his mouth was used. He found the musky smell of Jerome's sweaty crotch both heady and intoxicating.

"Is this what you wanted, Boy?" Jerome asked, pushing more of his now fully erect dick into Jason.

"Mmm-mmm," was all that Jason could utter, the sound vibrating around the cock in his mouth.

"You do have a hot mouth, Boy," Jerome huffed, his head thrown back, enjoying the sensations of Jason's lips wrapped around him.

Jerome took his time, not letting Jason have all of it at once, just letting Jason get it spit-slicked little by little. After what seemed an eternity to Jason, he finally felt the ring tickle the entrance to his throat.

“You ready for all of it, Boy?”

Jason moaned his assent.

Jerome pushed his thick dick in, causing Jason to gag. Pulling back, “Boy, I thought you said you was ready?”

He pushed his entire length in again. This time Jason opened his throat and took it all.

“Ahhh, there ya go, Boy. Take it.”

Jerome started to pick up the pace, face fucking Jason. Jason moaned as a little spittle started to drool from his mouth. He had to move his hand to adjust his own cock, which was bent down painfully, being held in place by the jock.

“Boy, I told you to keep your hands down!” Jerome ordered forcefully.

Jason could only whine slightly as he obeyed.

Soon, Jerome was banging away, really using Jason, skull fucking him, and none too gently. His heavy balls began to draw up close to his body. Holding Jason tightly by the ears now, Jerome bucked, then froze.

“Ahhh fuck, Boy. Here it comes,” Jerome said through his gritted teeth, eyes closed, head back.

He pushed deep, his first shot going directly down Jason’s throat, causing him to gag slightly. Jerome pulled back a bit, using short thrusts as he emptied himself, his hot cum blasting the inside of Jason’s mouth.

“Oh, fuck, Boy,” Jerome moaned as he stopped.

Jason started sucking, using the tip of his tongue to glide under the partially retracted foreskin, teasing the ring with his teeth. Jerome flinched from the attention on his now overly sensitive dick head. Not being able to take anymore, he pulled out of Jason’s mouth. The spittle on his chin now mixed with a little of the cum that had escaped his mouth. Jerome leaned

forward and scraped the combination of spittle and cum from Jason's chin and fed it back to him. Jason sucked on the thick fingers eagerly.

Jerome took a short step back; his bunched up jeans not letting him step much further. He looked at Jason on his knees, his face flushed, his legs spread wide, and at the strained fabric covering his crotch where he could see a small wet spot where all the seams of his jeans met at the crotch.

Smiling, Jerome asked, "Boy, your dick hard?"

"Yes, Sir, it is."

"You wanna get off?"

"Oh, yes, Sir. Please Sir?" Jason pleaded.

"Too fucking bad. You'll just have to wait," Jerome chuckled as Jason whined again.

Jerome's face turned serious. He pulled up his jeans, adjusted himself, buttoned and then buckled up. He reached down and grabbed Jason by the ear forcing him to stand up painfully. Looking into Jason's eyes, his hand still holding his ear, he studied him closely for a full minute.

"Is that what you wanted, Jason? You wantin' this kind of relationship with me?"

"Yes, Sir," Jason answered without hesitation.

"I want you to think on that some more," Jerome ordered quietly. "I'm a mean son of a bitch. I'm not easy to be around; I know that. I like things *my* way, which oftentimes can be rough. I'll be the first one to admit I've got a lot of baggage I'm lugging around." Jerome paused, still looking into Jason's eyes intently. "You still think you want to be in my bed?"

"Yes, Sir. More than anything, Sir," Jason answered again with no apparent indecision.

"You do know that this is not what I wanted, or what I wanted you for, don't you?" Jerome asked, his head cocked a little to the side. "Hell, I didn't ask for you at all. This was all Sampson's idea."

“Yes, Sir, I know, Sir.” Jason seemed sad all of a sudden.

“Speak, Boy. Tell me what’s goin’ on in that head of yours.”

“Sir, I fully understood from the start that you weren’t looking for a relationship of any kind. I was told that you needed a helper, and that it was purely for physical labor. That is what I felt I needed too, Sir. I *needed* to work with my hands.” Jason looked down, even though Jerome still held on to his ear. “I needed to be able to get out of my own head, at least for a while, Sir.”

“What happened then?” Jerome was very curious.

“Sir, I’m a pretty good judge of people, Sir.” Jason looked back up, into Jerome’s eyes. “I think you are a good man. I know all about baggage, Sir. I have my own to deal with.” Jason’s eyes became shiny. “You don’t know how much you have helped me already.”

“I’ve helped you?” Jerome’s eyes went wide with surprise.

“Yes, Sir, you have, Sir.” Jason smiled slightly. “You’ve given me a purpose again. I love working in the shop with my hands. My head is clearer now... more than I’ve ever known, Sir. I enjoy being round you, and if I may, Sir... I think you are one of the hottest men I’ve ever known.”

“Jason, I can’t promise you anything,” Jerome said as he let go of Jason’s ear. “I don’t want to lead you on or let you think that there is anything remotely permanent here. Understand?”

“Yes, Sir, I understand,” Jason answered.

“Okay, then we’ll play this by ear, Boy.”

“Yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir,” Jason smiled widely.

“Boy?”

“Yes, Sir?”

“Your dick still hard?”

“Yes, Sir, pretty much, Sir.”

“Good,” Jerome said almost flatly as he walked away.

“Sir?”

“Yes, Boy?” Jerome stopped and turned to face Jason.

“Anyone ever tell you that you’re a sadistic son of a bitch?”

Jerome chuckled. “Yep, more times than I care to remember.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“There’s my favorite boy,” Marie greeted the two men as they walked in. “Y’all sits here,” Marie said, pulling out a chair at a table in front of the window.

“You’re too good to me, Marie,” Jerome said.

A frown crossed Marie’s face. “Did you thinks I was a talkin’ ’bout you, Jerome? Naw, I was a talkin’ ’bout this sweet boy heres,” Marie said as she pinched Jason’s cheek.

“Yeah, and I love you too, Marie,” Jerome scowled, as he sat opposite Jason.

“Now, Jerome, you knows I loves you jes ’bout as much as I loves my bes’ house shoes!”

“Wow, I rank right up there,” Jerome said shaking his head.

Jason was laughing and smiling at the good natured banter between the two old friends.

“Marie, may we have two beers please?” Jason asked, smiling.

“Honey, of cou’se you kin,” Marie clucked.

“Seems like you’ve made a new best friend,” Jerome chuckled after Marie left.

“We have something in common that we both care about,” Jason said, glancing down at the menu.

“Oh? What’s that?” Jerome asked, leaning on his menu, having already decided on what he wanted.

Jason looked up. “You.”

Jerome’s mouth opened and closed a few times, then shut tight.

“Here’s ya go now,” Marie said as she set the two beers in frosty mugs down on the table. “What ch’all’s in the mood fer?”

“Ooo, how about some oysters, Sir?” Jason asked, his eyes twinkling.

“If that’s what you want, then sure. You heard the man, Marie,” Jerome smiled.

Marie looked really closely at Jerome. She bent over and took his chin in her hand, turning his head first one way and then the other. “You’s sick, Jerome?”

“No, why?”

“Cause you jes smiled an’ yo face didn’ break,” Marie replied seriously. Jason busted out laughing all over again.

“Get off me, woman,” Jerome pushed her hand away, scowling again.

“Yeah, tha’s still yous in there,” she said shaking her head.

“What else y’alls wantin’?”

“You always do right by me, Marie, so you pick for me,” Jason smiled as he handed back the menu.

“Marie, did Antoine make any dirty beans and rice today?”

“Shore ’nuff,” Marie answered Jerome.

“I’ll have some of that and some grilled shrimp,” Jerome added.

“And...?” Marie asked, her hands on her hips.

Jerome huffed. “*Please?*”

“Yes, baby, I’ll gits it fer you,” Marie smiled mischievously, then patted Jerome’s head just before she left.

“You know, Sir, if anyone wanted a go at you, they’d have to go through Marie first, and that’s something I know I wouldn’t want to do.”

Jerome blushed slightly. “Yeah, well I think she’s got a new favorite now.”

Ant came over with the butcher’s paper and spread it out on the table. He smiled at both men, but didn’t say anything. In a few minutes he was back with the customary yellow bucket of oysters.

Now that Jason knew how to *shuck* an oyster, he kept up with Jerome oyster for oyster. Jason still wasn't adventurous enough to use the hot sauce however, which Jerome took great delight in teasing him about. When their entrees arrived, Marie once again was able to give Jason something which instantly became his new favorite.

When Jerome got up to speak to a woman at another table who had been a friend of his father's, Marie was on Jason like a duck on a June bug.

"What'cha gone an' done to Jerome? I ain't seen him smile in I don't knows how long?"

"I took yours and my cousin's advice," Jason smiled.

"I didn' give you no a'vice," Marie said with her eyebrows raised.

"You did inadvertently."

"Wha'd I say?"

"You told me to stand my ground and not put up with his shit."

"You did tha'?" Marie looked shocked.

"Yep, pretty much," Jason smiled.

"An' wha' yo cousin say?"

"She said to take the bull by the horns."

"Hmm, I's gonna likes this cousin."

"I think that she'll like you too, Marie." Jason took Marie's hand in his. "I'll make sure to bring her in soon."

"She live here?" Marie looked surprised all over again.

"No, but she is here working for a while."

"Yes, Lord. Bes' bring that gal on in heres then," Marie patted Jason's hand. "I needs to git on back ta work, baby. Holler now if'n you need sumpthin'."

“I will, Marie.”

“An’ you jes keep on doin’ what you’s been a doin’, sugah. I ain’t seen Jerome happy in a long time now, an’ he deserves to be. He’s a good man.”

“I know, Marie, I know.”

“It was nice of Marie to send us home with pecan pie,” Jason said, as he put the doggie bag on the counter.

“She knows it’s one of my favorites,” Jerome said, then yawned.

“You want yours now, Sir?”

“No, I’m full. I think I’ll have mine for breakfast.”

“Breakfast?” Jason looked at Jerome like he was crazy.

“You sure don’t say anything about them beignets you been wolfin’ down every mornin’!”

“True,” Jason laughed as he followed Jerome into the bedroom.

Jerome lowered himself, then fell backwards on the bed. “I’m tired,” he stated, looking at the ceiling.

“We worked hard today, Sir” Jason said as he knelt in front of Jerome, starting to remove his shoes.

“Had to, since we’re basically losing tomorrow. We’re almost caught up, but not quite.”

Since Jerome didn’t say anything about Jason taking off his shoes, Jason decided to see how far he could go. Leaning forward he unbuckled Jerome’s belt.

“Boy, what are you doin’?” Jerome asked, but didn’t move.

“Just helping you get undressed, Sir. Making you more comfortable.”

“Yeah, right,” Jerome scoffed. “Why do I have the feelin’ that you have somethin’ else in mind?”

“I don’t know what you mean, Sir,” Jason grinned.

“Just you remember, I’m an old man. After this afternoon...”

Jason ignored him as he tugged off his pants, then his socks; leaving Jerome reclined on the bed wearing only a T-shirt.

Beginning with Jerome’s left foot, Jason started to massage, working his way up the thick calf. Jerome moaned in pleasure, his crossed arms covering his eyes. Jason switched to the other leg, giving it the same treatment all the way to the knee. With one hand on each of Jerome’s hairy legs, he massaged the bulging quadriceps next, moving closer to his crotch. When Jason’s hands moved to the insides of his thighs, he saw Jerome’s large uncut dick twitch and start to elongate.

Jason smiled as he rubbed closer, deliberately getting close but not touching the low hanging balls or the quickly thickening cock. Instead, he massaged Jerome’s hips, then all around the pubic area, watching as Jerome became fully erect.

Jerome growled low in his throat, but Jason cut the sound off by swallowing Jerome’s dick almost to the root. The growl turned into a mix between a groan and a gurgle, as if Jerome was gargling. Jerome’s big hands went to either side of Jason’s head guiding him up and down.

“Boy, you sure suck a mean dick,” Jerome groaned, thrusting his hips up to meet Jason’s mouth.

Jason worked Jerome’s cock, locking down around the head with his throat muscles, the ring tickling the back of his throat. He pulled completely off when the heavy balls started to draw up, and stood. Jerome opened his eyes, wondering what the hell was going on.

His eyes burned then turned smoky while he watched Jason remove his shirt. The now darker shadow of his chest hair made his pink nipples stand out in contrast. Fully aware that Jerome was watching him intently, Jason slowly undid his jeans, teasing him. He let the heavy denim drop, leaving him standing there wearing only a jock and socks. Jason’s own large cock was

obviously hard, angled to the left, a wet spot visible where the tip of the head was outlined against the jock. There was a low rumble in Jerome's chest.

Jason hooked his thumbs into the waistband of the jock and teased, slowly pushing it down. He deliberately slid the back off first, saving his cock and balls for last. As he stepped out of the jock, he was about to toss it over with his jeans when Jerome held his hand out for it. Jason tossed the jock to Jerome, who brought it up to his nose, inhaling deeply. His eyes never left Jason's as he took his time, savoring the scent. Jason shuddered as he watched.

Jerome reached down and gripped his dick, aiming it towards the ceiling. "You want this, Boy?" His voice was slightly muffled by the jock covering his mouth.

Jason could only nod before he ran around to the other side of the bed to get the lube he had stashed there. Coming back, he poured some of the slick silicone over Jerome's dick. He climbed onto the bed, straddled Jerome's cock and sat down quickly, taking it all in one lunge. He clenched his eyes tight, his mouth open in a silent scream. The blinding flash of exquisite pain was exactly what he wanted.

Jerome moaned, his hands gripping Jason's hips hard. Neither man moved, relishing the erotic feeling that each were experiencing.

When Jason opened his eyes, he looked at Jerome, the jock now lying forgotten on the bed beside him. Jason started to rock back and forth, his head falling back, exposing his throat and the heavy five o'clock shadow there. The same shadow could now be seen spreading across his chest and abdomen.

"Ahhh, *fuck*," Jason moaned, as he ground his ass across Jerome's pubic bone.

Jerome pushed and pulled Jason's hips in a grasp that was hard enough to leave bruises. "Christ on a cross, your ass is hot."

Jason flattened his hands on Jerome's fur-covered chest then rose up and sat back down hard, burying Jerome deeply inside him. He did this over and over, each time with more and more force.

Without warning, Jerome grabbed Jason under the legs and stood up, his dick still impaling him. Automatically, Jason wrapped his hands around Jerome's neck, holding on for dear life as his body was held suspended. Jerome turned and dropped Jason onto the bed, his dick staying lodged in his ass as his body followed Jason's down.

Bent almost double, Jason's eyes were opened wide as Jerome slammed into his ass hard, making his breath whoosh out as he grunted.

"You like it hard, Boy?"

"Sir, yes, Sir!"

Jerome pulled back and slammed into the hot ass again.

"Like that?"

"Sir, yes, Sir. Harder, Sir!" Jason all but screamed, his legs on Jerome's shoulders, his ass at least a foot off the bed, and both his and Jerome's weight on his shoulders.

Jerome reached up to take a firm grip of Jason's shoulders then he started to jackhammer his ass.

Jason's neck arched, "Oh... fuck... thank... you... Sir!"

Jerome watched the handsome man's face as he pounded into him as hard as he could. The fuck was almost brutal, but still Jason begged, almost incoherently, for more and harder still. With one hand, Jerome reached down and grabbed one of Jason's pink nipples, pinching and twisting it hard. Jason finally screamed, his face contorting as if in pain, as his dick jerked and started blasting a heavy load of cum, the first shot striping his chin. Jerome twisted harder as he covered Jason's mouth, taking the scream into his own mouth. Still, he continued to pound into Jason, his cum hitting them both on their chins.

They both tasted the coppery tang of blood when Jerome bit down on Jason's lower lip as he started to cum. His rhythm became erratic as he pumped his cream deeply into the man beneath him.

When he had finally finished, each man was breathing heavily. Jason's cum was cooling and starting to drip down his side. He looked up at Jerome's face, with his tightly closed eyes, and he couldn't help but start laughing.

Jerome's eyes flew open, his face scowling. "What the fuck is so funny?"

"Oh, Sir, that was the best fuck of my life!"

Jerome grinned. "Yeah, it was pretty good." He chuckled.

"Again, Sir?"

"You tryin' to kill me, Boy?"

"Never hurts to ask, Sir." Jason smiled.

Jerome shook his head as he pulled his rapidly deflating dick from Jason's well-fucked ass. He groaned slightly as he stood up.

"My back isn't going to survive you," Jerome said, stretching.

Jason got up and headed to the bathroom to clean up. When he returned, Jerome was already under the covers, in the middle of the bed. Jason crawled in too, sidling up close to Jerome. Jerome turned them both, spooning up behind Jason.

"I guess I'm going to need to get the sling put up," Jerome mumbled behind Jason's ear.

Jason smiled and closed his eyes. He was asleep in Jerome's arms in minutes.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The drive to Lafourche Parish was uneventful. For a change, it was cool enough to have the windows down. Jason got a kick out of riding in Jerome's old truck which had a massive spot welder secured in the back. There was a clean saltiness in the air that reminded him of fresh oysters. It was a type of countryside that he had never seen before, and it fascinated him. The huge water oaks dripping with Spanish moss made it seem very romantic.

Looking at Jerome, he asked, "Did you grow up here?"

"We lived in the city most of the time 'cause that's where Daddy worked. He was a welder on one of the docks back then," Jerome answered casually. "I spent most summers as a kid out here with Gran'daddy, though. I love it out here."

"I can see why. It's really beautiful. There's something calm but wild about it at the same time."

Jerome didn't say anything else, but had a slight smile on his face. Jason noticed that the further away they got from New Orleans, the more relaxed Jerome seemed to become. The small lines around his eyes smoothed. The little crease between his eyes all but disappeared and his shoulders seemed to relax.

Jerome pulled off the main road, which was barely two lanes, onto a gravel road. It wasn't long before a white house with a large front porch with four columns came into view. There were several large trees on either side of the house that seemed to frame it perfectly, a gentle breeze making them sway as if they were doing a slow exotic dance. Two little towheaded boys in the front yard were running around in white jockey shorts playing, making both Jerome and Jason grin.

Jason's BMW was parked under one of the trees, alongside a white minivan and an old Dodge truck. Jerome parked next to the other truck. The two little boys came running toward them, whooping and jumping in greeting, their lower legs covered in dust.

Ana and two other women were on the porch by the time they approached the house.

“Why, as I live ’n’ breathe, if it ain’t that handsome devil, Jerome Fontaine,” the older woman said as she opened her arms to him. Jerome readily walked into her warm embrace.

“Yvonne, you’re just as pretty as ever,” Jerome said, hugging her, before kissing her cheek.

“You ain’t changed one bit.” Yvonne laughed. “You is still the devil, flirting just like you always done!” She had the kind of laugh that made you smile or laugh along; it was that infectious.

“You remember my daughter, Rebecca, don’cha, Jerome?” Yvonne beamed.

“Of course I do, Yvonne. I ain’t senile yet,” Jerome smiled at Yvonne’s daughter. “You’re just as pretty as your momma was when she was your age.”

The young woman hugged Jerome, blushing.

Jerome turned to Ana with a slight frown. “Ana.”

“Well, nice to see you too, Jerome,” Ana gruffed, her hands on her hips.

“Yvonne, Rebecca, this is Jason Corleone,” Jerome said introducing Jason.

“He’s my cousin I was telling you about,” Ana chimed in.

“It’s nice to meet all of you,” Jason smiled as he shook hands. “You have a lovely place here.”

“Thank you, Jason,” Yvonne said, smiling as she looked deeply into his eyes, causing him to pause.

“Hank’s inside fixing the washing machine,” Rebecca informed them as she held open the screen door, inviting them inside.

The living area was neat and clean, except for a few toys on the floor. It was nothing fancy, but felt very comfortable, very much a home.

“Can I get y’all some tea?” Yvonne asked.

“That would be great, Yvonne,” Jerome answered.

“Let me go get Hank,” Rebecca said, quickly leaving the room.

“She’s a little on the shy side,” Ana whispered once they were alone.

“I remember her to be a little on the quiet side as a little girl,” Jerome said.

“Hank said he’d be here in a minute. He’s washin’ his hands,” Rebecca said as she followed her mother in with a large pitcher of iced tea.

A large man, who must have been Hank, came into the room, his T-shirt soaked. “Y’all excuse me, but that old pipe just gave out,” he said, wiping his hands on a towel. “I’m Hank, Hank Stapleton,” he held his hand out to Jerome first, then Jason.

“I remember you Hank,” Jerome said. “I remember you playing ball in high school. You were one hell of a left tackle.”

Hank’s face broke into a broad smile. “Yeah, just not good enough to get a scholarship but thank ya just the same.”

“What’s wrong with your pipe?” Jerome asked.

Jason shook his head slightly, thinking; *Leave it to Jerome to worry more about their pipe than his own issues.*

“Oh, hell, that ol’ cast iron fittin’ just gave way,” Hank explained. “You know how these ol’ houses are.”

“Yeah, I do,” Jerome chuckled. “I might be able to help. I’ve got an arc welder on the truck.”

“That’s exactly what I need,” Hank replied, starting to look excited.

“Then let’s go have a look-see and figure somethin’ out,” Jerome said, patting Hank on the shoulder.

As soon as the other men left, Yvonne sat next to Jason, keeping him on the sofa by taking his hand in hers, turning palm up. She studied it for a moment, then looked deep into his eyes.

“Your love is strong,” Yvonne said, almost in wonder. “Strong and pure. You have a chance to be very happy, but you’re unsure that your love will be returned. There is a long history of being hurt by those who are close to you. I think... family?”

Jason looked at the woman, stunned.

She peered back into his open palm. “You have a long, healthy life ahead of you, but you will have trouble soon. You have to make yourself known,” Yvonne said softly, looking into Jason’s eyes again, “You must protect him. He is in grave danger right now, both from someone close, and also from himself. He can be self-destructive, but if you stand with him, he will be yours.”

“I... I’m not sure I... understand,” Jason said hoarsely.

“It’s Jerome, isn’t it?” She asked in a quiet whisper. “You love him. He can, and will, love you just as strongly, if you stand by him now in this time of great need. It is you who needs to protect him. There are evil outside sources that want to do him great harm.” Yvonne explained as she stroked his cheek. “You are his salvation. It is you who must save him, not only from those evil sources, but also from himself.”

“Oh, Momma, no one wants to hear your mumbo jumbo,” Rebecca said as she handed Jason a glass of tea. “You’ll have to excuse her. Sometimes she goes on about silly stuff.”

“And had you listened to me, Rebecca, what happened to you wouldn’t have.” Yvonne snapped.

Rebecca blushed bright red. “I need to go check on the boys.”

Jerome and Hank came back into the room laughing, carrying a piece of old rusted pipe. “We’re gonna run down to the hardware store. We’ll be back in a bit,” Jerome informed them, as he and Hank walked out the front door, letting the screen door bang shut behind them.

Yvonne, Ana and Jason just looked at each other for a moment. Yvonne shook her head and laughed lightly.

“I swear, you give a man a project that involves tools, and he’s gone,” Yvonne said. “Come on, Jason, I have a feelin’ you know your way ’round a kitchen. I know that gal there don’,” she said, indicating Ana.

Jason laughed, “Nope, she can’t even boil water without burning it.”

“That’s not true,” Ana protested, standing up.

“Ana, the last time you tried to boil water for tea, you set off the fire alarms!”

“It was just the one time,” she pouted.

“I think it’s a good day for a boil,” Yvonne informed them. “Rebecca...!” Yvonne shouted out the door. “Go down to Monde’s and get the fixin’s for a boil. Take some of that money outta my purse.”

“Okay, Momma.”

“And make sure to get extra oysters, I know Jerome likes ’em,” she added.

“Okay, Momma,” Rebecca answered again.

Yvonne led the way through the house and out the back door. There were a couple of out buildings, including a chicken coop, which although it fascinated Jason, it just made Ana hold her nose. Jason helped Yvonne set up a large pot on a propane burner.

“There isn’t much ripe in the garden as yet, but I think there might be some red tomatoes ’bout ready and I know there’s some green ones. I know there is some okra ready, so we can definitely use some of that,” she said, strolling down a long row in a large vegetable garden.

“Wow, this is incredible,” Jason said in amazement. “You could feed an army from this garden alone.”

Yvonne had picked up a couple of wooden baskets from the small shed next to the garden, and handed one to Jason. “Rebecca and I will put a lot of things up durin’ the summers. I don’t much care for store bought, so we grow most of our own.”

“That is so cool,” Jason said, excited.

Ana stood at the edge of the garden, just watching.

“Hey, Ana, you going to help?” Jason asked, smiling at his cousin.

“Are you kidding? There might be snakes in there!”

Yvonne just laughed. “City gals never cease to amaze me.”

Jason helped Yvonne pick two baskets full of fresh produce and herbs. They laughed and joked while Ana just stood there looking bored.

The screen door banged, and Hank stepped out. “What’cha doin’ Momma?”

Before she could answer, Jerome drove his truck around the house, parking it right in front of the back door.

“What’s goin’ on?” he asked, getting out.

“Well if’n one of y’all would let me answer,” she said, hands on her hips. “We’re gonna have a boil!”

“Whooo-eee!” Jerome ran over, picked her up and swung her around. “I loves you woman!”

“Put me down, Jerome,” Yvonne laughed. “If’n you get that washer fixed up, I might just make some strawberry shortcakes.”

“With biscuits?” He asked, hopefully.

“Of course.”

Hank and Jerome worked on the washer and Yvonne, Rebecca and Jason worked in the kitchen, while Ana sat back and looked on like they were all crazy. Jason got a lesson in country cooking, and Yvonne even taught him how to make “cathead biscuits”.

They covered a long picnic table under a tall tree with a big plastic table cloth, and shortly after one in the afternoon, they all sat down to eat. Jason and Ana experienced their very first authentic boil, Louisiana style.

While they were eating, Ana explained what she was hoping Hank could do for them. Rebecca was against the idea immediately, while Yvonne looked apprehensive, and Jerome looked embarrassed.

“Once or twice a month I make a run to Atlanta,” Hank explained as he peeled a shrimp. “I’ve always had a feeling that what I was haulin’ wasn’t just seafood. There was always somethin’ not right about that load.”

“What do you mean, Hank?” Ana asked.

“Well, normally I inspect the cargo, ya know, makin’ sure it’s stacked good,” he answered. “On those runs, though, the back is always locked up before I even get it.”

“Do you think you could get inside the trailer?” Ana asked.

“I’m never given the key.”

Ana was silent for a minute, and then started thinking out loud. “Atlanta’s a pretty big city. What if we could find a place where you could take your truck and I got someone to open it up so that no one would be the wiser?”

“No, I don’t think so,” Rebecca spoke up. “Don’t do it, Hank. You know what could happen if you do.”

“Yeah, and I know what will happen if I don’t,” Hank said firmly. “One day I’ll be the one who gets pulled over and caught with God only knows what in the back of that truck.”

“Rebecca, he has a point,” Yvonne said. “I think you need to listen to what Jerome has to say. I know I can trust him, and I think you do too, Hank.”

“Jerome?” Hank asked.

Jerome sat there quietly, his head down. When he lifted his gaze, he looked first at Rebecca, then at Yvonne and finally at Hank. “Hank, I don’t want you to risk your life or livelihood on my behalf. I couldn’t live with myself if anything happened to you or your family.”

“Jerome!” Ana almost exploded.

“Hush, Ana,” Jason said firmly.

“What I can tell y’all, is if Hank is willing to do this for us, and if Ana is right in sayin’ that I’ll end up out right owning this whole thing, I’ll make sure you’re taken care of, Hank. You and your family. I don’t forget those who are like family, and y’all are like my own family. I’ve known Yvonne most all my life, and I know y’all are good folk.”

Everyone was quiet for a bit, waiting on Hank.

Hank looked at Jerome. “If anything happens to me, you gotta make sure to take care of ’Becca and the boys.”

“I swear to you, Hank, that no matter what happens, that is somethin’ you’ll never have to worry about,” Jerome said seriously. “I promise you, I’ll make sure that they will be taken care of to the best of my ability.”

“I’ll do it then,” Hank gave his answer quietly.

“Hank, no.” Rebecca almost yelled.

“I’ve got to ’Becca,” Hank said, turning to her. “It’s gettin’ bad over there and my gut’s tellin’ me that it’s about to get a lot worse.” He took her head in his hands and leaned his forehead to hers. Then he looked to Ana, “You just tell me what you want me to do.”

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Ana, Jerome, and Jason had gotten home a little late and all three went directly to bed. They all, even Ana, had had a wonderful time in Lafourche Parish. Jerome came back relaxed, Ana was happy with the outcome, and Jason felt he knew the new man in his life a lot better.

The next morning things got back to somewhat normal. Jason was able to get a good fuck in with Jerome before the new alarm clock went off, which made him happy. It also seemed to make Jerome quite relaxed as he had his coffee. Things weren't to stay that way though.

Jerome opened the front door to leave, saying, "We'll try and get as much done today on those rails as we can. Maybe we won't be so far behind, even after taking yesterday off."

"Yes, Sir," Jason answered, as he pulled the door shut behind him.

Just as he turned, an old pimped-out Caprice, rounded the corner, tires screeching. Jason looked up and saw a gun poking out of the barely lowered back window.

"Watch out!" He yelled as he tackled Jerome, taking him to the floor of the front porch.

Multiple shots rang out, the windows to the living room shattered, as did those of the front door. The car raced off, leaving the two men with hearts racing, ears ringing and astounded as they lay on the floor, Jason on top of Jerome.

"What the fuck?" Ana came out of the house screaming. "Ouch, motherfucker!" she screeched as she stepped on broken glass, cutting her foot.

"Ana, stand still, don't move," Jason commanded her.

"Easy for you to say," she yelled, holding up her bleeding foot while balancing on the other.

Jason got up, held out a hand to Jerome, and helped him to his feet. He then went over and picked up his cousin, carrying her into the house. He sat her on the kitchen counter.

“Jerome, call the police,” Jason shouted.

“Who the fuck was that?” Ana started.

“Shut up, Ana.” Jason said quietly.

Ana didn’t say another word, but listened to Jerome as he called the police.

Jason went into the bathroom and got a wet cloth, some alcohol, and a large bandage.

“Jason, just saved my life,” Jerome muttered to himself, while on hold. “Police are on their way,” Jerome confirmed moments later. “You okay, Ana?”

“I’m pissed is what I am,” Ana yelled. “I’ve not even had a cup of coffee and all hell’s broken loose.” She didn’t even notice that Jerome sounded concerned about her well-being.

Jason poured a cup of coffee and handed it to her. “Will you calm down now?” Turning to Jerome he asked, “Did you recognize the car?”

“Never seen it before,” Jerome shook his head. “Who would want to shoot me?”

“I have a feeling it might be your dear, beloved Uncle Bart,” Ana scoffed, blowing on the hot coffee. “I think we may have hit a nerve somewhere. This is getting serious. It appears that we’ve been found out. I need to call the office. Jason, would you go get my cell phone please?”

“Sure,” Jason ran up the stairs two at a time.

“Jerome, someone is playing hardball,” Ana said quietly. “It might be wise if we got you out of town.”

“I’m not fucking leaving!” Jerome paced back and forth over broken glass that covered almost everything in the living room. “I’m not going to be run out of my own home.”

“Then we are going to have to take some extra precautions. You have Jason to consider now.”

That stopped Jerome dead in his tracks. He looked at Ana. “What should I do?”

“First off, you can’t walk to work anymore,” she started, as Jason returned with the phone. “Change up your routine. Stay inside and away from the windows until we can figure something out.”

Jason doctored Ana’s foot as she made a call. Sirens, then screeching tires, alerted them that the police had arrived. Jerome watched as three patrol cars skidded to a stop in front of his house. He could see neighbors standing in various stages of dress on their porches and sidewalks, staring at the commotion.

Mass confusion ensued. One cop interviewed first Jerome and then Jason. Two other policemen walked around asking neighbors if they had seen or heard anything. Ana was on the phone with Diane, and then one of the partners in her law firm.

Jason swept up the glass while the policeman interviewed Jerome. Then it was Ana’s turn to confirm their account of what happened. They all had pretty much the same story, so it checked out as far as the police were concerned. It was being referred to as a drive-by shooting, unless any more evidence was produced.

It was just before noon when Marie showed up pushing a cart in front of her. The police were just pulling away as she made her way up to the steps.

“Honey, will you get that buggy up here for me?” Marie asked Jason as she made her way up the front steps.

“Of course,” Jason replied.

Marie took Jerome into her arms, crushing him to her bosom. “Baby, what’s goin’ on?”

“Missing another day’s work is what’s going on,” Jerome growled. “It’s like some force is against me finishing this fucking job. That’s what’s up!”

“Yous jes about gits yorese’f kill’t and you’s a fussin’ ’bout some work? You’s jes plain crazy, Jerome Fontaine.”

Jason pushed the small cart inside the house.

“Honey, g’won take tha’ ta the kitchen,” Marie told Jason.

There was a knock on what was left of the front door. Everyone turned to see a young man standing there.

“Cameron?” Jerome asked, his eyes as big as saucers.

“Uh... hello, Uncle Jerome,” the twenty-something said.

Jason could tell that he must be David’s son. He could have been *Jerome’s* son, the family resemblance was so strong.

“What are you doing here?” Jerome scowled. “If you’re here to try and get me...”

Cameron cut him off. “I’m not here for my father or Grandpa, Uncle Jerome. I’m here... I’m here for you.”

“Umm, wait a minute,” Ana interjected. “Uncle? If he is David’s son that means he is your second cousin, right?”

“Technically, yeah,” Jerome said. “But try and explain that to a three year old. Uncle just made things easier.”

Ana nodded understanding.

“Well come on in Cameron, no sense in just standing there in the doorway.” Jerome motioned for the young man to come inside.

“I’m so sorry, Uncle Jerome,” Cameron burst into tears and threw himself at Jerome, wrapping his arms around the older man.

“Here, here, what’s all this,” Jerome held the young man, stroking his head.

“It was Father who tried to have you killed this morning.”

“What?” Four voices asked all at once in a chorus.

Cameron looked at everyone in the room. A frightened look came over his face. "Maybe I shouldn't be here," he said as he tried to push Jerome away.

"Why would you say that about your daddy, Cameron?" Jerome asked softly, still stroking the boy's head.

"Because... it's true," Cameron answered in a whisper.

"Can you prove that?" Ana asked the young man as she stepped closer.

"Who are you?" Cameron asked suspiciously.

"Cameron, this is Ana Rizzo and her cousin Jason Corleone," Jerome introduced the two. "And that behemoth in the kitchen is none other than Marie Freeman."

"Hmph, insults me afta I done brought food!"

"Um... nice to meet y'all," Cameron said, still not certain about them.

"Cameron, anything you say to me, you can say in front of them," Jerome smiled at the boy. "They're my friends."

"Really? Would never know it," Ana snarked.

"Okay, with the exception of her, but she's a necessary evil," Jerome said, scowling at Ana.

Cameron and Jason both laughed. Cameron stepped away from Jerome and walked towards Jason, his hand extended.

"I'm glad to meet you," Cameron said with a big smile. "Anyone who can send my father into fits like you've done, I'm pleased to meet."

"I did?" Jason smiled as he shook Cameron's hand.

"Oh, you did," Cameron laughed. "I've never seen him so tore up."

"I'm not so sure that's a good thing," Jason smiled.

"I think so," Cameron smiled.

"Okay, are you going to tell us about this bombshell you just dropped?" Ana asked.

Cameron looked questioningly at Jerome. Jerome nodded his head okay.

“I just took the bar exam, and while waiting on the scores to come back, Father has me working at the law firm, mostly doing odd jobs.” He looked at Jerome again. “I hate it there.”

“Do I know that feeling,” Jason said bitterly.

“Ignore him,” Ana huffed. “Go on.”

“I got bored yesterday and started playing on Father’s computer while he and Grandpa were over at another firm in a meeting,” Cameron resumed. “Anyway, I ran across a file that had your name on it, Uncle Jerome, and I opened it. I put it on this,” Cameron held up a flash drive. “It was buried pretty deep. It was pure luck that I found it.”

“Let me have that,” Ana demanded, her hand held out. “Jason go...”

She hadn’t finished before Jason interrupted, “I’m on it.”

Jason came back with his laptop, set it up on the counter and booted it up. Taking the flash drive from Ana, he inserted it into the USB port. At this point, he let Ana take over, since she knew what she was looking for.

You could have heard a pin drop in the room until Ana said, “Oh... My... God!”

“What?” Jerome asked.

“We’ve got ’em. We have fucking got them,” Ana squealed.

Ana jumped up and started dancing around the room. Jason sat down at the computer and started reading as well. He took longer to read than Ana had, and by the time he was finished his face was white.

“Honey... wha’s a matter?” Marie asked, looking concerned.

“Sir... David has... your cousin has taken a hit out on you!”

“He did what?” Jerome’s mouth fell open. “I mean, I know we’ve never gotten along and that he hates me, but enough to have me killed?”

“Uncle Jerome, it’s worse than that,” Cameron hung his head.

“What is it, Cam?” Jerome asked quietly.

“There is just so much more...” Cameron looked at Jerome, then Jason. “He hates fags. Mom and he have been contributing to all kinds of groups who try to block legislation that is even remotely pro-gay. Somehow, he has it in his mind that you are a stain on the family name.”

“That doesn’t surprise me. No offense, Cam, but your mom is some piece of work.” Jerome shook his head. “I think she hates anyone who isn’t white and rich.”

“Yeah, pretty much,” Cameron smiled.

“Oh, my God!” Jason stood up. “Is it true about your grandfather, Cameron?” Jason asked expectantly. “Did your father really do this?”

“If you’re talking about blackmailing him, then yes.” Cameron answered. “Uncle Jerome, Grandpa doesn’t hate you, never has.”

“Hmph, you’d never prove it by me,” Jerome scowled again.

“Father has had the goods on Grandpa for almost thirty years now. Grandpa has been nothing but a puppet,” Cameron said bitterly.

“What are you talking about, Cam?” Jerome took him by the shoulders.

“Grandpa is gay too.”

There was a knock on the doorframe, since the door had been removed and was currently being replaced by a company Jerome had called.

“May we come in?” Rebecca asked, Hank right behind her.

“Rebecca? Hank?” Ana said as she walked over to the door. “Sure, come on in.”

“What’s been going on here?” Hank asked, looking around and noticing that there were no windows in the front of the house and that the door was being replaced.

“It’s a long story. What’s up?” Ana asked.

“I don’t want Hank involved in this,” Rebecca started. “And I think this is proof enough that he shouldn’t be.”

“Hush, now, ’Becca,” Hank shushed his wife gently. “Things have gotten really weird down at the docks. They’ve got all kinds of security guards roamin’ around now with machine guns, and they got me scheduled to make two runs to Atlanta this week. They also got another guy booked to do two trips as well.”

“Is that uncommon?” Ana asked.

“Oh, yeah. That’s like quadruple what is the norm,” Hank answered, obviously out of sorts about it.

“It’s too dangerous,” Rebecca fretted.

There was yet another knock on the doorframe, and a large man filled the empty space.

“Father?” Jason questioned, not believing his eyes.

“Hello, son, Ana,” the big man answered, walking into the room.

“What are you doing here?” Jason asked, stunned to see his father in New Orleans.

“I have come to take you home, as you’re evidently not in your right mind,” Mr. Corleone answered snidely. “Go get your things and we can leave. Ana, you are welcome to fly back with us.”

“I’m not going anywhere, Father, and neither is Ana.” Jason said defiantly.

“Don’t you take that tone with me, Jason, I’m your father and I deserve respect. You will do as I say.”

“As far as I’m concerned, you are a sperm donor, nothing more,” Jason said quietly, but firmly, standing up to the man for the first time in his life.

Francis Corleone slapped his son across the face, hard. “How dare you speak to me like that? This is precisely why you need to come home. This type of... *environment* isn’t healthy for you.”

Jerome pushed Jason out of the way and stood toe to toe with the elder Corleone. “Mine. You want to hit what’s mine again, you’ll have to go through me first.”

“Who the hell are you?” Francis Corleone asked smugly.

“This is *my* house,” Jerome started.

“You call this a house?” Jason’s father laughed. “This is a shack compared to what my son is used to.”

“Father, I am *not* going home with you, so please, leave.” Jason said, calmly stepping beside Jerome to show a united front.

“You’re coming home with me, Jason, if I have to physically drag you!” his father yelled.

Jerome growled, his face tight.

“You have a leash for this mongrel?” Francis asked, making that his first mistake.

Jerome’s arm flew up and out, his fist landing squarely in Jason’s father’s face.

Francis Corleone fell backwards, across the coffee table, landing on his ass, his feet up in the air, suspended by the heavy wooden table. Blood was streaming from his nose and lips.

“I should have warned you, Uncle Francis,” Ana giggled. “Don’t poke the bear.”

Without warning, there was a loud banging from the kitchen. Everyone turned to see Marie standing in the doorway hitting the bottom of a pot with a wooden spoon.

“Y’all come on an’ eats yous sumptin’. You’s gonna needs y’all strength to keep a fightin’.”

When everyone turned, they could see there was a huge buffet set up on the breakfast counter.

“Jason, come on over heres and gets this towel. Put you some ice in it and gives it to yo daddy,” she said, holding up an old kitchen towel.

“What the hell is this place?” Francis Corleone asked in a muffled voice from the floor. “A looney bin?”

Hank held out his hand to help the man up. “Hi, I’m Hank Stapleton and this here is my wife, Rebecca,” he said, introducing himself.

“I don’t care who the hell you are,” Francis said, refusing to take the hand and standing on his own.

“Here, Father,” Jason said, handing him the towel with ice.

Jason’s father snatched it out of his hand. “I should have you arrested for assault!” he yelled at Jerome.

“Technically, Uncle Francis, you provoked him in his own home and committed assault on Jason,” Ana informed him. “He could have *you* arrested for battery, the assault, and he has many witnesses here who are his friends. Who do you think would get out of jail first?”

“Come an’ gits it,” Marie said, pushing Rebecca and Hank towards the counter, then grabbed Jerome by the belt and turned him around.

“Get your hands off me, Marie,” Jerome snarled.

“Don’ yous take that tone with me, Jerome Fontaine, I’ll slaps them teef right outta yore mouf! Now gits on over there an’ eats,” Marie fussed at him. “I bets none y’all et at all taday!”

“Damn, Marie, I don’t feel like eatin’,” Jerome started to pout.

“Jerome, you gits yo ass on over there. I ain’t never knowed yous to not et an oyster. G’won now.”

Marie took Jason by the ear. “Yous too now.”

She turned to Ana, eying her up and down. “You’s just a pretty little thang, ain’t ya? You’s the cousin?”

Ana smiled widely. “Why, yes, I am.”

“I’m Marie, Marie Freeman. I’s pleased to meets you. I’s knowed Jerome mos’ my life. He’s a bit on the ornery side, but he’s like kin to me,” Marie chuckled as she watched Jerome load up a plate full of fried oysters, grilled shrimp and red beans and rice.

Then she turned her attention to Jason’s father. “Yo nose g’wona be a’right?”

“What’s it to you?” He snapped back.

“Didn’ no ones ever tell ya that you gits more flies with sugar than vinegar?” She shook her head at him. “Yous too. G’won and gits yous a plate.”

“I’m not...”

“Oh, yes you is,” Marie said, grabbing him by the front of his shirt and pulling him along to the food on the counter. Standing there, she picked up a plate. “You’s gonna eats if’n I gotta feeds ya,” she said as she started filling a plate for the shocked man.

“You people are crazy!” Jason’s dad said, shaking his head.

“Uncle Francis, it’s best to just go with the flow down here,” Ana giggled as she sat on the floor, her plate on the coffee table. “You won’t win here, that’s just a fact.”

Rebecca and Hank were sitting at the small table while Jerome sat on the sofa, the plate only inches from his nose as he practically inhaled the fried oysters. Jason sat next to him, a little smile on his face, their legs touching. Cameron, still somewhat shocked, sat in the one and only chair in the living room, his plate heaped with shrimp and oysters as well.

“Mr. Francis, yous g’won and sit down heres,” Marie said pulling out the other chair at the small table. “Once you’s wrap yo lips ’round some of them oysters, yous’ll quiet down soon’s ’nuff,” Marie chuckled.

Marie got herself a plate and sat on the other end of the sofa, close enough to touch Jason. “Now... ain’t this nice?”

Jerome grunted. Jason smiled fondly at the big black woman. Ana just sat grinning and nodding.

“These oysters are amazin’, ma’am,” Hank said, wiping his mouth.

“Thank ya,” Marie smiled.

Francis Corleone looked around the room. He picked up an oyster and popped it into his mouth. His eyebrows shot up as he looked over at Marie, who was watching for his reaction.

“This...” he licked his fingers. “This is truly outstanding.”

“Why thank you, Mr. Francis,” Marie giggled.

“Marie has her own restaurant, Father,” Jason said, smiling at Marie. “She’s an incredible cook.”

“Yes, I see that she is,” Jason’s father conceded.

The workers finally got the door hung as everyone else finished up eating; giving them some privacy from the outside world, even though there still weren’t any windows toward the street.

Jerome got up, rubbing his belly. “Thank you, Marie. That was as tasty as ever. I’m sorry if I was hard on you.”

Marie looked at Jerome, her mouth open, then Jason.

“Don’t look at me!” Jason laughed, standing up with his empty plate.

“Come on, Boy, we need to get some plywood up on these windows,” Jerome said, heading towards the back of the house.

“Hold on, Jerome, I’ll help y’all out,” Hank said, also getting up. Cameron followed the trio out too, leaving Jason’s father alone in a room full of women.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Jerome opened up the lattice-covered crawl space underneath the back of the house.

“I’ve got all this plywood already cut to cover the windows in case of a hurricane,” he explained. “Each is marked for a specific window, so I just need to find the ones for the front.”

“Where’s the drill and screws?” Hank asked.

“In the utility room,” Jerome answered.

“I’ll get ’em,” Jason volunteered.

It didn’t take Jerome long before he had the plywood pieces he was looking for pulled out. Jerome, Hank and Cameron carried them to the front of the house. Jason showed up with the tools needed moments later.

They started putting up the covering for the windows. Cameron held the plywood while Hank screwed them in place with the cordless screwdriver.

“Cameron?” Jerome started hesitantly. “What did you mean that Uncle Bart is gay?”

Cameron glanced quickly at Jerome, then looked down. “Daddy found out that Grandpa was having an affair not long after he joined the firm, Uncle Jerome. He made it his mission to find out who it was with.”

Cameron stopped. “Go on,” Jerome prodded.

“He didn’t count on it being ol’ Mr. Shipe.”

“Mr. Shipe!” Jerome nearly dropped the corner of the piece of plywood he was holding in place. “That ol’ coot at the bank?”

“Yes, Sir, that’d be the one.” Cameron smiled slightly. “Although he probably wasn’t such an ol’ coot back then.”

Jerome thought for a moment. “Damn, that had to have been... almost thirty years ago.”

“Close to it,” Cameron confirmed. “From what I’ve been able to find out, it’s still going on too.”

“Why that ol’ rooster,” Jerome laughed. “I didn’t know he had it in him.”

Cameron frowned. “Daddy has been holding that over his head all these years, Uncle Jerome, making him do things I don’t think he would do otherwise. Like what he did to your daddy. Grandpa isn’t all that bad, Uncle Jerome, honest.”

“I still find it hard to believe, but I can see where it could happen,” Jerome said sadly.

“Uncle Jerome?”

Jerome stepped away from the house, picking up the next piece of plywood they needed. He looked at his nephew, who looked so much like he had at that age, “Yeah, Cam?”

“I’m gay too.”

“Ah, Cam,” Jerome hugged the younger version of himself. “It’s okay, you know *I* don’t care.”

“Thanks, Uncle Jerome,” he said almost shyly.

“I guess that makes me the odd man out,” Hank laughed. “I’m the only non-gay man here?”

Jerome chuckled. “We won’t hold it against ya, Hank.”

“You’re not the only one if you count my Father,” Jason said sadly.

“No offense, Jason, but I think I’d rather be gay than like him,” Hank said sharply.

“No offense taken,” Jason smiled at the straight man standing there.

“Yous have ’nuf, Mr. Francis?” Marie asked.

“If you don’t mind, I would like a few more of those oysters,” he answered almost shyly. “They are spectacular,” he complimented, holding out the plate to Marie.

“Then gits up an’ gits ’em. Yo legs broke or sumpthin?”

Francis Corleone’s mouth hung open before he got to his feet. He helped himself to more of the wonderful food and sat back down.

“You know, Uncle Francis, you’re not going to be able to force Jason to go back to Philadelphia with you,” Ana said, as gently as she could.

“Yes I can, and he *will* go back with me,” he responded to his niece. “And if you know what’s good for you, you’ll do the same Luciana!”

“Listen here, Uncle Francis, I’m a grown woman and I will make my own decisions,” Ana retorted, standing up, her hands on her hips. “Neither you, nor my father, will dictate to *me* what I can or cannot do!”

“I’m not your father so I can’t control you, but I can my own son,” he barked at his brother’s daughter. “That boy has no idea what’s good for him, and *this* isn’t good for him.”

“Mr. Francis, I don’t know if you’ve noticed or not, but Jason ain’t no boy. He’s a grown up man,” Marie said gently. “He’s a mighty fine man too.”

“I don’t know any of y’all, but I did spend all day yesterday with Jason, and he is a kind and gentle man, sir,” Rebecca said timidly. “He’s a fine gentleman.”

“Uncle Francis, I’ve never seen Jason as happy as he has been here.” Ana said, kneeling beside her uncle. “Did you know that Jason was considering suicide before he left home?”

“What?” Francis Corleone choked.

“He was, Uncle Francis. He’s been that unhappy.”

“Why didn’t he tell me?” Jason’s father looked shocked.

“Uncle Francis, you either wouldn’t have listened, or you would have put him in some hospital, and you know it,” Ana said frankly. “You never listen to Jason, never have.”

“Mr. Francis, Jason don’ needs a father, that boy needs a daddy,” Marie said, placing one of her large hands on his arm. “They’s a big diff’ence ya knows?”

“Uncle Francis, Jason only ever wanted you to love him for who and what he is.”

“I do love him. He’s my son.”

“Do you?” Ana asked, her eyebrows raised. “Do you really love Jason for who he is? Because it looks like you have done everything for him *but* show him any kind of affection.”

“I... I have tried to give him everything.” Francis Corleone snapped.

“Uncle Francis... I think you were jealous of Jason,” Ana said quietly, staring at the floor before looking back up at her uncle.

“How in the hell do you figure that, Luciana?” he asked shocked.

“You were jealous of his relationship with your own father.”

“Why... that is just preposterous. I never...”

“Think about it, Uncle Francis.” Ana nudged his knee with her elbow.

“They were as thick as thieves those two,” Francis thought back. “I never knew what they were up to. The two of them were always off in a corner together having a good time.”

“And?” Ana prodded further.

“Okay, I guess I was a little jealous, but I’ve always done what I thought best for Jason,” he rationalized. “He has never been as strong as his brother Frank.”

“Yes, he *is* as strong as Frank,” Ana spat out. “Hell, he is so much stronger, and a much better man, than Frank could ever hope to be.”

“What are you talking about, Ana?” her uncle asked starting to look angry.

“I’m surprised you don’t know,” Ana looked harshly at her uncle, “or do you? Frank has a really bad reputation as a womanizer. As a matter of fact, there have been a few times where it was more than likely flat-out rape! It was always hushed up, but I have a feeling you knew about it.”

“No, not Frank,” Francis Corleone said. “He knows better. I taught him better than that. Sure, I knew he had an occasional fling, but nothing like that! I never covered for him in that regard.”

“Yeah, just like you,” Ana spat out. “Typical isn’t it?” she said, her anger apparent. “Jason is a grown man, a good man, and truth be told, a better man than *you* and *Frank* put together!”

“Now you listen here, Ana, I won’t...”

“You won’t what? Huh, Uncle Francis?” Ana stood up so she was looking down on him. “You won’t take your licks? Tell me it isn’t true. Go on, deny it.”

“I don’t have to...”

“You don’t have to what, Uncle Francis? Admit that you were wrong?” Ana was furious, her face red. “The only thing Jason has ever done is try to do what pleases *you*! And what have you done for him? Turned his mother into an alcoholic by chasing skirts all over town, embarrassing her and the rest of the family? Make him go to law school when he didn’t really want to. What you have done to your own family is disgraceful.”

Francis Corleone looked beaten.

“Uncle Francis, it isn’t too late,” Ana softened a bit. “Jason wants to love you, but if you don’t at least meet him halfway, you are going to lose him forever. If you love him like you say you do, you need to show it, and show it now before it’s too late.”

“Mr. Francis, you might wanna lis’en to this gal,” Marie said, squeezing his arm. “She shore is smart. I’s thinks she be right on this ’un.”

Francis looked at Marie, his eyes sad. "I really only wanted what was best for him. It was his being gay that made me think he was so unhappy."

"He seems very happy here," Rebecca said softly, also reaching out and touching Jason's father's arm. "He's a very gentle man."

Francis looked around at each face. "I do love my son, no matter what he is."

"Then you need to show him that, Uncle Francis. Soon."

There was a clatter and loud voices coming from the back of the house, as the rest of the men came back inside. One by one, they filtered into the living room area.

"We got all the windows covered up for the night," Hank said as he stood next to his wife, kissing her on the top of her head.

Jason's father stood up as his son came into the room. Jason kept his eyes averted, not looking at his father. Slowly, Francis Corleone approached his son.

"Jason..." He took Jason into his arms, holding him tight.

Jason looked shocked, his arms hanging loosely to his sides, his eyes wide open as well as his mouth.

"Jason," Francis said, standing back a bit, but still holding on. "I... I've been wrong on so many levels and I hope that you can forgive me, son."

"Father...?"

His father cut him off. "Just listen, Jason. Luciana has pointed out to me, something that I don't think I ever realized until right now." He took a deep breath. "I think that I've been jealous of you ever since you were a little boy. I just didn't know it."

"What?" Jason looked even more surprised. "Jealous? Of me?"

"You were closer to my own father than I ever was. I think that maybe I resented you for it." He took another deep breath. "But with that said, I have

always done what I thought was best for you. I only wanted you to be happy and successful. I guess I just went about it all wrong.”

“I understood Grandfather,” Jason smiled gently. “Grandfather understood me too, I think. He seemed to know me better than I did”

“And I think that I picked up on that, Jason,” Francis sighed. “I just... I don’t think he really let me know him the way he did you, and now that I look back, I think... that I resented you for that. I never had that connection with him.”

“I hate being a lawyer,” Jason finally said, his head down. “I never wanted to go to law school.”

“Why didn’t you say so?” Francis asked his son.

“I... I didn’t want to disappoint you.”

“Oh, Jason, I’m so sorry.” Francis hugged his son close to him again. “I do love you, Jason. I just want you to be happy. I don’t understand this gay thing, I may never understand it, but I’ll try. As it was so rudely pointed out to me, you are a better man than I, but I swear to you, I’m going to try to do better. I will give you my promise.”

Jason returned his father’s hug, tears streaming down his face. “I love you too... Daddy.” For the first time in Jason’s life, he felt the warmth of his father’s love and relished being in his arms.

The two men just stood there holding each other for a long time. Everyone else in the room was quiet, with hardly a dry eye in the place. Even Jerome’s eyes were shiny.

“I’s thinkin’ it’s ’bout time for some pie an’ coffee, don’ y’all?” Marie hefted herself up and went into the kitchen. “I done brought pecan, o’course,” she smiled widely at Jerome. “an’ peach an’ a strawbury. Y’all come on an’ hep yo own selves.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The next day proved to be even more bizarre than the day before. Although Jerome and Jason went to the shop as usual, they were actually driven there by Ana in Jason's car. They were given strict instructions that they were not to walk anywhere, and to drive as little as possible.

Just before lunch, Jason heard glass breaking at the front of the shop. Jerome hadn't heard it since he was using the grinder and had ear protectors on. When Jason went around the wall dividing the shop from the tiny reception area, he saw fire spreading across the floor to the small counter blocking the front door.

"Fire!" he screamed, running to Jerome waving his arms. "Fire!" he yelled again, Jerome hearing him this time.

Both men ran to the front of the shop. The whole reception area was in flames, smoke filling the small space. Thinking quickly, Jerome ran to the welding station and grabbed a large fire extinguisher while Jason called the fire department. It took some work, but Jerome was able to extinguish the fire, leaving white powder filling the air instead of smoke.

They could hear the sirens as the fire department approached, but they both smelled smoke again. Walking back into the shop area, they saw more smoke coming in from under the double steel doors.

"We need to get out of here," Jason yelled, pulling Jerome back towards the front of the building where they could get out the front door.

It wasn't easy to convince Jerome to leave it to the professionals, but with the shop rapidly filling with smoke, he eventually stopped fighting as he began to choke on the smoke. Standing on the sidewalk coughing, they watched as the NOFD battled to put out the fire in the back of the old building.

EMT's had to practically force Jerome to use an oxygen mask, while Jason took advantage of the clean air without needing any persuasion. They felt helpless as thick black smoke billowed up from the back of the building, and

they were unable to do anything but watch. It wasn't long before the police also showed up, and right behind them were Ana and Cameron.

"What are you doing here?" Jason choked.

"We gotta get you out of here *now!*" Ana said, just as a man in a dark suit approached.

"I can't leave," Jerome coughed. "That's my business on fire, if you haven't noticed."

"Mr. Fontaine," the newcomer said as he approached. "I'm Special Agent Tanner, FBI."

"What the fuck?" Jerome looked from Ana to the FBI agent. "What is the FBI doing here?"

Just then, the fire chief walked up to the small group. "Who is the business owner here?"

"I am," Jerome answered, tossing aside the plastic face mask.

"Sir, this was definitely a case of arson," he said sourly. "Someone set old tires on fire and leaned them against the building. The steel doors prevented a lot of damage, but the wooden part of the building has been severely compromised I'm afraid."

Jerome started to go to see for himself, but was stopped by the fire fighter. "Sir, they are still working back there. You can't be back there."

"The hell I can't," Jerome tried to jerk free.

"Mr. Fontaine, I need to speak with you and Mr. Corleone right now," Special Agent Tanner said, stepping in front of him. "I have reliable information that your lives are in danger. This fire was meant to kill you."

"What the hell?" Jerome stood there in disbelief.

"What the...?" Jason said too, as he watched his father walk towards them. "Father, what are you doing here?"

"I'm going to get your asses out of here," Francis Corleone snarled, somewhat nasally.

Jason had to hide his grin after hearing him talk. The swollen nose, fat lip and traces of a black eye were incongruous with the five-hundred-dollar suit he was wearing.

“Gentlemen, we need to get off the street,” urged Mr. FBI.

“Uncle Francis, can you take them home?” Ana asked her Uncle.

“Of course,” he answered without hesitation.

“That can only be a short stop I’m afraid,” Special Agent Tanner quickly added. “We need to get them to a safe location, and fast.”

“Wait a minute. Just fucking wait!” Jerome yelled. “I’m not going anywhere until I get some goddamned answers.”

“Sir, I will explain as much as I can once we get you off the street,” Agent Tanner tried to soothe Jerome without much success.

“What about my shop?” Jerome was close to losing it.

“Sir... Sir,” Jason held his shoulders and forced Jerome to focus on him. “Let’s go home and get some lunch and let the fire department take care of the shop for now.”

“Uncle Jerome?” Cameron said somewhat quietly. “Please?”

“Ah, *fuck!*” Jerome said, running his hand through his short hair. “Okay, let’s go.”

They rode the short distance in the big black sedan that Jason’s father had rented, in silence. When they reached Jerome’s house, where the windows were still boarded up, Jerome unlocked the door and stomped in. The rest followed him in single file. Soon the living room was full with Ana, Agent Tanner, Cameron, Jason, his father, and Jerome.

“Can someone, anyone, tell me what the fuck is going on?” Jerome snarled.

“Jerome, let me try and explain,” Ana started. She was dressed in a raw silk, grey suit, looking every bit the professional high-powered lawyer she was. “Your cousin David has figured out that someone connected to Jason has

been poking their nose into his business. Right now, he doesn't know that it goes beyond him."

"And he's wanting me dead over that?" Jerome said, shaking his head in disbelief.

"Listen, if you're out of the picture, then there will be no obstacle for him to do what he wants. After getting a warrant to follow the money, we discovered it's a lot bigger than any of us originally thought," Ana said seriously. "Jerome, this is much bigger than even I was expecting."

"I'm still not seeing where..." Jerome was at a loss for words.

"Here's the deal, Mr. Fontaine," Agent Tanner took over. "Not only does David Fontaine benefit from your untimely demise, but he needs to make sure that Mr. Corleone, Jason, is also permanently silent, since he isn't certain just how much he has been able to discover."

"Me?" Jason asked shocked.

"So far he thinks you're the only one doing all the snooping," Ana supplied that tidbit of information. "No one knows I'm here... yet, and Diane, who has also worked for Jason, is the perfect tie-in."

"Mr. Fontaine, your cousin has resources that are... far reaching," Agent Tanner said, looking at Ana uncomfortably. "Sir, he has contacts that will guarantee your death."

"This can't be happening," Jerome rubbed his face.

"Jerome, if it helps at all, it won't be for long." Ana said gently, touching his arm.

That is when Jerome really lost it.

"What the hell am I supposed to do? Huh?" Jerome started screaming. "I'm already days behind schedule. I've got obligations and contracts. My shop has just almost burned to the ground and is unsecured. I've got... Don't you people..."

Ana stepped up and slapped Jerome hard, shocking everyone in the room, especially Jerome.

“Listen up, asshole, you can’t do much of anything if you’re dead,” Ana said, poking Jerome in the chest. “And just so you’re clear on this, you are *not* the only one whose life is on the line now either. You go off and get Jason hurt or killed because of this and you won’t just have your family to worry about, you’ll have to worry about me finding and kicking your ass! Now sit down and shut your fucking trap!” Ana pushed Jerome with the flat of her hand, causing him to sit down hard on the sofa.

Ana turned to say something to Jason, but stopped dead. He was looking at her as if he were ready to rip her head off. His fists were clenched so tight his knuckles were white, and his face was red with anger.

Ana finally found her voice. “Jason, he was getting hysterical, I had to do something.”

With an obvious effort, Jason’s face calmed slightly. He looked down at his hands, flexing them. Taking a deep breath, he held it in before slowly letting it out, and then managed to say, “Don’t hit Jerome again, Ana.”

Ana only nodded.

Special Agent Tanner broke the uncomfortable silence. “We need to get these two under wraps quickly. Best place is probably going to be a hotel for now.”

“I’m not—” Jerome started, until Ana turned and looked at him sternly.

“We need to get Jerome, Jason, and Cameron all together in a secure place before everything goes down,” Tanner repeated to no one in particular, as he pulled out his cell phone.

“If I have to go to a hotel, then I’ll only go to the Phoenix,” Jerome stated flatly. “There is no negotiation on that.”

Tanner scowled briefly. “Where is it?”

“On Dauphine, between Mandeville and Marigny Streets,” Jerome answered, almost defiantly.

“I’ll need to make sure it is securable before—” Tanner started before Jerome cut him off.

“Oh, it is secure. Trust me, I helped make it that way,” Jerome said proudly.

“What do you mean, ’before everything goes down’?” Cameron asked timidly.

“Mr. Fontaine, Cameron,” Special Agent Tanner said, “I can’t tell you a lot but what I can tell you is that things are about to become very unpleasant for your father and grandfather. Since you are the one who turned over indisputable evidence, your life could also be at risk.”

“I see,” Cameron said, looking at his feet.

“What about my shop?” Jerome almost whined.

“Jerome, I’ll take care of it,” Jason’s dad said, stepping forward.

Jason and Jerome both looked stunned. Jason stood up and walked to his father. “Thanks, Father.”

Francis Corleone pulled his son into a hug. “Think you can just call me... Dad?”

Jason, unable to speak, looked at his father and nodded.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Agent Tanner pulled up to the address that Jerome had given him on Dauphine Street. “This it?” he asked, looking up at the building. “There’s no sign.”

“Nope, no sign needed.” Jerome smiled sourly “Only people who know about The Phoenix are those who want, or need, to know about it.”

The only outward sign that it was indeed The Phoenix was the ornate cast and wrought iron gate, which was fashioned to resemble a phoenix in flight. Beyond the gate they could see a long hall lit by overhead gas lights. Beyond that was another iron gate that no one could see through. Beside the front gate was an intercom box.

“You called the owner?” Tanner asked.

“Yeah, he’s expecting us,” Jerome answered. “Just ring the intercom and he’ll buzz us in.”

“Okay, you guys wait here,” Tanner said as he got out of the double parked car.

“Did you make that gate, Sir?” Jason asked Jerome in awe.

For the first time that day, Jerome smiled. “Yeah, I did. Like it?”

“Wow, Uncle Jerome,” Cameron said in admiration.

“That is beautiful, Sir.” Jason added.

“I worked steadily on this place for almost five years,” Jerome said, almost wistfully.

The three men in the car heard the buzzer and saw Tanner motion to them. They quickly got out of the car, grabbed their bags, and went through the gate they had been admiring. The gate at the other end of the long corridor opened, allowing them to see into a large courtyard area with a large rectangular swimming pool.

“Wow,” Jason exclaimed as they walked through. “It’s... amazing.”

“I did all the balconies,” Jerome pointed out. There were long balconies on the second story of all four sides, and even more elaborate balconies on the one side that had more than two stories. Bougainvillea vines were draped all over the place in an explosion of color. There was a sweet perfume riding on the air, adding to the atmosphere in the tranquil courtyard. Planters bursting with color were placed around the pool, creating separate lounging areas.

“What the hell you got yourself mixed up in, Jerome?” a voice behind them asked as the internal gate closed and locked.

The four men turned to see a shorter hairy man wearing a very skimpy black bikini. While three of them stood with their mouths agape, Jerome leaned down and hugged the shorter man before kissing him on the lips, causing Jason’s hackles to rise.

“Well, Jerome? What’s goin’ on?”

“Can I tell you over a cold beer?” Jerome asked, grinning widely.

“You know you can,” the nearly naked man answered, mirroring Jerome’s smile.

Jerome turned to the three men behind him. “This is Will, Will Parkinson. He’s the owner of this fine establishment. Will, this is Jason, my Boy.” Will’s eyebrows shot up, but he didn’t say anything. “This is Cameron, my nephew, and Special Agent Tanner,” Jerome finished the introductions.

“Special Agent?” Will frowned as he looked at Jerome. “A G-Man?”

“Yeah, sorry. It couldn’t be helped,” Jerome answered apologetically.

“Um... nice to meet you,” Cameron grinned shyly as he shook Will’s hand, his eyes wandering a bit over his body, noticing the gold rings in each nipple that were buried in dark fur.

“Mr. Parkinson—” Tanner started to say before Will cut him off.

“Zip it, suit,” Will all but spat out. “Jerome, in a nutshell, tell me what’cha wantin’.”

Jerome sighed heavily. “We need a place to stay for at least a few days, Will. It will be the three of us,” Jerome indicated himself, Jason and Cameron.

“No problem, Jerome,” Will said. “Only got one other guest right now, and won’t have any more until Friday. Even then we aren’t booked up.”

“Mr. Parkinson, this is a federal—”

Will turned to Tanner and said, “You just don’t know how to be quiet do you?”

“Excuse me!” Tanner said angrily. “I’m a Federal Agent, Mr. Parkinson, and this is a federal matter and you will listen to what I have to say!”

Will sighed heavily, shaking his head. “Christ. Go ahead if you fuckin’ have to,” he said, giving in to Tanner.

“First, I have a few questions,” Tanner said, clearly rattled. “Are there any other entrances to this place?”

“Yeah, only one, on the other side of the courtyard,” Will answered rolling his eyes.

“I’ll need to see it and make sure it is secure,” Tanner said officially.

Jerome and Will both laughed.

“Tanner, you can stand down.” Jerome chuckled. “That back gate is even more secure than the front. I should know... I made it that way.”

Tanner frowned.

“Trust me, *Agent*,” Will said smugly, “this place is almost as tight as Fort Knox, mainly to keep the likes of you out.”

Tanner frowned again. “Then we will need four rooms please, one for each of these men and another for an agent.”

“Jason and I room together,” Jerome informed Will, bringing a smile to Jason’s face.

“Listen, I don’t mind putting Jerome and party up,” Will said, sidestepping Jerome a bit to look directly at Tanner, “but I can’t have a fed in here stinkin’ up the place. You’d run off my clientele.”

“First off, Mr. Parkinson, it won’t be *me* staying here, trust me, but if *they* are going to stay here, then so is an agent.” There was no doubt that this was the way it was going to be.

Will looked to Jerome for help.

“How about a waiver?” Jason suggested.

“What do you mean?” Tanner asked suspiciously.

“What if you, as acting official, signed a waiver that the agent who is assigned to stay here will do their best to blend in, and that whatever he sees, hears, or in any way witnesses stays here, and no one can be prosecuted in any way?”

“I don’t know,” Tanner said thoughtfully. “So the agent, he or she would have to turn a blind eye to everything?”

“First off, *suit*,” Will said, none too politely, “This is a men’s only environment. Second, the only way I’d let a fed stay here is if they swear on their mother’s grave that what goes on here stays here, just like in Vegas.”

Tanner scowled at the muscled, hairy man in front of him. “Okay, that’s doable... I think, provided there are no major laws being broken.”

“Good, now, that we’ve got that settled,” Will smirked, “when are *you* leaving?”

“Oh, for fuck’s sake,” Jerome huffed. “Will, just tell me where we’re gonna be staying so I can get a shower and a cold beer. Then you two peacocks can strut all you want.”

“Y’all take the third floor,” Will said, not taking his eyes off Tanner. “You and your Boy can take the big suite. That leaves two rooms for junior to choose from. All have connecting doors if you remember, Jerome.”

“Yeah, cool. Thanks, Will.” Jerome seemed happy with the news. “Come on, Jason, I think you’re gonna love this.”

“Come to the office so I can get you the keys first, Jerome,” Will said, striding off and displaying his cute bubble butt. “Bring that suit with you.”

They all entered the small office where Will gave Jerome keys for the “Penthouse”, smiling slyly at Jason. “Everything is fully stocked up there, Jerome, just the way you like it.” Will winked, then smiled.

“Mr. Parkinson, if you will provide a purchase order—”

“Credit card or cash only, Suit, that’s the way it works around here,” Will said, squinting up at the agent. “Deal with it however you need to, but that’s how it’s gonna be.”

Agent Tanner was becoming more and more flustered, while his face turned redder. “I’ll arrange payment for you, Mr. Parkinson.” Tanner turned his back on Will, catching Jerome, Jason and Cameron before they could leave the office. “I’ll stay with you until the other Special Agent arrives, Mr. Fontaine.”

“Hey, what about that waiver?” Will asked.

“Mr. Parkinson, if you have a computer I can draw one up in just a few minutes.” Jason volunteered.

“You?” Will asked surprised.

“It’s okay, Will, he’s a lawyer,” Jerome smiled.

“Cool beans!” Will looked even more favorably at Jason. “Right over here,” he said, crooking a finger at Jason. “Make yourself at home right here handsome.” Will pulled out the chair in front of a computer desk. “And just call me Will.”

“Oooo, Papi!” Everyone turned to see a young Latino man wearing a neon green thong slink in, his hand already sliding down the front of Tanner’s suit. “You need fresh towels?”

“Give it a rest, Ricky.” Will snickered. “He’s not a guest.”

“Maybe yes? Maybe no?” Ricky circled the man, smiling lasciviously at him.

“Here you go, Mr. Parkinson... um, Will,” Jason said, standing up and holding out a couple of printed pages. “I think this will cover most of your concerns.”

“Thanks, Jason.” Will read over the document then looked at Jason again. “Pretty *and* has smarts. You need to keep this one, Jerome.”

Jason took the document back then tried to hand it to Agent Tanner. However, Tanner was frozen in place, as Ricky had latched onto his arm and was giving him goo-goo eyes. “Agent Tanner,” Jason prompted him.

Finally, Agent Tanner managed to pull his arm away from Ricky and took the document. “Excuse me,” he said. Just as he started to read, his phone rang, so he stepped outside of the office to answer it.

“This is Ricky,” Will smiled at the man and shook his head. “He is our lead housekeeper. If there is anything you need, he’s the one to call.”

Everyone had just finished introducing themselves when Tanner stepped back into the office. “This looks okay,” he said, indicating the document. “Although I’m still not comfortable condoning illegal activity.”

Jason stepped in before Will exploded. “Agent Tanner, I’m pretty sure that there isn’t going to be anything illegal going on. I think that Mr. Parkinson just needs to be reassured that his customers won’t have to be concerned about their possible sexual proclivities getting them into trouble.”

“Oh.” Tanner said flatly, his face turning red.

“You want I can show you?” Ricky asked, reattaching himself to the tall FBI agent.

“No!” Tanner almost yelled. “A... an agent is on his way, one who will stay with you while you are here.” Tanner wasn’t sure how to get out of Ricky’s clutches, and it was quite apparent that the pretty Latino man wasn’t one to take no easily.

“Come on, y’all” Will said, picking up a cordless phone. “I’ll show you to your rooms.”

“I’ll need to look them over,” Tanner said, trying to extricate himself from Ricky’s hold.

They all trudged up the stairs to the third floor, Ricky right on Tanner’s heels. Will opened the center French doors on the balcony.

“Here is the main lounge,” Will informed them. “There is the flat screen TV and stereo.” He pointed out along one wall. “There are DVDs in the drawer. The sectional is new.” The large black leather furniture dominated the room.

“Here is the Master Suite.” He opened the door so they could all see. Jerome and Jason dropped their bags just inside the door.

“Wow, this is incredible,” Jason exclaimed, his eyes wide. “Sir, did you make that bed?”

“Of course he did,” Will answered for him. “Where else you going to find that kind of work? The shackles are a permanent part of it too!” Will grinned widely, his eyebrows raised.

Tanner became more agitated looking at the large king sized canopy bed with chains hanging from the four intricate posts. He became even more uncomfortable when Will opened up a wardrobe full of whips, floggers, and a few other things that he could only imagine what they were used for.

“That turn you on, Papi?” Ricky leered at Tanner.

“I’m not gay!” Tanner proclaimed, finally having had enough of Ricky’s insinuations.

“That’s what they all say,” Ricky replied, undeterred.

“Jerome, there is a sling in the closet.” Will informed him. “I’ll get Ricky to rig it for you.”

“Oh, yes, I will do that.” Ricky nodded.

“The bathroom is through that door. There is a shower shot already hooked up,” Will said casually.

He led the way back through the lounge and then through another door. “This is the second bedroom. Its bathroom is shared with the next bedroom. There is another door over there that can be used to access it as well,” he demonstrated his point.

Just then the phone rang, so Will answered it. He looked at Tanner, eyebrows raised. “I’ll buzz you in. That was your agent.” He directed at Tanner. “I’ll go down and meet him,” Will said, going out the door of the second bedroom. “Y’all make yourselves at home. Ricky, go hang that sling for Jerome.”

“Yes, sir,” Ricky said, smiling slyly at Tanner. “You like to help?”

“No!” Tanner blushed again.

Jerome helped Ricky put up the sling in the Master Suite while Jason put their clothes away.

“I didn’t think to bring a bathing suit,” Jason said.

“You no need one,” Ricky reassured. “It is clothes optional.”

“Cool,” Cameron said. “I’ve never been to a clothing optional place before.”

Jason saw Jerome smile slightly at his nephew’s enthusiasm.

“Right in here, Eric,” they heard Will say, coming into the room with a giant of a man.

“Special Agent Tanner?” The big blond asked, holding out his hand to Tanner. “I’m Special Agent Eric Olsen.”

Tanner’s astonished face mirrored everyone else’s in the room, except for Will’s, who was grinning from ear to ear. All eyes looked over Agent Olsen. From the tight DC Eagle T-shirt, to the 501 jeans that looked as if they had been painted on, Eric Olsen was quite a specimen. He towered over everyone

in the room, standing at least six foot five. His shoulders looked as wide as the doorframe.

“You’re... gay?” Tanner almost squeaked.

“Yes, sir.” Special Agent Olsen answered, smiling.

With introductions out of the way, Jason noticed Cameron was all but drooling while looking at their new bodyguard. He poked Jerome on the ribs with his elbow drawing his attention to his nephew. Jerome looked at Jason and smiled, then winked.

“Well, Special Agent Olsen, I will leave you to it then.” Tanner made a speedy exit, Ricky right on his heels to “help let him out”.

As soon as the pair left, the rest all burst out laughing.

“Ricky won’t give up, trust me,” Will said, almost doubled over. “I wouldn’t put money on that suit either,” he quickly added.

“Um... Special Agent Olsen, I’ll show you your room if you like,” Cameron said, blushing fiercely.

“Please, just Eric,” he said smiling at Cameron. “Lead the way, handsome.”

Poor Cameron turned beet red as he left the room followed by Special Agent Eric Olsen.

Jason and Jerome both started laughing again.

CHAPTER TWENTY

It was late afternoon by the time the new guests at The Phoenix had completely settled in. At that point, both Jerome and Jason were starving, having missed lunch altogether. When Jerome was told that they were pretty much prisoners, and not allowed to leave at all, he started to become agitated.

“You mind telling me how we’re supposed to eat?” Jerome asked, pushing Special Agent Olsen for a quick answer.

“The FBI will have all meals sent in, Mr. Fontaine,” the big man soothed Jerome. “I’ll make a call right now and see if they can’t get something in here immediately.”

“Great.” Jerome started pacing like a caged animal.

Jason went to the kitchenette and got a beer out of the refrigerator for Jerome. “Here, Sir,” Jason said quietly.

Jerome took the beer and scowled slightly.

“Think of it like a mini vacation, Sir.” Jason tried to rationalize.

“Like I have time for a fucking vacation? I don’t even know the condition of my shop and you’re wantin’ me to relax?” Jerome was close to losing it.

“Let me call my father and see if he knows what’s going on with the shop, Sir,” Jason said, his phone already in his hand.

“Corleone,” Francis Corleone answered.

“Fath... Dad, it’s Jason.”

“Hello, Jason, how’re you doing, son?” He asked, genuinely concerned.

“I’m fine, Dad. I have you on speakerphone and Jerome is with me.” Jason looked at Jerome, whose brows were creased. “Dad, what’s the word on the shop?”

“I just left there and everything is boarded up tight.” Jason thought that he sounded tired. “Jerome, there wasn’t a lot of structural damage; mostly it was just the siding that was effected. That has been taken care of.”

There was a look of great relief on Jerome's face. "Thank you, Mr. Corleone, I don't know how to thank you." The expression on Jerome's face changed quickly as if he had just bitten into something foul, almost making Jason laugh out loud.

"Jerome, call me Francis, okay?"

"Um... sure... Francis. Thanks for your help."

"Anytime, Jerome. We'll talk when all this is over." Francis said, but it was phrased almost as a question.

"Sure, Francis. We'll have a couple of beers," Jerome replied, looking less stressed.

"Listen," Francis said, and they could hear a car engine starting in the background, "Ana wants me back at my hotel. I'm not sure what is going down, but she is suggesting that even I keep out of sight. Son, we may not be able to talk for a few days. I've been told that we shouldn't contact each other until this blows over."

"I understand... Dad."

"I'll talk to you as soon as I can, Jason. I love you, son." Francis Corleone's emotions rang loud and clear.

"I love you too, Dad. We'll talk soon."

Jason ended the call just as Eric Olsen walked into the room. Both Jerome and Jason's eyes nearly popped out of their heads. Their bodyguard was wearing a neon, lime-green, square-cut bathing suit that couldn't have been any tighter, and left nothing to the imagination. He had a towel over his shoulder, a Glock automatic gun in one hand and bottle of sunscreen and cell phone in the other.

Eric scowled slightly at Jason. "Mr. Corleone, I need to take your phone please, just for now."

"Why?" Jason asked surprised.

“You and Mr. Fontaine are targets and your phone is traceable,” Eric explained, his hand out, waiting for Jason to give up his phone.

Jason sighed, “I guess that makes sense.” He handed the phone to the blond giant who promptly removed the battery.

“Yours too, please, Mr. Fontaine.”

Jerome dug in his jeans pocket then slapped his phone into the big man’s hand, grumbling. The battery was taken out of his as well.

“I’m sorry, but it is for your protection,” Eric said sympathetically. “I’ll give ’em back just as soon as I’m given the okay. Sorry guys.”

Even Jerome couldn’t be mad at the man.

“If it’s any consolation, we should have some food here shortly,” Eric said brightly.

Cameron walked in wearing a towel around his waist, his face flushed.

“Looks as if you both are headed to the pool?” Jason observed grinning.

“Might as well take advantage of it while we’re here,” Cameron stammered.

“Sounds like a good idea to me.” Jason smiled in agreement. “Why don’t we all go, Sir?”

Jerome grumbled something incoherent, which Jason took to be a yes. “Why don’t we meet you guys down by the pool?”

“Cool.” Eric grinned his perfect, model smile. “We can eat poolside.”

Eric had to duck his head going through the French doors, with Cameron following like an eager puppy.

Jason studied Jerome, who just looked lost. “Come on, Sir; let’s make the best of it. There’s nothing we can do right now.”

Jerome’s shoulders heaved as he took a deep breath. He rubbed his face with both hands as he exhaled.

“I guess you’re right, Boy.”

“I’ll grab us a few beers and we can relax by the pool until the food arrives,” Jason said, rubbing Jerome’s shoulders a bit.

“I don’t know about relax, but the beer and food sound good ’bout now.”

“Let’s go then.”

The two men stripped, grabbed a couple of towels and two beers apiece, then headed down to the pool.

When Jerome and Jason approached the pool, Cameron was lying on his stomach naked, Special Agent Olsen was stretched out next to him, also naked, his cock and balls on display with his hands behind his head and his aviator shades on.

“Nice Prince Albert,” Jerome complimented the Agent. “What is that? An eight gauge?”

“Thanks.” The FBI Agent smiled. “Actually it’s a six gauge.”

“I’ve always liked a curved barbell,” Jerome said, commenting on the cock jewelry while shucking his towel.

“Yeah, me too,” the big blond agreed.

“I can tell.” Jerome chuckled.

“Oh, these?” Mr. FBI replied as he played with the two surgical steel barbell piercings in both nipples. “Yeah, I like it when they’re twisted,” he said, waggling his eyebrows.

Jerome flipped his own surgical steel nipple ring, smiling, as he stretched out on the chaise next to the blond. Glancing down, he couldn’t help but notice the outline of the Glock under the towel next to him.

Jason stretched out on the other side of Jerome, sighing.

“Boy, I hope you don’t burn,” Jerome frowned.

“Here, Mr. Corleone,” Eric Olsen said, tossing the sunscreen to Jason.

“Thanks.” Jason caught the bottle easily. “I tan easily after I burn the first time. And you can drop the Mr. Corleone. Just Jason, please.”

“Yeah, if we’re gonna be stuck here, might as well be on a first-name basis,” Jerome added.

“Works for me,” Eric said. “Just call me Eric then.”

“Now this is what I like to see,” interrupted Will, carrying one side of a large bucket filled with ice and beer. Ricky was on the other side. “Hot naked men by my pool, makes it all worthwhile.”

As they set down the beer, Will’s phone rang. “Food delivery?” he asked the small group.

“I’ll get that,” Eric said, picking up the Glock as he stood.

Will escorted Eric through the two gates, Eric wearing nothing but a towel. When they returned, they were both carrying large bags of food.

“Food, guys,” Eric smiled as he and Will set the bags on a table. He spread his towel over a chair as he sat down to eat.

“You guys let me know if there is anything y’all need,” Will spoke, as he and Ricky went back towards the office.

Everyone got up but Cameron, who seemed to be squirming a bit.

“Come on, Cam, get a move on,” his Uncle Jerome called to him. “Best get it while you can. Might not be nothin’ left if you wait too long.” Jerome smirked.

Cameron rolled away from the others and tried to pull the towel out from under his butt without exposing himself.

“Oh, good God, Cameron, it ain’t like I never saw a dick before,” Jerome huffed impatiently.

“But... you’re family.” Cameron blushed.

“Like anyone gives a flying rat’s ass?” Jerome scowled at the younger version of himself.

“Don’t worry about it, Cam.” Eric urged, smiling at the youth.

Cameron took a deep breath and stood up, his semihard, elongated dick swinging out in front of him.

Jerome whistled lowly. “Damn, Cam, you’re hung!”

Cameron’s head dropped in embarrassment.

“Um... Sir?” Jason grinned broadly. “Cameron looks to be a little larger than you. You really could pass for father and son. Is that what you looked like when you were his age?”

Jerome glared at Jason for a moment before looking back at his nephew.

“Come here, Cam,” Jerome ordered.

Cameron stood next to his uncle, still obviously embarrassed. There was no doubt they were related with the two standing side by side.

“Damn, you guys really do look alike,” Eric said, shaking his head.

“Now that you’re side by side, I take it back, Sir,” Jason said with eyes wide. “I think you are pretty much equals in the endowment department.”

Jerome pulled his nephew close by his side. Jason’s jaw dropped when he saw Jerome kiss the younger man’s cheek.

“You were a cute kid, but you’ve turned into a very handsome man now. You’ve nothing to be ashamed of, Cameron.” Jerome smiled almost tenderly at Cameron.

“Thanks, Uncle Jerome. I always hated it when we had family get-togethers and you weren’t there. You know, we didn’t even bring your name up when Dad was around,” Cameron said quietly.

“Don’t matter,” Jerome said, his voice sounding a bit scratchy. “Let’s eat.”

They all sat around the table and unloaded the deli sandwiches that had been delivered.

“How long we gonna be stuck here?” Jerome asked, before taking a large bite of the oyster po’boy.

“I can’t say for sure,” Eric answered after swallowing a bit of his own sandwich. “I do know that it shouldn’t be all that long.”

“Why do you say that?” Jason asked, muffuletta in hand.

“I guess I can tell you since you’re here and not really in communication with anyone,” Eric said seriously. “There are a bunch of warrants being gathered up. I think there is going to be a series of coordinated raids. Almost every agency known is going to be in on this operation.”

“Huh?” Cameron looked surprised.

“FBI, ATF, New Orleans PD, LBI and there was even a hint that the CIA might be in on this one.” Eric saw the shock on the other three faces. “This is pretty big, guys, and some of these people are ruthless. It’s why you’re being held up here. There are legitimate hits out on both Jerome and Jason here.”

“Who are they raiding?” Jason asked.

“Two law firms, the Port in Fourche, and three private residences.” Eric looked at Cameron. “Sorry, Cam, but your dad and granddad’s places are on that list.”

“What other private residence?” Jason prodded.

“Some big lawyer here in town. I don’t even know the name,” Eric informed them. “All I know is that as soon as they have all the warrants in place and all the agencies involved are ready, it’s a go.”

“Holy hell,” Jason commented, shaking his head.

“By the way, Eric,” Jerome said, his mouth full, “my Boy here requires beignets every morning. Got it?”

Eric grinned. “Got it, Sir.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

When the shadows encroached up and over the courtyard, the foursome left the pool and trudged up the stairs to their suites. Almost immediately, Jason could tell that Jerome was antsy and feeling caged.

“Sir?” Jason whispered as he took Jerome’s hand.

“Huh?” Jerome seemed miles away, like he was ready to crawl out of his own skin.

Jason didn’t say anything more, just pulled Jerome towards the bathroom. Turning on the shower and waiting for the water to heat up, he could feel Jerome becoming impatient. As soon as the water was as hot as Jason wanted, he pulled Jerome into the large, tiled shower. He adjusted the multiple jets to maximize the massage benefits.

Jason turned Jerome away from him, squeezed a dollop of shampoo in his hand and started to wash Jerome’s hair, taking the time to massage his scalp.

“Ahhh,” Jerome moaned as he leaned back into Jason’s body.

Jason smiled, pleased that he had called this one right. Once he was done with the shampoo, he took the natural sea sponge and chose the eucalyptus soap from the variety that was available. He started slowly, making small, then larger, circles across Jerome’s broad muscled back. Another groan of pleasure escaped Jerome and echoed in the steamy enclosure, as he braced his arms on the tiled wall.

As he moved down Jerome’s tight body, Jason could feel the muscles start to relax. The big man tensed momentarily when Jason spread his ass cheeks, but soon relaxed as he continued the deep massage of the thick, dense muscles. Jerome gasped when Jason’s fingers brushed lightly over his dark plum-colored pucker. Jason had learned long ago that there wasn’t a man alive that didn’t enjoy a little anal massage from time to time.

Not wanting to make him uncomfortable, Jason moved on to the thick hairy legs, digging deeply into the dense tissue, evoking another loud moan. Jerome dropped his head, resting his chin on his chest. When Jason reached

his feet, he had Jerome turn and sit on the built-in bench. Picking up each foot, he washed and then massaged each one slowly. He watched as the remaining tension in Jerome's face slid away down the drain along with the swirling soapy water.

The smell of eucalyptus filled the steamy room as Jason worked his way up Jerome's legs, taking special care to work the heavy quad muscles, circling closer and closer to the center, where Jerome's substantial genitals hung. His balls rested on the bench, while his big uncut dick lay nestled between the heavy orbs. Taking his time, Jason eventually reached Jerome's crotch area. Adding a little soap in his palm, Jason pushed back the foreskin, exposing the flared, sensitive glans. Gently, he cleaned the head of Jerome's cock, taking special care around the surgical steel ring of his Prince Albert. Lifting the hefty ball sack, he stretched it tight as he washed and massaged them. Looking up, he saw that Jerome was watching him intently, an expression on his face that Jason couldn't quite get a read on.

Satisfied that everything was squeaky clean, he picked up the sea sponge again and started on Jerome's furry abs. Jason loved the way the hair swirled as he made symmetrical circles, leaving soapsuds in the wake of the soft sponge as he moved upwards. He stood up when he reached Jerome's chest, continuing to wash and massage, lifting one arm, then the other, to reach the hairy pits.

Jason traced the outline of the tribal tattoo that was inked on Jerome's right shoulder, running down his arm as it circled his large bicep. This time, it was Jason who moaned. Shaking himself, getting back to the job at hand, he got the handheld shower sprayer and started to rinse off Jerome, taking extra care with the jewels that he hoped to taste later.

Pulling Jerome up to a standing position from the bench, Jason turned him, rinsing off his backside, enjoying the close personal contact.

He was taken by surprise when Jerome turned and snatched the hand held device, putting it back on its holder. "My turn," he said, a glint in his eye.

Jerome dumped shampoo on Jason's head and roughly scrubbed his scalp. The only thing Jason could do was brace himself against the shower wall and enjoy the ride. After Jerome rinsed away the shampoo, he started on Jason's back, using the same sea sponge to make large lazy circles on his shoulders and back. When he got around to Jason's tightly rounded ass, the stubble there now thick, Jerome shoved a thick finger inside Jason, causing him to yelp.

"You like me inside you, Boy?"

"Oh, yes, Sir," Jason moaned, thrusting his hips back, trying to get more of the digit inside him.

Jerome chuckled, "You're just gonna have to wait for any more, Boy."

By the time Jerome was finished, Jason had a raging hard-on, and was leaking precum like a faucet. Jerome turned the shower off and stepped out to grab a towel. He smiled as Jason whined so softly it was almost imperceptible.

"Come on, Boy." Jerome snickered to himself as he watched Jason, his face flushed as his dick stuck out in front of him.

"Yes, Sir," Jason said, obviously frustrated.

Walking into the bedroom, Jerome pointed to the sling.

"Oh, yes, Sir!" Had Jason had a tail, it would have been wagging just then.

It took Jason a moment to lie down in the hanging leather sling which was suspended from the ceiling by nickel-plated chains. Jerome walked up and pulled Jason toward him, positioning his ass to where it was hanging off the edge. He then used the leather shackles to secure first Jason's ankles, then his wrists, from each of the four chains holding the sling. The look in Jason's eyes was now dark and full of lust.

"Gonna have a little fun since there ain't nothin' else to do," Jerome said, a slightly evil smirk curling up one side of his mouth.

"Yes, Sir!"

"You trust me, Boy?"

"Yes, Sir," Jason replied seriously. "I do, Sir."

“Good. Let’s see if you really understand how I like to play.” Jerome stood between Jason’s legs, his ankles about shoulder height. “Yellow is your safe word for me to slow down. Got that?”

“Yes, Sir. Yellow means slow down.”

“My name... Jerome... is for stop,” he said quietly, looking Jason directly in the eyes. “Understand?”

“Yes, Sir. Jerome means stop.”

“If you say my name, everything stops. It ends right then.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Jerome ran his hand down Jason’s prickly chest, then down his tight stomach. “Damn, you sure are hairy.”

“Sorry, Sir.”

“Why you sorry? Ain’t nothing wrong with it.” Jerome frowned. “You’re a man. Men have hair. I happen to like men, not little hairless boys. I don’t wanna hear that again.”

“Yes, Sir.” Jason smiled, glad that Jerome didn’t mind him being so damned hairy.

“Let’s see where some of your limits are,” Jerome said with a gleam in his eye.

He walked over to the armoire. Opening the door, he peered back over his shoulder at Jason suspended in the shackles, his hands and legs spread. Grinning, he walked back with a leather bootlace and something else hidden behind his back.

“You ready, Boy?”

“Sir, yes, Sir!” Jason was almost hoarse with anticipation.

Jerome smiled at Jason’s enthusiasm. He looped the bootlace around the base of Jason’s cock and balls a few times, pulled it tight, then knotted it. He then held up a black leather phallus, approximately a foot long and four or five inches in diameter. He tied it onto the bootlace, through a loop at one end. He

held it up for Jason to see, making sure that he had his full attention, then Jerome let it drop.

The weight of the object pulled Jason's cock straight up, the tip pointing towards the ceiling. Jason grunted slightly as it pulled his dick up and his balls tight.

“How's that, Boy?”

“It is fine, Sir. Thank you, Sir.”

Jerome smiled, his eyes squinting, before he returned to the open toy chest. Jason was curious when he came back with a galvanized bucket and a spool of black string. Jerome pulled a small table close and set both objects down. He smirked and rubbed his hands together, looking like a kid in a candy store. Jason's mouth opened then quickly closed when he saw the wooden clothes pin in Jerome's hand.

Jason winced slightly as Jerome placed a clothes pin onto his left nipple. After the initial pain dissipated somewhat, it really didn't hurt all that much. Then his right nipple was given the same treatment.

“You ever played with clothes pins before, Boy?”

“No, Sir.”

Jerome grunted as he picked up another clothes pin. Starting on the inside of Jason's inner elbow, he started placing clothes pins about an inch apart, lining the inside of Jason's arm, the tender skin turning pink quickly. Jason gasped at the tight pinch just below his armpit, but quickly shut his mouth.

A slow burn started. At first it didn't seem like much of a big deal, but the longer the clothes pins pinched the tender flesh, the more intense the burning sensation became. Jerome continued to place the wooden clothes pins in a line all the way down his side, then he cut across to the left nipple, his face studious as he worked.

Jerome paused to survey his work. Seeming satisfied thus far, he started on the other arm, taking his time to make sure that each pin was secure. When

both sides looked the way he wanted, he started to thread the black twine through the center hole of each clothes pin, smiling as he went.

Jason really started to twitch as the pain ran from his nipples to each elbow. Jerome took a pocket knife and cut the string, leaving enough on both ends to be gathered together, one for the right side and one for the left. He laid the ends on Jason's stomach.

"Focus on me, Boy," Jerome said, rubbing the stubbled stomach where the four ends of the string lay. "Keep your eyes on me, you hear?"

"Yes, Sir," Jason said through clenched teeth.

Jason let out a long moan when Jerome placed the first clothes pin on his inner thigh, just above his knee. He gave each inner leg the same treatment as he had Jason's arms. Jason tried not to move, or flinch, with each added pinch to his tender flesh. The pain was really starting to radiate through his limbs.

"Breathe, Boy. Trust me. Believe. Focus on me, Boy," Jerome whispered his voice deep and rumbling.

"Yes, Sir."

Jason's dick was granite hard, a small pearl of clear fluid beading the tiny slit. Jason did flinch when the first clothes pin snapped closed on the tender underside of his dick, just below the now purple head.

"Breathe, Boy" Jerome instructed.

Jason took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. Then Jerome placed the rest of the pins, going down the underside of his rock hard cock. When Jerome got to the base, he started circling the pins around his balls.

"Focus, Boy. I'm almost done."

Jason didn't trust his voice anymore, so only nodded and kept breathing.

Jerome placed the last clothes pin just underneath Jason's balls, and smiled broadly. "There," he said, more to himself than to Jason.

Again, he ran the black twine through the clothes pins, laying the ends on Jason's heaving stomach, patting it and looking extremely satisfied with himself.

Jason could sense him moving, but couldn't see from his point of view. All he knew was that he no longer felt each individual clothes pin, only the searing pain running up his arms centering on his nipples and from his knees to his balls. He felt Jerome's name rise to his lips, ready to be spoken. He really didn't know how much more he was going to be able to take. He could feel sweat running down his sides from his armpits. The snaking pain pulsing up his arms and legs intensified with every beat of his heart.

"Focus on me, Boy," Jerome said, his chocolate brown eyes drilling into Jason's.

Jerome looked down briefly. Slowly he lifted his eyes, surveying his handiwork. He picked up the ends of the string in one hand.

Looking directly at Jason, he said, "Ready, Boy?"

Jason had an idea of what was about to happen and braced himself. "Yes, Sir," he managed through clenched teeth.

Jerome jerked the strings sharply as he buried his dick deep in Jason's clenched ass. A scream left Jason's mouth, as he threw his head back as far as it would go in the sling.

The door to the bedroom slammed open. Eric stood there with the Glock in both hands, just in time to see Jason's cum flying through the air.

"Oh, shit! Sorry." Eric quickly shut the door, just as the second explosion of cum left Jason's pulsing dick.

Jerome pounded Jason's ass as he continued to spurt hot cum into the air, until his upper body was splattered with his own cum. He gasped for breath, still seeing stars, as he looked up at Jerome who was pounding his ass for all he was worth.

When Jerome changed positions and then started jerking on Jason's already overly-sensitive dick, he screamed again as he started shooting another load into the air.

"That's my Boy," Jerome yelled as he emptied his balls into Jason's quivering ass.

Not knowing how long he lay there, Jason finally opened his eyes to see Jerome holding onto the chains where his legs were tethered, breathing heavily. To Jason, there seemed to be a glow surrounding Jerome's head.

Jason closed his eyes while Jerome took all the shackles off, his body too limp to move.

"Put your arms around my neck, Jason," Jerome whispered in his ear.

Without opening his eyes, Jason sluggishly complied, placing his arms around Jerome's neck. He was lifted, his body brought close to Jerome's. He could feel the heat of the man as the now cool cum sealed them together. Half walking, half carrying him, Jerome took him and laid him gently on the bed. Lying beside him, he pulled Jason close.

Jason opened his eyes and looked deeply into Jerome's. He could feel his eyes watering. Unable to hold them back, he felt tears silently start to stream down his face. There was a genuine tenderness in Jerome's eyes, which made Jason weep even harder.

"You okay, Boy?"

"Oh, yes, Sir. Thank you, Sir," Jason whispered as he mushed his face into Jerome's furry chest. "That was amazing."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Jason opened his eyes to the dark room. Jerome was spooned up behind him, in what had become the norm, which suited Jason just fine. As much as he hated to leave the comforts of Jerome's body, his bladder screamed at him to move his ass. Pushing Jerome's arm aside, he slid out of the big bed and made his way to the bathroom. He sighed contentedly as his urine cascaded into the bowl. The warm soreness in his ass made him smile.

When done, he realized how thirsty he was, so went to get some water from the small kitchenette's mini refrigerator. Bending over, he heard a slapping noise followed by a muffled "Fuck!" from the room next door. He grinned as he recognized that sound. He crept quietly towards the adjoining door. It wasn't completely closed.

"Oh... fuck yeah," the same voice groaned.

Jason, unable to resist, pushed the door open a crack so he could peer in. The lights were on, so he was able to clearly see Cameron slamming his big dick into Special Agent Eric Olsen's bubble butt.

Must run in the family, Jason said to himself, chuckling and closing the door.

He slipped back into his and Jerome's room, chugging the water as he went. Soon, he was back in the comfort of Jerome's arms, fast asleep.

Jerome pushed his morning wood into the firm cheeks of Jason's ass, grinning before he even opened his eyes. He breathed in the man's scent, the man who had been foisted upon him. The masculine scent made his cock twitch in the warm cleavage. The prickly stubble sticking him in his hips and dick as he pushed closer only added to the erotic feeling.

Just as quickly as Jerome grinned, it was replaced by a hard scowl. He slipped quietly out of bed. After a quick trip to the bathroom, he went in search of coffee. The scowl on his face never wavered as he measured out the

grounds and waited for the coffee to drip through the filter. Tension seeped back into his neck and shoulders, going practically unnoticed by him.

Walking onto the third story balcony, he could see across the other rooftops. A barge was being pushed by a tugboat, at eye level, even though he was on the third floor. Tourists were always amazed at having to look *up* to see the boats on the Mississippi. He rubbed his eyes, then pinched the bridge of his nose between his fingers hard enough to be painful. Reopening his eyes, he looked down and spotted Will sitting at a table next to the pool, reading the paper and drinking a cup of coffee. Naked, Jerome went down the stairs he had fabricated years earlier.

Will looked up from his paper. "Morning, Jerome."

"Yeah... morning," Jerome grumped.

"Who the hell pissed in your Cheerios?" Will asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No one." Jerome sat down across from his long-time friend.

"What is up with you, Jerome?"

"Nothing."

"Bullshit. You're hiding out here with a fed guarding you. You came in here with a new boy *and* your nephew. Now, you wanna talk to me or you want me to kick your ass?" Will glared over the glasses that were perched on the end of his nose. "I've known you too many years, Jerome Fontaine, *not* to know that some big shit is going on, now spill."

"Man, I can't talk about why we're here," Jerome said as he leaned back in the chair, sighing.

"Is that what's eating at you?"

"Things are just... complicated right now." Jerome looked over his cup at Will.

"Yeah, well I know how that can be. Life sometimes just throws us a curveball." Will also leaned back, watching Jerome. "That new boy you got is some looker though."

Jerome's face scrunched up. "He ain't my Boy."

"Bingo!" Will said shaking his head. "That's what's eating you huh? Fuck, Jerome, why can't you let go of the past and just be happy? Man, I have watched you these past twelve years throw happiness away with both hands. Toby would never have wanted that for you."

Will knew instantly that that was the crux of Jerome's problem. His face all but turned to stone when Toby's name was mentioned.

"Fuck you, Will."

"Jerome, I love you like a blood brother and I hate to see you so miserable. It's time, man." Will's voice was soft. "That boy up there is in love with you, if you haven't noticed."

"What the fuck, Will? He's not even been here a month. Ain't no way that can happen in that short a time."

Will shook his head, smirking. "Jerome, you, my friend, are a first-rate dumbass."

"Fuck you, Will."

"One, you've already said that, so you're starting to sound like a broken record. And two, if you remember, we tried that once and ended up laughing our asses off. Friends is all we're ever gonna be," Will laughed at the memory.

Jerome looked at his friend and couldn't help but laugh along with him as he also remembered the failed attempt at being bedmates.

"Yeah, two tops don't always make for good lovers," Jerome said as he continued to laugh.

The two friends fell into a comfortable silence as they sipped their coffees. They had a history together that only close friends could share.

"Jerome?"

"Yeah?"

"Go for it. Don't let this one slip away," Will said, looking at his friend. "You have feelings for this Jason guy and he is in love with you, whether you

want to believe it or not.” Will watched as Jerome took that all in. “It’s time, Jerome, time for you to be happy. It’s time to let Toby go.”

A single tear slipped from the corner of Jerome’s eye. “I don’t know if I can, Will.”

Will stood up and took Jerome’s hand. Pulling him up too, he led him to a double chaise next to the pool. Lying together on the lounge, Will took Jerome into his arms.

“Say good-bye Jerome. You’ve held on way too long. Toby has moved on and now so should you.”

Jerome held onto his friend as sobs took over, wracking his body. He clung to Will so tightly there were bound to be bruises left behind. Will just held his friend, tears also streaming down his face as they both said their final farewells to the beautiful man whose life had ended way too soon.

Jason stretched long and hard, luxuriating in the king sized bed. He knew that Jerome had made coffee, the smell beckoned to him. First things first, he went to relieve himself, pointing his semihard dick down. Finished, he turned to brush his teeth. In the mirror, he saw the redness on his body where the previous night’s activities had left their marks. Lifting his arms, he noticed the tiny bruises just under his armpits. Rubbing his hand over one, he felt the tenderness and smiled.

“Damn, that was hot,” he said to himself in the mirror. “I really need to at least shave my neck.” His hand rubbed the itchy growth there. “Eh, later.”

Coffee in hand, he went out onto the balcony in search of Jerome. He found him. A pang of pain hit him in the chest when he saw Jerome and Will, naked, holding each other on the large chaise lounge by the pool. He felt as if someone had just dumped a bucket of cold water over his head. His eyes were locked on the two men. It was like a bad car wreck; you just couldn’t help but look, no matter how disgusting it was.

His hand started to cramp from holding the wrought-iron railing so tightly. Peeling his fingers away, he went back inside, the coffee in his hand no longer appealing. Standing in the middle of the room Jason ran his hand over his chest, feeling the crustiness of his dried cum from the night before. Wrinkling his nose, he went back to the bathroom and turned on the shower, getting the water as hot as he could stand.

Jason scrubbed his body... hard. His skin was red and sore by the time he got out of the shower. Wiping the steam away from the mirror, he shaved his entire face smooth. Every move he made was automatic. He went through the same routine that he had done for years, not even thinking about what he was doing.

Getting dressed, he picked up a jock, looked at it and put it back, opting for a pair of cotton boxers. Jason chose a long-sleeved T-shirt and a pair of jeans to wear for the day. Sighing heavily, he went into the common area and turned on the large TV to a local station. Purely out of habit, he sipped the now lukewarm coffee.

“Morning,” Eric said as he entered the room, yawning and scratching his butt.

“Morning,” Jason replied, his eyes never leaving the TV.

Eric poured himself a cup of coffee and joined Jason on the big leather sectional, sitting to his left.

Jason looked over at the big naked man, remembering him from the night before, his ankles on Cameron’s shoulders, getting his ass plowed. Now he didn’t find it so cute.

“Eric, can I use my phone to call Ana?”

“Sorry, Jason, I don’t think that’s such a good idea,” Eric answered.

“Can I use your phone then?”

Eric looked at Jason, his body slumped on the sofa. “I just don’t think it’s safe, Jason. I’m sorry.”

Jason only nodded and then returned his attention to the blonde bimbo reporter gabbing away about something.

“What’s up, Jason?” Eric asked, knowing something was wrong.

“Nothin’.”

“I’m a good listener.” Eric prodded.

“Morning,” Jerome said, entering the room.

“Morning, Jerome,” Eric returned the greeting.

Jason didn’t say anything.

“You shaved?” Jerome asked standing in front of Jason.

“Yeah.” Jason answered him. He didn’t look at Jerome. If he had, he would have seen the frown followed by the surprised look on his face.

Cameron walked in carrying Eric’s ringing cell phone.

“Olsen,” Eric said, after taking the phone from Jerome’s younger look alike. Looking up at Jerome, he said, “Got it. We’ll be waiting.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

“It’s done,” Special Agent Eric Olsen said to the other three men, all of them naked except for Jason.

“What do you mean ‘it’s done’?” Jerome asked.

“The raids were carried out a few hours ago.” Eric explained. “The port was surrounded and taken over. They haven’t said what all was found yet. Your uncle’s law offices are still being searched and all employees are being questioned.” Eric looked at Cameron. “Both your grandfather and father have been arrested, Cameron. I’m sorry.”

Cameron didn’t say anything as he sat down heavily on the sofa, his eyes cast downward.

Eric looked at Jason. “Your cousin Ana’s firm here, has also been raided.”

“What?” For the first time Jason looked like he was paying attention. “Why?”

“I don’t have the details, Jason, but it seems that a few lawyers in her firm were also involved,” Eric said. “A senior partner and a Charles Whitcomb have been arrested and charged with collusion, so far.”

“So now what?” Jerome asked.

“Right now we wait,” Eric answered.

“If it’s all done and over with, why can’t we leave?” Jason asked.

“I’m waiting for an all clear from the higher ups,” Eric replied as he pulled Cameron close. “They want to make sure that the hits that were taken out on you have been negated.”

“Any idea how much longer?” This time it was Jerome asking.

“No, but it shouldn’t be long,” Eric said. “What’s the matter, Jerome, you don’t like vacations?”

“I don’t like bein’ cooped up is all.” Jerome grimaced as he turned to get some more coffee.

“Not so’s you’d notice,” Jason mumbled.

Jerome stopped and turned to look at Jason, his mouth open. “What’s that supposed to mean, Boy?”

Before Jason could answer, Eric’s phone chirped again.

“Olsen,” he answered. After a brief pause—“I’ll be right down.” Giving Jason a puzzled look, he stood up. “Breakfast is here,” he announced. “Wanna eat poolside or bring it up here?”

“Pool works,” Jerome said, having refilled his coffee. He looked perplexed as he watched Jason walk out the door, the first one to leave, heading downstairs.

Eric looked at Jerome. “What’s up with him?”

“I have no idea,” Jerome said, still looking puzzled.

The other three men, still naked, saw Will walking towards one of the poolside tables, his arms full of carryout bags. By the time they arrived, Jason had already chosen a breakfast sandwich and was sitting on the other side of the pool on one of the lounges, totally skipping the beignets that had been special ordered just for him.

Will looked at Jerome, frowned, and whispered, “What the fuck did you do, Jerome?”

“What are you talking about?”

Will nodded towards Jason, who was eating and ignoring the rest of them. “He practically bit my head off.”

Jerome frowned. “I have no idea, but I’m about to find out.”

Disregarding the food, Jerome strode purposefully over to Jason. Jason continued eating, never looking up.

“You wanna tell me what the fuck’s goin’ on?” Jerome demanded.

“Nothin’,” Jason answered simply, as if Jerome were asking about the weather.

Jerome's eyebrows shot up. "Boy, you are trying my patience."

"I'm *not* your *Boy*. You've made that crystal clear!" Jason finally looked at Jerome, his eyes hard. Jason stood up and started to walk away, but Jerome grabbed his arm, keeping him from turning.

"What the hell!"

Both Jason and Jerome whipped around, hearing the clatter of a metal chair hitting the pavement and Will's yell. Cameron was lying on his side, a red pool of blood spreading underneath him.

"Shooter!" Eric yelled, pulling out his Glock, and aiming towards the shooter. He let loose a few shots. "Get down!"

Jerome threw Jason and himself into the pool, keeping them close to the side, out of sight of the gunman on the roof.

"Keep down," Eric yelled as he ran, taking aim at the shooter on the roof. He pulled off two more shots. Seconds later, a figure fell, landing with a splat close to a potted fig tree. Eric kept his gun trained on the prone figure as he approached slowly. A rifle, with a silencer attached, had also landed, but out of reach of the body. Eric turned the person over with his foot.

"Call nine-one-one," Eric called to Will, who had ducked into the office entrance. Looking at the two men in the pool, he asked, "You guys okay?"

"Yeah, I think so," Jerome answered him, pushing Jason flat against the side of the pool while covering his back with his own body.

Eric ran to Cameron, grabbing a pool towel on his way. "Cameron... Cam," Eric said quietly, as he slowly turned the man onto his back.

Cameron's eyes opened, his lids fluttering. A brief smile formed on his lips when he saw Eric.

"Cameron, lay still, help is on the way." Eric pressed the towel to Cameron's shoulder.

"What happened?" Cameron asked, dazed.

“You’ve been shot, Cam, so please, just lay still for me,” Eric returned the smile. “It’s just your shoulder, so you’re gonna be okay.”

Jerome, dripping wet, knelt next to Cameron.

Reaching out, he was suddenly stopped when Eric growled, “Mine!”

Jerome looked at Eric, astonished to see his teeth were gritted, and his eyes silently dared him to move any closer to Cameron. Withdrawing his hand, a smirky smile on his face, he said, “Down, boy, I’m not gonna hurt him.”

Eric’s face cleared as if he was coming out of a trance. “Sorry man, I kinda lost it there for a minute.”

“Hey, I get it.” Jerome smiled with a new appreciation for Eric.

“Is he going to be okay?” Jason asked, his clothes soaking wet, plastered to his body.

Jerome turned his head to look up at him. “Boy, get in the office.”

“I said I wasn’t—”

Jerome growled. “Boy, I ain’t gonna tell you twice. Get. In. That. Office. *Now!*”

“Do as he says,” Eric said with complete authority. They could all hear the sound of sirens drawing close.

Inside the office, Will held out a towel to Jason.

“No thank you.” Jason turned his back on Will to look out the window at the scene going on poolside.

Will jerked Jason around. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“You, for one thing,” Jason yelled in his face.

Will threw Jason against the doorframe, his forearm across his neck. “Boy, you better tame that tongue of yours before someone rips it outta your fuckin’ head! Now you tell me what the hell is going on.”

“I saw you and Jerome.”

“You saw me and Jerome what?”

“This morning,” Jason spat.

Will took a step back, his arm dropping. “And here I thought you were a smart guy,” Will said, shaking his head.

“It doesn’t take a genius to know what’s going on when two naked guys are making out!” Jason yelled, his hands balled up into fists, tight against his sides.

Will couldn’t help it. He started laughing.

“What the fuck? What’s so funny?” Jason asked, glaring at the other man.

“Man, you don’t know me from shit.” Will said, still laughing. “You think that me and Jerome? Oh, that’s good. Wait ’til Jerome hears that one!” Will doubled over laughing, his hands on his knees.

Jason stood there, his eyes wide and mouth hanging open, not believing he was being laughed at.

Looking up at Jason, Will tried to compose himself. “Jason, I was... well never mind what we were actually doing, but trust me, it sure as hell wasn’t anything sexual. Man, I was telling Jerome that it was *you* that he needed in his life, and not to fuck it up!”

“Huh?” Jason was truly shocked.

“He was... well let’s just say he was letting go... of...”

“Toby.” Jason squeaked.

“So you know about Toby?”

Jason only nodded.

“The whole story?”

“I think so,” Jason said in a hoarse whisper.

“How he died?”

Again, Jason nodded.

Will let out a deep sigh. “Jerome was saying good-bye this morning. We both were, I guess,” Will said, a faraway tone to his voice.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph,” Jason said angrily, shaking his head. “I really am a total dumbass.”

The buzzer to the intercom interrupted them. Will pulled on a pair of shorts that were hanging on a peg just inside the office door, and pushed the towel at Jason.

“We good?” Will asked Jason as he walked past.

“Yeah, Will, I’m sorry.”

Will smiled at Jason. “Not a problem, just make it up to Jerome.”

The rest of the morning was a blur, as the New Orleans police invaded the compound along with the EMT’s. It wasn’t long until more FBI agents swarmed the place like ants on an ant hill. Eric had pulled on a pair of Will’s poolside shorts, which were so skin tight water couldn’t even have gotten between him and the short, very short, shorts.

Several hours later, Jerome and Jason made their way back to their rooms, completely exhausted. Jerome still hadn’t put on any clothes, only wearing a towel around his waist. If anyone had looked closely, they would have seen remnants of Jason’s cum embedded in his chest hair from the previous night.

It was strangely silent after all the ruckus that had been swirling around them the past few hours. Jerome dropped heavily onto the sofa.

“Um... Sir, can I talk to you?” Jason asked, as he knelt in front of Jerome on the floor.

Jerome didn’t even look at Jason, his head tilted back as he stared at the ceiling. “What?” His voice was blank, showing no emotion at all.

“I owe you an apology,” Jason said, his voice sounding a bit scratchy, even to himself.

Jerome slowly looked at Jason and waited.

Jason sighed, looking down at the floor. “I saw you and Will this morning by the pool. I... well I kinda thought... I jumped to some conclusions that perhaps might not have been...”

Jerome started to chuckle, then gave a full out belly laugh.

Jason looked up, startled by Jerome's laughter.

"You thought that Will and I..." he laughed even harder. "That Will and I were getting it on?"

"I'm sorry, Sir," Jason said, starting to sound a bit irritated.

"Oh, wait 'til Will hears this one!" Jerome said, wiping the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand.

"He knows," Jason told him, his face turning red. "He said the same thing about you."

"Oh?"

"Yeah... well he kinda set me straight." Jason admitted.

Jerome stood up and held his hand out to Jason, who took it readily. "Come on, Boy," he said gently. "I don't know about you, but I think I'm in need of a nap. I'm exhausted."

Jason grinned. "Sir, yes, Sir!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

“It’s nice that things have finally gotten back to normal,” Jason said, before taking a long drink of his ice cold beer. “This beer tastes so good!”

“Yeah, it is. Glad that we finally got that job done,” Jerome answered after taking a long swig of his own beer, nearly drinking half. “I didn’t know that we’d ever get done with everything that’s happened.”

“You think we’re gonna get that new client?” Jason wanted to know.

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure. They were happy with the price I quoted them, and I doubt that there is anyone around who can actually do it.” Jerome sounded confident. “That will keep us busy for the next two years if they do everything they want done.”

“Here y’alls go,” Marie announced as she set the plates down in front of them. “I’ll checks on y’alls in a bit,” she said as she scurried off to take care of other customers that packed the small restaurant.

“Watch out! Gun!” seconds before a shot was fired, the bullet whizzing by Jerome’s head, barely missing Ant who was standing at another table behind them.

Screaming and chaos broke out in the small restaurant as diners hit the floor, scrambling to get out of the way. Another shot exploded, sounding like a cannon in the small, confined space.

Jason reached across the small table to yank Jerome, whose back was to the shooter, to the floor. A loud “clunk” sounded moments after the second shot was fired. Jason and Jerome looked up to see Marie standing there with one of the large yellow mop buckets they used to serve oysters in her hand, and a grimace on her face. She was staring at a woman who was now sprawled out on the floor, unconscious, covered in oyster shells.

“Bethany?” Jerome asked to no one in particular, clearly surprised.

“Who dat?” Marie huffed slightly, kicking the woman, the bucket raised above her head ready to strike again.

Jerome looked up at Marie and started laughing. “She’s my cousin David’s wife,” he explained to Jason and Marie.

“Why would she want to kill you?” Jason asked. “Damn, that whole side of your family is just nuts!”

Someone must have called the police, because a police cruiser pulled up just then in front of the eatery, sirens blazing. Two of NOPD’s finest came rushing in, their guns drawn.

“Y’all kin put them things away now,” Marie said, still holding the bucket in one hand, her other hand on her large hip. “I dun took care of ’er.” Marie rolled her eyes at the two policemen.

Ignoring her, one of the policemen jerked Bethany’s hands behind her back, getting ready to handcuff her as she started to regain consciousness. The other officer didn’t put his gun away until the woman was cuffed and sitting on the floor.

The woman looked a little dazed, a cut on her cheek bleeding slightly. Shaking the cobwebs from her head, her eyes narrowed when she focused on Jerome. “You!” She screamed. “You ruined everything! You are *evil* and should be sent to hell!”

“What the hell?” Jerome asked shaking his head at the woman and looking at her like she was crazy. “Bethany, what are you talking about?”

“You are a sinner,” she continued her screaming. “You belong in hell with Satan. Reverend Bishop was right when he said you would be the ruin of us all!”

“Reverend Bishop?” Jerome snarled. One of the officers put his hand on Jerome’s chest to keep him from approaching the woman.

“You even took my only son and turned him into one of *your* kind,” she spat. “How does it feel to know you’ve ruined so many lives, Jerome, huh? How does it feel? Your own family is in jail because of you!”

“Woman, you bes’ hush yo’ mouf ’fore I knocks them teeth right out yo’ head!” Marie raised the bucket again. “An’ you kin tell that so-called Rever’nd that he don’ know shit an’ he shore ain’t no Christian!”

Jason couldn’t help it. He started laughing. It was just too outrageous to be imagined. By this time, Ant and Antoine were standing behind Marie, Antoine with a large chef’s knife and Ant armed with a hammer. Everyone looked at Jason as if he were insane.

“What?” He asked them. “You couldn’t make this shit up, it’s so crazy!”

One of the officers pulled Bethany to her feet while the other read the Miranda rights to her.

“You’re going to hell, Jerome, don’t you believe for one minute that you’re not!” she continued to scream, paying no attention to the officer speaking to her. “You and your filthy faggot friends are *all* going to burn in hell for all eternity!”

Marie swung the bucket towards the screaming woman’s head again, and was barely blocked by Antoine’s arm.

“Settle down, gal,” he murmured close to her ear. “She ain’t gonna hurt no one, so hesh up, hear?”

Marie looked at her husband and grunted, slowly lowering the yellow bucket.

Bethany Fontaine continued to rant as she was pulled away and stuffed into one of the squad cars. Not long after, she was driven away, still ranting in the back of the police cruiser.

After several hours of having everyone questioned by a detective, things finally settled down.

Ant had his mother sit down at a table in the corner, and rubbed her shoulders, doing his best to keep her calm. She still had a look on her face that would scare most people.

Jerome walked over to her, grinning from ear to ear. “You love me.”

“Shut up, Jerome,” Marie said, rolling her eyes at him, her bottom lip stuck out.

“You love me, otherwise you wouldn’t have saved my life. Now, go on, admit it,” Jerome said as he sat across from her, taking her hand in his.

“I ain’t sayin’ nuttin’,” she protested, not looking at him, but letting him hold her hand.

“That’s all right, Marie, I love you, too,” He smiled gently as he raised her hand and kissed it. “Thank you for saving my life.”

“Jerome, you is the most bothersome man I’s knows,” Marie huffed, failing to stay mad, and eventually grinned.

“I want to thank you also, Marie,” Jason said, before leaning over and kissing her on the cheek.

Marie glared at Jason, and then broke into a large smile. “I did it for you, not Jerome’s sorrowful butt.”

“Who’s this Reverend Bishop?” Jason asked innocently enough.

Jerome looked away, not saying anything.

Marie looked up at Jason, her face blank. “Toby’s daddy.”

“Oh,” Jason said quietly.

“He blames me,” Jerome said, just barely above a whisper.

“Now, Jerome, if you thinks we’s gonna go through this again, I am fo’ shore gonna take you out back an’ whoop yo’ ass, an I’m jus in the mood, too,” Marie said seriously, yanking his arm to make him look at her. “You didn’ have nuttin’ to do with Toby or yo’ daddy gittin’ kilt.”

Jason stood there shaking his head... again. “Is everyone around here crazy?”

“They’s ain’t so much crazy as just passionate,” a baritone voice behind him said softly.

Jason turned to see Antoine standing there.

“I don’ thinks we’ve been properly introduced,” the gentle voice said as he took Jason’s hand in his. “I’m Marie’s husband and Ant’s daddy.”

“Nice to finally meet you, Antoine,” Jason replied as he looked into the man’s gentle light-brown eyes, thinking he looked familiar somehow.

“It is my pleasure, I’m shore,” he replied with a smile.

Jerome stood and took Antoine into his arms, then kissed him on the cheek, then hugged him again.

Jason stood there with his mouth hanging open, unable to process what he was seeing.

Jerome turned to Jason. “He’s also my half-brother.”

“Huh?” Jason asked dumbly.

“Honey, wha’ he’s tryin’ ta tell ya is we’s all related,” Marie said tenderly. “We’s family, an’ family looks afta family, even if they’s stupid.”

It was Jason who sat down then. “But... how?”

Marie chuckled, shaking her head. “Jerome and Antoine’s daddy had a likin’ fer brown sugah nows an’ agains.”

“Oh, I see.” Jason blushed. He studied Jerome and Antoine, who were standing with their arms over each other’s shoulders. They had the same eyes. Looking a little closer, it was obvious that they were related; only Antoine was darker skinned.

“Ant,” Marie hollered toward the kitchen. “Come on out here an’ brings that bottle o’ whiskey wit’cha!” Ant had disappeared without Jason even noticing.

A moment later, Ant appeared with an unopened bottle of Jack Daniel’s and several glasses on a small tray.

Jason looked around at the group and smiled. “I’d be mighty proud to have you all as family.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

“Sampson is going to be here this afternoon,” Jerome said.

“Mmm, mmh,” Jason replied contently, his head resting on Jerome’s chest. “He’s staying over at the Phoenix with Will?”

“Yes,” Jerome answered as he played with Jason’s ear. “It’s good to be home.”

“Mmm, mmh.” Jason sighed.

The room still smelled of sex and cum, the result of their earlier antics.

“Your ass is bright red,” Jerome chuckled as he looked down at Jason’s butt.

“Mmm hmm.” Jason agreed, sighing.

“Maybe I should add some stripes to that ass and put you in chaps for the reception tonight,” Jerome said as he smacked Jason’s butt, leaving a hand print.

“M’kay,” Jason said after a quick yelp.

Jerome smacked Jason’s other cheek, leaving a similar handprint. “Sometimes you’re just too easy.” Jerome pouted.

“Anything... for you, Sir,” Jason said, looking into Jerome’s eyes.

“Okay, we need to get up and shower,” Jerome said pushing Jason off him.

“So soon?” Jason whined, trying to keep Jerome from leaving the bed.

“Yes... now, Boy. Have you forgotten that we’re supposed to be helping out Will?”

“No, I’ve not forgotten.” Jason grumbled as he got out of bed. He looked at the new clock on the nightstand. “We’ve got a little extra time,” he said, wagging his butt at Jerome.

“Boy, you’re gonna be the death of me yet!”

“Yeah, but what a way to go!” Jason teased Jerome, staying just out of his reach until he got to the shower. “Ouch!”

“Don’t tease the bear, Boy,” Jerome growled after grabbing both of Jason’s very sore butt cheeks and squeezing hard.

“Wow, Will, this place looks *great*,” said Jason, looking around the pool area, clearly impressed.

“Of course it does, he has *me*!” Ricky exclaimed, snapping his fingers before he turned on his heel and walked off.

Jerome and Jason both laughed as they watched the Latino boy walk away in his neon pink thong.

“What are you laughing at?” Will asked Jason, one eyebrow raised almost to his hairline. “He isn’t the only one around here wearing pink.”

Jason turned and wiggled his butt at Will. “You like?”

Will laughed. “Yeah, and the three stripes really sets it off. Nice chaps by the way.”

“Thank you,” Jason said grinning as he turned around. “They’re borrowed.”

“I have several pair.” Jerome shrugged.

“And here is our guest of honor,” Will said, drawing their attention to the gate.

“Well, well, it seems the gang’s all here.” Master Sampson strolled across the pavement toward the small group. His long blond hair was pulled back in a ponytail.

“Hey, buddy,” Will said, hugging Sampson then kissing him on the lips.

“Great to see you, Will.” Sampson smiled at his old friend. “Jerome?”

Jerome also hugged his friend then kissed him. “Great to see you, Sampson.”

Sampson turned to Jason, who was down on one knee, hands behind his back, head down, giving a full honor present. “What a good boy,” Sampson said as he petted the top of Jason’s head. “Stand up, boy.”

Jason stood, a smile on his face, but eyes still cast down. “Sir, it is good to see you, Sir!”

“I’ve heard many good things about you, boy, since you’ve been here.” Sampson pulled Jason into a big hug, and then whispered something in his ear.

Leaning back from the hug, Jason nodded his head at Sampson, a full blush rising to his cheeks.

“Let’s get this party started,” Will said as Ricky set up a bottle of champagne and some flutes on a table.

“We have a lot to celebrate,” Sampson said looking directly at Jerome.

“A toast,” Will proclaimed, holding up a glass of champagne. “To a great Southern Decadence Weekend!”

“Here, here,” they all joined in the toast.

“I’ll want to get changed in a moment, but before I do...” Sampson said looking at Jason.

Jason blushed again, looking first down at the ground and then at Will.

Will smiled smugly as he pulled an envelope from his back pocket and handed it to Jason. Jason took the envelope, then dropped to one knee in front of Jerome, extending the envelope to him.

“What’s this?” Jerome looked from Jason to the others before taking it.

“Please, Sir?” Jason asked softly.

Jerome took the envelope, ripped it open and started reading the letter inside, his eyes growing larger as he read. He stopped briefly; looking from Will to Sampson, then went back to reading the two page letter. Jason never moved.

When he was finished, Jerome’s hands dropped to his sides, the letter in one hand, the envelope in the other. He looked at Will, who smiled and

nodded to him. He then looked to Sampson. Sampson raised his eyebrows expectantly.

“I... I don’t know what to say,” Jerome stuttered.

“Well a yes or no would work about now,” Will said sarcastically, almost glaring at Jerome.

Jerome finally turned to Jason, who was still on the one knee waiting patiently. Jerome took Jason’s chin in his hand, raising his face so that he could look into his eyes.

“Is this really what you want, Jason?”

“Yes, Sir, more than anything I’ve ever wanted before, Sir.”

“I don’t... umm. Well, I don’t have one...” Jerome faltered.

Sampson leaned over and pulled a box out of his carry-on bag which he handed to Jerome. “Here, Jerome. I brought this for you.” Sampson smiled.

Jerome opened the black velvet box. Inside was a heavy sterling silver chain with a sterling silver and gold lock. Two keys lay next to it.

Looking up at Sampson, his mouth open, “You knew?” he asked.

Sampson only nodded. Jerome looked at Will, who also nodded.

“I... I don’t know...” Jerome started.

“Don’t make me kick your ass, Jerome,” Will growled.

“It’s okay, I understand, Sir,” Jason choked out, starting to stand.

Jerome put his hand on Jason’s shoulder holding him down. “That isn’t it, Boy. I just want to make sure that *this*,” he said indicating the collar “is what you really, really want. That you want to be collared to *me!*”

Jason looked into Jerome’s eyes. “Yes, Sir. I do, Sir. Anything for you, Sir.”

“Then yes, I will accept your petition for my collar, Boy. *My Boy.*” Jerome stroked the side of Jason’s scruffy cheek.

He took the heavy chain from the box and opened the lock. Holding it up for all to see and admire, he slowly draped it around Jason's neck. He then took the lock and threaded it through the two end loops of the chain. He looked deeply into Jason's eyes, and paused, hesitating. Jason nodded his head. Taking a deep breath, Jerome firmly snapped the lock in place.

“Mine,” he growled into Jason's face.

Jason smiled broadly. “Sir, yes, Sir!”

There was a round of applause from their friends. Will and Sampson both slapped Jerome on the back, congratulating him, and then did the same to Jason.

“Oh, it's just like a wedding, except there's no bouquet or cake!” Ricky sniffled, dabbing at his eyes with a paper cocktail napkin.

The others all looked at him and burst out laughing.

THE END

Author Bio

Max Vos is a classically trained chef with over 30 years of food service experience. After retiring in 2011, Max found himself with time on his hands and turned his talents to writing. “Cooking English”, a short story, was his first published work. He has two others currently in publication, three others due out this year, and he has just completed his second novel. First novel with MLR Press is due out later this year.

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