



# Coasting East

**North Shore Series Book 2**



**Lashley Mills**

## COASTING EAST

Justin Meyer and Parker Klein fell in love three years ago in college and now that they are 24 years old, they are looking forward to beginning their adult lives together.

However, there is one small issue. As much as these men love each other, their romantic relationship is unknown to the world. In college they had decided to just keep their relationship between themselves, but now that they have graduated, this may not be enough.

Through humor, sweetness, and passion, Justin and Parker transition into their adult lives, learning how to be true to themselves and to each other, moving towards the future the only way that they know how—together.

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# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## COASTING EAST

By Lashley Mills

### 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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# COASTING EAST

By Lashley Mills

## Photo Description

Two twenty-four-year-old boyfriends getting ready to play a game of football with their friends stand with their backs to the camera. The man on the left is wearing a red T-shirt with “MINE 02” written in large white letters across the back. The man on the right is wearing a backward baseball cap and a red T-shirt with “MINE 01” written across his back, and is playfully grabbing his boyfriend’s ass with his entire hand.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*These guys have been together since they lived on the same floor their sophomore year of college four years ago. Real life and adult jobs keep them busy and stressed all week. They look forward to getting together with Brandt and Todd, their best friends, every Sunday afternoon to have some fun and play a game of football at the local park. A little exercise and a lot of razzing is good for them all but they’re tired of hearing words like “gay, fag, and queer”, even if they don’t say them with malice. Brandt and Todd don’t know about them so they’ve devised a plan. They’re going to wear their new shirts to the park this Sunday and then they’re going to kick some ass on the field. They just hope their friendship survives.*

*I see this as being fun with lots of banter. Hope someone can see their story too and write it for me!*

*Sincerely,*

*Gyn*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** best friends in love, established couple, coming out, love making, group of friends, sports

**Word count:** 33,029



*Author's Note*

This story, *Coasting East* (North Shore Series #2,) is the stand-alone sequel to the story, *North of Sure* (North Shore Series #1.) You do not have to be familiar with *North of Sure* to enjoy this story.

*Acknowledgements*

To the LGBTQIA community at large and its supporters—  
thank you for your strength and for being who you are.

And to you, the reader, thank you for reading.

# COASTING EAST

By Lashley Mills

## CHAPTER ONE

Justin Meyer and Parker Klein fell in love three years ago during the summer after their sophomore year of college in Boston, while living on the same dorm floor. They'd met, become best friends, and had been inseparable ever since.

They spent their junior and senior years of college living together in a small two-bedroom apartment off campus, where only one of the bedrooms was big enough for a full size mattress. That bedroom was theirs, the place where they shared the same bed every night. The other bedroom had a twin size bed and two desks pressed up against the wall. They used that room as their study room, and if a bed was only two feet away from where they studied together every night, well, that was nothing if not convenient.

The appearance of having two separate bedrooms was important to them though. As much as they were in love with each other, they just weren't ready for anyone else to know, and as far as they were concerned, they were still best friends and nothing much had changed. Nothing much, except for everything.

And now, three years after having fallen in love, their physical appearances had changed slightly, but their hearts hadn't.

Parker had hazel-green eyes, and his physique was the same that it had always been—long and cut, with summer-tanned skin that never seemed to fade, no matter what time of year it was. In college, Parker rarely worried about getting haircuts, only bothering to get his sandy-brown hair trimmed once it was down to his shoulders. Since he'd graduated from college last year and was a little older now, he tried to be better about keeping up with it. Sort of. His hair length would fluctuate. It would be down past his ears almost brushing across his shoulders one day, and the next he would have it trimmed so short that it was almost a buzz cut. It depended on the seasons and on his

mood, and since he didn't have his own car, his overall effort to borrow his mom's or hop on the bus to go someplace to get it cut.

When their romantic relationship first started, Parker would ask Justin's opinion about his hair, but Justin would just palm the top of his head and joke with him to "shave it all off" or bet him on how long it would take for him to grow his hair to his ass. Parker got the hint that Justin didn't really care—well that, and Justin would tell him, "Wear it how you want it, Parker. You're hot either way. In every way," and then kiss him so deeply that he was left gasping for air that Parker just decided to experiment with it. He loved to surprise Justin by having long hair one day and nearly no hair the next. He would have done the same thing with facial hair if he could. He so wanted to grow out a beard and then shave it all off, just to see the reaction he'd get from Justin. He wondered if anything was capable of shocking his boyfriend. But he never had the chance, his facial hair never really grew in, and when it did, it was spotty at best.

Justin, on the other hand was completely different. He had dark brown hair, almost appearing black at times, chocolate-brown eyes, and, being half Italian on his mother's side, he had no problem growing out a mustache or a thick, full beard. When he first graduated college, he had decided to take a cue from Parker and just let everything grow out. However, he didn't really like the feel of his hair covering up his ears and cut it back to the short, cropped style that he had always worn thereafter. He did like how the beard felt on his face though. Actually, his favorite part was when his beard was first growing in, the hairs on his face still sort of rough and standing up, not yet formed into a beard—he would kiss Parker or put his face up to his, enjoying Parker's reaction to the new tactile sensation of Justin being up close to him.

Justin's rough hairs brushing up against Parker's smooth skin was a huge turn-on for him, and well, it was an even bigger turn-on to Parker. So, Justin began to sport a permanent five o'clock shadow. Using his electric razor, he kept it neat and trimmed and tidy, just short enough that it wasn't a full beard, so that when he brushed up against Parker, Parker would know that Justin was there and that his beard was for him.

Unlike Justin, Parker didn't know if his inability to grow facial hair had anything to do with his racial background because he wasn't sure exactly what it was. He was about a quarter Irish and a little German, but that's all he knew. He only knew about his mother's side since his dad had never been in the picture. His parents were never married and although it was never discussed, Parker knew that it was his mom who had decided to have him and to keep him. His whole life it had just been him and her. And he liked it that way.

And with having Justin and his mom, Parker knew all the love that he would ever need. He knew what it meant to be a part of something bigger than himself, and he truly knew what it meant to be loved.

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## CHAPTER TWO

When Justin and Parker graduated from college they lost their financial aid, so as much as they loved living together and wanted to continue to do so, they reluctantly decided to move back into their parents' houses, deciding that it was best that they saved money while they looked for jobs. Luckily, they lived in neighboring towns on the North Shore of Boston and as soon as they could save enough money to move, they'd resume living together.

It was a simple enough plan, except for the part where they couldn't find steady jobs and during the summer after their graduation. Justin was getting frustrated at the lack of job prospects.

"Fuck! Why did we have to graduate into this economy?" Justin was losing his patience with the whole job search thing. "We both graduated cum laude and we still can't find work. Nobody gives a fuck," Justin raged out into the hot air of his Ford Taurus. His car air conditioner had been broken for ages and he was sticking to his seat, the heat only aggravating him further, but at least he was with Parker.

As always, Parker was in the passenger seat beside him. They had decided to take a drive east to the beach and maybe sit by the ocean. Since it was a Tuesday morning, the beach would be deserted, for the most part, because most people would be at work. Most people had nine-to-five jobs, with a salary, and benefits, and could afford to move the fuck out of their parents' houses.

"Hey, it's not so bad." Parker tried to sound uplifting, but was failing miserably.

Justin looked over at him. "Parker, not so bad?! We've had to resort to getting it on in the backseat of my car for Christ's sake. And have you seen the backseat of my car?" Justin looked behind him into the backseat. "It's tiny. I can barely manage to give you a blow job without getting a stiff neck or throwing my back out." Justin was obviously being overly dramatic, but Parker agreed that their sexual escapades, now that they were living back at home, sometimes had to be done in less than ideal circumstances. But not

always. They at least had Parker's house to themselves while Parker's mom still worked the overnight shifts as a nurse. In fact, now that Parker was thinking about it, he couldn't help but smile at the thought of how they'd been spending a lot of their nights together.

Parker reached up and gently rubbed at the nape of Justin's neck. "Oh, baby, I'm sorry," Parker let out in mock sympathy. "Don't worry, the next time you go down on me, I'll be sure to give you a massage afterwards," Parker said coyly, continuing to rub Justin's neck. He leaned back in his seat a bit, as if he thought that since he was giving Justin the offer of a massage that Justin should give him the offer of what would cause him to get a stiff neck in the first place. Parker licked his lips in anticipation of Justin's reply. He wasn't really serious about this, but since Justin was just about always ready to go, maybe he had enticed him.

"Okay," Justin said looking back at Parker, focusing intently on his wet full lips. "Take off your shirt."

*What? Justin was going for this? Right now in the beach parking lot?*

*Yes!*

"Sure." Parker yanked his shirt up and over his head. It was an old T-shirt that he always liked wearing to the beach. It was so faded and worn that it was almost see-through.

"Yeah, okay." Justin leaned over toward Parker, who was just dying at this point for Justin to touch him. How was Justin okay with this? But Parker couldn't care about that right now. All he knew was that Justin was leaning slowly over him, slowly, slowly, almost there, come on...

But Justin just kept leaning past Parker, not brushing his thigh or his waist or his now hardening dick. Instead, Justin reached all the way past Parker until his hand reached the passenger side door handle, and he flung the door wide open. This was so not what Parker was expecting.

"Justin, what the...? What are you...?" But Justin was just smiling up at him still spread over his body, and he was—*Damn it, Justin*. Laughing.

"What did you think? I was going to blow you here? Now?"

"You did that on purpose."

“What?” Justin tried to sound innocent. “It’s not my fault that just by leaning over you, you get all horny.” Justin had retreated to his side of the car, opening his own door and stepping out onto the hot pavement of the beach lot.

*Damn it, Justin.* Parker wasn’t really mad though. Justin was always goofing with him and pulling pranks. Parker wasn’t really expecting to get blown in the beach parking lot anyway, but since the topic was brought up, he had to at least try to make his move and get Justin to go for it.

In the beginning of their relationship, Parker had always been the one to make the first move with Justin in every conceivable way. It was he who first kissed Justin, their sophomore year of college, when he could no longer put his feelings for Justin aside. When Justin had been receptive to him, wanting his kiss and wanting them to be together, Parker knew that there would never be another person for him besides Justin.

Parker continued to make the first moves, his want and desire driving him the entire time. Not just his want of the physical act, but of Justin, of wanting to be with him in every possible way. It was Parker who was the first person to elevate their make out sessions, actually wrapping his hands around Justin’s erection, and then later being the first person to go down on him.

But when it came to having sex, the act of finally joining their two bodies into one, it was Justin who initiated it. It was Justin who wanted to be entered first, and although it was Justin who had initiated it, Parker had wanted it, had wanted Justin just as badly as Justin had wanted him.

And now, three years after they first made love, Parker was no longer the one making all the moves. In fact, more often than not, it was Justin who was ravenous and insatiable and could never seem to get enough of him. And although it had been Justin who had been entered first by Parker and although that part of their relationship at the very beginning stayed the same for a couple of months, when Justin finally felt ready to top and when Parker had been so aroused by his passion and love for Justin that the want of Justin inside of him was all-consuming, they switched their positions in bed and their relationship reached even further levels of intimacy and want and desire and the love they shared and expressed to each other had only been growing from there.



Now, when they were together in bed, and not wanting to just fool around, but to be with each other in every possible way, it was Parker who often times found himself on the bottom. Not always though, not even close, because Justin still needed to feel Parker, still needed the closeness of having Parker within him, surrounding him fully, and Parker felt the same way.

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Although their job searches took longer than they had originally thought, Justin was eventually offered a job selling cars and Parker took per diem shifts as an orderly and patient transporter, working at the same hospital where his mother worked as a nurse.

Through Justin's former college roommate, Brandt Donnelly, Justin was able to score a job at Brandt's dad's car dealership, North Shore Motors. Brandt had always said that he wanted more for himself than just to work for his dad's company, but after graduation when he couldn't get a decent job either, even with his dad's numerous business contacts, he decided to take an office management position in the car dealership and immediately hired Justin on as a salesman.

Justin had never sold anything other than speakers, stereos, and CDs in the audio section of Best Buy at the mall. At first, the thought of selling \$70,000 imported cars to the swanks of Boston and the North Shore seemed daunting to him. But Brandt told him not to worry about it, that he'd train him, and that for every twenty cars he sold, he'd give him a bonus. Although Justin wasn't even sure if Brandt had that kind of authority, it at least got him motivated enough so that he could shove his nerves aside and go to work.

It was so ironic that Justin showed up to work every day to sell luxury automobiles in his beat-up Ford Taurus, a car that his grandmother had originally owned. After she broke her hip, when Justin was in high school, and didn't drive anymore, his grandparents decided to gift the car to Justin under the strict instructions that he was to buckle his seatbelt each and every time he was in the car and that he would never, ever, never text or use his cellphone while driving. To this day, out of habit, fear, or guilt, he wasn't sure which, he never used his phone in the car.

When Justin pulled into work each day, he parked behind the large storage shed in the back of the huge dealership lot, that covered well over five acres, and let his eyes roam over the Audis and the BMWs and told himself that he'd put money aside every week in order to buy one someday. Although he was indeed able to save some money toward this lofty dream, he was trying even harder to reach a more important goal.

Justin and Parker were now almost twenty-four years old and a year had passed since they had first started working. They both still lived with their parents, focusing on their goal of saving as much money as possible so that they could live together once again.

Justin still had great memories of living with Parker, and he smiled as he remembered the memory of a time they still joked about, even though it happened their senior year.

*"I'm not putting that in my mouth." Justin shook his head from side to side. "No."*

*"Come on, you'll like it," Parker urged him on.*

*"Nope."*

*"You said you'd try it."*

*"Yeah, well now that I see it, I've changed my mind."*

*Justin was looking down at the round, wooden table he was sitting at in their tiny college apartment. Well really, he was looking at the white plate of food that was on the round, wooden table.*

*Parker had recently come up with the idea of becoming a vegetarian. He said that he wanted to be healthier and now that they lived off campus and didn't have a meal plan to the college dining hall, they were always grabbing fast food—burgers, fries. Burgers, fries. Burgers.*

*And that's exactly what Justin wanted now.*

*But Justin was looking down at his plate and it was covered in what looked like a piece of brown leather baseball mitt stuffed with more brown bits of dirt, or rice? Or—"What is this anyway?"*

*“It’s a portobello mushroom stuffed with quinoa,” Parker answered, placing his plate on the table and taking a seat directly across from Justin.*

*“Keen-what?” What the hell? “Dude, if I can’t spell it, I’m definitely not eating it.”*

*“Yeah, well...” Parker was fidgeting with his fork in his hand, grimacing down at his stuffed mushroom creation, not looking too thrilled at the prospect of eating it.*

No way is this vegetarian thing going to last, *Justin thought.*

*“Come on, Parker, let’s just go to Five Guys. We need bacon. On a burger. Now.” Justin was half out of his seat, ready to go out to eat instead, but Parker wasn’t going for it.*

*“Justin, come on. I said I wasn’t going to eat meat anymore and you said you were cool with it.”*

*“Yeah, but I never said that I’d stop eating meat.” Nope. Burgers. Bacon. Burgers. Now.*

*“Yeah, because you never could. There’s no way you would make it as a vegetarian. You probably couldn’t even go a week without eating meat,” Parker said to him, his mouth still void of any fungus among-us creation.*

*“Is that a challenge?” Justin perked up at what Parker had just said.*

*“More like a bet.”*

*“Yeah?” Justin was loving the sound of this. “What are the stakes?”*

*“The stakes?” Parker’s eyes looked around the room as he thought of his idea. “How about, the first one to put flesh in his mouth loses,” Parker said, looking back across the table to Justin, deliberately making his answer sound like a double entendre.*

*“Yeah?” Justin ran his foot under the table over to Parker’s. Justin started at his foot, and then his shin, and slowly he dragged his foot up, up over Parker’s knee and onto his thigh, rubbing it back and forth, and right when Parker closed his eyes waiting to feel Justin’s foot nudge his cock, Justin abruptly pulled away and dropped his foot back to the floor. Parker’s eyes shot open.*

*“Fine. I know I can hold out longer than you,” Justin shot over to Parker, folding his hands in front of himself on the table like he was completely innocent even though his foot had just been only a centimeter away from Parker’s dick.*

*“Hold out longer? But wait.” Parker had to think back to his words. “So, the person who gives head first loses?” Was that right? “Or, the person who doesn’t give head loses?” He had no idea. He just knew that his cock wanted attention and now he was confused, and what sounded like a funny idea at first was now taking a turn for the worst.*

*Justin had to think about this. “Umm... the person who gives head first loses?” What? He wasn’t sure. “Wait, shouldn’t it be the other way around?” Justin was confused now too and either way, this wasn’t sounding so great anymore.*

*“So this is a no-blow-jobs bet?” Parker answered him, his hand reaching down to his crotch underneath the table, palming his half-hard dick that was pressing against the fly of his khakis. This was actually sounding like a horrible bet. And whatever the hell the stakes were or the bet actually was, he was willing to be on the losing end of it, whatever the hell that actually meant.*

*“I think the vegetarianism thing sounds easier...” Justin answered, sounding unsure. He took off his baseball cap and scratched at the matted, dark-brown hair underneath it. No way was either one of them going for this anymore.*

*“Fine.” Parker slid back from the dining table and walked over to Justin. “I’ll be on the losing side first.” He leaned down to Justin and gave him a kiss on his lips, and before Justin could pull him down further to get better contact with his mouth, he said, “Then you can take me to Five Guys for burgers. Winner pays.”*

*“Done,” replied Justin, reaching up for Parker, bringing him back down to him, hungrily sealing their lips together.*

And that’s how Parker was a vegetarian for less than half an hour.

Two years later, as much as Justin loved reliving the memories of the time in their tiny apartment, when they moved in together this time, he wanted it to

be in a house. Not on the fourth floor of a five-floor walk-up, where he and Parker barely had enough room to move around each other, let alone be able to set up a proper house. Not that he minded at the time—living in close quarters was... Convenient. Very convenient, and Justin didn't want to be anywhere else than right next to Parker, right up close to him on their mattress on the floor or their busted-up love seat, that after moving and angling and pushing and shoving, was just the right size to be able to fit through their narrow apartment doorways. It actually fit in their living room/dining room/kitchen hybrid space that was comprised of a wooden table, the busted-up green pleather love seat, a few folding chairs for when they had friends over and a fifty-five-inch LED flat screen TV.

In their college apartment, the TV was non-negotiable. They could save money using hand-me-down furniture and thrift store lamps and not buying a bed frame for the bed that they shared, but the TV? Non-negotiable. Justin and Parker loved watching sports, TV shows, and movies way too much to throw their money away on a crappy set. Justin was still working at Best Buy at the time and was able to get discounts on the TV, while the Blu-ray player and the HDMI cables were next to free. When he told his parents how excited he was about the TV, his dad showed up at their apartment one day after work with a low wooden TV stand that he and Justin lugged up the four flights of stairs. Justin was in college heaven. Parker. TV. Actual food in the fridge from time to time. It was all he needed.

But now, Justin wanted more. They had graduated college over a year ago and he was almost twenty-four years old, and he wanted more. There was no question in his mind who he wanted more with. Parker had been his best friend since their sophomore year in college, the one person he could turn to no matter what, the one person that he could spout off his crazy dreams to, but this dream he was having now? It wasn't so crazy.

He saw himself and Parker living together in a house with a yard, somewhere on the North Shore where they could stretch out in the backyard and stare up at the night sky and the moon and the stars. The first time he had told Parker he loved him was under the stars while lying on the red and green plaid blanket that he and Parker always shared at the Eagles college football games they went to. Justin wore his red T-shirt with the big white letters

across the front saying “GO” and his number, “01”, on the back and Parker wore his red T-shirt with the word “EAGLES!” on the front and the number “02” across the back, and Justin wanted more of that for them. More I love yous and hand-holding, and kissing, and making out and touching and well—everything.

But there was a problem. He and Parker weren’t out as a couple yet. Actually, they weren’t out individually either, not to their family and not to their friends, and even though they still met with their friends, Brandt and Todd, every weekend for a game of football, just like they had since their sophomore year of college, neither Brandt nor Todd knew of their romantic relationship.

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“Yeah, no wonder you fags like touch football so much.” Brandt looked over to Justin and Parker and said this with a curl of his lip. “I say fuck it. Let’s tackle each other for Christ’s sakes. That’s part of the fun!”

Todd just stood with one hand on his hip and kept his other hand at his brow, shielding the unnaturally bright overhead fluorescent lights of the indoor sports complex where the guys played football each week.

“Yeah, sure, we can play ‘tackle’ instead of ‘touch’, although I’m warning you, Brandt, don’t come crying to me when you wrinkle your expensive clothes. I don’t get why you show up every Sunday actually wearing your Sunday best. This isn’t church, you know. Except, now that I think of it, you should get down on your knees and pray that you don’t cry too loudly when Parker and I kick your ass,” Justin pointed out loudly.

“Yeah, I’m sure you want me on my knees...” Brandt retorted.

“What was that, Brandt? Let me guess, another fag joke? You’re so original, man. But you’re the one who’s the joke. Just try to beat Parker and me at this. Every week it’s the same old thing, hell it’s been the same thing for the past three years, a whole buncha talk and you guys always lose,” Justin sneered, to which Todd, still standing a bit farther off from the guys, looked slightly embarrassed.

“Sorry, Todd, I mean you’re good, you’re both good. But we both know that Parker and I were built for speed.”

“And that’s why we’re gonna kick your ass today when we play tackle. Your fast legs aren’t gonna save you from my two hundred and fifty pounds of muscle. Now are you and Parker gonna man up or what? Time to play some ball!” Brandt was always giving Justin shit. But Justin always gave it right back. That’s just how they’d been since they roomed together, along with Todd, during their freshman year of college and it was always in fun. They were good friends and they never took it seriously.

Brandt was always throwing around the word, “fag” or making gay jokes. It was something that Justin and Parker didn’t really care about and didn’t take serious offense to because they understood that Brandt was harmless, he was just an imbecile.

Three years after having become boyfriends with Parker, Justin knew without a shadow of a doubt who he was and it was all thanks to Parker. Justin, at first, had been at a loss, not wanting to use a label to mark his new found love for his best friend, but now, he knew that he wanted to because he knew who he was with Parker; he was the absolute best version of himself.

Some trepidation and fear still held Justin back. To the world, he and Parker were just friends, best friends and not Justin and Parker.

But that was all about to change.

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## CHAPTER THREE

“I told my mom.”

“What?” Justin felt like he was already in the middle of a conversation.

Parker pinched the bridge of his nose and ran his hand across his forehead. “About us, Justin. I told her about us.” He hadn’t discussed this with Justin beforehand and he wasn’t sure how he was going to take it. “Justin, you talk about us moving in together, and I’m not calling myself your roommate, not anymore. We never even talk about it anymore, us telling people we’re a couple. We’ve been together for over three years, it’s time.”

“Yeah, but.”

“But what? Justin, you’re acting like telling my mom wasn’t my decision to make.”

“Well maybe it’s not.” Justin mumbled out.

“What?”

“Since it involves me, I don’t think it is your decision to make,” Justin said looking straight into Parker’s eyes.

“It’s because it involves you that I made this decision. Justin, you know what you mean to me, you know what this relationship means to me. I can’t believe that we’re having this conversation.”

“What do you mean you can’t believe we’re having this conversation? You’re the one who brought it up.”

“No, Justin, what I mean is how can we not be on the same page about this? I need you to tell me right now.”

“Tell you what?”

“That we’re on the same page.”

Justin scratched up at the hairline above his forehead. Was he on the same page as Parker when it came to this? To “come out”? Ugh. He hated that term. To “come out” like he had been hiding, like this was all some deep dark



secret that needed to be revealed. And it wasn't. None of this was. Nothing he felt for Parker was even close to being dark or dirty or shameful.

They had both decided to keep the status of their romantic relationship to themselves while they were still in college, but now that they were older, now that they absolutely knew without a shadow of a doubt that this relationship was it for them, keeping quiet about it was no longer an option. It couldn't be. *Enough, Justin.*

"We're on the same page," Justin answered him.

"You don't sound too convincing." Parker was worried that Justin was just trying to appease him. And this couldn't be farther from the reality of it.

Justin walked up to Parker and kissed him sweetly on the lips. "I promise you. We're on the same page." And Justin was going to prove it.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

A week after Parker had said that he told his mom that he and Justin were a couple was Valentine's Day. Justin and Parker never made a huge deal out of the holiday, but this year was going to be different. Justin needed for it to be, because he knew he had acted like an ass. Parker had let him know that he had told his mom about them and he made it about himself, just like he always did anytime any conflict came up. And he knew it, and he felt like an asshole about it.

Parker was a million times braver than he was. But that too was going to change. Justin was no longer going to be a chickenshit about this. It's one thing not to mention to anyone that he and Parker were together, to just remain neutral about it, not going out of his way to tell anyone, but not actively denying it either. The time for that was over as well. He wasn't a college kid anymore. He and Parker weren't shacked up together in a fourth floor walk-up living off ramen noodles and string cheese. Well, the ramen noodles and string cheese hadn't really changed much, but still that's not the point.

The point was that Parker was it for Justin. The it. The person. He was damn lucky to even be with Parker and he knew it.

And this thing of not calling Parker his boyfriend to anyone and not letting anyone else in on the fact that they were together as a couple, together in love, had gone on too long. Far too long. And that was going to change too.

So, the day after Parker and he talked, Justin made a trip to Boston after work. Parker had a late shift at the hospital, and Justin knew that he would have time to go, even if there was killer rushhour traffic that time of day.

When Justin reached Boston, he found a parking spot off Commonwealth Avenue, right near his old college campus, and after parallel parking his car and walking around the street corner, he was within sight of his old sophomore dorm, the one where he had met Parker. The place where his whole life had changed.

It was now close to seven PM on a cold February night. After looking at the five-story brick dorm, now only illuminated by the soft orange glow of the

curbside street lights and the pole lights that lined the walkways on the college grounds, Justin couldn't help but feel lucky. Lucky that he had met Parker. Lucky that Parker only lived five doors down from him his sophomore year in the dorm. And more than anything, he just felt lucky to be with Parker. That was the truth. He had always felt lucky that Parker wanted to be with him, had chosen him and that feeling was never going to change.

In college, along with their friend Brandt, Justin and Parker's other best friend was Todd Schmidt. Todd still worked at the custom T-shirt shop that he and Parker had worked at throughout college, and since Todd was now in graduate school at their old college, he kept his job there, making his hours even more part-time to account for his graduate school studies and the observation hours that he had to clock in.

But Todd was going to be working tonight. Justin had called him to make sure of it. Justin wanted to see him, wanted to talk to him, wanted him to be there.

So, after shoving his hands further down in the deep pockets of his wool coat to protect them from the frigid night air, and walking a few more blocks, Justin found himself in front of the T-shirt shop. The one that specialized in custom-made T-shirts, where Parker had originally designed their "GO" and "EAGLES!" T-shirts that were worn to every single Eagles football game during college.

The entrance to the shop itself was small, and people might just walk on past it if they didn't know it was there. Oftentimes, the shop didn't deal directly with individuals from the public, trying to take on bigger clients in order to do bulk orders, but it was still a family-run business and they were still happy to service people's individual requests. Plus, Justin was personal friends with Todd, and he knew that Todd would be able to handle his rush order. He needed his order done before Valentine's Day, which would be on Sunday, only four days away.

"Hey, man. What are you doing around here?" Todd asked, hearing the little bell chime over the door when Justin walked into the shop.

“I told you I was coming. Or did you forget?” Justin walked over to the large stainless steel counter, toward the back of the shop that Todd was standing behind.

“Naw, I didn’t forget, just meant what can I getcha? We just printed out some Eagles shirts, but I don’t know if they’re your style, they’re the actual school colors—you know, maroon and gold. Not the red and white shirts that you and Parker always wore.” The “GO” and “EAGLES!” shirts, that he and Parker had worn every week in college, were bright red T-shirts with large white block letters.

“Naw, thanks, I, uh, was hoping that you could just put in an order for me, a custom order.”

Todd walked from behind the counter toward Justin, after having grabbed a pad of paper to take Justin’s order.

“The only thing is I need it by Saturday,” Justin told him.

“Uh, Saturday? Kind of short notice, Justin. How big’s the order?”

“Just two. Two shirts.” Justin sincerely hoped that Todd could make this happen.

“Alright, yeah. We should be able to do that. I’m in tomorrow too, so we can get it done.” Todd was looking down at the pad of paper he was holding in his hand, already writing down Justin’s contact information.

“So what’s the occasion?” Todd looked up from the order form.

“What?”

“The occasion? Why the rush job?”

“Oh, yeah, that. Well, you know. Sunday’s Valentine’s Day. So…” Justin let his voice trail off.

Justin “So…?”

“So I want some shirts made.”

“Well. Good to know.” Todd took the pad of paper he was holding in his hands and whacked the brim of Justin’s Patriots football cap with it. “I know you want shirts made. You just said that. What I’m asking is why? Or at the very least what do you want the shirts to say?”

“Oh, yeah. I figured I could just draw it. Isn’t that how you do it? I can design it and you can print it?”

“Yeah, we can do that. We probably can’t do anything too intricate since we only have a few days, but just tell me what you’re looking for and I’ll tell you if we can do it.”

“Do you still have red shirts?” Justin wanted to make sure that the two T-shirts Todd would print up would be red, just like the shirts that he and Parker had worn back in college.

“Yeah, red, blue, green, wisteria, chartreuse, aubergine...”

“Auburn what?”

“Aubergine. Never mind. The point is if we have chartreuse and wisteria and a hundred more colors that you never heard of, I think we can handle red.”

“Wiseass.”

“Yeah, I know. But you’re bringing it out in me. You’re not even telling me what you want.”

“Right. Well, two red shirts, size large.” Justin looked down at himself, maybe he better size up. “Well one large, one extra-large. With uhh, ‘01’ and ‘02’ on the backs.”

“Ahh, I see, making some more football shirts for our Valentine’s Day football match, huh?”

Justin just nodded.

Justin, Parker, Brandt and Todd still played football together every week or so, just as they had been doing since college. In the spring and summer, they liked to hit the park to be outside and get some fresh air, but with it still being February and freezing out, they played in the indoor sports complex that Brandt had a membership to. Since they played every Sunday and this year Valentine’s Day was on a Sunday, it was going to be a Valentine’s Day matchup.

“So you wear the ‘01’ and Parker wears the ‘02’.” Todd was taking down notes on the pad of paper. “Just remind me again of who wears the ‘GO’ and who wears the ‘EAGLES!’ that’s written on the front of the shirts.”

“Uhh, I’m the ‘GO’, but I want something different this time.”

Justin took the pad of paper from Todd and wrote in the words he wanted for the front and back of the T-shirts and then handed it back to him.

Todd looked down at the paper, saw what Justin wrote, and smiled. “Bout time.”

“What?” This wasn’t exactly the reaction that Justin had been expecting to receive from Todd.

“Dude, I was a psych major and now I’m in grad school for the same thing. I literally spend twenty hours a week just studying people.” Todd flung the pad of paper back to the counter. “This isn’t a surprise.”

Justin was taken a bit off guard. He had spent the whole drive down to Boston mentally preparing himself for some long-winded conversation with Todd about this and now with one quick glance at the T-shirt order form, Todd barely had any reaction.

“I thought, I dunno, I thought...”

“Wait, wait, I can redo my reaction if you want... Wait.” Todd cleared his throat, made a giant fake gasp, and for some reason took on a Southern accent. “Why, Justin, how could this be? I would have never known! The injustice of it all! The travesty! The—” Todd couldn’t keep the charade going on anymore and just started laughing at himself.

“Fucker.”

“Yeah, well, what else is new? These shirts will be ready on Saturday. I’ll make sure of it.” Todd reached into his pants pocket to grab his vibrating cellphone and started to fiddle around with it. “So see ya Sunday?”

The conversation that Justin had just spent the last hour and a half preparing himself for was apparently over.

“Yeah, man, see ya Sunday.”

And just like that, they said their good-byes and Justin, smiling to himself, walked back to his car.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

It was Sunday afternoon, Valentine's Day, and Justin and Parker were meeting their friends, Brandt and Todd, at the indoor athletic complex. Brandt still had a membership, even though it was in Boston and Brandt, Justin and Parker were back to living on the North Shore where they grew up and now had jobs. Ever since their sophomore year of college, Justin, Parker and Todd had been given free guest passes to the sports complex so that they could play their weekly game of touch, or oftentimes tackle, football. Justin always thought it was odd how they were all given free passes week after week at one of the most exclusive sports complexes in the state. But Justin's thoughts on this had changed last week, when they were in the locker room after the game. Brandt had gone to the restroom and Justin saw a filled out form resting on the top of Brandt's gym bag.

It was a membership renewal form to the sports complex. Right below the line that held Brandt's name, address and phone number was a big bold check mark in the box for a Family Pass renewal. And the names of the family members listed were: Justin Meyer, Parker Klein and Todd Schmidt.

Brandt must have been buying a family pass all along, and it's what they were, family. Thinking back to that moment, a week before, Justin knew he could do this.

Justin and Parker had come separately to the sports complex because Parker had an early shift at the hospital and would be coming straight from work. Since Parker still didn't have a car, he usually hopped on the bus to work, but since his mom wasn't working the overnight shift until tonight, she said he could borrow hers.

Justin had come to the sports complex early on purpose, knowing that he could do this, that he wanted to. But he also knew that he just needed a moment to collect his thoughts beforehand. He had told Parker to meet him there early because he needed to talk to him.

Sure enough, Parker, never one to be late, arrived at the sports complex about twenty minutes before Brandt and Todd were due to arrive and met Justin in the locker room.

Justin was sitting on the wooden bench in the aisle between two rows of steel grey lockers. It was two o'clock in the afternoon and there were a few men here and there, but Justin wasn't paying attention to whether or not anyone was around them, because when Parker walked in, Justin's heart raced in his chest just at the sight of him. He had been in love with Parker for over three years, and still, even now when Parker was around him, he had this magical way of causing Justin's pulse to quicken with nothing more than eye contact and God, that smile. The fact that Parker would even smile at him after he had acted like a total ass a few days back, and the fact that no matter what, he was Parker's and Parker was his, was making Justin's heart race even quicker. He was so happy to see Parker that he stood up from the bench and before Parker even had a moment to put his gym bag down, Justin pulled him close in an embrace, resting his face against Parker's hair, which he had been wearing short lately. Breathing in his scent, his fingertips pressed into the back of Parker's shirt, and Parker nestled his chin into Justin's shoulder.

"Jesus, I've missed you." Justin was holding onto Parker tightly, not wanting to let go.

Parker let out a small breathy laugh against Justin's shoulder. "Everyone misses Jesus, he lived two thousand years ago." Parker gave him a squeeze back and lifted his head away from Justin's shoulder so he could speak better. "And you just saw me three days ago," to which Justin only held on to him tighter. The fact that he hadn't seen Parker in only a few days but still felt like his world was incomplete without him, made him want to talk right away, and holding Parker tightly against him, he began to speak.

"I wish you had told me you were telling your mom."

Parker let his grip on Justin relax at these words. "Justin, if this is about not wanting to let her know..."

Justin gave Parker one last squeeze, then released his hold on him so that he could look him in the eyes. "No. It's not about that. What I mean is I'm



sorry. I'm sorry that you told her by yourself. I should have been there with you. I'm sorry that you had to think even for a minute that I wouldn't want to be. I should have been."

"Justin..."

Justin took Parker's hands in his. He was so beyond caring what anyone else thought, he needed to say this. "I love you, Parker. If you don't know that or if you don't feel that, I'm sorry. I fucked up, and I'm sorry," Justin said, all while looking straight at Parker. Parker motioned to take a seat on the bench, and Justin sat beside him, not letting go of his hand.

"I do feel it, Justin." Parker squeezed Justin's hand in his. "It's because I feel it that I had to tell her. I needed to. It's like every time I saw her I thought I was lying, lying about who I was, who I was with. I just..." Parker looked straight at Justin. "She's happy for us, Justin. I'm happy for us." Parker paused for a moment. "And I'm not embarrassed about us. And I don't want you to be either."

Justin's heart was still beating fast in his chest and at the word "embarrassed", he felt a jolt of pain. He was anything but embarrassed to be with Parker and the fact that he had let Parker believe that was enough to stop his heart all together, and while feeling all of this, four words escaped his lips.

"Never for one second."

"What?"

"I've never, for one second, been embarrassed or ashamed of us, Parker. When we were younger, we figured it was best if we kept things between us, to ourselves, but I want that to change, and if you want that too, I say we start today."

Justin let go of Parker's hand and began to dig in his gym duffle bag that was by his feet, and pulled out two red shirts and put one on.

"Nice shirt," Parker said, looking at him.

"Yeah well, you haven't seen yours yet."

Justin passed Parker over a bunched up piece of red fabric, the same way that Parker had tossed him over his “GO” shirt when they were back in college.

It was Parker who had originally come up with their red T-shirt ritual. When they met their sophomore year of college, Parker had made them both the red T-shirts to wear to every Eagles college football game they went to. They continued the tradition all through college, every year wearing the same T-shirts when they went down to the college football games to root for Brandt, who was the starting linebacker on the team.

After football season, even though Parker would retire his shirt to his closet or his drawer, keeping it safe until next season, Justin would still wear his around. Every time that Parker saw Justin and the word “GO” written across his chest, even though to others, this shirt made absolutely no sense, Parker knew what Justin meant by wearing it. He knew that Justin was showing that he loved him.

And now, standing before him, Justin was wearing a shirt that said “LOVE”.

Parker looked back down to the red T-shirt he was holding in his own hands and undraped the material in order to read it and saw that it said the word “IN” on its front in bold white letters. He then turned it around to see the word “MINE” written in white across the top of the back of his shirt, as if it was his last name, and a giant “01” written in white below that. Parker was all at once touched and confused by Justin’s kind gesture. “You got the numbers wrong though.”

“No I didn’t.”

Parker turned the shirt around. “Yeah you did,” and motioned toward the “01” on the back of the shirt he was holding. Parker had always been “02”, he had even picked the original shirts out that way himself.

“We always joked about the numbers, Parker. How I was number one and how you’re number two, my second in command. But we’ve always had it backwards. You’re number one. You’re my number one.”

“Justin.” Parker no longer felt any confusion, just pride and love.

“I want to make sure you’re ready, but I want for today to be the day.”

“The day for what?”

“We wear the shirts out. You and me, right now.” With Justin standing next to Parker their T-shirt phrase would read “IN LOVE” and there’d be no more question as to how they felt about each other.

This was something that Justin had wanted. He had wanted this for a long time, to be open and honest, but as much as he wanted this, there never seemed to be the right time. Although he never seemed to be at a loss for words, when it came to this, when it came to him and Parker, and what Parker really meant to him, he never seemed to have the words when trying to share this with other people. But that was all going to change. Today. And now as he was standing in front of Parker, looking into Parker’s hazel-green eyes, where the green so beautifully blended into the brown, he couldn’t for the life of him come up with one decent reason to go on keeping their relationship to themselves for even one more day. He still felt a loss for words right now in the locker room, the T-shirts would say enough. They said it all.

Parker looked over to him, half expecting for this to be a prank. He and Justin were always joking around with each other, and even though they weren’t in college anymore, they always managed to pull pranks on each other, but one look back to Justin and his chocolate-brown eyes, and Parker knew that he was serious. He and Justin were absolutely on the same page about this. They were doing this.

“We’re switching shirts though.” Parker told Justin. Their relationship was equal. There was no “01” and “02”, but Parker had always liked their numbers the way they were.

Justin quickly peeled his shirt off, which was snug for him anyway since Todd had made the “02” shirt in Parker’s size and passed it over to Parker and took the extra-large one Parker was holding and put it on. Parker took off the hospital scrubs he was wearing and put on his gym pants and sneakers, and quickly, while facing Justin he pulled the T-shirt down over his head.

Since Brandt and Todd were both coming straight from their houses, Justin and Parker knew that they would just come to the sports complex already

wearing their sports gear and wouldn't be going into the locker room first. Now that it was almost two-thirty, they knew that their friends would be out in the football area of the gym, waiting for them, and sure enough, *Yo douche we're here*. Justin received a text from Brandt and he and Parker knew that it was time.

“Ready to do this?” Justin grabbed his Patriots football cap and put it on backwards. No going back now.

Parker looked down at the giant word “LOVE” that was now across his chest and felt it inside and out.

“Ready to kick Brandt and Todd's asses?”

Parker joked, “Yeah, I'm ready.” He still couldn't believe that Justin had been the one to come up with this idea, but the fact that he had, made it all the more special.

“Good.” Justin grabbed Parker's ass right in the seam of his pants. “Now let's go play some ball.”

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## CHAPTER SIX

“So I see the holiday has gotten you two girls feeling all lovey-dovey today, hasn’t it?” Brandt hooted out into the air as soon as Justin and Parker approached him from across the indoor football field. Even at this distance, Brandt could see that they were holding hands.

Justin held his head up high. He and Brandt were always ragging on each other. But he wasn’t going to let him say much more. Not about this.

“Yeah, you know, nothing like a rough game of tackle football to bring out our soft feminine sides,” Justin said back to Brandt as he and Parker approached him and Todd. They were almost right up to Brandt, and Justin could feel Parker’s hand start to slip away, like maybe he was going to let go, but Justin was not going to let that happen. They were doing this. Now. Together. He wasn’t going to hide his love for Parker any longer. So, with a sidelong glance at Parker and a gentle smile, he squeezed Parker’s hand and held on to it even tighter.

But there was no way that Parker was going to let go of Justin’s hand. Ever since they left the locker room, Parker had been welled up with so much pride in Justin and in their love, that there was no way that he was going to back down from this.

Brandt looked slightly confused as to why Justin and Parker were keeping up with the hand-holding charade, but he just kept up with his banter. Same as always.

“Yeah, well, we were wondering what took you guys so long in the locker room. I figured you two fags must be off making out somewhere.” And Brandt stood there, towering in his massive height, loosely crossing his arms in front of his chest and laughing quietly at his own lame joke.

Todd was standing right next to Brandt and gave him a smack to the back of his head, matting down some of his curly blond hair. Brandt must have a pretty built up callus or something back there at this point. It seemed he is always getting whacked like that.

“Speak for yourself, Brandty,” Todd snickered. He knew that Brandt hated being called that. “I wasn’t wondering where they were. And they didn’t take that long anyways. Besides, look who’s talking. You were sitting so close to me on the bench just now that I could smell the maple syrup that you had for breakfast.”

Brandt looked alarmed at this, “Hey! What?! It’s cold in here. And I didn’t have maple syrup for breakfast. That was for lunch.” He mumbled the last sentence out.

“Yeah, Brandty, breakfast at noon, that sounds about right.” Todd pressed his elbow into Brandt’s waist when he said this, making the gesture that he was kidding, but at the same time, it was hard enough to make Brandt wince a little.

“Yeah. So. I slept late today. You should know, Todd, you always sleep past noon. And enough about me, anyways. Why are you two fags holding hands still?” Brandt clearly was not getting this, even though together side by side, the front of Justin and Parker’s shirts read “IN LOVE”.

It was then that Justin took it upon himself to turn around. He reluctantly let go of Parker’s hand and pivoted around until his back was to Brandt.

Brandt brought his fisted hand to his mouth and let out a snort. “‘MINE 01’?” This was all just hilarious to him. He never associated pranks with Valentine’s Day, but this whole thing was a riot. “And let me guess. Parker over there is ‘MINE 02’?”

Parker decided to speak up. “Yeah. I am,” he said and stepped into Brandt’s personal space a bit, keeping his voice cool and even. He needed Brandt to know that playtime was over and that this was for real. Extremely real. For both him and Justin.

“Whoa, Parker, cool down, dude. I mean this is all wicked funny, but seriously, what’s with the shirts? Did Justin just happen to have those lying around in the trunk of his car? We all know he’s a slob and has God knows what’s in there, but matching shirts? And on Valentine’s Day? Priceless.” Brandt let out another laugh. “Hey it’s like those old Visa commercials! Where’s Morgan Freeman’s voiceover when you need it?” It was kind of funny, but at this point, Justin and Parker just needed him to know the truth.

“No, Brandt, I didn’t just have these shirts lying around in my car. I had Todd make them. I wanted something nice to give to my boyfriend for Valentine’s Day. And so, I had these shirts made and this... this is it.” He and Parker turned back around to show the “IN LOVE” message on the front of their shirts to Brandt. Brandt was dense at times, but he did have some brains, and if he wasn’t getting this, Justin and Parker would show him just how serious they were.

“Yeah, guys very funny, but...” Brandt tried to speak, but it was then that he noticed the way Justin had his head tilted just slightly and he could see that Parker was leaning in and was about to. To. Kiss Justin.

“Um, guys?” *How far is this prank gonna go?* Brandt thought. But he only thought it for a brief instant, right before he saw his two closest friends pressed up against each other, arms draped over each other’s backs and engaging in a serious lip-lock.

Justin and Parker took a moment to embrace and then turned back to Brandt and Todd, neither one of them blushing or embarrassed, but just smiling and happy. Parker clasped Justin’s fingers in his. What had taken them so long to do this in the first place?

“What we’re trying to tell you, Brandt, and I guess you too, Todd, even though you do not look even vaguely surprised right now, is that Justin and I are together. As in, ‘in love’, together. As in, he’s my boyfriend and I’m his, together. As in, this has been going on for almost four freaking years, together.” And with that Justin gave Parker’s hand a gentle squeeze acknowledging how wrong this had been to keep the best thing in his life a secret.

“Well, it’s not really a surprise is it?” Todd was the first to say something. “I mean, I made the shirts for you guys, but even before that I knew. Hell, when Parker and I used to work together, I used to keep a running tally of how often he would mention Justin.” Todd chuckled at the memory. “I think I ran out of ink a few times.”

“What?” Brandt still looked like he was missing the joke.

“They’re together, Brandt. A couple. Boyfriends. ‘IN LOVE.’ It’s pretty clear, it’s on their shirts,” Todd said and then took a knee in order to tie his

shoelaces. “And I did a pretty good job on those shirts too.” Todd seemed to be more preoccupied with the quality of the shirts than on what the shirts actually said.

“Together?” Brandt’s mouth was dry and he knew that Justin and Parker had always been close, very close, extremely close and he always teased them about it, but the fact that they were actually together, together was not something that he had ever seriously considered.

“Yeah.” Justin grabbed the football that Brandt had been holding out of his hands. “Together.” Justin placed his fingers on the ball’s laces. “As in today we’re gonna kick you guys’ asses. Together.” And Parker ran deep so Justin threw him the ball and the game began.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

“Well you’re full of surprises,” Parker said to Justin. They were back at Parker’s house, in his bedroom, after having dinner together and making sure that they had brought Parker’s mom’s car home in time for her to get to work. “Well maybe I have something to show you too.” Parker was palming the crotch of his pants. “Keep the lights on. All the lights.”

*Fuck yes*, thought Justin.

Justin was standing by the light switch by the bedroom door, the bedside lamp was already on, so he figured he would flick off the bright lights on the ceiling fan but he perked up at Parker’s request.

“Oh, a little bit of ‘I’ll show you mine if you show me yours,’ huh?” Justin would take this request. He loved looking at Parker’s body, and somehow, as Parker got older, the leaner and more cut he became, when Justin himself had just begun to notice how he should maybe cut down on the nachos. Well, not all the nachos. Maybe just some. Sometimes.

“Yeah something like that.” Parker was sitting on his bed with his hands clasped behind his head and his back leaning against the pillows for support, waiting for Justin to come over to him. Justin was still by the light switch and decided to put on a little show. *What the hell, why not?* They were both still dressed and Justin, having changed back into his street clothes after the football game, was wearing his faded jeans and an olive green hoodie with an old, ratty, grey T-shirt underneath. It was a shirt that he insisted on keeping even though there were holes that dotted the neckline and dirt and grass stains that no way in hell would ever come out.

The T-shirt had once belonged to Parker—it was a baggy shirt that he always wore when they first began their ritual of playing football with their friends, Brandt and Todd, in the park and on the college quad. Having had so many good memories of Parker in the shirt, Justin could never part with it, even when Parker had wanted to throw it away.

But Justin was willing to part with the shirt now. And fast. Standing far enough away from the bed, so that Parker could have a good view, Justin took

off his hoodie and put it over the back of Parker's desk chair. Then he grabbed ahold of the hem at the bottom of his T-shirt and dragged it up, slowly, over his head and then balled it up in his hands and threw it at Parker. Right at his face.

Parker reached up and grabbed the shirt off himself and flung it back at Justin. "Great aim, doofus."

"Yeah, well we can't all be high school MVP."

Parker replied, "You know they always put me at quarterback because I have big hands, right?" Parker then brought his hands out from behind his head to his lap to look at them. "And what is it that they are always saying about big hands? I forget," Parker grinned over at Justin.

"Big Hands...? Bigfoot. But you're not that hairy, Parker. So don't worry. Not all the Sasquatch rumors about you can be true."

Justin was pulling at the zipper of his jeans. He kicked them off his legs and then reached down to the floor to grab them up in his hands along with his shirt. He then balled them up and threw them at the hamper in the far corner of Parker's bedroom. Miraculously, the clothes made it to the hamper and went right in. The fact that Justin had actually put his clothes in a hamper was miracle enough, and it had been a good throw, too.

"Well maybe you are an MVP after all. That was a slam dunk," Parker said. "But where's the rest of it?"

Justin was standing in his blue and white checked boxer shorts. And Parker wanted those off. Now.

"Nope." Justin shook his head. "This is 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours,' remember?" Justin walked closer to the bed. "And I'm not showing mine, until you show me yours," Justin said seductively and was now standing right at the edge of the bed. Parker was still seated with his back against all the pillows, and Justin's crotch was just below eye level, only a hands-reach away from him, but when he reached out toward Justin, Justin backed away from the bed.

"Fine, if you want to play it that way." Parker got off the bed and stood up where Justin had just been. It was now Justin's turn to sit on the bed with his

back against the pillows to watch the show. His dick was already enormously hard in anticipation of what he and Parker were about to get up to. When Parker had reached over to him to feel it, it almost pained him to back away from his intended touch. But Justin showed *his*, well some of his, he was still in his boxers, so now it was Parker's turn.

Parker stood about two feet away from the edge of his twin-size bed, far enough so that Justin could look, but not touch. Leaving his shirt on, he began to reach for his belt. He reached down with only one hand, taking his slow, devastatingly slow, time undoing its buckle and sliding it through all of the tabs on the waistband of his jeans, not breaking eye contact with Justin, who was now regretting that he had wanted to drag this out rather than just taking off all of his clothes immediately.

Justin's hands were on either side of himself on the bed, but he couldn't really keep them there anymore, not while he was watching Parker like this. He found his right hand pressing down on the crotch of his boxers, finding its way inside the hole in the fabric, and began to stroke himself up and down—not hard and not with much pressure, but just to have some contact, because now Parker was taking off his own pants, grabbing ahold of his boxers too. In one fell swoop, Parker slid off his pants and boxers so he was completely bottomless with his erect penis standing tall, trying to sneak its way under the hemline of his T-shirt.

Justin was rubbing himself faster at the sight of it. And it was a tease. Parker was being a tease now. And now it was Justin who was reaching over for Parker with his free hand and it was Parker who was backing away. If Parker would just take his shirt off, they could get this whole show on the road. Parker had walked back over to the bed, not being able to stand the distance between them either. As hot as he was getting seeing Justin touch himself under his boxers, he wanted his hand to be the one touching Justin. He leaned down over Justin, guiding Justin's mouth over to his, while his right hand found its way inside the hole in Justin's boxers and took over pleasuring him.

Parker was stroking Justin hard, but slowly, so slowly. The movements of his hand were almost painful because Justin needed more friction than just

slow, elongated strokes. Even though Justin's lips never left Parker's, he tried to move his pelvis in order to better reposition his dick in Parker's hand and when Parker felt him moving, Parker knew what Justin was up to.

"Nope." Parker backed his mouth off Justin's just slightly. "That wasn't the deal. I showed you *mine*, now you show me *yours*." Parker was eyeing Justin's boxer shorts still wanting them off. This time in an even worse way. Justin took the hint, reached down to himself, lifted his hips off the mattress, tugged his boxers off in one manic move, and threw them across the room toward the hamper, not even coming close to it, not even aiming really, not when Parker was this close to him, sitting next to him on the bed.

"Not such a good shot after all," Parker said before bringing Justin's mouth back to his, but before he could make contact, Justin added, "I'm a *perfect* shot." And by the way he said it, Parker knew that they no longer were talking about hamper basketball.

"Want to prove it?"

"*Fuck* yes." Justin reached over for Parker, grabbing at the shirt that Parker was still wearing, wanting it off him, but at the same time just wanting Parker's mouth on his, or better yet, wanting something else on his mouth, inside it.

After kissing Parker's lips and wrangling their tongues together inside of Parker's mouth, he laid Parker flat on his back with his head resting on the pillows at the top of the bed, and while lying down next to him he couldn't even will his hands to take Parker's shirt off completely, that would take way too long, so he just pushed it up his chest and began to cascade his lips down Parker's body, down his smooth chest, his abs, his belly button. Justin usually liked to take his time when exploring Parker's body, but right now he was just too eager and his tongue was finding its way lower and lower on Parker's body, finding the head of Parker's cock and swirling it around, tasting Parker and his familiar taste and wanting to take all of him in his mouth.

Justin's head was now level with Parker's cock and lying on the bed next to Parker, he was leaning over his body from the side, massaging his thighs and stomach as his head bobbed up and down Parker's long shaft. Now that

Justin had finally found what his mouth had been looking for, he could take his time. He didn't have to rush this, and his sucking of Parker was slow and steady and it was making Parker delirious.

“Wait.” Parker called down to Justin. He was going to come and he *so* didn't want to right now. Not when he still needed to show Justin something.

Justin knew by the amount of pre-come that he was getting out of Parker and at the way that Parker's dick was beating in his mouth that Parker was ready to come and as much as he loved tasting Parker, he wanted to abide by his wishes, so he began kissing Parker's body again, this time, traveling up his body instead of down and he soon found his lips against Parker's, his tongue just as happy to find a home inside Parker's mouth as it had been when Parker had just been inside his.

Justin and Parker continued to kiss feverishly, wildly, but now Justin really needed Parker's shirt off, and while lying next to Parker, half on top of him, he reached down with his hands and brought Parker's shirt up and over his head, with Parker's back now lying flat on the mattress and his head on the pillows.

“You were holding out on me. So this is what *yours* looks like. All of you.” Justin gasped out in between kisses. He had seen Parker naked literally hundreds of times, maybe thousands at this point, but he still marveled at him, still felt special that he could be the one to be with Parker like this. The only one.

“Yeah, except there's a difference now.” Justin was still resting on top of Parker, their kisses still hot, scorching, Parker not wanting to move his body away from Justin's, but at the same time needing to.

Justin didn't understand what Parker had meant just now, but when Parker rolled over so that his belly was flat against the mattress and he was lying completely on his stomach, Justin could see what Parker had been trying to say.

On Parker's chiseled back were numbers. The numbers 02, in black ink covering his entire right shoulder blade.

“A tattoo? Parker.” Justin was speechless for once and brought his hand over to Parker's shoulder, softly touching the outline of the numbers that

would be forever on him. Parker had been the one to make their football T-shirts, choosing their numbers and forever starting the ritual of Justin being “01” and Parker being “02,” and Justin now was looking down at Parker’s back, seeing the man he loved with an “02” knowing that it would be this way forever. That he and Parker would be this way forever. Together. And this is what Parker was showing to him.

“What do you think?” Parker, still lying on his belly, lifted his head off the mattress, looking intently into Justin’s eyes, waiting for his reaction.

“I’m thinking that mine is not going to look half as good as yours,” Justin answered. He definitely was going to get an 01 on his back. Definitely. No question.

“Yeah, well if we’ve established anything playing ‘I’ll show you mine if you show me yours’ tonight, it’s that,” Parker joked, bringing Justin’s mouth over to his and re-starting their hot make out session and now desperately wanting Justin to prove to him just what a good shot he was.

Parker was still lying flat on his belly, his dick beating hard against the mattress and he couldn’t resist rocking his body into the soft bedding, but at the same time wanting Justin on top of him to push him down even further into it.

Justin was on his side lying next to him, their lips locked together, rubbing up and down his back until he found Parker’s ass and began firmly kneading it over in his hand. Upon Justin’s firm contact, Parker was pressing his hips even further down into the mattress, needing the friction and the contact and scissored his legs open, inviting Justin over to him, wanting to feel all of his weight pressed down on top of him.

Upon seeing Parker widening his legs, Justin immediately reached over to the night table drawer, fumbling with the contents inside it and grabbing what he knew to be the lube, popped it open and quickly began to apply it all over his throbbing cock.

Parker was making moaning sounds into the mattress now, his face pressed into a mix of mattress and pillows, desperate for Justin to enter him and Justin was getting the message loud and clear.

With Parker flat on his belly on the mattress and his legs spread apart like they were, Justin slid into him, angling himself in just right, just so that he was nudging up against Parker's prostate and his mouth immediately found Parker's 02, kissing it with open mouthed kisses and swirling his tongue over each number.

Justin was absorbed in kissing Parker's back, his emotions reeling in a combination of lust and love and excitement over the fact that Parker had marked himself like that, and his thrusts were slow and steady, but Parker had other ideas and instead of pressing his body further into the mattress for friction, Parker was now doing his best to press his ass back up and into Justin so that Justin could slide in him even deeper, hitting his prostate again and again and again.

Parker was now grasping at the sheet on either side of himself but continued pushing off the mattress into Justin and Justin, feeling Parker's increased contact beneath him, couldn't stop himself from pressing hard into Parker, so much so that now Parker couldn't lift his ass up against Justin even if he wanted to, because now Justin was sprawled out completely on top of him, all of his weight upon him, slamming him down into the bed, just like Parker had wanted, *needed*, and Parker's dick was now getting all the contact he could ever need trapped against the mattress, moving up and down, up and down, right against the sheet. Justin was wild on top of him, pressing even further down into him, kissing Parker's hair and down the back of his neck, until again his mouth found the 02 and he was licking and biting at it, pressing his face right down onto it, his lips never breaking contact with Parker's skin, but at the same time still finding a way to call out I love yous to Parker in sweeping gasps of breath.

Justin's movements on top of Parker were now becoming frantic and listening to Parker's pleas from below him, he was slamming down into Parker forcefully, driven by his intrinsic need to make Parker come, and the bed was creaking violently below them like some low-budget porno, but that was in the very back of Justin's mind, because all he knew was that he was about thirty seconds away from coming, but he wanted to get Parker there first, needed to and—

“Ahhh, uuhhh!” Parker was calling out into the mattress, and Justin, spread out completely on top of him, could feel Parker’s body begin to quake below him, so he began to thrust into him even faster, even further, huffing out rapid breaths against Parker’s skin, and as he felt Parker’s ass clench around him and heard Parker yell out his final shout, he pressed his mouth to Parker’s 02 and with one final thrust into Parker, he let himself go and the whole entire time that he was coming, Justin’s mouth never left that spot.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

The next morning was Monday, and as amazing as Valentine's Day had been, Justin and Parker found themselves up early getting ready to go to work—well, work and play. Upon arriving at the car dealership, Brandt immediately took Justin aside and into his office and closed the door behind them.

Justin took a seat on the brown leather sofa up against the long wall of Brandt's wood-paneled office thinking that Brandt was going to brief him about the new shipment of Mercedes coming in today, but instead, Brandt just paced back and forth in front of him, trailing up and down the grey carpet.

"If I knew you guys were serious. I would never have said—I don't really think that you guys are..."

"What?" Justin now had a feeling that he knew what this talk was going to be about.

"You know, I don't think you guys are..."

"Dude, spit it out."

"Fags." Brandt mumbled out.

"What?"

"Fags," Brandt said louder. "Okay? I don't think that. And if I knew that you and Parker were, are, together, like together *together*, like for real *together*, I would have never have said that stuff about you, I would never have called you that." Brandt was having trouble meeting Justin's eyes. He felt like a giant, well at six feet, four inches tall he always felt like a giant, but now he was feeling like a giant asshole.

"Yeah, well, you don't want to know what we call you."

"What?" Brandt's head popped up and he looked at Justin.

Justin was just trying to get a rise out of Brandt. For years, Parker and he would rag on Brandt, making fun of his choice in music or how he took everything to the extreme, but Brandt was their friend, there was never any doubt about it. They never once took Brandt calling them fags seriously,

because as big of a mouth as Brandt had, and as much of an oaf as he was, he didn't have one malicious bone in his body. Justin knew it and Parker knew it. He was just a big oversized kid who had a lousy vocabulary.

"I said you don't want to know what Parker and I call you. You know: oaf, buffoon, loudmouth, imbecile, dumb-ass, jerkoff..." Justin was just throwing out any general insult that came to his mind, he wanted to make Brandt sweat a little.

"Yeah, well..." Brandt was still sounding down in the dumps, sincerely apologetic, like he deserved each and every insult that Justin was throwing out and Justin was loving that he could get away with this, especially at work, so he decided to go on.

"Doofus, ass-hat, lamebrain, numbskull, clown-turd." Clown-turd? Ok. He was out of insults. But Brandt didn't seem to notice.

"Keep it coming, Meyer, I deserve it."

At this point, fresh out of insults, Justin was just grasping at straws. "Uhh... Ugly, stupid, dumb, Umm... Not smart, uhh, gross..." He had absolutely nothing and was just listing off adjectives at this point. He even started looking around the office trying to get ideas as to what to say next but Brandt cut him off.

"I get it Justin. I'm dumb, and stupid, and I'm sorry if I ever once put you and Parker in an uncomfortable situation." Brandt was still sounding sincerely apologetic, and for him to phrase his apology like that, Justin absolutely knew he meant it.

"Yeah, well, I forgive you. But I'm not sure about Parker. You know what a hard-ass he can be."

At this, Brandt knew that Justin was kidding. Parker was the nicest guy on the face of the planet. Everyone thought so and everyone knew it. He of course would forgive Brandt, but Brandt needed to hear it for himself.

"Parker's not gonna be on the bus to work for another hour. Let's give him a call, see what he says." Justin took his cellphone out of his pocket and speed dialed Parker.

“Still can’t get enough of me even after this morning.” Parker didn’t even bother with a “hello” when he picked up the call from Justin. “I didn’t make you late, did I? You just tasted so—”

Justin immediately interjected, “Parker! Hi! It’s Justin, I’m here with Brandt. You’re on speaker.” Because this phone call was meant to be between the three of them, Justin didn’t even think twice about putting it on speaker phone.

“Oh, Brandt.” Parker let out a cough, but still sounded like his jovial self. “What’s up, fellas?”

Justin was feeling flush at Parker’s words and pulled at his necktie to loosen it but continued on. “Brandt here was just saying how he wanted to apologize to you about calling us fags in the past, so I was just telling him about all the names that we call him.”

“Ohh, I see,” Parker answered. Parker may have been the nicest guy on the face of the planet, but he was also a prankster and a jokester too. “Did you remember jerkoff?”

“Yup.”

“Dumb-ass?”

“Ya.”

“What about moron?”

“Moron!” Justin yelled out. “How did I forget moron!”

“I’ll add it to the list,” Brandt mumbled over to them, but now that Parker was on the line, he really did want to apologize to him and he walked up closer to Justin so that his mouth was closer to the phone. “Parker, I just want to apologize to you. I’m sorry for my actions in the past and I want you and Justin to know,” he looked back at Justin, “that I will never call you fags, or use that word, ever again.”

Brandt was sounding so proper and sincere and ironically very un-moronic, but that didn’t sway Parker’s response to him.

“I’ll forgive you,” Parker let out a breathy chuckle into the phone. “Moron.”

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## CHAPTER NINE

A few days after Brandt had apologized to Justin, they decided to go get a beer together after work. Justin was harboring absolutely no ill will toward Brandt, and even though Brandt had made it clear that he was happy for Parker and him, he couldn't help but feel that Brandt was still feeling awful. He decided it would be nice if they just went out after work to have a good time together.

The bar they decided to go to wasn't far from work. It was called O'Leary's and was an older place with an older crowd, with dim lighting, dark wood paneled walls, orange vinyl covered barstools, cheap beer and even cheaper wings and Justin and Brandt absolutely loved it. It had been their place ever since they started working together at the car dealership, and since Parker rarely drank, Justin had followed suit and usually only had a few drinks a month, and very rarely more than a couple at a time. But tonight he was with his buddy, Brandt, and he was feeling good. On his insistence, he was buying the rounds tonight, telling Brandt, "I'll buy, if you drive."

After finishing twenty hot wings each, five beers for himself and two for Brandt, and after talking about anything and everything work related, Justin had Parker on his mind and decided to switch conversation topics.

"You know, the first time we ever hooked up was in your bed." Justin looked across the table at Brandt. The two of them were seated at a round high-top table toward the back of the barroom.

"What!" Brandt choked out, nearly spitting out his drink. He was utterly shocked. And so did not need to know that.

"Yup. The first night Parker kissed me. I couldn't keep my hands off him. It's when we were roommates in college and you weren't there that weekend and—"

Brandt cut him off, bringing both hands to his ears, "Dude! Stop! I'm so not listening!"

So Justin stopped talking, and when Brandt thought that the coast was clear he took his hands off his ears and—"I told him he could sleep on your bed, but I couldn't be without him and—"

The fact that he and Parker had first hooked up in Brandt's bed had long been an inside joke between him and Parker, and now that Justin was five beers deep, he decided to keep the joke not so inside anymore.

"Ugh, Justin! Why did it have to be on my bed? Your bed was like three feet away from mine." Brandt took another swig of his beer. "At least tell me you changed the sheets afterwards or something."

Justin thought about it some. "Nah, man. I don't know. I can't remember now." Justin took a swig of his own beer. "Funny though, I remember everything else." Justin let his mind wander back to the first night he spent with Parker, one of the best nights of his life.

"I can't believe you lost your V-Card in my bed." Brandt sounded vaguely miserable and downed the rest of his drink.

"What?" Justin looked over to Brandt. "No, man. I said it was the first night we kissed and well, hooked up. But we didn't sleep together that night. Well, we did, but not *sleep* sleep together. It was the first time I even kissed a dude, I wasn't gonna put out completely... I'm not you, you know."

"What? Me? I never once kissed a dude."

"You know what I mean, Brandt. In all the time I've known you, all you've talked about is chicks, and I saw you bring countless girls back to our old dorm room for one-night-stands, but the whole time you never seriously dated one."

Brandt was motioning over to the waitress to get another drink, thinking, *How did this conversation get on me?* But he decided to give Justin a reply.

"Yeah, well. Not everyone can have what you have."

"Huh?"

"You and Parker." Brandt was serious. "Not everyone can have what you have."

"What?" Justin was not expecting this for a reply.

"You fell in love with your best friend, Justin. If I could have that with a girl, I would."

Brandt was sounding somber and that's not what this night was supposed to be about. They were just going to hang out and drink some beers and shoot the shit, and by no means did Justin intend to hit a nerve, and he wanted to make it right, so he maneuvered his barstool closer to Brandt and bumped his shoulder into his.

“He’s not my only best friend, you know.”

“Yeah, well, don’t get any ideas.”

“Too late.”

“What?”

“I’ve only been dating Parker for three years to get closer to you. You’re the one I really want. Oh, Brandt! Brandt!” Justin was making a kissy face leaning over into Brandt’s space and Brandt bumped Justin’s forehead back away from him with the heel of his hand. “Ow.” Justin rubbed the spot that Brandt had just hit. “Ass.”

“Yeah, well, that’s for getting my hopes up.” Brandt joked and reached into the bowl of peanuts that was set in front of him and threw one at Justin. “Clown.”

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## CHAPTER TEN

Now that Justin and Parker had told their closest friends about their relationship, and since Parker had already talked to his mom, the next logical step in Justin's mind was to tell his own family.

He had felt great about telling Brandt and Todd about him and Parker and after having talked to Brandt about it more at the bar, Justin knew that this didn't have to be some painful process. He had come to realize that he had control over the situation and it didn't have to depend entirely on other people's reactions.

He knew his parents and his sister loved him, and that even if they needed time, eventually they could accept this, because this is who he truly was.

Parker had asked him if he wanted him to be there, and Justin loved him for it, but Justin felt that telling his family was something that he needed to do on his own. As much as he felt like the ball was in his court when it came to this and that he was in charge of sitting his parents down and telling them, there also was a small nagging sensation in his mind. He didn't want fear to take over and prolong him telling his parents, and he didn't want it to be a painful process, but at the same time he knew that it was a process nonetheless. He was even going to Google "how to come out to your parents" but had decided against it. He knew his parents better than some search engine. He knew his parents loved him and he needed to be brave.

In the back of his mind, Justin had always rationalized that he would tell his parents when he was no longer living at home, because if they didn't react well, he could just get in his car and leave and then call them in a few days, but he would no longer prolong this. He couldn't.

So, after pacing around in his bedroom for most of the day and knowing that he would do this, that he had to, that it was the absolutely right thing to do, he just went for it.

"I've been in love with somebody for a while now and it's serious and I just want you to know." Justin and his parents, Brenda and Tom, were seated together at their oval wooden dining room table for dinner. Since his sixteen-

year-old sister, Cara, was at choir practice he figured now was as good a time as any to just come out to his parents and say it.

“Okay...” His father answered hesitantly while cutting into his chicken.

“Tom.” His mother looked over to her right at Justin’s dad who sat at the head of the table and then across the table directly at Justin and gave him a warm smile.

“Well, we knew this day was coming.” Justin’s dad put down his fork and knife and cleaned his mouth with his napkin, but he looked over at Justin, offered him a small smile, and tapped his arm with his hand.

Justin didn’t understand.

“We did. And we decided how we were going to react when it did happen,” Justin’s mom replied.

This was all above Justin’s head. He had only said one sentence to his parents and with it being just the beginning of the conversation, he had left Parker’s name out of it deliberately, and here they were talking like they already knew what he was going to say next. “I don’t understand.”

“Honey, remember that condom talk we had with you a few years back?” His mother was looking back at him from across the table.

*Jesus.* Justin had almost forgotten that mortifying day his parents had sat him down when he was almost a junior in college. His dad had mumbled out things about safety and respect and handed him a twelve-pack of condoms, which, to Justin’s horror, was already opened, with two missing, and he could only guess where the other two were. Why did they feel the need to have that talk with him again?

His mom was a pediatric nurse and had had “the talk” with him every year since puberty it felt like, always mentioning sob stories about young women she saw who came into the pediatrician’s office and were pregnant and scared and alone and not even out of high school.

In high school, “the talk” his mom always gave him centered around being responsible and not starting a family because he was too young and that sex was a responsibility and not a right. This talk his mom always gave him always lingered somewhere in the back of his mind, the responsibility of it all,



and even though Justin had some fun making out with girls in high school from time to time, he never took it beyond that.

But thinking back, when his parents had talked to him again in college, he remembered they never once mentioned the use of condoms for pregnancy prevention or family planning, it was always about safety and having respect for yourself and for your partner. Christ, looking back, he didn't even think they made mention of a girl. And it all clicked in Justin's mind.

"So, you knew? You knew this whole time?" Justin was flabbergasted.

"Justin, we're your parents..." His mother said.

"Jesus, I've been sweating about this for three years and you knew!" Justin was sounding accusatory, feeling stupid that he had made the decision to keep his relationship with Parker to himself when all that time his parents knew anyway. It would almost be comical if it wasn't so shocking.

"Now wait a minute." Justin's dad began to speak. "Justin, we are talking about Parker here, right?"

Yup. They knew.

Justin just nodded. *This is not going to be a painful process*, his mind chimed in. Why was he getting upset over this? It was good that they knew, wasn't it? He didn't even have to speak more than one sentence and they knew. He had to calm down, he was just shocked, almost to the point of being speechless, but—"How did you know?"

"We just had a feeling..." His mother was sounding reassuring.

"Oh, out with it Brenda. Justin's being honest with us and it's time we were honest with him." Justin's dad had spoken up. "Justin, we know because your mother overheard you two together one day." Justin's dad had balled up his napkin tightly in his hand and was not meeting Justin's eyes, and his body language alone had Justin in a mild panic.

"Together?" Justin let it out in an almost yelp. *Please mean you overheard us on the phone together. Please mean a conversation. Please mean anything other than together together. Like together...*

"In your room..." His dad coughed. "Together."

*SHIT!*

“Honey, you thought I was at work, it was the summer after you were a sophomore and I went upstairs to tell you I was home and...” His mother’s voice trailed off.

“Oh my God.” Mortifying. Absolutely mortifying. Thank God Parker wasn’t here for this. *Do not say what you heard. I don’t want to know, I don’t want to know.*

Justin’s mom wasn’t sure if she should continue on, but with this being the time for honesty, she felt she must, even though she was blushing and dragging the back of her spoon around in her plate.

“And the way you were calling out Parker’s name... Asking him to—” she cleared her throat. “Telling him to—” She stopped herself.

The summer after sophomore year, Justin knew what he would have been asking Parker to do, and the same thought entered his mind now at this whole situation.

*Fuck me.*

“Please stop.”

“Justin.”

“Please, just... Please stop. I get it.” This has got to be the worst coming-out experience of all time. He had thought he had prepared himself for every possible reaction of his parents. He was nowhere even close to guessing that this would be it.

“Your mother told me that night how she heard you two, you know...” His dad coughed again. “So after that we kind of looked for it, looked for the signs I mean, and well, it just fit.”

*Oh my God. They knew this whole time because they overheard us. I want to die. I want to die.*

Justin was in some state of mind between utter disbelief, utter shock, and utter, utter embarrassment and then another thought entered his mind.

“And Cara?” Justin asked.

“Justin, this is your news to share. We never told Cara.”

“Told me what?” Of course, Justin’s sister had chosen just that moment to come into the room. It was nearly seven o’clock, of course she would be home.

This night could not get any worse, there was no possible way, but Justin didn’t think he could say any more. Literally, he didn’t think he could say any more, because his vocal chords felt like they had shriveled up to dust in his throat. He just looked up to his mom from across the table, and without even a word from him, she asked, “Do you want me to tell her?” and Justin just nodded. *This wasn’t a painful process*, his mind had chimed back in, *just a mortifying one*.

“Cara, your brother was just telling us how he is in love and we were discussing it.” Their mom was speaking to Cara through the pass-through between the kitchen and the dining room.

“Oh yeah?” Cara walked over to the fridge, retrieved a carton of orange juice from inside it, and poured herself a glass before walking back to the dining room and taking a seat next to her brother. “So how is Parker doing these days anyway, Justin?”

*She knew. Of course, she knew. Everybody knew.* And from somewhere deep inside, Justin just decided to embrace this fact, his family knew. There was no yelling or arguments, they knew. It sucked how they knew, it was embarrassing as hell, but they knew nonetheless. Justin still looked at Cara quizzically.

“Oh, don’t give me that look.” Cara took a drink of OJ. “Justin, you guys used to watch me for Mom and Dad all the time and would want me in bed at like eight PM, when I was like thirteen, so you guys could ‘hang out’.” Cara made giant air quotes. “I was thirteen, not five. I kinda put the pieces together.” Her voice was light and sounded like she was on the verge of laughter, like none of this had fazed her in the least.

“Of course you know. Everybody knows.” Some of Justin’s mortification was back, even his sister knew what he and Parker had been up to.

“Yeah, but don’t feel bad, I mean, Parker’s hot, I’d hit that.”

“Cara!” His mom shot across the table at her.

But it didn’t matter. Justin needed to leave the room, the house, the planet.

“And on that note.” Justin just pushed his chair back from the table and brought his plate to the sink. At least the chicken had been good, so the whole dinner hadn’t been an entire nightmare.

“Cara, apologize to your brother!”

But Justin was already on the stairs taking two at a time and right when he reached his room, he heard Cara call out, “What! I was joking!”

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It took about an hour, but after just hanging out in his room alone, Justin was feeling much better about things. The important fact was that his parents knew and his sister knew and they had known for years apparently, and thinking about this now, Justin realized that yes, his parents knew, but they had never treated him any differently.

In fact, part of the shock tonight hadn’t been that his parents had known. It was the fact that they had known but had never treated him any differently and just as importantly, never treated Parker any differently. That eased some of Justin’s mortification and he decided to give Parker a call, just as he’d promised.

Parker knew that today would be the day Justin would talk to his parents and when Justin called him, as usual, he didn’t even bother with a “hello” he just answered on the second ring and said, “How’d it go?”

“Don’t ask.”

“That bad, huh?”

“I’m telling you, you don’t wanna know.” Justin was in his room and even though his bed was far away from the door, he now felt paranoid even talking to Parker and wondered what else his mom and dad, and maybe even Cara, had overheard during the years. He didn’t think he could handle telling Parker that his mom had overheard them. If he was embarrassed, God knows how Parker would feel.

“Well, you don’t sound that bad. It must not have been that horrible,” Parker spoke into the phone.

“Actually.” Fuck it, he’d tell Parker. One more thing out in the open. “For years, they already knew. They both did. Even my sister knew.”

“Really?” Parker’s voiced perked up on the phone. “So if they knew, it couldn’t have been that bad,” Parker continued on, “So how did they know? What did they say?”

“Well.” The paranoia was upon him and he lowered his voice. “My mom overheard us together.”

“So?” Parker wasn’t catching on. In his mind he and Justin were always hanging out together, what was the big deal about that?

“No, Parker. Like together.” Justin cupped his hand over the speaker. “Like together, together.” *Smooth code words, Justin.*

“What? Justin, I can barely hear you.”

“I said they knew because my mom overheard us together.” Justin’s voice was barely a whisper.

“What, she overheard what?” Parker honestly couldn’t hear him.

Jesus. “Us! Parker! She overheard us! Together! Like fucking together!” So much for being quiet.

*Oh God, here it comes,* Justin was sure that Parker would be just as embarrassed as he was, but what he didn’t expect was... *Is he laughing?*

“Justin that was years ago, you’re not even that loud anymore.” *Yes, it was laughter. Parker was laughing.*

“Oh, Christ.”

“Okay, okay, you *are* loud, but I’m louder, you always say so.”

*Oh my God.* It was like he was reliving what happened downstairs, and although normally he would love any chance to have anything that resembled phone sex with Parker, right now he had to change the conversation.

“Yeah well, loud or not loud, they know, have known. So, now everyone knows. Well the important people.”

“Good. So, now that that’s out of the way, what are you wearing?” Parker was trying to lighten the mood, or get in the mood, maybe both.

“I’m wearing a new shirt I made,” Justin replied. “It says ‘don’t even think about it’.” There was no way he would do anything in his room even remotely sexual ever again, and more than ever he was convinced that he and Parker needed a place of their own.

“Yeah, well take it off and it won’t say that anymore.” Parker was breathing heavier into the phone and *fuck*, maybe Justin would do something sexual in his room. His hand apparently thought so as it was moving down his body to palm his dick without him even realizing it. But no, he had more to say.

“So we’ve been talking about getting a place together.” Justin’s voice was sounding heavier too. “Whatcha say? Wanna make that happen?” Justin almost added the words “big boy” after his line of questioning, like he was some phone sex worker. His voice had taken on a huskier tone and, *Jesus Christ*, Parker had him half hard just by breathing heavily into his end of the phone.

“Yeah, wouldn’t want your mom to overhear us anymore.” Parker swore he heard Justin unzip his fly on the other end of the phone and he did the same. “Wouldn’t want her to hear me scream your name when you pound me into the mattress.”

*Fuck*, this was way too hot, and even though it was painful to change the subject, Justin had to clear something up. “So, we’re moving in together.” Justin’s hand was now on his dick, raring to go, but before he could give it one more stroke he needed to make sure this wasn’t just some sex talk that they were doing right now.

“Yeah, Justin. We’re moving in together.” Parker’s tone resembled his normal voice, but only for a moment, because then his heavy breathing was back. “Now tell me what you’re gonna do to me once we find a place.”

*Fuck yes.* And any lingering mortification or paranoia Justin was feeling was erased from his mind as his hand tightly gripped his cock. Imagining it was Parker’s, he began to very specifically lay out details of just what he was going to do to him once they were in their new place.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Justin and Parker didn't want to waste much time looking for a place, but at the same time they wanted a place that they could be in long-term. Once again, they were starting their lives up together, and since they had the chance to live together for two years in college, they couldn't wait to do that again. This time they both knew that it was going to be more permanent and this chapter of their lives wasn't going to be in some cramped apartment in Boston. No, they wanted to live in a house together, somewhere with a yard, where they could sit out at night after work or have more than a couple of people over at one time.

Now that it was the halfway through May, rentals on the North Shore were harder to come by since so many people came to the area looking for short-term summer rentals to be by the coast for the summer. Most available houses had short-term leases that only lasted a month if not a week, so after three weeks of house searching, Justin and Parker had come up empty.

They had seen a couple of places they'd found on Craigslist after work, but none of them worked out. They were now seriously considering working with a real estate agent, willing to pay the extra fee up-front if it meant that they could find a decent place.

The previous week, they both had really liked a Cape Cod style house that they saw and it was located pretty much right in between Justin's job at the car dealership and Parker's job at the hospital. It was right within their budget, had a flat yard that would be great for playing catch or football and it even came partially furnished. It was about three miles away from the ocean and still only about fifteen minutes away from their parents' houses, and had it not been only a short-term summer lease, Justin and Parker would have signed the lease on the spot.

Justin had been really disappointed about not getting the house, and Parker had taken it even harder. At first, the house hunt had been exciting and new, but after weeks of poor prospects, Parker was getting more and more

frustrated, understandably so, and Justin took it upon himself to be the ever-optimistic, hopeful one of the two for a change.

He wanted to cheer Parker up and had texted him that morning telling him that he would like to take him out to dinner that night, and now that they were both done with work for the day, Justin was waiting in his car outside the hospital for Parker.

“Where you wanna eat?” Justin had leaned over from his driver’s seat to the passenger side so that he could pop open the door for Parker who was standing on the curb in front of the hospital. Parker had taken a fresh change of clothes with him to the hospital, so he could change out of his scrubs, and he was wearing his favorite shirt from his favorite band: a black vintage Rolling Stones concert tee that had been worn and washed so many times that it looked grey. He was also wearing a braided black leather belt, his beat up navy-blue Chuck Taylors and dark-blue jeans. His sandy-brown hair was in one of its growing-out stages and was parted in the middle, tucked behind his ears, settling right at his jawline.

“Wherever’s good.” Parker was sounding sort of tired. He slid in and put on his seatbelt, but Justin thought that he might have just the pick-me-up that Parker needed.

“Ribs?” Justin knew Parker all too well. “You know, since you’re no longer a vegetarian,” Justin teased him. “How about The Blue Pineapple?”

Parker pepped up at this and smiled at Justin. “Yes, all the meat we can eat. Definitely.” He was looking forward to a plate full of the best barbecue ribs on the North Shore.

Justin put his car in drive, left the curb, and took Parker’s hand in his. “I’ll hold your hand now, before you get a gallon of sauce all over them,” he smiled over to Parker. The Blue Pineapple’s ribs were the best, and because they were the best, they were also messy as hell.

“Yeah, well at least I can keep the sauce on my hands, you just get it on your shirt.” Parker smiled back.



It was true, Justin had always been a messy eater and his clothes often wore most of his food, but that wasn't going to happen today. He shot Parker back a coy look and Parker knew exactly what he was thinking.

“Not the bib, Justin.”

“Oh yes, the bib.” Justin gave Parker's hand a squeeze. The Blue Pineapple offered plastic bibs to all their patrons and Justin and Parker, when they had first went there, had taken them in jest, just like they took the paper crowns at Burger King, but when Justin had found that the bib actually came in handy, he had worn one every time he went back.

“You must keep their bib supplier in business.” Parker squeezed Justin's hand back. “A bib supplier, is that even a thing?” Parker joked.

“Hey now, I look damn good in that thing!” Justin had taken an odd sense of pride in wearing the bib that had a white background and a giant blue pineapple across the front.

“Well, you're never gonna wear it now, you just missed the exit.”

Justin had hopped on the highway since it would be faster than back roads, but he just drove by the exit that he needed to take to go to the restaurant.

“We have a detour.”

“Oh, let me guess—a bib emporium just opened up?”

“Don't joke. I'd actually go to one if they existed.” Justin looked over to Parker. “No, I found a house for us to look at.”

Parker wasn't really in the mood to look at houses today, but since they had missed the exit to the restaurant anyway, he wasn't going to object. Justin threw on his blinker to take the next exit off the highway and within ten minutes they pulled up to a white Cape Cod house with dark green shutters and a dark green door.

And Parker's heart dropped in his chest.

“We've seen this one, Justin.”

“This one? Are you sure?”

They were parked in front of the same Cape Cod style house that they had seen last week, where the owner made it clear that she was only looking for short-term summer renters. Parker could not believe that Justin could forget something that had only happened a week ago.

“I’m sure, Justin. It’s the house we both really wanted, well I guess the house I really wanted, because now you don’t even remember.” Parker’s voice was sounding defeated, but Justin wanted a closer look at the house so he put the car in park and got out and Parker followed.

“It does look sort of familiar.” Justin ran a hand over his scratchy five o’clock shadow and walked on the flat front lawn, looking around and trying to remember. “I think I kinda remember.” He rubbed at his beard again. “But something seems different, like something’s missing.”

“It’s the same Justin, let’s just go.” Parker was beginning to make his way back to the car, but Justin spoke up.

“No. I remember now. There was something here.” Justin walked a few paces on the front yard to where the lawn met the sidewalk and not knowing what Justin was talking about, Parker followed to look where Justin was pointing, and saw that Justin was just pointing at the ground.

“There was nothing, Justin.”

“No, I think I remember a sign or something. Don’t you? You said we were here before.” It was all starting to become clearer to Justin and he had remembered something.

Parker was silent as he thought back and vaguely remembered a handmade “For Rent” sign that was on the front lawn, but he had been too preoccupied thinking about the house at the time to take a good look at some yard sign.

“Yeah, wait, come to think of it.” Now it was Justin who was making his way back to the car and taking his car keys out of his pocket, he opened up the trunk and bent down inside it.

When Justin stood from leaning inside the trunk, he was holding what Parker had remembered to be the yard sign, but instead of just having black writing saying “To Rent” and a phone number on a plain white background, the word “RENTED” was written in large red letters diagonally across it.

Justin walked back across the lawn and placed the sign in the same holes, that were still there from the previous week, and jammed the sign into the ground.

“See. I knew something was missing.” Justin propped his elbow on the top of the sign.

Parker was beginning to comprehend what Justin was doing and if Justin was joking right now...

“It looks kinda tacky though.” Justin looked down at the sign. “Well, when we live here we can take it down.”

*What?* Parker quickly walked up to Justin. “No way Justin, this is a summer rental, she told us last week.” *Don’t joke with me, Justin, not about this.*

“Well, I have learned some things on the job, you know.”

“What?”

“Selling cars... I’ve learned to sell and I sold the owner on the idea that we should be able to have the lease for the whole year. She didn’t even raise the price for the summer since we’re signing on long-term.”

Since Justin and Parker had been saving their money for so long, they knew that they could handle paying the rent on a house, but it would be a big help if they didn’t have to pay additional premiums for the summer.

“What? How’d you do that?” *Justin seriously better not be joking about this.*

“Easy.” He kissed Parker right on the front lawn, not giving a damn if anyone saw. “Some people do see my charm, you know.”

“Justin, I’m just gonna say it. If you are joking about this, it’s not even remotely funny.”

“Not about this, Parker.” He kissed him again. “Pack up your stuff. We’re moving.”

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

“Do you remember the first time you came to my room?” It was a Saturday morning at the end of May and Parker was standing in his bedroom, the same one that he had from the time he was in elementary school, and was looking out the window next to his twin-size bed, overlooking the driveway.

The first time that Justin had gone into Parker’s bedroom was the first time that he’d visited his house, during spring break of their sophomore year of college. Justin was visiting Parker, and upon entering his house, Justin saw Parker’s high school football shrine that his mom kept up in the living room. Justin and Parker had their first ever argument. Well, it wasn’t an argument really. Justin had been admiring Parker’s high school football awards, and it was just too painful for Parker to deal with Justin’s compliments because Parker’s career as a star high school quarterback was something that he had tried to forget.

That was because when Parker was a junior in high school, he had needed someone to talk to and had confided in his football coach that he was gay, and thereafter all hell broke loose. His coach didn’t tell him to quit the team specifically, but the bigoted asshole overworked Parker to the point of exhaustion and humiliation, and Parker, although the star of the team, was tired of the bullshit and decided that enough was enough and quit.

It had taken him years and the support of Justin to finally get over how wronged he’d been by his coach and now he was actually able to look back at his high school football career with fondness and a sense of pride.

“Why didn’t you say anything then? When I told you?” Parker was still looking out the window, but was directing his question toward Justin, and although the question had sounded vague, Justin knew exactly what he was talking about.

Because the day that Justin had first come to Parker’s house was the same day that Parker had decided to trust Justin, had decided to let his best friend

know that he was gay. Justin, confused as he was in his romantic feelings for Parker, did his best to comfort him, but never made mention of his own feelings.

“We’ve talked about this, Parker. You know why.”

“Remind me.” Parker walked away from the window and sat next to Justin on the edge of his bed.

“Because I was chickenshit, and scared, and confused. You were always the stronger one of us. The braver one. The one who made the first move...”

“Yeah, thank God for that.” It was Parker who had first kissed Justin and right then he gave him another. “Should we get gushy and start talking about the first time we knew we loved each other? Should I find my college diary?” Parker reached over to his nightstand and grabbed a small notebook and opened it up to a random blank page and pretended to read, “Dear Diary, today I met the cutest boy at school,” Parker said in his best imitation of a girl’s voice.

“Shut up.”

“His name’s Justin and I really want him to like me.” He went on. “I just hope that he doesn’t have cooties.”

“Funny.”

“Ok, how’s this? MTV True Life: I want to bone my best friend.” Parker smiled at Justin and threw the notebook back on his nightstand. “Hey, have they aired our episode yet?”

“Yeah. Your royalties just came to me. It was in our contract.”

“Oh, is that right?” Parker pushed Justin down on his back on the bed and climbed over him, straddling his lap.

“Yup.”

“Well, it sounds like you owe me a lot of money then.” Parker was leaning down to Justin’s face, just inches above him, speaking low, his voice husky, breathing in Justin’s scent.

Justin made to pat at his jeans pockets, and came up empty. “Looks like I left all my money at home.” He was now lifting his hips off the bed to closer connect Parker’s pelvis with his own.

“Well, guess we’ll have to work out another arrangement then,” Parker said, still straddling Justin’s lap and leaning down to him.

Justin lifted his head up, meeting Parker’s mouth with a deep kiss before flipping Parker onto his back on the mattress. He proceeded to kiss Parker hungrily, fully sprawled out on top of him, running his fingers through Parker’s hair and then sliding them down—down his face, down his neck—before stopping and resting his hand right over Parker’s heart.

“I remember, you know.” Justin lifted his head and stared down into Parker’s eyes.

“Huh?” Parker wasn’t sure what Justin meant or why he broke their kiss.

“The first time I knew I loved you. I remember when.” Justin’s hand was resting right over Parker’s heart, feeling its strong, fast beats right through Parker’s T-shirt. His own heart was beating so fast, he swore he could feel it in his fingertips, beating right along with Parker’s rhythm. “It was here, in your room. Sitting right here on this bed. The first time I was up here with you.”

Parker stared back into Justin’s eyes.

“Justin...”

“You asked me why I didn’t say anything then. But I’m telling you now, I love you, Parker.”

Although Justin was more than revved up and ready to go, he needed this moment with Parker to tell him this, to tell him fully, why on that day four years ago when Parker came out to him, why he had been so silent in his own feelings, and it was indeed because he was scared and it was indeed because he was confused, because deep down he knew, he had fallen in love with his best friend.

“I love you more.” Parker’s mouth clung back onto Justin’s, and as soon as Parker said it, Justin knew that there was no possible way.

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“I’ll miss this you know.”

Parker and Justin were now lying in Parker’s bed, trying to huddle together under the sheet that was balled up into a lump and was nowhere close to covering up their naked bodies.

“What, sharing your twin-size bed?” Justin asked him.

They were both lying on their sides, the only way that they could properly fit on the bed, with Justin being the big spoon, draping his hand over Parker’s stomach and slowly rubbing it back and forth.

“This room, this house.” Parker flipped over to look at Justin. “I worry about my mom, you know. It’s not the same with your parents, they have your sister, they have each other. With my mom, it’s different. It was always just her and me.” Parker’s voice had a worried tone to it.

“You have me.” Justin reached up and brushed Parker’s hair out of his eyes, it was grown out and shaggy, down past his jaw with small pieces falling over his forehead.

“That’s what I mean.” Parker let out a small sigh. “I have you and she has no one, she’s just gonna be here, by herself, in this house...”

“Hey, don’t talk like that. She’s not gonna be alone. She still has you. She has us. We’ll visit.”

Parker didn’t look entirely convinced.

“Parker, do you remember what else you told me the first time I was in your room?”

“What’s that?” Parker was surprised that Justin could even remember so much from that day, he had thought that it had gone all so horribly, but now that he knew the truth, now that he knew that it was the first time that Justin

knew he was in love with him, he understood why Justin could remember it all so well.

“You told me that I would never want to be you, because people expect you to be the perfect son, and you will never live up to that. But you already have, Parker, you already are.” Justin pressed his lips to Parker’s forehead. “I’m telling you, your mom has you, and that’s not going to change just because you’re no longer sleeping under the same roof.”

Parker was thinking about this and knew that Justin was right.

“But if you need time, if we need to wait...” Justin would give Parker time if he needed it, he needed Parker to be ready to start this chapter of their lives together, and although it pained a small part of him to even suggest it, for Parker he would do anything, and that included waiting.

But Parker cut him off, “We’re done waiting,” and then pressed his body up against Justin’s, bringing their mouths together with a kiss. “Our last time up here in my room is gonna be a lot different than our first.” Parker’s hand was around Justin’s waist, gripping onto his lower back, pressing them together, stroking Justin’s skin, moving his hands up toward his shoulder blades and then slowly down his back.

Yes, a repeat performance of the lovemaking that they just shared together was going to be a lot different.

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

After Justin and Parker were done reminiscing and done making even more memories in Parker's bedroom, they each took a quick shower. They then packed up Parker's room, jamming a lifetime of Parker's things into Justin's small Ford Taurus.

Parker, the week before this move, had done his piles of "keep", "donate", and "throw away", so at least what he was bringing with him to the new house had been sorted through.

Plus, he and Justin were each given a house key last week upon signing the lease and using his mom's car while Justin was at work, Parker was able to take some boxes of smaller items with him in order to help make the move-in day less burdensome.

The Cape Cod style house they were moving into was on the small side but it was perfect for them. It had five rooms: a kitchen and living room on the first floor and three bedrooms upstairs. The kitchen and living room were mostly furnished, and although everything in the house seemed to belong in the 1980s, including its oversized cream-colored floral sofa, the guys were happy to have some furniture in their first place. The only things that were missing were beds and furniture for the bedrooms, and although the thought of sleeping on the floor for at least the first couple of weeks before they could get a bed delivered didn't seem ideal, at least the rest of the house was furnished, and they weren't sure what they wanted to do with the other bedrooms anyway. They supposed a guest bedroom and maybe an exercise room/office would work, but they would figure that out when they'd lived in the place a bit longer and could think of what they wanted those rooms to be.

Due to Justin's busy week at work, Parker knew that he wouldn't be making it over to the house, so this was the first time that they had been to their new house together since signing the lease.

They were using today, Saturday, to move in all of Parker's things and they figured they could use tomorrow to focus on Justin and getting his things. Even though Justin could live without the basic necessities, like clothes and

toiletries, he was not going to go more than one day without the fifty-five-inch flat screen TV from their college apartment. The archaic device that was in the living room now was in no way going to cut it, but since the cable guy couldn't come until Tuesday, there was no reason to rush it over since the TV wouldn't work anyway.

Upon pulling into the straight, short driveway that led to a two-car garage attached to the white Cape house, Justin put the car in park. He and Parker unbuckled their seatbelts and made their way across the winding brick pathway that led them to a large brick front stoop. They both stood on it in front of the dark green front door.

The guys had decided to just leave Parker's things in the car for now, excited to see the house and spend their first night here together, they wanted to get inside and look around.

"Wait." Parker had always been the leaner one of the two, but what he didn't have in mass, he surely had in muscle and in strength, because what he was attempting now surely would require some.

"Parker, what the—"

Justin had just finished opening the front door to the house when Parker reached his right arm down to the back of Justin's knees and in one fell swoop he had grabbed Justin up off the stoop, and was holding him in his arms, awkwardly at best. What had started as an attempt to carry Justin over the threshold, the way that he would carry a bride, became him just clutching onto Justin's body, carrying him the best he could and just hoping that he wouldn't drop him. They were now off the stoop and in the front hallway and Parker figured that he could walk a little bit more before his arms collapsed completely.

"Parker, what the hell was that?" Parker finally let Justin down to the wood floor where Justin luckily landed on his feet. Justin was looking at Parker with a mixture of comedic laughter and utter surprise. "And what was it that you were humming?"

"Uhh, 'Here Comes the Bride...'" Parker was a little out of breath, and looking back, he realized that it was an odd choice. From the expression he saw on Justin's face, he could tell that Justin felt the same way. "I dunno,

something about brides and thresholds and carrying someone, it just popped into my head,” Parker offered as an explanation.

“Fine,” Justin smiled and rubbed the outsides of his thighs where Parker was just clutching him so strongly. “But I’m not wearing a dress.”

“You don’t have the legs for it anyway.” The same dark hair that covered Justin’s head also covered his legs. “There’s not enough wax in the world, my friend.”

“Well, you would know.” Justin always joked with Parker that he must wax because Parker’s skin was so smooth and bare, especially when compared to Justin’s. “And I hope you didn’t strain yourself carrying me like that. No excuses tonight when we break in the floor of our new bedroom.”

Clearly having only one thing on his mind, after Parker placed him down, the first thing Justin did was climb the stairs to the master bedroom, already having it in his head how he and Parker were going to spend their first night here together, and Parker was close behind him.

When they reached the master bedroom upstairs and Parker went to turn the doorknob, Justin stopped him. “Nope. It’s your turn, Parker Klein.” Instead of trying to carry Parker the way that Parker had carried him, Justin hoisted Parker up over his shoulder in a fireman’s carry, giving his ass a hard slap, and kicked open the door carrying Parker over the bedroom threshold.

“What! What’s this?” Justin walked into the room, calling this out loud.

Parker was still being carried by Justin, his head dangling low somewhere near Justin’s lower back, so he couldn’t see what Justin was looking at. “What? What’s in here?”

Justin was looking at the unfurnished bedroom that he and Parker would share, except, it was anything but unfurnished.

Against the pale yellow walls of the room, there was a long dark wood bureau with a matching mirror resting on it and a tall dresser with six drawers on the opposite side of the room. As if that wasn’t enough, right in the center of the room, right under the ceiling fan and next to two new nightstands, was a queen size bed with a headboard that matched the rest of the furniture.

But there was something different about the headboard too, because on second glance, draped over the bed's wooden headboard, was a folded up blanket, one that was red and green plaid, and it was the same blanket that Justin and Parker had shared years before at the Eagles football games, the same blanket that they laid on the night they first said I love you to each other, the same blanket that Parker had kept ever since, and Justin was hit with an enormous wave of love that he knew all too well was entirely possible.

Parker must have set this whole thing up, never once mentioning anything about it. Justin took him off his shoulder and placed him carefully on the floor, in order to properly look at the man he loved.

"Oh yeah." Parker acted like he had completely forgotten all about this new bedroom set. "I got us some furniture."

"Yeah, I can see that." Justin kicked off his shoes, pulled his shirt over his head, and let his jeans drop to the floor so that he was now only wearing his boxers. Then he jumped up and came crashing down on the mattress. He scooted up the bed and lay down on his back resting his head against the pillows.

Parker just stood in the doorway looking at him.

"What?" Justin propped himself up on his elbows. He was right in the middle of the mattress, the only thing on the bed being him, the pillows, and a new light blue bottom sheet.

"That's just really hot that I show you a bed and you take your clothes off." Parker said making his way over to the bed.

"Yeah, well what can I say, I'm easy." Justin took the baseball cap that he had been wearing and flung it at Parker the way he would throw a Frisbee.

Parker caught it and then let it drop out of his hands. "Yeah, it only took me an entire day of carrying furniture up the stairs to get you into bed. You're definitely easy."

At this, Justin scooted his way down the bed, his green boxers bunching up around his thighs, and he sat at the end of the bed looking up at Parker.

“Well if you come here, I’ll make it up to you.” He said quietly, in a hoarse whisper, looking straight into Parker’s eyes, and Parker thought it was sexy as hell.

Justin didn’t wait for Parker to say anything next, instead he reached out for Parker’s hands, pulling him down, and yanking Parker on top of him.

They both scooted back up on the bed to rest their heads on the pillows, lying on their sides facing each other, and Justin immediately went in to give Parker a kiss. At first, it was soft and sweet, but within a moment, it was full of passion. Parker wrapped his left leg over Justin’s hip in order to be closer to him, and Justin held tightly to his back, kissing him hard and pulling Parker over so he was completely on top of him. Parker was kissing Justin back intensely, the kiss was all tongues and lips, and even though he knew Justin would be happy about the bed, Justin’s reaction of immediately wanting to break it in, was making him incredibly hard. He was pressing his lower half fully on Justin, grinding up against him, when Justin pressed his chest up off of him, breaking their kiss.

“Lose the clothes, Klein,” Justin called Parker by his last name and Parker knew he meant business.

Parker shifted just slightly off Justin, so that only the right side of his body was on top of him, while his left side was now on the mattress supported by his elbow, and he immediately brought his hands down to unbuckle his belt. When he finally got that done, Justin reached his hands straight up under Parker’s T-shirt, dragging his hands slowly up Parker’s stomach, all the way to his chest and resting the fingers of each hand on Parker’s nipples, and he began to circle his fingertips slowly around them.

Parker loved when Justin touched him anywhere, but right now, what Justin was doing to his chest was driving him crazy and Parker’s brain was going a little berserk at this as one part of it was telling him to just shut his eyes and enjoy this, while the other part of his brain, in the background, was forcefully telling him, *take off your pants!*

His brain found a sort of compromise and rather than reaching down to take off his own pants, his right hand found its spot on Justin’s bare stomach, on that little patch of skin below his belly button but not quite touching the

waistband of his boxers and he began to soothingly rub his palm back and forth, back and forth. He kept this up for a moment, while kissing Justin in a mesh of lips and tongue and as his palm began to move southward, his fingertips lifted up the waistband of Justin's boxers and he rested his hand on the patch of hair that was just inside.

His mind was heightened at the sensation of going from the thin hair and smooth skin on Justin's stomach to the coarse hair that his hand now rested on, and again he began to rub smoothly, but this time he was making gentle circles in the hair that rested only slightly above Justin's rapidly growing hard cock that was sticking up and was now brushing the back of Parker's hand.

Justin was now shifting underneath him, writhing up so that his cock would brush up against Parker's hand, and Parker got the message.

He moved his hand just over slightly so that he could get his grip, and then wrapped his hand around Justin's cock, just lightly, just so that he knew that he was there, and Justin, panting for air and gasping in between kisses, definitely felt it.

"I'm glad you like it," Parker told him, moving his head over so that he could kiss the side of Justin's face, his jaw, his neck. He loved the way Justin's light beard felt against his skin and he began to move his hand up and down Justin's cock, wanting his hand to feel as much of him as it possibly could.

"Fuck yeah, you feel amazing, Parker." Justin was still panting and gasping and rubbing Parker's chest harder now and with more purpose.

"I meant the bed, but that works too." And Parker went back in to kiss Justin fiercely, working him over with his hand, and loving absolutely every moment of this. He was lying so close to Justin and was grinding his body and his hard-on into Justin's left hip, but he desperately wanted at the very least to unzip his own fly to lessen the pressure of his hardening cock that was now tightly compressed in his pants.

But before he could think of whether he would take his hand off of Justin in order to do this, Justin's hands had crept down his chest, onto his stomach and were now at the button to his jeans, undoing it, and unzipping his pants. Parker let out a little moan at this slight brush of Justin's hand when he was unzipping him and began rocking into Justin's hand which was still there and

was now making its way into the hole in front of Parker's boxers, but just when Justin's hand made its way inside and began to brush Parker's cock a little harder, Justin pulled his hand back out and Parker popped open his eyes in disbelief. He loved it when Justin was just rubbing his chest, but now that he had touched his cock and then took his hand away... Parker let out a whimper.

"I said, lose the clothes." And Justin gently pushed the rest of Parker off of him so that Parker lie flat on his back on the left side of the bed, his head resting on the pillows, and Justin came over him, kissing him once on the mouth, before sitting down upon him, straddling his waist.

Justin let his full weight rest upon Parker and brought his hands to the hem of Parker's shirt, hooking his thumbs up under it, and dragging it up Parker's torso, where his hands quickly brushed Parker's nipples but kept moving their way up so that he could take Parker's shirt off entirely.

When he removed Parker's shirt and flung it to the floor, he brought his hands back to Parker's chest, rubbing his hands smoothly over Parker's skin, and his fingers found their spot back on Parker's nipples and began to rub and tease Parker all over again.

Parker closed his eyes and let out a few soft moans all the while lifting his hips to grind up into Justin who was straddling his waist and sitting on top of him.

Justin leaned forward onto Parker, again meeting Parker's lips with his own and began kissing down Parker's face, down on to his chin, stopping there and then going down to Parker's chest, making small pecks all in a row, one after another along his collarbones. Kissing inward from the side, when Justin reached the small hollow of Parker's throat, he began kissing and licking his way up his neck, at first small little licks around the base and in the hollow, but soon Parker felt the long swooping licks of Justin's warm tongue up the entire length of his neck, and Parker was helpless against him, panting and gasping and clutching on to Justin's lower back, keeping him pressed to him, desperately not wanting to break the connection.

Justin's tongue stayed glued to Parker's neck as he ground down into him and he kept licking along the side of Parker's neck while he moved his head slowly upwards, taking his time to taste Parker's amazing skin.

After hearing more of Parker's soft moans and groans and gasps, Justin sat up on Parker, removing his lips from his neck, and reached behind himself in order to grab ahold of Parker's hands that had been gripping his lower back so tightly, and taking Parker's hands in his, he brought them up to his mouth.

Justin softly kissed the back of both of Parker's hands and each palm and then brought them back towards the mattress and up and over Parker's head so that now Parker's knuckles grazed the headboard.

Justin then leaned over Parker again, kissing him softly on the mouth like he had done to his hands and began making small open mouthed kisses down his neck and onto his chest, this time not taking his time as he slid down Parker's body, stopping for a short while to kiss Parker's nipples, but not stopping long at this detour. Parker's pants, although they were unzipped, were still on, and as he kissed Parker lower and lower, he was on a mission to take them off.

When Justin finally found his mouth on the only hair that Parker had on his entire torso, the thin straight line of light brown hair that ran down from Parker's belly button and disappeared into his jeans, he brought his hands to Parker's jeans waistband, sliding the tips of his fingers into them and began to drag them down.

The jeans got bunched up at Parker's knees, so Justin scooted up off Parker completely and maneuvered down the bed some more until he was standing on the floor at the bottom of the bed.

He quickly untied and pulled off Parker's sneakers, peeled off his socks, and grabbed the bottom cuff on his jeans, which he then forcefully pulled down and off.

When he finally got Parker's jeans off, he walked on the floor to the left side of the bed where Parker was still lying, and sat next to him on the edge. He leaned down to kiss Parker's mouth, planting hot and firm open mouthed kisses onto his lips and then sat up and scooted down the bed some so that he could reach down to Parker's boxers and take them off.



Parker lifted his hips up off the mattress as to make Justin's job easier and Justin easily slid off his boxers and threw them behind him on the floor. Still sitting on the edge of the bed, Justin began rubbing his hands over the tops and insides of Parker's thighs, teasing him mercilessly, all the while careful not to touch anywhere else.

Justin couldn't believe that he was here with Parker in *their* new house in *their* new bedroom, in *their* new bed. He knew that this was only the first time of many that they would be together in bed like this, and that thought alone was driving him crazy in the moment, and his whole body and mind were consumed with not only the time they were having now, but with all of the times that were still to come, and he couldn't stand to tease Parker anymore, because by doing so, he was only torturing himself.

So he scooted down the edge of the bed even more, and still sitting on the bed's edge, he took his right hand and began gently stroking Parker's erect cock up and down, up and down, loving the feel of his boyfriend in his hand, wanting to give him the most incredible pleasure imaginable and thinking to himself how it was Parker who had brought them together. Parker who was brave and made the first move the night they first kissed, Parker who was always there for him, no matter what, there to laugh, there to talk, there to listen. Parker who was his best friend, his boyfriend and his entire world, and if he didn't have Parker in his life he knew with all of his heart that he would have nothing.

It was with these thoughts in mind that Justin shifted himself off the side of the bed and stood up on the floor right next to the bed and looked down at Parker, allowing his eyes to gaze over his entire body, taking in the entire breathtaking sight of him before meeting Parker's eyes with his own. Looking back at Justin, Parker propped himself up on his elbows and then sat up so he was now sitting on the left side edge of the bed, his feet planted on the floor, still looking up at Justin who was standing in front of him.

"Now you." Parker told him. Justin was still wearing his own boxers and Parker reached his hands up into the top of them, wanting to drag them down, but Justin's hands met his and stopped them.

“The bed. I do love it, you know.” Justin leaned down into Parker, smoothing his left hand along Parker’s jaw, and said this softly, still looking him in the eyes before giving him another kiss. Parker met his lips back and was kissing him fully and deeply and they kept like this for almost ever, loving the taste of each other and both knowing that they could never get enough. “But you know, I would have slept on the floor forever if it meant that I got to do it with you.” Justin had pulled gently away from Parker’s mouth and was now kneeling in front of him on the floor and with Parker right on the edge of the bed, Justin positioned himself in between Parker’s spread legs and with Justin kneeling directly in front of him, right up next to the bed, they were now chest to chest.

Justin brought his hands up around Parker’s back and was stroking him softly, holding him close, all the while kissing him in a mixture of soft and hard, tongue and no tongue, but all with 100% love.

As good as Parker’s mouth felt against his, Justin wanted even more of him, wanted to taste and feel and to be more with him. He was always more when he was with Parker. He always felt more and could do more and could *be* more. His life had never been the same since he had met Parker, and although now, after almost four years of being together he couldn’t really for the life of him remember what it had been like before they met, all he knew was that a life without Parker must have been no life at all.

“I love you, Parker.” Justin planted one last kiss on Parker’s mouth, a sweet, soft expression of all of the emotion that was within him, and of all the emotion that Parker brought out of him.

Justin was still kneeling on the floor in front of Parker and had brought his hands out from around Parker’s back and onto the tops of Parker’s thighs and was stroking them, back and forth, back and forth, the friction of his palms burning heat against Parker’s skin. His hands were inches away from Parker’s throbbing cock and Justin loved that he had Parker in this position, sitting right on the edge of the bed where he could have full access to him.

“I love you too, Justin, God, I love you.” Parker was gasping and huffing out breaths as Justin once again kissed his way down his chest and onto the

straight trail of light brown hair that ran below his belly button, not stopping once as he did so until he reached Parker's cock and took it in his mouth.

At this point, Justin was done with taking things slowly and now that he could feel Parker inside of him and felt the pulsing and throbbing of Parker's cock with every licking and sucking and swallowing action he took, Justin wanted nothing more than to bring Parker up and over the edge.

Parker ran his hands over Justin's short, cropped hair, massaging and caressing and feeling and wanting. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he was hunching over, with his stomach slightly concave as he leaned in down towards Justin, wanting to be as close as physically possible to him while Justin was kneeling in front of him on the floor.

Parker rested his hands on top of Justin's head the best he could in between Justin's slick, deliriously pleasurable bobbing motions and every time Justin looked up to meet his eyes, Parker would stare straight back into them, and he could barely hold back from coming.

Finally, Parker had to close his eyes as he could feel the final tingle building up low in his belly. His hips were gently rocking back and forth into Justin's mouth and his thighs were on fire from the friction of Justin's hands consistently working them over. He wanted to let Justin know what was coming next. He knew Justin wouldn't pull off, that he never did, but still he had to at least say something, anything to let him know.

"Justin—" Parker's voice was eager and hoarse and he kept his mouth open after he said this and his eyes were screwed shut so he didn't see Justin looking back up at him when he said his name. Instead, he could just feel the pressure of Justin's mouth becoming tighter around him as Justin brought his hands quickly away from Parker's thighs and put them right in between his legs, softly touching and stroking his balls, and that extra touch right there is what did it.

"Justin—" Parker let out a few more stifled breaths and the next thing he knew he was gasping and panting even harder as he dug his fingertips into Justin's hair, bucked his hips up one more time, and came in Justin's mouth.

He kept his eyes closed, riding out the incredible sensations that Justin had just created in him. He could feel Justin's mouth still on him, but the licking

and sucking sensations had stopped and instead he could now feel the soft tender kisses of Justin's mouth on his softening penis and then felt more tender kisses from Justin trail up his abdomen, up his chest, until Justin was now looking straight into his eyes.

"You're amazing," Parker said, leaning forward and bringing his hands to the sides of Justin's face, kissing him with even more passion than he had before, if that was even possible.

"I told you I'd make it up to you," Justin smirked and said this squarely against Parker's lips, making a teasing vibration as he did so.

"Yeah, well, now it's your turn." Parker gripped Justin from underneath the arms and still sitting on the edge of the bed, yanked him upwards to which Justin then stood directly in front of him.

*Perfect.*

Parker quickly took the waistband of Justin's boxers and began to slide them down, and this time, Justin didn't stop him.

Justin hadn't even stepped out of the boxers that Parker had pushed to the floor before Parker was leaning into him, kissing and nipping at his stomach, licking around his belly button and moving his way lower and lower and—

"Unngh, Parker." Parker took Justin's cock into his mouth, using his left hand to grip the base and wrapping his right hand around Justin's lower back. His hand moved lower onto Justin's ass and after a few minutes of gentle suckles and licks, he pulled his mouth off of Justin and Justin let out a surprised gaspy whine.

Parker wanted Justin on the bed, he didn't want him to have to stand up for this, so with the hand that was gripping Justin's ass, he pulled him even closer to him and lied on his back across the bed until Justin was on top of him. He proceeded to then kiss Justin fiercely, loving the feeling of all of Justin's weight on top of him, feeling so incredibly close to him on this bed that they would share and wanting to give Justin back every bit of pleasure that he had just received.

On top of him, Justin was grinding down into him, pressing his erection into the soft fold of flesh in between Parker's thigh and his groin, and even

though he had just come, the sensitivity of it all was driving Parker crazy and he quickly thought that if Justin could just wait it out a bit longer, that if he could just wait so that he could get hard again too... But the feeling of Justin's tongue darting in and out of his mouth, pressing deeper inside, trying to reach his throat and eat him alive, gave Parker other ideas and really, no, he wasn't going to make Justin wait any longer.

Parker reached his hands up off of Justin's ass and pressed his chest upwards a bit and even though he hated that his lips lost contact with Justin's, he knew that his mouth would soon find another home on his boyfriend.

Justin seemed to get the idea and rolled off of Parker, and being that they were lying horizontally across the bed, Justin was now lying on his back next to the pillows and quickly shoved a few underneath his own head and shoulders. He wanted his head propped up so that he could see what Parker was going to do to him, for as good as it always felt, he loved it even more when he could watch.

Parker gave him a few more maddening hot kisses on his mouth and then began to move down his body quickly, dragging his tongue out along his chest and torso and soon finding the base of Justin's cock and the patch of hair that was right above it.

Parker wrapped his hand around the base of Justin's cock and pressed his face to the hair there, giving Justin mercilessly slow, agonizing kisses, dragging out a few more whimpers and moans from him before lowering his head a tiny bit more and bringing Justin inside of his mouth.

Justin knew that there was no way that he could last long—not after what he had just done to Parker and definitely not after what Parker was doing to him. He was extraordinarily hard, and the sight of Parker licking at his cock and sliding him in and out of his mouth sent every sense he had into overdrive and it was all too much in the best possible way.

Justin had his hands buried into the sheet on either side of him but as the sensations heightened and his back and pelvis rose off the bed, he brought his hands down to the back of Parker's head, saying his name, *moaning* his name, and gripping the beautiful hair on it.

As the sensations continued to heighten, Justin couldn't hold back any longer, he wouldn't, and his brain stopped working as his hips began circling and thrusting and he began groaning and moaning and he never shut his eyes once as Parker was taking him in and out of his mouth, and when Parker looked up at him, it was with so much love and so much heat that Justin was just done. Everything inside of him was just done. He was finished in so many ways more than one. This was Parker, making love to him right now on their bed, giving him the best feelings imaginable, and as good as it all felt, as incredibly amazing as it was to see and feel Parker now on the bed with him and being a part of him like that, his heart was hammering not just with what Parker was doing to him, *with him, for him*, but with every feeling he had ever had in his life for Parker, with every memory and kiss and laugh and touch all balled up inside of him, rolled into this feeling that he couldn't even place exactly where it was in his chest, because it was moving like a wave through him, and now it was in his stomach and now it was in his heart and he tried to keep it down in his chest, but when he opened his mouth to breathe, the wave was getting bigger and taking him over entirely and now that his mouth was open it wanted to rush out, but he wouldn't let it and "Unnnnnnggghh!"

And he was just so in love, and he was just done. Gone for. Whatever the saying is, he was it. And he held this feeling tightly in his chest, this wave that radiated through him, knowing that whatever happened that this feeling wouldn't go away. It was always there and always would be.

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"By the way, my appointment's made." The next day, Justin was bringing up breakfast-in-bed to Parker, well, lunch really, well, snacks if Justin really thought about it. They had quite the time keeping each other up the night before but now that it was Sunday, even though they would have spent the whole day in bed if they could, they still had to go to Justin's house to pack up his stuff and bring it to their new house.

"Hmmm?" Parker was still in a state of sleep under their red and green plaid blanket, curled up on his side.

Since they had just begun the move-in process, there was next to no food in the house yet and all Justin could bring up to Parker was a half-eaten can of

potato chips, an unopened bag of tortilla chips and a jar of salsa. He figured this was all right for now, and that he would take Parker out for a proper lunch before they grabbed his stuff. Justin placed the junk food bounty on the night table next to Parker's side of the bed and climbed back on the bed to lie down on his side, curling up into Parker.

Although the bottom half of Parker's body was under their plaid blanket, his upper back was exposed, and lying next to Parker now, Justin traced his hand over Parker's "02" tattoo and put his mouth up against it, kissing it.

"I said I made my appointment. You said you went to Ronnie at Armed & Inked, he put me in for next week." Justin was kissing Parker's tattooed right shoulder blade and making his way up the side of Parker's neck, caressing and brushing Parker's nearly shoulder length hair over to the side as he did so.

Justin wanted his "01" tattoo on his left shoulder blade, whereas Parker got his "02" tattoo on his right. Upon thinking about where to place it, it just felt right to have it put on his left, on the same side as his heart and to compliment the placement of Parker's, like they were two parts of a whole, because they were.

"Gonna get inked for me, hmm?" Parker hummed out. Feeling Justin's soft kisses and gentle caresses, Parker was still in that blissful state between being asleep and being awake and just then when Justin wrapped his arm around his chest and pressed him even closer to him, Parker felt like he could stay this way forever.

"Yeah, well I figure you don't get to be the only one to have all the fun." Now that Justin was curled in right behind Parker, he felt like he would never be able to get up and out of bed again. Parker's warm skin pressing up against his body was making him feel so calm, so safe, so peaceful, and even though they were home now, in their home, Justin couldn't help but feel that the entire time that he had known Parker, that he had been home all along.

Parker turned over to face Justin and looked in his eyes. "Fun? You know it involves needles right?"

"Yeah, well I told Ronnie it would be my first time and he said he'd go easy on me." Justin's mouth had found its place back on the side of Parker's neck.

“Easy, huh?” Parker arched his neck into Justin “You’re always saying how you’re so *easy*.” Parker was dragging his hands up underneath the T-shirt that Justin had stupidly put on thinking that they would actually get some work done today.

“What can I say? You bring it out in me.” Justin’s mouth was open and he was nipping at Parker’s skin, the skin right where Parker’s neck connected with his shoulder, and Parker was already breathing heavily at the feel of it. Leave it to Justin to get him completely turned on before he was even fully awake.

“Yeah, well, I’m gonna go brush my teeth, and when I come back, you can show me just how *easy* you really are.” Parker pulled away from Justin and before he could even get up and out of bed, Justin was taking off his own shirt and wrestling down his track pants and boxers.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Keeping true to their word, now that they were moved into their new place, Justin and Parker visited Parker's mom and regularly invited her over. Just because they were in their mid-twenties didn't make it so that they knew exactly what they needed to run the day-to-day operations of their house, and other than Parker generously providing them with the bedroom furniture, they still needed a lot of the basics. So Parker's mom, Shannon, went shopping with them one day so that they could pick up household necessities like pots and pans, and extra sheets, well, two extra sets of sheets and a comforter that they both liked for their queen size bed. And now that summer was in full swing, they even bought a window unit air conditioner for their living room and took the air conditioner from Parker's old bedroom and put it in their bedroom window.

As much as Justin and Parker loved that they now had their own yard and could hang out to throw around the Frisbee or baseball or football and have Brandt and Todd over for weekend scrimmages, they found that most of the time they only used their yard at night after work when it was cooler outside because this summer had turned into a scorcher.

They had been living in their house for two months, it was the beginning of August, and it seemed like every day was over ninety-five degrees with ninety percent humidity. Parker had to walk almost two miles in the heat every day to the bus stop to get to work and because he had per diem shifts at the hospital and didn't have a set schedule, most days Justin couldn't drive him. Not that it made much difference because on the days that Justin could drive him, since his air conditioner in his car had been busted since God knows when, they both still ended up sweaty and sticking to the seats, even with the windows down. Justin really wanted to improve this situation.

"I see you decided to take a shower with your clothes on today, Meyer."

Justin had just walked into work looking drenched and Brandt, of course, greeted him. Due to the heat and humidity, Justin drove to work wearing casual clothes and brought his work suit along with him, arriving to work early

enough everyday so that he could change his clothes before meeting with customers.

“Yeah, well at least I remember to bathe.” Justin told Brandt sarcastically. Good one. Sort of. Justin didn’t really care though, he just wanted to get to the employee’s bathroom so he could change.

When he’d changed and come out of the bathroom, he saw that Brandt was still the only one in the showroom and that they still had a good half hour before any customers would be walking in and he decided that now was as good a time as any to talk to Brandt.

“I want to switch up our bonus deal.”

“What?” Brandt was bending over a new silver Audi A5 Coupe, buffing out something on its hood with his suit sleeve.

“Our bonus deal. Right now, I get a bonus for every twenty cars I sell. And I get it as a check, but I want to work out something different.”

When it came to money and business deals, Brandt was just like his dad. All ears. “I’m listening.”

“Well, I get a bonus check every month on top of my commission, but I want to change that.”

“Fine, no more bonuses for you, good call.” Brandt smirked and then made his way across the shiny black granite showroom floor, over to the small showroom office that housed coffee, teas, and snacks for the customers who came in, and then popped in a pod of bold roast coffee into the automatic coffee maker.

Justin followed behind him and leaned against the counter by the sink. “Actually. You’re kinda right.”

“What?” Brandt turned around to face him.

“I get bonuses in the form of money. What I want is to get bonuses in the form of product.”

Brandt was intrigued. “Go on.”

“I want to buy a car here, and I figure that maybe you’d go for giving me a higher bonus percentage on the sales I make if you know that the money is going right back into the company.”

“I knew it!” Brandt boomed out. “Finally ready to get rid of your Taurus! Man, I don’t know how the hell you still drive around in that thing. How many miles does it have on it now? Two hundred thousand? Three?”

“Yeah, well it’s lasted this long...”

“Can’t stand coming to work every day looking at all the foreign models, huh? The princess wants something shiny and new!” Brandt made a horrible attempt at making a girly princess voice. Well at least that’s what Justin thought he was trying to make his voice sound like. Mostly it sounded like a cross between a squeaky mouse and a helium-huffing hyena.

“What the hell are you talking about, Brandt? You drive a domestic. Or didn’t you know that about Escalades?”

Brandt’s coffee was done and he was pulling open all the cabinet drawers searching for sugar packets. His coffee was always mostly sugar. “Yeah well, that’s because my dad was dealing in domestics at the time. I’m trading up, though.” He was squatting, opening up all the lower cabinets, still searching. “Gonna get a Porsche or a Maserati or an Aston Martin or—Jesus Christ, where’s all the sugar?!”

Justin sighed and walked over to the coffee maker, where right beside, it in plain sight, was a small basket containing more sugar packets than even Brandt could use and handed it down to him.

“So do we have a deal?”

“What?” Brandt was now standing, ripping the sugar packets open with his teeth. Justin just gave him a look. “All right. Deal. If you put your bonuses back into the company, I’ll double your percentage rate. We’ll write up something tomorrow.”

Yes. All Justin’s time trying to sell customers luxury automobiles had made him quite the salesman. He could even sell Brandt.

“Now show me where you got that sugar, I can never find it in here.”

“You’re such a—” Wait, now isn’t the right time to call Brandt a doofus. “Good boss. You’re a good boss. Thanks Brandt.” And Justin pointed over to the place on the counter where the sugar belonged.

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“Nice wheels, Meyer.” Parker was walking out of their house and down the driveway toward Justin. Having walked the two miles home from taking the bus, he was still looking drenched from the humidity and hot summer sun even though Justin guessed that he had been home for about an hour. With the bus stop being in the center of town and so far away from where they lived, he hated that Parker still had to take the bus, but with Parker still on a per diem schedule at the hospital with his shift times always fluctuating, today Justin couldn’t swing driving him.

“Yeah? Glad you think so.”

Since it was August, it was still light outside even though it was evening and Parker could clearly see Justin standing next to a black, certified pre-owned BMW X5 SUV. The car was nearly ten years old and pushing one hundred thousand miles, but it only had one previous owner and Brandt, knowing that Justin was buying this car, had his crew thoroughly inspect it and detail it. Twice.

And as if that wasn’t good enough, when Justin bought the car, Brandt honored their newly formed bonus arrangement and even advanced Justin his bonus money up front. He then also honored Justin’s employee discount and on top of that, he took ten thousand dollars off the Blue Book value without even mentioning it. Justin basically felt like he was stealing.

“So what? Old man Donnelly decided to let you have a test drive?” Parker asked him.

It was true that Justin worked for North Shore Motors and that yes, it was owned by Brandt’s dad, Ed Donnelly, but Justin had only seen Mr. Donnelly around the car lot a dozen or so times since he started working there over a year ago. Now that Brandt was managing most things around the office, Mr. Donnelly had even more of an excuse to take jet-setting vacations with Mrs. Donnelly, leaving Brandt to run the show, which was completely fine with Justin.

The first time Justin had met Mr. Donnelly was in his freshman year of college on move-in day and Mr. Donnelly honestly scared the shit out of him. Justin was the second kid to arrive on move-in day and all he could hear while standing outside his new dorm room holding an overstuffed duffle bag full of clothes, was the barely muffled yelling of a man inside taking note of the state of the carpet and the lack of closet space and how it only had one window and wasn't there someone he could yell at about this because he didn't want his hard earned money going to some shit-hole dorm where three shit-kicker kids were forced into a triple.

In fact, when Brandt had offered Justin the job at the dealership, even though Justin was desperate to get some more work experience and start making a decent paycheck, he took time to think about it because he really didn't think that he could handle working for Mr. Donnelly. It was only when Brandt reassured Justin that he would be his supervisor and that he would keep his dad off his back that Justin agreed, and Brandt kept to his word. He was never once hassled by Mr. Donnelly, not that he could really be hassled by someone who wasn't there.

“A test drive? Yeah something like that.” Justin had never told Parker his intentions of buying a car. “So let's go for a spin. I figured you could drive.” Justin reached into his pocket, pulled out the car keys, and tossed them over the hood to Parker.

“Dude, I just worked a twelve-hour shift. Why don't you drive?”

“I already drove it here. It's your turn.”

Parker walked around the front of the car, noticing the blue dealer plates encased in a North Shore Motors license plate holder. “And old man Donnelly isn't going to shit a brick if something happens to this car?” Parker, although having never met Mr. Donnelly, had heard horror stories about him from Brandt and Justin. “Why is it here anyways? You never bring cars home.”

“It's like you said, a test drive.”

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

After carefully backing out of the driveway, Parker was coasting east, wanting to spend this time with Justin and see the ocean after a long day of work. The light of the day was only just beginning to fade, and it was that peaceful time of evening when day almost fully blended into night and the sky was just slightly glowing from the fading illuminating sun. Parker loved this time of day.

As they continued to drive, Justin put on the air conditioning, and Parker smiled at how the cold air felt against his damp skin. Parker then turned on the radio low, loving that it actually got reception because Justin's car, although it had a radio, didn't have an antenna and could only get a few stations in here and there.

While Parker drove, heading east toward the ocean, he listened to Justin note of all the car features and talk about its leather seats and sunroof and CD player. He took Justin's hand in his and kept his other hand on the steering wheel, feeling relaxed, enjoying the smoothness of the road and Justin being beside him.

They were driving around aimlessly until Parker decided that he was hungry and drove over to the seashell shaped restaurant that had the best fried clams and seafood on the North Shore. In general, Parker had been trying to eat a little healthier, but having come straight home from work and wanting to wait for Justin before he ate, he was now starving.

The guys took their order to go and they headed over to the seawall to sit down on its edge, side by side, to look at the ocean and eat their meals: two large clam plates with extra tartar sauce, extra coleslaw, a large order of onion rings and enough ketchup packets to bring them into the next century. Oh yeah, and two large Cokes. *So much for healthy eating.*

It was a perfect time of night to be sitting by the ocean. The tide was coming in, and although they lived on the east coast, and therefore were looking to the east while the sun was setting behind them, they could still see the sky painted in tones of gold and rose swirling amongst the darkening hue

of encroaching purple twilight, and the first stars were now showing themselves in the late evening sky.

“So what do you think?” Justin looked over to Parker feeling completely stuffed. It somehow had only taken him about five minutes to eat his entire meal, and Parker was done soon thereafter.

Not bothering to eat with utensils, and wanting to wipe his hands on something, Parker was digging in a half-deflated, brown paper bag. They had an extra bag just for napkins, that’s how much food they had, and now that Parker was done eating, he really needed to clean up his hands.

“Disgusting. I couldn’t eat any of it.” He had found the napkins and was wiping his hands before passing some over to Justin. That meal was the best thing he had eaten all month. All year. Maybe his whole life.

“Yeah, same here.” Justin joked back. “But I still finished faster than you did.”

“I don’t know if you wanna brag about that.” Parker nudged Justin’s shoulder with his. “That’s not always a good thing.” Parker smiled over to him.

“Well. It’s not always a bad thing.” Justin smiled and nudged him back. “And besides, I was talking about the car. What do you think?”

Parker was finishing the last of his Coke through its straw, making exaggerated slurping sounds when the straw reached the bottom of the empty cup.

“It’s a Beemer. It’s nice.” He sounded distracted as he popped off the lid of his soda cup eyeing its contents, hoping for one last sip.

“Nice?”

“Yeah. I mean, it’s really nice. Better than the bus,” Parker answered, wondering again, why Justin had him drive around a work car in the first place.

“Better than the bus. All right, I’ll take it.” Justin brought his legs that were dangling over the seawall to his side and hoisted himself up to stand. “You have the keys right?”



“Huh?” Parker was still distracted. *Nope. No more sips.* The soda cup was just one more thing to add to the trash bag.

“The keys. To the car. Pass ’em over, I just wanna grab something.”

Parker patted his pockets and handed the keys to Justin.

“Be right back.”

Parker took this time while Justin was at the car to grab up all the trash and find a trash can to throw it away and then he sat back down on the seawall to look at the waves softly crash against the shore while waiting for Justin.

Justin was back shortly after Parker and took a seat beside him on the seawall and handed him back the car keys. Parker went to stuff the keys back in his shorts pocket when Justin spoke up.

“Corny? Too much? I knew it’d be too much.”

Parker was still clutching the keys in his hand, now looking confused. “Is what too much?”

“The key chain.”

Parker didn’t even see what Justin had been talking about, but when he looked down into his hands he could see something silver catch the light.

He had to bring the car keys closer to his eyes in order to make out what Justin was talking about, and now he was looking at a small round silver disc attached to the key ring, but it had been there when Justin handed him the keys in the first place back in their driveway at home, and Parker didn’t think anything of it.

“This little circle? It’s definitely too much,” Parker joked and handed the keys back to Justin. “I thought you said you had to go back to the car to get something. The keychain was already on here.”

“Yeah, but you haven’t seen it yet.” Justin handed the keys back to Parker.

“Uhh, I do see it.” Parker had no idea what Justin was getting at with all this keychain talk. “What, do all Beemers come with these?” Parker was now squinting, turning the keychain over in his hand, when his thumb felt a small bump on the side of the silver disc, and upon closer inspection, he saw that it was a clasp.

Parker opened up the silver circle and inside was a small picture of him and Justin from their sophomore year of college, with Justin's arm draped around Parker's shoulder while wearing their "GO" and "EAGLES!" football shirts. Parker recognized the photo, a larger one was framed in their house, and while contemplating why Justin would have put this on the key ring of a work car, Justin spoke up.

"And *this* is what I got from the car."

Justin unfolded a piece of paper and held it out in front of Parker so he could read it and Parker just stared at it.

"Justin..."

Parker was now reading a car title to a BMW X5 SUV. And on the very top line, the line where it states the new owner's name, there was a name filled in.

And it said Parker Klein.

"You bought the bed. I bought the car. Fair deal." Justin had been saving money toward a new car the entire time that he had been working at the car dealership and the entire time he knew who it would be for. It would be for Parker. He wanted Parker to be able to get to and from work safely, any time of day or night that he was scheduled, and not have to rely on walking on busy streets out in the snow or the sleet or the rain or the hot sun to take a bus.

Parker was speechless. He half expected all of this to be one of Justin's pranks, but looking over at Justin, looking in his eyes, he knew that this was somehow real, that Justin was somehow serious and his mouth opened and popped out the first thing in his mind.

"No way." He was still in shock, gripping the car keys. "No way am I driving this thing around while you're still in your crappy Taurus."

"Crappy! Hey! My grandparents gave me that car! And we've made some good memories in it if I remember correctly." Justin was grinning widely at Parker and he wasn't alone in remembering the good times they'd spent in it.

"Yeah we have had good memories." Parker looked over to Justin. "You know the first time we ever spent any time together was in your car when you

drove me home from school.” Parker smiled at the memory. Who knew that by Justin driving him home from college nearly five years ago that he would be starting the best friendship he would ever know and that it would all be with the love of his life.

But not all of the memories he had of Justin’s car were so G-rated. “And who could forget the stiff necks and chaffed asses from being in your tiny backseat.”

“I’d rather remember what it was that we were doing that gave us all those stiff necks and chaffed asses.” Justin bumped his shoulder into Parker’s. “And plus, with us being squished back there, that’s how I knew that you always wanted an SUV.”

Parker was still thinking back to the past times he’d had with Justin, but feeling the car keys in his hand, he was brought back to the present.

“Justin, there’s no way.”

“It’s done. The title’s in your name. Plates have already been ordered. Car insurance’s been bought. So, sorry, Parker. You’re stuck with it.”

Parker was still feeling a mixture of shock and bewilderment but all of this was overshadowed by an inordinate amount of gratitude and love toward Justin and the fact that he would do something like this. Justin was always telling Parker how he hated that he had to take the bus to work and how he worried about him walking on the busy main streets that didn’t even have sidewalks, especially at night when Justin had to work late and Parker was called in at the last minute for a shift.

But there was no way. Even now hearing all of this from Justin, Parker couldn’t believe that he had bought him a car. A Beemer for Christ sake. There was no way he could pay Justin back for this. No way. But the look of warmth and love on Justin’s face said it all. Justin didn’t give him a car in order to be paid back in some way. He gave it to him because he loved him and wanted him to have it, *needed* him to have it, because as long as Parker was safe, he was too.

And one final thought popped into Parker’s mind.

“Time for some new memories?” Parker leaned his head toward Justin and rested his lips against his.

“Time for some new memories.”

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*Valentine’s Day – 6 Months later*

“Admit it!” Brandt yelled over to Justin. Even though Justin was about thirty yards away from him in the sports complex in Boston where they always played their wintertime football games, Brandt could see Justin easily in his bright red T-shirt that had a big white “IN” written across the front. It was the same T-shirt that Justin had worn one year ago today during their first ever Valentine’s Day football game.

“What?” Justin yelled back right before spiraling the football over to Brandt and then jogged over to him.

“You tried this before! You want to switch around the teams!”

Justin casually clapped his hands out in front of himself and looked up at Brandt with a coy smile. Justin was trying to act dumb. Brandt wasn’t buying it. When Justin’s smile wasn’t going to convince Brandt of anything, he decided that he’d give it his best shot and say something.

“I’m just trying to make things fair! You know you and Todd always lose!”

Just as Justin said this, Todd was walking over to the two of them, having just changed into his football clothes. Justin couldn’t help but wince a little bit. He loved to smack talk with Brandt. But it was just that—smack. He didn’t want Todd to feel bad about his and Parker’s past victories.

The guys still played their game of football almost every week, just as they had been doing for five years since they were sophomores in college and the teams were always the same—Justin and Parker on one side and Brandt and Todd on the other. But when it came to the Valentine’s Day game today, Justin wanted to make sure that he and Parker were on opposite teams.

“Yeah, yeah. Trying to switch up the teams again, huh, Justin?” Todd had indeed overheard the small conversation that just went on between Brandt and Justin and had to add in his two cents too. “Should we be expecting this every

week?” Todd said, as if he was annoyed, but his smile said otherwise. “And besides, Brandt. He’s right. The last time we won a game was back in November. And I can’t keep losing all my money to these two.” Todd gestured over to Justin and the man behind him, jogging up to their little group.

The guys had started making small bets with each other over who would win each week’s football games, and the bets would get pretty steep, consisting of payments of pizza and beer.

“Come on, Todd. You don’t lose that much money to us. And besides, we always buy you beer afterward to help you nurse your wounds.” Parker had made his way up to his gang of friends after having taken a few extra minutes in the locker room. He and Justin had decided to drive over to the sports complex separately today, and now that Parker had his own car, this was possible.

Even though Justin and Parker had been living together for the past eight months, they didn’t want to see each other too much on the morning of Valentine’s Day. During the first couple of years of their romantic relationship, they never wanted to make a big deal out of the holiday, but last year things changed for them.

It was a year ago today that Justin and Parker announced their romantic relationship to Brandt and Todd while wearing the “IN LOVE” T-shirts that Justin had designed for them, with “MINE 01” and “MINE 02” written on the backs.

“Ahh,” Justin now looked over to Parker, a great big smile on his face. “Look who decided to show up!” He of course was kidding. He knew without a shadow of a doubt that Parker would definitely be coming to the game today.

“Yeah, well, I had to find my shirt. I never know where I keep this thing.” Lie. Parker smiled back at Justin, but he knew Justin knew that he was lying. They kept their “IN” and “LOVE” shirts, along with their “GO” and “EAGLES!” shirts from their college days, folded up together in Justin’s undershirt drawer, the only red shirts in a sea of white.

Justin inched his way toward Parker and stood about an inch away from him. *God, he looks good.* “Well, good thing you found it, because you look damn se—”

Brandt cut him off. “Guys!” Although Brandt had welcomed Justin and Parker’s relationship and never treated them differently, he still had a hang-up about them showing PDA on the football field.

But fuck it, Justin was still standing directly in front of Parker, and if he wanted to kiss his boyfriend on the football field on Valentine’s Day he would. But Parker beat him to it, grabbing him around the waist, kissing him first, right on the lips.

“Ugh. No crying in baseball, no kissing in football!” Brandt, who at one time never understood why Justin and Parker liked movies so much, had finally taken an interest in films and actually recited some movie quotes from time to time. Albeit they weren’t always accurate.

Then Brandt crossed his arms in front of his chest and let out a big huff of air. “And we know you guys are gonna be all over each other on the field. That’s why Justin wants to switch up the teams today. So you guys can tackle each other and whatever the hell else.” He tried to look annoyed, he really did. But he secretly wanted this change of teams, because if they changed teams, he had a way better chance of winning, and he had a girlfriend this year, someone he actually cared about and it would be nice to try to show off just a bit. Not that he cared about proving that he was a former college football hero or anything. “And can we get on with it, already? You know I’m with Gretchen this year. And she doesn’t want to spend all damn day in this arena watching the four of us play football.” Lie. Gretchen was sitting happily over in the bleachers that lined the field, smiling along and having a great time.

Parker and Justin shot up their eyebrows at Brandt’s statement and were about to call him out on it when Brandt opened his mouth.

“Fine. But you know if she didn’t like you guys so damn much, she wouldn’t be here.”

“I know why she’s here,” Justin retorted. “It’s because Brandt’s in love. Brandt and Gretchen sitting in a tree, S-I-T-T-I-N-G.”

“Good one, Einstein, that’s not even how it goes.”

“It is in your version. You wouldn’t know how to do anything else.”

And with that Justin grabbed the ball.

“Two-Fourteen! Two-Fourteen! Hut, Hut, Hike!”

**THE END**

## **Author Bio**

*Thank you very much for reading. I sincerely hope you enjoyed this story. I really enjoy Justin and Parker and I hope that you do too!*

*In case you are interested, the prequel to this story, North of Sure (North Shore Series #1), is available through Amazon.com. The prequel takes place when Justin and Parker meet in college.*

*Please be on the look-out for more stories from me in the future as I plan to release more stories on Amazon.com.*

## **Contact & Media Info**

*I always enjoy hearing from readers so please connect with me at Goodreads or at my Amazon.com page.*

*Thank you for your support and as always, happy reading.*

*Best Wishes,*

*Lashley Mills*

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