

# LOVE IS AN OPEN ROAD



Don't Read in the Closet 2015

## A LIMITED OFFER

# Robert Cage

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# Love is an Open Road

*An M/M Romance series*

## A LIMITED OFFER

**By Robert Cage**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

### What Is Love is an Open Road?

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 these authors 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 is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, 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.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

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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## Photo Description

A black-and-white photo of the bare back of a handcuffed male confined in the back of car.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*It hurts. Hurts to know I was betrayed by someone so close to me. He wasn't just a simple bodyguard, or an occasional lover, he was a friend. Someone I had actually been able to open up to and spill all my secrets to. Someone I foolishly thought could one day love me. Until the day I was woken by a police raid, and the man I had so recently slept with was reading me my Miranda rights and dragging me off in handcuffs. The pain and hurt I feel now won't even begin to describe what I'm going to inflict on this man the moment his blue-blooded friends set me free.*

*Sincerely,*

*Danielle*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** abduction, abuse, chauffeur, criminal activity, friends to lovers, masochist, rough sex

**Content Warnings:** graphic violence

**Word Count:** 11,358

# **A LIMITED OFFER**

**By Robert Cage**

## Chapter One

Bryce Pattinson stood for a few moments longer, watching the rear deck collapse onto the beachfront. A last roar of orange-crimson flames shot into the air, the explosion much louder than he had anticipated. The fire had now consumed a good half of the house and showed no signs of abating.

*They must have seen it coming, all of it, he thought. They wanted it, the assholes.*

That didn't make what Bryce had done easier to live with, but it provided a justification of sorts, perhaps one he could take to bed with him, but maybe not one he could sleep easily with, at least just yet.

In the end, he had only been doing his job—a job he had been well prepared for all his life, even if he'd just realized it. He was going beyond the call of duty.

And if he was honest with himself, Bryce wasn't altogether unhappy to have been the one who had served up this particular chilly dish, as nasty as it was.

He only hoped he could get away with his heart intact.

\*\*\*\*

## Chapter Two

Earlier that day, Bryce had eyed the dull finish on the Cadillac critically, prying the lid off the rust-streaked tin of carnauba wax.

It would take at least two hours to cover the entire length of the black limousine with two coats, and it was nearly ten in the morning right now—ninety degrees in the Massachusetts North Shore shade, and it was only poised to become steamier later on. It left him maybe half an hour to stock the car's mirrored walnut bar, vacuum the plush carpets, and then grab a shower and dress.

Bryce shed the muscle tee he was wearing, stripping down only to his denim shorts. He knelt and began the punishing task of polishing the car's dauntingly long stretch panel.

His ears caught the familiar, now much-anticipated, thunder of hooves from his right. He watched as a lithe white Arabian stallion easily cleared three short hurdles in succession along the lush green run of pasture that ran parallel to the winding drive, expertly guided by its master, Charles Benjamin Westin IV.

The magnificent animal tapered off to a brisk canter before departing for the labyrinth of trails beyond the grove of beech trees, now in full flower. Bryce's eyes trained on the sensuous bob of the horseman's ass in his formfitting jodhpurs. It distracted him just for the moment, until he became aware that he was now pouring car wax on the blacktop beneath him. He sighed with disgust, shifting his body to stave off his inevitable erection, only dreading the coming day even more.

*Am I doing the right thing? Hell yes, you are. It's the only option you've got right now.*

Bryce never had any intention of even liking, much less finding his new boss attractive—actually, he had counted on just the opposite when he had applied for this job. Everything he had learned prior to meeting Charles Westin, the twenty-four-year-old heir to Westin Industries—the sixty-five-billion-dollar global conglomerate owned by Westin's father—only played into Bryce's innate prejudices toward the one percent and their entitled elitism.

No, the facts were very plain. Without that lung transplant, his little sister Melanie had no chance at all. The insurance was dried up, and it would take at

least forty thousand to secure the organ donation in time. He had gone over all the options—he was pursuing the only one he had left. And guys like Westin had way more options than guys like Bryce had *ever* been given.

Charles Westin IV was only two years younger than Bryce. The kid had a full ride at Williams right out of Exeter Prep, and had never held any job that wasn't at least at an executive-level position since graduating. And currently, Charles had *no* job at all, and it didn't seem to worry him in the least. The scion split his time between the Westin's coastal mansion in Marblehead, and their only occasionally occupied penthouse off Central Park West on the weekends.

Yet oddly enough, Bryce—who probably spent from twenty to twenty-five hours weekly driving Charles Westin around—only found the younger man more and more of an enticing enigma the longer he worked for him. For a soon-to-be billionaire, he carried around a weird, almost uncomfortable aura of shame. Charles seemed hesitant to ask Bryce for anything at all. He adamantly refused to even let him open the car door. He never gave Bryce the expected small, slightly demeaning errands to run. He certainly never said anything that could be mistaken for a directive, period—much less an order. He was polite, often pleasant, but he also didn't say much.

No, Master Westin only seemed to go to three places: the mansion in Marblehead, the penthouse in New York, and one truly bizarre destination out on Long Island every Thursday evening—like clockwork, always in black tie, and always carrying a large leather briefcase, though he never stayed the night.

The Long Island place was obviously a large estate of some sort, but Bryce was never allowed to leave the chauffeur's lot or proceed past a certain point outside the massive iron gates. Beyond that, he could catch just a glimpse of the main house, if the night was clear. A chauffeured Rolls Royce always arrived to retrieve his boss from the lot at exactly eight and returned him dutifully about six hours later. It was two or three in the morning by that point, and Charles usually slept on the ride back to Marblehead on the convertible bed in the back of the Cadillac.

It wasn't uncommon for Bryce to wake his master upon arrival back in Massachusetts. When making rest stops, Bryce often paused a little longer than he thought he should. He would stare for minutes at his employer's heaving shape, knowing he probably should wake him, but never having the heart to do so. The man just looked so vulnerable, so *peaceful*—but also quite worn out. He was typically more withdrawn and self-conscious than usual, on these trips.

There had been more than a few times when Bryce was tempted to crawl back there with Charles, spoon him, and cradle him in his arms.

One day, Bryce hoped he could find the nerve to ask his employer exactly *what* went on in that big house. Not for the first time, the idea that Charlie was being hurt on these expeditions flared in his mind. And wasn't that part of his job—to look after Charlie? How could he forget that? Chester Ferguson, the family's middle-aged, staunchly English butler, constantly reminded him of it. But something wasn't right about that place on Long Island—something bad went on there. Bryce could sense it, maybe even suspected that his boss was into something far more sinister than just a wild weekly party.

Having grown up the oldest of four kids, in a household that was often brimming with activity and noise, Bryce could understand how Charles had evolved into such a reserved, soft-spoken man. And he couldn't imagine the scrutiny and expectations that were leveled upon him either. It was so drastically different from how Bryce had grown up, having to fight for anything and everything. That fighting instinct was something he suspected Charles lacked. It was often hard for Bryce to battle the urge to protect his employer in more ways than just physically, as was part and parcel for his job. Yet, it went beyond a feeling of brotherly covetousness. He wanted to get to know this enticing man better, but had simply no clue as to how to go about it. Each time Bryce caught himself speculating on whether his affection for his master was secretly reciprocated, it seemed ridiculous, though not any less exciting.

*Maybe one day...*

Bryce caught his reflection in a hubcap and winced, turning away. In his ears, the hooves of Charlie's horse resonated loudly and his own heartbeat accelerated to match it.

*This might come as a surprise, but I think I'm falling in love with you,* Bryce imagined himself saying, plenty of times, to Charlie. *Don't be afraid. I won't let anyone hurt you. I'll always take care of you, in every way.*

*Yeah, right.*

That would be the *last* thing he'd say before being expelled from the service industry forever.

Still, Bryce prided himself on his decorum and training. Two of the biggest rules of being a personal chauffeur to a powerful, well-known family were ultimate discretion about his employer's affairs and only speaking when he was

spoken to. He guessed he would adhere to *all* of the rules, until the day came when he would break every one of them. A day like today?

His face burned with shame. *I can't do this. Maybe there's another...* Bryce's circular buffing became more forceful, the paint squeaking beneath the chamois rag. He could almost see his face in the mirror finish now.

*This whole thing blows.*

Charles wasn't simply a hot piece of ass. No, he was, for lack of a better word, the most goddamn *gorgeous* man Bryce had ever seen. It had nothing to do with his money or social standing.

Yes, Charles Westin was simply amazing to look at—thick full head of fine blond hair, baby-blue eyes, and a mischievous, slightly crooked smile that took Bryce's breath away, when he was privileged enough to catch a glimpse of it, which wasn't often. He was perfect—like a model in some fucking Polo ad. His face could be listed in Webster's as a pictorial definition for aristocratic.

It was that smile that had won Bryce's heart in the job interview, for the brief ten-minute period he got to bask in its glow. That smile instantly dispelled any notion of *spoiled overprivileged rich twit* that Bryce had been harboring, ready to fire, in his psyche. The grin was so sincere and warm, and matched perfectly the questions Charles had asked in the interview, always seeming to focus on what *Bryce* wanted out of the position, what *Bryce's* goals were—never mind what Charles's needs were. Bryce's salary requirements were met only with a kind smile. In fact, Bryce had gotten about thirty percent more than he was making before, plus a damn nice apartment to live in over the garage, rent-free, all meals included.

But Charles had no real say in any of that. He didn't make the rules or write the checks, after all. That was decided by Charles Westin III and then passed down to Ferguson. Bryce was nothing but a hired hand for the stunning young man—why should he kid himself?

It was typical for Bryce to delude himself. He was a master of self-deception as his failed career moves had more than proved out. No, Bryce was nothing more than a high-school dropout from Lubbock, Texas, one who had quit the first job he had ever held—as a rodeo clown in a traveling show that he had joined after failing to make the strenuous cut for bull riding—to become a junior private eye in his father's middling Dallas firm. Prior to coming to work for the Westins in Marblehead, Bryce's days had been filled with tasks far more

degrading and mundane than driving an extremely hot man's ninety-thousand-dollar custom-built Cadillac. He should be getting down on his hands and knees each day to thank Charles for the opportunity.

And he knew his boss was pleased with him even though he didn't often say it outright. The overtures made by Mr. Ferguson had confirmed this.

"I must say, reports are good. Master Charles is very comfortable with you, Mr. Pattinson," the normally tight-lipped butler had told him just this past week. "The senior Mr. Westin was actually wondering if you'd entertain the idea of becoming Master Charles's full-time valet and personal assistant, eventually. He will be requiring one very shortly. What do you think of *that*?"

It had taken Bryce a few moments to process the question, but he could have been knocked over with a feather at the announcement. For a moment, he wondered if this wasn't just another example of the staid Englishman's biting bone-dry humor.

"That sounds intriguing, Mr. Ferguson. I'll consider it," Bryce had replied neutrally, to which the butler wasted no time in raising an eyebrow.

"Well, don't think about it too long, son. It's a limited offer that won't be on the table for any length of time, I can assure you. The family has been known to traditionally go for an experienced gentleman's gentleman from one of the premier agencies in London. These are men trained to serve the aristocracy, mind you. The fact that they're even considering an American for this position is—well, unique," he finished, giving Bryce a curt nod and brief smile before dismissing him.

At first, Bryce had fought turning cartwheels. But there was something about this offer that further disturbed him. Yes, being a valet to Charles Westin would mean being around him more often but it would also mean a great deal more intimacy. Could Bryce handle that? Could he handle dressing and undressing the man each day? Grooming and perhaps assisting in bathing him on occasion? Bryce had heard enough about what was expected from Emory Slocombe, who had attended Charles's father personally for nearly thirty years. But Emory was married with children. He certainly didn't have to worry about restraining himself from attacking and ravishing his employer daily.

No, it was just too much of a long shot—with the stakes being his sister's life. And he wouldn't jeopardize this upcoming opportunity with Louis on such a nebulous shot in the dark. He wondered where the suggestion for this

unexpected promotion had come from. It couldn't be from Charles—he was uncomfortable enough even having a driver.

Perhaps Louis Wentworth had been right after all.

Maybe Bryce was a fool to be pursuing this type of work, especially for someone like Charlie Westin IV, who was miles out of his league in every way.

No, it was best if he could go along with Louis today and hope he could live with himself afterward.

*Think about Melanie. That's all that matters.*

And face it—attending Charles would be pure torture—like having a scoop of triple-fudge ice cream dangled above his mouth at a slow drip, each minute of every day, yet not being able to open his mouth for even a morsel.

*What if he doesn't want me at all or as much as I want him? What if he's not even gay, for god's sake?*

That would indeed be the ultimate irony.

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## Chapter Three

It was only last week that Bryce found himself glancing uneasily at Louis Wentworth and Miles Fitzgerald as they motioned for him to take a seat on the outdoor pier adjacent to the Southampton Yacht Club. It was a mystery to him how either of the two men had known who he was or that he had been so recently employed by the Westins.

But Louis Wentworth seemed to know a lot of things most people didn't. The man had some very interesting connections—ones that were hard to dismiss entirely.

Louis's father owned a large share in a chain of casinos that was slowly overtaking the East Coast, buying out or destroying most of the competition in their wake. Bryce had read up on Louis's father, Richard. He knew all the "official" stories as well as some of the less-than-official ones. If the man was as mobbed up as people said, he certainly didn't give that impression in the interviews he gave to the press. No, the Wentworths were almost as rich and legitimately connected as the Westins, mainly in politics; they just seemed to be more speculative in their investments. Perhaps there was nothing to the sinister gossip after all.

"You don't *really* want to spend god-knows-how-long polishing shoes and sorting out undies, do you, Bryce? You seem much brighter than that," Louis said, lighting a cigar and gesturing magnanimously to the platter of fresh shellfish that had just been delivered to his harborside table. "We're offering you a five percent share in a company set to IPO at fifteen easily, possibly doubling in value in only a year if we get the backing I suspect we will from Westin Industries. And of course, there's the one-hundred-k signing bonus you'd get as our new security chief."

"What do the Westins have to do with this again?" Bryce asked, accepting two oysters from the uniformed waiter who stood at attention close by.

"We're old friends," Miles chimed in. "Charles was our Marketing VP at Bit Crunch, right out of Williams with the rest of us. Surely your new master must have mentioned *that*." He flashed Bryce a blinding smile that oozed condescension, though it was apparent from the way Louis was glaring at Miles that either his disclosure of this information, or his delivery of it, wasn't to his liking.

“What Miles means, Bryce—what both of us mean—is that we’ve thought of a way to convince Charlie to come in with us on a new venture, a limited offer of sorts, you might say. But we need your help. After all, you *are* the person closest to him, aren’t you?”

“I’m just a chauffeur,” Bryce replied, smiling uneasily. “And I’ve only worked for Mr. Westin a few months. If you want to know the truth, I don’t really think he wants anything more from me. I know his father has other ideas.”

Miles let loose with an effeminate giggle, piling a mound of caviar on a thick slice of brioche toast. The slightly built blond man fixed Bryce with a grin of amusement that only irritated him further.

Bryce glared at Fitzgerald. *The man’s like an excitable little poodle that can’t shut up*, he thought. *What in god’s name does a butch beefcake like Louis see in him?*

Continuing to hold Miles’s stare, Bryce wondered how much both Miles and Louis *really* knew about his situation. It seemed as if they could read his mind or more likely that they were paying other people to read it for them. Bryce was a licensed private dick, after all. He knew such services were easily bought and paid for, especially by Wentworth money.

Louis intervened. “Have you driven your new boss to Long Island lately, maybe to a large estate in Long Beach? Was your master *dressed* for the occasion?”

Bryce stood up. “I’m sorry, gentlemen,” he said. “This is getting a little weird for me. Perhaps if I wasn’t—”

Two bundles of hundreds—Bryce had no idea how many there were, but they were thick—landed abruptly in the center of the table from Miles’s outstretched hand.

Louis’s smile grew more smug as he lazily puffed his cigar. “Just a taste of your signing bonus. Consider it an additional appetizer.”

“That’s for me?” Bryce asked. “What’s the catch?”

“Nothing you can’t live with.” Miles shrugged. “Although it would make life easier to live *now*, wouldn’t it? You could hire your own valet or chauffeur with that kind of walking-around money,” he tittered.

“Have a seat, Mr. Pattinson,” Louis suggested, gesturing for more champagne. “Hear us out, at least. You can always walk away from all of this, at any time. Mr. Westin needn’t be the wiser.”

And that's how it had happened. Against all his better judgement, Bryce had sat there listening, feeling only the slightest twinge of guilt, as the stacks of hundreds rested neatly on the table, both beckoning and taunting him with their newly minted green gleam, almost sparkling in the sunlight. They promised so much.

Today, Bryce would finally see if they would deliver.

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## Chapter Four

“How was your ride, sir?” Bryce asked, as he stood in the doorway to Charles’s bedroom.

He watched as Emory Slocombe gave a few final touch-ups to the young man’s navy blue blazer with a horsehair brush. The plump, balding valet retreated, hands behind his back, surveying the garment with a critical eye.

Charles met Bryce’s gaze only briefly in the floor-length mirror. “It was good,” he replied. “I didn’t look *too* much like an ass out there, hopefully, did I? I’ve yet to break that boy in all the way, I think. He still does pretty much what he wants to do, no matter how hard I try to control him.” He flashed Bryce a quick, tentative grin before glancing nervously away.

“I thought you looked fine, sir,” Bryce murmured, feeling his own cheeks heating even as he said it. Emory shot Bryce a brief, curious glance before flicking his fingers discreetly at two suitcases and one toiletry case that rested on the polished white marble floor.

“I believe I’m good to go, Slocombe,” Charles piped. “Thank you. Mr. Pattinson can take it from here.”

Bryce was stealing quick peeks at Charles’s tight ass at the moment, but his gaze suddenly went to a thin white thread dangling from the man’s jacket hem.

“There’s just one more thing, Mr. Slocombe,” Bryce said, gesturing vaguely in the direction of the stray fiber.

Slocombe furrowed his brow in annoyance at first, and then drew back as if startled, once he saw it. “I dare say, you’re right,” the Englishman conceded grimly, removing the thread with a brisk swipe of the brush. “You have a good eye, Mr. Pattinson,” he admitted. He gave Bryce a curt but impressed nod that only made him more self-conscious. “Have a safe and pleasant journey, Master Charles,” Slocombe said, before departing.

When the man had gone, Charles turned. “Bryce, please shut the door if you would. I need to speak with you.”

Ice and heat slithered down Bryce’s spine simultaneously, mingling and creating an uncomfortable yet electrifying sensation. His employer had never addressed him by his first name before. Actually, it had even been out of

character for Charles to disclose as much as he had just now about his new horse, now that he thought of it.

*What in the fuck is going on?* Bryce wondered. But it didn't matter—right now he was as helpless as a baby kitten with Charles training those goddamn baby blues on him.

“Come over by the window,” the younger man suggested. “And call me Charlie, Bryce. We're about the same age, after all, aren't we?”

“I'm twenty-six,” Bryce said. “And I still feel as if I should be—”

“Just *stop* with all that, will you?” Charlie blurted out, slicing his hand through the air. He shook his head, sighing. “I'm sorry,” he mumbled.

Charlie paced toward the large bay windows that overlooked the blue-green Atlantic, which today was far more turbulent than Bryce could remember it being in some time, especially for late July. “Help yourself to a water, coffee, or something from the bar,” he offered, directing Bryce to the stout rosewood cabinet on the far wall.

“Nothing for you?” Bryce asked.

“No, but thanks.”

Charlie crossed his legs, picking absently beneath his manicured nails, staring out the beveled glass. He seemed to be watching Bryce quite closely as he went about removing a bottle of Perrier from the mini-fridge. Bryce returned and took a seat across from his employer. He felt a hint of sweat under his collar and he winced to himself, wishing he could shed his heavy chauffeur's livery.

“Bryce,” Charlie began, “I don't want to make you uncomfortable, but I have to know something. Was this valet thing your idea? Or were you put up to it?” The man's expression was stern, almost touched with annoyance. “Whatever,” he continued, rolling his eyes briefly. “I want nothing to do with it.” He shook his head ruefully. “I'm fucking sick of everyone deciding what's best for me. As usual, it doesn't make a difference what *I* want, or what any of *my* plans are. They all just assume I'm to be made into this carbon copy of my father. They've got it all mapped out, you know.” His jaw tightened, his expression becoming darker, conspiratorial.

“It wasn't my idea, sir—I mean, Charlie,” Bryce found himself stammering. “Mr. Ferguson just sort of—sprang it on me last week. I thought maybe

you'd—I mean... you are happy with me—my services... aren't you? Please, I want you to tell me if you're not."

Charlie stood suddenly and went to the window, leaning forward until his forehead was lightly pressing it. He blinked, and Bryce noticed the man's eyes were wet, almost brimming with tears.

"Oh, I like you, Bryce," Charlie said, laughing softly and looking down. "Very much—maybe *too* much. In fact, I don't think I've ever liked anyone so much before. Goddamnit!" he exclaimed suddenly, turning away and swiping at his eyes. "I've been meaning to tell you... to ask you—but I'm just not sure how it would work. Am I even on the right track? Are you—?" He turned and looked beseechingly into Bryce's eyes. "Oh fuck, if I've only been imagining all this, you have every right to just walk out of here right now, or maybe even punch me in the mouth first. And you'd be justified. This is beyond professional, it's—"

Bryce could feel his pulse begin to thump rapidly in his wrist. Never in a million years would he have expected anything like this. He'd always imagined *he'd* be the one making the first move, before the whole thing blew up in his face, of course. And to have it happen now, on *today* of all days, after he'd—

"You're not imagining anything, Charlie," Bryce blurted. He fixed the gorgeous man with a smile, lowering his eyes. "I was pretty much gone the first time we talked. And if there's anyone crossing a line, it's me. I shouldn't have even taken this job." He leaned forward, still sitting, taking Charlie's hands in his, gently stroking them. "But I knew if I didn't, I'd never get the chance to know you at all. It isn't like I could just ask you out." Bryce raised Charlie's hand to his mouth and softly kissed the back of it, before raising it to his cheek. He found himself choking back a sob of disbelief. Just the man's touch was electric, yet strangely soothing. Bryce rose and stood close to Charlie, relieved and overjoyed when the man bit his lip and slipped his arms around his waist. He looked insanely happy.

"Ask me *anything*," Charlie murmured, that smile shining forth like a warm beacon. "The answer will always be yes. I just—don't know if I want you *working* for me. It doesn't seem right. This does, though."

Their lips came together, gently at first, then slowly increasing in force and passion. Soon their tongues were battling, and Bryce's hands moved to fondle the man's superbly tight rear, molding his fingers around the twin scoops and

squeezing gently. Charlie only pressed into him further, fiercely rubbing against Bryce's now full-throttle hard-on.

"Oh my god," Charlie moaned softly, nodding to the bed. "Let's go—right now—should we? We're not on any specific timetable. And it's only a few hours away. Someone else could drive, maybe? We could both be in back?" He gave Bryce a charming grin, like a kid asking for another hot fudge sundae that he was sure he'd be denied.

Bryce's hand snaked under the band of Charlie's white linen trousers, his fingers lightly dandling his balls, caressing his cock. The head was already moist, its length substantial and firm. He was only half listening to his employer's words at this point. He paused to search the man's luminous blue eyes for some hint of humor or teasing, but he found nothing like that.

"Come along with me today, Bryce, but let me serve *you*. I've only ever wanted to do that. After this meeting with Louis and Miles, I'll be free of all this bullshit forever—I'll be independent, on my own, for once. God, I miss those days after I graduated. The whole world seemed to open up in front of me. Working for the family business wasn't the only option back then, you know. If only Bit Crunch hadn't folded..."

Charlie's eyes acquired a wistful glaze before he shook his head, looking up at Bryce and smiling broadly. "No, it will be better this way—and I won't have someone looking over my shoulder, approving or disapproving my every move. And I won't be alone—you'll take care of me in all the ways that matter. And I'll take care of you. You'll see."

Bryce paused, pulling away lightly.

Wasn't this what he always secretly wanted? To be with this man, no matter the cost? But that couldn't happen now—none of it could. He had to go through with his current plan. He was locked in; had taken the money. Nothing could change that now, just as no other option was as sure for him, at this point.

But perhaps—maybe—could he delay things a bit? He had to find some way to...

"What's wrong?" Charlie asked, his eyes misting over with hurt. "Bryce?"

"Give me a second," Bryce said. He sat and drank hastily from the bottle of Perrier, trying to breathe, to think. "There's no way you could just cancel this meeting today, is there?" he asked.

“Why would I do that?” Charlie said, stifling a laugh. “I’m almost home free...”

Bryce watched as Charlie’s mouth suddenly formed a small soundless O. He sat down roughly on his chair a moment later, a small gasp escaping his mouth. “I guess—I guess I never thought—oh man, I—of course...”

Wagging his head brusquely, Bryce leaned forward. “No, Charlie, it’s *not* what you think. I’m thinking of *you*. I mean, it just seems—from the brief things I’ve heard you talk about, do you think it’s the right move for you? Just—walking away from this?”

A small, skeptical smile played on his employer’s face. “Have you been spying on me? Or talking to father or Ferguson? Emory, maybe? I know you two talk. Just what do you *know*, Bryce?”

“Only what Mr. Ferguson told me,” Bryce insisted. “And yeah, Emory did fill in a bit more. That you’re in line for this executive vice president slot at Westin, and that you’ll need a man to look after you. That’s a sure thing, Charlie. I know you’re not wild about following this path they’ve set up for you but think logically. It’s got to be a damn sight more secure than signing up with anything Louis Wentworth could offer you. And Bit Crunch was a disaster—I’ve heard you say that plenty of times, and yeah, I’m sorry but sometimes I can’t help but overhear things. You know the partitions in that limo aren’t *that* thick.”

“I see,” Charlie said, raising an eyebrow. “Well, it probably would be better in both the short and long term—for *you*.”

Bryce let out a low humorless chuckle. “Now, wait just a minute. I’m only suggesting—”

“I know what you’re suggesting,” Charlie hissed. “You’re suggesting I do the exact same goddamn thing I’ve done my entire life—hide! My god... and you’d be happy with that, would you?” His face contorted into an almost sickened grimace that killed Bryce to witness. “Jesus, Bryce, this is so fucking... disappointing! Do you think I’d have said anything to you today if I knew this would be your response? Unbelievable!”

“No one would have to know,” Bryce insisted. “And I—I’d like caring for you, Charlie. I really would. I like caring for you now—at least when you let me.”

Charlie backed away, the tears forming again. He shook his head. “I don’t need another servant, Bryce. I’m up to my ass in them as it is, or haven’t you

noticed? Always have been. I need a friend—a *partner*—someone who believes that I can amount to something—who believes in *me*. Don't you understand that?" He shook his head, rubbing his eyes viciously.

"And you're out of your mind," Charlie continued, "if you think my father will allow me to remain single for long. How would you like driving me around with my fiancée in the back of the car? Would that turn you on? How would you like dressing me to go out to dinner with her—knowing I'll only be able to say two or three goddamn words to you all night, until of course we get together in your room over the garage for a blow job at two AM? *No*, fuck that. You're going to have to trust me on this. Please, I don't want to lose you..."

And then Charlie was grappling with him, holding on to Bryce as if his life suddenly depended on it. Bryce had to struggle to keep from looking away—the hurt on Charlie's face was devastating.

"You're not going to lose me, Charlie," he whispered. "But you have to trust me. Listen to me—you can't go through with this thing today, with Louis. It's not what you—"

Nodding swiftly, Charlie put a hand over Bryce's mouth. "You want the money. I understand now." He smiled tightly. "That's okay. I don't blame you. We'll keep things as they are. But as long as you're still working for me, I want you to start working."

Bryce watched as Charlie slowly began to strip, still sobbing softly. The man kicked off his shoes, then shed his jacket, shirt and tie. A thin, languorous smile painted his lips as he walked slowly to the bed. He stuck out a hand and patted the bedspread almost mockingly.

"Come here, boy. You say you want to serve me, don't you? You want to take care of me? Then do it! Get down on your knees—now!"

All the kindness and gentle humility seemed to evaporate as Charlie reclined upon the bed, his hands behind his head. "You want to be my valet, don't you? Then start valeting. Strip me down and then fuck me while you're at it. You want to get used to our new roles, right? Come on!" He snapped his fingers, an imperious expression on his face.

Bryce was at a loss. He didn't have any idea where this was coming from. All he knew was that he wanted to make love to this man more than anything he'd wanted in his life—but, not now, not like this. What was he trying to prove to him? That he could be some badass?

Charlie's haughty manner was both arousing him and inflaming him—exactly what the man wanted, no doubt. Bryce felt the degradation but at the same time he didn't feel necessarily bad about it, either. Being bossed around by this rich boy was a bit of a thrill, but he also knew this wasn't Charlie. No, this was some sort of act. He wasn't sure just who he was looking at right now.

Falling to his knees, Bryce crawled toward the bed. Charlie's eyes were on him, an obscene smirk of pleasure on his lips.

"Sing for your supper, Bryce. You'll only get what you earn. Remember that. Take my pants off with your teeth, why don't you?" he added.

"Charlie..." Bryce began. "Stop this. You don't have to—"

"What?" Charlie asked innocently. "Rub your nose in it? Why not? I should get something for my money." But just then, his face broke, the smug smile quickly swept away by a new flow of tears.

Bryce leapt on top of him, turning Charlie over swiftly and jerking down his expensive handmade trousers. He deftly removed the man's boxers with a jerk and thrust his cock between the crevice of the man's cheeks. Desire and revulsion mixed inside Bryce queasily—desire for the man's hot little body driving him on and revulsion at his own intentions repelling him. What he intended to do, what he was being asked to do, what he wanted to do—it was all becoming indistinct, a blur that he couldn't reconcile easily in his brain or in his conscience.

"Do it," Charlie hissed between sobs. "Do your job, Bryce. Do what I order you..."

"You fucked-up spoiled little shit," Bryce hissed. "You don't know what you want! How could you, having everything handed to you? You want this, do you? You want to be fucked but still feel superior?"

"Just do it," Charlie moaned. "*Do it!*"

Bryce lunged forth, gently biting and licking Charlie's slender neck before wetting his fingers and then plunging one, then two, into the man's ever-expanding hole. He dove on Charlie's back, pulling his ass toward him, readying him for entry.

"I'm doing this because you're ordering me to do it, *master*," Bryce hissed. "I'm going to do anything you order from now on. Just you watch."

Charlie whimpered, nodding, as Bryce continued to advance with short thrusts until his cockhead had firmly pierced him. Bryce's fingers stroked and

flitted around Charlie's nipples as he pulled him back onto his shaft with steady, slow jerks until he was inside. He began to thrust slowly as Charlie's hips bucked, gently taking up a flawless rhythm, his ass looking just like it did on top of that damn horse that afternoon—that fucking horse that probably cost more than his entire *bonus* from Louis and Miles. His anger and frustration began to overtake him, and he surrendered to it.

Bryce was trying not to be rough, but something about Charlie's complete banal detachment infuriated him. The blank expression on the man's face told him that he could have very well been humping a dildo. Bryce intensified his strokes, and Charlie let out a few sharp gasps in response.

"Tell me you like this," Bryce panted, almost pleading.

Charlie said nothing, eventually just burying his face in the bedspread, letting Bryce have his way with him. After several moments, Bryce stopped altogether. He wasn't going to do this as long as he was still taking Louis's money. He was already playing the role of a whore, wasn't he? Why make it worse? Shame and an overwhelming sense of regret made it difficult to even look at Charlie for a few moments.

"What the hell's the matter with you?"

Charlie's voice snapped him from his reverie, his eyes connecting only briefly with Charlie's mystified, obviously hurt expression.

"This was a mistake," Bryce murmured. He stood awkwardly for a few moments, watching Charlie dress, thinking he probably should be at least offering to help. But it would have been as logical as fighting a drug addiction by doubling the dose. Bryce dressed rapidly, and exited even faster after retrieving Charlie's bags.

When they finally got in the car, each of them back in their respective positions as master and servant, Bryce looked in the rearview mirror. Charlie looked back, the sullen expression on his face a challenge.

"You sure you want to do this?" Bryce asked.

"I *do*," Charlie said, smiling a phony large smile. "And put your cap on, Pattinson. I want them to understand that you work for me—even when you can't finish the job."

"Oh, I'll finish it, *sir*," Bryce retorted.

The solid black leather partition slid quickly up.

*Fine. If that's what you want, you got it, boss.*

Bryce cursed to himself and pulled out.

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## Chapter Five

“Bryce! *Bryce!* Where *are* we? Answer me, goddamnit!”

Charlie struck the partition again, this time harder. Bryce had taken care to disable the locks and partitions in the back, but he wasn’t sure how long the solid partition could hold out. It was thick but not that thick. He fought the urge to clap his hands over his ears. Part of him was resisting this whole thing furiously; the other was shouting that he had no choice.

*He had done it.* It was now out of his hands.

A sharp rapping at his window startled him, and he looked up to see two beefy guys in Connecticut patrolman’s uniforms, both wearing sunglasses. He rolled the window down.

One of the men, a blond crew cut–wearing dude, tossed aside the cigarette he had been smoking and gestured inside the car.

“You’re Pattinson, right? I take it you got him then?” he rasped dully.

Bryce nodded and stared out the windshield.

“Excellent,” the other guy said. He was dark haired and sported a rather uneven mullet. “Mr. Wentworth will be pleased. We’ll take it from here. When I give the signal, pop the locks.”

Gritting his teeth, Bryce listened for the knock on the roof. When it came, he popped the locks and the trunk. He got out, trying not to watch as the two henchmen wrestled Charlie from the back.

“Bryce! What the fuck? Who are these...? What are you...? Don’t just stand there, help me!”

Blondie smacked Charlie on the back of the head and threw him against the car. Charlie landed splayed out over the trunk as Dark Mullet seized his wrists and cuffed them, then began to read him the Miranda rights. While he did this, the blond man strolled to the trunk and searched for a bit, then produced a clear plastic bag filled with a brownish substance.

“Got it,” he said. He held up the packet to his partner. “Charlie, you’ve been a naughty boy,” he taunted.

“What the fuck? That’s not mine!” Charlie wailed.

Blondie kicked him on the back of his legs. “Shut the fuck up, you rich little shithead!” He bent over and stroked Charlie’s cheek, getting close to his ear. “You’re in a heap of trouble now, son. Mind you just shut your mouth for now.” He turned to Bryce. “Mr. Wentworth wants *you* to do the honors,” he said. “Come on—you know what to do!”

Bryce put on his sunglasses, afraid he might lose it at any moment. Louis and Miles hadn’t told him they’d be rough on Charlie, but what had he really expected? He braced himself and moved behind the man whose ass he’d plumbed only hours before. The irony went beyond perverse—it nauseated him. And what he had to do next only made it worse.

“I have to take off your shirt,” Bryce muttered.

Dark Mullet laughed. “What is this, some kinda foreplay? Tear it the fuck off him, like you were told!”

Tears burned in Bryce’s eyes as he gripped the fine cotton weave of Charlie’s shirt and dug his fingers into it, ripping it violently. Knives continued to assault Bryce’s heart as he watched Charlie’s head fall and his cheeks flush. The gentle coercion he’d received from the man before, encouraging him toward some kind of rape, seemed benign compared to this level of degradation. Or perhaps it only seemed worse due to the recent deposit in Bryce’s bank account. He didn’t care anymore—he only wanted this over with.

“Got it. Mr. Wentworth will get a kick out of this,” Blondie roared, aiming his phone, obviously concluding an impromptu video recording. Bryce fought to control an anger that was taking root deep within him. This wasn’t what he signed up for—was it?

He got back behind the wheel of the limo and began following the squad car to Southampton. It was only a few more miles. It was either almost over or just beginning. But he needed to hold it together. He tried thinking of Melanie and how much she needed the transplant, but all he could see was himself, bent over Charlie’s ass only hours before.

No, this was his only option. He wanted Charlie Westin more than anyone in his life, but what the man was offering him—his love, his affection—had no signing bonus associated with it. It wasn’t certain, at least, and what would he have said to the man if he’d agreed to be with him?

*Hey, Charlie, I know we’ve only known each other for a few months, but can I borrow tens of thousands for an operation for my sister?* It was laughable.

Almost as big a joke as imagining he was anything but the blandest of diddles for this rich kid. Charlie might be infatuated with him now, but how long would that really last? No, their worlds were just too goddamned different.

*It was better this way, wasn't it?*

He'd figure out how to live with himself later.

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"Come on, Bryce, join the party," Miles called.

Bryce tried to smile in the face of Miles's insufferably eager grin, but couldn't. "I'll just stay out here, with the car," he said, looking out toward the ocean.

Miles raised the martini he was holding to his lips and sipped delicately. "Not an option," he sang blithely, gnawing on an olive. "Louis wants you down there. He has a job for you."

Shaking his head in disgust, Bryce walked from where the Cadillac was parked toward where Miles was standing, inches from the side entrance to the beach house's massive open-air porch.

"Fuck that, Miles. I never agreed to this. I was only supposed to bring him here, nothing more. Once Louis has money wired, I'll drive him back, but that's it."

Miles snickered. "Jesus, you're dumber than I thought. Look, Judas—the deed is done. Come on! You can't tell me you didn't fantasize about this moment when you were driving his self-important ass around for the last few months. Wait a minute—are you into him?" He paused and pretended to think. "That can't be, though. See, *I've* been into him on a regular basis, and I can tell you that Charlie is very discriminating for a hyped-up little pain slut. He doesn't screw anyone who can't support him in the lifestyle to which he's become accustomed. And it is a hell of a lifestyle, sweetie."

Bryce smirked. "I thought you were Louis's little bitch," he fired back.

Miles tossed the empty crystal glass on the gravel where it shattered with a popping sound.

"No, honey—you're the bitch in this game. *Our* bitch, that is, and one we're paying a shitload for, so get moving." He jerked his head toward the door, his voice losing all of its ingratiating humor. "Louis doesn't like to be kept waiting. You're working for us now. Remember that."

“I’d rather hear that from Louis, if you don’t mind,” Bryce replied, trying to keep his voice as level and emotionless as possible.

After taking a few steps onto the porch, Miles nodded his head at someone.

A moment later, two men in dark suits emerged, stalking toward Bryce, each holding a revolver. They seized his arms without ceremony and began hauling him toward the house.

Miles followed.

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Louis drew back his hand and swung the bullwhip in front of him at full force. The report bounced and echoed hollowly in the sparsely furnished concrete room.

He walked to Bryce, extending the whip handle, which was silver, carved with an intricate design. Bryce had only to look to his side to note the advanced proximity of the henchman’s gun to his kidney. He wondered where the other one had gone. *Probably guarding the house somewhere.* He accepted the oiled length of blackened leather. It had the look and feel of a gigantic rat’s tail, but it was familiar, and very well made. Tough—probably kangaroo hide.

Straightening the fire-red ascot at the neckline of his black silk shirt, Louis reached out and pulled Miles toward him, wrapping his muscular arm around the smaller man.

“You get to do the honors, Bryce,” he said, pointing at Charlie, who was now stripped nude, hanging by his roped wrists from a crossbeam only a few feet in front of them. “I’m sure with a few well-aimed strokes of this bad boy that your former employer will soon agree to my funding terms—one-hundred percent Westin, of course, in an offshore account of my choosing.” He glanced quickly at the solid gold Rolex Submariner dangling from his left wrist. “Break him in less than half an hour, and I might even let you fuck him afterwards—but only if Miles and me get to watch. Interested?”

Before Bryce could say a word, Charlie spat, a bit of blood running from his mouth. “Tell me, Louis,” the bound man hissed. “Is there even a start-up to fund, or was that all bullshit, too?”

Louis mock-frowned and shook his head. “Aw, poor Charlie,” he chided. “You obviously didn’t learn your lesson last time. It’s so fortunate Miles ran into you when he did, though. I was beginning to think you’d forgotten about

us. But I've always known how much you wanted to run away from your family's crushing control. Poor baby." He paused, his large frame shaking gently with laughter. "Like you don't enjoy every minute of it. Just like you enjoyed fucking Miles here every Thursday night for the past—what has it been—a year now?" Louis turned to Miles for confirmation.

"About that," Miles replied. "And I have such nice mementos of that time, too. Louis and I have had some rather stimulating weekends, watching all that footage of the two of us on Thursdays, Charlie. Would you like to see some?"

"Great idea, Babe," Louis purred, giving his partner a deep French kiss. He paused to regard Bryce. "That's guaranteed to get me off if you two pathetic faggots don't." They sauntered back to two plush leather chairs set up at the back of the room. "Miles dear, get me a brandy, would you? And a cigar?"

Louis thumbed a remote control, aiming it at a projector mounted to the ceiling. Bryce watched as the entire wall in back of Charlie flowered into light, rendering a close-up of Charlie's face, contorted into a mask of extreme pain limned with the slightest dash of ecstasy. The face faded in a slow dissolve to a side view of Miles mounting Charlie, pulling on a leathered choke chain with one hand and brandishing a cane with the other. He wasn't sure if Charlie was in pleasure, pain, or both. But he could plainly see from the escalating force of the blows that Charlie wasn't enjoying himself as the punishment wore on. *He couldn't be. Could he?*

*Why is he putting up with this? And from someone I know he understands doesn't give a damn about him? Does he hate himself that much?*

"So here's the deal, Charlie," Louis announced blandly, once Miles had lit his cigar. "You have until noon tomorrow to fund my account. That gives me a good twelve hours for Bryce here to persuade you with some of my favorite toys, of which I have many," he chortled. "But if you still don't see reason by that time, those videos of you being Miles's little bitch boy go viral. I don't think your daddy would like that much, and it would probably put a rather red face on your pending executive board nomination and any PR campaign Westin has in mind to support it. And being caught with a big bag of smack in your car won't help either. Those two gentlemen who brought you here are no longer cops, but they do know plenty of real ones—guys who are in my dad's pocket. So, either way, you're fucked. Best to just cooperate."

"Go fuck *yourself*, Louis," Charlie croaked. "Your father might be ashamed of you, but mine still thinks I'm worth a shit. After all, I don't see your daddy

offering anything to you—it's why you're this desperate, isn't it? So, go ahead and get your kicks while you can. You'll be in jail within a month."

"What are you are waiting for, Bryce?" Louis asked, clicking his fingers impatiently. "Time to show Charlie who the boss is." Louis settled back and blew a smoke ring. Miles unzipped his lover's trousers, snaking his hand through the fly.

Bryce stared at the whip in his hand and then looked at Charlie. The man's face betrayed his disbelief and devastation. Bryce took a breath and mouthed *No*, trying his best to reassure Charlie with his eyes. He then mouthed *Trust me* and thought he caught a glimmer of recognition from Charlie before the man aimed his focus upon Louis once more.

"You don't have the balls, Louis. Face it—I'm the only card you have left to play. No one else is as gullible or desperate as me."

"You mean except for Bryce, here," Miles laughed, bending over Louis's lap.

A split second later, Miles recoiled violently as Louis grasped the man's hair, jerked his head erect and pumped a bullet through the back of his blond head with a silencer-equipped .22 pistol that had apparently been concealed in the chair cushion.

Louis smiled as Miles collapsed to the floor at his feet, smoke curling from the blackened hole in the back of his head. Blood seeped and then pooled on the concrete beneath him.

"So what do you think?" Louis said, smirking. "Think I still don't have the balls?" He glanced at the inert corpse. "He also *did* really annoy the shit out of me. You're much prettier, anyway," he said, winking at Bryce.

Bryce looked Louis dead in the eye and tossed the handle of the whip a few inches in the air, catching it. With a deft flick of his wrist that he'd sworn had been lost long ago, he cracked the whip down, its end slashing down upon Louis's wrist. The .22 leapt in the air, landing on the concrete, fishtailing wildly. It skidded inches from Bryce's toe and he snatched it up nimbly. Just as the slow-witted henchman went to draw his weapon, Bryce aimed and fired, hitting the man squarely in the chest, dropping him.

Louis was now on the floor, writhing in utter agony. His wrist looked to be half torn away from the razor-like force of the lashing, and blood was liberally gushing from the wound. He staggered to his feet, only to slip in the puddle of

Miles's spilled blood. Raising his head, Louis started to scream, but Bryce was already over by Charlie, loosening his bonds and lowering him, one eye on the door leading to the rest of the house.

He wasn't sure if Louis's other goon was still guarding the house or not. The two former cops seemed to have disappeared a long time ago. He spotted a door in the corner of the concrete room, half hidden in the gloom of the basement. Behind them, the footage of Charlie and Miles played on, a surreal visual accompaniment to the soundtrack of Louis's animal-like howls.

The door opened up onto a lush green yard and the ocean beyond. It had been no trouble to open. He wasn't that surprised. Louis was an amateur at everything that his money couldn't resolve for him. Without his moronic goons he couldn't piss straight.

Bryce walked behind Charlie, supporting him. By this point, the man was very weak—almost on the verge of passing out. The two of them kept plodding in the direction of the sand. When they came upon a rather large dune, Bryce settled Charlie just behind it, gently kissing him on the head. His heart warmed as a faint version of that lovely smile that had so often smitten him lit Charlie's face.

"I'll be right back, baby," Bryce said softly. "It's all under control. I'm taking care of you now. Don't be afraid. I won't let anyone hurt you. I just have a few loose ends to wrap up."

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## Chapter Six

Behind him, in the distance, the crimson clouds of flames still raged. In the distance, the faint whine of sirens slowly grew, creating an almost apocalyptic aura around Bryce.

When he finally returned to the limousine, which he had parked almost a mile away on a stretch of public road adjacent to the beach house property, Bryce found Charlie asleep in back on the convertible bed that formed from the two facing folded-down leather bench seats.

He climbed inside and lay down gingerly beside Charlie, softly stroking his hair. The man's eyes fluttered open, and he at first looked alarmed, then his eyes narrowed in relief at the sight of Bryce.

"Do you know how many nights I wanted to do that? Do *this*?" Bryce gestured around him. "Climb back here and cuddle you in my arms after you'd fallen asleep?"

"I wish—you had told me sooner," Charlie said. "You know I would have welcomed it, welcomed you. I don't know how I'll ever thank you, Bryce. I don't know how my family will *ever* thank you for what you've done—but we'll find a way. Anything, just name it. I *want* you to ask me..."

Charlie moved to embrace him, and Bryce's heart surged as this gorgeous blond dream that he'd thought of constantly now finally collapsed into his arms. He was his—really his—at last.

"Don't think about that now," he said. "We can talk about it later."

"I can't *stop* thinking about it," Charlie sighed. Bryce pulled him close, kissing his neck as he tasted the salt from Charlie's tears splashing his lips. They were sweet and sacred, as was everything that came from this man. "And you tried to stop me from coming here today," Charlie continued, "but I was so pissed—at myself, really—for not telling you how I felt sooner. And who am I kidding? I'm just not the take-charge type. I never have been and never will be. At least not in my personal life."

"You don't have to worry about that, any more, Charlie," Bryce said. "But I do need to explain something to you—explain how I could have possibly done something like this to you. I don't expect you to accept it or to forgive me, but you need to at least understand what was going through my mind."

A small smile played on Charlie's face and his eyes shifted nervously. "You don't have to, Bryce. I'm not as sheltered as you think I am. I know not everyone was born with a bottomless bank account."

Bryce lightly gripped Charlie's shoulders, shaking them gently. "No, it's not like that. It was—it's my sister Melanie. She's—got medical issues. It's serious. It's *not* an excuse. And I'm not asking you for anything. I just can't believe I was so desperate to have tried something like what I tried today. But they—Louis and Miles—were just waving that money in my face. I didn't think you'd ever give me the time of day and I..."

Charlie put a finger to Bryce's mouth.

"Don't say another word," he whispered. "I'll make sure it's taken care of, don't worry. Even if I didn't care about you, Bryce—which I do—it's my duty to take care of you through extraordinary circumstances, to return your loyalty as my servant. If you're my partner, it's doubly true. Don't you know that?"

Bryce felt himself being pulled into Charlie's chest and held tightly a moment later, tighter than he'd ever felt anyone grab onto him before. It felt so good, so comforting. For someone who wasn't the "take-charge type" Charlie Westin was doing a pretty fucking good job of impersonating someone who was.

"I'm going to take care of you, Charlie Westin—in every way," Bryce said, his voice choking with tears. "And when the time is right, we'll do what we want. I don't care if they disinherit you. There's nothing they can take from me as long as I have you right by my side."

They gripped each other fiercely, rolling with zestful abandon on the leather for several minutes, enjoying the pleasant fit of each other's bodies against one another. Bryce eventually moved away and began to unbutton Charlie's shirt slowly.

A huge explosion, sounding like a few hundred fireworks going off at once, rebounded and echoed in the blackness beyond the parked car.

"What the hell was that?" Charlie asked, the fear palpable in his voice.

Bryce grinned. "It was the last of that fucking house. I was watching from the ridge and saw that dumb-ass Louis, lighting one of his fucking cigars while attempting to call someone. Oh yeah. I might have left the gas on before I left."

Charlie smiled wryly. "I suppose I should feel badly about that. I have two other questions, though, that are more important to me: where in the hell did

you learn to use a whip like that, and would you consider using it on me next time—just a little gentler, of course?”

Bryce chuckled, rolling his eyes. “I used to bust broncos for a living before one of them almost busted me. But I was always pretty good with a whip. I guess some things you never forget. I really had no idea you were into all that shit.”

“Is that a problem for you?” Charlie asked.

“Not if it gives you pleasure,” Bryce shrugged. “But I won’t seriously hurt you. No one’s ever going to hurt you again, if I can help it.”

“I believe that,” Charlie sighed, plunging his tongue into Bryce’s mouth. Bryce drifted away for a moment, virtually on a cloud of euphoria, as the two of them lay by each other’s side. He trembled with pleasure as he felt Charlie’s hand stroke his cock, coaxing it towards erection. It didn’t need much assistance.

Soon after, Charlie turned, and Bryce snuggled, spooning against him. He reached down and gently fingered his lover’s hole, grazing his fingertip against it before softly spreading it open. In another minute they were moving together, fluidly in sync with one another. Bryce wrapped his fingers around Charlie’s flat tummy, giving it a little squeeze as he surged into him, plumbing deeper and deeper, his cock continuing to swell. They continued for maybe ten more minutes—Bryce had hoped he could go longer, but it seemed impossible to relax into a comfortable state of bliss with the amount of adrenaline pumping through his blood at this moment.

“Oh, Charlie, you dear sweet man,” Bryce moaned.

“I love you, Bryce,” Charlie whispered softly. Bryce surged forth and shot, the delicious wetness flooding into Charlie and flowing back onto him in a font of passion that only seemed to strengthen the overwhelming bond the two now shared.

They would both take care of the other from now on, no matter what the future held.

**The End**

## Author Bio

*Robert Cage has been writing BDSM novels and short stories for close to twenty years, publishing on the Web through various e-book publishers. From 1997 to 2010 he authored four novels and one collection of short fiction under another pseudonym. He has always striven to make his fiction “more story and character-focused than much of what he sees published in the BDSM world.”*

*Robert has just released his first novel, which he coauthored with writing partner Kathryn Sparrow in the male romance genre. Available now in both Kindle and print formats from Storm Moon Press, it is titled Submit for Redemption/Book One: Submission and is the first book in a multibook series planned by Robert and Kathryn. Robert is currently busy at work on Just Desserts, a novel that is a prequel to Submit for Redemption/Book One: Submission. He and Kathryn also plan to release Submit for Redemption/Book Two: Domination soon, also from Storm Moon Press.*

*In addition to writing fiction, Robert collects books, music, and films avidly, and also contributes to a number of online film sites as a movie reviewer.*

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