Jasper and I were late to our jobs once.

 The previous night had been another week of late shifts and sleepless nights trying to calculate our monthly budgets, followed by one of us fucking the other’s brains out.

 One night had Jasper feeling pent up, especially in a certain area. In only a pair of white briefs, partially camouflaging into his white fur while enveloping the black spots, I could feel the erection against my leg. At first, I cheekily pretended not to notice him jumping me, and instead caress his arm as my other paw held the phone up for us to see. Whatever local online news channel we were watching scene secondary to my brother’s straining, leaking tent, and his intense nuzzling.

So, I instructed him to sit back and relax. He proceeded to eagerly do so, tail wagging between his toned calves. I grinned at him. Setting the phone aside, my lips trailed down his chest and stomach until they focused on the tight hem of his undies. Then, I gave two slobbering kisses to the fabric-covered erection, my tongue feeling the throbbing outline of Jasper’s cock until I flashed my fangs up at him. The drooling, panting dog let out a relieved moan as I used my teeth to pull down the hem, and his manhood plopped free into the open air.

My chops salivated at the sight. So did my sibling when I finally suckled down on his shaft. Jasper was uttering, “Oh, Jack! Oh, Jack!” in seconds. Minutes later, and Jasper shifted sideways so he could tend to my raging boner too. His experienced canine tongue and lips synchronized with mine as our paws wandered either up to the balls or caressed our thighs, sometimes underneath the tails.

“Mlep, you’re so greedy!” Jasper tugged at my balls mid-slurp. “Mmm…”

Giggling, I lapped my maw away to say, “I can’t help it, ya horndog.”

I returned to servicing his shaft when the Dalmatian kissed my hardened tip.

“Heh,” he stroked once, then twice, “who’s the real horndog?”

Teasing like that enticed us to perform much more passionately. We weren’t just exploring; we were luxuriously gliding our way through the various sensations we could elicit. I sucked on Jasper’s cock utilizing everything we’d learned together. He did too, only he certainly liked denying me release a few times before letting me erupt all over in his maw.

Once we were finished and swallowed almost all the evidence, before either of us knew it after cuddling up close on the bed, Jasper’s nose tickling my nape instead of his toes, I had forgotten to set the alarm.

“Crap, crap, crap, we’re fuckin’ LATE!” I jumped out of bed and nudged Jasper’s bare shoulder. “Jasper! Jas, get up!”

Jasper snorted and yelped when I suddenly pulled him out of bed. “Wha—What’s…oh fuck,” he stared at my phone screen when I showed the time. “We gotta get showered!”

“There isn’t time!” I tried arguing as we scrambled for the bathroom. “Let’s just put on deo—”

“Jackson, we slept in the Sex Bed,” he brought up the obvious, “We smell like sex, and if we don’t shower, somebody with a good nose will notice! We need showers!”

 I glanced one more hard time at my phone and relented. “Fine, but no fooling around!” Growling as I turned the knob and stepped over the tub’s siding to be accompanied by cold water, I muttered to my twin, “If we’re lucky, it’ll only be warnings!”

 “Hey, I’m as concerned as you are,” Jasper muttered back, then audibly winced. “Ack, cold, cold!” The tired Dalmatian shuddered beside me before snatching a towel from my paw after I’d finished scrubbing my chest. “I’ll get your back, okay?”

 “Thanks,” I mumbled as he went straight to work. “God, I hope we’re not too late.”

Seconds stretched into eons as the freezing water sliced the grime and dried cum from our fur. God, I couldn’t believe we’d slept in. I couldn’t believe we were late to our jobs only two weeks after getting an apartment together. If we didn’t hurry or think of a perfect excuse/explanation, the bosses would remember the instance and—

 “Permission to buy an alarm clock the first chance I get?” Jasper interrupted the hissing showerhead drowning out my chastising thoughts.

 I softly smiled, then grabbed the soap to go at his back too. “Permission granted.”

 Minutes later, our half-dried fur caused our work clothes to get wet along the edges, but neither of us cared. We simply grabbed our uniforms, our keys, our lunch bags, and tumbled out the apartment door and into the curved hallway…right into another mammal. Fortunately, my right shoulder only connected with his left, and the older, disheveled squirrel stumbled back.

 “Hey, watch it!” He angrily spat at us, having dodged in time, but only just. “I’m walkin’ here, ya brats! Uh, huh? What the—”

 “Sorry!” I called back after rushing past him.

 “We’re in a hurry!” Jasper added as we bolted for the elevators.

 Neither me nor my twin brother had thought about the squirrel. His clothes did strike us as odd. He wore a dirtied long-sleeved shirt over a baggy coat despite it being early August, as well as a pair of blue jeans torn and muddied from probably days without being cleaned. Beyond that were his half-toothy smile and the wafting linger of unwashed fur anybody down the sidewalk could notice in a breeze. The fact he came in and out of the Atlantica, sometimes days apart or lingering on a spot near the boardwalk’s far corner, it had me worried until Rodney offhandedly mentioned Graham ‘Whiskey’ Harper, the

 “It doesn’t take a fuckin’ genius to figure out how he’s paying rent,” Rodney mentioned to me without looking away from another magazine he’d been reading. “You can smell his own product several yards away. He also scams tourists by pretending to be homeless.”

 “And Virgil’s okay with it?” I remembered asking in astonished surprise.

 “Okay with it?” Rodney snickered like a kid. “Dude, it’s an open secret around here.”

“Open secret?” I repeated the answer.

“Yes, an open secret.” He confirmed the answer. “As far as we know, Virgil won’t be too dystopian if he suspects something. The key is plausible deniability. Otherwise, if he ever found solid evidence that of his tenants was breaking the law, God help ‘em…”

 “Why’s the guy called ‘Whiskey’ anyway?” I asked offhandedly.

 The coywolf smirked before turning a page in his magazine. “He likes buying out the store’s entire stock if he get’s the chance,” he explained. “Dude also takes it as payment if you or some friends ever wanna get some stuff.”

 Anyway, I didn’t think much of Whiskey or seeing him that morning until the late afternoon I clocked out and entered the Atlantica’s ground floor lobby. No other mammals were in sight, save for a certain other Dalmatian staring down at a small booklet. He smelled of grease and hours-old sweat dried over time, but the scent of deodorant made it more than okay for me to stand close enough to give him a hug.

We’d just opened the elevator when a sudden, smelly blur rushed over to the closing door. A trembling paw held it open, and the limb’s owner stepped inside.

“Afternoon,” Jasper greeted the familiar squirrel. He ignored the older herbivore’s obvious stares directed at us, but I didn’t. “Which floor you going to?”

“Same as you, boys.” Whiskey chuckled darkly.

“Okay then,” Jasper repressed the button leading us to our floor.

The pit at the bottom of my stomach said something was wrong. It didn’t resemble the hunger experienced before a satisfying meal, or how a junkie/drug dealer happened to be occupying the same small box ascending upward in a concrete shaft. It caused the hairs on the back of my neck to stand up. It signaled to me that one of us three would say something…bad.

Sniffling a little and wiping his nose with a wrist, Whiskey looked like he wanted to say something. Instead, he simply squinted at us and showed his back to the elevator doors once they closed shut.

“You two brothers?”

Jasper cleared his throat. “What?”

“You’re brothers, right?” Whiskey asked again. “Twins?”

I felt my twin’s tail stop wagging behind us. Mine paused too.

“Yes, we are…” I carefully replied to the squirrel, who now held a toothy grin spread across his greying muzzle.

“Are you sure?” He finally asked not-so-innocently, “Brothers don’t fuck each other.”

Jasper instinctively stepped forward, looking down at the older man two-thirds our height. The wariness festering inside flared into a panicked, frozen state of mind.

“Fucking hell,” he choked back a dramatic growl, “What the fuck’s wrong with you?! You’re sick! Me and my bro aren’t that close, ya pervert!”

Phrases like that seemed like an excellent strategy on paper. To quote my own coworker from downstairs, “Plausible deniability is the key.” Had the squirrel been a jaded yet observant substitute teacher or a random female classmate or three, it could have worked.

“No point in hiding it, kids.” Whiskey shrugged before tapping the side of his wrinkled snout. “This morning, when you bumped into me. I could smell sex on you two. This nose might be old, but it ain’t stupid.”

We held our breath for less than a second. Our shower from we were late, it hadn’t been thorough enough! The flaring panic beginning to storm in my chest led me to impulsively grabbing onto one of Jasper’s paws without thinking. Whiskey’s grin grew almost slightly.

“We have no idea what you’re talking about, dude,” Jasper scoffed without letting go of my paw. If anything, he closed his fingers tighter around mine. “That smell wasn’t us. Maybe it was just you.”

That snide comment cause the old squirrel to chortle.

“It ain’t a good idea to insult me, boy,” Whiskey crossed his arms. “What you two are doing is sick and twisted. It ain’t right. It’s fucked up that you two are doing this. And as a concerned citizen, I feel it’d be my duty to report you two to the authorities…”

Jasper’s nostrils flamed like a feral bull’s “What’re you talking about, old man?” He snarled down at him. “Whatever me and Jack are doing, it isn’t worth shit to you.”

The elevator stopped and the doors dinged open to an empty hallway. Without waiting for a response, Jasper burst past the squirrel and pulled me with him. We started to make our way left towards our apartment door when I heard a third pair of feet following behind us. That same putrid smell wafted down the corridor like bad perfume.

“Hey,” he tried walking fast. “Hey, wait!”

 “Jas,” I murmured to my hectic brother, “Jas, he’s following—”

 “I know, babe. Just keep walking,” he murmured back, still grasping my paw. “Let’s just get inside and think of something…”

 Jasper fumbled for his key right as the relentless squirrel started closing the distance between us. His height and demeanor didn’t scare us, exactly. Finally, I heard a click. Jasper exhaled and quickly turned the door handle, and we rushed inside. Unfortunately, a single shoe prevented me from slamming it shut.

 “Ow, that smarts!” Whiskey hissed, then gripped the door and opened it wider to see us both. “I’m not done here, boys. I’ve got some words for you two!”

“Fuck off,” Jasper tried pushing the door closed. However, our intruding neighbor appeared surprisingly strong enough for it to barely budge. “Go on! Get out!”

Whiskey didn’t move, only scowling at us. “Ya think running away from this’ll make me go away? Disappear?”

 “No, but I still don’t wanna see your ugly mug anymore,” Jasper quipped venomously. “I don’t know what you think you’re doing, but we aren’t committing any crimes.” Behind him, I saw the Dalmatian’s head peek into the hallway, then down at Whiskey with perked ears. “Incest between consenting adults is legal here in New Jersey. We’re eighteen and consenting, therefore we’re consenting adults. Ergo, it’s none of your business or anybody’s business what I do with the man I love.”

 The fluttering inside my chest momentarily distracted me from its racing heartbeat.

 “Legal, schm-legal, it’s still disgusting and wrong,” Whiskey mocked. “The cops around here don’t exactly care about what’s legal when it involves a couple of faggy brothers.”

 Blood in my cheeks momentarily evaporated into nothing. Jasper remained unmoving, having given up on closing the door. “Whatever the fuck you think you’re trying to do—”

“Let me put it out in bright letters then,” he told us. “What I do for a living doesn’t really pay the bills. I’ve got alimony and kids like you to feed. Think you can give me a check to help out for this month, and we can forget this morning never, ever happened?”

 This couldn’t be happening. This couldn’t be happening.

“Are you being serious?” Jasper gawked openly when it connected to him at last. “Are you…Are you trying to blackmail us?”

 “No, I’m not trying to blackmail you,” Whiskey shook his muzzle amusedly. “No, I am blackmailing you. There ain’t no doubt about it.”

 “You sonofa—” Jasper nearly lunged for him, but the squirrel stepped away from the doorframe, only for my brother’s claws to miss by mere inches.

“I guess that makes you the nice one,” Whiskey gestured to me. I shrank further behind my brother. “Now, are you gonna play ball or am I gonna have to be law-abiding?”

“Fuck you,” Jasper answered.

“I just require nine-hundred or so,” Whiskey didn’t blink at the Dalmatian’s growls. “Eight-hundred for the rent and an extra hundred for your attitude.”

“We don’t have that money, old man!”

“Everybody has something.”

“We really don’t have shit though, so it’s not worth your time.”

“Are you sure, because I can go to a payphone downstairs.”

“Try it!”

 Normally, I’d have been silent on the sidelines, watching as my more outspoken and confident brother took the reins of a confrontation like this. He did it when a pair of bullies tried beating us up in middle school because we were lanky and acted weird. He did it again countless times when Dad tried micromanaging our lives inside that gilded cage of a mansion neither of us called a home. Then, Jasper did it one final time with Dad when he inevitably caught us months back on our birthday, resulting in me almost losing him. Unlike those times though, when I let my unapologetic twin navigate such a stressful field, I let a bold thought slip out.

 “Or we could call the cops on you first,” I suggested aloud.

 The smug squirrel looked at me as if I’d told a joke. “What?”

 “Jack, what the…?” Jasper hung the question out as I suggested it again.

 “We could call the cops on you first, Whiskey,” I said with astonishing bravery. “Drugs are illegal in almost every state too. Including this one. The cops might give us a hard time at first, but who do you think they’ll be more interested in searching?”

 The expression on Whiskey’s face could be best described with three words; realization, bewilderment, and exasperation. Those three caused his grip on the door to momentarily slip. My twin grabbed the opportunity by the reins in typical fashion by slamming the wooden barrier shut, though it almost razed the squirrel’s fingers by mere millimeters.

 He didn’t give Whiskey time to react, and instead shared his livid thoughts. Had there been no front door or even the fact other apartments existed around our haven, the Dalmatian likely would’ve bellowed out an angry hurricane that’d put our old man to shame.

 “Now listen here, fucker,” Jasper informed him with his fangs touching the door and glaring directly through the peephole. “Me and my bro don’t want trouble with you or the damn cops. We just wanna be left in peace, but if I catch you stalking us or bothering us again, I’ll give ya a real reason to call the police.”

 Movement behind the door suggested he’d finally went away. Sighing, Jasper twisted the locks shut, turned towards me, and we silently wandered towards the living room area. We were still reeling from what had just occurred; somebody learned about our secret love for each other, but not only did we stand our ground against him, but we survived it too.

We made it only eight or nine steps before I suggested cooking a late lunch for us.

“Sounds good,” my brother mumbled before sitting down on the couch.

Placing some leftover slices of pizza from the refrigerator into the microwave, I then placed the plate on our coffee table. Without waiting, I quietly sat next to my brother as we stared blankly at the TV screen, now playing a rerun of something. Our paws squeezed onto each other for support, and I relaxed my muzzle onto my brother’s warm neck.

“Hey,” he murmured after a soft moment, his voice feeling like a warm vibration through his skin and fur as I nestled closer. “You feeling alright?”

I eventually confessed, “…not really.”

“C’mon, that dude was an asshole,” Jasper clicked the nearby TV remote until it settled on a local news channel. Apparently, a new trend was corrupting the youth. “He’s so doped up on his own shit, he’ll probably forget we even exist by tomorrow.”

“I don’t think so,” I replied in a disagreeing whine. “He knows we’re brothers and that we’re together. But not in a normal way.”

We fell into brief silence as the anchorwoman onscreen, a vixen dressed in respectable clothes while sporting the thickest New Jerseyan accent either of us ever heard, spoke as if she did not even have to worry about the news she reported.

(“Is your teenager tangled in this new drug fad involving methylphenidate and downing a bottle of Red Ram? John discovered this after interviewing a local doctor about this problem.”)

Did she ever wonder how her neighbors would react to the man she dated? Did she ever have to worry about being judged for having a boyfriend she loved, yet everyone in society considered disgusting? Did they ever have to think twice about holding paws or showing affection in front of other eyes, even in front of the most liberal or indifferent of people? The bright smile and shining fur shimmering under fluorescent office lights implied her biggest worries went nowhere near incest.

“Who’s he to say what’s normal?”

I perked an ear at Jasper’s own question, unintentionally eliciting a giggle from my brother as one of the ears tickled his jugular. That temporarily levied the heavy silence bearing down on us.

“Fuck what that guy thinks,” he caressed my elbows as it lay wrapped around me, “and fuck whoever he tells us. It ain’t illegal in this state. Fuck them. Dad’s feelings didn’t matter, our classmates didn’t matter, so this whole city don’t matter.”

I couldn’t stop myself from snickering. Like every other time before, he knew how to cheer me up. The apprehension and fear of prejudice we faced earlier became a forgotten memory as I reached for our pizza slices and handed him one.

 “I love you, Jasper.”

 I bit into mine, as did he.

 “I love you too, Jackson.”

 For the moment, we felt at peace. For the moment, we sat together in the eye of the storm, unaware of how much our confrontation from earlier was transforming into a hurricane.