



*Spark & Stone*

LAURA S. FOX

# **Spark & Stone**

by

Laura S. Fox

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M/M Erotic Romance

Intended for Mature Audiences Only

This book contains graphic depictions of sexual intercourse, strong language, and it is not meant for readers who are less than 18 years of age.

## *Chapter One - Family-Friendly*

“Face it, Heathcliff. It’s a good deal.” Harry hurried to place the open folder under his nose and then began patting his forehead with a pristine white handkerchief.

Harry was probably holding that close just because he sweated profusely regardless of weather and the conditioned air blasted through the hidden ceiling fans.

Heathcliff balanced the pen in his hand. Should he really sign? He had his freedom to consider. And what was with all this bullcrap about a ‘family-friendly image’? But the money was good, and he knew well that private lessons, no matter how overpriced, and social media followers, could not bring him where he wanted to be. His body, admired by millions, came with high maintenance. In other words, money.

So, yes, it was a good deal. He clicked the pen a few times, before writing down his name slowly, in calligraphic letters. Harry watched him from the side, perched on his toes, like a bald eagle waiting for a meal.

He slammed the pen flat on top of the document. “Done.”

“And the NDA.” Harry hurried to push the pen away and fished another document from the bottom.

Heathcliff frowned. “What is this all about?” he asked, feeling irritated with whatever Harry considered important.

“They want you to maintain a certain image, um --” Harry trailed off.

“Family-friendly,” Heathcliff said, pursing his lips.

He took the piece of paper, trying to make sense of the legalese dancing on the page. There had to be a place in hell for lawyers. Or, otherwise, divinity could not be possible.

“So, what do they want, exactly?” he demanded to know.

Heathcliff had an idea what they wanted. But he wanted to hear it, loud and clear, from his agent. For the percentage Harry took, Heathcliff could feel no inclination to humor or pity him. Otherwise, they were as close as a fitness trainer with a substantial social media following and his agent could be.

He quirked an eyebrow. “Well?”

“Well,” Harry repeated after him. “It would serve if you, ahem, kept your ... um, encounters, more out of the public eye?” he ended the phrase with a question mark.

Heathcliff shook his head. “So do they have a problem with my sexuality?” He linked his fingers and placed his hands neatly in front of him.

After precisely two studied seconds, he turned to look Harry in the eye.

“No, no,” Harry waved both his plump hands, “not at all. Only that ... the notoriety ... also the nature of some, ahem, encounters of the kind --”

“Come on, Harry.” Heathcliff smiled as he would have for a toothpaste ad, “this bad boy image draws followers by the ton.”

For this particular occasion, Heathcliff had opted for a more conservative looking suit, and he knew that his body looked good in anything. His short blond beard had been trimmed to perfection. He had expected to meet someone from the company directly, but instead, his agent was playing the errand boy part. So, something had to give, and he wanted to know what.

“Yes, yes, that’s true.” Harry nodded enthusiastically. “But the company has a certain image to care for, as well. Come on, Heathcliff, you know you need this deal. This is how this business works. Your two million followers on social media mean nothing if you don’t monetize your fanbase. Everybody does it,” he hurried to add.

*Tell me about it*, Heathcliff thought with an internal sigh. He was getting tired of marketing himself with no tangible results, except for a few celebrities willing to pay him a grand a day for the opportunity to train their over-tanned tushies to exhaustion. He was making good money, but not by far as much as he wanted to make.

The deal was good, indeed, and Harry was right, he thought for the umpteenth time since he had entered the room. Only that it came at a damn price.

“So am I supposed to keep from sex? Take a celibacy vow?” Heathcliff pressed the matter, partly because he wanted to see Harry squirm a little more, even if it wasn’t his fault. “Live like a monk?”

Harry waved again. “Oh, no. But, you know, maybe if you kept your ... dealings a bit away from the tabloids’ spotlight --”

“All right.” Heathcliff exhaled and rubbed his chin in thought. “Now, is there anything else in this NDA that I should know about?”

“Well, for starters, you should not tell anyone of its existence ... since it’s an NDA, after all. They would not like people to think that, ahem --”

“They have something against a gay guy who’s not already married with children,” Heathcliff completed the stunted phrase his agent was trying to get out of his mouth.

“If you were, that would have made things a lot easier,” Harry joked, while attempting a smile, and then deciding against it when Heathcliff set his piercing gaze on him.

Piercing blue eyes. A standard phrase tabloids loved to use when talking about him. Well, he hoped his eyes were piercing enough when he bore them into his helpless agent.

“Oh, so it’s okay to be gay as long as you’re a hetero-normative kind of gay,” Heathcliff enunciated every word, to make sure that the other understood the message.

Harry shifted from one foot to the other. “Well, I would not put it this way --”

“I would,” Heathcliff interrupted him. “You know, I have a feeling that all this gay marriage stuff is somehow working against a gay way of life. You know, it’s not called the alternative lifestyle just because it sounds nice. It’s about freedom,” he began preaching, knowing well he was making Harry uncomfortable like hell. “Freedom to have as many sex partners as you want without having imaginary regrets about not conforming to monogamy. Freedom to experiment. To live life to the fullest.”

To make a point, he opened his arms wide.

“I don’t disagree,” Harry said hurriedly.

“I’m afraid that straight people agree with gay marriage just because they want to see us struggling to live by the same hypocritical and impossible standards that they have been carrying as a tight collar around their necks since the beginning of civilization,” Heathcliff added, fighting a smile.

Harry began to fidget even more. “Yes, I see --”

Heathcliff laughed and patted Harry on the back. His agent sighed and relaxed a little.

“Come on, man, I’m just joking here. So, as long as I don’t make the tabloids’ headlines while selling these guys’ protein shakes, we’re good, right?”

“Yes.” Harry exhaled, suddenly relieved.

“All right, let me sign the damn NDA, and be over with it.” Heathcliff took the pen and scribbled down his name on the second document.

“Ah, wait,” Harry said. “There is something else.”

Heathcliff turned toward Harry. “What?”

His irritation was starting to rear its head again.

“It’s in the NDA,” Harry said, somewhat reluctantly. “They will send someone to, ahem, assist you and, keep an eye on you?” he added with a question mark and a purse of his lips, his head dipped into his shoulders, like he was waiting for something heavy to fall on his head.

“Keep an eye on me?” Heathcliff said slowly, adding the same question mark.

What could be the punishment for strangling his agent in a fit of annoyance? Harry was doing his best, though. But a babysitter?

“Yes,” Harry said apologetically. “Not all the time, mind you, and he will not interfere with your life, in general. But he will help you with photo shoots, ads, everything pertaining to campaigns and the like. Also, he’ll make sure that, ahem, the people you will choose to ... entertain with won’t talk to tabloids.”

“What?!” Heathcliff exclaimed. “What the hell are these people? Gangsters? What the hell do you mean by that? Family-friendly my ass! What’s the name of that kind of family? The Sopranos?”

“No, no, no!” Harry hurried to appease him. “Nothing like that. He will just have your partners sign NDAs. No gangsters!” He set his hands flat and upright to prove the solemnity of his words.

“Hmm.” Heathcliff’s eyes narrowed when he looked at the other. “Are you sure? Because if I see some Fat Tony knocking down my door just to check where my dick has been, we’re going to have a problem. Capisci?” He even did the thing with the fingers, to make sure his agent got it.

Harry laughed this time. He was way too tense. Maybe it was not a good idea to play with the guy’s blood pressure, after all.

Heathcliff pointed a finger at him. “Harry, you should look over the diet plan I sent you.”

“I did, I did,” Harry said quickly, as he averted his eyes.

Heathcliff sighed. He could understand his agent. Keeping up with a diet and an exercise regimen wasn’t easy. That was why he chose to unwind by hooking up with the hottest guys he could get his hands on. Letting go of his primary hobby was not precisely how he wanted to make a breach in the industry and start making some real money.

He wasn’t promiscuous, but he liked his sexual encounters to be unrestricted if he were to choose a term to describe them. Therefore the idea of having some middle-aged straight man, most probably married for twelve years and with zero sex life, look over his shoulder and shake his head in disapproval, was most unpalatable.

His agent chose to change the subject. “I’m glad you signed, Heathcliff.”



“Okay. But I will not give up on sex.” He stared at Harry, keeping the signed documents under his palm, not allowing him to grab them just yet.

“No, no, that will be absurd,” Harry agreed.

“Here you go then.” Heathcliff took the signed papers and handed them gallantly to his agent. “So when should I meet or expect this babysitter?”

“Oh, he will drop by your place sometime over the next few days if that is fine by you. I will give him your number so he can call you and announce his visit in advance.”

“Sure thing. Feel free to send him my schedule, too. This way, I think he’ll quickly find a way to bother me when I’m not supposed to be bothered,” Heathcliff added.

“I will communicate him all the details,” Harry said. “Thank you for this, Heathcliff. We’re making headway, I’m telling you. Endorsements, deals, they’ll start to pour now. So, you know, let’s just make it happen and keep these people happy.”

Harry put the signed documents into his suitcase, barely keeping from sighing in relief if Heathcliff read the signs right.

He smiled. “Of course.”

Well, it was a good deal, and that should have been enough incentive to keep his sexual trysts a bit away from the hot lights for now. After all, he was interested in getting pleasure out of them, and not publicity. Especially now, when that could count as bad and unwanted publicity.

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Aidan Spark waited patiently as the phone rang and rang, without any signs that whoever was supposed to answer could be bothered to do that. From the starters, he knew that would be difficult, and for more reasons than one. But, to begin with the obvious, Heathcliff Stone wasn’t picking up.

Three times, four times, five times ...

For lack of anything to do, Aidan took a look at himself in the mirror. Squinting, he brushed some invisible lint off his lapel. With slow, meticulous moves, he straightened up his tie and slicked back his hair a bit more. Appearance was crucial, and that was something he knew well. Just the same it was for the guy he was trying right now to contact.

It was the umpteenth time he was trying to reach Heathcliff Stone, without any success. He wondered whether he was doing it on purpose. By all means, he seemed plenty active on his social media, so nothing was supposed to prevent him from picking up the phone.

Of course, he could try other channels, but Aidan had been informed that he was to schedule the meeting in this manner, and he always did things by the book.

“Quite the insistent man you are,” someone finally answered and started talking directly, without even bothering to say the standard greetings required by the circumstances.

“Hello, Mr. Stone,” Aidan began, using his usual professional tone. “I am Aidan Spark, with The Healthy Shakers.”

“You sound young,” Heathcliff interrupted him.

Aidan ignored the rude statement. “I am calling to schedule our first meeting.”

What being young had to do with anything? Aidan wanted to sigh, but he knew he had to keep his cool. Having to deal with the handsome, drool-worthy, sexy fitness guru Heathcliff Stone, was enough torment on its own.

“Come by, if you insist so much,” Heathcliff said. “I’m sure you know the address.”

“I would like to establish a day and an hour. Something that is convenient for you.”

“It’s Saturday. Come over.”

And just like that, he cut the conversation, leaving Aidan to stare at the phone screen with a frown. Of course, he had to be an insufferable ass. Good looking people tended to be like that. It was no surprise that Heathcliff Stone was no exception to the rule.

What would he do? It was already two o’clock in the afternoon. A meeting over drinks was out of the question. Too early. Maybe just send a text with a dinner invitation? It was unlikely that a famous man like Heathcliff Stone wasn’t already booked.

It was unorthodox, but Aidan was decided not to let him weasel his way out of the deal he had struck with The Healthy Shakers. So he would pay him a visit, and he would do it right away.

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“Hey, that’s not exactly nice,” the man writhing under him teased, between one moan and one, very suggestive, roll of the eyes.

“Hmm?” Heathcliff said questioningly.

His date was worthy of walking down the catwalk. It was no wonder he wanted to make it into the fashion industry. His golden skin was flawless, and he had cheekbones that one could use to polish knives. Not to mention his amazing plump lips that Heathcliff had just earlier experienced wrapped around his cock. Driving himself over and over again inside that lithe body would yield results soon.

“Talking over the phone while we’re fucking?” his current fuck buddy pouted.

“He wouldn’t let go if I didn’t pick up,” he replied with a smile and pulled the guy close for a quick kiss on those luscious pouty lips.

“Who was that?”

“My new assistant,” Heathcliff replied.

“And you just invited him over?”

“Aren’t you talking a little too much?” Heathcliff withdrew only to place the others on all fours.

The look from the back was amazing, too. He would use his contacts to see what he could do for the young model. What was his name again? Matt? Mitch? He had never been good with names. He needed to check his phone. Although he kept his occasional flings’ numbers in the phone memory for no longer than a few days, he would make an exception this time. He definitely wanted to meet Matt/Mitch again.

While he appraised the slim arched back of his partner, his mind wandered to the voice over the phone. The guy had sounded young. So he wasn’t a middle-aged man, after all? By all means, Aidan Spark had sounded professional. Maybe it was just his luck to have a voice this young.

He would see him soon enough. After ignoring him on purpose all Friday, Heathcliff wanted to put him to work, and have him on the move on Saturday. If the scumbags from The Healthy Shakers wished to make him dance to their tune, he wouldn’t be all compliant and convenient. At least he could make Aidan Spark sweat a little.

“Ah, damn,” Matt/Mitch moaned, and Heathcliff sped up.

It took them only a couple more minutes to come. Heathcliff was satisfied for now, but he definitely wanted seconds. Matt/Mitch was a knockout between the sheets.

“Hey, I’m hitting the shower. Join me or shower later?” he asked him.

His partner just waved, clearly wasted. “Later.”

Heathcliff shrugged. “Suit yourself.”

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Aidan pulled the car into the driveway, after checking the address a couple of times, to make sure he got it right. He climbed out of his car, took his briefcase and smoothed down a few imaginary wrinkles on his suit. When he deemed himself satisfactory, he walked to the door.

Apparently, he could be buzzed in, so he pressed one time, shortly, on the button. Although it was a bit annoying, it looked like he needed to consider doing that a second time.

“Come up,” a raspy voice finally replied, and the long sound that followed let him know that he could go through the door.

For his current status, Heathcliff Stone had a pretty good looking house. Aidan took in the nice, maybe a bit too square, design arrangements. By all means, his host was nowhere in sight.

His ear picked up something, and he blinked a couple of times, feeling intrigued. What were those sounds? Was someone in pain? Or ...?

He could feel his cheeks warming up. Heathcliff Stone couldn't be this uncouth. But, as his eyes traveled across the stairs leading to what was most probably the man's open bedroom and den of pleasures, he was sure his hearing wasn't playing tricks on him.

Taking a deep sigh, and making an effort to cool down a bit, he took the first step. After all, Aidan Spark was a professional, and Heathcliff Stone had to do a little better to impress him.

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“Were you planning some threesome and you didn't say?” Matt/Mitch moaned.

Heathcliff stared at the preppy looking guy at the top of the stairs. He could feel a grin coming up. Was that the babysitter? At first glance, he couldn't hold a candle to his current date, yet, as he looked at him, standing there, a small professional smile frozen on his lips, Heathcliff could only think of how that would be a helluva lot fun.

Square down to a tee, Aidan Spark looked taken out of some yuppie collection, spring-summer. His suit was neat, his light brown hair was slicked back, not one strand astray, and his warm eyes were examining his host inquisitively.

Holding his stare, Heathcliff placed an absent-minded peck on his bed partner's ankle. Matt/Mitch was looking particularly good in that position, one leg hooked over Heathcliff's broad shoulder, the other dropped and touching the floor.

Yet, right now, Heathcliff only had eyes on his so-called babysitter. Yeah, he was cute. And, by how he was standing there, obviously striving to keep in place instead of running away screaming, was tickling him the right way.

So, a hand placed firmly on his partner's hip, he began moving more amply. The babysitter seemed no less and no more disturbed.

*Oh, the nerve,* Heathcliff thought. Aidan was checking his wristwatch with a small frown.

“Oh, yes, baby,” he cooed, but he was still not looking at his partner.

“Hey.” Mitch/Matt slapped him over the chest, to draw his attention.

“Come here,” Heathcliff whispered seductively and pulled him into a kiss.

Faking that he was closing his eyes, he continued to examine the newcomer through his dropped eyelashes. Matt/Mitch moaned prettily while their lips and tongues did a sensual dance.

“Damn, fuck.” His partner dropped on his back as Heathcliff continued to fuck him harder and harder.

And Heathcliff locked eyes again with Aidan Spark, as he came into the rubber while fucking some guy whose name he was sure he would forget the moment he was out the door. Just in case he did actually know it in the first place.

“Hmm.” He purred in satisfaction as he pulled out and took out the condom with expert moves.

“What do you say?” he held the rubber so that his new guest could see the load he had just shot.

“It is commendable that you practice safe sex, Mr. Stone,” Aidan said in the same even, measured tone Heathcliff had heard over the phone.

He wanted so much to mess with this guy. The fact that he looked like he would resist just made things more exciting.

“Mr. Stone?” Matt/Mitch guffawed from the bed.

Heathcliff offered his hand to help him get up, and with a small playful smack on his delicious rump, he pushed him in the direction of the bathroom.

“May I have your signature here?”

Heathcliff turned to watch the guest again. One moment out of sight, and he was running amok, it seemed. Now he was taking out of his briefcase some papers and a pen. With practiced moves, he moved his suitcase in the other hand and began walking toward Matt/Mitch.

“Please, if you don’t mind,” Aidan said charmingly.

Matt/Mitch looked over at Heathcliff, his mouth a bit slack.

“And what’s this supposed to mean?”

“It’s just something you must sign; it will be quick, I promise,” Aidan continued. “It’s just a confidentiality agreement.”

“Um, what?” The pretty boy who had just left Heathcliff’s bed was staring at the new guy, with an adorable expression of total confusion.

Ah, well, he was a bit dumb, Heathcliff thought. But really beautiful. So it all evened out. There was, although, the question what the new guest's redeeming qualities were. Not that he wasn't cute. But Aidan Spark had an attitude like his personality had also left some dry cleaning service, and not only his perfectly tailored clothes.

"It is just a formality," Aidan said affably while placing the paper and the pen on the nightstand and gently manipulating Matt/Mitch to make him sign.

"What's it for?" Matt/Mitch mumbled, but he was already taking the pen.

"As I said, a small formality. We just want to make sure that details of your encounter with Mr. Stone don't end up in the attention of the wrong kind of media."

Heathcliff scoffed, amused, and walked to the bathroom to throw the full condom, seeing that his babysitter was not at all interested in his victories. By all means, Aidan should have paid attention to him.

"All right," Matt/Mitch said and scribbled down his name.

"Thank you," Aidan took the signed papers quickly and put them back into his briefcase.

The babysitter was young all right, but he was behaving like a mother hen on a mission. Heathcliff felt his fingers itching, ready to tousle his perfect slick hair, pull at his tie, and make him look disheveled and maybe, just maybe, a little less stiff.

"Let's hit the shower, Mitch." He pulled possessively at his recently out of bed partner, seeing how the two were looking at each other and smiling.

His babysitter was not supposed to get friendly with his date.

"Matt." The soon to be fashion model grabbed his arm. "It's Matt," he insisted when Heathcliff looked at him with a frown.

"Right." He flashed his signature grin at the guy, knowing that he would be forgiven. "I'm just teasing you."

He planned on taking a long shower, to piss off his babysitter. Maybe even engage in a bit more naughty play, just to let Matt go with a long-lasting impression.

"I go first," Matt said apologetically. "I need to be quick. I have to meet someone. Hey, do you know Reynolds? You know, from --"

Heathcliff was just shaking and nodding his head automatically at the guy's questions, all his attention grabbed by the other man in his home. Aidan Spark looked like he could not care less he was interrupting. Ah, wait, he invited the guy over.

He barely registered Matt leaving his side. His babysitter was standing, briefcase in hand, without moving. The guy was looking at nothing in particular, his face schooled into a neutral expression. Heathcliff was wondering whether the man had some secret button he could push.

He decided to be the first to begin the conversation. "So you were sent by The Healthy Shakers."

"Yes," came the prompt reply.

Aidan was averting his eyes.

"Well, you wanted to see me. How about being a little chattier than this?"

Heathcliff moved closer. He wanted to see those hazel eyes from up close. A few very light freckles spread on his nose and the height of his cheeks. Definitely adorable. Not visible from afar, but if he got really close, the hazel eyes had speckles of green in them, too.

Aidan stole a quick nervous look at him. "Um, maybe we can talk once you ... put some clothes on, Mr. Stone?"

Interesting. He was making Aidan Spark nervous. Yet, just earlier, he had casually talked Matt into signing the damn confidentiality agreement, without batting an eyelash. Could it be that only Heathcliff's naked body had that effect on the yuppie? Yeah, that was definitely interesting and worth exploring.

"I have no secrets," he joked, putting his hands up, just to prove his point.

"I'm afraid that is going to change," Aidan replied.

Heathcliff smirked. "Oh. My family-friendly image, right?"

"Right," Aidan said, and this time he looked straight into his eyes.

Hmm, hot and cold. Aidan was a bit of a puzzle. Or maybe he was faking it too much, Heathcliff thought. But who wasn't?

Matt came back into the room, his hair damp from the shower. "Hey, I'm going to hit the road."

He was quick at picking up his clothes from the floor. In less than thirty seconds, he was back into his jeans, and, t-shirt in hand, he hurried to place a quick peck on Heathcliff's cheek. "Call me?" Matt said, with a small, fully-dimpled, smile.

"Sure," Heathcliff replied.

His babysitter looked away as Heathcliff pulled Matt into a quick embrace and kissed him on the lips with an audible smack.

As soon as Matt was gone, Heathcliff decided that it was a good idea to follow the babysitter's recommendation and put something on. He picked a pair of drawstring pants. All the time, he stole quick glances in the other's direction, but it looked like Aidan was more interested in examining the design of the full-size mirror in the corner than in admiring his host, as he was supposed to.

"Here, I'm dressed. Happy now?" Heathcliff smiled.

Aidan pursed his lips while looking at him. "Shall we proceed, then?"

"Let's get downstairs." Heathcliff gestured, and Aidan took the hint to move immediately.

Or even desperately. Aidan Spark was a deer caught in the headlights, but pretending he was a cold fish. Maybe he wasn't either. Heathcliff inhaled as he moved past him. Only a very faint scent of fresh smelling body lotion and shampoo. Something a bit too sweet, at least for a guy. No cologne.

"I can assure you I am on your side, Mr. Stone," Aidan said while descending the stairs, with Heathcliff on his tail.

"Hmm, and what's that supposed to mean?" Heathcliff said.

"There's no need to sniff me to see if I'm friend or foe."

Wow. Caught red-handed. So nothing went unnoticed by those pretty hazel eyes, huh?

Heathcliff chuckled. "I can assure you that it's not why I ... sniffed you."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes, really. I was actually checking for signs of arousal."

A scoff was the only answer to that. "Where can we sit? I don't want to take up your Saturday, seeing what a busy man you are," Aidan said instead of answering to the provocation.

"Oh, please, take up all of my time, if needed." Heathcliff pointed to the guest to the direction of the patio in the back. "As you can see, I freed my schedule for you."

"Not quite so obvious. I thought I was interrupting."

"Nah, it's nice to have an audience cheering at the finish line. Please, let me bring you something to drink."

If Aidan felt slighted, he didn't show it. With the same professional moves, he took out some papers from his briefcase and placed them on the rattan table. Heathcliff disappeared into the kitchen.



Whipping out the ingredients for a fortifying smoothie, he began preparing the drinks. Through the glass door, he took a bit more time to look at his guest.

Aidan Spark was cuteness incarnate in the shape and appearance of a preppy looking guy. The way he was scrunching his nose – that cute freckled nose – was definitely not professional at all. He was obviously trying to rein in his emotions, but he was way too young to do that efficiently. Maybe fresh out of university? He couldn't be older than twenty-three or twenty-four.

Heathcliff placed the two tall glasses on the table and took a seat across from his guest, hooking one leg over one arm of the chair and pulling the other under him. “Are you trying to scare me here?” he joked, as he gestured for the papers.

“No,” came the short reply. “Can you please tell me what is this?” Aidan gestured at the green smoothie in front of him.

“A healthy drink, I can assure you. Wait, do you have any allergies? To coconut milk? Leafy greens, perhaps?” Heathcliff asked.

Aidan shook his head slowly but continued to look warily at the drink. “No allergies. I would have liked a coffee, though,” he replied.

“I'm sorry. I don't keep any such stimulants in the house,” Heathcliff replied promptly. “Give it a try.”

“I'm not sure --”

“Do you have something against smoothies or do you always insult your hosts like this?” Heathcliff decided to take the reins. “Come on. It will make you feel great.”

“Okay,” Aidan said reluctantly and put the straw in his mouth to sip at the drink.

The way his soft lips wrapped around the straw was pure inspiration, Heathcliff thought.

“Wow, it's a bit sweet,” Aidan said, as his eyebrows shot up.

“Of course. I thought you would like something sweet. Only healthy stuff, though. Some berry mix and a touch of honey,” Heathcliff said with a smile.

“I thought all healthy drinks tasted like crap,” Aidan said in an apparent bout of honesty.

“And does your health-driven, family-friendly employer know that?” Heathcliff joked.

For a second, Aidan looked quite terrorized at the idea of being outed as a non-lover of healthy drinks to his boss.

“Don’t worry. I won’t tell on you.” Heathcliff dropped his voice low on purposes, and examined Aidan with hooded eyes.

“Anyways,” Aidan said quickly, “let’s go over your schedule for next week, and see how we can accommodate the new obligations.”

Heathcliff grinned. “Ugh, you’re such a slave driver, aren’t you?”

“Excuse me?” Aidan looked at him, pursing his lips again.

“Did you just swallow a lemon? Because that look is not so good on you. It makes you almost ten years older. You know, twenty-five or so.”

Aidan opened his mouth to say something but closed it without getting one word out. But at least, he avoided pursing his lips again. “You’re so insufferable,” he murmured, eventually.

“Oh, really?” Heathcliff cooed.

Ah, so there was life in that cold fish, after all. It tickled Heathcliff in all the right places.

“Yes. Look, I’m not here to step on your toes. I’d appreciate if you didn’t step on mine, either. Mr. Stone,” Aidan added after a short pause.

“Why so formal? We’ll be in each other’s hair more than a married couple. Please, call me Heathcliff.”

Aidan snorted. “You’re so not a Heathcliff.”

So much fire, Heathcliff thought as he examined his guest. “And how should a Heathcliff be?” he asked, decided to play along and see where that would take him.

“Dark, brooding, handsome,” Aidan recited right away and looked at him unabashedly.

“Seriously? Not even handsome?” Heathcliff feigned hurt.

“It gets leveled to the ground by your personality,” Aidan said right away.

Heathcliff began laughing. “Okay, put me through the ordeal of scheduling my life,” he said as he gestured for Aidan to begin.

“Let’s see,” Aidan started. “Next week, we will have to do a photo shoot. At this point, we will just throw some ideas around, see what sticks.”

“Hmm.” Heathcliff decided to be a little more insufferable and a teaser. “Don’t you guys already have everything planned out? This doesn’t sound too professional.”

The yuppie opened his mouth, closed it, pursed it, and then began to talk. “We believe, at The Healthy Shakers, that the right way is the incremental way. You see, thinking up a solution and having it work from the get-go, is hardly realistic. But, by sequential increments --”

“Oh god,” Heathcliff groaned and rolled his eyes. “Save me the ‘our mission’ spiel, will you?”

Aidan Spark seemed a little taken aback by being interrupted like that. But, nonetheless, he didn’t let it drop. “If you’re not interested in hearing the spiel, as you say, why are you questioning our methods?” he inquired.

Heathcliff liked a challenge. No, scratch that. He loved a challenge. And Aidan Spark looked like a good provider for that. “Who’s ‘we’?” he asked, and leaned forward, looking around Aidan, like he was trying to identify some invisible companions.

“The company,” Aidan said, but his voice no longer seemed so sure.

Good. He wasn’t impossible to throw off balance. Heathcliff could feel a little happiness rising at the small victory.

“Okay. But I’m dealing with you,” Heathcliff pointed out. “Strangely enough, I haven’t met your boss or anyone representing the company.”

“I’m representing the company,” Aidan said as he tried to straighten in his chair, pulling at the jacket of his suit, seemingly hoping to arrange it into a defensive armor.

“You’re my babysitter,” Heathcliff said, shaking his head, and smiling. “I suppose none of us is treated fairly, here, isn’t it?”

Aidan frowned, squinted, looked away, and the corners of his lips dropped. All that made Heathcliff want to reach over the table and tousle his perfect hair.

“Hey, drink your smoothie,” he said in a more appeased tone. “It will make you feel better. And leave the schedule here. I’ll call you or drop a line if there’s anything in the way, okay?”

Aidan exhaled. “Okay.”

“All right, then I guess this meeting is over. I would not dream of taking up more of your Saturday,” Heathcliff said in a professional tone.

When they shook hands, Heathcliff kept his hand a little longer. Aidan Spark looked like he wanted to run away. Yet, in his beautiful eyes, there was something telling that he wanted to stay, too.

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“Why am I doing this?” Aidan mumbled to himself as he dropped his head against the wheel, unwilling to climb out of his car and go home.

It wasn't like he had a lot to do on Saturday. All his friends were currently engaged in the same project he was. Of getting ahead while young, or otherwise, they would amount to nothing.

He could bet none of his friends had the same problems he was having right now, though.

Keeping his ground in front of Heathcliff Stone had been no easy feat. The guy was a beast, no doubt. A sexy beast, of course. And the fact that Aidan was secretly jerking off to the dude in the little spare time he had at his disposal wasn't helping. No, it definitely wasn't.

## *Chapter Two – Not A Virgin-Virgin*

If he had been asked, Aidan would have had a hard time explaining why he was so keen on using Heathcliff Stone as JO material. It made him feel a bit ashamed. With so much gay porn to use for that particular purpose, singling out a guy who wasn't even in that industry was sort of fucked up.

Aidan could not clearly explain to himself the attraction. He had never been into the muscled type, although Heathcliff wasn't some bodybuilder, to begin with. But there was something in the man's harmonious body that was easy on the eyes, and also made it difficult to keep from objectifying him and making him the main protagonist of some pretty X-rated fantasies.

The thing was Heathcliff had something unique. Aidan knew, and not only because he was trying to build a career in advertising for himself, that it wasn't for nothing that so many people were following Heathcliff Stone on social media.

The fitness guru had charisma. When he talked, he was full of passion and genuinely interested in what he did. He was the kind of celebrity that didn't seem to look down on his audience.

Aidan had been enthralled from the first time he had watched one of his videos. The truth was Heathcliff's advice worked. He was interested in making people do at least a little something to change their lifestyle for the better.

Of course, once Aidan had realized the guy on the screen was also making him hot under the collar, that had been a sort of revelation. Not that he hadn't been well aware that he was gay, but because he had realized, that moment, what was his type.

The type Aidan knew would be so good for him, and yet so bad, at the same time. From that first eyes-to-screen contact, Aidan had been interested in learning more about the fitness guru. Discovering that Heathcliff was batting for the same team had made him feel stupidly happy. It was like he was suddenly some schoolgirl dreaming, wide-eyed, about having a real chance with some A-list celebrity.

Aidan had found the idea so ludicrous that he had been trying ever since to dismiss it. There was no real chance of meeting Heathcliff, let alone getting involved with him in some way. Well, that had been before.

Because now, not only he had made Heathcliff's acquaintance, but he was supposed to look after him some of his working hours on most days and that made Aidan's imaginary dilemma from before a pretty much real one.

He needed something to blame everything on. Maybe the fact that he was still a virgin. Well, not a virgin-virgin since he had traded hand jobs and blowjobs with a few strangers in his life. More like in a hand job with one, and a tentative at a blowjob with another. Those were nothing but

details. The point was: his experience was limited. Each time he had seemed to find the courage to go for the next step, something had happened, preventing him from doing so.

The other problem was that he was buried in work. He had a very clear plan in place that was supposed to take him to being paid six figures yearly before the age of thirty. That meant that he needed to put in the hours and kiss the right behinds. The latter, he wasn't crazy about. Plus, while he was a hard worker, it seemed like everyone just saw the proverbial willing donkey when looking at him.

That landed him in his current position. Being the youngest in the department, the higher-ups had decided that he was perfect for looking after Heathcliff Stone and his shenanigans. In other words, his work at the office was not that important or indispensable. And that would put him through a lot of suffering, seeing who Heathcliff was and his prowess in bedroom affairs. At work, people weren't aware of Aidan's sexuality, and he hadn't been keen on telling them. After all, office romance was frowned upon, regardless of form and sexual orientation, and it was no one's damn business anyway what he was and what he wasn't.

So, back to the current situation, Aidan was in a pretty bad place. But he planned to survive. Also, seeing that outside his fitness guru image, Heathcliff Stone was sort of an ass, that was definitely going to cure him of his little obsession.

What the hell was he thinking? Cure him? Now he had the image of Heathcliff's glorious cock imprinted on his cortex, as well as how he moved when fucking. All those details had stored themselves happily into the spank bank.

Damn, Aidan thought and winced. His dick had a mind of its own, and it wasn't helping. No problem, he said to himself. He knew how to be the perfect professional. And he would keep a perfectly cool head while dealing with Heathcliff.

Aidan clicked on the folder and went through the schedule he had eventually agreed upon with Heathcliff. Now he was at work, and he was not supposed to fantasize about a particularly scrumptious male specimen when he actually had to keep his mind in the game, as his boss often said.

"Aidan, the boss wants to see you." One of his female coworkers peeked at him from above, looking down inside his cubicle.

He straightened up, as if he tried to hide doing something naughty under the desk, which was definitely not the case. Only his brain was wandering, not his hands, luckily.

"All right, thank you," he said, and the woman gave him a half-frozen smile like she had been studying hard for it.

He took the physical folder with him since he knew their boss liked to do things the old fashioned way.

“Come inside and sit down,” the man said the moment Aidan knocked, and half stepped into the guy’s office.

“Yes, sir.” Aidan sat gingerly across from him.

All the chairs in the room, except for the one on which his boss sat his important behind, were so low that Aidan, without being unusually tall, felt like he was trying to fit into a kindergarten chair.

For some reason, his boss was making him nervous. There was something about him that seemed to judge everything and everyone. He wore thick black-rimmed eyeglasses, and he could be anywhere between forty and fifty-five years of age. Even that detail about him was making Aidan think he was a bit odd, that and the fact that the man seemed to have nothing particular about his physique. It was like someone had traced the persona of an average middle-aged, middle-class, man, and come up with this guy.

“How was your meeting with Heathcliff Stone?” his boss asked sharply, linking his hands in front of his face and looking at Aidan over them while keeping half of his face hidden.

“Good, sir. We established a schedule and, starting this week, we will go through a few possibilities to see what works. The first photo shoot is today.”

“Excellent. Do you find him manageable? You know you must keep a close eye on the guy. He’s quite famous for his rather unsavory sexual trysts.”

Aidan knew a bit about Heathcliff Stone’s sex life. It wasn’t like he was some stalker. By merely picking any tabloid, one could get up to date with his adventures. Aidan especially recalled a particular night spent by the said celebrity exposing his talents as a dancer while showered in expensive champagne by two rather attractive and also obnoxiously rich celebrities. It had happened at a very posh and high-class establishment catering only to the most affluent clientele, and made quite the impression on Aidan.

Yes, Heathcliff Stone knew how to live his life to the fullest, but Aidan would not have called that unsavory. Glamorous? Yes. Exciting? Definitely. And maybe wild. But Aidan was sure Heathcliff would not do anything truly dangerous for him, or his sex partners. In his frenzied and bubbly lifestyle, he still acted responsibly, as far as Aidan could tell. Otherwise, how the hell he managed to look so good and healthy day after day, in the videos he was sharing with the world? Also, while he was thankful for the tabloids carefully documenting Heathcliff’s sex life, Aidan was sure that it was, after all, no one’s business how he spent his free time.

“What’s your opinion on this guy, Spark? Do you think you can make him behave?”

Aidan kept his professional smile on, but he could feel his cheeks hurting. “The deal is for him to be discreet, sir,” he said, his voice a little strained.

“Sure.” His boss nodded. “Of course, it would be great if there wasn’t anything for him to be discreet about. Keep him busy.”

“Um, sir?” Aidan blinked a few times. “I filled every free opening he had in his schedule for the week, but, otherwise --”

“Be proactive.” The man suddenly smacked the desk with both palms, making Aidan jump from his chair. “That’s the secret to climb the career ladder. And you want that, don’t you?”

“Of course, sir,” Aidan replied right away.

“I expect a lot from someone like you. The first steps you make in your career, they matter a lot. They shape up your future. Do you understand what I’m telling you?”

“Yes, sir,” Aidan said again.

“All right. Dismissed. Make sure our most recent asset doesn’t make a fool of himself and our brand.”

“That’s my mission, sir,” Aidan said.

Had the man been in the army before marketing and advertising? Aidan almost felt compelled to salute before scampering off.

The secretary handed him a folder with details on the photo shoot. On his way out of the building, Aidan stole a look inside and read through rapidly. He felt the need to work his jaw a little. How was he supposed to achieve that and still keep it family-friendly?

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Heathcliff had spent a rather uneventful Sunday after the cutie who had just waltzed into his life had ordered him to rest and get his beauty sleep. Aidan had also left a stack of confidentiality agreements for him to use in case he wanted to get freaky. The size of that stack was making his heart fill with pride. It meant Aidan knew how busy he could get between the sheets. But, also, he had felt not so inclined to go cruising, seeing how he needed to have his bed partners sign before doing the horizontal dance. It didn’t seem like good foreplay strategy.

So, after the morning exercising routine, a shower, and doing some post-processing on a quick video on the workout of the day that he religiously proceeded to post on all his social media, Heathcliff was ready to meet Aidan again. They were supposed to go to a photo shoot, and the details were pending.



Not that he wasn't good at taking things in stride. Part of his success stemmed from how adaptable he was. So he would flash the biggest, family-friendly smile he could manage while holding that protein shake they needed to be advertised. And he would bring home the dough. Easy as a breeze.

While the photo shoot caused no anticipation, meeting Aidan Spark again did. The young man was yummy. He also had such an air of innocence about him, despite his efforts to appear stiff upper lip. That was causing excitement all right.

Heathcliff wouldn't have been interested if Aidan had been true to his image or straight. But so far, Heathcliff's gay-dar had proved to function flawlessly. On Saturday, when Aidan had been around, Heathcliff had had plenty of time to read him.

Any straight dude walking on two gay guys going at it would have been at least a little put off. But Aidan Spark had stood there, watching him and Matt fucking, without as little as a blink. That was exhibit A.

Exhibit B was how utterly unflinching Aidan had been while standing next to Matt, and talking to him. Male nudity? He had no problems with it.

And the piece of resistance. Aidan Spark had seemed nervous only when Heathcliff had gotten close while wearing nothing at all. And those signs of arousal he had talked to Aidan about? Oh, they had been there. Slightly parted lips, a small intake of breath, and a little coloring of the height of his cheeks. Heathcliff smiled to himself. He wasn't leaving Aidan Spark indifferent at all.

It almost seemed a pity to mess with him. But Aidan Spark was on a mission to make him, Heathcliff, keep it in his pants. Well, then his mission was to make Aidan have a hard time doing that for himself.

The short buzz let him know Aidan was dead on schedule like a Swiss watch. Heathcliff smiled to himself.

He winked at himself in the mirror. "It's showtime, baby."

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"How was your weekend?" Aidan asked perfunctorily seeing how for long minutes since they had climbed into his car they had been silent.

If he made small conversation, he would be all right. And it would be easier to ignore how particularly handsome Heathcliff looked in casual slacks and a matching shirt that was hugging his body like it was in love with him.

He needed to keep his wits together.

“You’re pursing your lips again,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan’s hands flexed on the wheel. Great, the red light was going to prolong his torment for at least ninety seconds. “I’m afraid it’s a habit,” he replied icily.

“So break it,” Heathcliff said with confidence.

All right, his charge was stepping on his toes. Why did it matter if he was pursing his lips or not?

“Why? Is it bothering you?” he shot at the guy, tapping a rhythm with his hands on the wheel, and begging with his eyes for the light to change.

“It has nothing to do with me,” Heathcliff replied matter-of-factly. “But it doesn’t make you look good.”

Aidan frowned “Well, it doesn’t matter. I’m not the model, you are. I don’t have any reason to prevent wrinkles or whatever.”

“You’re also scrunching your nose when you’re irritated, and you want to hide something. That’s actually cute. What are you hiding?”

Aidan exhaled and stepped on it, as the light changed. Speaking to Heathcliff was like a one-sided conversation. He seemed only interested in sending his point across and could not care less about what the other had to say. He was probably assertive or something like that.

So Aidan chose to ignore the question.

“Aren’t you supposed to keep me entertained?”

Aidan could swear Heathcliff drawled the words on purpose. He needed to focus. With one snappy move, he turned on the radio. “Here. Be entertained,” he said.

His radio was set on the death metal station. Soon, the car was filled with a cacophony of sounds and unintelligible words. Well, for Heathcliff, that might have sounded like a cacophony, at least. Aidan loved it. It was just an outlet to vent off after spending the entire day like a little robot caught in the corporate automated hell.

“Sorry.” He began fiddling with the knob to catch something more adequate for his passenger.

Warm fingers were over his, and Aidan withdrew like touched by fire. His hands clasped firmly on the wheel, and he set his eyes up ahead. Heathcliff turned off the radio.

“Is that the music genre you prefer?” Heathcliff questioned.

“Why? Do you have something against that, too?” he said through his teeth.

He was supposed to keep a cool head. But he was acting like a stupid kid. His crush was next to him, and he proved himself an inept in all possible ways.

“No. But it just goes to prove my theory that you are hiding something. Actually, if I were to say it correctly, you are hiding your entire true self.”

“All we need is a couch for me to lay on it,” Aidan said with a sigh. “Thank you, Mr. Therapist. Any other advice you have for me?”

“No. I do have a question for you, though. What’s with the cat and mouse game?”

“What do you mean?” Aidan could feel himself blushing.

“Is this how you treat all the business associates your company has to work with?”

Aidan froze. Of course, he was overstepping. No matter how eccentric Heathcliff Stone was, he was not supposed to lose his temper like that. He stole a small glance at his passenger. Heathcliff’s face was cut in granite, his eyes deadly serious.

“I’m sorry,” he mumbled. “I ... I seriously apologize. You’re right, I --”

A hand was in his hair, tousling it around.

Heathcliff chuckled. “Kid.”

Aidan could feel his righteous indignation coming back up. But he exhaled and parked the car efficiently.

When he looked at Heathcliff again, he was smiling. Oh, that. That was the thing that could sell protein shakes, and health drinks, and most probably anything else, from cleaning supplies to cryptocurrency.

His righteous indignation melted to a puddle.

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The photographer was busy snapping pictures from all angles while Heathcliff found it a bit annoying how he had to keep up a frozen smile all this time. Something wasn’t working; he could tell. His babysitter was mumbling, trying to get the photographer do something, both their faces scrunched up in thought. And what followed was a particular string of indications for Heathcliff to follow that made little to no sense.

“Let’s take a breather,” he said shortly, putting down the glass in his hand on a nearby table.

Someone had to take the reins, as the other two people involved seemed to struggle to reach an agreement. The photographer made a face like he wanted to protest, but one stern look from Heathcliff was enough to make him reconsider that.

The man agreed with a sigh. "Regroup in ten."

Heathcliff gestured for Aidan to come close.

"So, are you going to let me in what I'm supposed to do, or are you going to keep that little folder all to yourself?" he questioned, pointing out at what Aidan was holding in his hand, as his life depended on it.

"Yes, I am going to keep it to myself," Aidan said stubbornly.

"And why is that if I may ask?" Heathcliff said smoothly while getting dangerously close.

He knew well what personal space was and he was invading it right now. But Aidan Spark needed a bit of shaking up if they were going to work together.

Aidan took one step back and held the folder to his chest protectively. "It's all per need to know basis."

"For real?" Heathcliff laughed. "I've never heard of such a thing. Also, it appears that there is some miscommunication between you and the photographer. And seeing that I have already tried to keep a smile for half an hour, without looking like a psychopath, I'm starting to get a little annoyed. I did clear my schedule for you, you know."

Aidan seemed to ponder over that, his face all a frown.

"Is it that difficult what you have in that little prep paper there?"

"Kind of," Aidan admitted sheepishly.

"Then tell me about it. I can help," Heathcliff said.

"No, it would sound --" Aidan trailed off.

"Come on," Heathcliff insisted. "You guys want family-friendly. I can handle family-friendly. Is this t-shirt not okay?" He gestured toward his outfit. "Is there anything in how I look that doesn't work? How about the posture?"

Aidan just shook his head repeatedly.

"All right, you have me a little frustrated here," Heathcliff warned. "And I don't plan on wasting my entire day, trying to figure out what you want."

"I can't just tell you," Aidan said, blushing a little.

“How about you show me, then?” Heathcliff came up with an idea.

If Aidan was embarrassed, whatever he had to do had to involve something along the lines of showing off more of his body. With a smirk, he began to unbutton his shirt.

“Um, what are you doing?” Aidan mumbled.

“I suppose I need to change a little the angle for this little ad of yours.”

“You’re way too naked.” Aidan protested, putting his hands up and waving them both like he wanted nothing to do with whatever Heathcliff was proposing.

“Then dress me up how you like,” Heathcliff said with a wide grin.

That seemed to finally propel the corporate bunny into action. Aidan turned on his feet and went straight to the small wardrobe available for various photo shoots. After deliberating and browsing through the clothes neatly placed on hangers for a couple of minutes, Aidan came back with a light blue tank top.

Aidan offered the piece of clothing to Heathcliff. “Here.”

“Hmm,” Heathcliff said in a non-committal tone but picked up the tank top.

“And maybe change into some shorts?” Aidan added, rubbing his chin in thought.

Heathcliff waited patiently for Aidan to come back with the other piece to complete his outfit. He had no troubles acting with nonchalance as he opened the fly on his slacks. Aidan looked away, and Heathcliff smiled to himself. The bunny was so damn easy.

“Perfect.” Aidan nodded when Heathcliff was finally wholly dressed.

“Are you guys ready to take it from the top? Ah, that’s definitely better,” the photographer commented. “Showing off those guns, eh?”

He winked at Aidan, for some reason, which made Heathcliff a bit annoyed, for another, equally unknown reason.

“I think we would need something to make them pop even better,” the photographer added. “Let me get you something.”

He disappeared for a minute, only to return with a bottle of body oil. Heathcliff gestured for the photographer to throw it to him, but Aidan was quicker. He looked critically at the label.

“How about something organic?” Aidan placed the bottle back into the photographer’s hand.

The man scoffed. “You have to be kidding me.”

“Please.” Aidan smiled charmingly, and the photographer scurried away, murmuring something under his breath.

“Why did you tell him that?” Heathcliff asked.

Aidan seemed a little surprised at the question. “Well.” He shifted from one foot to the other. “I know you don’t approve of anything that’s too chemical based.”

“Oh, do you?” Heathcliff grinned. “Are you interested in me then?”

Aidan rolled his eyes. “Please. It’s my job. That’s all.”

“And what exactly is that job you’re talking about?” Heathcliff hovered close, well aware of the effect he had on the other.

“You know. To take care of you. To keep you ... you know,” Aidan babbled.

“Happy? Ah, so you’re my slave, then?” Heathcliff chuckled.

“I beg your pardon? No! I’m definitely not your slave!” Aidan sputtered.

“Here it is. Natural formula, 99% of ingredients organic ... Good enough?” The photographer interrupted them by walking back into the room.

“Sure thing,” Heathcliff said and took the bottle from his hand.

Then he pushed it into Aidan’s right hand.

“Now get to work, slave,” Heathcliff said the last word in a low whisper.

Aidan exhaled. “Okay.”

Heathcliff watched as Aidan proceeded to take off his jacket. And then as he turned to find a chair and put it there. His eyes traveled down his back. Crisp white shirt. No wonder there.

Aidan Spark had a beautiful body, not overly muscular, and not skinny, either. Just right. He was filling his clothes nicely. But, Heathcliff rubbed his lips in thought, that was not the only thing going for him. As Aidan moved around, Heathcliff was fortunate enough to take in what definitely looked like a perfect butt, just the kind to star in a bubble gum commercial for adults, clad in perfectly tailored pants, but still visible enough to make an impression. Heathcliff could feel his interest in Aidan Spark increasing by each second he spent staring at that scrumptious ass.

“Let’s do this,” Aidan interrupted his train of thought. He rolled up his sleeves, and he began pouring oil into one palm.

“You know there might be personnel here that can do this instead,” Heathcliff said with satisfaction, as Aidan started to apply the body oil on his biceps.

The hazel, green speckled, eyes set on him without one moment of hesitation. “Don’t forget you’re an asset to us, Mr. Stone.” Aidan’s lips twitched in amusement. “I could never allow anyone else to touch you.”

“Please, as I told you, call me Heathcliff. I’m not that kind of master,” Heathcliff said.

“Ah, it’s hard for me to do that. I told you,” Aidan mirrored his words, “that you’re nothing like a Heathcliff.”

“What can I tell you, man? My mom and her obsession for the Brontë sisters.” Heathcliff shrugged. “How about Heath then? I’m generous, as you can see.”

“Okay, since I see that you play the victim’s role in this, I might call you Heathcliff,” Aidan said with a small laugh.

“Good, good, it’s nice to see that we’re making headway.” Heathcliff smiled. “Hey, I think you missed a spot.”

It was nice to see Aidan standing up to him. It made even a boring photo shoot an exciting event.

“You are thoroughly oiled, master,” Aidan said, his eyes glinting with mischief.

“Damn,” Heathcliff whispered. “Are you into roleplay, perhaps?”

Aidan chose to play along. “A master shouldn’t be interested in his slave’s preferences regarding how he spends his free time.”

All this time, his hands were carefully spreading the oil on Heathcliff’s smooth skin. By how those fingers moved while touching him, wrapping around each muscle, Heathcliff was sure the situation was as close to being an erotic massage as something like that could be.

Also, Aidan was so close that Heathcliff could freely inhale his scent. It was clear as day that Aidan Spark followed his hygiene routine to the letter. It was almost impossible to smell anything that was close of human nature. And Heathcliff was dying to know how the smell of clean sweat on Aidan’s skin would be like. Under those stiff clothes, Aidan had to be a twink. Or, if his assessment was right, and since he looked like he had a bit of meat on his bones, a twunk.

Heathcliff laughed, getting a hold of himself. “You’re full of surprises, Spark.”

“Spark? Call me Aidan, please,” he replied.

“Hmm, as your master I should give you a new name, too.”

“I have a feeling I’m not going to like it.” Aidan continued to insist on spots as if he didn’t want to let go of Heathcliff’s arms just yet.

“Hmm, Sparky?”

Aidan removed his hands as if burned. “You’re so conceited, Stone.”

“Ah, so we’re back to last name basis?” Heathcliff joked.

Aidan nodded. “It might be the most suitable for our business relationship.”

Heathcliff laughed. “I thought we were in a master-slave relationship.”

Aidan snorted. “In your dreams.”

“Are you guys ready?” The photographer intervened.

“Almost,” Aidan replied. “Can you, um,” he addressed Heathcliff, “push your shorts a little lower?”

“What?” Heathcliff frowned just to see Aidan blushing again.

“You know. Lower them on your hips a little.”

“I can’t. My hands are now all oily, thanks to you,” Heathcliff teased. “You’ll have to do it for me.”

For a second, Heathcliff thought that Aidan would protest, but right away, without hesitation, he wiped his hands on a tissue. Quickly, the said hands were on his waist, fiddling with his shorts. It also looked like Aidan’s cheeks were getting a big red, but his fingers remained steady, nonetheless.

“There.” Aidan took one step back and admired his masterpiece.

It had all happened way too quickly. Heathcliff had a mind to ask for more adjustments, but, by how the photographer was checking his phone, they were probably late anyway.

He grabbed the glass from the table again.

“Yes, like this.” Aidan began to issue the indications, instead of the photographer who was only interested in shooting picture after picture, moving around. “Now, a bit from the side.”

Heathcliff followed the demands without a fuss. Now he was damn curious, though. And he would ask a question or two.

Half an hour later, when they looked on a computer screen at the raw pics, his chance came.



“How is this supposed to be family-friendly?”

“Don’t you like it?” Aidan asked. “Families are also made of housewives who don’t mind putting their hubbies to work out and drink protein shakes if they’re going to look this good.” He explained.

“I see. A rather unexpected explanation, but I’ll take it.”

“So, what do you think of them?”

“Pretty damn sexy. I’m not particularly into self-loving, but I’d give myself the daily screw,” Heathcliff joked.

Aidan shook his head. “So damn full of yourself.”

“What? You jealous?” Heathcliff drawled the words. “By what I saw, you have nothing to worry about. You have plenty, and I really mean it, plenty, going for you.”

Aidan’s eyes narrowed to thin slits. He turned his head, to stare at Heathcliff. He was just a couple of inches shorter. Heathcliff liked how he could easily stare into Aidan’s eyes from so up close.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he said.

“Oh, nothing, just the little secret you’re hiding in your pants,” Heathcliff continued to tease him.

The look on Aidan’s face was incredibly hilarious.

Aidan blushed. “It’s not little.”

“Oh, sorry. It’s just a manner of speaking. It’s not little at all. Actually, it’s pretty damn ...”

“Wait, how can you tell?” Aidan questioned. “I mean, do you have X-ray vision or something?”

“Hmm, no, but it’s not like it’s not sticking out,” Heathcliff said. “I had a hard time tearing my eyes off of it.”

“Sticking out?” Aidan looked down on himself with a horrified shout.

For a second, Heathcliff was confused. Then he started laughing.

“Wait, what did you think I was talking about?” he asked, wiping a few tears from his eyes.

Aidan looked so guilty and adorable at the same time that Heathcliff wanted to smooch him on the spot.

“I was,” he leaned in and whispered into his ear, “talking about the treasure booty you have there, worthy of starring in ads for bubble gum.”

“Bubble what?” Aidan seemed thoroughly flustered.

“Hmm, don’t tell me you don’t know?” Heathcliff teased some more.

“Know what?” Aidan almost choked this time around.

“That you have one of the most gorgeous and delicious asses I’ve ever seen in my life? Trust me; I know what I’m talking about.”

Aidan was so red now, even the tip of his ears was crimson.

“Are we done here?” Aidan said calmly, although it appeared that he was on the point of breaking down. “Please let me know if I can drop you somewhere. We should leave since we’ve taken plenty of the photographer’s day.”

Wow, points for at least trying, Heathcliff smirked. He would have this corporate bunny in the bag sooner than initially thought. And now Heathcliff was pretty sure he wanted to do more than just tease him.

Yeah, it was as fun as he had imagined, and even something on top of that.

### *Chapter Three – Nice Shape*

Did it count as a weakness of character the fact that he was fapping furiously in the shower to the umpteenth recount of what had happened earlier that day at the photo shoot? Aidan was pretty sure it did but just as true it was that he could not help it.

Heathcliff Stone could charm the panties off a nun with his flirting. Or maybe, just maybe, Aidan just needed to get laid. Once he had that virginity - partial virginity! - thing out of the way, he would act less like a hormone-driven teenager, and more like the professional he was.

Plus, he really needed to get a cooler head. He had so believed his semi could have been visible through his pants when Heathcliff had teased him about his ass. Talking about misunderstandings.

Speaking of which, Aidan thought as he sneaked one soapy hand behind to tease that unfortunately still virgin opening, he needed to find someone willing to help him get rid of his V-card. For now, the fresh memories of oiling Heathcliff Stone's amazing muscled arms, and almost touching his ass had to do.

Aidan pulled down the skin from his cock, at the same time as two fingers began penetrating his ass. Ah, damn, why the hell couldn't he be a little bolder? By twenty-two, as a gay guy who wasn't in any sort of denial or confusion, he should have had already a long list of fuck buddies. But no, he had to study and work all the frigging time, and that left him little leeway to create that fuck buddy list. The brief encounters Aidan had marked down as the only experiences in his life, as far as sexual congress was concerned, didn't matter. If he were to think about them, he could not recall them in explicit details.

Unlike what had happened while touching his charge's amazing muscles. He needed to approach the matter of his virginity seriously. Later. Right now, he needed just to close his eyes, remember how Heathcliff friggin' Stone had praised his ass, and how firm his biceps had felt, and just stick both fingers deep inside his ass, to make himself spill all the pent-up energy he had stored in his balls.

Aidan was breathing heavily once done and almost wanted to laugh at himself. When had it been the last time he had jerked off? Maybe a week ago? The fact that he could not clearly remember was terrible in itself. At his age, he was supposed to be more sexually active, much more sexually active.

And probably spend a lot less time on social media. Good thing he had stumbled on Heathcliff's videos, though. At least he was working out almost daily and made at least ten percent healthy choices when it came to food. Otherwise, things would have probably been much worse.

Aidan stepped out of a shower, and he was about to begin drying himself with a towel when Heathcliff's remark about his ass rushed to his mind. Turning to one side, he started checking

himself in the mirror. Well, his ass was pretty well shaped up. Funny, before, he had thought that it was a bummer he had that kind of ass. His type of ass was definitely not plumped like this. No matter how much he exercised, he didn't seem capable of losing more of that.

It was definitely nothing like Heathcliff's behind. Before Saturday, he had only been able to guess the beautiful shape of those gluteus maximus muscles through the material of the fashionable sportswear Heathcliff liked to use when recording his videos.

But now, oh, damn, he thought with a sigh. Now he knew everything. He had seen it firsthand. Tabloids were never that risky in presenting Heathcliff's adventures. The most they had shown were snapshots of him from afar when in nothing but the buff or censored photos.

And, for someone who certainly enjoyed his sexy adventures to the max, Heathcliff didn't care about posting racy pics or videos on his social media. He was all professional there, and he wasn't displaying himself as a desirable sex object, unlike other celebrities. Not that he wasn't a very much desirable sex object.

Aidan knew he really needed to get a hold of himself. One, he could not objectify Heathcliff Stone like that, especially now that he had met him in flesh and blood. Two, because that hadn't been the way he had been raised. He knew better. His mom and dad would have shaken their heads over his behavior. Not that he would have ever told his parents something like that. Only the thought was making him cringe.

Despite the lecture he was trying to give himself mentally, for some unfathomable reason, he had a massive crush on a celebrity. Well, a celebrity who wasn't looking down on people, that was for sure, but a celebrity, nonetheless.

Aidan shook his head. Maybe Heathcliff had just been teasing him. And his butt was, well, a bit too ... plump. Heathcliff Stone was now a business partner to his company, and Aidan could keep things at a professional level.

With that decision in mind, Aidan stepped into his living room. The phone rang, and he hurried to take the call. Anyone calling after nine PM had probably a very good reason to do so. The caller ID gave him pause, but he swiped right in less than an instant.

"Hey, Spark." Heathcliff's energetic voice boomed into his ear.

With a small wince, Aidan moved his phone a bit away.

He decided to play along. "What's up, Stone?"

"A small evening workout routine is up," Heathcliff replied promptly.

"Seriously? At this hour?" Aidan checked the clock on the wall, just to be sure.

“Well, since you put a span in my works with your confidentiality agreements and whatnot, I have some energy left to waste. And I never let anything go to waste.”

“But seriously, it’s nine o’clock in the evening,” Aidan protested, pointing out the obvious. “And don’t you know it’s the morning routine that burns all the fat?”

He was using one of Heathcliff’s favorite phrases on purpose, to see if he could piss him off.

“Sure, sure.” Heathcliff chuckled at the other end. “But I don’t want you to lose that butt.”

Aidan wondered for a second whether his blushing could somehow be felt through the phone.

“Seriously, stop teasing a guy over his weak points,” he mumbled.

“Weak points?” Heathcliff seemed taken aback. “Bunny, the only weak point you have is your stiff personality.”

Aidan had a mind of just cutting off the convo. The guy had some nerve. “Bunny?” He pretended to be pissed off at the nickname. It was kind of cute, though. “What of me makes you think of a bunny?” he insisted.

“Well, you’re always on the run,” Heathcliff replied. “I should call you a busy bee, too, but that’s not sexy.”

“Oh, god,” Aidan murmured. “How would you like me to give you a nickname? And frankly, bunny would be a much better nickname for you than for me.”

“Really? Why?” Heathcliff played along.

“You know.” Aidan felt a little worked up. “Because of how much you fu --”

He caught himself in time. He was not supposed to insult his company’s business associates.

“Are you trying to tell me I’m fucking like a bunny? Oh, I can assure you I’m not fast at all,” Heathcliff drawled, making Aidan blush a little more. He wasn’t even in the same room with him and could make his knees go weak. “Anyway, come by, and I’ll show you why exercising in the evening has certain benefits.”

Heathcliff didn’t even wait for him to reply and cut off the conversation. Aidan had a mind just to pretend he hadn’t been invited to exercise at nine o’clock in the evening, and just see about his usual routine.

But, somehow, he felt compelled to dance to Heathcliff’s tune. No, that wasn’t right. He felt drawn like a moth to a flame. He just hoped he wouldn’t get burned too much.

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Heathcliff was probably known to tabloids and whatnot as someone who acted on impulse, but that was far from it. Even the craziest of his adventures were well thought over, and, if he ended making the headlines, that was because he didn't care. Actually, once he had seen what tabloids meant for his popularity as a fitness trainer, he had philosophically decided that any publicity was good publicity, after all.

And, to make the circle complete, that brought him enough business to make him even more worthy of starring in trashy papers.

Of course, there had to be some turning point, one way or another, and that had just come as the endorsement deal offered by The Healthy Shakers. Now it was the right time to put to the test whether the lack of appearance in tabloids would have a negative or positive impact on his audience.

The money was good. What was even better, he had a babysitter. And Heathcliff was quite curious about what Aidan Spark was hiding, and not only beneath his tailored suit. For starters, it was underneath the dry cleaned clothes that one could find a delicious rump. Yeah, Heathcliff wanted to see more of that. He had no idea why Aidan was saying that was his weak point. Or how he could blush like that.

If he was gay, which Heathcliff was almost one hundred percent sure that it was the truth, it was difficult to imagine he had no experience. Despite his attitude and yuppie personality, Aidan had to unwind once in a while. And he must have had at least a bit of college experimentation under his belt. If gay guys in the area were leaving Aidan Spark and his gorgeous behind alone, they were either blind or he, Heathcliff Stone, was one damned lucky fucker.

Heathcliff whistled as he put on the thinnest t-shirt and sports shorts he had around. It was clear as day that Aidan was far from being indifferent to his body. So he intended to show it as much as possible. The outline of his cock through those shorts was just impossible to miss.

Maybe Aidan needed a little friendly nudge. Maybe he had been the proverbial bookworm in school. But Aidan was taking care of himself, as far as Heathcliff could tell, which meant that the guy wanted, at least unconsciously, to put himself out there.

If that was what Aidan lacked in his life, Heathcliff was happy to oblige. Also, he was damned curious to see what shape Aidan was in, without that many clothes.

The buzzing sound let him know that his guest and personal project for the evening had arrived. With a smirk, he began walking down the stairs.

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“Why are you in a suit?” was Heathcliff’s first question as he took in his guest, standing in the door. “What part of evening exercising was unclear?”

Aidan put one finger up. It was like the young man was rehearsing a role, one that hadn't been his in the beginning. Yeah, Heathcliff thought. The corporate bunny nickname suited him. He was probably brainwashed on a regular basis. But Heathcliff truly wanted to have a say in that.

"I don't remember agreeing to anything."

"Then why are you here?" Heathcliff crossed his arms.

And didn't miss how Aidan's pretty hazel and green speckled eyes lingered on his guns.

"To ... assist you in any way I can. Maybe --"

"Hush. I'll lend you some sports clothes. Come."

"But I don't --"

"Hey, I thought you were supposed to keep me happy." Heathcliff interrupted him again.

Aidan Spark was there because he was curious. Also, because, most probably, he couldn't or wouldn't help himself. There was interest there, but also a lot of hesitation and Heathcliff wanted to bring the real Aidan Spark to light. He could bet he would be in for a delightful surprise.

"And how does making me work out at this hour keep you happy?" Aidan questioned.

"Well, I would rather have anyone working with me be at the peak of their health," Heathcliff said.

"Oh, that's why your agent looks like he's one hamburger away from having a coronary."

Heathcliff could feel his lips twitch. Corporate bunny was a witty thing, too.

"That man, unfortunately," Heathcliff sighed, "might just be a lost cause. I say 'might', because I'm still not giving up on him. But I have a theory, and you're the perfect subject."

"Would you mind sharing that theory?" Aidan said.

Heathcliff rummaged through his drawers and came up with some sportswear he knew it was too tight for him, but he was still keeping around for no reason.

"Here." Heathcliff threw the t-shirt and the shorts to his guest.

"Okay," Aidan sighed. "Um, some privacy?"

Heathcliff smirked at him. "What? Haven't you ever changed in a locker room with all the other boys?"

"Well, they weren't looking at me," Aidan said, casting his eyes down.

“Who says I’m going to look at you? And really, what do you think you have to hide? I can assure you I’ve seen plenty of naked men in my life.”

Aidan exhaled. “Yeah, that’s the problem.”

Hmm, Heathcliff could smell a bit of insecurity there. So endearing. All right, for the moment, he would allow the bunny a little room to feel more secure.

“I’ll be downstairs,” Heathcliff said.

“Okay,” Aidan replied, and this time he sounded grateful.

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Heathcliff was proud of his home gym. And he intended to make Aidan Spark work out a little so that he could see how much he could push him around and get away with. It was funny how exciting the prospect of seducing the yuppie seemed. To be fair, as much awesome sex he usually had, he wasn’t as enthusiastic as he had used to be.

Everything was, well, at least for him, too easy. And he didn’t only think that because he was a bit too full of himself, although many would have said exactly that about him. It was a simple fact. With his growing popularity, ending up in bed with whoever he wanted was too damn easy. Not that his physique and personal charm weren’t usually enough. But being a recognizable face surely made his charisma go through the roof.

“I’m here.” A hesitant voice called, and he turned to look at his guest.

Who looked pretty good in clothes that were a bit too large for him. Funny thing, Heathcliff hadn’t thought before that he liked this type. The cute, hesitant, ready to bolt bunny type.

“Let’s see you.” Heathcliff walked toward Aidan.

Without hesitation, he grabbed Aidan’s right arm, feeling his muscles. Nice. Firm enough. Seeing how many young people were not enthralled with the prospect of working out, it was good that Aidan Spark was, indeed, as he expected, taking care of himself.

Heathcliff made Aidan turn, taking in that bubblegum butt that was making the entire thing tenfold more interesting.

“Okay,” he said. “You seem in pretty nice shape.”

“Thank you,” Aidan answered primly.

“Are you smoking?”

“No!” came the absolutely terrified reply.



“What about drinking?”

“Are you serious?” Aidan sputtered. “Of course not! I mean, only on special occasions.”

“Hey, as your trainer ...”

Aidan pursed his lips. “Again, I have absolutely no idea when I agreed to that.”

“And yet, you’re still here, and ready for a workout.”

“Okay,” Aidan said with a small, exasperated huff.

“Fast food?”

No response. Ah, that was the problem.

“Too busy working?” Heathcliff asked again.

“Something like that,” Aidan mumbled like a kid caught doing something naughty.

“I will give you hints and pointers along the way about nutrition, as well. But, for starters, think more colors on your plate.”

“Ketchup is red,” Aidan said promptly.

Heathcliff could feel his lips twitching, eager to smile. Don’t put it behind the corporate bunny to give him lip.

“Sure, sure,” he replied. “My theory is to teach good habits as early in life as possible.”

“Then I’m a lost cause because I’m already twenty-two,” Aidan said.

“Twenty-two? That’s a perfect age, actually,” Heathcliff said. “Young people should create their own lifestyle once away from their parents. It is a test. There’s no one to tell you what to do and what to eat, so you need to decide all that for yourself.”

Aidan sighed. “And the fast food menu is just a convenient way to start.”

“Which is bad.” Heathcliff put one hand on Aidan’s shoulder and wagged his finger at him.

“Let’s see you on the treadmill.”

He crossed his arms and looked at Aidan. He began running at a casual pace. All seemed good. His favorite corporate bunny was in reasonably good shape.

“Um, how long should I do this?” Aidan asked, without stopping.

“A little more,” Heathcliff said.

He wanted to see him sweating a little, but nothing else. When Heathcliff stopped the machine and gestured for Aidan to get down, he observed with satisfaction how strands of the perfect slick hair were now curling against Aidan's forehead. And there was a bit of sweat on his upper lip.

Heathcliff almost wanted to lean in and have a taste. But he wasn't that kind of seducer. Aidan would come to him because he wanted to, and not because he was pressed into anything.

Instead, he slipped into his professional shoes. If he were to admire Aidan's lovely body and let his own pleasure demand its rights, he would reach the end of this way too soon.

Aidan was proving to be a fast learner, and quite obedient when it came to having everything explained to him in logical terms. Apparently, only when teased, the bunny made a fuss. And that was okay.

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Heathcliff nodded. "Okay. You have good stamina. I like that."

"I bet," Aidan said in a low voice, almost to himself.

"What was that?" Heathcliff asked right away.

"Nothing. I'm not used to work out at this hour."

His personal trainer chose to ignore his not so hidden pleas to finish the training session. Aidan could feel the sweat pouring down his back and not only. Being like this, in front of Heathcliff Stone, made him feel a bit awkward.

Actually, awkward was not the right word. He felt a bit too hot, and it wasn't only because of the physical exertion he was put through. Heathcliff's eyes were on him, at all times, evaluating him, and Aidan could feel their cool fire, which, most probably, made the man's lovers and not only as hot as he was feeling at the moment.

It was as if something was about to happen. Aidan knew well what was hoping to happen. Partially. Not totally. Heathcliff was fucking handsome men that could star in movies and ads. He could not see anything else but a temporary distraction in someone like Aidan.

False modesty was not among his flaws. Aidan knew he was pretty handsome himself, but he wasn't in Heathcliff Stone's league. And while studying to be among the top of his class had been an endeavor he had managed with flying colors, physical appearance was not something that could be treated equally.

Some people just had it. Aidan worked out and wanted to be attractive, but it was only that much he could do. The few times when he had gone to gay clubs, he had been picked up and had not

been refused, but his partners had been in the same league as him. Plus, playing safe meant he didn't have to be disappointed.

And Heathcliff Stone looked like disappointment in the works incarnate. He was a teaser, a professional flirter, but Aidan didn't want to be a notch on his belt and nothing else. What was he thinking? Heathcliff found it entertaining to tease him because he was probably bored. Aidan would have been lucky to be a notch on his belt.

But, if Aidan were honest to himself and his chances, and also took into consideration how detached Heathcliff looked right now, although as intense as he always was when explaining his routines, he just needed to take his mind off of that.

Well, in theory. Because while he obediently went through all the directions Heathcliff gave him, he could think of nothing else but why he was not already making a move. Aidan knew he couldn't resist. But he was doing nothing but behave like a professional trainer, which he was.

That was that. Most probably, Heathcliff wanted to make sure that the people working with him and representing him had, at least, some dedication for fitness. It was a logical explanation.

Not that it sat well with him. Either way, he would be disappointed. And he needed to think of going for deals that didn't come with that kind of unpleasant consequences, which meant playing on the safe side, like usual.

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Aidan could not believe that was over. He had practically had a personal training session with Heathcliff Stone, and he knew well how much that was supposed to cost. If he were to think about it, basically, he was taking advantage of his position. But, hell, the workout had made him feel really good, and also, Heathcliff had been nothing but professional, save for that little teasing in the beginning.

Well, he did feel good, but he could not deny the disappointment he felt. Disappointment that should not have been there, seeing how he was so determined to play on the safe side. Nonetheless, he had expected a bit more from visiting Heathcliff at home, after dark, regardless of his internal battles concerning how much the fitness guru was out of his league. Yet, Heathcliff hadn't made a move to touch him in any way that could be deemed inappropriate.

“What the hell?” He murmured to himself.

Had he really expected to be assaulted? Actually, that was one tiny reason why he had never gone too far with the guys he had tried to hook up. His parents had ingrained in him to be cautious, really, really cautious, and even if now he was no longer living with them, and he was pretty much on his own, those teachings were still in his head, stopping him from doing something that could be deemed dangerous. Even if just a little. Even if he wanted to do

something that was, at least, a tiny bit dangerous. Even if it meant that he would experience the bitter taste of disappointment, which was there, despite all that.

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Heathcliff had every reason to pat himself on the back for his restraint. The bunny had looked a bit dejected upon leaving, which meant that he had prepped himself for something else, certainly different from a regular training session.

Heathcliff had enjoyed training him. Aidan Spark had the vitality and good shape of a body at that age, and he was catching fast. He was also intelligent, and he knew what questions to ask. And that, for someone who taught others healthy living, pretty much felt like a victory.

Now he was curious. What was going to be the bunny's next move? He was ripe for the taking, as far as someone as experienced as Heathcliff could tell.

But why was he, Heathcliff, hesitating? Again, he tried to tell himself that it was because he wanted to give the young man enough space to make his own choices. Yet, with the bunny out the door, Heathcliff began to feel a tad impatient now.

Whatever he liked, he took. And people threw themselves at his feet, so it wasn't like he needed to pressure anyone into giving in. But, with Aidan, he felt like, no matter how slow he knew he had to take things, he wanted everything and he wanted it right that moment. Only his moral compass, and yes, he had one of those, prevented him from overwhelming the bunny and get him to yield. At some simple level, he knew he would win.

Yet, somehow, that wasn't good enough.

Aidan had gotten out of his shower, two buttons open off his shirt, smelling good, and with a hooded promise in his beautiful innocent eyes. But Heathcliff had ignored all the signs, and just kept the door for him to leave.

Heathcliff shook his head and smiled. Soon he would be thirty. Maybe he felt like he was turning a new page in his life. Hmm, he had never thought of that before.

He could just throw those confidentiality agreements at the bottom of a drawer, forget about them, and go partying. It wasn't like Aidan Spark could watch him all the time. But he felt it wasn't right to do such a thing.

Also, Heathcliff wasn't exactly in the mood to party. What he wanted was not in some posh club or bar, and waiting to wave at him from the sidelines. What he wanted was, for the first time in his life, a completely different person than the type he usually took to bed.

## *Chapter Four – Happy Birthday To Me!*

“Is this all?”

Aidan raised his eyes from the papers they had been perusing together until earlier. Trying to keep a professional attitude about the whole deal was tough. But after a lot of deliberation with himself, he had decided that he could not try doing something inappropriate with Heathcliff. He was off limits. Plus, he didn't look that interested. The teasing had been, after all, nothing but teasing,

“Yes, it is all,” he said, placing his hands neatly over the papers.

“May I offer you anything? I can make you something,” Heathcliff offered.

Aidan stood up. Spending too much time together with Heathcliff was bound to make him do something foolish that he would regret later. Was he that desperate that he was willing to humiliate himself by throwing himself at Heathcliff Stone, a celebrity that could not care less about him and ALSO had plenty of handsome guys to choose from? He would just say ‘no’; Aidan was sure that would happen.

“No, thank you,” he said and offered his hand to say goodbye in the manliest manner he could think off.

Heathcliff took it in his and held it. Aidan kept a frozen professional smile on his face.

“It's a real pleasure doing business with you, Mr. Stone,” he said.

Heathcliff smiled. “What's with the formalities? I thought we were friends.”

Aidan knew he should withdraw his hand, but he couldn't. “I think it's better this way. I hope you have nothing against it.”

Why was he talking like they had done something together, something that was frowned upon? Nothing had happened, much to his chagrin. Heathcliff pulled him closer, using his superior strength, and looked him in the eye.

“Kid,” he said, challenging him.

Aidan could feel the warmth from his hand which was the only part of his body in close connection to Heathcliff, spreading up his arm. His host's bulged bicep as he was holding his arm flexed was too distracting. Heathcliff had maneuvered their hands that they were now linked together, as if they were two players, congratulating each other after a fight.

He knew his way out of this. He had seen movies and whatnot. The way to do it was to be casual, yet keep the professional boundaries.

“Okay, Stone, you got me. I’m a kid. I’m ... What? Eight years your junior? Laugh all you want.”

Yeah, that was kind of it. Some playful banter like between acquaintances, without being real bros, or anything remotely similar.

“No one’s laughing, Spark,” Heathcliff replied, but his eyes were lit with amusement now. “Sure you don’t want to hang out? I might have an orgy planned later, and this is your only chance to foil it.”

Aidan inhaled. “I don’t buy that.”

Damn, it wasn’t right for Heathcliff Stone to smell so good. Maybe he could stop breathing when he was around. Or he could put more distance between them, right now.

“Maybe some other time,” he added quickly.

“What? Do you really want to be part of some orgy? I’m afraid you might steal the show.” Heathcliff’s eyes glinted with mischief.

Aidan rolled his eyes. “Are you for real?” he groaned, and finally pulled his hand free.

“No. I’d never drag you to an orgy. You’re way too stiff, and by the time you loosen up, the party would be over. Just to make something clear. Are we done with the ‘Mr. Stone’ crap? Call me Heathcliff, or Heath.”

“Or Stone.” Aidan shrugged.

“Okay, if that’s how you like it.” Heathcliff nodded. “See you around then?”

“I’ll let you know. The ad is coming up nicely. We’ll make a star out of you.”

“I’m already a star, kid,” Heathcliff said with too much self-importance to be taken seriously.

Against himself, he snickered.

“Ha, got you,” Heathcliff pointed at him.

“Yeah, you got me.” Aidan grabbed his suitcase. “See ya,” he said brightly like he meant it.

On his way out, he pretended he could not feel Heathcliff’s gorgeous eyes following him. It was, most probably, just his imagination and wishful thinking.

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“Am I really supposed to keep an eye on the guy while he’s celebrating? He’s most probably with his friends, his family --” Aidan tried to protest.

For the love of everything he held dear, he needed to keep away from Heathcliff Stone, as much as he could. Being sent to crash his birthday party was just the opposite of what he tried to achieve, which was to keep his wits about him and accept that nothing could happen between him and the sexy fitness guru.

“Spark,” his boss stopped him. “The man has two million followers on social media. He has millions of hits on his videos, and that’s even more people if you add all the visualizations together. Do you have any idea how much money we save in advertising? You know, I suppose, how an advertising budget works. We’re paying this guy a fraction of that. Only a fraction. So, if I want you to go down to his house, and make sure that he keeps his dick in his pants, especially since his birthday won’t go unnoticed by tabloids, then that is something you do.”

Aidan opened his mouth a few times, wanting to contradict his boss a little. But, after all, that was his boss, and no matter how bluntly he was putting it, that was the truth. Ultimately, his job was to prevent Heathcliff from ending up in the headlines, especially if those headlines were going to contain some X-rated details of his personal life.

But, at the same time, Aidan could not deny that it was making him feel a little dirty to do what he was told. A part of him, a righteous one, was revolting against it. Why was anyone’s business who Heathcliff welcomed into his bed?

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“Working hard or hardly working?” Heathcliff teased him, the moment he saw him.

“Sorry, I practically invited myself over. Happy birthday,” Aidan said with a perfunctory smile while handing the host a bottle of wine. “I hope this is okay.”

“It surely is.” Heathcliff took him by the shoulder and guided him inside. “I was expecting something less formal, though,” he pointed at Aidan’s clothes.

“It’s a new suit,” Aidan explained.

“Still, just as formal as the others I saw you in. Seriously, were you born in a suit?” Heathcliff asked.

Aidan felt a tiny bit dizzy only taking in his host’s scent. Heathcliff looked amazing in casual clothes, a pleasant shade of blue that was making his eyes look even more magnetic. Aidan wanted nothing else but to lose himself in those seas of blue and get closer.

He caught himself just in time.

“I see you have a lot of guests,” he noticed.

“Yes, please feel free to mingle.”

If Aidan had known how to mingle, he would not have had a V-card to worry about. So that was easier said than done.

With a sigh, he took in the crowd by the pool. Heathcliff's list of friends was truly glamorous. Aidan could bet that the net worth of everyone strung together was enough to buy an entire neighborhood, if not a small town. They weren't necessarily billionaires or A-list celebrities, but they were well off enough, and Aidan felt there like a fish out of water.

But it was a good and well deserved cold shower he was getting right now. He had no place in that world. That is why he wasn't on the list of invites, and there only on a mission from work. A somewhat sleazy task that was making him feel a bit ill to the stomach, but the kind of thing on which his job was depending on.

Heathcliff left his side to talk to other guests, like the good host he was. Aidan shrugged and grabbed a glass filled with some bubbly liquid. Maybe if he drank a little, that would settle his nerves.

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Heathcliff had been a tad surprised to see Aidan knocking down his door, but he was glad the young man was there. Except for a few quick encounters over ads and whatnot, they had not had a lot of time to talk over the last week. He had barely managed to get Aidan to stop acting as formal as the suit he was wearing.

Heathcliff had an idea what was happening. Aidan was a tiny bit pissed. Ever since that night, when he had summoned him for an evening workout session, Aidan had been a little bit of a porcupine, the corporate version.

For the moment, Heathcliff had thought it to be for the better. He was getting a bit too interested in a young man with who, by the nature of their business relationship, he was not supposed to get involved.

Also, he had expected Aidan to take some steps and express his desires if any were there. He had thought that giving him room for maneuver would make him a little less of a scared bunny.

But Aidan Spark had tried to be nothing but professional throughout their meetings, and Heathcliff was starting to wonder whether maybe his gay-dar and his charm were bound to fail one time in a million.

He tried to catch a glimpse of Aidan, scouting the area, after some recent acquaintances had grabbed his attention. He was nowhere in sight, unfortunately. If there was one thing Heathcliff truly wanted for his birthday, he had an inkling that his present had just walked over his threshold. Or maybe he tried to appease his somewhat wounded pride by what looked like Aidan's total disinterest in his person.



“Hey, Heath.” Someone caught him from behind.

“Hey, Randy?” he said questioningly while turning and taking in the handsome brunet who was still keeping his hands on his waist.

“Hey, nice to see you recognize me. I suppose that’s progress.” Randy flashed a nice smile at him. “I’ve just got back from Italy. It was all business, unfortunately, and I didn’t have enough time to indulge in either Italian cuisine or Italian men. Of course, when I saw your invite in my e-mail, I told myself that there is something here that entire Italy can’t offer. Or, better said, someone.”

Randy was wiggling his eyebrows in a very suggestive way that left no room for guesswork. Heathcliff could feel the familiar stir in his groin, looking at him. Randy was a particularly talented rider, as far as he could remember. While he liked it on top, he wasn’t a top. And that was the kind Heathcliff liked best. Also, the attempt at seduction, as much as it was the same old, same old, was more than welcome. Heathcliff seriously needed to get laid.

Seeing how he hadn’t gotten laid in a while now, ever since Aidan ‘Bubble Butt’ Spark had walked into his life, he could allow himself a small indiscretion. After all, it was his birthday.

So, taking Randy’s hand and inviting him on a tour of the grounds, he decided that it was the right time to put an end to his self-imposed celibacy.

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There was a wicked hot tongue in his ear, and warm hands feeling his abs, and, by all means, he should have been up and ready for action. And he was all that. The problem was one of focus. Never before had he been troubled enough to underperform while a sexy bed partner was in his arms, prepared for what always happened when someone got freaky with Heathcliff Stone: an incendiary sex session that the said partner would want to talk about with his friends.

So he was up and ready. Hell, he was hard enough to split logs through the sheer power of his neglected dick. But while his hands were all over Randy, his mind was wandering to a particular corporate bunny with a bubble butt to die for, pouty lips, and an attitude that could only be considered a proper challenge for someone as charming as him.

Damn, he wouldn’t fuck a guy while thinking of another, would he?

“Damn, Heath, I just realized I friggin’ missed you.” Randy joked while struggling with his belt.

Heathcliff placed one hand over Randy’s unsteady ones. It could be that he had a little bit too much to drink already. Not that it was usually a problem. Some bottom boys tended to be more uninhibited and pliable with a bit of alcohol in their system. But, right now, Heathcliff didn’t want to rush. If anything, he wanted to take things a little slowly, and clear his head of Aidan Spark, before getting hot and bothered with his friend.

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Aidan heard someone whispering. "I think they went that way."

Acting quickly, he ducked behind a tall bush. Something of how that duo was whispering seemed a little off, at least to his ears.

"It's been such a slow week, ugh," one of the two commented.

The man was quite fat and seemed to have troubles keeping up with the other, who was as tall as the first one was fat. They looked like a comedic duo, except they appeared somehow to be bent on doing something illicit.

The tall one tsked. "Do you believe Stone went off to be some good boy now?"

"We'll catch him, don't worry. It's all clearly because he tries to sell some new so-called family-friendly image. I heard it through the grapevine. He's starting to endorse some new product. And part of the deal is for him to steer clear of his usual lifestyle."

The tall one snorted. "Like the leopard is going to change his spots. I just saw him sneaking around with a guy. Do you think he wants to get down and dirty with his guest? Like out here, in the open?"

"They might go into the house. That would be tricky. I don't know if we could go in undetected."

"Trust me. I have a nose for this. They're outside. Probably Stone thinks no one will miss him for the two minutes he needs to get freaky."

Aidan could feel the tip of his ears glowing red. He moved slowly, decided to follow the two assholes.

"Ah, as I thought." The tall one ducked behind a manicured bush. "He's all over some dude. Do you think you can manage a good angle from here?"

"Sure thing I can. Too bad it's nothing racy. I was expecting a pool full of hot naked people for his birthday, and, instead, things have been nothing but PG-13."

"Yeah, I know. Are you all set?"

Aidan cleared his throat and walked quickly toward the two.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said loudly, making them turn. "I don't think you two are on the guest list."

"Who the fuck are you?" the tall one said through his teeth, trying to keep his voice down.

On purpose, Aidan raised his. "I'm security. So, if you two followed me to the exit, I would be grateful."

He hoped that the noise he was making would make the two assholes disappear.

"What is going on here?" Heathcliff finally emerged from the other side, his guest nowhere in sight.

"These two gentlemen are, I believe, trespassers, Mr. Stone," Aidan said, pleading with his eyes for Heathcliff to play along.

Heathcliff frowned. "That indeed they are. How about you two leave before I need to have my bodyguard here throw you out?"

The two guys were staring, alternatively, to Aidan and Heathcliff, like they could not believe their eyes and ears.

"Bodyguard?" one of them finally dared to talk.

Heathcliff shrugged. "He's a black belt. How about you two go that way?" He pointed toward the garden exit.

"I will see them out if that is fine by you," Aidan said politely.

"Please do so. And then report to me," Heathcliff said.

Aidan played along. "Yes, sir. Gentlemen?" He turned toward the two and gestured for them to follow.

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Heathcliff wanted so much to laugh out loud, but the two were still within earshot.

"What was that all about? Did you hire a bodyguard? Do you even need one?" Randy appeared by his side. "Anyways, where were we?" He caressed his arm suggestively.

"Randy," Heathcliff grabbed the man by the shoulders, "how about calling rain check? Trespassers have a way of putting me out of the mood, seriously out of the mood. But please, have fun. I should continue to entertain my guests, as well."

Randy pursed his lips in disappointment. "I distinctively recall how nothing used to put you out of the mood."

"What can I say, man? It must be the age," Heathcliff joked. "Come on; let's get back to the party. I know exactly someone who would love to make your acquaintance. You'll like him."

Heathcliff took his guest by the shoulders and walked back into the house. From there, he would encourage Randy to mingle with others while he got busy finding his brave knight in shining armor or better said, corporate bunny draped in a nice tailored suit.

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“Ah, there you are.” Heathcliff grabbed Aidan by one arm some hours later. “Didn’t I tell you to report back to me as soon as you were done seeing those bastards out?”

Bunny boy was looking at him wide-eyed. Damn, he was pretty, Heathcliff thought. No, there was no way he would let this one go scot-free. If that happened, he was a total fool, as well as the perfect enemy to his cock. One look at that fresh-faced yuppie and he was sold. And if some work were involved, he wouldn’t be bothered. Actually, he looked forward to the excitement of the conquest. He hadn’t had much of that for a long time.

“I thought, ahem,” Aidan cleared his throat, “that you needed time with your guest. After all, you were interrupted.”

Heathcliff felt like he wanted to grab the young man and kiss him until he couldn’t breathe anymore.

“So, how do you know if I got freaky with that dude?” Heathcliff questioned and leaned in.

Hmm, the yuppie had seemingly indulged in some of the sweet drinks around. His breath smelled faintly of alcohol, but he didn’t seem intoxicated.

“I don’t,” Aidan said promptly. “Wait, I hope you did make him sign that confidentiality agreement, right?”

“Nah, I was way too excited to do that,” Heathcliff said slowly, gauging the tiniest reaction from his precious babysitter, currently bodyguard.

There wasn’t any need for keen attention. Aidan’s face spoke volumes.

“Find him, and have him sign. Ah, don’t tell me he’s already gone!” Aidan began fretting while looking around at the guests starting to leave and saying their goodbyes to the host.

Heathcliff was intercepted by three female social media celebs. Bidding them farewell in as few words as he could manage, he hurried after Aidan who had taken upon himself to hunt down Randy.

“Hey, hey.” He caught Aidan’s arm just in time. “I’m just joking. Chill a little.”

Aidan exhaled. “Good, just give me the papers so I can file them away later.”

“I wasn’t joking about that.” Heathcliff put his arms gently over Aidan’s shoulders. “I was joking about having sex with him.”

It was fun to read all the changes happening in those bright, beautiful eyes from up close. First, disbelief, second, hope, and third, anxiety.

“Are you just pulling my leg?” Aidan complained.

Heathcliff chuckled. “Nah, I wouldn’t. How about you help me clean up?”

Aidan looked at the deserted poolside. There were empty glasses left everywhere, and for some reason, a few canapés were floating in the water. Now that was a bit insulting toward the chef’s efforts, Heathcliff thought.

“I’m joking again,” Heathcliff whispered into Aidan’s ear, taking advantage of how concerned he seemed, most certainly strategizing how to start the cleaning process. “There are hired people especially for that. But they will come late in the morning. Right now, I’m beat.”

Aidan looked at him with dreamy eyes. “I should go, too.”

“No, you should not,” Heathcliff said like Aidan was a bit hard headed. “You know,” he leaned in again, “I was so looking forward to doing it out in the garden. Come.”

He took Aidan by one hand. The last guests were finally out the door so that he could have his fun with his little corporate bunny. Never before had he hoped for a party to finish faster.

Strangely enough, Aidan didn’t protest and followed him. His hand was warm, and the fingers moved slightly like they were small, timid animals trapped inside. Maybe Heathcliff wasn’t the only one with expectations in this.

He liked the backyard garden even more than he liked his house. It was peaceful there, and the tall hedge was keeping things private. Well, except for some assholes like those from earlier who wanted to take advantage of his open house policy on his b-day.

Heathcliff stopped in the same spot where only hours ago, Randy had been busy groping him while he had been busy trying to ignore his tendency to think only of Aidan Spark, regardless of the man in his arms. Probably some battles were just meant to be fought, not won, as well.

Heathcliff laughed. “You see, you sort of cockblocked me.”

“I think I saved your reputation, but have it your way,” Aidan quipped right away.

“Ah, well, I still think I’m entitled to a small compensation,” Heathcliff joked.

He stopped and turned to face Aidan. In the dim light of the breaking dawn, his pretty features seemed a bit harsh. Was he going to scare Aidan away by asking for a kiss? Damn, he was

thinking like a teenager. He almost wanted to slap himself silly. But he needed to promise that he would take things slowly with Aidan Spark, even if that meant pure torture.

“I guess with someone like you, it can’t be helped.” Aidan exhaled and took one step forward.

It was nice to have bunny boy coming at him so honestly. He licked his lips in anticipation. Was he behaving like a star-struck romantic character? Apparently, yes, and it felt ... Refreshing.

Maybe it would help if he closed his eyes and let Aidan gather some much-needed courage to take that step. With a small satisfied sigh, he did that. He could feel the young man moving closer. Now he could inhale his scent.

Firm hands touched his crotch. His eyes snapped open.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“Um, offering some help?” Aidan said questioningly.

The hands began moving away, but Heathcliff caught them and pressed them firmly against the front of his pants. Damn, this was even better.

He clicked his tongue. “Super. Let’s see what you got.”

Aidan seemed particularly bold and absorbed with the task at hand as he struggled with the fly a little, but soon enough Heathcliff’s junior was hanging out in the open. And that little shiver might have been because of the morning breeze, but Heathcliff knew it was something else.

Hesitant, but courageous fingers wrapped around his cock. Heathcliff moved just enough so that he could hook one arm over Aidan’s shoulders. He looked down, enjoying the way Aidan was carefully pulling down the skin and giving the hardening cock friendly tugs.

“You’re good, Spark,” he murmured. “Lots of practice?”

Aidan turned his head to look at him. “Screw you, Stone.”

There was no bite in that. Maybe a tinge of not so well hidden amusement. Aidan was enjoying himself, and Heathcliff was all for being the cause of all that enjoyment.

“Will you mind if I do this?” he asked, sneaking one hand down on Aidan’s back.

“What?” Aidan mumbled.

Heathcliff sighed in contentment as his hand finally reached that delicious bottom he had been dreaming of lately. “Ah, yes,” he drawled.

Aidan stopped for a second, but he didn’t protest. Instead, his rhythm went steady. Heathcliff was busy caressing his ass. Only the way how that perk, round, perfect thing was filling his hand

was enough to make his cock burst. It was maybe the lack of sexual activity during the last week, but he knew he would reach his peak soon.

To stop that from happening too soon, he covered Aidan's hand with his free one.

"Just tell me how you like it," Aidan asked softly. "Do you want me to touch your balls too?"

For a corporate bunny who wore nothing but suits, Aidan Spark was suddenly very much versed in giving other men hand jobs. What were the limits of his knowledge? Heathcliff was dying to find out, but it wouldn't be that day.

He agreed with a grunt, and Aidan moved in front of him so that he could handle both cock and balls better. Aidan was careful to push Heathcliff's pants a little lower to make room for his hand.

"Do you know what else would make me happy?" Heathcliff whispered through his small moans, as he planted both hands on Aidan's ass.

"I'm not going to blow you," Aidan protested, but his voice was a whisper, too.

"Okay, not that. But it's still something that involves your mouth."

Heathcliff almost made Aidan stumble by pulling him close. Aidan's lips tasted of expensive alcohol, but they were sweet, too. His hands hesitated for just one second, and then returned to their job.

There was something akin to art in giving a man a hand job. Each guy had a different way, as Heathcliff could attest. And, right now, he could appreciate Aidan's craft. It wasn't something sophisticated or pretentious. It was the set to work kind of way which seemed to be a denominator of his preppy personality.

It was also a tad endearingly clumsy, yet, the lack of artfulness was compensated by enthusiasm. Aidan's hands were not hurried. They were not so timidly discovering, and Heathcliff wished he could have the staying power to let Aidan unravel everything he was looking for.

It wasn't going to be, though, as much as he wanted that. The excitement and surprise caused by how the smooth hands went up and down his cock and fondled his balls at the same time had to bear fruit soon. All the while, playing with his tongue, as daring and curious as his hands, was adding fuel to the fire.

Heathcliff came with a small growl which made him bite the soft, pliant lips.

"Better now?" Aidan said after a few long seconds spent doing nothing but kissing slowly.

Aidan was kissing him. It was adorable how his pouty lips seemed disappointed as their kiss came to an end, slightly parted and moist. Heathcliff took one long look at his gorgeous

babysitter, bodyguard, and now quite enthusiastic hand job giver. He had been wrong to consider Aidan someone who was not as beautiful and handsome as his regular bed partners. His cuteness could demolish any competition, and it wasn't all about how he looked.

"Definitely better," Heathcliff replied. "I suppose I can finally say. Happy birthday to me," his voice turned to a whisper as he brushed their lips together once more.

He wasn't joking. Not entirely. It had been the perfect present for his thirtieth birthday. So he kissed Aidan on the mouth with a satisfying smack. Aidan giggled and withdrew. "Tissue?" he asked.

Heathcliff nodded and sauntered toward the poolside, where some tissues had to be still around the tables, somewhere.

"Just wait for me here," he said over his shoulder.

"Sure," Aidan called after him.

Damn, Heathcliff cursed under his breath as he stepped on some broken glass. The cleaning team would have a field day. Where the hell were those damn tissues? Maybe he had to go inside to find some.

The sound of a revving engine startled him. He hurried to the front lawn, only to see Aidan's car already turning at the corner.

He shook his head and smiled. The bunny might have escaped this time, but Heathcliff knew now that laying traps would be effective.

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Running from the scene of the crime was everything Aidan could think of. He wasn't drunk, as he had drunk responsibly throughout the party, but he would get in trouble if the police stopped him.

So, despite his impulse to put the pedal to the metal, he opted for the acceptable speed limit.

He had given Heathcliff Stone a hand job. He had jerked off the guy. Wanked him, spanked his monkey, masturbated him ... There were no nice or better words to describe what he had just done. In the spur of the moment, it had seemed so natural. Now, he was scared out of his wits.

How the hell was he going to get out of this? To Heathcliff Stone and everyone else at work, he was supposed to be professionalism incarnate.

And he was pretty sure his job description didn't include hand jobs. What the hell had he been thinking?





## *Chapter Five - In Which Aidan Learns Lies Tend To Have Short Legs*

Heathcliff had his eyes set on Aidan, from the moment he had walked on the set. Even though he really needed all the concentration he could gather since they were now shooting a video, he could not keep from following the cute bunny around, at least with his eyes.

Unlike other times, Aidan had messaged him to meet at the set and hadn't offered the usual courtesy of transportation. He had tried to brush it off, saying to himself that, most probably, Aidan was busy with other work-related tasks, but he knew his gut instinct wasn't lying.

The bunny was avoiding him. And there were a few explanations he could think of, and none was satisfying enough. If there were some problems, they had to be addressed and fast. He had no intention to let Aidan go, but he needed to have the patience to allow the little prey the possibility to surrender on his own accord.

Aidan had run away like a kid who just did something naughty and was now scared of being found out by his parents. Could it be that the bunny was still living with his folks? It wasn't impossible.

He knew little about Aidan, Heathcliff thought, as the assistant on the set began talking to him, explaining what he had to do.

"Just a second." Heathcliff stopped the assistant and sauntered over where Aidan stood on the sidelines, like an extra with no hope of getting selected for the team.

He could see Aidan's eyes growing wide as he approached. By how stiff he stood, it was clear that he was embarrassed and now trying to save face by pretending to be what he considered the perfect professional.

"Hey," Heathcliff said curtly, nodding at Aidan.

"Hey," Aidan replied, just as curtly, and mimicking his nod.

"Aren't you supposed to give me pointers about this?" Heathcliff gestured with his chin over his shoulder, his eyes never leaving Aidan's face.

Aidan licked his lips nervously. Was it wrong for Heathcliff that such a simple gesture was making him want to do nothing but lean over and lick that gorgeous pouting mouth? How come there were so many details about the young man that made him look so endearing? How come he hadn't noticed them right from the start?

As a connoisseur of male beauty, Heathcliff needed to correct that. Aidan's top lip arched enticingly, and all he needed to do was to raise one hand and draw the beautiful shape with his fingers.

Damn, he shook his head. He was getting absurdly romantic these days. What he needed was to drag Aidan to his bed, fuck him into the mattress, and then he would see whether he still behaved like a love-struck teenager or not. He could bet all would fade away. Poets were guys who had troubles getting laid; he was sure of it.

“Hey, Earth to Stone.” Aidan waved one hand in front of him.

Heathcliff caught his hand deftly. “Come with me,” he ordered and practically dragged Aidan after him.

“You don’t need me. I gave all the pointers to the assistant on the set,” Aidan protested but didn’t squirm, as a few people around were already stealing glances in their direction. “He can tell you everything you need to know. He has all the details.”

Heathcliff shook his head. “You’re not delegating this, Spark. I’m your charge, so behave like it. Now, get to work.”

“What’s wrong with working with the assistant?” Aidan whispered.

Heathcliff whispered back. “I don’t like him.”

“You don’t? By all means, I’d say he is your type.”

They were talking in hushed voices while the other people were getting busy with the props. The assistant was a tall, slender guy in his twenties, with a charming smile, and come hither looks. Heathcliff nodded perfunctorily at him. Aidan wasn’t wrong. But right that moment, he wasn’t interested.

“He’s not you,” he said into Aidan’s ear, making sure to brush his lips lightly over the heated tip.

“Okay, you spoiled fitness guru,” Aidan replied, a bit annoyed. “Really, guru? This so doesn’t apply to you. Gurus are guys who are definitely not as spoiled as you.”

Heathcliff smiled. “It’s your fault. You spoiled me,” he said, as he positioned himself in front of Aidan and crossed his arms over his chest.

“How did I do that?” Aidan crossed his arms, too.

What was with the mimicking? Heathcliff wondered briefly. The little bunny had little, if any control over the situation, so he was trying to put on a brave front. It wasn’t working. Maybe guys were falling at Heathcliff’s feet, but that didn’t mean that he couldn’t go through Aidan’s defenses, seeing how weak they were.

“By jerking me off.” Heathcliff leaned closer and said the words while looking Aidan straight into his pretty eyes.

“That was --” Aidan trailed off and gulped nervously.

“Pretty good.” Heathcliff offered an encouraging smile. “But I think there’s room for improvement. And I believe I can give you plenty of pointers.”

Aidan was so cute when blushing.

“Heathcliff, are you ready?” the assistant on the set interrupted them.

Heathcliff looked at the guy, and by how the assistant froze on the spot, he knew his laser cut stare still worked flawlessly. “Not yet,” he said brusquely. “And, please, Mr. Stone. Let’s not get confused.”

The assistant mumbled an excuse and walked away.

“Mr. Stone? Really?” Aidan asked him, quirking an eyebrow.

“Yeah, why not?” Heathcliff said.

“But why don’t you let me address you like that, then?”

“Hmm, I might reconsider. Although, in your case, I’d like you to address me as ‘sir’.”

For a moment, Heathcliff thought he had had a glimpse of something, as Aidan’s eyes lit up.

Aidan snickered. “You’re so not a ‘sir’.”

Heathcliff rolled his eyes. “Spark, I think you need some discipline and tough love. Didn’t your parents teach you how to behave like a good kid?”

“They did, but, well, I’m no longer living with them,” Aidan replied promptly.

Heathcliff nodded. “Ah, that’s good to know.”

Aidan looked at him a bit questioningly, but whatever he wanted to say, he let it drop.

“You’re the one who needs a bit of tough love, Stone,” he said. “Come on, let’s get you ready, or we will be here all day. And, seriously, why did you snap at the assistant? He was just trying to do his job.”

“One, I didn’t snap.” Heathcliff raised one finger. “I don’t snap. And two, he was trying to get you away from me. Seeing how you’re the babysitter, I have no idea how you can agree to something like that.”

“I’m the babysitter? Then you’re the kid.” Aidan snickered. “Should I call you ‘young master’ instead of ‘sir’?”

Heathcliff played along. “Master would be suitable.”

Aidan snorted. “Damn, you’re so full of yourself. Let’s shoot the ad already.”

“Only if you call me master,” Heathcliff pressed the matter, as amused by the situation as Aidan seemed to be.

Aidan pushed him to move. “Get on the set, Stone. And stop being such a big baby.”

Heathcliff liked that. Aidan Spark wasn’t the kind to be yanked and jerked around. Yeah, he very much liked that.

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Standing his ground in front of Heathcliff Stone was no easy feat. Nonetheless, it was nothing he couldn’t handle. At least he hoped that was the case. Now, he needed to focus on getting the ad perfect so that he could report back to the headquarters with another accomplished task.

After all, his probabilities to get ahead on the career ladder lay on his success in taking care of Heathcliff and enduring his shenanigans to get the job done. So, he had every reason in the world to be the perfect professional with the occasional leeway for Heathcliff’s strong personality. He liked to do as he wished all the time.

That was what Aidan was saying to himself while following his charge as Heathcliff was doing his best on the set. He was, indeed, a natural born star. People would buy whatever The Healthy Shakers were selling if they were one percent as taken with him as Aidan was, and everyone else around.

The thing was he could not let it show. He could appreciate Heathcliff Stone from a professional standpoint, and that was that. And he had already sworn off offering hand jobs, as soon as he had gotten home after Heathcliff’s birthday party. From that moment forward, he would be nothing else but the perfect professional.

Of course, getting the obnoxious fitness guru to forget about the incident seemed to be a challenge. By how much attention Heathcliff was getting from the male population so inclined everywhere he went, one would have expected him to have forgotten already about a rushed hand job given by someone who definitely didn’t have enough expertise in pleasing others.

Heathcliff had enjoyed it at the time, by what Aidan could tell. But it had been a breach of conduct, and it was Aidan’s job to correct that. The simplest way to do it was by being nothing but the perfect professional, as he had already told himself a thousand times.

It didn’t seem such a simple thing to do. He could feel his breath catching in his chest as he looked at Heathcliff. Maybe he wasn’t anything like the dark, brooding character from

*Wuthering Heights*, but he could draw a sigh or two from anyone he met, and not due to some misplaced reverence.

But regret. Aidan considered himself way too young to qualify for a proper list of regrets, but, in this case, he could tell he had just met his first serious one. Nothing would happen between him and Heathcliff Stone, and that was final. How could he lose his head like that?

Okay, so Heathcliff had kissed him and fondled his ass. Aidan could feel his cheeks warming up only thinking about that incident. He needed to become better versed in flirting with guys if he was to survive around the sex bomb that Heathcliff was. Some training in that kind of dealings was required. All he needed was a plan and to act accordingly.

Discreetly, Aidan looked at his watch. The less time he spent in close proximity of that sexy bastard, the better. But he could not just take off. It would have been a terrible breach of his contract since he had a job to do. With a long, heartfelt sigh, he looked at Heathcliff, how he was looking straight into the camera, and saying the words from the script with a broad smile that was lighting his entire face.

Definitely not a Heathcliff. It was like the entire set was alive because of him. And even if it was just a regular commercial for advertising a mundane product, it looked like everyone around was looking in pure rapture at him.

It was, most probably, a perk only truly beautiful people had. Heathcliff seemed to have a talent for getting on his nerves, too, but Aidan knew he could not be really mad at him. No one ever really was; he was sure of it.

When the team on the set began wrapping up the video shoot, Aidan shook his head as if he was awakening from a dream. Yes, he needed to get a hold of himself and fast.

“So, what do you say, Spark?” Heathcliff sauntered over to him.

“You killed it,” Aidan said with a smile he couldn’t stop.

“Bro fist?” Heathcliff offered.

“Sure.” Aidan shrugged and pushed his closed fist against Heathcliff’s.

Heathcliff leaned in. “See? My job is to make you happy.”

Aidan could sense his intentions from a mile away, and he needed to do something about them. And fast. But the problem was whether he could bring it up, or was it a better idea to let Heathcliff be the initiator?

He had his speech already prepared. But what if Heathcliff didn’t say anything? What if all had been nothing but harmless teasing, kissing, and ass fondling, hand jobs notwithstanding?

That could be, and it was damn disappointing if he were to think about it. But, it was for the better. He used two fingers to press against his forehead, between his eyebrows, and stopped his internal struggle.

“What monsters are you fighting in your head, my valiant knight?” Heathcliff joked.

“Ah, nothing.” Aidan shook his head. “I mean, I’m not fighting ... And I’m not a knight.”

“I think you are. You single-handedly annihilated those paparazzi. And saved my reputation, in the process.”

“Oh, you give me too much credit,” Aidan said, but he could feel his chest puffing out on its own accord. “Plus, you’re no fair maiden.”

“Only fair,” Heathcliff played along. “Let’s talk.”

Aidan felt a bit out of balance, as Heathcliff took his arm and made him walk. That was Heathcliff Stone, a man of action. Only that Aidan could feel sweat pooling at the small of his back, just thinking what he wanted to talk about.

It looked like Heathcliff knew perfectly well where he was heading, as he practically pushed Aidan through a side door that seemed to open to a small empty room, filled with cleaning supplies.

He was about to open his mouth and ask what the hell they were doing in a janitor’s closet when Heathcliff made their lips meet.

The first automatic instinct was to open his mouth and let him sneak his tongue inside. Aidan’s eyelids shut, and, in spite of himself, he voiced a small, meaningful moan. Heathcliff almost slammed him against a wall and got busy right away with his hands. Then he grabbed his ass hard, and Aidan could feel his knees giving in.

What was his plan again? Definitely not this. With some difficulty, he pushed his hands between them and Heathcliff away along with that. “Wait,” he breathed out.

Heathcliff watched him, a bit thoughtfully. And annoyed.

“What are we doing?” Aidan asked.

He knew the answer. But he was too much of a coward to lead this conversation properly.

“Well, in a nutshell,” Heathcliff drew their bodies close again, “I’m trying to get into your pants.”

Aidan evaded the second kiss in time.

“What?” Heathcliff murmured, seemingly a bit surprised at being denied. “Okay.” He took one step back. “I suppose a place like this is not ideal. But, bunny boy, you gave me a taste and ran away. Forgive me if I think this is sort of due.”

“Due?” Aidan mumbled.

“Yeah.” Heathcliff looked him in the eye. “But I have nothing against taking this to my house. Or do you have to go back to work?”

Aidan grabbed that straw with the desperation of a drowning man. “Actually, I need to report back. And there are many other things I need to work on.”

“Are you trying to tell me I’m not the only one you’re babysitting?” Heathcliff joked, but he was frowning.

“You’re the only one I’m babysitting. But my work entails other things. Like filing reports, doing market research --”

“All right. When do you get away?”

“It all depends on the boss,” Aidan said with a small shrug.

“It doesn’t matter. As soon as you leave work, you’ll come straight to my house.”

“Don’t wait for me,” Aidan said quickly.

Heathcliff’s frown deepened. “Why?”

Damn, he needed to cut and run. Aidan moved from one foot to the other. “I’m not gay,” he blurted out.

Was the lie going to hold? He had no idea. But it was the only card he could play.

Heathcliff cocked his head to one side. “You’re kidding me, right? So it’s just a habit to give hand jobs to guys? When you’re working? Shit, that must be one hell of a job description, Spark.”

Aidan scowled. “No, it’s not a habit. It was ... I mean ... It was --”

Heathcliff put one hand up. “Enough. I get it.”

“You do?” Aidan breathed out in relief.

Heathcliff smiled. “Yeah. You’re confused. Well, I’m available if you need to work that confusion out of your system.”

“I’m not confused!” Aidan protested.



“Sure.” Heathcliff grinned. “Well, suit yourself. My offer won’t stay for long. I need to get laid.”

“And? Why don’t you get laid?” Aidan questioned.

“Hmm, I don’t know, maybe because making my bed partners sign some NDA doesn’t sound like the perfect kind of foreplay,” Heathcliff replied. “And I’m all for perfection when it comes to lovemaking.”

Now there was a decent distance between them, and Aidan was grateful for it.

“Sorry about that,” Aidan offered. “But you signed the agreement.”

“That I did,” Heathcliff admitted. “So you’re not gay?”

“That’s right,” Aidan hurried to confirm.

Heathcliff was still staring at him as if he didn’t quite believe him. “Well,” he shrugged, “I suppose my gay-dar malfunctioned this time. Then let’s get out of this closet already,” he added and smiled.

Aidan nodded. He should have been relieved to see Heathcliff taking things so lightly. Yet, he could not stop the little pang of disappointment he felt as he walked out the janitor’s closet, after Heathcliff.

“So, see you tomorrow?” he asked, feeling a bit nervous as he stood face to face with Heathcliff.

“What do you need me for?” Heathcliff questioned.

Aidan was a bit taken aback. Heathcliff had taken the rejection well. Too well. But now he sounded pissed.

“Just to look together over some marketing materials. Also, I can help you with, you know, pointers.”

“Send them by e-mail,” Heathcliff said, rather clipped. “And I think I’m done with taking advice from you. I know what I need to do. Just do your job, Spark.”

Aidan watched in disbelief while Heathcliff stormed off. “Would you like me to give you a ride?” he called after the man.

“I’ll just Uber home,” Heathcliff threw over his shoulder.

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It wasn’t like him to let his emotions show, Heathcliff thought as he climbed out of the car that had taken him back home. But the thing was: he was pissed. First, he had played things cool. If Aidan felt the need to lie about his sexuality, that was fine by him. It was none of his business.

Spark was gay as a rainbow unicorn. Okay, maybe not that flashy, but it was clear as day that Aidan was eating him up with his eyes whenever they were close.

Yet, for some reason, he had chosen to lie. And Heathcliff could not take it easy. The fuck was wrong with him? If a guy didn't want him, it wasn't the end of the world. But not being able to get his hands on that corporate bunny was making him frustrated.

He needed to collect himself a little. So his pride had just taken a hit. But that wasn't it. He could still taste Aidan's sweet lips on his. The bunny was frigging tasty. Heathcliff wanted to eat him whole, probably starting with his beautiful mouth and ending with his sexy bubblegum ass. And that particular dessert was not going to be served to him on a silver platter as he had expected.

So, he was not the kind of man to get caught up in some dilemma. The bunny wanted him. He would come around, eventually. If not, it wasn't a disaster. But Heathcliff didn't really want to write him off as the one who got away. Guys didn't get away from him, usually.

Hmm, he could not be so petty. If Aidan didn't want him, it was fine. Totally fine.

Also, he just needed to get laid. It was the best medicine to cure that unexpected rejection. And he could put Aidan Spark out of his mind. It wasn't that difficult, after all.

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Aidan took his phone and headed for the bathroom. Bathroom mirror selfies were clichés, but there was no other way to take pics of his ass, without having to call someone and have that person do it for him.

The snafu with Heathcliff would not have existed if he had just gotten laid. With that sexual tension out of the way, it would be simple to keep things professional with the fitness guru.

So, he needed to take action. Heathcliff had praised his ass, which meant that there was a good chance that others would appreciate it, too.

Torso and ass pics should do it. He wouldn't show his face, at least, not until securing a date.

He could not believe he was doing this. Never before had he used a dating app. But desperate times called for desperate measures. All he needed to do was to convince himself that nothing bad would happen, that he wouldn't stumble upon some trolls who only wanted to catfish him, or ... worse ...

Aidan gulped. All that his parents had told him about being careful was rushing to mind, right now. But there was no other choice. He had to get rid of his V-card and stop acting like a love-struck teenager around Heathcliff. That was the key to his professional success, and he needed to be courageous about it.

Also, who knew? Maybe he could find some guy interested in more than just a hookup. He had never really tried a gay dating app, but now it was a good idea to start. He was twenty-two, and that was an unacceptable age to still be an ass virgin.

With a frown, he selected a few pics which weren't blurred and had good lighting and proceeded to create his profile. Soon enough, notifications began to pour in.

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Heathcliff was swiping through guys' profiles, feeling rather bored, when his attention was suddenly piqued. "Shy22yo, looking for something casual or serious," he read out loud.

Hmm, the guy's pics were nice, really nice. Heathcliff straightened up. Now that was the kind of ass he liked best. Actually, the kind of ass he had come to like lately. Well, fucking some youngster who had the same body type as Aidan Spark could be a solution to his problem.

Definitely delicious, Heathcliff decided, and he began palming his cock through his tracksuit pants while he contemplated how to approach the guy going by Shy22yo.

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Aidan could feel his palms sweating as he looked at the various profiles contacting him. One drew his attention in particular. In the off chance that he wasn't dealing with a pro catfisher, that guy that had CrazyFitness as his handle looked terrific. Aidan could see himself worshipping those washboard abs for hours. And other things, he thought, as he felt getting hot under the collar.

"Hey," he typed, not knowing what to say.

"Hey," the reply came right away.

He had no idea what should come next. Luckily, his convo partner had no such issues.

*"What are you looking for?"*

*"Hooking up,"* he typed in, feeling his boldness fading away with each touch of the screen.

*"Where do you live?"*

Aidan gave the name of his neighborhood. He hoped the guy wasn't looking to find out his precise address.

*"That's not so far from me,"* the reply came.

*"You're not a catfisher, I hope."* Aidan hesitated, but eventually sent the message.

*"I'm definitely not."*

*“That’s good.”*

Again, he had no idea how to continue. How did other people handle these things?

*“You don’t have a lot of experience.”* The next message read.

*“I don’t,”* Aidan replied quickly.

Maybe he could just forget about the whole thing. It didn’t seem right. All the words of caution hammered into his brain by his parents were coming back to haunt him.

*“Your pics are really nice. You have an amazing ass.”*

*“Thank you. You have a gorgeous body, too.”* Aidan chose to offer a compliment in return, as well.

*“Are you available tonight? I’d like to know you better.”*

Aidan hesitated before replying. But it was easier if he was getting this out of the way and fast.

*“Yes,”* he typed quickly now, that the decision had been taken.

It was hard to focus, as contradictory feelings and thoughts were assaulting him from all directions.

*“You are a quiet one,”* the guy messaged him.

*“I’d say I’m efficient,”* Aidan replied.

A laughing emoji was the answer. Good, that was good, Aidan thought as he liked his lips nervously.

*“All right, Mr. Efficient. What would you like to do?”*

Aidan pondered for a while. So it was like a date? Not like a going straight to business kind of thing? Were they going to grab a bite and stuff like that?

*“Do you like Chinese?”* he typed.

*“Only if that’s what you are, sexy,”* the man replied.

Ah, so the question was about sex. Aidan could feel his Adam’s apple going up and down, and he couldn’t swallow normally.

*“Hand jobs?”* he wrote tentatively.

*“That would be a start. Dick pic?”*

Aidan almost dropped his phone as he tried to take a picture of his dick. He was only half hard and cursed, pissed at himself. But he sent the pic anyway.

*"That's pretty nice. Legs, too,"* the man commented.

*"I'm not as well built as you,"* Aidan replied.

*"How would you like to see more of me?"*

*"Sure."*

*"What would you like to see?"*

Aidan inhaled and exhaled. *"Your dick,"* he typed down.

He needed to show a bit of courage if he did this. He almost gasped as he looked at the pic sent. That was a gorgeous cock right there, fully hard, not like his.

*"Wow."* He sent his reaction right away.

*"Now that we broke the ice, what would you really want to do?"*

*"I'd blow you,"* Aidan typed down without even breathing.

*"That's nice. I'd blow your cute cock, too,"* the man replied right away.

*"It's not cute."* Aidan wrote down in protest.

*"It is if I say so,"* the reply came right away.

Well, his own cock was much appreciative of the to and fro sexy banter. Now he was fully hard.

*"Would you like another dick pic?"* he asked, feeling hopeful.

At least, now he had a chance to show that he wasn't that lame.

*"No. I want a close up of that glorious ass."*

Aidan turned slightly and took a picture from above. It was the best he could do.

*"Nice,"* the reaction came promptly. *"Now put two fingers in your ass."*

Damn, the guy wasn't shy about what he wanted. Aidan could feel his heart beating faster. He did his best to get a good angle, as he stabbed his backside with two fingers. That was as much as it had ever gotten in there, so it wasn't that impossible. Or bad. Actually, he felt quite thrilled with the sensation.

*"Good boy."* The reply was all he needed.

Aidan smiled. It felt nice to be appreciated. Now he wanted something in return.

*"Can I see some ass cleavage?"* He sent his message.

*"Ass cleavage?"* the reply read.

*"Like when you show the cock and balls, but also the crack below,"* Aidan dutifully explained.

*"Coming right up."*

Wow, the guy looked good from all angles. And that ass cleavage was to die for. The man was also flexible, his legs parted and showing possibilities. Aidan had no idea whether he would like to top or bottom, but, right now, he had an inkling that he wouldn't mind knowing what the man's ass cleavage kept hidden.

He began stroking his cock. This was easier than he had imaged.

*"Would you stick something up your ass?"* he eventually dared to ask.

*"Quite daring. I like it. Let's trade face pics, too, and then take it from there. We'll do anything you want once we get together."*

Was he really going to do this? He hesitated for a little while.

The phone pinged again. *"Let's do it both at the same time."*

Aidan drew a long breath and then decided he needed to bite the bullet. CrazyFitness, whoever he was, seemed like a normal person, not someone who was lurking dating apps to find victims like a psychopath on a killing streak. Maybe, just maybe, he had watched way too many TV shows. Also, the guy was hotness on a stick. If he managed to score with him, he would be a happy camper.

So, there was no hesitation when he snapped a selfie.

*"Ready? I'm dying to meet you,"* the man sent another message.

Aidan sent the pic and waited. But not even for a second. He gaped at the screen and dropped the phone. What were the frigging chances for that to happen?

His phone began ringing. A good idea was to let it ring. For lack of anything else to do, he jumped to his feet and got dressed up in less than five seconds. What the hell?! That was bad, like really bad.

His phone continued to ring. Hysterically if he could say so. He could not possibly avoid this. So, with trembling hands, he took the phone from where he had dropped it on the bed.

“Aidan Spark, you’re coming straight to my house, and you’re coming right now, or we’ll have a real problem,” Heathcliff’s voice came through, calm and steady.

How could he act so cool? Yet, Heathcliff sounded somewhat menacing, too.

“Yes, sir,” Aidan mumbled and cut the conversation.

## *Chapter Six – Hook, Line, And Sinker*

Heathcliff could not believe his luck. He had trapped the bunny like the most skillful hunter in existence, and the awesome part was that he hadn't planned for it. No one could accuse him of foul play. Now he needed to calm down a little, no matter how exciting the prospect of having Aidan Spark over, after dark, was.

So, he gave his cock a playful smack and pulled his tracksuit pants back up. For a second, he considered grabbing a t-shirt, too, but eventually, he decided against. For a swift victory, which he aimed for, he needed to show the 'enemy' his guns.

Aidan hadn't protested against the direct order. That was making his heart fill with fondness for the young man. Still, Heathcliff could not forget how pissed he had been earlier that day, because of Aidan's rejection.

The bunny was cruising gay dating apps, looking for hard dicks. Heathcliff shook his head. Now there was no way in hell for Aidan to deny his sexuality. Also, he wouldn't deny Heathcliff what he wanted. And that was enough to put a big smile on his face.

The familiar buzz letting him know he had a visitor made his smile grow even bigger. Instead of allowing him in, Heathcliff went for the door. As he opened it, he took in a much chastised Aidan Spark, standing there, hands linked together in front and a guilty expression on his beautiful face.

"Inside." He gestured shortly with his chin, decided to keep up with the appearances and play tough.

Although the bunny was pitiful like that, Heathcliff had to admit to himself that he liked it. And, never before in his life, had he considered himself a sadist. Making Aidan Spark squirm a little sounded like fun, though.

"Sit," he ordered curtly, and Aidan sat gingerly on the sofa.

Aidan had evidently come as fast as he could, and he was now wearing only a baggy t-shirt and jeans. He looked younger and more vulnerable like this, instead of in his usual suit. The way he stared at his Converse shoes, his head hung low, made Heathcliff want to grab him, kiss him, and devour him on the spot.

But now it wasn't a good moment to be rash. Pretending to be upset, he remained standing and looked at Aidan from above. "So, Spark, you're not gay, huh?"

The bunny remained silent, probably expecting a lecture. Well, Heathcliff wasn't all against that idea, but he needed to bring Aidan where he wanted, without leaving emotional scars. Under his pretense to be the perfect yuppie, Aidan was quite delicate if the expression on his face right now was any indication.



“Or do you have something against me, in particular?” Heathcliff decided to play his next card.

Aidan looked up, with some difficulty. “It’s not like that.” He shifted in place.

Heathcliff opened his arms wide. “How is it like? I’m here to listen.”

It was fun, indeed, to watch what was happening to Aidan. His eyes were gliding over Heathcliff’s torso. Just as the first time they had met, Aidan appeared to be quite impressed with his physique.

“I thought,” Aidan caught his hands together and pressed them like that against his knees, “that it would be easier if I lied.”

“Hmm, I see. But why? Is there a reason why you don’t want me?”

Aidan cocked his head to one side and stared at him like he could not believe his ears. Ah, so he wasn’t so chastised, after all. Heathcliff rejoiced inside.

“We’re working together,” Aidan explained when he realized that the staring contest wasn’t really working.

“And? Have you never mixed business with pleasure before?”

Aidan opened his mouth and then closed it. He seemed to ponder over what answer to give next. “It wouldn’t be ... okay,” he said with some hesitation.

“Why? It’s not like I’m your patient and you’re the doctor or something,” Heathcliff scoffed, “although I wouldn’t mind being treated by you.”

“For what?” Aidan snorted.

Heathcliff grabbed his junk through his pants and squeezed. “A hard cock.”

Aidan blushed and looked away.

“What’s that?” Heathcliff drawled. “You can’t be that easy to throw off balance. I thought you were the perfect professional.”

“Are you going to tell on me?” Aidan questioned, looking stubbornly down.

“Ah. I see. You’re not out at work.”

“It’s no one’s business,” Aidan mumbled.

“Correct,” Heathcliff admitted. “Okay. Your secret is safe with me.”

“Thank you. Can I go now?” Aidan begged with his pretty eyes, looking up, at his host.

Heathcliff blinked a few times, mimicking confusion. “So that you can go back on that dating app, searching for cocks?” he stared him down.

Aidan made himself little into the sofa. “I won’t do that. I’ve had enough shocks for the day, thank you very much. I couldn’t get it up now anyway,” he said with a long sigh.

“Now that’s a theory I’m willing to put to the test.” Heathcliff moved slowly, walking over to where Aidan was seated.

Aidan’s head snapped up again. “Ah, hmm, what?” He pulled his knees to his chest and pushed himself back into the couch.

“Well,” Heathcliff plopped himself down next to him, “you got me pretty worked up, you know? And it’s not fair. You know I can’t get laid because of you. And it looks like everywhere I look, you’re there, cockblocking me.”

Aidan glared. “That’s not true.”

Heathcliff rested his chin on one palm and looked at the scared bunny. If he got closer, he was sure he could hear a heart beating like crazy. “Yes, it is.” He grinned. “So, you need to make up for it. Again.”

“A hand job?” Aidan asked, his eyes lit up by hope.

Heathcliff wanted to kiss Aidan until he couldn’t breathe anymore that very moment. “Ah, but the stakes are higher now. You promised me something while we messaged back and forth.”

Aidan pouted. “I had no idea I was talking to you.”

It was too much to stand there, without touching him. Heathcliff raised one hand and cupped the Aidan’s chin. Slowly, he brushed one thumb over the plump, inviting lips. Aidan exhaled, and his eyelids fluttered. “You have a beautiful mouth,” Heathcliff heard himself speaking.

What was with the romantic introduction? He needed his cock sucked. But, despite having every speck of reason to be pissed at himself, he decided against being brash.

“I do?” Aidan murmured, without pulling his head away.

Heathcliff nodded solemnly and smiled to give the other assurance. Aidan moved slowly, and Heathcliff knew that it was okay to meet him in the middle. Their lips touched, feather-like, at first. Then Aidan moved first, again, and opened his mouth, sticking out his tongue and pushing inside.

This time, Aidan wouldn’t get away unscathed, Heathcliff thought and quickly trapped his head in his hands, deepening the kiss. Kissing someone with lips like those was amazing. Heathcliff wanted nothing more but to taste and taste again, Aidan’s sweet mouth.

He flicked his tongue over the other's lips. Aidan was following suit, trying to catch him, with playful jabs and quick bites. Whatever Aidan protested against, he did quite the opposite with his lips, teeth, and tongue.

And that was not the only thing he did. Aidan's hands were planted firmly on Heathcliff's chest, squeezing, and then searching with curious fingers for the nipples. A small sigh, drowned by their hungry kiss, was the immediate response, as Aidan managed to grab Heathcliff's nipples and pull at them slowly.

A bit intrigued, Heathcliff interrupted the kiss. "I thought I was supposed to be the seducer," he said, with a small frown.

"You're already naked," Aidan pointed out.

"Good point," Heathcliff admitted and pressed the other with his back against the sofa.

He wouldn't be so easily bested at his own game. So he sneaked his hands under Aidan's baggy t-shirt, humming in pleasure as he took in the smooth skin underneath his fingertips. Aidan gasped as Heathcliff mimicked his actions from earlier, and pulled at his nipples hard.

"Ouch." Aidan moved his head away to protest.

His cheeks had a pleasant shade of pink, and the pouty lips were moist and parted.

"I had to draw your attention," Heathcliff said.

"Is this really okay?" Aidan placed one hand on Heathcliff's chest and looked him in the eye with hope written all over his pretty face.

"No one will know, I promise, cross my heart," Heathcliff said.

He was leaning in for another kiss when he was stopped again.

"I don't have a lot of experience," Aidan said sheepishly.

"That's something we can correct as we go," Heathcliff promised.

Teaching the bunny a few things would be an enjoyable pastime. And Heathcliff was a natural born trainer, regardless of discipline, as long as it was his field of expertise.

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Aidan could not believe his audacity. Well, he was quite horny, and Heathcliff was offering. Plus, he wanted to believe Heathcliff that he wouldn't rat him out. So, this wasn't some blackmail to worry about. They would enjoy themselves, kiss a little, give each other hand jobs

... at least, he hoped Heathcliff would touch him, too, because he was quite hard from the kiss, and wanted to take his time and explore that amazing body and ...

Aidan didn't have the guts to think further. He couldn't. This was, in a way, a good strategy to hit two birds with one stone. Or more. He would clear the air between Heathcliff and him, he would get his dick touched, which hadn't happened in quite a while, not by another person, and ...

Heathcliff's hands were busy torturing his nipples, and he couldn't keep a train of thought if it killed him. With each squeeze and pull, his back was arching against the sofa, and somehow, he was under Heathcliff, their crotches lining up and rubbing against each other.

Could he hope for Heathcliff to put his mouth on him? He wanted, no needed, Heathcliff to put his mouth on him. Preferably, everywhere. But, mostly, on his cock.

"Are we ..." he gulped, in one of the short breaks from kissing Heathcliff was not so generous with, "going to do something else?"

Heathcliff seemed amused. "Do you have somewhere you need to be?"

"No, but --" Aidan hesitated.

If Heathcliff kept it up with that grinding motion against him, he could not vouch for himself.

"Ah, is there a problem?" Heathcliff teased and placed one hand over Aidan's crotch. "Hard as a rock. Nice. It looks like I still have a good hand at picking my hookups."

Aidan breathed out, as Heathcliff palmed his hard cock through his jeans, making it a bit painful, but only enough for it to feel excruciatingly more exciting. "I won't be hard for too long if you continue like this," he warned.

Maybe he was not supposed to be so frank about his inability to keep from coming from that kind of stimulation. But Aidan felt he could be at ease with Heathcliff, right that very moment.

"Now why didn't you say so?" Heathcliff teased and began unzipping Aidan's fly. "Wow, no underwear?"

"I was too busy getting out the door," Aidan explained and grunted.

Heathcliff's fingers were firm around his cock.

"Oh, fuck," Aidan complained and moved his head to one side to avoid looking at Heathcliff.

Heathcliff chuckled. "Someone's loaded and ready to blow."

"Stop it with the teasing," Aidan whined.

“Then look at me if that is what you want.”

Aidan knew the risks, but he looked anyway. Heathcliff’s satisfied grin was making him feel small and inexperienced. He was sure he was blushing furiously right now, but the hand moving steadily up and down his cock was way too practiced and pleasant to ignore for the sake of feeling indignation.

“Should I honor the promise we made earlier?” Heathcliff looked at him with clear intent.

“Don’t,” Aidan whispered and squirmed under the careful ministrations he needed to endure. “I’ll just ... blow.”

“You’re close anyway.” Heathcliff leaned over and brushed the hair away from Aidan’s forehead with his free hand.

“But then I won’t feel a thing,” Aidan complained, “and it’ll be over too soon.” His words came out painfully, with difficulty, as his breath was quickening.

“Look at me and don’t worry about coming. I’ve seen enough in my life not to give a damn. Don’t be embarrassed, Aidan,” Heathcliff said with kindness.

Aidan pushed his head back into the sofa, but kept eye contact, breathing hard.

“Yes, like this, come on,” Heathcliff encouraged him. “You’re so damn pretty, bunny boy.”

“Don’t call me that,” Aidan said each word like it was a separate phrase, in a staccato rhythm that seemed final and already at that point of no return.

Which was precisely what was happening, as he practically bucked his hips into Heathcliff’s hand that hurried its pace to make that moment perfect, so perfect, that Aidan had no idea what to compare it with.

Nothing in his life had ever been like this. Aidan squeezed his eyes shut as he came and came, without being able to stop, or think, or even consider that he was practically being jerked off to completion by no other than Heathcliff Stone, a social media celebrity who could fuck half the city, but had chosen tonight, to give someone like Aidan this amazing special treatment.

He shuddered as wet fingers touched his lips. He opened them without thinking, and Heathcliff painted them in and out with the sticky substance on his fingers. “Is it customary to eat your semen after the deed?” Aidan mumbled.

“Nothing like that. I just had a mind of tasting it off your lips,” Heathcliff said, and, just like that, Aidan could feel his lips taken again into one of those maddening kisses that seemed to have no beginning and no end.

Aidan was still breathing a bit unevenly when Heathcliff released him from the kiss. Licking his lips, he could taste his jizz. It seemed incredibly erotic, and Aidan moaned, without thinking. He could not get hard right at that moment. In five minutes, maybe.

“And now, I do believe you should keep your part of the deal,” Heathcliff said with a broad smile.

“Do you want me to jerk you off?” Aidan asked as he tried to straighten up.

The insecurity from before came back in full force. But he could give the other a hand job. It wasn't that complicated.

“Hey, I told you.” Heathcliff ruffled his hair. “This time, I want more.”

“More?” Aidan swallowed. He could barely move, that wasted he was.

“This beautiful mouth,” Heathcliff touched his lips slowly, “on my cock. Nothing less than that.”

Aidan could feel his cheeks on fire. But he had to do it, right? Also, he wanted to do it. Damn, he was entirely sure he needed to do it. The only thing he worried about was that he would choke on it.

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Heathcliff could tell there was sort of a debate going on in Aidan's mind that very moment. What could it be? Was he against giving head, perhaps? That would have been a bummer, and Heathcliff was not the kind to impose on others what they didn't want to do.

“It's okay,” he said with a sigh. “I was just joking. But there's got to be something you're willing to give. You got my hopes high with those pics. By the way, I wasn't wrong about your ass. Ten out of ten, would definitely bang.”

Heathcliff was trying to hide his annoyance over Aidan's prolonged silence with a joke. Although he was right about that. If Aidan wanted to put his ass up, that would be a dream come true. So he was taken by surprise, as Aidan bent quickly and landed with his head in his lap.

He chuckled. “Wow, tiger.”

Aidan said nothing, fiddling with Heathcliff's pants only to pull the still hard cock out. Giving Aidan a hand job had turned him stiff as a board, and that wouldn't go away soon.

He listened carefully as the other took a deep breath, like before an audacious dive. Raking his fingers through the chestnut hair, Heathcliff let out a breath of his own. Aidan was quick to find his way around. Not that it was hard to do so.

Curious lips wrapped gently around the head of his cock. An equally curious tongue followed, tracing around the mushroom, playing on the sensitive area right under the head. Maybe Aidan had little experience, but he knew what to do with it. Heathcliff only needed to be patient and wait for him to take it deeper.

By how Aidan was trying to adjust his position, he was struggling with it, too. Heathcliff guided him to lie on the carpet, between his legs. "That's better," he whispered while caressing the silky strands of hair under his fingers.

Aidan looked up at him, and Heathcliff had, for a brief moment, a sensation that was hard to identify. He could not remember anyone looking at him like that, with a sort of honesty so profound and hard to find these days. Sex partners were a convenience for him. And most often, they wanted something in return.

Except for bunny boy. Right now, Aidan wasn't working some angle; he wasn't putting on some show with the purpose to impress so that he could get something in return. Yes, Aidan Spark wasn't there to haggle for some advantage. He just wanted to suck Heathcliff's cock.

He caressed Aidan's cheeks slowly. "You look nice like this."

The green-speckled brown eyes glared at him, but Aidan adjusted his lips around the hard cock in his mouth, trying slowly to take it deeper.

He guided Aidan. "Here, help yourself with one hand."

For a moment, Aidan took Heathcliff's cock out of his mouth. "I know. I'm not that inexperienced," he protested.

"Oh, forgive me if I assumed you needed some guidance." Heathcliff grinned. "Knock yourself out, then." He leaned back and put his hands behind his head while looking down on his guest with amused superiority.

"You're so damn spoiled." Aidan pouted, but put one hand around Heathcliff's cock and went back to work, with renewed enthusiasm.

"I told you. You're the one who's spoiling me."

Aidan might have wanted to say something in reply, but the muffled sounds coming from his full mouth made no sense whatsoever.

Heathcliff gasped, despite himself, as Aidan took him deep. Exactly how little or how much experience did he have, in the end? From where he stood, it looked like Aidan knew what he was doing. He was practically swallowing the hard cock in his care almost to the hilt, and that was not something Shy22yo was supposed to know.

“Damn, you’re good, Spark,” Heathcliff whispered, and this time, it wasn’t some joke.

Aidan withdrew, breathing heavily. Heathcliff watched him, now a bit amused. So the bunny was trying his best, after all? Or maybe he was going beyond that, as the ambitious young professional he was. He was about to comment again, to tell him to take it easy, but Aidan studied the cock in his hand for a second, with a focused look on his handsome face, and then swallowed it again.

Heathcliff could get used to it. Aidan was busy grabbing him by his balls with the other hand, and he was polishing the sword in the least of all euphemistic ways. Heathcliff could feel his tongue everywhere, and Aidan’s shortened breath, interrupted by small grunts and moans, told him everything he needed to know.

Aidan was getting off on sucking his cock, even if it meant pushing his limits. For the record, Heathcliff hoped Aidan had never taken anyone this deep. As any young man in a big city, who seemed to have no hang-ups about using gay dating apps, Aidan must have had his fair share of encounters. So, maybe, just maybe, when he was saying that he had little experience, it meant clearly that he had been around at least a few times.

And he was a pretty good cocksucker, despite his natural shyness. Aidan was good on taking cues, too, and soon, he changed the pace, making his hand grip on Heathcliff’s cock more firm, and picking up the speed.

“Wait.” Heathcliff took his cock from Aidan’s hand and mouth. “Stay like this and close your eyes.”

While the temptation to come inside Aidan’s pretty mouth was high, he wanted to give that handsome face a well-deserved facial. It was just his kink, and some would have said that having some guy swallowing the load was hotter. Nonetheless, this was what he liked. Aidan obeyed without protesting, and Heathcliff began moving his hand faster.

“Here it goes,” he growled as his cock began to erupt.

Long while ropes of fluid began spraying Aidan’s pretty lips and cheeks. Heathcliff made sure to take a good aim so, soon enough, Aidan’s face was looking like the perfect cover for the hottest bukkake of the year. Not that he would have ever dreamed of sharing his sex partners. Regardless of what the tabloids said about him, Heathcliff wasn’t that big a fan of orgies. Even in a crowd, he usually preferred to grab a guy and have fun with him, and not with the entire party.

“You look so good right now,” Heathcliff said, and his voice was low and hoarse.

Aidan snickered but didn’t open his mouth or eyes.

Heathcliff chuckled. “Let me take care of you.”



He pulled a few paper tissues from the box on the table and began wiping Aidan's face slowly. He was so obedient, as he let Heathcliff clean him, his hands in his lap, his head just thrown back slightly, and smiling softly.

It was, suddenly, so very intimate, Heathcliff thought, as his hands moved slowly, as if he didn't want that moment to be lost. He kissed Aidan on the nose, earning a small giggle in reply. Then he kissed his lips, and Aidan immediately opened his mouth, to let him in.

If he hadn't been so thoroughly satisfied, he would have been so damn hard right now. Heathcliff sighed as he broke the kiss. "What hour do you have to be in bed?" he asked, hoping that Aidan would say that he wanted to stay a little more.

"I guess I need to head back home," Aidan said, as he opened his eyes slowly.

How come the bunny was even prettier from up close? In a sea of wannabe supermodels, aspiring actors, and all kinds of good-looking men populating the city, some might not have noticed Aidan Spark. He didn't have magnetic eyes or a perfect body, but he was so damn pretty that Heathcliff wanted to grab him, lock him up and keep him until he would tire of him.

He helped Aidan to his feet. "Are you sure you can't stay a little more?" Heathcliff found himself talking.

Aidan shook his head slowly. "I can't miss any sleep hours. And you shouldn't, either." He pushed a finger into Heathcliff's chest.

Heathcliff grinned. "Oh, back to babysitter mode."

He stood up and placed his arms on Aidan's shoulders, trying to weigh him down a little. Aidan just smiled and kept his ground. Heathcliff wasn't sure what answer he wanted to hear as he stared him in the eye, for the simple reason that he had no idea what the question was.

"I must." Aidan sighed. "It's my job. The best part of this is that, at least, you won't have to chase down some guy with an NDA tonight."

"Seriously, is that the best part?" Heathcliff laughed. "Someone's married to his job, it seems."

"You're the one to talk. Your name is practically synonymous to your profession."

"Ah, well, that's different," Heathcliff pointed out.

"How so?" Aidan blinked, a bit annoyed, as it seemed.

"I'm my own man. You're slaving for the man," Heathcliff said with a small shrug.

"Oh, no, I forgot how full of yourself you are." Aidan shook his head. "Well, my company practically owns your ass right now --"

“Excuse me?” Heathcliff pretended to feel outraged. “When did I sign up for that?”

Aidan didn't care for a reply. He was already busy straightening up his clothes and giving himself a critical eye.

“Tomorrow, you should be pronto at my door, and chauffeur me around,” Heathcliff said.

“Seriously? How come you don't have a car?” Aidan questioned.

“Something with my eyes. Apparently, I'd be a menace on the public roads for both me and others.” Heathcliff preferred to keep a light tone.

“Oh, wow. So you're not perfect?” Aidan challenged him with his eyes.

“Disappointed?” Heathcliff flashed his most charming smile.

“Actually, no.” Aidan shook his head and smiled widely. “I like the idea that you're human, after all.”

“I have no idea whether I should take this as a compliment or as an insult.” Heathcliff seemed to ponder, pressing one index finger against his lips.

“It's a compliment.” Aidan raised his eyebrows and gave Heathcliff a look full of meaning while leaning slightly toward him.

The bunny was good at pulling his leg. But maybe, just maybe Aidan should be well aware of who he was playing with. Suddenly, Heathcliff dropped to his knees in one fluid motion, grabbed Aidan's crotch, pulled out the soft cock and pushed it all inside his mouth.

“Fuck,” Aidan moaned, in pure surprise.

Heathcliff made sure to suck in and create a vacuum, enough to make him half-hard in less than fifteen seconds. Then, with a smug grin on his face, he stood up.

“Are you kidding me?” Aidan mumbled. “What was that?”

“Motivation, bunny boy,” Heathcliff replied promptly. “Now you know who you're messing with. Tomorrow, at seven-thirty, be here. And tell your masters back at the corporate headquarters that you need to babysit me all day long.”

“I need to be with you at seven-thirty. How am I supposed to transmit that message so quickly?” Aidan wondered out loud.

“I don't know. Use a flying pigeon or whatever. Not my problem.” Heathcliff shrugged, satisfied with himself. “I think I need to make it a little clearer who owns whose ass.”

“Ah,” Aidan said, seemingly now understanding what that was all about.

“Good. It looks like we’re on the same page. Now, go home and sleep. I need you sharp and focused first thing in the morning.”

“Slave driver,” Aidan muttered, but he obeyed when Heathcliff took him by the shoulders and guided him toward the door.

“Your dick’s hanging out,” Heathcliff whispered into his ear.

Aidan looked down at himself in horror, and quickly pushed back his cock into his jeans, pulling up the zipper. “Thanks,” he said with a suggestive roll of the eyes. “I was about to walk out of here like that and scare the neighbors.”

“I wouldn’t have let that happen,” Heathcliff said promptly. “You might not know me just yet, but I’m terribly possessive of my slaves. No one’s supposed to see your junk but me. By the way, delete that profile on the dating app.”

“Why should I?” Aidan questioned, one hand on the door handle.

“Hmm, do you pretend to be difficult to train to keep things exciting? I don’t share. So delete all your pics and your profile.”

“All right.” Aidan breathed out. “Anything else?”

“Hmm, maybe update your status on social media and stuff like that?”

Aidan blinked a few times, now apparently at a loss.

“Make that ‘committed’, bunny boy.” Heathcliff hovered close, loving how Aidan’s breath was quickening as he did that. “I don’t want you prancing around, like a unicorn without a master.”

Aidan snorted. “Committed? Seriously, dude, too soon.”

Heathcliff stood his ground. “No, it’s not.”

Aidan glared. “You’re not my boyfriend only because we gave each other hand jobs.”

“Boyfriend? Who’s saying that? No, Sparky, you’re my pet from now on. As for hand jobs, there’ll be more than that. Now, shoo, you’re taking minutes off my beauty sleep.”

Aidan was smiling as he walked away. That was a good sign. *Hook, line, and sinker*, Heathcliff thought to himself with satisfaction, as the door closed after his guest.

## *Chapter Seven – Who’s This Nice Guy?*

Okay, okay, so he had to be completely out of his frigging mind to go through that and live to tell the tale. Well, that was definitely an exaggeration, but Aidan felt the need to do precisely that. Because as soon as he had gotten home, he had slipped under the covers, in bed, and ...

Sort of jerked off furiously while replaying in his mind how Heathcliff - frigging Stone! - had touched his dick and even took it into his mouth for like ten seconds or so. Half an hour later, he was sweaty, wasted, and in no mood for a shower, which he knew he needed to take.

If that had been so hot, how hot exactly had to be full-fledged sex with Heathcliff? Aidan whimpered as he walked toward the bathroom. His dick was oversensitive, and he could not give himself another hand, no matter how much he wanted to.

While there, with Heathcliff, he had managed to joke and say whatever just to seem cool and totally fine with hooking up with someone who had the looks of an Adonis and the reputation of a Don Juan, the gay version.

But inside ... well, inside, he was a huge mess right now. Good thing Heathcliff hadn’t seemed bothered by his lack of experience. A few times, he had almost choked while sucking off the guy. What an experience that had been, Aidan thought, as he stepped under the water jet.

By all means, Heathcliff was way, way out of his league. So what was that all about? It felt rather nice that Heathcliff had picked him in blind, so to speak, seeing how they had first hooked up over that dating app. Ah, he needed to delete his profile.

Aidan stopped for a second while soaping his body. Was he really going to obey every word Heathcliff said? For a moment, he considered rebellion. But, what lay in balance was well worth it. Maybe Heathcliff would touch him again, and maybe, just maybe, Aidan would see what a real blowjob felt like.

His short experience was rather lame. He had pretended to be somewhat experienced when talking to Heathcliff, but he was anything but that.

So, he was, after all, willing to play to Heathcliff’s tune, he thought after a not so long debate. Well, all that happy banter that was going to and fro between them seemed to work for them, and Aidan was pretty much satisfied with taking what was offered.

Of course, that wasn’t particularly a reason to feel proud. His mom and dad had taught him better than to obey the whims of a spoiled fitness guru or whatever. Seeing how he had so far managed to save face while interacting with Heathcliff, that meant that he was handling himself well.

Was he? No, Aidan shook his head, as he wiped his body with a large fluffy towel. He didn’t think in such negative terms of himself. If he was obeying to Heathcliff’s whims, it was because he had decided to do so. Not someone else.

Ah, damn, he needed to send his boss a message and told him about the change of plans. There was a chance that the man was going to ask him to come straight to work the next day, and then he could tell Heathcliff he hadn't managed to convince his boss to leave him off the hook, just because the star of their commercials wanted that to happen.

That would work out rather nice, Aidan thought. He wouldn't bend the knee, so to speak, to Heathcliff, and Heathcliff couldn't hold it against him. Now that sounded like a way out.

If it were for someone to ask him what exactly he was afraid of, he would say that he didn't feel exactly gutsy enough to face Heathcliff Stone so soon. He had practically had his cock in his mouth, and, although briefly, his cock had been in the other's mouth.

Damn, he wouldn't get any sleep if he kept doing that. With a sigh, he grabbed his phone. There was a way out of this if his boss didn't reply to his message at all.

*"Sorry for the late message, boss. Heathcliff Stone wants me to go over some marketing materials tomorrow."*

There. He sent the message. It was short, to the point, and also not very convincing. For minutes, his phone remained silent, and he felt that he could breathe freely. He was off the hook. He wouldn't spend tomorrow in the company of that *homme fatale*, and he would be okay.

His phone pinged, and his heart sank a little.

*"Do what you have to, Spark. And keep the guy out of trouble."*

Ah, damn it, Aidan cursed, and he put the phone cautiously on the nightstand. Then he needed more than just his beauty sleep. He needed all his strength to face Heathcliff tomorrow. Yeah, he could be the perfect professional, after all. And that was the strategy he needed to count on.

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Aidan touched his hair gingerly, wishing he could have one last look in a mirror, to see if he looked fine. As he waited in front of Heathcliff's door, he almost felt like running away. Last night, it had all seemed extraordinary, erotic, and mind-blowing, but, in the light of the day, how would they face each other?

He gulped a few times nervously. The not so imaginary knot in his throat was making it difficult to breathe. Maybe he could make a run for it? But --

The door opened, and Heathcliff welcomed him with a radiating smile.

"You're punctual. I like it," Heathcliff said.

"Of course," Aidan replied. "It's not professional to be late to business meetings."

“Business meetings? You think that’s what’s happening?” Heathcliff chuckled.

“We’re not allowed to fool around during work hours.” Aidan put both his hands up as if he was waiting for the other to jump him on the spot.

“Fool around?” Heathcliff watched him closely, and Aidan almost felt the need to take a step back.

Why did Heathcliff have to look amazing in anything he wore? Right now, he was dressed in a white tank top and sports shorts, and Aidan could barely keep his eyes off his beautiful arms. Or chest. Damn, that chest was like sculpted in marble. And it was easy for Aidan to make its shape through the tight-fitting fabric.

“Did you get enough sleep?” Heathcliff hovered closer.

Aidan could smell the scent of whatever shower gel Heathcliff was using. In some parallel universe, that had to be the scent of sex appeal. “Of course,” he protested right away.

“Funny, because I think you were daydreaming right now.”

“I wasn’t daydreaming,” Aidan said, keeping his cool.

“Yes, you were,” Heathcliff contradicted him. “Did you have breakfast?”

“Yeah, I had breakfast. Are we going somewhere or are we just spending some time in the door, talking nonsense?” Aidan asked.

“What did you have for breakfast?” Heathcliff came even closer.

“Food,” he replied and licked his lips nervously.

Heathcliff had no idea about what personal space meant. They were so close now that only a couple of inches were needed for their noses to touch.

“As your owner, I need to see to your eating habits,” Heathcliff said with a sort of finality Aidan was sure he didn’t like.

Aidan smiled, too. “Damn, you really think that’s how it is. You’re not my owner.”

“Really, Sparky? Now, who’s a good boy?”

Heathcliff was talking in that annoying voice people used to converse with their pets.

“Cut it out.” Aidan got annoyed for real this time. “Now where should I take you, Your Highness? I remember clearly that you wanted to be chauffeured around. By the way, this is the only one time I’m lying for you. I told my boss I would look with you over some marketing materials.” He pointed a finger accusatorily at Heathcliff.

“We will do that, too, sure.” Heathcliff shrugged and finally decided to close the door behind him.

Then he took Aidan by the shoulders so that they could walk toward the car.

“Isn’t this a little too --” Aidan tried to shrug him off.

“No, it’s not.” Heathcliff squeezed him harder. “Have you forgotten your current status so easily? You belong to me, bunny boy.”

“I don’t belong to you,” Aidan protested. “Stop it with all the teasing.”

“Or else what?” Heathcliff laughed. “And stop fretting so much. As much as the idea of morning sex appeals to me, it usually happens after my bed partner spends the night.”

“And what’s that got to do with anything?” Aidan wondered out loud.

“C’mon, pet. I know very well why you’re like a hedgehog under the siege of a dozen owls.”

“Oh, of course, you know everything.” Aidan glared. “Owls don’t hunt in packs. Actually, they’re pretty solitary creatures.”

“Of course I do know everything. At least, I know everything when it involves you. You’re thinking about the blowjob you didn’t get.” Heathcliff seemed to ignore his rambles about owls completely.

Aidan blushed and pulled open the car door. “Get inside the car already, Stone.” He hid his embarrassment about being read so easily. “And don’t expect me to keep the door for you.”

Heathcliff laughed and sauntered to the other side. After climbing behind the wheel, Aidan reached for the door on Heathcliff’s side to open it.

And now his entire car would smell of Heathcliff’s expensive shower gel. Damn, he was in hell.

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Heathcliff wanted nothing less than to grab Aidan, call it a day, even if it wasn’t even eight am, and drag the young man back to the house. What would happen after that, not even he dared to think about for no other reason than the fact that he needed to show that he could rein in his attraction toward the corporate bunny.

The fact that Aidan was trying to put on a brave face and pretend he wasn’t affected made the entire situation even more delicious than it already was. There was just something about Aidan Spark, something that made him unique, special. Heathcliff could categorize his bed partners in many ways. There were people who had sex with him for favors, there were those who thought a

wild night with Heathcliff made them look good, and there were also bed partners who just wanted to see how it was like, and then brag to their friends ...

Heathcliff could not remember the last time when someone had had sex with him just for him. Of course, he could write down Aidan's attraction toward him as nothing else but curiosity and also a common appeal toward a celebrity. He wasn't as big as Hollywood stars, or musicians with Billboard hits, but Heathcliff knew he was sort of a celebrity, too.

Nonetheless, there was something in Aidan's eyes when he was looking at him that Heathcliff hadn't seen in his bed partners' eyes in an eternity. Aidan liked him not just because he was a fitness guru with a strong following on social media.

Aidan was looking at him like Heathcliff was everything he wanted. There was nothing but pure, nude desire in those pretty eyes. And that was making him all giddy inside. Like he could not wait to see Aidan again.

Despite all the teasing, Heathcliff truly wanted Aidan, too. It was dangerous to feel this vulnerable. Some people, if not a lot of them, would have jumped at the opportunity to use that. Except that Aidan did nothing of the kind.

If he had wanted some opportunity to score with a B-list celebrity, he would have asked for it by now. Also, if he had wanted to work some angle and demand favors, he could have done it already. But Aidan was fighting the attraction, and that was making Heathcliff genuinely excited about the whole deal.

Maybe Aidan was nothing but a corporate bunny, after all. Even that sense of duty was endearing Heathcliff toward Aidan. He valued his work. With so many people around not giving a damn about such a thing, except for waiting for the next paycheck or hoping to strike it big, as if life's pleasures were handed on a silver platter like lottery winnings to anyone but those who worked hard to get them, that was unique.

And it was something they had in common, Heathcliff realized. He valued his work, too, no matter how superficial others considered him. He wanted to help people get in shape, do even a little to change bad habits, and reap the benefits of their hard work. It wasn't some smugness or idiotic attitude that had made so many people follow him on social media and watch his videos. Heathcliff wanted to believe that he was giving something back to those who listened to his advice.

Aidan complained. "Can I know where we're going? All you've done so far was to gesture for me to make left or right."

Heathcliff shook his head. By nature, he wasn't a particularly meditative person. Yet, it appeared that Aidan was making him think. He bet the bunny would have laughed at that. But there was nothing to laugh about.



Aidan was making quite an impression on him. And now he wanted to make an impression on Aidan, as well, one that went beyond the image of a gay playboy who also happened to post fitness videos on social media. Heathcliff knew he needed to make Aidan understand why fitness and physical wellbeing mattered to him and were an essential part of his life.

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“Where are we?” Aidan asked as he looked at the entrance with revolving metal doors.

The building seemed to be located in a less affluent area of the city, although it was new and modern. Multiple businesses appeared to be located there, so Aidan had no idea what Heathcliff had in mind.

Heathcliff just smiled all knowingly and took out from his rucksack an ID card which he handed to the man tending the reception desk.

“Good morning, Mr. Stone,” the man, way into his seventies, with a dignified countenance that reminded Aidan of butlers he had seen in movies, saluted Heathcliff. “Always sharp and early, right? Ah, I see you brought a friend?” he asked while scribbling down something in a large register that was hidden from view.

“A good morning to you, too, Mr. Johnson,” Heathcliff replied cheerfully. “Yes, today I brought someone with me. I hope that’s fine.”

“Of course it is. Any friend of yours is welcome here, Mr. Stone.” The old man handed back his card. “A few patients are already here, and I’m sure they will be excited to see you today.”

Patients? Aidan could feel his ears twitching. Now his curiosity was piqued. For the moment, he saluted the receptionist and followed Heathcliff who was already walking down a hallway in his usual purposeful stride, after wishing Mr. Johnson a good day.

He almost stopped dead in his tracks when they entered a large room appointed with what looked like exercising equipment. Not that it was a surprise to discover that Heathcliff was taking him to a place that was fitness related. The surprise came from the people who were already there. A mother with a toddler was sitting on a mat, and she was busy communicating with him in the unique language that only young children and their parents could understand.

Other guests included an old man who was slowly walking on a treadmill while a short woman dressed in green overalls was guiding him, talking to him softly, as well as a lady in her early thirties who seemed to have troubles keeping her hands in her lap as she was resting on a long bench.

“How are my favorite people today?” Heathcliff said using his signature energetic voice Aidan knew well from his videos.

Suddenly, the room became animated, with everyone busy welcoming Heathcliff. Even the woman on the bench tried to sit straighter, and her eyes lit up.

The short woman in green overalls turned toward them.

“So happy to see you today, Heath. Could you please see to Mrs. Simmons? And then little Andy?”

“Sure thing, Dee,” Heathcliff replied. “My friend is here with me to see how I work. I hope it’s not too much trouble.”

“Not at all,” the woman replied. “You two are more than welcome.”

“This is Aidan,” Heathcliff pointed at him.

The entire room said, on multiple voices. “Hi, Aidan.”

He murmured a reply and sat on the bench when the woman pointed at him. No matter how he looked at things, he could not believe his eyes. A center for physiotherapy was the last place he had expected Heathcliff to take him to.

As he stood there, in a bit of shocked silence, Heathcliff knelt next to the lady with the twitchy hands and began speaking to her in a low voice. Then he helped her to what looked like a massage table in a corner where he started to examine her arms slowly.

The next hour, Aidan spent in a haze, his eyes never leaving Heathcliff as he moved from one patient to another, offering help and advice. When the toddler grabbed Heathcliff’s thumbs with both his tiny hands, and he began helping him move his arms up and down, Aidan was sure he needed to pinch himself.

Who was this nice guy?

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“How come I don’t know about this? And what is it, exactly?” Aidan questioned, as soon as they were outside.

Heathcliff grinned at him. “Maybe you didn’t do your homework, bunny boy.”

“Seriously? I know everything that moves on your social media. I mean, I have to, for my job and all,” Aidan said quickly and pretended to play with his car keys to hide his embarrassment.

“Well, I never post anything about what I do here on social media,” Heathcliff said.

“Why?” Aidan asked as they climbed into the car. “This is, as my boss would put it, advertising gold. Plus, very family-friendly.”

“Nah, this is not something I want to brag about. This is something I do because I feel that it’s more important than anything.”

“Is it true? What that lady said? You’re volunteering here?”

“Yes,” Heathcliff said with a small shrug. “Does it surprise you?” he added with a broad smile.

“Sort of. I mean, you were really great there.”

“And what’s that supposed to mean?” Heathcliff feigned affront. “I’m always great!”

“Oh, shut up.” Aidan shook his head, trying hard to shake off the smile he felt creeping in.

“Come on, Stone, out with it. The big ‘why’. What is it?”

“First of all, tell me what you think,” Heathcliff insisted.

“Really? Okay. I’m impressed. Wait. Was this for me?”

“Yes. I definitely wanted you to see this part of me.”

Aidan looked ahead, pretending to be more focused on his driving than what he really was. His heart was beating just a tiny bit faster than usual. “Why?” he croaked, and coughed, trying to regain his voice.

“It looks like I need to score some points with you.”

“Are you kidding me? Are you trying to impress your dates by showing them you can be generous with your time and skills?”

“Are we on a date? I thought it was a business meeting or something of the kind.” Heathcliff laughed. “To answer your question, I actually wanted you to know me a little better. Also, to answer your question about the ‘why’, here it is. I give money to charity, sure. But I’m doing this because I believe it is more effective than giving away cash, cash you never know for sure if it actually gets to the people who really need it.”

Aidan pondered for a moment.

“So you’re a nice guy, Stone?” He tried to tread lightly.

“Of course I’m a nice guy.” Heathcliff smiled affably. “So what do you think of me now?”

“I think,” Aidan swallowed slowly, not to give himself away, “that you really are a nice guy.”

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Heathcliff could feel the bunny getting a bit skittish. What was that all about? After all, he had tried to make Aidan more at ease, by showing him that he could be a decent human being and he

wouldn't jump him the moment they saw each other. Yet, it seemed like everything he did was making the other more nervous with each minute they spent together.

After leaving the center, they had gone to the tennis court, where Heathcliff had almost forced Aidan to change into a t-shirt and shorts that he had brought with him as extra, knowing that the bunny wouldn't bring his own. Aidan was already affronted by the mere idea that they would play hooky on a workday.

On the tennis court, Heathcliff had given Aidan a run for his money, but the bunny had lost honorably. He was such a good kid, despite being twenty-two, that Heathcliff wanted to smooch him right there, on the court, with the occasional passersby watching. Of course, again, seeing how he needed to behave exemplarily for the day, he had opted to keep his cool.

After a healthy lunch, they were now back at Heathcliff's place. And Aidan was hovering in the door like he had no idea whether he was going to put a foot inside or not.

"Aren't we going over that marketing strategy you talked about with your boss?" Heathcliff asked, eyeing the uneasy bunny who was now switching from one foot to another. "Come inside."

Aidan slid inside like a burglar much aware that, at any point, he could trigger the alarm, but was willing to take a chance anyway. It was this combination of caution and daring attitude that made Heathcliff so intrigued about Aidan. For the most part, his casual encounters were easy to read. Maybe they weren't hiding like Aidan was. As he had admitted, he was not out at work and rightfully, he didn't want any complications.

"Do your parents know?" Heathcliff asked, all of a sudden, following his train of thought.

Aidan stared at him quizzically. "Know what?"

They had moved to the rattan table on the patio, and Aidan had been busy for a few minutes now to explain everything on a tablet he seemed to carry in his car. Heathcliff hadn't paid much attention, too busy with examining his guest. It was strange how much one could observe just by watching.

Aidan liked his work. It wasn't something people as young as him could often be found guilty of. So the professional mask wasn't just an act.

"Do they know you're gay?"

Aidan pushed himself back into his chair, blushed, and then looked straight at his host.

"They do. Can we focus on what we need to do here? I really don't want to go back to my boss with nothing to show. He'll start suspecting I ditched work for no reason at all, other than snatching a free day."

“You seem to respond well to authority figures,” Heathcliff said with a small smile.

The pretty brown eyes shot up again. Aidan was doing that a lot. His eyes were moving about, observing details, and then they suddenly set on the other party, keen on finding out what everything was all about. He was all about finding answers.

“Why do I feel like everything must be sexual with you?” Aidan asked. “Like right now, I’m certain you’re thinking about something like BDSM and what not.”

“Not everything is sexual with me,” Heathcliff retorted. “Actually, I think you’re the one to make it so.”

Aidan scoffed. “Sure, sure. C’mon, don’t tell me you’re not trying to drag me into some conversation that has nothing to do with what we have to do here. Like how well I respond to orders.”

Heathcliff laughed wholeheartedly. “How well do you respond to orders?” he leaned over the table and looked into Aidan’s eyes.

The other made a move like he wanted to push himself back even further, but eventually, he stood his ground. Good. Heathcliff liked staring into his eyes from so up close.

“Wouldn’t you like to know?” Aidan said with defiance. “You’re not my boss, by the way.”

“Oh, I can make you take orders and love it, bunny boy,” Heathcliff replied.

“Seriously? You can’t.” Aidan set his chin up to show he wasn’t intimidated.

“Oh, yeah? Let’s just put that to the test, shall we?”

Aidan’s eyes thinned. “I have a feeling I won’t like what you have in mind.”

“Oh, you will. But, of course, as an untrained pet, you’ll fight a little. Let’s take a shower.”

Aidan seemed taken aback. “Why? We showered at the tennis court.”

Heathcliff grinned. “Yeah, quickly and separately. Now I do enjoy taking long showers, and it’s even better when there’s company. So join me?”

Aidan opened his mouth, most likely to protest, but then he reconsidered. “Are you going to behave? You’re a nice guy now, after all.”

“Don’t count on that.” Heathcliff laughed. “I’m a carnivore and much in the mood for bunny.”

Aidan guffawed. “C’mon, that’s the only bad joke you could think of? I was expecting something about my meat in your mouth or something.”

“Do you happen to have an oral obsession, Spark? Because I see you have no issues reminding me of my promise.”

Aidan looked like a kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar. “I do not!” he chose to fake indignation.

“Okay. Then let’s hit the shower.”

“I was joking. I’m not going to shower with you,” Aidan mumbled, and now his eyes were darting sideways as if he was trying to find a way out.

“You will, or I’ll complain to your boss that you’re not working hard enough to earn your keep.”

“You wouldn’t have the guts!”

“Oh, you have no idea what I can do to have it my way. Blackmail is not beneath me.”

“So I see,” Aidan said dryly. “That was enough Mr. Nice Guy for today, huh?”

Heathcliff smiled sure of himself and stretched out his hand. “You’ll not regret it, cross my heart.”

Aidan seemed a bit hesitant as he stood up and eventually took the offered hand. But his fingers curled over Heathcliff’s without any of that caution that seemed to be part of his personality.

## *Chapter Eight – (Not) So Honest*

Neither of them was talking, seemingly too trapped into observing the other. Heathcliff knew he was supposed to be the initiator, with Aidan being so guarded and almost on the point of running out the door.

“When you say you lack experience,” he said softly, as he raised his hands to cup Aidan’s face, “how much lack of experience are we talking about?”

“You know,” Aidan trembled slightly under the caress, “the usual. I mean, I’ve been in college. I did have some experiences. So to speak. I know ... all of it. It’s just ... I haven’t done enough ... Just yet.”

Aidan was the sweetest when he was babbling like that. The armor he wore, which he thought thick, yet was paper thin, quickly crumbled away as soon as he was touched. Heathcliff could feel the subtle way in which Aidan was leaning into the caress like he wanted that more than anything.

“Then it’s the right time to correct that,” Heathcliff said in a tone that was supposed to sound encouraging and playful, but only came across as impatient. “It’s good to know you’re not a virgin.”

“I’m not a virgin,” Aidan said quickly, and his eyes darted sideways.

“Your cocksucking technique needs a little improvement,” Heathcliff said as his voice dropped low, and his head, too, only enough to get level with the young man and brush his lips softly against the parted ones, waiting for his move. “And I will be so happy to help you with that.”

“Okay,” Aidan barely whispered, and Heathcliff closed their mouths together, filling the room with their soft moans.

After more than a decade of screwing guys like it was a sport, Heathcliff was a bit surprised to sense his arousal growing so fast the moment he put his hands on Aidan. Right now, he was whimpering softly, and Heathcliff wasn’t singing out of tune, either, with his small, demanding grunts, as he was devouring the pliant mouth.

Was it the fact that Aidan was inexperienced? Was it because of how his big brown eyes, speckled with green, were honest? Was it because Heathcliff was pretty much on self-imposed celibacy because of the corporate bunny and that stupid NDA policy?

It could be all that, and it would not have covered the whole truth. He sneaked his hands slower, caressing Aidan’s neck in passing, and then he pushed down the suit jacket while the other began to help him by chucking it off and moving his arms, too, to touch back.

He wouldn’t rush this. He would take his time and relish in the delight of having Aidan. His

fingers knew the drill as it was their second nature, as they unbuttoned the yuppie's perfect shirt, to reach inside and touch.

Of them two, Aidan seemed to be the impatient one. He pushed away slightly, only to pull the white tee over his head. Heathcliff took one moment to look at him, half dressed, his flawless skin entralling, the way the few strands of hair gone rogue were curling against a slightly damp forehead.

He moved one hand to push them out of the way.

"Sorry," Aidan mumbled. "I tend to sweat when I'm nervous."

"Hmm." Heathcliff got closer and kissed him again. "I don't mind it. Am I making you nervous?"

"Yeah." Aidan threw his head back while Heathcliff began kissing his neck. "I mean, I have no idea what's going to happen next." He covered his embarrassment with another small laugh.

Heathcliff began unbuckling Aidan's belt. "Don't worry. Let's play a small game. You say the words, I follow. Now let me finish undressing you because I want us to get in the shower."

Aidan snickered. "I thought you were in charge, the master and all."

Heathcliff felt a tiny bit distracted. Rightfully so, since his hands were now filling themselves with Aidan's gorgeous buttocks, free from the suit pants and underwear. Damn, he hoped Aidan wanted that, to take things further so that he could enjoy that ass.

"Can we just, you know, keep to blowjobs and stuff?" Aidan murmured.

Hiding his disappointment would be hard. But maybe his impatience was not completely lost on the bunny, and that was sort of scary. "Sure," Heathcliff replied, with half a grimace.

There was time for everything. Heathcliff knew, with a clarity he had no idea he had in him, that he was in this for the long game. For months, if everything worked well, he had to advertise those protein shakes Aidan's company was selling. And that meant that his collaboration with bunny boy would continue.

An idea was starting to take shape in his brain. But he wouldn't lose any precious time by thinking strategies. For now, there were more pressing matters, such as taking Aidan for a ride that would score positive points in his favor. He was all for consolidating his current position until he could take the next step.

Also, he needed to honor his promise from the time they had been flirting over the dating app. Aidan had waited enough.

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There was nothing more he wished for than to have Heathcliff take charge and show him how it was done, but Aidan also feared that he would not handle that well. Somehow he would make a fool of himself. In a way, it was good that Heathcliff was handing him the lead, although that was certainly not how things looked like.

He liked the way Heathcliff held his hand in his. His touch was firm, without being overbearing. As they linked their fingers, Heathcliff pushed him slowly into the walk-in shower. Aidan could barely register how cool the shower was. He had used it before, that disappointing evening when Heathcliff had called him for a training session with absolutely no innuendo or follow up. Back then, he hadn't paid much attention to the amenities and had just washed quickly under the ceiling jets that ran water on the person underneath like a calming waterfall.

So Heathcliff was pretty much a water animal. That was something to write down. He wanted to know more about him, more than just the way he kissed. Aidan wanted Heathcliff Stone to teach him everything.

Well, he had lied a little earlier, he thought as he moaned softly and rested his head against the tiles, and Heathcliff continued to devour his neck like a vampire in dire need of a meal. He was half a virgin if that was a thing, but he had skimmed over the truth for fear of being rejected. Maybe Heathcliff Stone didn't do virgins. He wouldn't put that theory to the test. That was him playing safe.

"You're so cute and sweet," Heathcliff murmured as he dropped to his knees.

Droplets of water were catching in his short hair. Apparently, the shower also had some lighting function, as the soft blue light was making everything intensely erotic. Heathcliff's amazing eyes appeared even more magnetic as they looked up at him.

"Everywhere," Heathcliff added and bit Aidan's belly playfully.

"It's not fair," Aidan complained, but moved slightly, to allow Heathcliff to sneak his hands around. "I don't have a perfect six pack like you."

"Maybe I don't want that." Heathcliff began licking around the bellybutton.

He was usually ticklish, but right now, everything Heathcliff did was making his arousal grow. Skilled hands were planted firmly on his ass, and he could feel them moving, little by little, toward the crack.

Oh, damn, if Heathcliff told him to turn, spread, and take it, he wouldn't say 'no'. Which would be reckless, and impractical, and it wasn't the ideal way he imagined losing his V-card, but he would take that chance anyway. He had heard plenty about how anal sex wasn't that good under water. Something about lube losing its power and all that.

But Heathcliff seemed to have taken his demand to heart, and Aidan looked down and saw how

his hard cock was grabbed firmly. He inhaled loudly as Heathcliff touched him with his lips, and then used his mouth to cover the head only to roll down slowly.

Unlike him, Heathcliff had no troubles chocking. Naturally so. Aidan was not by far as well-endowed as his partner. But he could not afford to be overly conscious right now, for no other reason than that his dick was following its own agenda, it was hard, and also enjoying tremendously how it was licked and sucked by Heathcliff Stone, the most handsome of all fitness gurus on social media.

Oh, damn, he needed to pay attention. Maybe this would be nothing but a one-time thing, which only meant that he needed to store it away for jerk off purposes. The way Heathcliff was using his tongue had to be something straight out of some manual on giving head. Aidan had had no idea until now his dick had so many sensitive points. It was like Heathcliff was putting his mark on the map.

At the same time, he could not just overlook the way Heathcliff moved his hands, kneading his buttocks, and soon touching the so-called virgin territories. Aidan jolted and moaned loudly as a wet finger pressed against the closed entrance. Heathcliff wasn't penetrating him, but he was putting a bit of pressure, which was enough to make his eyes roll in his head.

Heathcliff stopped for a few seconds, letting go of Aidan's cock, only to push his fingers in his mouth, wetting them and then returning to the task at hand.

It wasn't like he had never wondered how it would be to come into someone's mouth while being stimulated like that. The finger at his hole moved more daringly now, crossing beyond the tight ring of muscles, but without going too deep. It was exciting, but also a bit frustrating. He adjusted his position and grabbed his butt cheeks to part them and let the other know he wanted more.

"I like it when you show initiative," Heathcliff commented, stopping again. "You want a finger in your butt, bunny boy?"

"Don't ask," Aidan murmured.

The soft water running down his body was enhancing the sensations. He shivered and whimpered as Heathcliff moved away his finger to wet it more and then stick it deeper. Aidan was confident he was soon going to feel something, which was pretty magical, and he used to give himself satisfaction when alone at home, using nothing but his fingers.

But Heathcliff's finger was better. Much, much better. And the tongue doing those crazy swirls on his hard cock, alternatively with small suction, was better than anything else in the world right now.

Aidan could feel his balls growing heavier, pulling closer to his body. "Oh, fuck, oh, damn, oh,"

he moaned helplessly, as Heathcliff's finger curled inside his ass, making him see heaven in an instant.

At the same time, Heathcliff went faster and faster while working his cock. The squeeze was fantastic, even with just the mouth. Aidan risked another look at the man at his feet. This wasn't by far right, and he felt like he should be the one in that position, only the thought making him jolt with new bouts of pleasure. Sucking off a guy like that was a one in a million experience, he was sure. But being sucked off by a guy like that topped everything. Actually, he had no idea which one would have been better.

He would propose later a sixty-nine if Heathcliff was still in the mood. Aidan hoped he would be because he needed to see how it felt to have his mouth filled with that gorgeous cock he knew now while having his own devoured like that.

That imagery was enough to push him over the edge. "Oh, fuck, coming, sorry," he cried out, realizing too late that it was just common courtesy to let the other know if you were about to blow.

But Heathcliff didn't seem put off by that in the slightest and just held Aidan there, squeezing him with that skillful mouth that made him see stars in broad daylight. Oh, fuck, was the only thing he could think of. He was practically coming in the other's mouth, and Heathcliff was even swallowing which meant it was better than any fantasy he could ever conjure in his imagination.

"So, so sorry," he mumbled, covering his face as he was coming down and touching the ground again.

"What's all this sorry routine about?" Heathcliff chuckled as he stood up.

Their faces were close. He could smell himself on the other's breath. But they were so, so close, and Aidan had no idea how he was still standing. Heathcliff was gentle as he took Aidan's hands and took them away from his face.

"Has anyone ever swallowed your load?" Heathcliff questioned, eyeing him a bit suspiciously.

"Of course," Aidan said brightly. "It's just that, um, I mean, I've never ... well, you're a celebrity, okay? Forgive me if I'm a little too excited!"

"Ah, so this is all about me being big on social media?" Heathcliff questioned, somewhat amused.

"No! I mean ... c'mon, man. It's you, okay? You swallowing --" Aidan gulped nervously and looked away.

"Hmm," Heathcliff purred and came closer if that was possible.

Heathcliff was now caressing his jawline with his lips.

“I bet everyone is impressed when they have sex with you,” Aidan said to his defense.

“You actually seem more impressed than others,” Heathcliff pointed out.

“Ah, well, I’m new to this,” Aidan retorted.

“How new?” Heathcliff whispered into his ear.

“Don’t act like you don’t know. Just last night I ... with you --”

“I’m not talking about me,” Heathcliff continued to kiss him slowly, now licking the ear and sinking his teeth softly into the tender lobe. “I’m talking about sex.”

“I’ve been with guys,” Aidan protested feebly. “It’s the twenty-first century. I have fuck buddies on speed dial.”

He had no idea what he was saying. He didn’t want to be this inexperienced aloof guy that Heathcliff had suddenly decided to take to his bed.

“You do?” Heathcliff stopped for a second. “What were you doing on that dating app last night then?”

“No one was available on such short notice.” Aidan looked away, hoping he could hide his blatant lies.

He was getting into this deeper and deeper.

“So,” Heathcliff’s hands moved slowly, increasing the pleasant sensations of the water slushing down his body, “it looks like you’re much more experienced than what you let others know.”

“I’m not. Well, compared to other people my age, I’m not,” Aidan said quickly.

“Hmm, let’s see then. Has anyone ever rimmed you before?”

Aidan gasped so loudly that Heathcliff laughed. “Oh, so that hasn’t happened to you.” He glued their bodies together. “It’s nice to know I’ll be a first of sorts for you.”

Aidan swallowed with difficulty. What was that supposed to mean? Maybe he could tell Heathcliff he was actually a virgin? But no, that would not have been right. Heathcliff would think he was a liar, which he was, so he had nothing to say in his defense.

All he needed to do was to play it cool, as usual. “You don’t have to do that,” he murmured.

Heathcliff rimming him? He could not get hard so fast again. But he would let Heathcliff do whatever to him.

“Well, you’re the one in charge. What would you like to do next?” Heathcliff asked.

“Sixty-nine,” he said in a heartbeat.

Heathcliff grinned. “I like a man who knows what he wants. Let’s wash and then take this to the bedroom. I want to run a full and thorough evaluation of what your lack of experience actually means.”

Aidan just nodded. Could Heathcliff see through him and call him out on his lies? He hoped that wasn’t the case. He liked where things were going, and he didn’t want to be shut down for being dishonest.

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Aidan’s reactions to everything were a surprise. Heathcliff couldn’t help but wonder whether the bunny had any experience whatsoever. Of course, it came with the territory that he was who he was, and people everywhere wanted to bed him, so maybe, just maybe, Aidan’s excitement combined with his natural shyness was something normal.

Yet, it somehow rubbed him the wrong way that the corporate bunny had said he had fuck buddies on speed dial. He felt like he had been robbed of something, something that was important to him. But he was silly. It was impossible for a twenty-two-year-old with that kind of ass to be a virgin in the twenty-first century and in a city where so many good-looking men were at least willing to have a taste of the alternative lifestyle.

So he had gotten to the bunny a little too late. But that didn’t mean he couldn’t enjoy being with him. Since when was he interested in virgins? Not that he was discriminating against virgins or anything. It was just that he hadn’t met any so far. Everyone around was so well versed and knew everything.

In other words, expected and sort of boring. By contrast, Aidan’s lack of experience was exciting.

“When did you have sex the first time?” he asked, caressing Aidan’s ear with his lips, as they were moving slowly against one another, now stretched comfortably on the bed.

His desire for Aidan was a bit frightening. Heathcliff almost felt like asking him, point black, to go anal. But the young man had already stated his desire. The fact that Heathcliff needed to postpone his own was nothing short of delicious self-imposed torture.

“I was eighteen or something,” Aidan mumbled.

“Ah, you don’t quite remember then? Was it that forgettable?” Heathcliff laughed.

“I guess,” the reply came like a whisper.

Aidan had no qualms to wrap his legs around Heathcliff, so their erections were touching. Heathcliff liked how Aidan was smaller than him in that department. Not that he had some superiority complex. He just knew he was big as a fact, and he found Aidan's cock as cute as its owner.

"You guess?" Heathcliff expressed his surprise.

"It was a party, and there was drinking and stuff," Aidan said weakly.

"Hmm, and after? Any experiences worth recalling?"

Curiosity was getting the better of him. It wasn't exactly like him to make conversation while in bed with a pretty thing like Aidan Spark. But he wanted so much to know what he was going against and what kind of guys he needed to compare himself to.

"A few," Aidan's voice was growing smaller and smaller.

"Your fuck buddies don't seem like a capable lot," Heathcliff insisted.

Aidan's hands were touching him slowly, caressing his chest, and he knew they should get to the real deal already, but he just wanted to hold the other for a little while longer like that.

"They don't compare to you. Can't, I mean," Aidan said with his disarming honesty.

Heathcliff felt elated. It was veiled praise, but praise, nonetheless. He was more than willing to take it. With a small laugh, he pushed himself up. "Butt to me," he gestured for Aidan to turn.

The bunny looked at him, frowning a bit.

"I want to eat your ass a little, then we can do your sixty-nine," Heathcliff explained.

"Um, okay," Aidan blushed and turned to sit on his fours. "Like this?" he asked over his shoulder.

Heathcliff knelt before the bed and pulled Aidan closer, grabbing him firmly by his dick with one hand.

"Oh, fuck," Aidan groaned.

Yeah. The bunny's reactions were way too endearing. Heathcliff would be a total fool if he let that delicious rump get away from him.

He was about to get to work when somewhere, a phone went off. Ah, it wasn't his. Aidan straightened up.

"Just let it," he said.

“It might be important,” Aidan replied and began rummaging through the clothes on the floor.

Heathcliff stood up with a sigh and sat on the bed. Aidan’s small frown as he checked his phone was telling him he would not get to rim him, and he could kiss that sixty-nine goodbye, too.

“I’m needed at work,” Aidan murmured.

“Weren’t you off the hook for today or something?” Heathcliff protested.

He could tell he sounded petty, but he couldn’t help it. Sexual frustration hadn’t been on schedule for today.

“I’m the youngest in the department,” Aidan explained. “Everyone wants to yank me around. Especially the boss.”

“Hmm.” Heathcliff grunted and looked away.

He could hear Aidan getting dressed and he knew well he could not behave like a kid and ask to be put first, but he felt so much like he wanted to throw a tantrum.

“I’m sorry,” Aidan said dejectedly, kneeling next to him. “It’s just ... work.”

“Sure,” Heathcliff said brightly. “Go.”

Aidan pressed his lips on Heathcliff’s cheek, in apology and quite a chaste kiss. Not as chaste was his hand that sneaked between Heathcliff’s legs and gave the still half hard cock a small friendly squeeze.

Oh, the bunny would get it sooner or later, Heathcliff thought. He was just too yummy to get away. He pulled Aidan into a kiss, but he wasn’t settling for a peck on the cheek. One hand in his hair, the other set firmly along the jawline, he kissed Aidan for real, pushing his tongue into the other’s mouth and playing with it, too.

Aidan made a small whimpering sound. Good, that meant the bunny would come back for more. Not that Heathcliff would wait for Aidan to make a move. He was not that kind of man.

“Put those fuck buddies of yours out of your mind. Wipe that speed dial,” he said with all the seriousness he could manage.

“I don’t call them that often.” Aidan cast his eyes down.

“I don’t care. You have me now,” Heathcliff insisted.

“Seriously? I mean, of course, you’re in my care,” Aidan said, looking a bit puzzled.

“Tell me you didn’t think this was just a one-time thing,” Heathcliff replied, just as puzzled with Aidan’s logic.

“Well, we were interrupted and all ... But you’re not exactly the poster boy for keeping the guys in your bed for more than a little while and --”

Heathcliff tipped Aidan’s chin so they could look at each other. The bunny was avoiding his eyes. “I thought your job description included only snooping around my social media and my professional interests, not what tabloids say about me.”

“Are you saying tabloids don’t always tell the truth?” Aidan snickered and tried to change the subject swiftly.

“In this case, I’m afraid they are closer to the truth than when, let’s say, they talk about penguins giving birth to frogs,” Heathcliff joked. “So your boss told you to go through the ordeal of getting to know me through what online and offline gossip says?”

Aidan avoided his eyes again. “Something like that.”

Heathcliff pressed their foreheads together. “Hey, it’s okay to say you like me. You practically dug through filth to get to know me.”

“It’s not like that,” Aidan protested and slid away from Heathcliff’s hold. “I’m just doing my job, really.”

“Yes, really.” Heathcliff stretched on the bed with a long sigh and placed one hand over his now soft cock.

No wonder there, Aidan’s eyes followed.

“Come on, Spark. You like me,” Heathcliff cooed.

Aidan rolled his eyes. “Damn, Stone, you really are full of yourself.”

“As you should be,” Heathcliff shot back.

Aidan looked at him, opened his mouth, frowned, and then pursed his lips. “As I said,” he eventually said. “Just don’t go fucking around, Stone, okay?”

“I won’t, as long as you’ll keep me in check, bunny boy.” Heathcliff laughed. “You know I can’t control myself. So go and slave away your life, but, as soon as you’re off the hook, call me.”

“I might have other obligations,” Aidan pointed out.

“No, you might not,” Heathcliff said. “You owe me a blowjob.”

“Ah, I see.” Aidan smiled. “Okay, then. Seeing how I’m forced to leave you hanging --”

“Exactly what I said.” Heathcliff could feel his lips twitching, too. “And you know what? How about you have only me on your speed dial?”



“I can’t have only you,” Aidan protested. “I also have my folks and pizza.”

“And aren’t you afraid that you might call your mom instead of some fuck buddy by accident?” Heathcliff wondered out loud. “And pizza, seriously? We do need to correct that.”

“Okay, save your lectures on healthy eating for later.”

“Ah, so we will meet later,” Heathcliff said with satisfaction.

“I thought you only said I should call you,” Aidan reminded him.

Heathcliff shrugged. “Of course, so I know when you’ll swing by.”

Aidan sighed. “All right. I guess there’s no winning with you. So see you later then.”

Heathcliff winked at him. He knew well that the way he was laying there, offering the corporate bunny a perfect look at his entire naked body would leave a lasting impression.

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What the hell was wrong with him? Aidan thought as he ignited the car engine. He had almost given himself away a thousand times. He needed to be more careful. Telling lies would not hold.

He had to make a promise to himself. No more lies, or he would become incapable of keeping everything in check.

Maybe he needed to distance himself a little from Heathcliff Stone. He was just someone in a contractual relationship with the company employing Aidan. So, normally, he should not get involved with him. It was enough for Heathcliff to take his hand that Aidan could feel like nothing else mattered.

Damn, he was driven by his hormones. But it wasn’t like someone would find out, right? He would be careful, and he would tell Heathcliff to be discreet, too.

Was he doing something that could endanger his career? Especially since he hadn’t even really started to get genuinely concerned about it. Not for lack of trying, but apparently, he was hired in that office only to keep folders in check and babysit celebrities.

And that was not at all like Aidan had imagined his first year in the work field to look like. He was hoping to get a creative position soon, but, each time he had asked his boss about anything remotely close to that, he had been shut down and told to wait.

Maybe he should focus on his career, after all. Seeing how now he was moving away at a decent speed from Heathcliff’s driveway, he could see things a bit more clearly. Would he think more about how to get busy with a fitness guru, than about what he was doing with his life?

He needed to have priorities. And he could not let his cock dictate priorities, no matter how impatient that thing was lately. Ever since he had met Heathcliff Stone in flesh and blood, it was like nothing else mattered but figuring out how he could lose his virginity to him. Most probably, none of his friends were thinking about such things. No, without a doubt, they were working hard and weren't getting distracted from their careers by impure thoughts involving who knew who.

He wouldn't call Heathcliff later, he decided. Actually, he would call, and he would tell him... Hell, what could he say to him?

His phone went off. With a small frown, he checked the message. Apparently, they were getting a bit impatient at work. And that was the most important thing at the moment. He could lose his virginity later.

How much later, that was a question with a pending answer. Aidan would not be bothered by such things right at that moment.

### *Chapter Nine - When Will You Be Home?*

“So, was no one else available to take care of all these?” Aidan questioned while pointing with a pen at the huge stack of folders on his desk.

One of the promises he had made to himself was to be more assertive. At least, that was one of the things the motivation audio books he was listening to on his way to work every day tried to teach him. ‘Tried’ being the operative word since Aidan had proven to be nothing but a mediocre student in that respect. No matter how much he wanted to impose himself, especially at work, he seemed to do an abysmal job.

The female colleague leaned against his desk with the same coffee cup that seemed glued to her, in one hand. “It is your job,” she said matter-of-factly.

“I see,” Aidan replied, pursing his lips.

He could not fathom why his colleague wasn’t moving away, now that she had unloaded on his desk enough files to keep him busy until he was grey.

“So how is he?” the woman eventually asked, seeing how Aidan had grabbed one of the folders and was getting ready to get to work.

“Who?” Aidan asked, without looking at her.

The woman leaned over like she wanted to share some secret with Aidan. “Heathcliff Stone, who else? I wish I had your job,” she said under her breath with a small grimace.

“By all means, I can share,” Aidan put one hand over the stack of folders.

The woman almost took a step back as if she had been burned. “I meant looking after Heathcliff,” she said and shook her head.

Aidan could say he was a tad annoyed by how his colleague was talking about Heathcliff. Like she was entitled to say his name like that.

“He’s gay,” he blurted out.

It wasn’t like him to act like that.

“And?” the woman shrugged. “I bet it’s amazing to work with someone like him,” she said dreamily.

Aidan sighed. “He’s actually --” he began but stopped.

“Yes?” the woman’s eyes lit up.

“He’s an awesome person,” Aidan said. “Quite nice.”

And he was doing that in all honesty.

“Ah,” the woman seemed disappointed. “Okay. If you say so, I mean. He has quite a reputation.”

“Well, it’s no one’s business what he does in his spare time,” Aidan retorted.

“Of course,” the woman said in an exaggerated, empathic voice. “But it must be torture for him not to be able to go as wild as he likes, now that he’s signed with us.”

“What do you mean?” Aidan looked straight at her.

The woman balanced the coffee cup in her hand like it was some circus act. “You know, we don’t just endorse anyone,” she added like Aidan must have been hearing that for the first time in his life.

“He has two million followers,” Aidan pointed out. “Of course we do not endorse just anyone,” he said, emphasizing the ‘we’.

“I was talking about, you know, his rather loose --” The woman stopped, apparently trying to find her words.

“His followers don’t care about that,” Aidan said sharply. “He does a great job at giving fitness advice. He has a positive impact on people’s lives.”

Aidan was getting a little worked up. But it wasn’t fair that people were judging Heathcliff based on what he did in his free time.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me,” he set his hands on the keyboard, looking determinedly ahead, at the screen, “I need to take care of all these unless I want to end up sleeping here.”

The woman scoffed, but added nothing, and began walking away. “Put those extra hours in, Aidan,” she said over her shoulder. “They will pay off, eventually.”

Something was foreboding in how the woman said those words. And how she looked at him as if she knew something he didn’t.

With a shrug, he decided to get back to work. And, while he was determined to stay away from Heathcliff and remain strictly professional in their dealings, he wouldn’t just let random people gossip or speak ill of him. Heathcliff was more than just his image, and, as Aidan knew well, a good person.

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“Is the boss in?” Aidan asked the secretary.

Part of his assertiveness training involved reminding his boss, with some frequency, that he was very much interested in a creative position. He was efficient, he was doing his job, day by day, and he had not much else to learn from his current situation.

The secretary placed one hand over the phone with a bored expression. "Let me check if he can see you."

Aidan remained standing. It was three hours after what was supposed to be closing time, but his boss was still at work, and he was keeping his secretary from leaving home, as well. Of course, that meant his boss was busy. But Aidan wouldn't take much of his time.

The secretary spoke perfunctorily over the phone and then gestured for him to go inside.

"Spark," his boss boomed, "good job on the photo and video shoot!"

"Thank you, sir," Aidan said. "What do you think of the results?"

"Sit," the man ordered, looking at him over his glasses.

Aidan sat on one of the little chairs available. Having his knees up almost to his chest was making him feel awkward. It was not the ideal position to ask for a promotion, but he needed to make do with what he had.

"Is Heathcliff Stone behaving?" the man asked.

Aidan knew what his boss was asking, and it was making him grind his teeth a little.

"He's on his best behavior, sir," he murmured.

Being part of this charade was making him feel bad, even if he wasn't the instigator, by all means.

"Good. Now, can I help you with anything?" his boss asked, still looking over his glasses, and visibly not in the mood to extend this visit from an employee for too long.

"I have a few ideas about how to make this campaign have an even bigger impact," Aidan said.

"Creative input is not in your job description," the other cut him short.

"About that," Aidan started and licked his lips nervously. "I think I could serve the company better if I were --"

"Are you unhappy with your current position, Spark?" the man asked, in the same booming voice.

It was annoying how he could not see his boss's entirely while speaking especially since he liked to talk in that loud voice from behind the curtain of his hands.

“I wouldn’t say unhappy, sir, but --”

“No ‘buts’,” the man interrupted him. “Do you have any idea how many employees in this company, employees who have been with us for years, wait for a creative position?”

“I can’t say that I do, sir,” Aidan replied when he noticed that his boss was actually waiting for an answer.

“So you don’t know. What makes you think you’re better than these people who have been serving under my wing for years, if not decades?” His boss slammed both his palms against the desk, startling Aidan.

He had to say he preferred when his boss was seated and hid half his face then when he was standing up, hovering over his desk, like he was trying to reach Aidan and do something strange and most probably illegal in a typical office environment. Leaving aside considerations related to workplace conditions, Aidan knew what he had to do.

He stood up, too. “I finished in the first five percent of my class, I have a portfolio that HR, not only here, but at three different companies, decided it was enough to qualify me for immediate employment, I always put in the extra hours, I have been involved with five different creative projects so far, and I have been serving under your wing for one year, too, sir!”

He was almost out of breath when he stopped that tirade, but chose not to flinch. His boss was looking at him, his eyes out of his sockets, and, not quite so briefly, Aidan wondered what the punishment was for insubordination.

“Very good, Spark!” the man yelled at him.

Was it a good idea to add anything else? His time to decide flew out the window, as his boss sat down and gestured for him to do the same.

“Your work on this campaign with Heathcliff Stone has been exemplary, soldier,” the man said, seemingly now a bit more appeased than before.

Soldier? No wonder he thought the guy was ex-military. He needed to ask one of his older colleagues about that.

“Not once had he made the headlines with some misconduct,” his boss added. “So keep up the good work. Dismissed!”

Aidan stood up, feeling a bit confused. Had he made any progress regarding the creative position? He couldn’t tell. But, apparently, there were many things he wasn’t well aware of in this type of environment. After one year, he expected to have already gotten the lay of the land, but, still, he couldn’t figure out his boss or his colleagues.

He did not exactly drag his feet as he made his exit, but he felt far from being the winner. His boss was as impenetrable as ever, and Aidan wasn't sure if it counted that he had stood his ground, almost yelling back.

At his desk, he took a few minutes to recollect himself. Had he chosen poorly when he had gone with this company? Almost mindlessly, he began browsing through his social media. These days, he was more often than not stalking his friends, rather than picking up the phone and talking to them, asking them how they were and all that. It was like they were all trapped behind the shiny screens of phones and computers, and their existence seemed a little bit like from a reality show.

"Living the life," he mumbled under his breath, as he read the latest post from one of his besties.

So the guy was somewhere on an exotic island, researching turtles and whatnot. He looked good, all tanned, wearing a rather stupid hat and crocs. With a sigh, he moved on. Another friend was bragging about his work, at some big company.

"I always knew I would land my dream job," Aidan read out loud.

He was now alone on the entire floor, so he could do that without drawing unnecessary attention. "Dream job, my ass," he said to himself.

Was he jealous of his friends who had ended up in much better places than he had? If that was the truth, it was only his fault that had happened and no one else's. He needed to think about this. Leaving his current job was not an option. Not until he had at least a few years of experience under his belt, and he could get references.

Maybe he was too impatient. Maybe he had imagined his 'dream job' completely different, with challenges, excitement, rewards, both financial and intellectual, not a string of boring days where he needed to organize files and do whatever crossed anyone's mind, seeing how everyone else was above him and believed themselves entitled to push him around.

And, of course, he had his student loan to repay, and he was too proud to ask his mom and dad for help, as he could not declare himself defeated after just one year as part of the working class. He needed to soldier on and get that creative position he craved.

The playful chime of his phone interrupted his thoughts. Ah, damn, it was Heathcliff, he sighed, as he looked at the screen. What was he going to do? How was he going to let the guy down gently? Wait, was he even considering that he was someone Heathcliff Stone would lose sleep over? Nah, most probably, he would move on ... Again, he was absurd. There was nothing to move on from, regardless of how Aidan liked to think it was. Heathcliff Stone was the kind of man who would forget about much hotter guys than Aidan the following day after having them in his bed.

Still, Heathcliff was calling. And, by the looks of things, he had no intention to give up.

“Yes,” he eventually answered in a meek voice.

“Are you trying to stand me up, bunny boy?” Heathcliff’s energetic voice came through.

“How impatient can you be? It’s only --” Aidan looked at the clock on the wall and cursed under his breath.

“Only a little over ten PM. You know, I was only joking when I told you to go slave your life away. You didn’t have to take it literally.”

“Haven’t you heard of extra hours?” Aidan asked, feeling a little snappy.

“Haven’t you heard of having an actual life besides work?” Heathcliff replied in kind, but he seemed amused.

“You’re kidding me, right? For me, you are work, too, you know?” Aidan said.

“See? I’m helping you get more extra hours. Also, you’re getting blowjobs in the process. I don’t remember any complaints,” Heathcliff pointed out.

Aidan was thankful for being alone. He was sure he was as red as a beet. And there was also a part of his body that was reacting to Heathcliff’s voice and choice of uncouth words, without giving a damn that Aidan had a frigging career to worry about.

“Listen,” he sighed, “I ... I am certain that I’m a somewhat decent distraction for you --”

“I have a feeling I’m not going to like what you’re going to say next,” Heathcliff interrupted him. “So stop talking. I don’t appreciate the snappiness of your tone. Come straight to my place as soon as you’re finished. You can take a shower here, and I also have dinner ready. It’s a little late, but I bet you’re famished. I’ll warm it up for you.”

Aidan wanted to say that wasn’t the case, but his stomach made a sound of protest to remind him that he had been neglecting his hunger for too many hours now. Maybe for tonight, he could postpone thinking about his career and go and eat real food for a change, and enjoy whatever came after.

Heathcliff woke him up from his musings. “I’m not hearing what I should hear.”

Aidan sighed. “I’m coming.”

“Come on; it’s not like I’m inviting you to walk the plank. I have grilled chicken with vegetables. Everything made outside, on a real grill.”

Aidan was sure his mouth was going to water if Heathcliff told him there was nothing but stale bread for dinner. He could not say ‘no’ to such an invitation. And Heathcliff would get bored with him anyway by tomorrow or the day after tomorrow or next week.



“I’m coming,” he said, with determination this time.

“Atta boy,” Heathcliff replied, and Aidan could picture him smiling.

It was a comforting thought to go home to someone. It wasn’t his home, and that someone was just a guy who he was happening to work with, but, all in all, he felt a bit of warmth, right in the middle of his chest.

Damn, he thought, as it struck him. He missed his parents. They had always been so close, maybe a bit too close at times, but he was thankful for their love and care. Now, that he had to live far from them, and there were days when he forgot or didn’t have time to call them, he realized how much he was missing everything, from his mom’s cooking to his dad’s gentle guidance.

He shook his head. It was late now. But tomorrow, he would call them for sure.

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The bunny was looking a bit worse for wear, but he was too young for that tiredness to take its toll on him. His face was a little drawn, but somewhat that made him a bit more attractive. Maybe because the usual mask was slipping off a little, and that without Heathcliff going on a full-fledged campaign to make the young man show his true colors.

Heathcliff gestured for Aidan to walk inside. “Come on in.”

Aidan’s eyes were a bit sad, he noticed. Heathcliff placed his hands on his shoulders and squeezed in sympathy. “Rough day?”

Aidan smiled. “Just the usual.”

“Good. Hit the shower. I let a change of clothes there for you. Then come down so that you can put something in your stomach.”

Aidan just nodded and began climbing the stairs. For a few seconds, Heathcliff watched him. It was so unlike him to have someone in his care at home. Well, he was interested in the Aidan sexually, so nothing was that different. He did all that for his selfish self, after all. There was no point to worry that there was something else there, he thought, as he moved the plate filled with food just one-quarter of an inch to the left.

Aidan was back in ten minutes, and he sat gingerly at the table. “You’re not eating?” he asked.

“I never eat so late,” Heathcliff explained. “I wouldn’t recommend it to you, either, but seeing how the alternative is you losing that gorgeous ass --”

It was so nice to see Aidan blushing. Who was still blushing in this day and age?

“Dig in. Don’t worry about a thing. Now, tell me, who’s responsible for keeping you so late?”

“I am,” Aidan said with a soft sigh. “I need to put in the hours if I want to get ahead.”

“And ruin your health in the process?” Heathcliff asked.

“Well, not everyone’s a winner at the lottery genes like you, Mr. Gorgeous,” Aidan babbled.

“Mr. Gorgeous?” Heathcliff chuckled.

Aidan cast his eyes down. “Forget I said that.”

“Impossible,” Heathcliff teased his guest. “Now, bunny boy, you know that I work hard for this body.”

“How could I not know?” Aidan stole a furtive glance in his direction. “I mean, I’m sorry. Of course, you work hard. I was out of line.”

Heathcliff wanted to reach him across the table and ruffle his hair. “Your mom and dad must be so proud of you,” he said. “You’re well behaved for the times we’re living in.”

“I hope they are,” Aidan said as he dug into his plate.

The fact that Aidan had a healthy appetite for food pleased Heathcliff. Usually, that was a sign of an equally healthy appetite in other areas.

“I’m sure they are,” Heathcliff replied.

Aidan drew one long sigh. “I took a student loan, I believe I struck a bad deal, so I’m overpaying, and I’m caught in a job that doesn’t seem to take me anywhere right now while all my friends are living the life,” he said with a grimace. “Sorry, too much info, right?”

“What’s that about your job?” Heathcliff asked.

Aidan shrugged and, for a while, he seemed too busy eating. Heathcliff decided to offer him a bit of a reprieve.

“Thank you. It was delicious,” Aidan said while patting his lips with the napkin.

“My pleasure.” Heathcliff watched the young man closely. “I’ll leave you off the hook for now, but you’ll have to tell me all about your job.”

Aidan threw him a much sincere look of gratefulness. So, bunny boy was trapped like a hamster on a wheel. Heathcliff could tell that was the case. All vulnerable, dressed in clothes that were a bit too large for him, Aidan had no reason to lie about a serious thing like that.

“I guess I should get going now,” Aidan said as he stood up.

Heathcliff frowned. "Seriously? Don't you forget something? I'm not the Salvation Army, bunny boy. I only cook for guys who give me blowjobs."

Not really. He could not remember when he had cooked for one of his sex partners. Serve them a healthy drink, maybe. But they were usually out the door too quickly for Heathcliff to include meals on the house with the horizontal action. Or vertical, depending on the mood and the physical prowess of the said partners.

Aidan was making such a face that Heathcliff found it impossible to keep up the charade. "You're so easy to tease. I'm joking. But really, spend the night. I promise I'll be good and not pester you about that BJ you owe me until morning."

"Spend the night? Like in sleeping?" Aidan's innocent eyes were as big as saucers now.

"Yeah, I do that sometimes, too," Heathcliff joked. "Regardless of what the tabloids might have told you," he added, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

Aidan snickered and shook his head. "Doesn't it bother you that I'll have to wake up early so that I can get home and change?"

"No," Heathcliff replied. "I'll set the alarm for the time you want."

"Hmm," Aidan smiled. "How come tabloids picture you like this frivolous playboy who only cares about one night stands and whatnot? When you're such a nice man."

Heathcliff smiled sweetly. "I have no idea, really," he joked.

"Okay. Where will I sleep?" Aidan asked.

"What kind of question is that? In my bed, of course."

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Aidan was sure he was making a pretty funny face that very moment. "It looks like I need to take back what I said about you being a nice guy," he mumbled.

"Hey, I promise I'll keep to my part of the bed."

"I bet you say that to all the guys you seduce in your spare time," Aidan said, but his lips were twitching.

"Ah, but that's where you're wrong, bunny boy. Usually, I say something along the lines of 'Let's fuck'."

Aidan hoped his face wasn't giving him away now. He swallowed with difficulty some imaginary knot in his throat. He wanted Heathcliff to tell him that. The f-word spoken so casually sounded so erotic in his mouth.

He shook his head. He needed to check himself. And just earlier that day he had thought about avoiding getting more involved. And now, he was in Heathcliff's house, eating his food, wearing his clothes, and about to sleep in his bed. With him. He was about to sleep with Heathcliff Stone. Only he could not brag about it on social media.

"Disappointed?" Heathcliff cooed.

"What?" he stammered.

"That I don't propose that. Come on, a guy with your experience and fuck buddies on speed dial, I might be just another notch on your belt, right?" Heathcliff teased him.

That sounded so ridiculous it wasn't even funny. "I thought it was the other way around," he said.

"Really? Come on; let's sleep. I can tell you're wasted. I promise I'll be the perfect gentleman."

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Half an hour later, on his side of the bed, Aidan was far from being able to fall asleep. Only the thought that he was in the same bed with Heathcliff was enough to make him lose sleep over it. Against himself, he sighed loudly.

"Trouble sleeping?" Heathcliff's voice was as sinuous as a snake.

Ah, so he wasn't the only one not sleeping. "I'm thinking," he replied.

"What about?" Heathcliff shifted, and Aidan could tell he was scooting over.

Heathcliff's bed was large, but Aidan was sure he could reach out and touch the other.

"Um, about," he gulped, "how I should ... repay you for your hospitality, after all. Also, not to break your record of not cooking for guys who you don't, you know, bang."

He was spewing nonsense. Heathcliff would laugh at him. But he couldn't just sleep with that gorgeous man next to him. If he did something, he would lose all night over whether he should jump Heathcliff's bones or not.

"Do you want me to bang you?" Heathcliff asked.

"Yes, I mean no!" Aidan almost shouted, horrified. "I mean, I do owe you a blowjob."

In one swift move, Heathcliff was all over him. It wasn't pitch black in the room, so he could somewhat make the other's naked torso. Or better said, he could feel that because he had automatically reached his arms to embrace Heathcliff.

His hands wandered to the waistband of Heathcliff's silk pajama pants.

"I normally sleep naked, but I was making an exception for your sake, you know." Heathcliff sounded amused.

"You don't have to make an exception," Aidan whispered.

"Your word is my command. Do you want me naked, bunny boy?" Heathcliff teased.

"Yeah," Aidan replied, feeling courageous.

"What do I get in return?" Heathcliff asked.

"Um, the blowjob?" Aidan asked, feeling unsure.

"My price is a bit steeper, I'm afraid."

"What would you like?" Aidan whispered.

"I'm so glad you asked," Heathcliff said gleefully. "First, for you to get naked, too."

"I don't want to get fucked," Aidan said pleadingly.

Like hell, he didn't. But he wasn't prepared for that step. Plus, Heathcliff's cock was a bit scary. Amazing and looking like Aidan's wildest fantasies, but big, definitely too much for a virgin, without proper prior preparations. He needed to buy a dildo or a butt plug or something and then prepare extensively if he ever got fucked by Heathcliff's huge cock.

If, of course, if. In two days max, Heathcliff would become disinterested, and Aidan would miss the opportunity to lose his virginity to someone ... who was basically everything Aidan could wish for, and not just in a bed partner.

What was he thinking again? He had no chance with Heathcliff! But he could not ...

"Okay, I won't fuck you," Heathcliff replied. "I can feel you frowning from here. But, except for my cock in your ass, we'll do everything I want. Deal?"

"Deal," Aidan hurried to say.

He was quite impatient to learn what Heathcliff meant by everything. He kept him trapped under his body, and soon their mouths found each other, and a good old fashioned battle of tongues began. Aidan loved kissing; it was something so real, so intimate, that it made him tremble in pleasure. All the while his hands were caressing Heathcliff's back, mapping all the muscles

slowly. Despite not being overly muscular like some bodybuilder, he had gorgeous anatomy. Aidan could recall all the anatomy lessons from school just by moving his hands over the other's skin.

This time, when his hands reached the waistband of Heathcliff's pajama pants, he started pushing the fabric down. As shy as he felt, he could not let an opportunity like that slip, so he began squeezing Heathcliff's ass with all the impatience threatening to burst inside him.

He groaned softly into the kiss, feeling Heathcliff's still clothed erection rubbing against his.

Heathcliff stopped their kiss. "You seem into my ass."

"It's a pretty amazing ass," Aidan said promptly.

"Hmm, thank you, but don't get your hopes high. It takes a very special kind of man to fuck me," Heathcliff purred into his ear.

"I wasn't ... I mean ... I wasn't thinking about that!" he protested, but his voice was weak.

Well, if he were honest to himself, Aidan was quite sure, even while being a total virgin, that he wanted to be versatile. His fantasies were explicit in that regard.

"Yes, you were. Well, if you prove yourself, I might just let you," Heathcliff teased him. "Would you like that?"

"Are you serious?" Aidan asked, without hiding how hopeful he felt. "How can I prove myself?"

"Ready to take notes?" Heathcliff chuckled, making him whimper as hot air was softly blown over his ear. "First things first, well, I'm first."

"First?" Aidan mumbled.

"To fuck you." Heathcliff pushed his hips making their erections almost crush together.

Aidan was almost afraid he would come in his pants and make a total fool of himself. He needed to focus. He squeezed his eyes tightly. Just a little concentration was all he needed, for real.

Heathcliff moved away, and his eyes snapped open. He let out a breath when he realized Heathcliff had just turned on the light.

"Care for a striptease show?" Heathcliff teased him, his thumbs hooked into the elastic waistband of the pajama pants.

The said piece of clothing was already lowered on the hip bones, and Heathcliff looked so damn delicious that Aidan moved without realizing. Soon he was on his knees in front of the other, and his hands were reaching to drag down the pants for real this time.

“For a guy who usually seems all ice, you’re quite hot for cock, Spark,” Heathcliff joked.

Feeling a bit guilty, he looked up. Heathcliff’s beautiful eyes had a not so veiled hunger in them that he could not overlook it. He licked his lips.

“May I please suck your cock?” he whispered.

Heathcliff’s hand rested on top of his head and started to caress his hair. “As I said, so well behaved. Go ahead.”

Aidan grabbed the hard cock with both hands. As he descended with lips and tongue on the object of his desires, Heathcliff’s fingers ran softly through his hair.

“You have a wonderful mouth, Aidan,” the words were spoken just as softly. “You suck my cock so well.”

He loved being praised. Such a thing, coming from someone like Heathcliff who had been with who knew how many guys had to mean something. So, just like anything else he was doing in his life, he put his heart and soul into it.

His hands set firmly on the long cock, to control his motions, he began sucking slowly, making sure to lick the head over and over again.

“Damn,” Heathcliff whispered.

He was bucking his hips slightly, a sign that Aidan was doing a good job, but maybe not enough. He tried to take a little more, but the engorged head touching the back of his throat made him withdraw with a small cough.

“Sorry,” he mumbled.

“It’s okay,” Heathcliff held him by the back of the head and guided him back. “Take it a bit slowly. I don’t need you to deepthroat. That takes patience and time.”

Aidan looked up at the man. “I have patience and time.”

“Yeah, but I don’t right now,” Heathcliff replied. “Now, open your mouth and be the good boy I know you are.”

Aidan didn’t protest and went back to work, the best way he could go about it. He would to ask Heathcliff for pointers later. But right now all he wanted was to make the guy get off.

“You’re good like this, so good,” Heathcliff praised him.

He needed no other encouragements to settle into a rhythm. His jaw hurt a little, but he sort of liked that, too. And he was growing accustomed to Heathcliff's cock size that no longer seemed as frightening as before.

"Okay." Heathcliff stopped him, one hand firmly in his hair. "You're good, bunny boy. Now do me a little favor. Take your clothes off and go sit on the bed with your ass up."

"Are you going to fuck me?" Aidan asked, only half scared this time.

"I told you I wasn't," Heathcliff sounded a tad impatient, as he was stroking his cock with short, punishing moves. "I want a good look at your ass as I blow. All over it, of course."

Aidan could feel a small jolt of excitement coursing through his entire body like a short circuit at those words. Heathcliff Stone liked his ass. So much that he wanted to blow while looking at it.

With frantic moves, he got rid of the few clothes he wore, dropping them on the floor, and then climbed the bed. "Like this?" he asked over one shoulder.

"Perfect," Heathcliff grabbed one of his buttocks. "Yes, damn," his voice dropped lower. "Don't worry, I won't go near your lovely hole," he added.

Heathcliff was squeezing his ass and praising him, but Aidan could not say he was still listening. Between his legs, his own cock was solid and heavy, and his balls were almost in pain. He needed to touch himself, or he would go insane.

When he felt the hot droplets of cum all over his butt and lower back, his hand only had to move a few times up and down his cock, and he was a goner. Too late, while he was breathing hard and trying to recollect his rational thoughts, he realized he had just made a mess on the sheets.

"I'm so sorry," he said almost inaudibly.

"You have a gorgeous ass, and I'm going to say that a thousand times if need be. What are you sorry for, again?" Heathcliff questioned.

"I came all over your sheets," Aidan admitted.

"Hmm, okay. You are guilty all right," Heathcliff joked. "No problem, I'm opening a tab and put there all your debts to me. You know how much I want to make you my personal slave."

Despite the shame and everything, Aidan snickered, pushing his head into a pillow.

"I'll bring something to clean you up," Heathcliff leaned over and kissed him between the shoulder blades, making him shudder.

"Thank you," he managed.



Damn, he must have looked like such a kid, Aidan thought, as his eyelids grew heavy.

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Aidan was stretched on the edge of the bed and was sleeping like a little angel, Heathcliff noticed the soonest he was back from the bathroom. With a small chuckle, he began to wipe slowly the round buttocks on which he had just come quite copiously minutes earlier.

He placed an almost tender kiss on Aidan's ass. He didn't protest much as he was slowly made to scoot over, toward the middle of the bed. Heathcliff grabbed the stained blanket without disturbing his bed partner. It wasn't that big a deal. Aidan hadn't exactly messed the sheets.

It took him little to return with another blanket. He covered them both and placed one protective arm around Aidan. It felt nice to have someone to sleep with in the same bed for a change.

## *Chapter Ten – I Want! I Don't Want!*

The sound of the alarm was unfamiliar, and, for seconds, Aidan had no idea where he was or whether he was still sleeping and dreaming. Shaking his head and groaning, he eventually pushed himself up.

Or, better said, he tried. There was a heavy arm thrown over him, and Aidan was pretty much mortified when it struck him. He had slept in the same bed with Heathcliff Stone. He had cooked for him, and later, Aidan had given him a blowjob, and then Heathcliff had come all over his ass ... And Aidan had made a fool of himself by blowing over the sheets, only because he had been way too aroused to control himself.

It had been quite the experience, Aidan thought, determined to be at least a bit philosophical about the whole thing. He still needed to keep things in check. Keep himself in check. Well, he wasn't sure he could.

He wasn't supposed to sleep with people in contractual relationships with the company he was working for. Without knowing for sure whether that was a rule set in stone in corporate law and whatnot, he felt it was wrong.

The arm squeezed him, and he sighed. Why did it have to feel so good to be with Heathcliff? At first, they hadn't even liked each other much. They had been almost neutral. No, that wasn't right. Aidan had liked Heathcliff even before meeting him. It was just vital that he could keep being professional.

Maybe he could wait for Heathcliff to become bored. Yeah, that was a brilliant idea. But, right now, he needed to hurry back to his place, get into a suit, and go to work. After a night in Heathcliff's arms, he was ready to take on the world.

The only problem was that he needed to get out of bed. With infinite care, he took Heathcliff's arm and tried to remove it. Not a fat chance, he thought, as the arm just wrapped around him, pulling him close to the warm body. Damn, being there was so good Aidan almost felt like crying. And like he just wanted to cuddle and forget about work.

Unfortunately, that was not an option. The only option was to get out of the bed and head to his place for a change of clothes and his almost lost motivation to go to work. So he needed to disentangle himself from Heathcliff's arms and do the right thing.

"Hey," he said softly. "I really need to go."

There was no response. Aidan tried to pry himself free, but Heathcliff's body seemed to be as stubborn as its owner, always finding a way to catch him and pull him tightly. Soon enough, Aidan began to squirm. This was getting ridiculous.

"Stone, you're not really sleeping," he said sternly.

A small chuckle was the answer this time.

“Where’s the fire, bunny boy?” Heathcliff nuzzled the back of his neck.

Aidan shuddered. Heathcliff was too sexy, too strong, and too much to deal with first thing in the morning.

“I need to go,” he said, and his voice sounded a bit whiny.

“Do you really need to go? Is it what you want?” Heathcliff’s voice was smooth as silk.

Aidan groaned.

“I have to.”

“You don’t like your job,” Heathcliff said in a tone that brooked no contradiction.

He needed to protest. “It’s not that! It’s ... something else.”

“Care to elaborate?”

Heathcliff’s hand was slowly moving, caressing his chest, brushing over his nipples. Aidan shivered.

“I need to go,” he whispered.

“Okay, bunny boy, but later, come see me. Don’t wait until it’s ten o’clock in the evening. You’re not allowed to do that to yourself.”

“I’m not allowed?” Aidan scoffed. “You’re not my real mom,” he mimicked a stupid meme, for lack of a better and more intelligent thing to say.

“No, but I could be your --” Heathcliff let the words hang in the air for a second, “daddy!”

“Seriously,” Aidan moaned and closed his eyes. “Stone, let me get out of the bed, or it will be on you that I end up jobless. And you’re not old enough to be a daddy.”

“Are you sure you can’t stay a little longer?” Heathcliff was talking right into his ear, making the hair on his head stand on end.

Was this how being with Heathcliff in bed felt like all the time? They weren’t even fucking. No, he could not think of such dirty things this early in the morning.

“Not everyone has the luxury of sleeping in and living a free life.”

“Is that a jab at me, Sparky?” Heathcliff teased. “I should let you know I am a man who knows a thing or two about discipline.”

“I bet,” Aidan shot back. “May I go now?”

Heathcliff removed his arm, and Aidan stood up. He noticed his clothes placed neatly on a chair and hurried to get dressed.

“You offer quite a nice view from the back,” Heathcliff said.

He preferred not to turn. Aidan was so sure, in the light of the new day, that he had made a big mistake coming over to Heathcliff last night. He didn't have just a weakness or a thing for the fitness guru now. He had a crush the size of a continent, and being in such proximity to him only meant that he was dooming himself to failure on all fronts.

“I should,” Aidan started, but his tongue was like lead in his mouth, “um, just keep things professional with you.”

He exhaled. He had done it. He had said the one thing that he had to tell Heathcliff. Whatever they were both playing at was not okay. And if Aidan was the one to play by the rules, that was only normal. Of them two, Aidan was the one with more to lose, and also the one who seemed more responsible. Fucking guys and treating everything like it was just another day in the life of a social media celebrity were Heathcliff's job, not his. Aidan's job was to think mainly, well, of his job.

“Professional?” Heathcliff sounded amused. “Of course, that's totally how things are between us.”

“I'm serious,” Aidan said.

Now that he had his clothes on, he felt a little more protected against Heathcliff's charms. What was he thinking? Heathcliff was stretching lazily on the bed, like a feline ready to pounce, and the broad smile on his face was extremely suspicious. Aidan could not look into those magnetic eyes without losing his balance.

Internal balance. Whatever. He shook his head. “Everything is a joke with you,” he said.

It was safer if he didn't look at Heathcliff at all.

“I think you're the one who doesn't treat this with the proper attitude,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan's head shot up, and his eyes clashed with the magnetic blues he was trying so hard to avoid. “How can you say that?”

“Well, let's look at the facts, bunny boy. First, you flaunt that gorgeous ass.”

“I don't flaunt --”

“Hush. What? Your fuck buddies don’t care to tell you that too often? I’ll correct that, don’t worry. Second, you like it. Three, we both like it. So this game of ‘I want-I don’t want’ doesn’t make you cute.”

Despite the casual choice of words, Heathcliff’s voice sounded a bit sharp and cutting. The man was pissed.

“You’re pissed,” Aidan said with finality.

“Why should I be pissed?” Heathcliff quirked an eyebrow. “I’m just stating facts.”

“Come on,” Aidan insisted. “This, whatever it is, is just like any other day for you. I’m just another guy you would like to fuck. And while I may feel tempted to believe that I am in select company, seeing the kind of guys you usually take to bed, I have no doubts that it is also pretty numerous company.”

“Are you done?” Heathcliff sounded irritated for real now.

“Well, there’s not much else to say. I’m sorry that I can’t accommodate you and give you what you want, which probably hurts, seeing how spoiled you are, but it’s actually my job on the line, and I can’t risk it for a fuck.”

Aidan had no idea why he had gotten so worked up all of a sudden. But the truth was he was running late. And he would have liked to have this conversation with Heathcliff another time, but now was a moment as good as any, seeing how they could not continue to fool around like this. Also, for some reason, he felt defensive. He had opened up to Heathcliff the night before like he has never done it with anyone, throwing words about how his job sucked, and other personal stuff.

“Oh, please, don’t risk it,” Heathcliff said scathingly. “What do you think? That I’ll post on social media how I screwed you?”

“No. But I guess that all that publicity you enjoy from tabloids would gladly feed on your latest conquest.” Aidan knew he was unreasonable, rude, and completely unfair. “Anyways, thank you for the meal. And last night. I mean everything.”

He almost stumbled back as he tried to find his way to the door. Heathcliff was quick to catch him before he managed to exit the room. Aidan didn’t have the guts to turn, as trapped as he was between the door and Heathcliff’s muscular body.

“Listen here, bunny boy,” Heathcliff whispered into his ear. “Whatever you think you’re doing, it’s wrong. As long as you keep it a secret, what’s going on between us, I mean, I will do the same. So don’t sell me crap about tabloids and whatnot. This has nothing to do with your job. It has, however, all to do with you being a stuck-up. I must admit that I’m surprised. For someone this young, you behave like you’ve spent your entire life licking bitter lemons. You know that’s

not who you are. Now go to that job you don't like and act like someone you're not. When you come running back to me--"

"What?" Aidan interrupted Heathcliff's tirade. "Will you tell me 'I told you so'? Will you be glad to show me the door? Will you laugh at me?"

"No." Heathcliff was now closer, his lips brushing by Aidan's ear. "I'll wait for you with open arms. And a hard cock, of course."

Aidan bit his bottom lip. Of course. Even when he was pissed, Heathcliff was still a joker.

"No, it's not a joke," Heathcliff added as if he knew what Aidan was thinking. "Now, shoo. Don't let your job wait for you. It will only be there for the next fifty years or so."

Heathcliff moved and, for a second, Aidan feared that he would embrace him and he wasn't going to be able to keep himself from responding in kind. But Heathcliff simply opened the door, giving him enough room to slip through and get out of the room.

To say that his head was a storm of thoughts as he climbed into his car to run away would have been an understatement.

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It was not the first time that bunny boy was riling him up good. Heathcliff wanted to slam his hands against the door in frustration, but that wasn't him. He wasn't the kind to get worked up over guys, no matter how cute or tempting. If men he liked weren't willing to play with him, he didn't care for them. It was that simple.

Only that nothing was one bit simple when it came to Aidan Spark. What the hell was wrong with him? Heathcliff thought, feeling his annoyance rising. Aidan was definitely not as handsome as any of the guys he took to bed. Could it be that it was only because Aidan was pushing him away, he suddenly felt his hunter instincts waking to life?

But that would not have been fair. Whenever Heathcliff was interested in a guy, it was completely genuine. There were no lies, no make-believes, and, especially, no hurt feelings. Yes, it was true that he rarely got rejected, but still.

Damn, what the hell would he do? He could say 'fuck it' and see about business as usual. The thing was he liked Aidan. Even all that over-zealousness about his job was making him interesting. Most people of Aidan's age Heathcliff knew were interested in other things, such as having fun and dreaming about becoming successful in life by nothing but sheer luck.

Bunny boy, on the other hand, was a hard worker. Heathcliff could appreciate that in a guy because he was the same. He had never realized before that the men he usually took to bed were

nothing like that. Yes, they were handsome. Yes, they were great in the sack. But that was about where all their expertise stopped while Aidan's qualities began.

He was made of some good stuff, the idea suddenly struck Heathcliff. He was well behaved, had not one ounce of bad intentions in him, and even the fact that he was rejecting Heathcliff was part of him trying to be a decent human being.

How many guys would have said 'no' to the opportunity to jump between the sheets with him, and skip work at the same time? Heathcliff's usual acquaintances were nothing like Aidan. Or, better said, Aidan was nothing like them.

So, he thought with a deep sigh, the bunny was worth the effort. What Heathcliff needed was a strategy. And if his hunter instincts were finally awakened, they had to be put to good use, which meant that Aidan wouldn't escape that easily.

Without waiting and counting on his newly acquired personal insight on the matter, Heathcliff grabbed his phone.

"Yes?" Aidan's voice came through.

Bunny boy was trying to be brave. Heathcliff could sense the small tremble in the other's voice.

"This weekend, I'm planning to go a little wild. I thought about giving you the heads-up so that you prepare for a sleepless night. I suppose you are going to come to babysit me."

There was a short silence at the other end.

"What do you have in mind?" Aidan asked.

"I'm in the mood to hit the clubs."

"Clubs? More than one?"

"Depending on my mood, that could be a 'yes' or a 'no'. Make sure to take a stack of NDAs with you."

"I gave you like one hundred of those," Aidan protested.

"And do you expect me to keep them where while I go dancing? I plan on wearing tight-fitting clothes. Very tight-fitting clothes. Even revealing."

It was a bit hard to keep a straight voice while talking to Aidan like that.

"I see," Aidan sighed. "Well, I will have everything ready."

"Are you planning to come along dressed in a suit and take your briefcase with you, too?"

“How else am I going to bring the papers over?”

“That’s your job to figure out.”

After a short moment, Aidan said. “I have a solution. Anything else?”

“Yes. We’re going to hit the clubs together. Wear something appropriate and don’t give me lip.”

“Okay,” came the short reply.

“Good. I’m glad how professional things are between us,” Heathcliff said.

“Look, I know you must be upset and I--”

“No one’s upset, Spark,” Heathcliff interrupted Aidan. “I’m only asking you to do your job. You can do that, right?”

“Of course,” Aidan replied. “We still have something to do before the weekend. You will have to start mentioning our brand during your videos.”

“And you’re telling me this only now?” Heathcliff pretended to be taken by surprise.

“I’m sorry,” Aidan said, and Heathcliff could tell he meant it. “We will discuss the details as soon as I have them.”

“Okay. So will you come with me this weekend?”

“Of course. It is my job,” Aidan said, sounding a bit affronted. “I’ll call you.”

“Do that,” Heathcliff said shortly.

He smiled as he cut off the conversation. Aidan was adamant about his job and whatever it entailed. Heathcliff could use that to drive the bunny crazy and profit from that.

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Great. He was stuck in traffic. And, on top of everything, he had just gotten a phone call from Heathcliff. There hadn’t been more than twenty minutes since Aidan had left Heathcliff’s house, and he had called. Aidan had been expecting to deal with a miffed fitness guru slash social media celebrity for at least a couple of days.

If anything, Heathcliff was quick to rebound from their little quarrel from earlier. Aidan could still hear his words. They had sounded like a promise. Well, Aidan had a promise to keep to himself, too. And it was great that Heathcliff considered that getting back in the saddle was the best course of action, regardless of what he had told Aidan just earlier.



Why was he deluding himself with thoughts of Heathcliff considering some relationship with him? He just wanted to have fun. Whether he would do that with Aidan or someone else didn't matter.

He blinked a few times, waiting for the light to change. What was he thinking? That he could entertain the idea of Heathcliff going - what? - exclusive with him? They barely knew each other. Plus, Aidan had tried not to be easy.

Right, he snorted. He had been easy like a Sunday morning. It was enough for Heathcliff to snap his fingers and he felt the need to run to him, lolling tongue and wagging tail included.

That was how he had ended up sucking Heathcliff's dick, eating his food, and even sleeping with him in the same bed.

"Heathcliff Stone is off limits," Aidan said loudly.

Not even to himself that sounded convincing. It was not even about his job, or not only. Aidan knew when a guy was out of his league. Heathcliff was playing pro at the sex Olympics while Aidan was a virgin - almost! - if he were sincere.

He was going round in circles. It was good that Heathcliff wanted to hook up. It was good that he was calling Aidan to see that with his own eyes. Aidan could see about his job and, at the same time, he could witness how little Heathcliff thought of him.

Aidan could have profited and gotten more from the famous fitness trainer. But it would not have been right. Heathcliff had proven a decent person and had been upfront about what he wanted. Aidan had said 'no', and this was happening.

So, all in all, it was fine. Why did he dread Saturday to come?

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"These are all for you. Make sure to follow the classification to the letter," his co-worker said with an insincere smile.

Aidan felt like he wanted to pull out a few of his hairs, if not all of it. The stacks of papers on his desk were growing higher and higher.

"Why the hell do we need all these?" he mumbled, mostly to himself.

"These are the minutiae of all the meetings from last month. These are copies of the minutiae. And these are the ones you will have to send to the archive," the woman explained as she pressed down on the stacks, looking pretty much like a strange bird on top of a giant nest made from corporate paperwork.

From her vantage point, Aidan most likely looked like a delicious worm if the perfectly rouged smile she had plastered all over her face was any indication.

“And why do I have to go through all of them?” Aidan asked.

The woman’s eyes glinted as she had just been served the best occasion to climb the career ladder taking three steps at a time.

“Sometimes,” she explained, “one clerk makes a mistake, and then that mistake is corrected, but,” she prolonged the words as if she wanted to keep Aidan in suspense, “the first copies are already sent to the archive. So that is why we have the second copies, which contain the mistakes that were corrected.”

“Wait,” Aidan asked, “so if the first copies are already archived, how come there’s a third stack on my desk?”

Again, the woman smiled as if Aidan was just a silly little thing that needed everything explained.

“The first copies are not directly archived. They wait to be archived. But if word gets that some corrections have been made, they’re not archived. And they are returned,” the woman added, victoriously.

Aidan pressed his fingers against his temples, hard. “You still haven’t told me why we have the third stack.”

“This,” his co-worker rapped against the third stack, “is supposed to be the final version, but,” she put up one finger to draw Aidan’s attention, “you need to compare all the notes from version one and version two, to see if all the corrections have been made. Is it all clear now?”

“Crystal,” Aidan said dryly and reached for the first stack. “Now remind me why we don’t do this directly, using a computer, like normal people?” It was a rhetorical question. Together with his colleague, he recited in synch. “Because here, at The Healthy Shakers, we do things the old fashioned way.”

It would be a long, dull day, and if he didn’t become mad by the end of the week, it would be okay.

Maybe he would learn something from all those minutiae. Who was he kidding? There was never anything interesting in there.

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“We will go first for something light,” Aidan explained, linking his hands over the papers scattered in front of him.

He was glad he could get away from classifying papers so that he could meet up with Heathcliff at his place. It was like a breath of fresh air even though Aidan was sincerely afraid of facing Heathcliff after he had spouted all that bullshit the last time.

One look at Heathcliff and he knew he was in hell. Heathcliff was so handsome it hurt. It was a good thing he was so spoiled and annoying, after all. It helped Aidan keep a clear head.

“I don’t like the idea of mentioning the same product three times in the same video,” Heathcliff said frankly. “It is excessive, not light.”

Aidan nodded. “Two times then? At the end and the beginning?”

“Are you trying to play me, bunny boy?” Heathcliff smiled. “You knew I would say ‘no’, so you’re now offering a so-called sweeter deal.”

Aidan sighed. He had already told his boss Heathcliff was not brain dead, and trying a thing like that wouldn’t work. His boss had told him, in turn, to do his best for the company. Aidan didn’t feel particularly thrilled to follow suit with that advice slash order. With his boss, one could never know.

“So one time, at the end of the video,” Heathcliff concluded.

Aidan nodded. “Okay.”

He was in no shape to fight Heathcliff over something like this. After a couple of days of filing and filing and filing all kinds on nonsense papers that served no apparent purpose, he felt empty on the inside.

“Why so gloomy? It looks like you’ve lost weight.”

Aidan looked at Heathcliff. “That’s not possible. We saw each other two days ago. Even if I lost weight, you would not be able to tell.”

“Then maybe it’s only your spirit that’s down. Come on, you can tell me. What is it?”

Aidan opened his mouth to speak, and then reconsidered. If he fell into the same trap of spilling his guts to Heathcliff, it would not work well. The same thing was bound to repeat. He had no close friends to complain about his job, not with everyone ‘living the life’ and ‘enjoying the job of their dreams’. But that didn’t mean he could use Heathcliff to vent off. It wasn’t fair, for the simple fact that he could not offer anything of equal value in return.

“Well?” Heathcliff interrupted his train of thought.

“It’s nothing.” He shook his head in sorrow.

“Are you seriously going to sit there and lie to me like this?”

Aidan could not risk looking at Heathcliff right now. He felt guilty over not saying anything, but the point was, Heathcliff was a stranger.

“Fine. As you wish. What are you going to wear on Saturday?”

“I haven’t thought about it,” Aidan said cautiously, a bit surprised with the change of topic.

“Think about it now,” Heathcliff said curtly.

“There’s still time. And what does it matter what I wear? You’re the one who’s going to hook up, not me. Of course, no matter what you’ll wear, there’ll be no shortage of partners for you --” Aidan trailed off, realizing too late what he was doing.

“Thank you for the compliment.” Heathcliff’s smile was sweet, but his eyes were glinting with mischief.

“I wasn’t complimenting you. I was stating some facts.” Aidan wanted to turn this in a way that could not hurt him, but it was not that easy.

“Either way, I’ll take it. Now, look at me,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan looked at the other and cursed himself internally. Staring Heathcliff into his amazing blue eyes was like watching at a sign that read ‘welcome to the house of temptations’ or something like that.

“What’s wrong with your eyes?” Aidan blurted out.

“Excuse me?” Heathcliff asked, taken aback.

“You told me, that time, that you can’t drive because --”

“That’s not a very interesting topic of conversation.”

Aidan eased back into the rattan chair. It was good that at least something was working to disrupt Heathcliff’s magical charm. Talking to him about his imperfections was his kryptonite. It was good that he had a weak spot after all.

“You are going to wear an outfit I will pick for you.” Heathcliff’s eyes set on him. “My treat.”

“What?! But you don’t even know my measurements!”

“I’ve held plenty of men in my arms to know what clothes fit.”

“You must be kidding me! Are you doubling as a seamstress in your spare time?” Aidan expressed his bewilderment.

Heathcliff looked pretty smug over where he was sitting. He liked walking around the house in nothing but a pair of shorts. Besides his magnetic eyes, Aidan had had to look at his impressive looking muscles all the time.

If this wasn't hell, he had no idea what it was. Well, at least it was different from the corporate hell that was claiming bits of his soul with every day that passed.

"What can I say? Some people are just gifted." Heathcliff shrugged. "Don't worry. You'll like the clothes I choose for you. And if you don't, look at the bright side. You'll only need to wear them once."

"I will send them back cleaned and pressed," Aidan promised.

"I expect nothing less of you." Heathcliff's smile was broader now.

Aidan shifted in his chair. He could not exactly say 'no'. He didn't have money to splurge on new clothes. The suits had been a solid investment, but, otherwise, Aidan needed to budget properly for everything, from rent to food and gas. Clothes to wear at some posh club were not high on that list. And he supposed the usual stuff he wore when hanging out with friends at some student dive bar could not be considered up to snuff for such an occasion.

"Are you planning to get showered in champagne again?" Aidan asked, without thinking.

Heathcliff threw him a dumbfounded look. Then, it seemed as if realization was finally dawning on him.

"Ah, that." He smiled fondly as if that was a good memory. "It wasn't exactly a shower. And the downside was that I got sticky everywhere. And I do mean it, everywhere," he added with a wink.

Aidan blushed. Only the thought of bubbly liquid finding its way down through the fantastic shape of Heathcliff's beautiful muscles was making his knees wobbly. It was a good thing he was sitting.

"Of course, I didn't do the cleaning," Heathcliff added.

"What do you mean?" Aidan gulped.

"My friends were keen on doing that. With their tongues."

Aidan was sure he was making a face right now, but he couldn't help it.

Heathcliff burst into laughter. "You're so easy, Spark. I just took a normal shower. And both my friends and I agreed that it was the kind of thing that sounded better as a fantasy."

"So no licking?" Aidan asked.

“Don’t be so disappointed. If that’s something you’d like to try, I can arrange something.”

“I don’t really like champagne.”

It was official. His tongue had a mind of its own. It was like he could not help it.

“What would you like to lick from my body, then?” Heathcliff’s voice was curling around the still rational part of his brain like a snake.

Aidan shook his head.

“Sorry. It was just some curiosity. Frankly, I thought it would have been a little too much. I mean, how much champagne could they use to give you a proper shower? Plus, it would have made everything slippery, right? And you could not have danced on a wet table without risking breaking your neck, right?”

“Spark,” Heathcliff stopped him. “Breathe a little. You look a bit flushed over there. Come on, hypothetically, what would lick from another man’s body?”

“I don’t know.” Aidan began to squirm.

“You’re not leaving until you tell me. It’s clear as day there’s a kink here you don’t want to admit.”

“You can’t keep me here!” Aidan protested.

“Do you want to try me?” Heathcliff looked at him like he truly meant it.

“I guess not.” Aidan closed his eyes. “Fine. Body shots. Can I go now?”

“Yes. Just don’t forget about what I told you. Your clothes will get by your place by Saturday afternoon. And if you’re not here, at nine PM sharp, I’m going alone, and you can hunt down the numerous men I intend to have sex with to your heart’s content afterward. How does that sound?”

Aidan shrugged, trying to rein in a pang of jealousy upon hearing those words. “Like I got the short end of the stick, but whatever.”

“Cheer up, Spark.” Heathcliff grinned. “You’re going to party with me. I promise it will be a night to remember.”

“I’m sure of it,” Aidan admitted with a long sigh.

So the hell he was living in presently was getting more complicated. What else was new?

## *Chapter Eleven – A Risk Worth Taking*

“A night to remember,” Aidan mumbled to himself as he took the package just delivered by his door, and went inside.

He inhaled once and then exhaled. He hoped Heathcliff wasn't in the mood to make fun of him, by sending him something like knee-high socks and pom-poms. At first glance, there seemed to be no pom-poms. Good. He could breathe normally.

So Heathcliff had opted for normal clothes, by the looks of it. What the hell was he thinking? That Aidan didn't have a pair a jeans and a t-shirt? He took a small critical look at the jeggings neatly packed. And then he took out a white tee with some imprint on the front face.

With a shrug, he decided to try them on. If they didn't fit, he could make fun of Stone later, seeing how stubborn he had been about knowing a man's measurements just by looking at him.

Well, the jeggings fit, but jeggings fit anyone. Aidan looked in the mirror and grimaced. Of course, Heathcliff had to choose something that gave his ass a lift job. Like it wasn't enough that he had that kind of butt. Obviously, Heathcliff still wanted to make a little fun of him. But, Aidan thought, as he looked again critically at his behind, his ass did look good in those jeans.

He just hoped the t-shirt wouldn't be tight fitting. Unlike the fitness guru he had to babysit, he had no six pack to show off through his tee. Of course, Aidan remembered and his mood dipped. He was invited to hit the clubs with Heathcliff only because he needed to keep his eyes on that wandering dick.

At least, the t-shirt was comfortable and not revealing. That pre-washed style was precisely what Aidan liked when he wasn't in a suit. And it fell below the waistline, so his ass wasn't going to stick out too much.

The jeans were ankle-cropped, so he needed some loafers to match them. No wonder, he thought as he looked inside the box. Heathcliff had thought of everything. He took out the soft suede shoes and tried them on. Not only they fit; they were also comfortable.

Aidan took one last critical look at himself in the mirror. Well, he did look nice. He looked nicer than usual, and seeing that he had just put on some jeans and a t-shirt said something about Heathcliff's taste in clothes. Probably he could work in the fashion industry if he didn't care about being a fitness guru anymore.

Too bad Heathcliff didn't have the same good taste in men. Aidan stopped himself with a grimace. He was acting like a jealous prick, and, even if there was no one to see him doing that, it was still wrong. And Heathcliff had great taste in men. Only the most gorgeous male specimens to ever walk the earth landed in the guy's bed.

So, in the end, he was just a jealous prick, Aidan thought grimly. And why was he jealous, anyways? Heathcliff had basically said that he wanted to fuck him. Aidan could say the word, and that would happen.

But then what? Setting aside the fact that it would have been dangerous to get freaky with one of the company's business partners, there was nothing to look forward to after that. Men like Heathcliff Stone were good to be erotic fantasy material, but nothing else.

As he had said before, for Heathcliff, it would have been just another conquest. And that man loved to move on fast from one guy to another, almost as much as he liked men in general. Aidan didn't want that. He would not be able to face Heathcliff again if they were to screw once and then meet again like they were people working together and nothing more.

In a way, he could understand why office romance was so frowned upon at his company. Working side by side with someone one had been so intimately with once the passion fizzled out had to suck balls.

Aidan didn't want to test how much of that theory was correct. As always, he needed to play safe.

His phone interrupted his train of thought. Looking at the screen, he smiled against himself. Of course, Heathcliff had to call him, ask if the clothes fit and gloat about how right he always was.

"Hey," he began.

"Have you already tried on the clothes, bunny boy?"

Aidan rolled his eyes. Was Heathcliff easy to read or what? "Yes, and they fit, thank you very much. Now, before you start congratulating yourself, yes, I admit, they are perfect. Even the shoes. You could be a fashion designer in your spare time, or a seamstress, as I said."

"Have you tried on everything?"

Aidan was a bit puzzled. "Come on, Stone, you don't suspect me of not knowing how to put on a pair of jeans, I hope. And I have plenty of jeans, you know?"

"Bunny boy, listen closely. Have you tried on everything?"

"Yes, you spoiled fitness guru, impossible being that you are," Aidan said with a huff. "I currently wear the t-shirt, the jeggings, and the loafers. Are you satisfied now? How much of a control freak can you be? I won't make you look bad at the club, don't worry. I promise you won't even know I'm there."

"Hmm. You haven't tried on everything," Heathcliff said. "I hope there wasn't some snafu with the delivery. Go look inside the box."



“Okay,” Aidan replied. “Can you please tell me what should I be looking for?”

“It’s a surprise,” Heathcliff’s voice dropped low. “Just look for it. And, of course, once you find it, put it on.”

Aidan shrugged and began rummaging through the box. With a frown, he extracted a small package he had missed before. He pressed the phone between his cheek and shoulder so that he could rip open the package.

And almost dropped the phone when he looked at the small strange object in his hands.

“Seriously, Stone?” He threw the offending thing on the bed.

“Of course. Come on. Your outfit will not be complete without it.”

“A thong? Pink on top of everything else?”

Heathcliff’s chuckle on the other end was making him shiver. The man had some nerve.

“What? I think it would show your naughty side.”

“I don’t have a naughty side! And for your information, underwear is worn underneath your clothes. So there’s nothing to show!”

“Yes, you do have a naughty side.” Heathcliff was ignoring what he was saying on purpose. “But you’re shy, too. First, I thought black would be a good fit, but I changed my mind. Pink is your color, bunny boy.”

“I can’t believe you!” Aidan sputtered.

“So, are you going to wear it?” Heathcliff asked, completely ignoring Aidan’s indignation.

“What I’m going to do is that I’ll turn it into a sling and I’ll come by your house to break all your windows,” Aidan said with conviction.

Heathcliff laughed. “Ha! Good luck finding any pebbles on my perfectly manicured lawn.”

“I’ll bring my own, don’t worry,” Aidan replied.

“Aww, are you really that upset, bunny boy?” Heathcliff drawled the words on purpose.

“Of course I’m upset! You’re blatantly flirting!”

“And? Who has ever died from flirting?”

“I feel the itch to strangle you a little. Probably with that pink thong you so carefully chose for me. So there’s a start for everything.”

Heathcliff was laughing so hard right now that Aidan had to keep the phone a bit away from his ear.

“I like you, Aidan Spark,” Heathcliff said as soon as he managed to regain his voice.

Aidan wanted to say something but had no idea what he could say to that. Also, his cheeks were on fire now, and it wasn't because of his indignation over the pink thong. He felt warm all over.

“Don't forget. Nine PM, sharp.”

“Are you going to leave without me if I'm there, let's say at one minute past nine?” Aidan said, trying to pretend he was cool and collected.

“No, if you're not here, I'll come to get you,” Heathcliff said softly. “And I'm going to have you wear that thong, whether you like it or not.”

“I'll be there on time. I'd rather wear my own underwear,” Aidan said dryly.

“Good. See you, bunny boy.”

Aidan swallowed hard as he stared at his phone after the conversation was over. Yeah, Heathcliff was playing in the big league while he, Aidan, was not even qualified to be called an amateur.

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Heathcliff whistled a happy tune as he watched himself in the mirror. The long sleeved shirt was dark blue, as his pants. His choice of outfit was a bit more serious than what he usually wore when he went out clubbing, but more than ever in his life, he wanted to impress his date.

He opened one button more, but then he reconsidered. The point was to avoid going over the top. Aidan Spark wouldn't know what hit him. If the bunny wanted to keep things professional, that was an approach Heathcliff was more than willing to try.

But first, he would put Aidan through his paces. After all, Heathcliff was dying to see more of the real Aidan. Usually, an ass like that and a cute face like Aidan's were enough incentives for him to make a move. But now, for some reason, he wanted more. He could not exactly define what that was, but he intended to explore it thoroughly.

Yes, Heathcliff admired himself in the mirror one last time. He looked like he meant serious business. He checked his wrist watch, and, on cue, his doorbell rang. The bunny was there, right on schedule, as expected.

He opened the door with a bit of impatience and smiled fondly as his eyes set on his babysitter. Aidan looked perfect in the clothes Heathcliff had picked for him. Also, he looked more his age, and more relaxed. His hair was a little tousled, too, and Heathcliff expected that some hairstyling attempts had been made in that area.

Aidan looked good, but also, very much surprised.

“Is this what you’re going to wear?” Aidan pointed at Heathcliff.

“No ‘hello’, no nothing?” Heathcliff chided his guest, opening his arms wide.

“Sorry, hi,” Aidan said right away.

Heathcliff knew he couldn’t help it. He reached out and ruffled Aidan’s hair. A pair of miffed eyes stared at him, their owner obviously taking affront. But Aidan didn’t move his head away, so Heathcliff’s touch turned into a caress. For a couple of seconds, they stared at one another.

Aidan was the first to react, breaking the silence.

“Well, what’s with the business smart yet casual look? We won’t look good together! I mean --” Aidan stuttered.

“I thought you were only going to lurk from the shadows? Where are your NDAs, bunny boy?” Heathcliff inspected Aidan like he expected him to produce official papers out of nowhere suddenly.

Aidan took out his phone out of a back pocket and showed it to Heathcliff. “It’s not customary for how my company does things, but I think going digital for one night won’t hurt anyone,” he explained.

“Oh, I see. You’re always ready, like a boy scout.” Heathcliff smiled. “What don’t you like about my clothes? Don’t you think I can get enough attention dressed like this?” He pointed at his body on purpose.

Aidan was looking him up and down with a hungry look. It was a good thing that bunny boy was so young. He had no censure when it came to things he didn’t think visible with the naked eye by others.

“Of course, that’s not the point.” Aidan shook his head. “But you’re overdressed, and I’m underdressed, given the circumstances. I thought you were worried I’d make you look bad. Now it looks like you only care about me doing exactly that. I could have worn a suit,” he said, pursing his lips.

“No, bunny boy, you couldn’t have.” Heathcliff smiled and stepped out of the house. “Now let’s go. Since we’re in a professional relationship, I only thought it suitable to dress the part.”

Aidan shook his head and exhaled. Heathcliff had every reason to be pleased with himself. Regardless of what he was saying, bunny boy was into him big time, and Heathcliff would capitalize on that attraction. He only needed to play his cards right, and his prey would be ensnared before the night was over.

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“Why are you walking two steps behind?” Heathcliff asked, throwing a curious look at him.

“I don’t want people to have the impression that we’re together. While I’m here on official business, I have no wish to sabotage your chances to get laid,” Aidan said quickly.

He was pretty nervous if anyone asked him. Not that he had never been in a gay club, but this time and this place were different. First of all, they were inside some posh establishment, and they had gotten in without waiting one minute at the door. The bouncer had thrown Aidan an appreciative look and acted friendly toward Heathcliff. Then he had allowed them to walk inside, not without throwing a short ‘nice catch, Heath’ at Heathcliff, and being met with an all-knowing smirk.

Oh, Aidan had seen everything but said nothing. After all, it was no wonder that bouncers and whatnot knew Heathcliff. What was surprising was the bouncer telling Heathcliff that. Seeing what kind of men were usually in the man’s bed, Aidan must have looked homely and average.

Maybe it was some inside joke. Maybe, from time to time, Heathcliff chose some random guy for a pity fuck, and that was it. With that conviction in mind, Aidan decided to stay a little back and let Heathcliff bask in the usual attention.

It looked like his companion had a different plan. Heathcliff grabbed him by the shoulders and made him walk side by side with him.

If things kept up like that, he was lost, Aidan thought. He could smell Heathcliff’s expensive cologne and feel his warmth. If the man did as little as breathe in his direction, his legs would buckle under him. Good thing Heathcliff kept him close.

“Are you okay, Aidan?” Heathcliff whispered into his ear.

“Are we on the first-name basis now? I thought you were all business tonight,” Aidan whispered back.

It was nice to hear Heathcliff calling him by his given name. Too nice, actually, and that was a huge problem. His legs weren’t quite bucking under him, but he needed to draw all the irony he could muster to avoid making a total fool of himself.

The more he wanted to swear off Heathcliff and to entertain any idea of erotic nature about him, the deeper he was sinking. Aidan had a mind to make a run for the door and spare himself the embarrassment.

“I like your name, you little fire,” Heathcliff’s voice dropped low.

Aidan gasped. What the hell? Had Heathcliff been looking into the meaning of his name? Why? With some difficulty, he got a hold of himself.

“I like your name, too, although you’re nothing like the tortured hero from *Wuthering Heights*,” he replied casually.

“Would you like me to behave like a tortured hero?” Heathcliff asked smoothly.

“No, actually, I’d like you to have fun tonight. I know it’s been a lot. People at my company can be overbearing sometimes. So feel free to hook up, and I’ll take care of NDAs and whatnot without getting in your way.”

Heathcliff chuckled. “So generous of you.”

“People are looking at you.” Aidan gestured with his chin toward no one in particular.

Of course, there were plenty of interested looks thrown their way. Aidan wasn’t in the least surprised. Carefully, he extracted himself from Heathcliff’s hold.

“Come on,” he said. “There are so many gorgeous men here tonight. You must be thrilled. Look, someone’s already coming your way.”

Aidan was sure he was babbling like an idiot, but he could not help it. A man in his late thirties, with a nicely groomed beard, dressed up about the same as Heathcliff was making his way toward them. Well, the guy was handsome, tall and strong, but he was not precisely Heathcliff’s type. Probably Heathcliff would let him down gently.

Aidan stepped aside, determined to give his companion free rein to mingle. But, to his surprise, the stranger stopped in front of him.

“What’s your name, cutie?” The man towered over him.

Aidan almost took one step back. From up close, the guy was pretty impressive.

“My name ... Um ... Sorry, I’m working tonight,” Aidan said quickly, putting his hands over his chest in an unconscious defensive gesture.

The man blinked a couple of times and then smiled. “May I ask what your job is about? You don’t look like a waiter or a bartender. Are you maybe a stripper?” The stranger leaned in closer, and Aidan gulped.

A stripper? That was not exactly a good idea for a joke. But the man’s interest seemed genuine.

“No.” Aidan shook his head energetically. “I must look after someone. I can’t say more. It’s, um, confidential.”

He searched with his eyes for Heathcliff. His charge was several feet away, relaxing on a sofa, and already engaged in conversation with a handsome man. Heathcliff's companion was a guy in his late twenties, with longish brown hair, and by the looks of it, he was also pretty attractive.

The pang of jealousy Aidan had felt earlier squeezed his heart. But that was why he was there. Heathcliff would do what he wanted, with whom he wanted, and Aidan wouldn't stop him.

"Mysterious. I like it." The man who had approached him drew closer.

Aidan looked up. "I'm sorry. I wish I could, um, make your acquaintance," he struggled to find his words, "but I'm working tonight."

"It's okay," the man said with a broad smile. "Here's my card. If you're ever not working, and in the mood for a drink and more, call me."

Aidan was pretty stunned as he stood there with the man's card in his hand. Eventually, he shook his head and looked over at Heathcliff. Well, it didn't look like there was any progress on that front. Heathcliff seemed to enjoy his conversation with his companion, but, by body language signs, there was no sexual interest just yet between them.

Aidan decided to scoot over and climb a high seat at the bar so that he could observe his charge without being too intrusive. Suddenly, he felt a pat on his back. He turned to look at the bartender who welcomed him with a bright smile. The man was as young as he was and wore what could be called fascinating eye contacts that made his eyes look like a tiger's. Aidan was probably gawking. The bartender smirked.

Of course, he shook his head. If he sat at the bar, he needed to order something. He would ask for some sparkling water and hope he didn't have to break the bank for it, seeing how posh the place looked.

"This is for you." The bartender pushed a small tray with three drinks on it toward him.

Aidan stared stupidly at the tray. "What?" he barely managed. "I didn't order anything. And I can't drink!"

"Oh, baby, you're so sweet." The bartender guffawed. "Just take the tray over to Heath's table. The red one's for you," the man added and winked at him.

"What's in it?" Aidan looked at the tall glass suspiciously. Well, obviously, neither the Old Fashioned nor the Roman Holiday could be for him.

"Don't worry, darling. It's just a Shirley Temple. For a cutie like you, it's just what you need."

By how the bartender grinned, Aidan was pretty sure that wasn't a Shirley Temple. But, with a sigh, he took the tray. What was Heathcliff playing at? Wasn't he supposed to lay back and let Heathcliff fool around?

For the moment, he wouldn't protest. He would take the drinks to Heathcliff's table and find out what was going on. Maybe Heathcliff didn't like that guy and was using Aidan to pretend he was taken? It wasn't exactly in his job description, but Aidan could do that. However, there were three drinks there, so that scenario was unlikely.

He walked over with the tray in his hands. Heathcliff seemed deep in conversation with his companion, just as before. Could it be the two were just friends? Aidan felt relieved. He placed the drinks carefully on the table.

Heathcliff finally looked at him. "How come you're not on the dance floor? I thought someone was already courting you."

Aidan pursed his lips. Was it okay to give away what his role was, in front of the other?

"I'm Michael." The stranger stretched out his hand, putting a stop to his dilemma for the moment.

He took the man's hand and shook it. Michael was indeed a looker, from up close, too. But he didn't seem to be Heathcliff's type. He didn't seem the flirtatious type, nor was he the kind to star in fashion magazines. Michael had an appeal that didn't come from the way he looked. His brown eyes were honest, as was his smile. Aidan felt instantly drawn to him.

"I'm Aidan," he replied.

"I know." Michael's smile broadened. "So you're in charge of our dear Heath here?"

"Um, sort of. I'm just --" Aidan trailed off, not really knowing what to say, and looking desperately at Heathcliff for a cue.

Who was looking at him like a tomcat waiting for a little mouse to make a move. So he was made a fool of, after all. It didn't matter. Two could play that game.

"I must make sure that all of Mr. Stone's sex partners sign NDAs so that they don't go running their mouths off to tabloids and ruin our brand," Aidan said in one go.

Michael stared at him, a bit surprised, and then burst into laughter. Aidan didn't have the guts to look at Heathcliff right now. Probably he wasn't grinning anymore.

"Well, that's a noble mission, Aidan," Michael said. "Come, sit next to me."

"Aidan will sit next to me," Heathcliff intervened.

Aidan remained unflinching, looking first at Michael, and then at Heathcliff whose face, no surprise there, looked now like cut in stone. Oh, damn, had he gone too far by blurting out the truth? Sometimes, he needed to check himself. Only a child made such mistakes.

“Oh, Heath, please, let’s not fight. Aidan will get bored while you go hunt down your hookup for the night. I only wish to keep him entertained.”

Oh, good, Michael wasn’t the hookup for the night, Aidan thought, feeling relieved. He seemed way too nice to be some one night stand.

“I’m sure you’ll make him neglect his duties,” Heathcliff replied smoothly.

“I can sit between you two,” Aidan said, and instantly thought he had just committed another faux-pas.

Two pairs of eyes, one brown and warm, the other blue and slightly pissed, set on him.

“Good decision, Aidan.” Michael encouraged him and made room so that he could take his seat on the sofa.

The moment he sat, Heathcliff stretched one arm and draped it over his shoulders.

“Aren’t you a bit overbearing, Heath?” Michael laughed. “Give our little friend here some room to breathe.”

Casually, Michael put one hand on Aidan’s knee. “If you’re ever interested in ditching your job as Heathcliff’s babysitter, I’d like you to come work for me. Do you have any experience with nightclubs?”

Just as quickly, Michael removed his hand. The man was a bit of a flirt, after all. Wait, nightclubs? Aidan finally felt his brain catching up with the surroundings.

“Is this place yours?” he asked directly.

Michael chuckled. “Yes. How do you like it?”

“It’s really nice,” Aidan said enthusiastically.

Heathcliff’s hand on his shoulder squeezed, and he was pulled slightly toward the other. Michael seemed to observe everything with an amused smile.

“But, unfortunately, I don’t have any experience with nightclubs,” Aidan added, this time regretfully.

“No worries.” Michael adjusted his position so that he could face Aidan. “I can show you all the ropes.”



“I don’t really think I would be qualified. Plus, I don’t think I have any experience with, well, anything.” Aidan felt the need to be honest.

Michael’s eyes lit up. “You’re so adorable! And modest. I understand why Heath is so taken with you.”

Aidan gulped and cast his eyes down quickly. Taken with him? Heathcliff? Michael didn’t know his friend that well, then. But Heathcliff was taken with many men, on a regular basis, so it was normal for Michael to say something like that.

“We have only a work-related relationship,” Aidan said without looking up.

“Interesting,” Michael commented. “Heath, what do you have to say in your defense?”

“Maybe that you’re too close to my babysitter. Seriously? Offering him a job? Good babysitters are so hard to find. You wouldn’t believe it,” Heathcliff replied.

Aidan exhaled. Of course, it was all a joke. Good, now he knew where he stood.

“Are you having fun, Aidan?” Michael asked.

“Your club is fabulous, Michael, but I really am here because of work,” Aidan said apologetically.

“I feel for you.” Michael patted his knee. “But I was actually wondering if you’re having fun as Heath’s babysitter.”

“I wouldn’t call it fun. It’s, um, interesting,” Aidan said slowly.

Talking to people like those he was seated with at that table felt a bit like walking on eggshells now.

“Then let me help you do something fun for a change,” Michael stood up and stretched out his hand. “Let’s dance. And maybe I can convince you that my offer is worthy of your consideration.”

Aidan stole a nervous look toward Heathcliff who was still holding him by the shoulders.

“Go on,” Heathcliff smiled at him. “I think you’re entitled to a little bit of fun. Also, I trust Mikey here to fend off the competition.”

“Okay,” Aidan replied, not really understanding what Heathcliff was getting at by that. “But it’s only one dance, and I’ll get back. Please, if you hook up, at least take the guy’s name so that I can, you know, do my job.”

Heathcliff burst into laughter. “How fast do you think I can hook up?”

“You’re you,” Aidan said simply. “I bet you can raise one hand and say one word, and you’ll have to beat everyone off with a stick.”

“Hmm, maybe I should do that before you leave the table,” Heathcliff purred and began caressing Aidan’s nape with the tip of his fingers.

Aidan shuddered. Everywhere Heathcliff touched him felt electric. Or maybe he was impressed by being there and in such company. He stood up a bit brusquely and took Michael’s hand. As he turned to look over his shoulder, he noticed Heathcliff’s eyes. The man was looking at him in a way that was not easy to define. Was there a tiny bit of longing? No, that couldn’t be. Heathcliff was not the longing type.

“I must say that I’m pleasantly surprised with Heath.” Michael helped him move to the rhythm on the dance floor, still holding his hand.

“Why?” Aidan asked directly.

Michael knew how to move. It was like he was made for the dance floor. The best part was that Aidan found it easy to take after him. At least he didn’t appear to have two left legs. The curious and even somewhat jealous looks thrown in his direction told him that Michael didn’t keep it a secret that he was the owner of the place. But even without that, he would have drawn plenty of interest. He didn’t have only the moves of a dancer, but also a body that seemed shaped by such activities.

“Because he brought someone like you with him. Usually, he’s all about social butterflies.”

Aidan nodded, not knowing what to say. Michael suddenly pulled him close, almost making their bodies touch. But his talents as a dancer shone through, and Aidan was just close enough to feel the other’s body heat and nothing more. He could tell he was a little overwhelmed.

“It’s just work.” Aidan shook his head.

Michael was a bit taller so he could stare down at Aidan. “By what Heath tells me, it’s more than that.”

“Um, what does he tell you?”

Michael chuckled. “That you’re a fascinating person.”

“He says that because I’m not the usual type he hangs out with. Not that we’re hanging out. I need to watch over him because, you know,” Aidan said quickly.

“Work,” Michael completed his phrase and looked at him a tad amused. “I mean it about the job, Aidan.”

“But we just met,” Aidan pointed out. “There is no way you could know I’m qualified. Or at least that I have what it takes to assist you.”

Michael nodded, and then pushed Aidan slightly away, only to make him twirl and end up with his back flush against him. Aidan felt a little dizzy, and not because he had just performed a perfect pirouette like a ballerina. Michael smelled nice, and Aidan could feel his breath on his cheek.

“Heath tells me you’re talented. Bright, even. Also, that you know how to deal with difficult situations.”

“He’s just saying. Also, I believe he has too much fun teasing me. So, please, take what he says with a pinch of salt.”

Michael’s low chuckle sent shivers down his spine. “Heath is rarely impressed with a man’s intellect. You’re an exception, sweetheart. So, if we could get over your modesty, please tell me, what would you do to bring this place up to speed with the twenty-first century?”

Aidan was taken aback by the sudden question. But, as Michael continued to guide him and make him dance, really dance, he began thinking.

“How is your social media presence?” he asked.

“Facebook page, Twitter account, Insta, all that jazz,” Michael replied.

“What about engagement? What’s the average number of likes, tweets, and so on when you post something new?”

Michael laughed. “Let’s say that I’m doing a fine job keeping people interested in my venue in the real world. I don’t think I’ve posted anything new in about three months.”

“Three months?” Aidan expressed his surprise. “Then I’m sorry to break it to you, Michael, but that’s like the equivalent of being social media dead.”

“I thought so,” Michael sighed.

“What about your website?”

“Err, let’s say I haven’t had enough time to take care of that,” Michael replied and smiled charmingly.

“You need a website,” Aidan said, trying hard to ignore Michael’s enticing sway of the hips as the man pulled him close again. “And a social media manager. For starters, I mean.”

“See? And you say you have no experience,” Michael said brightly. “Let’s go back and enjoy our drinks. Heath must be already bored out of his wits.”

Aidan looked back at the table, only to find the place empty. Instantly he felt the now familiar pang in his chest. So Heathcliff had found someone quickly after all.

“Ah, he’s gone already,” Michael noted, too. “I hope I can be good enough company. What do you say, Aidan?”

“Sure,” Aidan said. “But please, don’t let me keep you from seeing about your evening, as usual.”

Michael’s face was all a smile. “We could talk more about what I can do with this place.”

“Certainly.” Aidan nodded. “But are you sure you want to spend your Saturday night talking business?”

“Definitely.” Michael gestured for him to take a seat.

“Okay,” Aidan began, but his eyes began searching around. “I’d say that you should start --” he trailed off as he noticed Heathcliff standing not far away from them, and talking to a young man dressed in a white tee that probably showed a perfect six pack.

The kind he didn’t have, Aidan thought ruefully. A pat on his shoulder woke him up from his thoughts.

“Do you want to know what you should do right now?” Michael asked him.

“I’m sorry.” Aidan shook his head, feeling guilty. “Where were we? Ah, we were talking about--”

“We can talk some more about that another time. Now take a sip from your drink,” Michael encouraged him, “it will give you strength.”

Of course, as the guest, Michael probably wanted to know his opinion about the cocktails served there. Aidan dutifully took a sip through the straw. “There’s alcohol in it!”

Michael laughed. “Of course. It’s a Dirty Shirley, not your usual Shirley Temple, but that’s just a small detail, right?”

“I wouldn’t call one ounce of vodka a small detail,” Aidan said wryly.

“Someone knows his cocktail recipes.” Michael laughed. “Now take another sip of liquid courage, go over there, and ask Heath to dance.”

“Why would I do that?” Aidan asked, feeling a bit hot, and not just from the drink.

“Because he told me that’s what he’s hoping for tonight,” Michael replied promptly.

Aidan blinked a few times. He looked at Michael, but it didn't look like he wanted to play him. "Why? Is he getting cold feet? Does he think one percent of the male population here would reject him or something? I bet he aims at a perfect score," he babbled. "What does he need me for?"

"Why don't you find out?" Michael said with a small, secretive smile.

Aidan looked at his host, then over at Heathcliff. The young man in the white tee was well into Heathcliff's space, yet, Heathcliff didn't seem to take the reins, as expected. Aidan took a long sip from his drink.

What was the worst that can happen? In a few words, he would make a fool of himself. Heathcliff could tell him to fuck off so that he could see about his mating strategies for the night.

Somewhat, with Michael's encouragements, and the alcohol in his system, Aidan felt like the worst was a risk worth taking.

## *Chapter Twelve – Perfect Shot*

He walked over to Heathcliff and his companion, and, for a couple of seconds, he just stood there, not knowing what to do. It was surely foolish, to act on instinct like that because truth be told, he wanted to dance with Heathcliff, too, and there was no turning back.

Heathcliff's companion seemed to be the first to notice him standing there. "Can we help you with something?" the guy asked, frowning slightly.

Aidan licked his lips and swallowed. He was about to make a total fool of himself, but he wouldn't back down now. "Would you like to dance?" he asked Heathcliff directly.

"Excuse me," the guy in the white tee huffed, "we were just in the middle of a conversation, and you're interrupting. And seriously, is that your pick up line? Maybe you should go home and polish it a little."

"I'd love to dance," Heathcliff said dramatically, taking his companion by surprise.

And not only. Aidan's eyes grew wide. Now he had expected a rejection or at least a small jab at his request, and the only unknown factor in all that was how Heathcliff would go about it. Funny how he wasn't ready for a positive response.

"You would?" he asked, feeling, and most probably looking, a bit stupid.

"Let's go," Heathcliff said with determination and took Aidan's hand, ignoring the other completely.

"Hey, that's not very nice," the guy called after them.

Heathcliff only half-turned toward him. "I'm sorry, please forgive me," he said in a sugary voice. "I'm just suddenly in the mood for dancing."

"You could have just said so," the guy threw his last words at them. "Jeez, some people," he added, most probably to himself.

Heathcliff snickered like a kid doing something naughty and carried Aidan quickly to the dance floor. And, unlike Michael who had shown Aidan a proof of his virtuosity as a dancer just earlier, Heathcliff pulled him into a tight hug and kept him there.

"Heathcliff," Aidan called softly, "we're not exactly dancing."

"I suppose we should also move a little, right?" Heathcliff began to move, but only slightly, in total disregard of the fast-paced music.

"We're not supposed to slow dance," Aidan pointed out again.

It wasn't like he minded. Actually, being there, in Heathcliff's arms, felt good and right at the same time.

"It's the only style of dancing I know," Heathcliff replied.

"Seriously? Aren't you the master of all things, you know, physical?"

"That I am." Heathcliff chuckled. "I just skipped dancing lessons; that's all."

"Michael is an excellent dancer and your friend. Doesn't he find this appalling coming from you?" Aidan asked and wrapped his arms around Heathcliff's neck.

"Ah, Mikey. I thought he would seduce you and you wouldn't say 'no'."

"I'm only here for you, you spoiled fitness guru," Aidan said affectionately.

"You're such a perfect babysitter," Heathcliff's voice dropped low.

Aidan was sure they were putting on a bit of a show, slow dancing while all the others were engaged in much more physically strenuous exercise on the floor.

"Michael told me you wanted me to ask you to dance. Is that true?" Aidan asked.

"It is," Heathcliff admitted simply.

"But why? Isn't this how you practically send the others around here the wrong signals?"

"What do you mean? What signals?"

"You know. That you don't want to hook up. Dancing with your babysitter is the surest way to keep everyone at bay."

"Good. That's exactly what I want to do."

Aidan wanted to be able to have a witty comeback to that. The thing was he felt like no other words were needed.

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Heathcliff had never played the sentimental card with anyone in his life, as he liked to believe that he was as honest as they came in all his dealings. Yet, right now, keeping Aidan close in his arms, he felt pretty damn sentimental, and it wasn't some play. The strategist in him was all a frown. The rest was smiling, though.

He had to remind himself to thank Michael later. Apparently, a small friendly nudge had been enough for Aidan to come to him and ask him for a dance.

To say that he had been thrilled the moment he saw Aidan there, a bit shy, but determined, was an understatement. Heathcliff was so happy that the only way to contain what he felt was to hold Aidan tightly.

The weirdest thing of all was that, for the moment, his mind was blank. He could not remember one step from his elaborate plan to seduce the corporate bunny. And he had thought he had everything thoroughly planned.

Obviously, something was happening. If he hadn't been so giddy with Aidan coming for him, he would have investigated the issue thoroughly.

With a content sigh, he snuck his hands lower on Aidan's back.

"Are you all right?" Aidan asked gently. "You're a bit not your usual self tonight. Are you ill?"

Heathcliff scoffed. "I just wanted a dance with my babysitter. How is that a problem?"

"It's not," Aidan replied. "But we've been slow dancing for about twenty minutes or so, and the music changed five times. People around us are really starting to stare."

"Let them stare," Heathcliff said smoothly. "Don't you like the attention?"

"Actually, I don't. I'm not a famous influencer like you."

Ah, finally, some steps of his elaborate plan were coming back to him. Heathcliff knew exactly where he wanted Aidan. "Then we can go somewhere private."

Aidan pushed himself away to look at him, with something akin to suspicion in his lovely eyes. "Heathcliff," he said, his voice a little wary, "aren't you here tonight to hook up?"

Heathcliff pulled Aidan back into his arms. "I changed my mind."

"All right. So do you want to go back home and sleep?"

"Will you tuck me in?" Heathcliff joked.

"Of course," Aidan said. "What kind of babysitter would I be if I didn't send you to sleep with a bedtime story?"

"Don't you like this club?" Heathcliff asked. "I'm sure Michael will be disappointed to hear you want to leave so quickly."

"The club is fabulous. It's you who makes me worry. Are you sure you're not ill?"

This time, Aidan raised one hand and touched his forehead. Heathcliff pulled back. It wasn't that he didn't like to tease Aidan over his babysitter role, but he was sure this wasn't in the job description. Also, it was not part of his plan.



“Let’s go somewhere private, bunny boy,” he said with determination.

He dragged Aidan after him through the crowd. The bout of sentimentality from earlier was thankfully over. Now he could go back to being business-like, as his plan for the night demanded. Plus, he wasn’t sure he could win Aidan over by being sentimental and doe-eyed. That wasn’t him.

Michael smiled at them as they walked over to his table. “You two were quite the sensation on the dance floor.”

“Mikey, can I have that private booth now?” Heathcliff asked.

Michael’s eyes lit up. “For you? Always. Seeing you so taken with one another, I’ve already sent word. You’ll not be disturbed.”

“Wait; what?” Aidan intervened. “What do we need a private booth for?”

“For the same reason anyone needs a private booth when going to a club. To have fun in private,” Heathcliff replied.

“Are we going to have fun in private?” Aidan asked.

“Yes. I recall a certain kink of yours that only I can cater to.”

“Oh, fuck. You can’t be serious,” Aidan protested.

“Come with me, and stop being difficult.” Heathcliff held Aidan’s hand in his tightly like he was afraid bunny boy would make a run for the exit. “Since you’re my babysitter, I must take care of your needs.”

“Stone, you’re still a conceited bastard, aren’t you?”

“Stone? You called me Heathcliff earlier. It was nice for a change.”

“What was nice for a change was you being less of a conceited bastard,” Aidan replied.

Heathcliff laughed. “Did you really fall for that act?”

He could not tell why he felt the need to distance himself from his behavior from earlier. It was like control was slipping through his fingers. Heathcliff Stone was always in control. So taking back the reins, like he was doing right now, was completely normal.

“Actually, ah, it doesn’t matter. Let’s get it over with. I know exactly what you have in mind. But let me tell you. I’m holding my liquor well,” Aidan warned him.

“I thought you told me you don’t drink.”

“I don’t. I have a natural tolerance. Something about some of my ancestors being sailors and all that.”

“Ah, so you’re from a family of explorers? That explains everything,” Heathcliff said with a broad smile.

“And what do you mean by that?” Aidan asked.

“Your bold personality, of course. You came to invite me to dance.”

“I’m pretty sure my ancestors would have been engaged in thrashing the bar by now, but let’s say that I believe you. But I don’t think I’m bold, at all.”

“Let me be the judge of that, okay?” Heathcliff linked his fingers with Aidan’s.

“You two are better than any reality show,” Michael interrupted them. “I wish I could be a fly on the wall to learn what’s coming next.”

“Do you have flies in here, Mikey?” Heathcliff joked as he looked at his friend. “That calls for a visit from the health department.”

“Just go and have fun, you two. But, seriously, you should tell me how that went.”

“A gentleman never kisses and tells.” Heathcliff flashed a big grin at his friend.

Michael replied with a knowing smile. But he could read something akin to surprise in Michael’s eyes. Ever since he confessed to him how much he liked Aidan and wanted to trap him, Michael had had a hard time hiding it. Of course, Heathcliff knew why that was happening. Michael was too considerate a friend to tell him anything he didn’t want to hear. However, Michael had jokingly proposed to save Aidan from him, by trying to seduce him.

Heathcliff wasn’t sure who Michael was trying to protect. It was clear as day that his friend had been taken with Aidan from the first second. For some reason, he felt proud; his affection for the young man wasn’t misplaced, and Michael was validating his decision. Also, if Michael joked about hooking up with Aidan, that meant Heathcliff wasn’t the only one to notice how incredibly cute the bunny was.

He offered his hand to Michael. “Thanks, man.”

“Have fun, you two.” Michael grinned at them. “Especially you, Aidan. Don’t let Heath push you around, okay? Also, don’t fall for this vulnerable act. He’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

“Thanks for the heads up. But you have nothing to worry about,” Aidan said with a small laugh. “I am Heathcliff’s babysitter and not the other way around. I’ll be completely responsible, and I’ll take care that he doesn’t start using colored markers on the walls.”

Heathcliff looked at Aidan. So he was having fun, after all. That was the only reason why he allowed him to talk like that. As soon as they were alone, Heathcliff would be back in charge. Right now, he could allow Aidan a few giggles at his expense.

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“Seriously, Stone, you’re so easy to read. I told you about body shots, and of course you have to do something like this,” Aidan said as he gestured toward the table on which a small shot glass, and a whole bottle of tequila, along with a beautiful porcelain plate full of lime wedges, were neatly arranged. “I still don’t understand how you can give up on a night of hooking up and getting busy with various handsome men just for the sake of trying to get me under the table. Wait, was that your plan? To have me drunk so that you could sneak out and have fun without me hovering over you?”

Heathcliff laughed and pushed him toward the love settee. Aidan didn’t have to look too close to notice how this particular private booth had a romantic flair to it. It had obviously been modeled to cater to couples.

“I’m having fun right now.” Heathcliff hovered over him while Aidan sat. “I actually have a business proposition, but let’s talk about that later.”

“Business proposition?” Aidan wondered out loud.

“Let’s talk after you’re a little looser than this.”

“I told you. I don’t get drunk easily. Also, I wouldn’t want to risk getting into a coma by accident.” Aidan gestured towards the bottle.

“Don’t worry about that. I just want to see your skill at drinking body shots. I don’t want you drunk either. So, are you ready?” Heathcliff asked with a smirk.

Aidan rolled his eyes. “Okay, I am ready.”

He should have known Heathcliff was all for fooling around. But the sooner he could get this over with, the sooner Heathcliff would go back at doing what he wanted, and Aidan could return to his job.

That, of course, unless the little voice inside his head telling him Heathcliff actually wanted to hook up with him and no one else was saying the truth. Aidan had a mind to ignore it as wishful thinking, but, at the same time, he worried about what it might mean. Maybe it wasn’t such a good idea to run away from this? Maybe if he just hooked up with Heathcliff one time, he would still be fine?

Plus, that being the case, he could say he lost his V-card to the biggest crush in his life to date, which was huge.

Aidan shook his head. Heathcliff was caressing his jawline slowly, still standing and looking down at him.

“You’re always thinking of something,” Heathcliff said. “I can tell.”

“It’s not so hard to tell, seeing how I tend to fall silent all of a sudden,” Aidan babbled nervously.

“What are you thinking about?”

Aidan decided to grab the bull by the horns. “Are you trying to get me in bed with you, Stone?”

“Is it that obvious?” Heathcliff chuckled.

“Pretty much, yeah. But why? We’re practically in your type of paradise. Outside this door, there are literally dozens of men waiting for a chance to get into your graces. Yet, you’re wasting your time with me when you could go out there and swim in dicks or something.”

Heathcliff laughed wholeheartedly. “Let me see how good you are at body shots and then we’ll talk business.”

Aidan shrugged. On the outside, he could play it cool, but on the inside, he was a hot mess. He just hoped Heathcliff wouldn’t notice how his palms were sweaty, his heart started to beat faster, and he could only do this much to avoid jumping the sexy fitness guru’s bones.

From the first second Heathcliff embraced him on the dance floor and kept him there, he had known he was doomed. Of course, he was trying to grab at straws and tell himself that Heathcliff meant nothing by it.

“Is it that bad for your ego that I’m telling you ‘no’?” Aidan asked.

There was still a chance to escape. He could piss off Heathcliff a little, and he could go.

“Are you telling me ‘no’?” Heathcliff asked and climbed the settee, placing his knees on Aidan’s sides, trapping him between his muscular thighs.

Aidan knew his heart rate was now in a danger zone. Heathcliff leaned in and kissed him gently. In response, Aidan dug his blunt nails into the plush canvas of the settee.

“Your answer,” Heathcliff demanded, keeping Aidan’s head firmly in his hands.

Aidan gulped loudly. “No, I’m not telling you ‘no’,” he replied.

“Good.” Heathcliff caressed his cheeks and stood up. “Then I think it’s time for our little introduction.”

Aidan had a mind to ask what that was supposed to mean, but the words caught in his throat. Slowly, with hooded eyes, Heathcliff began to unbutton his shirt. The thumping rhythm coming

from the club was muffled, but it made the perfect musical backdrop for Heathcliff's striptease show.

"I have already seen you naked," Aidan said, just for the sake of sounding like he wasn't impressed at all.

He was very much impressed. And yes, he had seen Heathcliff naked, but that didn't mean he didn't want to see him naked again.

Heathcliff's only response was an all-knowing smirk. Aidan watched fascinated as the shirt came off. However, it looked like Heathcliff had no intention to go further than that. Not that he minded. The topless look was perfect on Heathcliff.

"So, what are you waiting for?" Heathcliff challenged him, hands on hips.

"For you to lie down so I can show you what a body shot looks like," Aidan said with courage he knew well he didn't possess.

"Then how about you make room for me?" Heathcliff laughed.

Of course, Aidan thought and stood up to allow Heathcliff to stretch on the settee. Pretending to be absorbed with pouring himself a shot, he kept from throwing glances in the other's direction.

So, it was a bit of a surprise to see Heathcliff already with a lime wedge between his lips and well prepared with a short, thin trail of salt on his naked chest. Aidan gulped but knew it was now or never to show the sexy asshole he was not fazed easily. He threw his head back as he let the alcohol burn his throat and then, he straddled Heathcliff quickly.

It wasn't the most comfortable position to assume, but he didn't care for details at this point. Aidan pressed Heathcliff into the settee with both hands on his shoulders, and licked the trail of salt, making the other giggle. And, without a glitch, he raised his head and pulled the lime wedge out of Heathcliff's mouth, savoring the sour taste.

"Wow, perfect shot," Heathcliff joked. "In the mood for another?"

"I think I played along enough," Aidan said, staring into the other's eyes from above. "How about you tell me about that business deal you wanted to talk about?"

Heathcliff put his hands on Aidan's hips and moved slowly upward. "I think I like this position. Don't you agree?"

Aidan sighed. "You're impossible; you know that, right?"

"And you're a tiny bit hard," Heathcliff replied, moving one hand and placing it over Aidan's crotch.

“Who wouldn’t be?” Aidan retorted. “Come on, isn’t this enough for your ego? The night’s still young. Why don’t you go pick up a nice guy and have some fun with him? What do you say?”

“I am not exactly crazy about nice guys,” Heathcliff said, moving his hand on purpose over Aidan’s semi, making him grunt.

“Then go find a naughty one.”

“You didn’t let me finish. I’m not into nice guys, except for one. You.”

Aidan licked his lips. “So the only way we can solve this is by letting you have your way with me?”

“Have my way with you? What are you, an innocent maiden?”

“I’m not innocent!” Aidan protested.

“Exactly,” Heathcliff said with satisfaction. “So let’s get back to what I was saying. Can you pay attention?”

“I could if you didn’t fondle me through my jeans,” Aidan complained right away.

“I think that’s actually helping to keep you focused on me,” Heathcliff replied.

Aidan sighed. “Okay, just say what you have to say.”

“I don’t like this thing with NDAs and all that,” Heathcliff began. “It’s not only because it is annoying as hell to get guys to sign before, after, or in-between. It is because it’s like I’m trumpeting all over the place that I got myself a deal. I am a confident man, but this reeks of self-importance.”

“Okay,” Aidan admitted.

“But it’s not like I prefer the alternative, which is not to get laid at all. So, I must ask you, isn’t it annoying for you to hunt my partners down and get them to sign those stupid NDAs?”

It was. Aidan nodded. “Yes, it is. But that’s what the contract says.”

“Normally I’d say fuck the contract,” Heathcliff said, and his moves on Aidan’s still clothed cock became more daring.

Aidan could feel his breath hitching in his chest. “Don’t fuck the contract,” he said stupidly. He knew what Heathcliff meant by that.

“I have no intention to.” Heathcliff chuckled. “I realized, however, that there is a solution that could keep everyone happy.”

“Seriously? What?” Aidan asked, trying to focus on anything else but the hand moving over his cock.

“I have something you want, and you have something I want. Do you see what I’m getting at?”

Aidan closed his eyes tightly. “I can’t say I do.”

“We don’t have to make a big deal out of it,” Heathcliff continued. “You want to be the perfect professional, and I have nothing against that. Actually, I think it’s perfect for what I have in mind. If we hook up, there’s no need for NDAs.”

Aidan’s eyes snapped open. “Is that your business deal? I should sleep with you because I’m sure not to go with tabloids with something stupid like how you snore after fucking?”

“I don’t snore,” Heathcliff protested.

“It was some stupid example! I can’t believe that you really thought of this! And how do I keep being the ‘perfect professional’, as you say, while I’m sleeping with you?”

“It’s simple. You keep me happy, and I keep everyone at your company happy, by projecting the perfect family-friendly image everyone wants of me.”

“And I’m what? Some sacrifice for the greater corporate good?” Aidan sputtered.

He made a move to get up. Heathcliff wrapped one arm quickly around him and stopped him.

“Do you like me, Aidan Spark?” Heathcliff asked. “Look at me, tell me you don’t like me, and I’ll let you go. Because I like you very much and I think that this solves everything. No one will know as long as you don’t tell anyone.”

“Do you think is it that simple?” Aidan squirmed into the other’s lap. “And how can you say so confidently that no one will know? Your friend, Michael, is well aware of what we might be doing right now.”

“Chill. Mikey and I have been friends since forever. And he never lets paparazzi into his club. He has a nose for them. And I won’t drag you to clubs and expose you everywhere. Where I want to drag you is my bedroom, and no one, absolutely no one will know what’s going on in there.”

Aidan bit his bottom lip hard. “It’s stupid,” he said after a few moments. “But I suppose you do have a point.”

“Is that all? I have a point?” Heathcliff asked. “Come on, bunny boy, don’t keep me waiting. Do you like me or not? Because if you can say that you don’t, hand on heart, I promise I won’t ever bother you with this.”

“I --” Aidan trailed off.

“Eyes on me,” Heathcliff insisted.

Aidan knew it wasn't a good idea to look at Heathcliff right now. But if he didn't, he would look like a coward. So he assumed the risk. Why did that spoilt fitness guru have to look so handsome? It wasn't helping Aidan with his decision at all.

But it wasn't just Heathcliff's natural sex appeal that was making him drown into those amazing blue eyes. He was looking at him pleadingly. Aidan knew it had to be an act, but there was something inside him, a soft spot of sorts, that made him feel for Heathcliff staring at him like that.

“I do like you,” he said dejectedly.

Heathcliff's hand cupped his face and caressed him. “And is that such a bad thing that you must look down like this when admitting it?”

“I can't win against you, can I?” Aidan said, looking down.

“Oh, damn, why do you have to be so cute?” Heathcliff whispered. “I like you more than I've ever liked anyone else.”

“You're just saying,” Aidan said stubbornly.

Heathcliff straightened up, but without letting Aidan go, just adjusting their position so that they could sit upright. “I'm not just saying. Look, you have fuck buddies on speed dial. Am I such a bad deal compared to them? I promise I'll be worth your while.”

“Okay. But I must warn you. I'm bad at this,” Aidan said with a deep sigh.

“Really? You're bad at sex? I must say that what you've shown me this far tends to contradict you. And how come you have fuck buddies if you're so bad at this? You know what? Let me be the judge of that. And if it's that bad, which I seriously doubt, I will work hard to correct those flaws you fear so much. I really mean it,” Heathcliff said solemnly. “Just say ‘yes’.”

“Okay,” Aidan mumbled, feeling a bit ashamed with himself.

He was giving in to temptation here. And he could not blame Heathcliff for being some manipulative seducer. If anything, the guy was asking nicely for it.

Heathcliff caressed his cheeks slowly. “Give me a kiss. I promise you that you won't come to regret it. I can keep things professional as long as you do the same.”



*I already regret it*, Aidan thought. As for keeping things professional, that would be a challenge. At the same time, he wanted to find a reason to say 'no' and could not think of one, let alone more.

Heathcliff took his mouth and kissed him gently. It was hard to put that kind of kiss next to the perfect playboy persona Heathcliff was known for. Or maybe that was making him so successful in all his romantic dealings. And Aidan knew that by playing along with that so-called business deal, he was doing no favors to himself.

Except that his entire body was reacting to Heathcliff's caresses and kisses, and he wanted, at least once, to do something wild and amazing that he could recall many years from now.

### *Chapter Thirteen – A Pretty Hard Situation*

Aidan had no idea how he could keep so silent. It was maybe because Heathcliff was silent, too, and that, in a way, was making him feel terribly nervous. What could Heathcliff be thinking? Was he reconsidering the whole thing? But he had been the one to come up with the idea in the first place. And Aidan was pretty certain it was not typical of Heathcliff to go back on his decisions.

Yet, they were together in the backseat of a taxi, and they were saying nothing to each other. They weren't even sitting too close, and there was tension between them that Aidan had no idea what to do with. He could say it was sexual tension, but that wasn't the whole story.

Heathcliff was not even looking at him, preoccupied, apparently, with the deserted streets flying by out the car window. Aidan was too scared to take the first step, grab the other's hand, or do anything that would break the silence. The driver was silent, too, but, at least, he had a reason. He was working.

Something that, if Aidan had been careful enough not to blow it tonight, he should have been busy doing, as well. In a way, by Heathcliff's line of reasoning, it was work. Not that it was in the traditional sense, but --

"We're here," the driver interrupted his train of thought.

Heathcliff was busy paying the driver while Aidan got out of the car. He would lose his V-card because of work. That thought was enough to make him laugh. Only that the joke was on him, and he was determined to go through with everything just for the sake that it was all going to happen because of Heathcliff Stone and his fucked up sense of logic.

No, that wasn't fair, Aidan chided himself internally. He wanted to do it. He wanted to do it so much that he was afraid he would ruin it somehow.

"Hey," Heathcliff called for him gently. "Ready to get inside, or do you find the pollution haze to be particularly enthralling tonight?"

Aidan snickered. "You can still see the stars," he pointed upward, at the dark sky.

"Okay, I should have thought of buying a telescope if I had known stargazing had some sort of aphrodisiac effect on you."

Aidan shook his head. He was worrying too much. Heathcliff was up for mischief as always. And there were much worse ways of losing his V-card. He knew that, with Heathcliff, he would enjoy it. So he hurried to join his host, and walk inside together.

He gasped as Heathcliff grabbed him abruptly and kissed him hard on the lips as soon as the door shut behind them.

“I thought we were never getting home,” Heathcliff said and pressed their lips together again.

“Ah, so that kind of impatience made you behave like you were made of stone?” Aidan laughed nervously. “Frankly, I thought you were having second thoughts about the whole thing.”

“What?” Heathcliff frowned while his hands were busy cupping Aidan’s ass. “Why should I have second thoughts about the one thing that I’ve been dreaming of since I met you?”

“Dreaming?” Aidan guffawed. “Right. You have men like that Matt guy in your bed at a snap of the fingers.”

“I don’t want men like that. Not anymore,” Heathcliff said simply. “Were you worried for real? I just thought not to give the driver any reason to think there’s something between us. You know, paparazzi could be hiding anywhere.”

“Oh,” Aidan said. “That’s logical.” Maybe Heathcliff was joking a little, but his consideration was noted.

“There’s no way I’d give up on this, bunny boy,” Heathcliff said and squeezed Aidan’s butt cheeks hard.

“You really are something, Stone,” Aidan grunted. “Isn’t my ass a bit, you know, too big?”

Heathcliff chuckled. “I like to have plenty to hold on. If you’re hoping to kill my erection with conversation, it won’t work, especially since the conversation involves your gorgeous ass. Come on. I told you I want you in my bed.”

Aidan knew he had to pretend he was completely used to having men proposition him for sex. So, with a calculated shrug, he was the first up the stairs. Walking straight was a challenge, though, as Heathcliff made himself busy by squeezing his ass. “How impatient can you be?” he complained. “We’re only a few steps away.”

“Too many.” Heathcliff’s reply was curt.

Aidan wanted to say that he wasn’t impatient at all, but he was nothing short of trembling. Heathcliff pushed him through a door to a small room and caught him from behind making both of them land on the bed. It was only this far he could keep up with appearances of being cool. This time, when Heathcliff kissed him, Aidan spread his legs and trapped the other between them, wrapping them tightly around him.

Heathcliff seemed bent on devouring his mouth, and Aidan couldn’t say he minded. Everything he wanted was to feel more of the other’s body. His hands were busy trying to unbutton Heathcliff’s shirt. Damn, he was so nervous his hands were trembling, and seeing how they were almost glued to one another, trying to move was tricky as it was.

“Fuck this,” Heathcliff said with a small annoyed huff and pulled so hard at his own shirt that the small buttons began flying everywhere.

Aidan couldn't suppress a giggle. “I thought I was supposed to do that.”

“Shut up,” Heathcliff growled playfully at him. “I will get up for two seconds to take off my pants. Be naked.”

Aidan was still laughing as he was pulling his t-shirt over his head. Dealing with the jeggings was a bit trickier and not only because they were so tight, but also because he could not take his eyes off Heathcliff and his perfect physique.

He gulped as he took a look at Heathcliff's hard cock. The man was stretched to his limits, as things looked. Aidan yelped as Heathcliff pulled suddenly at his pants, dragging them away and making him almost fall off the bed.

“Your ass looks perfect in these, but they're a fucking pain to take off,” Heathcliff noted with a half-amused voice.

With their powers combined, the jeggings were eventually thrown somewhere in an unknown direction, following the rest of their clothes.

“You would have looked so nice in that thong,” Heathcliff shook his head as he pulled down Aidan's underwear.

“Well, I don't think that having something up my butt would have been that comfortable,” Aidan chose to be philosophical about the idea.

“Hmm, you will have something up your butt soon, and I bet it won't be that comfortable,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan could feel his laugh freezing a little on his lips. This was it. He was going to do it. And Heathcliff's cock seemed unusually large from where he lay on the bed. Maybe there was still time to confess about his V-card?

But no. If Heathcliff were to back down, the opportunity could be lost. Heathcliff was all hot and bothered now, but tomorrow, after helping Aidan to get rid of his virginity finally, he would be back at his world of Matt-like dudes with supermodel bodies and handsome faces created to star in commercials.

Heathcliff was bound to get back to his usual ways regardless of whether Aidan slept with him tonight or not. And that meant that he needed not to waste this opportunity. Yet, he could not help thinking that having Heathcliff knocking at his back door with that thing was going to be pretty tricky to deal with.

“Do you have a butt plug?” Aidan asked.

Heathcliff looked at him, a bit surprised. “What for? I like it that you’re kinky, but tonight, I only want to put one thing inside you, and that’s my cock.”

With that, Heathcliff began tugging at his cock. Aidan adjusted his position on the bed.

“I thought it would be a good idea to, you know, stretch myself a little.”

“Don’t worry. It’s been a while since you’ve done it, then? Since you finished college, maybe?” Heathcliff asked.

“Yeah,” Aidan hurried to say and stopped.

The trick with telling lies was having a system, and he could tell, with the utmost clarity, that his system was in shambles. He had told Heathcliff he had no shortage of men to have sex with, and now he had just hurried to say another lie that was contradicting the first.

“Really? Do you do anything at all outside work?” Heathcliff expressed his surprise. “I was just teasing you earlier when saying that you haven’t done anything since college.”

Aidan was thankful that Heathcliff was busy rummaging through a drawer. When he saw what he held in his hands, he made himself little.

Heathcliff threw the pack of condoms and the lube on the bed and hopped on it. Aidan tried to sit casually, but he could not do it.

Heathcliff grinned. “Are you nervous, Spark? You don’t have to be. What? Am I that big compared to your fuck buddies?”

“Yeah,” Aidan said while his eyes remained staring at Heathcliff’s cock. “The biggest.”

“Thank you for the compliment. Now come here,” Heathcliff whispered, and pulled him into a kiss.

Kissing was something he could handle. Aidan enjoyed how Heathcliff’s hard body pressed his into the bed. Their erections were touching, and he liked that, too. His bed partner was good at this, he could tell, even without any basis for comparison. Heathcliff began moving lower, kissing his jawline, biting his neck playfully, and going south.

Aidan gasped and moaned as Heathcliff took his nipples one by one and played with his tongue around them. It was the most pleasant type of torture he could think of. Heathcliff’s tongue traced a long wet trail between his solar plexus and his belly button where it stopped for an earnest dip.

“Fuck, so good,” he barely managed to whisper.

Heathcliff was keen on being totally in charge, by what he could tell. When his cock got attacked by hungry lips, Aidan had to ask himself what he would do if he were to blow too soon.

No, it wasn't a matter of 'if'. Heathcliff was sucking his cock with purpose, helping himself with the hands, one on Aidan's balls, squeezing gently, the other at the base of his dick. Aidan whimpered. It was too much. Was it okay to blow so soon? But what was he going to do later?

"Heath, I'm gonna come if you do this," he complained.

There was no response except for a hot mouth swallowing him to the hilt. Aidan bucked his hips upward, no longer in control while Heathcliff milked him to the last drop. As he dropped back on the bed, he covered his face with his hands.

"Well, I think that now you'll feel a little less nervous about me pounding your gorgeous ass with my big cock," Heathcliff said carefully.

Aidan moved his hands away, pretending he wasn't embarrassed. "I will?" he asked tentatively.

"Yes, you will," Heathcliff assured him and placed a small playful kiss on his lips. "Now forgive me if I get to work, but it's only this much I can show restraint."

"Okay," Aidan said. "Do you want me to suck you, too? Maybe a little?"

Heathcliff made a small, impatient gesture. "No. I love your mouth, Aidan, but I really need to feel that butt."

"Okay," Aidan whispered, his voice meek.

Heathcliff was right, to a certain degree. He was no longer that nervous. His bones were like jelly, and he had just seen heaven. But he was still an anal virgin, and Heathcliff's impatience was not something he could take lightly just as he couldn't take that gorgeous hard cock lightly.

All in all, the situation was pretty hard.

Heathcliff knelt by the bed and pulled him closer. Aidan gasped as he felt Heathcliff's tongue on his balls, then going lower. Heathcliff helped him to adjust his position so that he could rim him. Aidan bit his hand, and his eyes rolled in his head. His dick was spent, but he could bet that thing was twitching now that Heathcliff's tongue was in his ass.

So that was how rimming felt like. It was a revelation, and one of the top tier kind since Aidan was pretty certain nothing could compare to it. He was sure he was making some weird sounds because Heathcliff stopped.

"Do you like it?"

"Are you seriously asking me that?" Aidan mumbled. "It's fucking everything."

“Good to know,” Heathcliff chuckled. “Now, forgive me if I’m not making this as long as I wish, but my cock is going to burst if I’m teasing it anymore.”

“Go ahead,” Aidan said, trying to sound sure of himself.

Wet fingers were probing his backdoor slowly and, in spite of himself, Aidan grabbed the sheets with both hands. No, no, no, he needed to relax. It was like a yoga exercise if he thought about it. Breathe in, breathe out ... repeat.

Maybe it helped, or Heathcliff was using lube in generous quantities because he could feel how his ass was slowly opening. Even if Heathcliff was impatient, he was too experienced not to realize that he was dealing with a pretty tight ass.

The other’s fingers were going deeper, slowly massaging the muscles inside and Aidan could feel a new sensation growing. He had never gone this far when fingering himself, and the fact that he had postponed buying a dildo and experiment a little seemed a serious overlook on this part now, more than ever.

Not that it didn’t feel good. Actually, it felt great, like a different kind of pleasure he had no idea existed. The slow stretching was nice, too. People were exaggerating when talking about anal sex and making jokes about how much it hurt. So many of them were having plenty of it, Aidan was sure.

“I guess you’re ready,” Heathcliff whispered and straightened up to put a condom on.

Aidan pushed himself on his elbows to look at him. Heathcliff was gorgeous. He was a guy who took to bed only other gorgeous men. Yet, Aidan was there, his dick already sucked, his ass well prepared, and waiting to lose his V-card to that man.

“Here I go,” Heathcliff joked and put himself in position.

Aidan smiled. So that sensation that he had only felt it so far with the fingers, he would feel it again, but more intense, better, right? He could feel Heathcliff’s cock against his entrance. His own cock was leaking, hard again, leaning on one side.

A small push and Aidan jolted. “Fuck!”

“What?” Heathcliff was startled, too. “Aidan, you better not tell me you forgot to file some stupid documents at work.”

He scowled “No. It’s just ... Okay, you really are big.”

Heathcliff chuckled. “I know. But you should get a little bit more creative with the compliments, bunny boy.”

“It’s not a compliment; it’s a fact,” Aidan replied.

Heathcliff shrugged. “Okay, I’ll take it.”

And he started pushing again. Aidan forced himself not to cry out. Okay, all the jokes about anal sex and whatnot were right. It hurt. But he could not tell Heathcliff to stop right now.

“You definitely haven’t had sex since college,” Heathcliff noted with a small grunt. “You’re tight as fuck.”

He changed his angle, and Aidan felt a bit of relief. How were those breathing exercises? In and out, in and out ...

He could tell Heathcliff was taking things slow, most probably surprised with having to deal with such a tight opening.

“Hey,” Heathcliff called softly and touched his cheek. “Tell me if it hurts too much.”

“I think,” Aidan licked his lips, “I’m getting used to it. Yeah, I’m getting there; don’t worry.”

“Okay,” Heathcliff replied, but he didn’t seem that convinced.

He withdrew a little and added more lube. By the small frown on his face, Aidan could tell he was puzzled. Aidan sighed in relief. When Heathcliff got back to work, it was a bit better.

“All in,” Heathcliff said like it was a victory of sorts.

Which, of course it was, seeing what a hard ass Aidan was, no pun intended. The good news was that he was, indeed, getting used to the sensation. The even better news was that when Heathcliff began to move, slowly at first, the sensation from before, the pleasant one, started to return.

Aidan could not make quite clear what was pain and what was pleasure, but the latter definitely grew. Heathcliff was murmuring words of praise that involved his ass, and Aidan could sense a different kind of arousal. Heathcliff was also holding him by the legs, keeping him in place, and giving him a sense of security that was not entirely physical.

Aidan touched his dick gingerly, a bit surprised to find it rock hard. He began to pump it, as he expressed his growing pleasure through small grunts and moans.

This was it. And it was friggin’ better than anything. Yeah, he was jerking off, but he was doing it with an amazing cock up his ass that was hitting something like a perfect spot inside and was making his entire body squirm in pleasure. He could feel his eyes getting moist, his mouth filling with drool and he was certain he was coming although he needed to look to be sure, something difficult to do with his head thrown back in ecstasy.

“Oh, fuck, Aidan, you’re so hot,” Heathcliff whispered, and his hammering intensified.



His cock spent for a second time that night, Aidan finally dared to open his eyes. He took in Heathcliff as he was moving on top of him, a serious expression etched on his face, and he could not stop himself.

Aidan put both his hands on Heathcliff's cheeks, and his thumbs caressed sensuous lips. He let them wander next, making sure to play with his nipples, which were hard and aroused, and so pleasant to play with. He pulled at them hard, and Heathcliff cursed under his breath.

It looked like he hadn't been off the mark with that nipple play. Heathcliff pushed one time hard, making the bed creak, then a second and a third time and stood there, his fingers digging into Aidan's thighs.

He liked looking at Heathcliff like this, he realized, as he pulled back. Heathcliff almost stumbled toward the bathroom, probably to throw away the used condom.

With one hand, he reached between his legs. His ass had been thoroughly used, that was for sure. But even touching it gently like this still gave him small shivers of pleasure.

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Fuck, Heathcliff thought, as he came back and looked at Aidan, as he laid there, stretched on the bed, lazily fingering himself. The bunny's ass had been everything and more. So damn tight and wonderful, and Heathcliff couldn't tell whether it was because he hadn't done it in a while, or Aidan was truly special, but he was pretty sure he hadn't blown a load so big in a long, long time.

The bunny was still shy, but that was something they would work on. With all that timidity, however, Aidan hadn't hesitated to pull at his nipples hard, and that had been all he needed to go over the edge.

He had been surprised seeing how tight Aidan was. Not that he only fucked well-used guys, but that was something new. Aidan was not a virgin, but he had fucked very little in his life. Or maybe his fuck buddies preferred to bottom?

Heathcliff shook his head. With an ass like that, it would have been a shame for Aidan to top most of the time.

"How was it?" he asked, as he lay on the bed, next to Aidan.

"Super," Aidan said with a small satisfied sigh, followed by a lazy smile. "Seriously, I thought losing your V-card should be tougher."

Heathcliff blinked a few times, and Aidan's smile faded. "What card?" he asked slowly, still not believing his ears.

“Nothing. It’s an expression,” Aidan said quickly and looked away. “Maybe I should go get a shower,” he made a move to sit up.

Heathcliff was quick to grab him and pull him back. “Aidan,” he said a tiny bit menacingly, “tell me I didn’t just pop your cherry.”

“You didn’t,” Aidan squirmed in his arms.

“Don’t take me for a fool. I’m not ancient. I know what a V-card is.”

“Are you mad?” Aidan squeezed his eyes hard and then opened them quickly.

Heathcliff huffed. “I want to strangle you a little. Why didn’t you tell me?”

No, that wasn’t what he wanted to do to bunny boy. He could feel his lips twitching, and he wasn’t exactly angered. Actually, what he felt was far from anger.

“I thought you would say ‘no’,” Aidan whispered. “Maybe you don’t do virgins or something.”

Heathcliff shook his head, still not believing what had just transpired from what Aidan told him. “That’s silly. I kept wondering why the hell you felt so tight, though. Ugh, I do want to punish you a little.”

He pulled Aidan on top of him and kept him close. “I did pop your cherry,” he laughed into sweaty strands of chestnut colored hair.

Reaching for Aidan’s ass in this position was easy. Slowly, he began testing the tight opening that had just welcomed him earlier, not without some resistance. Aidan shivered in his arms. “So how was it for real?” he asked.

“The best I’ve ever had?” Aidan joked, but even his voice was trembling a little.

“Smartass,” Heathcliff said, and pushed two fingers inside, busy checking for damages. “How come you blurted out the truth, though? Otherwise, you seemed to have kept your secret well hidden from me. Fuck buddies, pretending to be experienced, cruising dating apps --”

“Too well fucked, I guess. My mind going all blank and that,” Aidan whispered and hid his face in the crook of Heathcliff’s shoulder.

“Ah, now that’s what I call a compliment,” Heathcliff whispered back and kissed Aidan’s temple. “You should have told me, though. I would have been more patient, taken more time to get you ready. And I thought you were just a little fussy over the deal I proposed.”

“It was perfect,” Aidan murmured. “Thank you.”

Heathcliff felt the sudden need to swallow a lump in his throat. His bed partners often praised him for his moves, his prowess in bed, his cock and many other things. But he could not recall being thanked for a good fucking. This hadn't been just a good fucking. It had been much more and not only because he was, practically, Aidan's first man. Getting his head around that idea was hard.

"Am I really your first?" Heathcliff asked gently, caressing Aidan's hair slowly, while his other hand was still busy feeling the other's asshole.

"Yeah. Trust me; I tried to keep it a secret. Apparently, all the blood from my brain, along with any traces of self-preservation went someplace else." Aidan snickered, but by his light trembling, he was enjoying what Heathcliff was doing to him very much. "I'm so glad you're not mad, Heath."

"I couldn't be. It's ... well, my ego just received a well-deserved boost."

"Well-deserved," Aidan giggled.

"So, did you just recently discover that you like guys?"

"No, I've known for a while. But except for some hand jobs and blowjobs, I haven't done anything. I mean, until now," Aidan sighed contently.

"Would you like to do it again? At least, this time I know I'm dealing with a virgin." Heathcliff increased the rhythm of his fingers, being rewarded immediately by Aidan's hitched breath and small bucks of his hips.

"I can only be an anal virgin once," Aidan said, but he was laughing.

"Until this night is over, you'll still be one. At least give me that," Heathcliff demanded.

"Well, there is one thing I haven't done," Aidan replied. "Can I fuck you?"

"Whoa, whoa," Heathcliff reacted. "Curb your enthusiasm, bunny boy."

"What? Are you an anal virgin, too?" Aidan snickered.

Heathcliff was surprised by Aidan's audacity. But, by now, he should have been used to it. However, he would not go there right now. "I know everything about gay sex. Your delicious ass decided your fate, I'm afraid, bunny boy. You'd be wasted as a top."

"Try me," Aidan moved his head and pushed himself up a little to look at Heathcliff.

Why was it suddenly difficult to look into those pretty brown eyes?

"Maybe another time," Heathcliff decided to brush it off and pulled Aidan into a deep kiss.

Bunny boy didn't protest. He liked kissing just as much as Heathcliff, so they both delved into it, their tongues soon engaged in a small battle of wills.

This time, when they rolled on the bed, with Heathcliff on top again, they took their time to look into each other's eyes. Heathcliff knew everything about gay sex, and that was a fact. But except for a long time ago, he could not recall feeling like this. Like he wanted to drown into Aidan's pretty brown eyes.

"What?" Aidan asked and bit his bottom lip quickly.

"What-what?" Heathcliff teased.

"You're looking at me like, I don't know. Don't tell me I'm the first who ever got his cherry popped by you." Aidan snickered, and his eyes darted sideways.

"Actually, yeah, you're my first. Hard to find virgins in a city like the one we're living in."

"Seriously? Am I the only victim of helicopter parenting, then? And I thought everyone lied on Facebook and whatever. I really thought they were all closeted virgins." Aidan licked his lips nervously.

"Helicopter parenting?" Heathcliff commented, amused.

"Well, I love my mom and dad. But they wouldn't be surprised with me being a virgin at twenty-two. They would say that's good and that I should wait for that special someone."

"Your parents are awesome," Heathcliff said, his lips twitching.

"Really?" Aidan glared. "If it were for them, I'd still be a virgin. I'm sure they would tell me not to sleep with you."

"Then I'm lucky they don't know." Heathcliff leaned in and stole another quick kiss from Aidan's pouty lips. "How come you slept with me, then?"

"The chick should fly out of the coop at one point. And for me, I think it was long overdue. Don't you think?"

"No, actually I think twenty-two is a good age to lose your V-card," Heathcliff joked.

"Yeah, right," Aidan snorted. "When did you lose yours, then?"

"I was eighteen. But we're not talking about me." Heathcliff hurried to change the subject. "What did your parents tell you that made you so cautious?"

Aidan shrugged. “You know, the usual. That there are bad people everywhere. That being young shouldn’t mean being irresponsible. And, of course, that I should make sure, really, really sure, that’s something I want.”

“Hmm,” Heathcliff purred. “So you are sure, really, really sure?”

“If you keep teasing me, I don’t think I’ll keep being sure for long,” Aidan threatened him, but he was smiling.

“Then I must say that I’m glad you picked me,” Heathcliff concluded.

“You were the one who picked me,” Aidan pointed out. “And who could tell you ‘no’?”

“Ah, so you haven’t bought the whole deal thing for a moment, then?” Heathcliff asked. “And I thought myself so clever.”

“What? We don’t have a deal?” Aidan’s eyes grew wide.

“Don’t worry; I won’t rush to the tabloids with the story of how you lost your V-card to me. But I thought you played along because you liked me.”

Heathcliff had no intention to sound like a miffed kid when saying those words, but he was a bit annoyed. It was like Aidan, virgin or no-longer-a-virgin Aidan, was still slipping through his fingers.

“Of course I like you, you big spoiled fitness guru or whatever you are because I won’t call you that, seeing how much like a kid you behave. Seriously? Do you need validation from someone like me?”

“Someone like you? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“C’mon, don’t make me spell it. Average. Non-supermodel material. A guy on the street.”

“I don’t see you that way,” Heathcliff protested.

Aidan burst into laughter. “Then there’s really something wrong with your eyes.”

“Bunny,” Heathcliff warned, “I have perfect taste in men, and my eyes are not that bad.”

“Exactly.” Aidan squirmed a little under him. “You have perfect taste in men, and I’m an exception. I have no gorgeous six-pack; I’m not particularly handsome; I don’t have amazing muscles; I don’t--”

“You forget that I checked you personally, and from the perspective of a fitness trainer. You have nice muscles, with good definition, even if they’re not cut from some bodybuilder magazine. You’re cute as a button, and your eyes are especially pretty. You may not have a six-

pack, but you are in perfect shape, and I like your body very much. Especially your ass is bound to leave a long-lasting impression, no matter where you go.”

Aidan looked at him for a few seconds, opened his mouth, and then closed it.

“I’m glad we’re on the same page,” Heathcliff said. “Do you think someone like Matt has anything on you? It’s the other way around, bunny boy.”

“Wow, I mean, do you really mean it? There’s no point to lie since I’m already in your bed, and it’s not like I’m going to say ‘no’ if you say ‘let’s fuck again’.”

“Hmm, thanks for letting me know in advance. And you’re more than Matt in every possible way.”

“And now my ego is receiving a boost, and I can’t say it’s well-deserved. Matt and other guys like him are supermodels! I mean, have you seen that guy’s cheekbones? I mean--”

“Stop it with that guy already,” Heathcliff warned. “I can’t remember his face right now, and I fucked dozens like him. Do you know where’s the difference?”

Aidan looked at him with questioning eyes. “Where?”

Heathcliff caressed the other’s forehead slowly. “Unlike Matt and others like him, you don’t have only half a brain. You’re witty, funny, a hard worker. Just look how serious you are about your job.”

“So you fucked me because of my PowerPoint skills?” Aidan mumbled, but he didn’t look away.

His big brown eyes were filled with excitement.

“PowerPoint? Where did that come from?” Heathcliff asked.

“Never mind,” Aidan said quickly. “So do you like me? For real?”

“Is this level of insecurity a consequence of helicopter parenting?”

“It might be.”

“Let me put your mind at ease, then. I like you.”

“And you’re not just going to call Matt or someone like him tomorrow because you’re already bored of me?”

“Bored of you? I barely had a taste. And it looks like you have a knack for postponing sex with conversation. What do you say? Are you ready for another round? I promise I’ll treat you kindly, like a virgin should be treated,” Heathcliff promised solemnly.

Aidan snickered. “Maybe not so kindly. I like, um, feeling you,” he added, and this time, he looked away.

Heathcliff kissed him. Bunny boy was tons of fun. And he wasn’t afraid of saying what he wanted. For Heathcliff, that was super cool.

## *Chapter Fourteen – Sex Education*

Heathcliff caressed Aidan's cheeks slowly, prolonging their kiss. At the same time, his hands were getting busy because there was no way he would go back on the promise he had made earlier that night. He needed to be inside Aidan again, and this time, he would do it like he was supposed to when dealing with a virgin.

He interrupted the kiss to search for a condom. "So, have you at least tested your backdoor with a dildo?" Heathcliff asked, still not having enough of hearing how Aidan had given his precious V-card to him.

"I was thinking of that," Aidan replied. "But I just couldn't find the time, you know? So it was just with the fingers. Gosh, I do sound like such a virgin, right?"

"No worries," Heathcliff said with a small chuckle. "I like all this virgin talk from you. Tell me more."

Aidan eyed him suspiciously. "You're enjoying this too much, Stone."

"Hey, I popped your cherry. I totally earned the right to be called Heath. Plus, I like it how it sounds in your mouth."

"Um, okay," Aidan said, blushed and looked away.

Heathcliff caressed Aidan's cheeks gently. "Look at me," he ordered. The pretty brown eyes glared at him. "It means a lot that you're doing this with me. That we're doing it together, actually."

Aidan snickered. "Oh, damn, I didn't peg you for the seducing type. I thought you were all direct and stuff. When it came to sex, I mean. I'm babbling, right?"

"Do you think I'm trying to seduce you?" Heathcliff grinned. "I think I've done a pretty good job already."

"You basically tricked me into doing it with you because of work," Aidan said while continuing to glare.

"And you totally fell for that, right?" Heathcliff's grin broadened. "C'mon, I had to come with a play. You really are like a bunny. You're too good at running."

"And you can't keep up? Maybe you should work on your stamina," Aidan joked.

"Do you think I lack stamina? Maybe I should show how much in top shape I am, then."

"It's a promise?" Aidan stuck his tongue at him.



Heathcliff shook his head. Yeah, the bunny was a firecracker in bed, and he had been right to let his hunter instincts guide him in this case.

“Let’s try something different. You made me drool for that ass for so long; I’m entitled to receive compensation.”

“What do you have in mind?” Aidan asked directly.

“On all fours,” Heathcliff commanded.

He wasn’t expecting Aidan to comply so dutifully, but as much as the bunny liked to contradict him sometimes, just as much he seemed to take to orders without being told twice. Heathcliff was now sure he hadn’t met someone like Aidan in his life. Not that he ever found it difficult to get it up, but anything he did with Aidan was making him hard, from kisses and light touches to being presented nicely with a perfect round butt right in his face.

“Like this?” Aidan asked, looking at him over one shoulder.

Heathcliff was still too enthralled with the gorgeous sight in front of his eyes to reply. With a small grunt, that could mean anything, he grabbed Aidan’s ass cheeks and pulled them slightly apart. It was like the little pink hole was winking at him. He smiled and pushed two fingers inside. A small hitched breath was the instant answer from Aidan.

“Is it, I mean, does it always feel this good?” Aidan asked. “It’s like, I mean, wow, it’s like, I don’t really know how it’s like,” he ended his babbling sentence with a small sigh.

“Yes. If you did it once and loved it, that means you’re hooked,” Heathcliff joked.

“Ah, then I guess I’m hooked,” Aidan said with conviction and wiggled his gorgeous butt a little, to get more of Heathcliff’s fingers inside.

“Easy,” Heathcliff cooed, “I’m going to give you the real thing right now.”

“Okay,” Aidan replied and breathed out once loudly, then pulled a pillow and embraced it with determination.

Heathcliff almost had troubles ripping the condom package as his eyes were continuously drawn to Aidan’s ass. Yeah, he had spoken nothing but the truth. With that kind of ass, Aidan would be wasted as a top. It wasn’t some joke. Heathcliff knew he was damned lucky to have gotten first to that ass.

It must have been because of Aidan’s demanding job. Obviously, he didn’t have time to cruise the clubs and find a partner, and it wasn’t ironic at all that it was because of work that he had found someone to sleep with. All in all, it worked for Heathcliff. Plus, if Aidan were so busy

working, he would be busy to fill in all the openings, pun intended. Yeah, bunny boy would not have time to do anything except for work and Heathcliff.

Satisfied with the way he had managed to figure out Aidan's entire schedule for the foreseeable future, he climbed the bed to sit on his knees between Aidan's legs. Even this way they fit. Aidan's ass was sitting just at the right height for Heathcliff to stick his cock inside. He was suddenly in the mood to see how they looked like, ready to fuck and fitting so well.

He grabbed Aidan by the hips, and for a while, he played around with his cock, just letting it slide between the other's butt cheeks. He reached for more lube, decided to help Aidan feel even more pleasure than the first time. By how tight he had been, it must have hurt, at least some.

And Heathcliff didn't want Aidan to remember even for one moment that the first time hurt, no matter how great it felt afterward.

"You're such a teaser, Heath," Aidan complained.

Heathcliff laughed. Busy taking care of business in the best possible manner, he had forgotten that his bed partner appeared to be quite sensitive and willing to get down to it.

"Do you want me to stick my cock in your beautiful ass, Aidan?" Heathcliff teased him some more.

Aidan's ass was stretching nicely, and his heavy breathing was a clear sign that he was enjoying it. Heathcliff pushed inside slowly, now taking the time to enjoy the sensation even more than the first time. The grip was still steady on his cock, and the muscled channel wasn't giving in quickly, but they were getting there, to the point of making one with the other, even if fleetingly.

"Damn, this look from above, bunny boy, is ten out of ten," he confirmed out loud what he was thinking.

Aidan was just moaning softly, and he was rocking his hips, too, meeting him mid-way.

"I can tell you. An ass like this? I'm seriously lucky," he said.

"You're just saying," Aidan protested meekly. "You fucked hundreds of asses or something."

"Hundreds? Okay, stop reading tabloids right now," Heathcliff said. "They weren't that many."

Suddenly, he felt the need to be a little defensive. It was a good thing all the blood in his brain was most probably asked for duty at the downstairs department because he would have wondered why the hell he wanted to deny his sexual conquests. Usually, he was proud of them.

"Ah, this feels so good," Aidan moaned prettily. "Can I jerk off?"

Heathcliff laughed. "You don't have to ask."

“Okay. Thank you.”

Damn, always prim and proper. Asking for permission and being thankful for it. Heathcliff knew he would have to buy a rabbit cage soon. There was no way he would allow other guys to get to Aidan. At the club, earlier that night, that dude had been all over Aidan. Or maybe he had been just normal and decent, but Heathcliff could not be bothered with details.

What did bunnies eat? He shook his head and pushed inside Aidan deeper. He wasn't the kind to amuse himself with silly jokes, but now he was getting all worked up about treating Aidan like a pet.

But, seriously, he needed to learn everything about Aidan's likes and dislikes. That was a start. For now, he needed to see to his sex education. Lesson number one was learning that only Heathcliff's cock felt that good.

Determined to prove the said lesson with a practical experiment, Heathcliff changed the angle and reached under Aidan so that he could touch his chest. Aidan's nipples were hard, small round pebbles waiting to be teased more.

“Oh, fuck, what did you do? Why does it feel this good in my ass?” Aidan murmured and moved to slam his ass against Heathcliff's pelvis over and over again.

“Just a little trick to get to your prostate more,” Heathcliff murmured into his ear. “Do you like this?”

“Are you kidding me?” Aidan whispered. “It's the best thing I've ever had in my life.”

“Good, that's good. Keep that thought.”

Heathcliff kissed Aidan's ear, making him moan loudly, and then followed the jawline until Aidan picked up the cue and moved his head enough so that they could kiss.

Saying that they were kissing was a bit of a stretch, seeing how they were both grunting and moaning, and needed the air to do that. Heathcliff was carried away, so much that he hadn't realized that he had been pulling at Aidan's nipples for some time.

Not that Aidan was complaining. Actually, bunny boy seemed pretty much far gone, and his mouth was slack and moist, and Heathcliff could taste it to his heart's content. A louder moan and he knew that Aidan was coming, which was good since he could not keep it any longer, either.

He let Aidan collapse on the bed and straightened up so that he could come as he wanted in the first place while looking at that gorgeous ass swallowing his cock.

“Your ass is too damned good,” he said in a staccato rhythm, as he came in waves, screwed deep inside Aidan’s tight body.

Aidan didn’t seem to have any energy left to thank properly for the compliment as it was his habit, but Heathcliff didn’t mind. He hurried to throw away the used condom and then he fell on the bed next to Aidan. Slowly, he reached with one hand to caress the other’s back in passing.

“How was it?” he asked.

Aidan turned his face and grinned at him. “I might not be able to sit, probably, I don’t know, but it was all worth it.”

“I can’t believe you ran from me so much when you basically wanted it just like I did,” Heathcliff started talking, speaking his mind more than he intended in the first place.

Aidan’s face became serious. “I can count on you, right? No one can know.”

“Scout’s honor,” Heathcliff promised.

Now that he thought about it, he could not remember the last time when he needed to sneak around. As appealing as that sounded, it was actually dissatisfying. For some reason, he could see himself taking Aidan everywhere with him and showing off his pet.

“What are you thinking about?” Aidan questioned. “For a second, you smiled like you were terribly satisfied with yourself, and then you frowned and became all serious.”

Okay, so it really wasn’t like him to wear his heart on his sleeve, and Aidan had just witnessed ... Nothing. He had witnessed nothing.

“It’s not important. Now, tell me, Sparky, how did you really manage to keep guys away from your ass?”

“Is this still bothering you? I knew I should have kept my mouth shut about my V-card,” Aidan said with a snort. “Now you think there’s something wrong with me, right?” he added anxiously.

“With you? No way!” Heathcliff denied. “With the rest of the gay guys in this city, yes!”

Aidan giggled and looked at Heathcliff through his eyelashes. “I can’t believe I did it. Do you think others will be able to tell? I mean, I should be different now, right?”

“Not really,” Heathcliff replied. “It might help your confidence, though. Seriously, Aidan, you’re not off the hook. Come on; tell me everything.”

“Everything?” Aidan quirked an eyebrow. “About what?”

“Your sexual experience, obviously,” Heathcliff said as he rolled on the side and propped his head against his palm, the arm bent from the elbow.

Aidan sighed. “It’s nothing exciting to tell. Why do you want to know?”

“You’re my student now. I must gauge your level of experience,” Heathcliff said promptly.

“I’m your what now?” Aidan pursed his lips.

“You obviously need some sex education in your life,” Heathcliff explained right away.

“I know how to put on a condom,” Aidan said.

“And that’s all you know about sex,” Heathcliff said with a smirk.

“Okay, so I didn’t fuck hundreds of dudes, but I do have Internet, and there are books, you know?” Aidan glared again.

“From the top, bunny boy,” Heathcliff commanded, in a tone that brooked no contradiction. “And they weren’t hundreds,” he hurried to add.

“How many were they?” Aidan asked, his eyes darting sideways.

There were a few reasons why Aidan did that. Sometimes, because he felt embarrassed. Other times, because he felt insecure. And, on occasion, because he wasn’t sure he wanted to hear the answer. Bunny boy was like an open book, and Heathcliff was definitely sure of his theories. So, right now, maybe, just maybe, Aidan was a tiny bit jealous, picturing in his head that he was competing against an army of underwear models and Insta-famous stars.

“I didn’t exactly count,” Heathcliff replied.

That wasn’t exactly true. But he wouldn’t admit to being a loose character. It was true that he had felt it was normal to do so and fuck as many guys as he could get his hands on, but right now, under a pair of cute, scrutinizing brown eyes, he felt the need to lie.

“So they could be hundreds,” Aidan concluded.

“They aren’t!” Heathcliff protested again.

“Dozens? Over eighty?” Aidan continued.

“I’m going to tickle you; I promise,” Heathcliff said menacingly.

“Okay,” Aidan decided to let it go. “But you would definitely have much more to tell than me. My so-called experience is almost close to zero compared to you.”

“Let me be the judge of that. How can I be a good sex educator if you don’t let me establish where we stand?”

“All right. Do you always have your way?”

“Always,” Heathcliff confirmed, with a broad smile.

“Of course. With eyes like that --” Aidan trailed off.

“Do you like my eyes?”

“Okay, it’s serious. Something happened to you, and you’re not telling. I can bet my shitty paycheck that you’re told you have amazing eyes one hundred and ten times a day.”

Something had happened to him, and Heathcliff was pretty sure he didn’t want to go there, at least, not right now. He needed to process why he wanted to grab Aidan, put him into a nice shiny cage and keep him at home for who knew how long. He could not remember if he had ever felt the need to do that with anyone. Usually, he was all for enjoying the act, and then, rather quickly, unless the guy was good otherwise and could be kept as a friend or at least as a pleasant acquaintance, he wanted to see his partner out the door as fast as possible.

Mainly because he was too busy with something else, like establishing himself as a real influencer. Sex was great, as long as it didn’t become a complication. The thing was, right now, as he was looking at his current bed partner, Heathcliff didn’t want him out the door.

Good thing tomorrow was Sunday, and he was sure that even a busy bee like Aidan didn’t have to work. Supposedly. Better to ask. “You’re not working tomorrow, I hope,” he said.

Aidan rolled his eyes. “I don’t. But what’s that have to do with what we were talking about? Do people put up with you and this way of yours to make conversation?”

“Yeah, they do. Great. So, if you’re not working, nothing stops you from spending all Sunday here, with me.”

Aidan stared at him, wide-eyed. He gulped visibly. “Okay. As long as I don’t bore you or stand in your way otherwise.”

“You don’t bore me, and you don’t stand in my way. And, seriously, is it that little trust you have in me? I told you that the deal is for you to keep me busy so that you nor I have to chase down dudes with NDAs and whatnot. And that goes, I promise, for as long as we have to work together.”

“That’s a big commitment, Stone,” Aidan said while watching him intently. “It could be months. If things work smoothly, maybe the entire year. You do realize you’re practically saying that you’ll fuck the same guy for this duration, right?”

“Yes, I do realize,” Heathcliff replied, feeling a bit miffed over being treated like he couldn’t understand his situation. “What? Do you have other plans?”

“Like what other plans?”

“I don’t know. Hooking up with dozens of guys, maybe?”

The moment the words flew from his mouth, Heathcliff regretted them. He was not supposed to give Aidan ideas about hooking up with other dudes.

“Yeah, right,” Aidan snorted, “only that I lack your eyes, your perfect body, your big cock, and - am I forgetting something? - ah, yes, your reputation. I’d say that the chances for me hooking up with one guy, let alone dozens, are close to none.”

“That guy at the club came directly at you,” Heathcliff pointed out.

Clearly, he was in a sudden mood to sabotage himself. No, no, no, he was doing that only because he wanted to hear from Aidan’s mouth that the bunny had no intentions to pay any attention to any other guy save for him.

“I know,” Aidan admitted. “But I was working,” he added, a bit defensively.

“Was that the only reason you told him ‘no’?” Heathcliff asked, his voice suave and completely innocent.

Aidan looked away. “No,” he said in a meek tone.

“Hmm, louder, bunny boy, I don’t think I heard you.”

“I said ‘no’,” Aidan repeated, and this time, he glared at Heathcliff. “All right, you spoiled fitness guru or whatever you are. I like you. And dozens of guys coming to ask me to dance or whatever won’t change that, for as long as our deal stands. Do you feel better now?”

Clever, Heathcliff thought. The bunny wasn’t easy to fool. He had seen through Heathcliff’s game right away.

“Yes, definitely better,” he said, feeling suddenly better about himself. “Now back to your experience with sex. The first time, the second time, and the third time. Spit it all out.”

“Are you taking notes? And how come you know there wasn’t a fourth time?”

“I didn’t,” Heathcliff said with a big grin. “I do now.”

Aidan appeared mad for a second, but he was biting his lips not to laugh, and that was impossible to miss.

“All right,” he sighed. “The first time, it was with a guy at a gay club. It was my first time going. We danced, and we started to fool around. Eventually, we traded hand jobs.”

Good. Gay clubs were out of the questions. Guys who were interested in trading hand jobs with Aidan appeared to lurk around those places. *Perverts*, Heathcliff thought to himself, pleased with his findings so far.

“The second time, in college, my roommate came with a friend, and I won’t go into details, but that guy ended sleeping with me in the same bed.” Aidan coughed and made an effort to continue. “He kind of asked me to suck him off and played with my cock. It was okay-ish, I guess.”

Good thing college was over. There was no need for strange dudes to land in Aidan’s bed by accident.

“And the third time,” Aidan sighed deeply, “it didn’t happen all the way, actually. I went to this guy’s place, and his mom walked on us. It was pretty fucking weird,” he pursed his lips, “since he wasn’t out to her. Thank God we weren’t naked. I didn’t have to hunt down my clothes on the way to the door.”

*Yes, thank God*, Heathcliff nodded.

“How did you end up fooling around with this guy?” he questioned.

“Some ad,” Aidan shrugged. “It was stupid. He did sound nervous over the phone. I should have known he had something to hide. Of course, I wasn’t expecting a shouting mom, but rather for him to have some corpses buried in the backyard.”

“Corpses?” Heathcliff asked, a bit alarmed.

“I’m watching way too many crime shows,” Aidan sighed.

“Well, you never know,” Heathcliff said solemnly. “It’s better if you don’t use ads and dating apps and all that.”

“Aren’t you supposed to tell me that I’m absurd and worry for no reason?” Aidan stared at him, wide-eyed.

“No. You have every right to worry.”

“Why?” Aidan sounded alarmed. “Do you know something I don’t? Hey, you’re using dating apps, too!”

“I do, but I have experience. You’re just a virgin,” Heathcliff said, barely keeping from laughing out loud.



Playing with the bunny was way too much fun.

“I am not a virgin anymore,” Aidan pointed out.

“Please,” Heathcliff snorted, “you have no experience whatsoever. And I am going to correct that.”

“You are?” Aidan stared through his curly eyelashes.

“Yeah,” Heathcliff grinned broadly. “Bunny boy, as I can see, your experience makes you the perfect candidate for Heathcliff Stone’s special sex education course.”

“Oh, is it a course?” Aidan played along, biting his lips in the most enticing way possible. “How much is it?”

“For you, completely free. Of course, you need to understand that, during this course, your body might suffer certain types of abuse, all of the pleasant kind, mind you, but still.”

“All right, I’m in,” Aidan said with a small shrug. “But I hope we can continue our course another day. My ass is a little ... sore, I guess.”

Heathcliff pulled Aidan close for a hug. “As your instructor, I will see that your wellbeing is optimal. Now I’ll take you to the bathroom and give you a nice shower. You don’t have to lift a finger. It is my solemn duty to do everything in my power to make you feel amazing.”

“Damn,” Aidan whispered, “are you certain you don’t want to start selling this course of yours online? Guys would enlist by the thousands.”

“I’m sorry, but admittance is a rather stringent affair. Actually, only one particular person has managed to qualify.”

“Hmm, I wonder how he did manage,” Aidan said, his eyes glinting with mischief.

“First of all, he dutifully presented something called a V-card. Seeing how such a thing comes in short supply, I could not do anything else but to admit him.”

“I didn’t dutifully present anything!” Aidan protested. “It was only because of a technicality that I let that slide.”

“And I’m glad you did,” Heathcliff kissed Aidan on the lips with a loud smack. “Because that gave me this idea for a course that I can sense it would be very successful.”

Aidan giggled. “Oh, fuck, I’m just too lucky, right? No one will believe me, not years from now when I say who I lost my virginity with.”

“Do you find yourself often talking about such intimate things?” Heathcliff questioned.

“No,” Aidan replied. “But I assume that, when one gets to talk to his future boyfriend, such topics of conversation might pop up.”

Boyfriend? Heathcliff could feel the smile freezing on his face. Whatever was happening, Aidan saw it just as a fleeting experience, nothing to last, something to be remembered and talked about with presumptive boyfriends, but fleeting nonetheless.

And why was that bothering him? He was all for spending pleasant fleeting moments in the company of good-looking men. Shaking his head, he pushed the thought away.

Aidan patted his forehead. “I had no idea you had a melancholic side, Stone. Not that it doesn’t suit you. This forlorn look might just make you worthy of being called Heathcliff, after all. I should wonder what’s that all about, but I bet you’ll just say it’s nothing.”

“It’s nothing,” Heathcliff hurried to say. “Now upsy-daisy. I want you bathed and ready for bed. I need you to get all your energies high for tomorrow.”

“All right. Even in bed, you are a slave driver,” Aidan said with a small snort. “But so that you know, I can take care of myself.”

“And? How is that relevant to how I must take care of you as my one and only student?”

Aidan sighed. “I suppose it’s not.”

Heathcliff stood up and helped Aidan to his feet, too. On the way to the bathroom, he placed one possessive hand over Aidan’s ass. For the foreseeable future, Aidan would not have any boyfriends to confess his past transgressions with a particular fitness guru. He could work with that.

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Aidan could swear something was a bit off in the way Heathcliff looked at him. Not that he didn’t like it. It was making him feel a little too hot and dizzy when those magnetic blue eyes set on him. Things had gone much, much better than he had expected. He felt a little like walking on clouds, and like he was on the point of laughing uncontrollably.

The thing was he felt happy. Heathcliff was pure perfection in bed, not that he had any basis for comparison, but he could bet that not many people could say that the first time had been that good.

For him, it had been that, and even more. Just the thought of being held tight by Heathcliff was making his face split into a big smile for no apparent reason. It was also making his cock twitch, but seriously, for the moment, he needed to think of going to sleep. As young as he was, he could not think it wise to do it three times in a row. Actually, he had come three times if he

remembered correctly. Funny how the details were blurred. Definitely, he needed a repeat performance.

Losing his V-card with his crush. That was amazing, and impossible if he thought about it, but he was there, in Heathcliff's house, in his bed, and his arms. Good thing he hadn't blurted it all out that last bit. It had been embarrassing enough to talk to Heathcliff about his virginity and almost complete lack of experience. The last thing that spoiled fitness guru needed to know was that Aidan was crushing on him, and had been doing so for a while now.

Heathcliff had been a little odd. In a charming, fascinating way, of course, but not at all what Aidan had expected. He had thought the guy would be arrogant, as usual, full of himself, maybe caring and understanding as he always was, but still entitled to look down on Aidan for being so inexperienced.

Aidan had expected a lot of teasing, and right now, he was relieved since he wasn't good at handling embarrassment that easily. Instead of that, he had received a lot of questions, and, except for a little playful banter, Heathcliff had been completely considerate and even ...

Aidan could not put it into words. If he were to think of it, he played a dangerous game. He was crushing on Heathcliff as things were. Little was needed for him to really fall for the guy. And right now, he could feel that if tomorrow, for some reason, all the people on the planet wanted to leave for Mars, except for him and Heathcliff, he would have found that situation ideal.

He was childish to think like this. He needed to keep his head clear. Heathcliff was not the type for romantic complications, and no one knew that better than Aidan. Heathcliff Stone didn't have boyfriends. He screwed guys, fucked their brains out, but that was all.

And Aidan was day-dreaming just because he had only had great sex with the man. No, not great. Amazing. Everything he could dream of for his first time.

"Are you tired, bunny boy?" Heathcliff whispered into his ear, making him shiver.

Heathcliff was washing his body in long, languorous strokes, and Aidan could barely keep his thoughts in check. It felt too good. Most probably, guys fell in love with Heathcliff after just one time with him. Maybe that was why Heathcliff didn't keep anyone close. Who needed complications? But it looked like he wanted to keep Aidan close.

Now that was puzzling. "Have you ever done something like this with anyone?" Aidan asked.

"What? Sex?" Heathcliff laughed into his ear, making goose bumps appear everywhere, on Aidan's skin, despite the hot water slushing over him.

"No. Keep him for, you know, more than a day."

"Of course. I do not always fuck once and forget," Heathcliff replied.

His strong arms were now wrapped around Aidan, and he was pulled back, flush against the other. There was, without a doubt, an erection rubbing against the small of his back. He wasn't the only one who had no idea how he would go to sleep like that.

"But for months?"

"You still don't trust me, bunny boy?"

"I do trust you," Aidan answered, feeling a bit confused. "It's just ... if you get bored --"

"You worry too much. But I do have plenty of ideas on how to make you feel less worried. Every day, after work, come here. Spend time with me."

"Every day? I'm sure you have plenty --"

"Mouthing off to me? I told you. You're my pet."

"I really have no idea when I agreed to that," Aidan said, his voice dropping to a whisper, as Heathcliff began to lavish his ear with small licks and kisses.

"Pets don't have to agree. They're happy when they get a master."

"They are?"

"Yes. Trust me. I'm a certified pet owner."

"So you had others? Pets, I mean?"

"Aren't you full of questions? Here, a task for you," Heathcliff said, and pulled Aidan's hand to place it over his hard cock. "Let's see how good you are with hand jobs."

"You know that already," Aidan said softly, but his fingers curled around Heathcliff's hard cock.

He sighed when Heathcliff did the same to him. The position was awkward, his arm pulled backward, but he didn't mind. If Heathcliff wanted them to practice yoga while giving each other hand jobs, he wouldn't mind.

Heathcliff turned him gently and, facing each other, it was easier. Also, they could kiss, and Aidan was the one with the initiative, angling his head and getting closer, while his fingers continued to get busy with Heathcliff's cock.

Heathcliff was busy doing the same to him, and no words were needed about what they wanted. Aidan could feel strong fingers wrapping around the back of his head as he was brought even closer so that they could deepen the kiss.

Maybe Heathcliff would not let him do the penetration ever, but Aidan could get a little of the upper hand in this. He moved one hand to grab Heathcliff by the nape in the same fashion and

put his soul into the kiss. A small surprised grunt from the other let him know that his small aggressive act was not overlooked, or rejected.

Heathcliff was letting him attack his mouth, and Aidan grew bolder. It was perfect. He could assert his own way of dominance, even if it was little. Heathcliff didn't seem to mind and allowed him to lead the hostilities. From time to time, he was, however, returning the favor, and Aidan was only pretending to withdraw, to renew his forceful attack once more.

They were moaning into each other's mouths, as they both came, almost at the same time, the rhythm of their strokes too much to handle for too long.

Heathcliff's eyes were a tad darker when they finally began to let go reluctantly. It hit Aidan just that moment. Whatever he was scared of, falling for an un-fallable guy, must have been on Heathcliff's mind, too. There they were, a man with the sexual experience of a hundred, and a guy who had just lost his virginity. Of course, someone like Heathcliff Stone must be scared about having some novice fall for him, just because they had sex.

Amazing, mind-boggling, knee-melting sex, but just sex. Aidan needed to show that he understood the situation and could be mature enough not to be a cliché from some angst teenage movie.

So he smiled and pressed his forehead against Heathcliff.

"You don't have to look so worried, you know? I'm perfectly capable of keeping things professional."

He waited for a couple of seconds, but there was no comeback. Only their still heavy breathing filled the steamy air. Great. He had done something stupid somehow. Maybe that wasn't it. Maybe --

"I know," the reply finally came.

Oh, okay, he thought. So Heathcliff knew and they were on the same page. He couldn't have asked for more.

## *Chapter Fifteen - A Sunday In The Life Of An Influencer*

Aidan murmured something in his sleep, as Heathcliff traced a small path slowly from his shoulder down his arm and rested his hand on his hip. For all the case Aidan was making about being the perfect professional, he liked to sleep in.

Heathcliff rose up slowly, careful not to wake up his bed partner, although, by the look of things, the chances for that to happen were close to zero. He would go down and prepare breakfast, but not before his usual routine.

Should Aidan have awakened, Heathcliff would have been all down for another type of exercise, but it looked like his guest was very accommodating of Heathcliff's habits.

He could go to the backyard and start the day with his usual Tai Chi routine. It helped him clear his mind and boy, did he need that right now.

Heathcliff had thought Aidan to be an open book. But it wasn't the first time he was wrong about the corporate bunny. At first, he had seemed easy to seduce. Then he hadn't. And then he had been easy to approach again, which brought things to the present, with Aidan in his bed, no longer a virgin, and quite satisfied with that outcome if Heathcliff could take his words at face value.

Aidan had made no waste of compliments, but he had been quite thorough in replying to Heathcliff's questions about whether he enjoyed himself or not. Thorough in the way of small giggles, a few blushes, and several 'Of course I liked it, Stone, stop bothering me, I really want to sleep'.

But Aidan hadn't gone to sleep right away. For minutes, Heathcliff could tell Aidan's eyes were on him but had said nothing. And after that, there had been a shy hand reaching for him and resting against his elbow, like its owner wanted to make sure that wasn't some dream.

Heathcliff had turned and taken his bed partner into his arms, pulling Aidan firmly to him. Despite Aidan's half-hearted protests, they had slept like that until morning.

The problem wasn't with Aidan, Heathcliff thought as he breathed in the morning air. The problem was with him, more precisely, with his lack of experience regarding such situations.

He wanted something, but he could not define it, nor was he capable of finding the means to get it. That wasn't like him. Heathcliff Stone had everything in his life well figured out, planned to the precision of hours, if not minutes. From the outside, that must not have been quite clear, but he hadn't gotten where he was without proper discipline.

That also meant it wasn't on a whim that he had proposed Aidan the deal of sleeping together to eliminate complications with partners who could spill the beans about Heathcliff's sex life to tabloids. The practical aspect of the said deal was all him: calculated, down to the letter.

But that was just part of whatever was happening right now. Heathcliff wanted Aidan, he liked him, with his pretty brown eyes, pouty lips, gorgeous ass, and proper attitude. He wanted the bunny so much that the fact that they could strike a deal beneficial for both parties seemed to fall into place like the last piece of a puzzle.

Aidan's unwilling confession about his virginity had rattled the boat a little. Heathcliff hadn't expected that to happen, and usually, complications were seen as nuisances from where he stood. He would have liked to know about it in advance. But he could not find it in him to feel annoyed with the lack of essential information beforehand.

Instead, Heathcliff felt triumphant, truly and utterly satisfied, with the idea that he had been the first man to have sex - proper sex! - with Aidan. From last night, the feeling hadn't waned. On the inside, Heathcliff felt a little giddy, like a teenager after the first night of lovemaking.

Well, that feeling had gotten a bit of a cold shower with Aidan's words after they jerked off each other in the bathroom. Aidan wanted to make it all clear that feelings would not be involved. Usually, Heathcliff would have appreciated the directness and also, the intention to keep complications at bay from the get-go.

But, in this particular case, it had made him feel a tiny bit annoyed. Was Aidan truly impervious to his charms? He didn't seem so. Yet, he had quickly said that they would be all professional in their dealings, regardless of all the steamy sex happening between them.

And what had he expected? For Aidan to proffer his undying love? Why? Just because Heathcliff was his first?

"It's the twenty-first century," he murmured to himself and moved slowly, performing his routine.

Emotional attachments were so last century or something. Today, people wanted everything and wanted it now. That meant that no one had time for thinking over what they felt about this or that. At least, people who wanted to be successful, as he wanted. Others didn't mind trailing behind. For them, other things were important.

But not for Heathcliff. So where was this feeling of slight dissatisfaction coming from? Heathcliff decided to focus on his exercise routine for the moment. It was clear that inner peace wasn't some on/off switch. He needed to work on it, and he knew that well.

Later, as he was watching over the mushroom and veggie omelet, he knew what was wrong with him. Inner peace had eventually made him see it all clear.

Now, the question was: how could one truly trap a bunny? Especially one who was slippery as a weasel, sly as a fox, and brave as a lion? Heathcliff had his work cut out for him, but maybe it was high time for that to happen.

Anyone who knew him would laugh at him. No, almost anyone. He knew a few people who would express satisfaction upon hearing his predicament, and not because they wanted to see him make a fool of himself or brought down a peg or two, but because they loved him and had been waiting for that to happen for a long time.

For Heathcliff to really, truly, deeply, like someone.

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Aidan stretched and yawned, feeling the silky sheets under his fingers. Since when was he throwing money on such luxuries? His eyes snapped open. He wasn't at home. He had slept over at Heathcliff's house, and, more importantly, he had had sex with the man. A quick look around let him know he was alone in the room.

He rolled on his stomach and hid his face into the pillow.

"Aidan Spark, you really did it," he said to himself, the sound of his own voice making it all real.

He turned on his back and remained like that for a couple of minutes, just staring at the ceiling. So, to put things in order, he wasn't an ass virgin anymore. The experience had been amazing, Heathcliff had been awesome, and he, Aidan, hadn't even made a bit of a fool of himself.

He had ended up blurting out the truth about his virginity, and Heathcliff had seemed impressed, in a positive way. Well, that was good. Actually, it was terrific. Aidan felt appreciated, which was pretty much the opposite of what he expected from telling someone he was still a virgin at twenty-two.

Their relationship was bound to change. That was clear, and Aidan knew it, all too well, that it was up to him not to screw it up. He could not fall for Heathcliff. That was definitely out of the question, and it was more than just his job at stake.

On the upside, he would get to have a lot of awesome sex with Heathcliff. On the downside, he needed to keep himself in check and let no one know about what was going on between him and the sexy fitness guru.

Now, where was Heathcliff? Most probably, he never slept in, not even on Sundays. And also most likely he was already working out or doing something only fitness gurus did to keep in shape and all that.

No matter how nice the bed was, he had to get up and go scouting the area for Heathcliff. That was a good opportunity to see if Heathcliff was still pleased with the arrangement. Aidan could not really trust the man. After all, he had fucked hundreds of dudes. Or they weren't hundreds if what Heathcliff said was true. Even so, Aidan knew what kind of competition he had to face.



Maybe not right now, though. Heathcliff had been so pleased with Aidan losing his virginity to him, and it looked like, for some time, he could hold his interest. After all, it was a novelty in his life, again, if what Heathcliff said was true and no other virgin had ever moored into his port.

Aidan hurried to the bathroom, for a quick shower and to freshen up. For a couple of minutes, he stared into the mirror, making faces and gauging whether he could keep a neutral expression and not look like some love-struck teenager the moment he would see Heathcliff after their torrid night together.

He smiled as he saw the clothes left on the back of a chair. This time, they fit. So Heathcliff had planned for this all along, and he hadn't just left some of his old clothes for Aidan to wear around the house. They were some sort of sportswear, shorts and a tee, but very comfortable.

Aidan walked down the stairs, feeling pretty confident in his abilities to behave like the perfect professional.

That, until he saw Heathcliff fiddling with something in front of the cooktop in the kitchen. Did he really need to walk around shirtless all the time? Not that Heathcliff had any reasons to be modest. Even among other fitness gurus, he looked amazing.

But that, unfortunately, was doing nothing for Aidan's nerves. He could behave properly. All he needed was a second to collect himself.

Time was up. Heathcliff turned to look at him from across the room and smiled. Aidan felt a sudden lump in his throat and made a small, weird sound.

"Is everything okay, bunny boy?" Heathcliff asked in his usual energetic voice. "I was expecting you to get up before me, seeing how dedicated you are to building a career."

"It's Sunday," Aidan pointed out, feeling a tiny bit pissed at Heathcliff's words.

"Ah, really? So that's when you go all wild and listen to death metal?"

Aidan opened his mouth, but no witty retort came up. Maybe he was too busy ogling Heathcliff's perfect chest and abs. It wasn't all his fault. That man needed to wear a t-shirt.

"Why are you always naked?" he asked, without hiding his irritation this time.

Heathcliff laughed. "I'm not naked. I wear pants."

"Right," Aidan replied and rolled his eyes.

"Hey, it's not like we're not close friends now. You can see me naked at any time."

Aidan licked his lips. His eyes, damned traitorous eyes, traveled from Heathcliff's face down to his chest, and then, by sheer force of will, back to where they were supposed to look. "Your close friends don't find it distracting?" he asked.

"I've heard no complaints," was the prompt reply.

"I can bet," Aidan commented dryly.

"Come eat." Heathcliff invited him to take a seat at the table.

Aidan had been too busy staring shamelessly at the master of the house to notice the mouth-watering smells wafting from the cooktop. Without a word, he sat at the table and waited for Heathcliff to place a plate in front of him, along with a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice.

"Thank you," he said politely.

They ate in silence, and Aidan was not exactly thankful for that. Not because he liked talking with his mouth full, but because he was suddenly overly conscious of how Heathcliff's eyes seemed to be on him more often than not.

"I'll wash the dishes," he said when they finished.

At least he could get himself busy with the dishwasher and try to calm the beating of his heart. Why was Heathcliff looking at him like that? He hadn't grown horns overnight, had he?

"So, bunny boy," Heathcliff drawled the words clearly on purpose, "what do you usually do on Sundays?"

Hmm, tough question, Aidan thought. Not because it didn't have a simple answer, but because he had to lie. Or Heathcliff would think him pretty lame.

"Hang out, stuff like that," he said with a small shrug while placing the plates into the dishwasher with so much attention that for an outsider, it must have looked like he was operating some demanding experiment.

"What stuff?"

"Aren't you a bit too curious for a business partner?" Aidan tried to guide his irritation toward the one deserving of it.

"Business partner?" Heathcliff sounded genuinely surprised.

"Yeah. We have a deal." Aidan finally managed to close the dishwasher and turned toward Heathcliff.

"I'll drink to that," Heathcliff smirked and took a long sip from his juice.

In spite of himself, Aidan smiled. Heathcliff made light of everything, so things were all right between them.

“What do you want to know?” he asked and leaned against the counter.

Maybe it was a better idea to sit. Heathcliff was looking him up and down, with appreciative eyes, and that made him feel a bit awkward and hot under the collar. So he moved and drew a chair to sit, at some distance from his host.

“Is there a reason to feel embarrassed?” Heathcliff questioned him while staring him down with those amazing magnetic eyes.

“No,” Aidan barely managed, and his voice sounded weird.

“So come sit on my lap.”

Aidan frowned and glared at Heathcliff. It didn't appear that the man was joking. So eventually he moved, and Heathcliff pulled him into his strong arms. It wasn't exactly comfortable to sit like that, so he shifted a little and finally snuck one arm to wrap it around Heathcliff's shoulders.

Heathcliff smirked and raised one hand to caress his cheek gently. Aidan had no choice but to stare into those hypnotic eyes from up close. He was sure he was trembling slightly and blushing like crazy, but it wasn't like he could stop that.

The worst thing was that he could do nothing but wait for some ironic, yet playful, remark from Heathcliff. He closed his eyes.

The next second, warm lips were against his, and the hand on his cheek was slowly moving to wrap around his neck, guiding him so that they could kiss better. Heathcliff was a true artist when it came to kissing. Just slightly opening his lips, Aidan had to allow it.

He enjoyed it, so much that it hurt a little, somewhere right in the middle of his chest. Heathcliff moved his lips slowly over his, caressing them, and his tongue flickered over, teasing him, coaxing him into opening more.

Soon enough, Heathcliff's tongue was in his mouth, and, unlike the night before when Aidan had felt confident enough to stand his ground, right now, he could not help feeling overwhelmed. Heathcliff's hand moved away from his neck, and snuck under his t-shirt, finding quickly purchase in one of his nipples.

Aidan grunted into the kiss, not in displeasure, but surprise. Heathcliff had a way to play with his nipples, pulling slowly, but firmly, then rubbing gently, and playing around. The thing was everything he did make Aidan's cock twitch.

The shorts he was wearing were thin, so he doubted he could hide how excited he was. As if he knew, Heathcliff moved his hand again, and this time he used it to tease Aidan's cock through his shorts.

Tease was not the right word to describe what Heathcliff did. The man squeezed his cock hard, almost wrapping his fingers entirely around it. Aidan whimpered and tried to interrupt the kiss to protest, but Heathcliff's other arm kept him from the back, and it wasn't so easy to escape.

Damn, he thought, as he squirmed in Heathcliff's lap. This wasn't fair. He shifted more, trying to adjust his position. He could tell Heathcliff was hard, too. His cock was lodged against Aidan's thigh, stiff as a board.

His sounds of protest were muffled as Heathcliff devoured his mouth with purpose. No, he couldn't. He would not last. But his hands just grabbed blindly at Heathcliff's shoulders, and his entire body arched tautly.

Heathcliff's hand was still rubbing his cock as he slowly came down. But it was doing so slower and slower until it brought itself to a halt. Finally, Heathcliff let go of his mouth, and Aidan stared down dejectedly. The large dark spot on his shorts was the only telltale sign needed.

So Heathcliff still treated him like a virgin who could not keep it up long. The thought should have been infuriating, but Aidan could not feel that. He was spent, a tiny bit cold, and he still felt his skin burning and one of his nipples tingling.

Heathcliff stood up with him in his arms, and Aidan finally shook off his daze. "I can walk," he protested feebly.

From above, Heathcliff's eyes were burning. Aidan's words froze on his lips. Maybe the asshole needed to pull a muscle or something to understand that he could not just waltz around with another grown man in his arms.

He made himself little in the strong arms and set his head against a strong shoulder with a small sigh. Since when did he live with the impression that he could tell Heathcliff what to do?

Once they were in the bedroom, Heathcliff placed him on the bed and began pulling his shorts down. Aidan knew he had to say something, but words didn't come to him, anyway. By the looks of things, Heathcliff was still hard and would do something about it soon.

Aidan watched as Heathcliff shucked down his tracksuit bottoms, pushing them away with one foot, his eyes never leaving him. Next thing, Heathcliff grabbed a condom and the bottle of lube and was busy getting himself ready.

Aidan's ass twitched at that sight. He would be sore for sure tomorrow, seeing how Heathcliff didn't exactly care that Aidan had been a virgin not a full 24 hours ago. But instead of saying

something to protect his ass, he snuck his hands under his butt cheeks and pulled them apart, giving Heathcliff a good look.

Heathcliff smiled, and soon he was all over Aidan, pushing slick fingers inside him.

“We could have skipped the through the clothes thing,” Aidan mumbled. “I could have come now, with you.”

“You’ll come, little fire,” Heathcliff chuckled, “you’ll come many times, don’t worry.”

“I still have to work tomorrow,” Aidan said a bit worried now.

Heathcliff’s appetite was a force to be reckoned with.

“And? Don’t you want to come again? And again? And again?” Heathcliff cooed, biting Aidan’s lips gently.

“Can my ass take it? I mean --”

“Don’t worry. Just this one time. And then you’ll come by hand or mouth.”

“Okay,” Aidan agreed, his voice dropped to a whisper.

Heathcliff was the expert, after all.

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Usually, Heathcliff would have let Aidan and his lovely ass rest for the day, but the moment he saw the young man all shy and hesitant, he had felt a sudden, unbearable lust that could only be quenched one way and one way only. He would make up for it, by giving Aidan blowjobs and hand jobs and anything else he could think of that didn’t involve that delicious round butt, but that would come later.

Right now, he could barely keep himself from ramming in, and making the bed rattle under them. Aidan was just a sweet thing, presenting his hole to be ravished, and Heathcliff felt a little guilty. This wasn’t like him, but many things weren’t like him since he had met the corporate bunny.

And now he could not blame it on lack of sex. After the night before, he should have been a bit more appeased. Instead, his desire for Aidan was growing. He would make gentle love to his bunny, and then he would behave for the entire day.

Right now, though, more pressing matters were at stake. His cock could not be pleased with anything else but that tight hole. He pressed Aidan into the bed with his entire body and proceeded to push inside slowly while capturing his lover’s mouth into a deep kiss and distracting him with caresses.

Aidan shifted under him to allow him a better angle. Heathcliff cursed under his breath. The bunny was way too accommodating of his lust, and that wasn't a good thing. He would go too fast, too deep, and it was happening because Aidan skillfully draped his legs around him and pulled him in.

And he wanted to take it slow. How could he do that now? Aidan was the bottom, but he was taking the reins, undulating his body and slowly pulling Heathcliff in. The rhythm was decided, and he hadn't been the one to impose it.

His cock was too hard and his desire too strong to give up right now, protest, or change anything. Aidan had no idea what he was doing to him, but he would have a talk with the naughty bunny later. Right now, he was too busy listening to the wordless orders coming from Aidan's body.

They were moving amply, and it appeared that Aidan knew how to make it better for himself now, shifting just slightly and raising his hips just enough to let Heathcliff hit just the right spot if the small moans and whimpers were any indication.

A great bottom, that was Aidan Spark right now. Not a corporate bunny, as Heathcliff liked to call him teasingly. And not a preppy young man looking to climb the career ladder. But a perfect bottom who could drive a top like Heathcliff absolutely crazy.

"Heath, so good, so good," Aidan whimpered softly.

"Are you coming, Aidan?" Heathcliff asked, feeling the tension in the other's body, not ready for it just yet.

"Yes, it's too good, sorry," Aidan mumbled, and arched against Heathcliff, squirming and grunting.

Heathcliff said nothing, too caught up into giving himself pleasure. He had thought Aidan would be too sore and hate him a little for being so overbearing, yet instead, the corporate bunny knew well how to take enough for himself.

That was more than a pleasant surprise. It was the stuff that could make Heathcliff do something dangerous, like losing his head a little. Aidan pulled him closer for a kiss and Heathcliff continued to move on top of him, with short, impatient thrusts.

He growled into Aidan's mouth as he came, deep and lodged into his ass, screwed in there like a bolt in its fitting nut. For long moments, he just stood there, breathing and doing nothing else. Aidan's fingers were caressing his head slowly, and they were bringing his sanity back with their steady movement.

Eventually, he needed to move. He did so reluctantly, and Aidan's hands fell from his body, stretched for him for a brief moment before they dropped on the bed.

“Wow,” Aidan said and looked at him dreamily.

“Yeah, wow,” he replied and shook his head with mirth.

Aidan snickered, breaking the moment. “Are you going to do this often? I mean, my ass ... Not that I’m complaining,” he added quickly.

Heathcliff laughed and pulled the condom off his cock. “Not today. We’ll relax, swim in the pool, go later for ice cream --”

“Icecream?” Aidan pushed himself on his elbows and stared at him through his dropped eyelashes.

“You must like ice cream,” Heathcliff said with a grin.

“I do, but --”

“I’ll take you somewhere nice. The best ice cream in this corner of the universe,” he interrupted Aidan and headed for the bathroom.

Something hit him in the back, and he turned, feeling much offended. He grabbed the pillow from the floor. “What’s this?” he asked, staring at the cute young man lying in his bed.

Aidan snickered. “You treat me like a kid.”

“You are one.” Heathcliff laughed and threw the pillow back.

Aidan caught it effortlessly. And threw it again, the moment Heathcliff turned his back. The bunny was too naughty for his own good. Heathcliff could say he almost felt regrets about his earlier promise to leave Aidan’s ass alone.

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Frolicking all naked in Heathcliff’s pool? It surely did pay to be a famous influencer, Aidan thought. Heathcliff had said he would join, but he was seated on the patio and fiddling with his phone for some reason. Aidan had a mind to splash some water his way and have him come and play.

The serious look on Heathcliff’s face kept him from doing so, though. So Aidan swam to the edge and looked at his host intently.

“Can I help you with anything?” he asked.

“Nothing I can’t manage. I’m just sending someone a few gluten-free recipes along with some advice.”

“So you’re working?” Aidan felt the need to glare.

“I guess so,” Heathcliff answered and smiled, his eyes filled with fondness. “Do you feel neglected, bunny boy?”

“Why should I?” Aidan shrugged. “I have this awesome pool all to myself.”

“Hmm, are you trying to make me neglect my duties?”

“Nah, I’m just wondering how come famous influencers have to work on Sundays,” Aidan replied.

“That’s how they become famous influencers in the first place,” Heathcliff said, and his smile grew wider. “All done,” he added and left the phone on the table.

Aidan watched as Heathcliff stood up and pushed down his pants. He couldn’t get enough of looking at him, his perfect body and that ...

“Are you sure you want to stare at my cock like this, bunny boy?” Heathcliff joked. “It’s almost like you’re inviting trouble.”

“No way,” Aidan said with a small grimace. “I really had enough.”

“I’m glad to hear that. Your satisfaction is above everything else.”

Heathcliff took him by surprise as he jumped into the pool, splashing water everywhere. Somewhere, deep inside, Heathcliff was still a bit like a kid, Aidan could swear. He swam away from the area of impact, but it looked like Heathcliff was adept at water activities, too, because it took him little to reach Aidan from behind and gather him into his strong arms.

Could he get enough of this? Heathcliff turned him and kissed him deeply. As the man’s hand snuck between his legs and began playing with his cock, Aidan knew the answer. Probably not. That was the answer.

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It had been such an intense weekend that Aidan wondered if it wasn’t a good idea to pinch himself and see if he wasn’t dreaming.

“Are you sure you can’t spend the night?” Heathcliff asked him, as he stood in the door, finally ready to say goodbye.

“I need to rest,” Aidan smiled sheepishly, “after going at it like we did all day.”

An all-knowing smirk was the only answer. Eventually, they had gone for ice cream, but that had been the only out of the house activity. The day had been spent in various adult-oriented activities, and Aidan needed not to think of those at all if he wanted to make it home and focus on other, more important things.



“Also, it would not be wise to be reckless, right? What if someone sees us in the morning, leaving together, or something?”

Heathcliff ruffles his hair. “Of course. You think of everything.”

“These clothes,” Aidan pointed at himself, “I’ll clean them and send them back.”

“Don’t. They look good on you.”

“But --”

“A master can spoil his pet,” Heathcliff said with one raised finger.

“I had no idea pets wore clothes,” Aidan said dryly.

“Some do. Tomorrow, after work, report back to me. And try to make it earlier than ten o’clock in the evening.”

“All right. I’ll try. But I don’t promise anything.”

“You better do,” Heathcliff said. “Who’s your master?”

Aidan rolled his eyes. “Are we seriously playing at this BDSM thing?”

“We could,” Heathcliff replied. “If you want to.”

“Oh, how considerate of you.”

Aidan was new to sex as he was. Getting into kinks was not exactly on top of his list. But he liked the idea of ‘reporting’ to Heathcliff. It gave him a good reason to see the end of the workday.

“All right,” he said. “See you tomorrow then. Feel free to do whatever as there are no outstanding requests at the moment from the company.”

He was almost out the door when Heathcliff pulled him back. “Aren’t you forgetting something?”

He turned, ready to protest when Heathcliff pressed their mouths together. “See you tomorrow, Aidan. Don’t keep me waiting, okay?”

“I wouldn’t dream of doing that,” Aidan said back and wasn’t joking.

## *Chapter Sixteen - #TGIM*

Aidan sat at his desk, fired up his computer, and began browsing through his e-mails. Leaving aside the spam that seemed to find him no matter how hard he tried to keep it his inbox crap-free, a few social media notifications that he ignored since they just showed how happy some people were, and newsletters from online shops he only visited once, he finally decided that it was actually a good moment to get to work.

Only that, for the first time since he started working, he could not find the motivation in him to 'hustle harder', as was the mantra around the office these days. No, Aidan the perfect professional seemed long gone, or hidden somewhere he could not find him. In his place, the no-longer-a-virgin version of himself sat triumphantly. Well, maybe not that triumphantly, since he was still sore after his crazy weekend.

His middle finger was lazily rolling the mouse wheel, and his mind was happily wandering, back to what had happened in the short span of a Saturday night and an entire Sunday.

The good news was he hadn't dreamed whatever happened. The bad news was that he had no idea where to go from there. Heathcliff had been clear; they were in a relationship of sorts. Not a relationship-relationship, but sort of a business deal. It was easy for Heathcliff to take everything so easy, mostly because he hadn't been the one getting fucked.

Not that Aidan had any regrets. He had been an enthusiastic participant and he would have done the same all over again. He just hoped Heathcliff would be true to his word and this would continue, at least for a while.

It felt like he had so much to learn, mainly about sex, but also about interacting with someone on an intimate level. Everywhere he looked, people seemed married to their jobs, and treated romantic implications as nothing but obstacles. By how they bragged, they also fucked a lot, but Aidan had an inkling that wasn't the case, at least, not for everyone.

Work was the number one priority. It had to be for him, too. He was twenty-two, young, strong, capable, ready to climb the career ladder that seemed to go up, up in the clouds, only if he logged in the hours and proved to be the perfect corporate employee.

At least, that was the spiel. He envied Heathcliff. The man didn't have to work from nine to five. He did what he liked. And, on top of everything, he had no troubles showing how good he felt in his own skin.

Someone was leaning against the half wall of his cubicle. The smell of coffee from the downstairs machine let the intruder's presence known. Aidan turned his head, feeling already irritated. Could people just see that he was busy working?

“Thank God it’s Monday,” the intruder, some young employee who was even newer than him, commented with a wistful look on his face.

He wore a suit that seemed too large for his skinny frame, and shoes that appeared as penguin feet from under the overflowing hem of his pants. Penguin-pants, Aidan thought an immediate nickname for the man interrupting his musings about a certain gorgeous fitness guru.

“Excuse me?” Aidan looked at the other, intrigued.

“It’s the start of a new week,” the young man said loudly, as if he was addressing an invisible audience, “the gate is open for new opportunities.”

Aidan felt the need to roll his eyes, but caught himself in time. “Yeah, nice, great, whatever,” he mumbled and turned toward his screen.

“Attitude is everything,” the guy continued, as he could barely wait for someone to listen to him babbling away.

Aidan didn’t want to listen. He stole a glance around, half sitting up from his chair. To be fair, they were the only ones present. Why had he come so early? Maybe because he felt too energetic after his weekend with Heathcliff.

“Work is the most beautiful thing in our lives, as young people,” the intruder added.

“For you, maybe,” Aidan said under his breath.

He would have sided with this guy last week. Well, maybe not entirely, but still. Now, he had more important things on his mind.

“What did you say?” Penguin-pants asked smoothly.

“Nothing. I’m just going through the tasks for the day, in my head. I sometimes find myself talking,” Aidan attempted an apologetic tone, while trying to make it clear that the guy was bothering him.

“That’s great, Aidan. Just imagine, one day, years from now, that we might switch our cubicles with some offices on the corner,” Penguin-pants continued, seemingly impervious to being told off.

“There’s only one office on the corner,” Aidan pointed out.

Penguin-pants stared down at him with his washed out eyes. “Exactly,” he said pompously and finally decided to leave.

Aidan shrugged. Whatever that dude was into, Aidan wasn't interested. He needed to go back on more important matters, such as how serious Heathcliff was about the whole thing happening between them.

No, no, no, he had promised himself that he would not lose his head, and that was what he was doing. He would just have some more amazing sex with Heathcliff, but that was where everything stopped.

*Come on, Aidan, he chided himself, do you really think a guy like that would want anything else?* It was a wonder in itself that Heathcliff wanted anything from someone like Aidan. So, he needed to stop fretting, and be content with what he had.

Hmm, what he had ... his mind traveled to the day before. How many times had Heathcliff blown his mind? Yes, he used metaphors, trying with all his might to stop his mind from sending the wrong signals to certain parts of his body. The last thing he needed was a hard-on at work.

He would open Excel and start working. That would be the perfect cold shower he needed so that he could stop his mind from wandering to those magnetic blue eyes, perfect abs, amazing c –

“Aidan, do you have those graphs ready?” A female voice interrupted his daydreaming.

“Of course,” he shook his head, “just printing them.”

“Good. The boss wants them now.”

When the hell had that man arrived? Looking around, Aidan noticed that the cubicles were now quite animated. His daydreaming proved dangerous. He was clearly unaware of his surroundings.

He grabbed the graphs impatiently, the whirring of the printer getting a little on his nerves. He could have just used the larger printers down the hall, but, for some reason, his boss wanted him to have a printer in his otherwise poorly appointed cubicle. For emergencies, or something like that.

Aidan ambled toward his boss's office, and almost crushed into Penguin-pants. “Sorry,” he said and tried to move past him.

Apparently, Penguin-pants had other ideas. When Aidan quickened his pace, he did the same, and for a few awkward moments, they almost brushed their shoulders.

Little was Aidan's surprise, seeing how Penguin-pants was making a beeline for the big kahuna's office, just like him.

“He wants to see my graphs,” Penguin-pants threw over his shoulder.

“Really? That's exactly --”

The door opened and their boss's personal assistant looked them up and down as if she could check them for some fatal diseases while doing so. "You're late," she said haughtily, and made room for them to walk inside.

This was odd. Everything was odd, Aidan thought, and pushed one hand through his hair and arranged his tie quickly. Why on earth was the big kahuna asking two different employees for those graphs? Maybe they weren't the same graphs; that was one possible explanation.

The personal assistant pushed them both through the door to the inner sanctum of their leader. Aidan still felt awkward next to Penguin-pants.

Their boss was behind his desk, his fingers propped in front of him. "The graphs," he demanded shortly.

Aidan took one step forward, but the other was quicker and placed his papers in front of their boss, as if he was showing the man some treasure map. Their boss examined the offered gift with scrutinizing eyes.

"Excellent!" he shouted, startling Aidan.

Penguin-pants seemed unfazed. Damn, he had been here longer, but their boss's antics still took him by surprise. He collected himself quickly and hurried to show his graphs, too. The boss threw them a bored, fleeting look.

"Work harder, Spark."

What? What was that? What was that supposed to mean? Graphs were graphs.

"What do you mean, sir?" he asked directly.

"See this line?" The man asked, and pointed at a thick red smudge of printer paint on Penguin-pants's material. "This is what I want to see. And the font! Verdana? Spark, I thought you better than this!"

Aidan frowned and took one step closer to look at the other's graphs. "These are incorrect, sir." He drew with one finger along the praised red line. "We can't expect this level of growth --"

"You have no confidence, Spark!" His boss boomed, and, for a second, Aidan wondered if the windows rattled or was just his imagination. "Ambition is a way of life. If we're always cautious, how can we move forward? How can we conquer the vast expanse of the universe?"

Aidan could feel a headache coming in. His boss was a total nutcase, he was sure of it, but this talk about conquering the universe was new. And he had never been scolded about his graphs before. He was the big kahuna's PowerPoint darling. Everyone knew that.

Apparently, he now had competition. Aidan threw a furtive look in Penguin-pants's direction. The guy seemed quite pleased with himself. So that was that morning talk all about. A new PowerPoint star was in town, and he was challenging Aidan to a deathmatch.

Aidan could care less for deathmatches. "Sir," he insisted, as he turned toward his boss again, "it is not about precautions, it's about facts."

"Facts." Penguin-pants snickered at his left.

"Yes, facts," Aidan said, half-turning toward his unexpected competition. "We're not ignoring facts, are we?"

"Your insinuations are disappointing, Spark," his boss intervened. "We create an environment here. It's not just a business."

High time for a huge mental eye roll. Here we go, Aidan thought. The talk about the environment, and not just any environment, but the one the big kahuna was struggling to invent at the workplace.

"We think beyond." His boss made his fingers crack.

Aidan stopped a grimace just in time. He needed to work on his neutral attitude when it came to his boss's interminable speech about what the company meant to him and had to mean for everyone else, regardless of paycheck.

"Can you think beyond, Spark?" the man asked, in a paternal voice.

"Yes, sir," Aidan said stiffly.

"Today, toiling for greatness is our *raison d'être*. It's not about profit," his boss said, standing up and slamming his palm against the desk.

"Not about profit," Penguin-pants echoed, his eyes shining, his mouth a bit slack in awe.

Aidan took an imperceptible step away from his co-worker. The guy was seriously giving him the creeps.

"It's not about our products," his boss continued.

"No, not our products," Penguin-pants murmured in fervor, clasping his hands in front, and rocking gently back and forth.

When had this meeting turned into some Corporate Cultists Anonymous networking event? Aidan hoped they wouldn't have to hold hands and sing Kumbaya next.

"It's not even about growth!"

“No, not growth!”

“It’s about us,” his boss’s voice became gentle again, “as humans, living together, working together, creating a greater good.”

Wow, Aidan thought. He had always believed his boss was a quirky character, but this bordered on insanity. Maybe he should call nine-one-one and ask for help? Someone needed a straitjacket.

His boss droned on about some mission of sorts. Aidan knew he needed to pay attention, but his mind was wandering again, against himself. It was like he had a natural mental shield to protect him from bullshit, particularly the corporate kind. His co-worker continued to echo the big kahuna’s words without fail. Aidan wondered briefly if he was caught, perhaps, in some absurd play, waiting for a saviour of sorts who would never come.

Eventually, it was clear. He was no longer the boss’s favorite PowerPoint graph illustrator. Actually, that was a relief. He would have more time to invest in things that truly mattered. The only inconvenience was that falling from his boss’s graces meant that he had even lower chances of advancing to a creative position.

“I have an idea,” his boss said while puffing his chest in self-importance. “Today, we’ll have a marathon.”

Marathon? Seriously? Were they going to run around the building, dressed in suits? What about the female employees? Some of them wore high heels, for goodness’s sake!

“It is even more.”

Of course it was. Everything was more with the Military Apeman, Aidan invented another nickname, this time for his boss. For some reason, his creative juices were flowing. Not in the right direction, but they were definitely flowing.

“It is a test of will.”

Aidan was sure he didn’t like the sound of that.

“We’ll see who’s capable of putting in the most extra hours. We’ll toil, we’ll struggle, but we will prevail,” his boss put out a fist, punching the air in a victorious gesture.

Oh, great. Heathcliff would hate him, and even forget about him, but there was no way around this. He was called to arms and needed to prove himself. That meant no going to the fitness guru’s house tonight, no eating that delicious food Heathcliff managed to make while still keeping it healthy - how he did it was beyond him - and, above all, no chance of amazing sex.

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“Hey, guys, welcome to another livestream,” Heathcliff said while opening his arms wide. “Today, we are going to do something a bit different. Some of you asked me in the comments about some stretching exercises that anyone could do. So, let’s get to work.”

Heathcliff continued his explanations in front of the camera, and, from time to time, he looked at the live chat so that he could give the people watching him some extra pointers. One of the commentaries made him grimace.

He could choose to ignore it, but he knew about these things. They would come back and back again like a nasty fly.

“I see you’re interested in my love life,” he said during a small break. “No, I did not turn into a monk. Actually, far from it.”

As he grabbed his elbow and pulled it tight, keeping it there, he looked at the large screen. Whoever that was, they had no intention of letting him off the hook.

“Well, the truth is I found someone. Someone who’s gorgeous, makes me laugh, and is a great person all around.”

He huffed when he read the next comment. “No, I didn’t turn straight, and far from me to elope. You, guys, know I don’t believe in the marriage institution. But we’re not here to talk politics, right? Let’s get to work. I can bet that you can’t exercise and type at the same time.”

The troll, if it was a troll, stopped for a while. Maybe he or she was doing what Heathcliff said, which was certainly healthier than being hunched over a phone and trolling people’s live chats.

It didn’t take the troll long. Heathcliff liked to think it was a troll, and it was best to ignore such things, but he had a reputation to uphold, and that meant that he was nice to everyone, even those who tried to get a rise out of him.

Plus, somewhat secretly, he wanted to brag about Aidan, without telling who it was or any details. The thing was he was damned proud of his latest conquest. That was a way of saying since there was still a long road to get Aidan to fall for him, and not just consider him a good lay. He was working on that.

“Maybe that’s what’s happening,” he said and smiled as he read the new comment. “Yes, even someone like me can be monogamous. Plus, I’ve always been that, serial monogamous, but monogamous nonetheless. And that’s all for today’s livestream. Thank you, guys, for watching, see you on Wednesday, when we’ll talk about healthy eats and how we can have more of them in our diets without a hassle.”

It was no wonder some people wanted to know what was with him and his sudden disappearance from tabloids and whatnot. Also, it was a relief that the tabloids themselves had left him alone for the time being, at least.



That could not take long. They would harass him soon enough. As long as he had provided for their shitty publications with endless gossip material, he had been their sweetheart. Like the vicious vipers they were, they would strike.

Aidan was right about being cautious. But unless they thought about breaking into his home or sending drones over the high fence to spy on him, they had no chance of learning anything. Outside the home, Aidan was just someone from The Healthy Shakers, sent to him on business, and Heathcliff could live without PDAs, seeing how important appearances were now. Not that he wouldn't have liked some PDAs if they involved Aidan. Just the thought of walking hand in hand with his cute bunny made him smile fondly.

His phone rang, interrupting his thoughts. Maybe it was Aidan. It was just late afternoon, and he was well aware that the bunny worked long hours, but a man could hope. Maybe his naughty boy had snuck into the bathroom for a quickie and needed Heathcliff to provide the right entertainment.

But no, as much as he liked the idea, it wasn't like Aidan to do such a thing. He sighed when he looked at the phone. It wasn't Aidan, but Michael.

"Hey, hey, stranger, you disappeared from the face of the planet since Saturday night," his friend teased him as soon as he put the phone to his ear. "I am dying to know, so I'm swallowing all my pride and dignity and, as you can see, I'm calling first. How was it? Did Aidan tell you off?"

"You wish," Heathcliff snorted, "what kind of friend are you, you ass?"

"The kind who wants to know if you got laid, and if your crush was, at least, somewhere around when that happened," Michael joked.

"Yes and yes," Heathcliff said curtly, but he was dying to talk to someone about Aidan, and Michael was the perfect candidate since he knew him so well.

"Details. You know you can't leave me like this."

"I can, actually. C'mon, Mikey, you know I'm a gentleman."

"In what parallel universe? But I don't want details about sex positions and all that. I suspect that your bedroom gymnastics are unparalleled. My question is: how did Aidan react? How come he didn't put you in place?"

"Obviously, he likes me," Heathcliff said with satisfaction.

"Ah, damn," Michael sighed, "and I thought the man to tell Heathcliff Stone 'no' finally fell from heaven."

“You would have liked that, wouldn’t you?” Heathcliff laughed. “Always ready to make fun of my predicaments?”

“I’d never,” Michael said theatrically. “But I like Aidan. I’m not sure if walking into the wolf’s den was the best decision in his life.”

“Are you worried about Aidan more than about me?” Heathcliff protested. “Who always saved you a place in the cafeteria all throughout the middle school? And who got you your first date ever? Or supported you when you came out to your folks?”

“Hmm, I think you’re forgetting a few hundred other things, but well, at thirty, your memory might start to fail.”

“You’re twenty-nine years and eight months old, asshole,” Heathcliff said with affection.

“Still in my twenties. Now, seriously, Heathcliff, do I have any reason to worry for you? Is there something the matter?”

“Stop it right there, mother hen. No and yes. I think I like Aidan very much.”

“Yes, you told me.”

“No, I really, really like him.”

“Oh.”

Heathcliff waited for a few seconds. “That’s all you have to say?”

“Sorry, I was busy checking the fashion trends for best men at weddings.”

Heathcliff laughed. “I didn’t break that badly. I still don’t see the point of marriage.”

“All right,” Michael said brightly. “But it was worth checking. I think I’m going to buy a new suit, just in case.”

“If you’re done joking, can we talk for real? Or should I allow you a joke more or two?”

“No, I’m done. So, let’s see what’s happening here. Are you falling for your little corporate bunny?”

“Let’s not talk about romantic crap. I just feel the need to have him near, preferably locked in a shiny cage so that I don’t lose him out of my sight.”

“Hmm, possessive, aren’t we? But how are you going to compete with Aidan’s convenient lovers on speed dial?”

“Easy. They’re imaginary,” Heathcliff said with satisfaction.

“Ah, that’s what you’re telling yourself to protect your ego?” Michael questioned right away the validity of his statement.

“No,” Heathcliff said and wished his scowl could be visible through the phone. “He, how should I say this, had something when came home with me Saturday night and now he doesn’t have that thing anymore.”

“Hmm, his self-esteem?”

“Try harder.”

Michael was among the very few people who could tease him like this and get away with it. “Well, I don’t know. I’m not used to you being so mysterious. What is it? Don’t keep me hanging, Heath, I mean it.”

Heathcliff laughed. “His V-card.”

“His V-card?” Michael said slowly, as if he was trying to process that new piece of information. “Fuck, did you just defile an innocent, Heath?”

“Hey, he enjoyed his defilement very much.”

“I bet. But really? How old did you say he was? Twenty-two, right? We were definitely younger than that when we first did it. So he recently realized he was gay?”

“No, apparently, while knowing well he liked guys, he waited for me.”

“Yeah, sure.” Michael could always tell when he was joking. “C’mon, what’s the whole story?”

“The whole story doesn’t matter. Point is he is, ah, damn, Mikey, how can I say this? He’s absolutely gorgeous.”

“You had gorgeous men in your bed before, Heath. That’s not it. So, as you told me earlier, try harder.”

“He’s unique, like no one else I know or ever fucked. I mean, he’s so cute, you saw that, right?”

“Yes, and I also noticed him to be well behaved and modest.”

“That’s why I like him, yes. See, I can always count on you when I can’t find my words.”

Michael fell silent for a couple of seconds. “Heath, are you serious about this?” He no longer seemed in the mood to joke.

“Yes, I am,” Heathcliff replied promptly. “Why? Does it seem so hard to believe?”

“Aidan seems like a nice guy. You don’t do ‘nice’, Heath.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Heathcliff valued Michael’s friendship more than anything, but the guy was sometimes getting on his nerves with his brutal honesty.

“That if you plan to mess with Aidan’s pretty head, make him fall for you, and then discard him later, I’ll kick your ass.”

“Why should I discard him? How heartless do you think I am?” Heathcliff frowned.

“As heartless as your next hook up,” Michael replied right away.

“Hey, I’m having fun, what’s wrong with that?” Heathcliff felt a bit defensive. Yet, he knew what Michael was saying.

“Nothing’s wrong, as long as the men who come to your bed know where and how they stand. Aidan’s different.”

“He is,” Heathcliff said. “And I don’t plan to discard him. I’m serious, Mikey, I have no intention to let him go.”

“Wow. I thought you only wanted to get into his pants. I don’t remember ever to have heard you talk like this about someone. It was always about the gorgeous ass on some guy, or pretty mouth that would look good sucking your cock.”

“You make me sound like such an asshole,” Heathcliff said.

“You know I always tell you the truth. Until today, I thought you had the hots for Aidan, only because of his bubble butt. So, what changed?”

“I might not have told you the entire truth,” Heathcliff replied.

“So spit it out now,” Michael encouraged him.

“I like Aidan like I haven’t liked anyone in a long time. I can’t put my finger on what makes me think that. But I do. He just does it for me, and I feel like, the moment he entered my house for the first time, and watched me fucking some random guy with his big pretty eyes, I liked him.”

“That’s as close to a romantic confession as I’ll ever hear from you, right? Well, if things are like this, it’s simple. Aidan likes you, too, right?”

“Yes, of course he likes me,” Heathcliff replied, a bit too quickly.

“So tell him.”

“I did.”

“Great. When’s the wedding?” Michael asked, and he seemed only to half-joke.

“Again with the wedding,” Heathcliff huffed. “Don’t you think we should get to know each other better first?”

“You’ll have plenty of time after you tell your vows,” Michael joked this time around. “I can smell insecurities from a mile away, but I’ve never thought I’ll talk to you about such a topic that’s always been beneath you. What doesn’t work to your utter and complete satisfaction, Heath?”

Heathcliff sighed. “He thinks it’s just an arrangement.”

“I’m sure that’s just because you told him so.”

“That’s true.”

“So? Tell him now that your feelings finally run deeper.”

“It’s not that easy. He also thinks he’ll move on after we’re done, whatever he believes that is, have a boyfriend and tell him about how he lost his virginity to a famous influencer.”

Michael was laughing his ass off on the other end. “This boy will give you a run for your money, Heath.”

“Yeah. I’ve already told him I like him very much, but I don’t think he believes me. Whatever words will come out of my mouth, they can’t convince him.”

“Because of your playboy reputation, obviously. Okay, so you’ll need to convince him otherwise. What do you have in mind?”

“Seduce, secure, and lock him up.”

“Hmm, I suppose it sounds like a plan. But you will have to do better than this.”

“Go on,” Heathcliff said. He knew he could count on Michael. The guy was a serial romantic, so he had to have some tricks up his sleeve.

“You must show Aidan how you really are. I know you’re all friendly and nice with everyone, but how many people know the real you? You must introduce him to your family, and talk to him about things that truly move you, you know what I’m saying?”

Heathcliff sighed deeply. “I’m doing that. I might not be good at it, but I want to show him the real me.”

“Great. Now I must leave you, Heath. I should get ready for my date. Of course, if you still want to talk some more, I can cancel.”

“No, don’t behave like I’m suddenly an invalid or something. And you’re going on a date this early?”

“My club doesn’t open until eight. I don’t function by the same rules as other people,” Michael replied with a small laugh.

“So, is it someone new?” Heathcliff asked.

“Yes,” Michael said and it was his turn to sigh now.

“Hmm, why the sighing?”

“I don’t know. People treat love today like fast food. Where’s the sophistication, the thrill, I wonder?”

“I think you have too high expectations, Mikey. Many men just want to fuck.”

“Well, I don’t,” Michael replied promptly. “I know I’m heading for my next disappointment right now, but I’ll do my best.”

“At least you’ll get laid.”

“Don’t remind me,” Michael said, his voice void of humor.

“Among gay men, you must be the real unicorn, Mikey. What’s so wrong about just wanting to get laid?”

“I don’t know,” Michael said airily. “Maybe Aidan just wants the same thing with you.”

“Hitting below the belt, Mikey?” Heathcliff complained.

“It proves my point. What do you have to say now?”

“I suppose you are right, to some degree. Then, I wish you good luck. Maybe your date is more than after a hook up.”

“Yeah,” Michael said without conviction. “Talk to you later. And don’t scare Aidan off. If someone like you can finally fall in love, it’s worth seeing it all.”

“Ah, you couldn’t stop using the L word,” Heathcliff chuckled.

“Never,” Michael confirmed.

For minutes after he finished his conversation with his friend, Heathcliff pondered over Michael’s words. He wanted to show Aidan the real him, so that was pretty good advice. If only Michael could be convinced to try some of Heathcliff’s tricks, he would have plenty of men falling in love with him. Not that Heathcliff would have used them on purpose, but he knew,

from experience, what worked. But Michael was stubborn when it came to love. He wanted the impossible, sparks flying, and meeting someone who was his other half and needed to match him like an arm in shoulder.

Heathcliff shook his head. He needed to plan well to make Aidan fall for him. No matter how much the bunny liked him, that was far from what Heathcliff wanted. So he had to put his mind to work.

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Aidan consulted the clock on the right corner of the screen and pursed his lips. The entire office was in a standoff. No one was leaving their battle stations, and they were all pretending to work.

He could not leave first. It would look badly. And it was already nine o'clock. Good thing Heathcliff had fucked him so well all weekend. Seeing how Heathcliff would get bored to wait for him and that from the first day of their so-called relationship, he would find someone else fast.

But not if Aidan could help it. He had to make a phone call and tell Heathcliff why he would be late, and probably not go to see him tonight.

“Hey, bunny boy, you must tell me that you’re on your way.” Heathcliff’s voice was a sexy drawl that made Aidan’s heart beat instantly faster.

“I wish,” he said dejectedly. “My boss has this idea of testing us, to see who’s capable of putting in more extra hours. The office is full at this hour if you can believe it. I’m sure some people are even afraid to use the bathroom so that they’re not written down as deserters.”

“So you’re in the trenches?”

“Yeah, I’m so sorry, I was so looking forward for tonight, I mean, I knew you were waiting for me, and --”

His ramblings were cut short. “Do you need evac to extract you, bunny boy? Leave it to me,” Heathcliff said abruptly.

Aidan wanted to ask him what he meant by that, but Heathcliff was no longer on the phone. With a sigh, he turned back to his graphs. What font could be better for those crappy PowerPoint presentations?

Half an hour later, his boss boomed from his door. “Spark!”

Aidan jumped to his feet. “Yes, sir!”

“You just got a special mission!” his boss yelled over the many sleepy heads, dozing off in their cubicles, now a bit confused over all that ruckus. “You need to go to Heathcliff Stone’s house immediately!”

“Yes, sir!” Aidan said with enthusiasm and caught himself in time. “Why?” he asked.

“The man is throwing some orgy and you must stop it at all costs. Stay with him till morning if need be. Kick everyone out and make sure they stay there!”

With that, his boss withdrew to his office and slammed the door. It took Aidan all his willpower to school his face into an annoyed expression and he started to mumbled something under his breath, to convince his co-workers that he wasn’t pleased in the least with the turn of events.

The door to the boss’s office flew open again. “And the time you spent there will be logged as extra hours!” the man shouted and then slammed the door again.

Aidan bit his lips hard not to laugh. Heathcliff would laugh, too, when he would hear about it. Wait, his mind caught up with him, an orgy?



## *Chapter Seventeen - Fake News*

Aidan wondered as he drove to Heathcliff's house, how on earth his boss was so convinced that Heath was throwing an orgy or any party, for that matter. Heathcliff could not have organized such a thing in short notice since he was waiting for him, right?

But Heathcliff was a man with resources, and probably he did have fuck buddies on speed dial, unlike him, and perhaps he had just had to summon some of the gorgeous men usually populating his bed, which meant an orgy wasn't impossible to organize.

Aidan shook his head. Heathcliff had managed to prank his boss somehow. Hopefully, he wasn't supposed to break a sex party for real. He would have no idea how to handle himself under the circumstances.

He would see Heathcliff, and that thought put a sudden lump in his throat. Yeah, he had been happy to get out of the trenches and see Heathcliff, but what would happen between them now?

Aidan pursed his lips and frowned so hard that his head started to hurt. Why was he nervous? It was all but an arrangement, one that proved more exciting than in his wildest dreams, but an arrangement, nonetheless.

So, he needed to keep his cool. Would Heathcliff want to have sex with him tonight? He could not believe he said this to himself, but he hoped so. His parents would frown if they heard him talk like that. He would keep his mouth shut about the whole thing. There was nothing to say. It wasn't like Heathcliff was his boyfriend or anything. And he had an inkling that his parents would only want to hear about a serious relationship when that would happen.

What was he thinking? He shook his head hard. He had always told his parents everything, but, of course, this was out of the question. They had had the talk with him about safe sex and everything.

Too bad there weren't condoms to protect his feelings. For that, he needed to grow up and enjoy everything while it lasted. His friends from Facebook would undoubtedly say the same thing, regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

He looked at Heathcliff's house from the driveway, and it appeared that no orgy was underway. The premises were quiet, but Aidan felt a small shiver of anticipation as he walked toward the house.

Like activated by magic, the door opened in front of him before he could touch the buzzer.

"Welcome home, Aidan," Heathcliff said, standing in the door, his thumbs pulling lazily at his belt loops, and watching his guest like he was some delicious desert delivered to his door.

At least, this time, he was dressed more than usual when indoors. Not that the tight fitting tank top left much to the imagination. Aidan's eyes traveled over the taut muscles, but he stopped himself in time.

"Ahem, good evening, sir," he said exaggerating every sound coming out of his mouth, "I'm with the cockblock patrol. We heard there was an orgy in the neighborhood. In our department, there's zero tolerance for wandering dicks."

"The cockblock patrol?" Heathcliff grinned and played along. "And I thought you guys were the dicks." He took one step to the side, allowing Aidan to come inside. "Please, officer, feel free to inspect every room. I assure you there are no dicks around, except for the one directly attached to yours truly."

"Ah," Aidan said with pedantry, "so we were misinformed by the looks of things. I wonder how we came to believe there was an orgy here."

"It must be fake news," Heathcliff said airily while closing the door behind Aidan. "It seems to be everywhere these days. One can't tell what's real and what's not."

"A shame," Aidan quipped.

And yelped as he was caught deftly, made to walk backward until his legs hit a sofa, and then splayed on the said piece of furniture with Heathcliff on top.

"What's a shame?" Heathcliff's lips hovered over his.

Aidan gulped and stared into Heathcliff's eyes, which was, as he could tell immediately, a big mistake. "That, um, there is so much fake news in the world? How did you manage to pull this off? I mean, unless you have a dozen handsome men tucked under your bed or something --"

"What should I do with a dozen men when I have all I want right here?"

Aidan breathed in Heathcliff's sexy scent. It wasn't fair he talked like that. There was no point in seducing Aidan any further since they were already fucking. Aidan didn't need the temptation. Heathcliff was playing because it felt easy and natural for him to do so.

Aidan, on the other hand, was ill-equipped to withstand the attack. Was this a big mistake, after all? But he could not go back on his word now. If he fell for Heathcliff Stone like an innocent virgin or something, it was all on him. He would resist with all his might, he promised to himself.

"Oh, so a golden tongue is part of your perks, too?" Aidan pretended he was cool with being told such flattering words by a gorgeous man like Heathcliff.

“You should know,” Heathcliff leaned in and whispered into his ear. “It’s been in your ass a few times if I recall correctly.”

Aidan froze for a split of a second, then he panicked, and then he broke into a sweat. Who was he kidding? He was doomed. But it was just sex. Just sex, he repeated in his mind a few times to cool down. Now that the panic was gone, he was hard.

Heathcliff lodged one leg between his and pressed against his cock. Aidan whimpered and closed his eyes.

“You know, organizing an orgy in such short notice comes with a certain level of anticipation,” Heathcliff began rubbing against him, “and now I’m all worked up.”

“How did you do it?” Aidan asked, hoping he could ignore what he felt. “My boss is sure I’m working hard at throwing sexy men out on the lawn, this very moment.”

“I just posted a small joke on my social media accounts. Something along the lines of ‘orgy at my house’.”

“And no one RSVP-ed?” Aidan asked. “You’re either lying or overnight, there’s a more handsome fitness guru than you with more followers than you who happens to organize another orgy on the other side of the city at the same moment as you.”

Heathcliff chuckled. “I didn’t give details on the hour and expected attire. Everyone knows I’m thorough when it comes to parties.”

“I still can’t believe --”

“It was only on my private channels, and I had someone slip the info to your boss as fast as possible. What they didn’t slip was how I posted, a few minutes later, that it was all a joke.”

“Wow, you are resourceful, Stone,” Aidan hurried to say.

The words barely came out of his throat. Heathcliff slowly moved against him, and his body reacted, completely helpless.

“You know what else I am?” Heathcliff cooed into his ear. “Horny as fuck. I hope you know what your duty as a babysitter is.”

“Yeah? What’s that?”

“To put me to bed, of course. And I can’t do that if my cock is hard.”

“My boss says staying with you will count as extra hours.”

“Good job, Spark,” Heathcliff said and began munching his ear playfully.

“He says I should watch over you until morning to make sure there’s not some orgy breakout around.”

“Now that’s what I call a good boss. Strict and thorough, but good.”

“Yeah, right,” Aidan snorted.

His boss was the last man he wanted to think of right now. Actually, for him, that very moment, Heathcliff was the only man who mattered on the face of the earth, and he was okay with it. Oh, no, he wasn’t okay with it. He needed to play along, have fun, and entertain absolutely zero ideas that this was more than it was.

“Are you tired?” Heathcliff said softly into his ear. “It will be eat, shower, sleep for you, then. I promise.”

While Heathcliff pretended to be all understanding about Aidan coming from work at that hour, his body language told a different story. They were humping each other through their clothes, and Aidan’s own body was happy to converse with Heathcliff’s and be in complete accord over what was best to happen next.

“Not that tired,” he replied.

Heathcliff pulled back only a little and then, suddenly, kissed Aidan deeply, taking his breath away along with all his sanity. What was that he needed to be cautious of? Not falling ... right.

“Come on,” Heathcliff finally let him breathe and stood up, “let’s get you fed. Then you can take a shower, and we’ll be off to bed.”

“Just for the record,” Aidan put one finger up, “are we going to sleep or --”

“Hmm, don’t finish that thought, bunny boy, or I have a mind to get you in bed on an empty belly.”

Aidan also had a mind, to say the first pun that came to his mind, which was that he was happy to have something else in his belly. But he caught himself in time. Sexy banter with even sexier fitness gurus was not a good idea, given the hour. He would make that shower short, just in case.

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Heathcliff examined Aidan with unhidden curiosity, as the bunny munched on his food rather quickly.

“Have your parents never told you to chew your food?”

It appeared that the bunny was in a hurry. Heathcliff hoped Aidan would not come up with some idea that he needed to sleep in his bed and leave. As much as he had enjoyed his day working

and spending his waking hours doing what he loved most, Aidan's coming to his home was the highlight of that particular Monday.

The bunny had seemed eager and happy to see him, but Heathcliff could not understand why he was now gulping down food like there was no tomorrow. Maybe he had had nothing else to eat the entire day? Heathcliff felt a little worried.

Aidan looked a little guilty as he put down his fork. "I don't usually eat like a pig."

"I didn't think that," Heathcliff replied. "I just don't want you to get a stomach ache because of eating too fast."

Now, Aidan looked even guiltier. What was that all about? Heathcliff quirked an eyebrow. "Have you eaten anything today?" he asked.

"Yeah," the reply came too fast.

"Hmm, care to elaborate?"

"No."

Heathcliff sighed. "You need to take better care of yourself, Aidan. Bad habits are easy to get and hard to shake off. Plus, I told you. I don't want you to lose that butt."

Aidan grabbed his fork and began moving the last bit of food on his plate with a focused look on his face. "I'm doing my best."

His voice was quiet, and his eyes were cast down. Heathcliff liked his bunny, but he had a feeling that Aidan was not exactly in a good place. He wanted to learn more, but he didn't want to pressure him into spilling all the beans.

"That I'm sure," Heathcliff replied and did so with as much kindness as he could muster.

Maybe Mikey was right about him. He was a bit of an asshole. Right now, he thought of Aidan and what to do to make it better for him, but actually, he was looking out for number one, as usual. He wanted Aidan in his bed tonight, and indigestion would not work for his plans.

For Aidan's sake, he needed to prove less of an asshole. So maybe there would be no sex in the cards tonight, and he could live with that.

"Are you still hungry?" he asked.

Aidan shook his head.

"All right. Then let's go upstairs, you can take a shower, and then we'll sleep. What do you say?"

Aidan looked up, and for a second, it seemed that he wanted to ask something. In the end, he chose to remain silent, leaving Heathcliff to wonder what that might be.

Less than half an hour later, Aidan came back from the shower, his hair still a little damp, and wearing nothing but a pair of shorts. Heathcliff was sure he had left a tee for him to wear to bed, too. Not that he minded staring at Aidan as he was. Without looking like a gym rat, Aidan had a harmonious, beautiful body. Heathcliff wanted to touch him everywhere.

“Use the blow dryer a little more. You don’t want to wake up with a headache tomorrow if you go to sleep with your hair still wet.”

“Are we going to sleep?” Aidan asked, cocking his head to one side and ignoring Heathcliff’s recommendation.

“Yes. You had a rough day. See? I’m not as sexed up as you might think,” Heathcliff smile.

Aidan didn’t smile in return. “So, you’re already bored?”

“Bored?” Heathcliff put aside the fitness magazine he was reading. “Bored of what? Of you? What makes you think that?”

“You. The fact that you want to go to sleep. Not that’s any problem,” Aidan put his hands up. “I just ... I need to know.”

Heathcliff could feel his lips twitching. So he wanted to be considerate and let the bunny sleep and instead of having that gesture appreciated by Aidan, it actually had the opposite effect. Mikey knew jackshit. And maybe he wasn’t that big an asshole. Or maybe he was a smart asshole.

He patted the bed next to him. “Come here.”

Aidan obeyed and climbed the bed, his eyes still cast down. Heathcliff pushed the magazine from the bed and grabbed Aidan by the shoulders. A small yelp was the reaction as Heathcliff had him pinned against the bed. Now the pretty brown eyes had to look at him.

“Let me spell it for you, bunny boy. If I didn’t know you have a job that demands almost all of you, I’d wreck your ass. And not just tonight, but every day of the fucking week. Is it clear for you how not bored I am?”

Aidan’s eyes lit up. Heathcliff kept him there not because there was some chance for the bunny to run, but because he liked looking at him like that.

“Um, okay. So we’re not sleeping right now, right?”

Heathcliff loved that level of insecurity for some reason. He had seen it in some people, and it had been fake. But not in Aidan. The corporate bunny was the real McCoy.

“I see you have a lot on your mind. How about you tell me what you want to do instead of sleeping?”

“Maybe ... sixty-nine?” Aidan whispered quickly and looked away.

“Sixty-nine it is, then,” Heathcliff agreed. “You on top so I don’t choke you.”

“Me on top?” Aidan smiled and looked excited.

“Yeah. I’ll have a good look of your ass this way.”

“I want to have a good look of your ass, too,” Aidan demanded.

Aidan had asked directly, and Heathcliff had danced around the topic. If anyone had asked him, he could not have said exactly why he didn’t bottom. Mostly, it was because guys who landed into his bed just saw it naturally that they would bottom. That may have been happening also because Heathcliff felt attracted to bottom boys anyways.

Aidan looked like a gorgeous bottom. With an ass like that, he was bound to be on the receiving end. And, once the yuppie armor fell away, he gave off that vulnerable vibe that any top would have liked. But, apparently, bunny boy had a mind to top Heathcliff, if allowed.

Heathcliff wasn’t sure he could allow it. When had been the last time he had bottomed? He wasn’t missing it; that was sure. Also, in his mind, anyone who wanted to top him had to be someone bigger, stronger, and have a somewhat more dominant attitude. At least, that was what he remembered from the tops he had had in his bed, what felt like a lifetime ago.

They would cross that bridge when they came to it. For now, he wanted to play with his bunny. After an entire day spent working, both needed it.

“All right, I’ll let you do your explorations later. For now, I want you naked and on top of me, ass first.”

Aidan nodded and began executing the order, like the good trooper he was. Heathcliff was satisfied with how comfortable Aidan felt around him. Not that people usually felt otherwise when in bed with him. But, with the corporate bunny, he needed to be sure that Aidan was enjoying himself.

He helped Aidan straddle his face, seeing the hesitation rearing its head again in the big pretty eyes.

“Hmm,” he purred as his hands roamed over the nice curve of Aidan’s ass, “I like this. I like it very much.”

Aidan said nothing but he got busy pushing down Heathcliff's pajama bottoms. Heathcliff grunted as he felt moist lips wrapping quickly around his half-hard cock. Aidan was in business mode tonight. Everything he did, he did quickly.

"Don't go so fast," he said, and Aidan stopped.

Ah, how nice the young man had to look with his mouth full. Heathcliff shook his head. That was what he always thought about the men in his bed. Mikey was right, after all. He needed to prove to Aidan that he was more than just a bed partner.

Still, Aidan had beautiful lips, and Heathcliff distinctly remembered how nicely they wrapped around his cock from their previous escapades.

"I want to feel your tongue on my cock. Go slowly, and take your time. I've waited all day for this."

Aidan didn't reply and, instead, he got busy applying Heathcliff's advice. He was such a quick learner, Heathcliff thought, as Aidan's tongue began to lap gently at the head of his cock.

He needed to offer something in return, so he started by kissing the round ass cheeks in front of him and continued by parting them and pushing his tongue inside to lick the small pink hole.

Aidan was making the cutest sounds when rimmed. Heathcliff was learning his entire repertoire. Using his hands, he began to tease gently Aidan's balls and cock, which was already leaving a wet trail on Heathcliff's chest.

He could go straight to business and swallow Aidan's cock into his mouth. But he had a feeling that if he were to do that, they would both blow too soon, Aidan from too much physical stimulation, and Heathcliff from being overwhelmed with what it meant to have such an effect on someone he truly liked and wanted.

The biggest sexual organ was the brain, after all, Heathcliff noted in passing. He had often brushed off the truth of this statement, but now he understood it. Even if what he did with Aidan was hot, it wasn't only because they were so good together in bed that he felt that aroused.

It was the idea that he had the one he desired on top of him, dutifully licking his cock. At the same time, he could do all he wanted with the nicely presented behind.

Tonight it would be just some sixty-nine fun. But Heathcliff wanted to take his time, as much time as possible, to explore his new found hobby.

He wasn't the only one in the mood for exploring, as he could feel Aidan's hands busy on parting his ass cheeks, too, while letting his cock a bit unattended. It looked like Aidan was mimicking his actions, but when Heathcliff felt a curious tongue struggling to get inside his ass, he let out a small sound of surprise.



“Is it bad? Am I bad?” Aidan stopped right away.

“No, please, go on. You’re a natural,” Heathcliff encouraged Aidan.

A snicker was the first response. “I’m a natural ass-licker?”

“Yeah, why not?” Heathcliff laughed, too.

Aidan sighed. “Too bad I can’t be that much of a natural ass-licker at work. I suppose my expertise stops at the bedroom door.”

“Good. And it’s this bedroom door, not just any bedroom door,” Heathcliff said, wanting to make things all clear.

“Okay.” Aidan exhaled and got back to the task at hand.

Maybe he could allow Aidan a bit of leeway in that respect, Heathcliff thought. After all, what could be the harm? He could feel his ass pull itself tight; hmm, his body didn’t seem that delighted with the idea. Maybe he was an incorrigible top, and that was that.

For now, Aidan could lick his ass as much as he wanted. And, when the bunny would ask him again – because he would ask again – Heathcliff would flip him over, give it to him hard, and make him forget all about entertaining any thoughts of being the top in their relationship.

He always did what he wanted. The fact that he liked Aidan more than anyone else ever didn’t change that. With that decision in mind, he grabbed hold tightly of Aidan’s cock and pushed it inside his mouth. Aidan was, indeed, delicious everywhere.

At the same time, the bunny had decided that he also wanted to make that sixty-nine a proper sixty-nine. Taking after Heathcliff, he was stuffing his mouth and doing a pretty good job.

Heathcliff was sometimes concerned with finesse, but he could not be bothered with it right now. The slurping sounds they were both making bordered on obscene, but that just went to prove how much they both wanted it.

He used his tongue to tease the glans from time to time, but his main course of action was right now to deepthroat as deep and as fast as he could. Aidan made small sounds of distress from time to time, but it wasn’t like Heathcliff was keeping him there and forcing him to take more than what he could.

The bunny was an ambitious little thing. Right now, it wasn’t the time for a technical explanation on how oral sex worked, so they had both to do with what their enthusiasm and lack of sexual activity for the last twenty-four hours could provide.

Aidan was first to shoot, and Heathcliff kept him there, enjoying the sensation of having his tongue coated with cum. It was a good call from Aidan to withdraw a little when Heathcliff came, to avoid, what would have been a little too much for someone as inexperienced as him.

Heathcliff could tell, as he licked Aidan's cock clean, that Aidan was doing the same thing. He was a bit clumsy and endearing, but he was, indeed, doing his best.

"How do you find it?" Heathcliff asked, curious about what Aidan thought.

"What?"

"My cum, bunny boy." Heathcliff laughed and patted Aidan's ass to make him move away.

"It's good, I guess," Aidan replied, with a small sigh.

Heathcliff pushed himself up and stared at Aidan. "Just good?"

Aidan snickered. "It's a bit of an acquired taste, right?"

"Ah, I can't believe it." Heathcliff pretended to frown, sensing immediately that Aidan was pulling his leg on purpose. "Then acquired it will be. I'll make it part of your daily diet."

"And how are you going to do that?"

"I'll find ways," Heathcliff grinned and leaned toward Aidan.

Aidan smiled and quickly looked away, but the next second he was the one to grab Heathcliff and kiss him. He was also quick to straddle Heathcliff and push him into the bed while in charge of the kiss.

Heathcliff grabbed Aidan's buttocks hard and eventually unglued his attacker from his lips. Aidan pouted, seemingly displeased with being pushed away. But he didn't protest when Heathcliff extracted himself and then offered his hand.

"I still need to blow dry your hair," Heathcliff said sternly.

"Blow dry," Aidan said and giggled like the naughty kid he was.

He stood completely unmoved while Heathcliff took care of his hair.

"You're good with children."

"Hmm?" Heathcliff fluffed Aidan's hair with his fingers and took one step back to admire his handiwork.

"You clearly like to take care of someone," Aidan pointed out.

“That doesn’t necessarily mean children.”

“I saw you at that center. You looked nice while taking care of all those people. And almost human when you helped that little boy.”

“Almost human?” Heathcliff laughed. “Either way, I don’t see myself married with children.”

“Why?” Aidan cocked his head to the side.

Heathcliff shrugged. “It’s not for me. I enjoy my freedom; thank you very much.”

Aidan smiled, and Heathcliff could not stop thinking that there was something wistful in that smile.

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Why had he asked such a stupid question? Aidan thought. It wasn’t like he wanted Heathcliff to go down on one knee and propose, right? Like what people did that? He didn’t think of gay people in particular but of any sexual orientation and preference. More and more, people enjoyed their freedom and never married, or, if they did, it was definitely later than twenty-two years of age. Or thirty.

He was just a glutton for punishment and wanted to hear out of Heathcliff’s mouth that whatever happened between them was fleeting, with no consequences whatsoever for the future. They were having fun; that was what they were doing.

So why was his heart growing small, small, small, while thinking that?

## *Chapter Eighteen – A Bit Of Fun*

It was a hassle to get up early and rush to his place so that he could get into clean clothes before heading to work, but he could not complain. Heathcliff had waked him up slowly, with a hand job, and later, had served him with pancakes, some healthy version of them, of which the man had spoken fondly while explaining to Aidan how he had stumbled over the recipe in his never-ending quest for healthy eats.

Aidan had only half-listened, for no other reason that his head was too full with what was happening. The only thing he could be satisfied with was that he could only wish for this status quo to last for as long as possible. He was still bewildered by everything, and he could not fathom why Heathcliff was giving up on his precious freedom to be with him.

Okay, so there were NDAs and other stuff that would put a span in the works if Heathcliff wanted to fool around, but that could not be all. For starters, Heathcliff must have had at least several special friends ready to cater to his need to go under the radar without feeling awkward about having them sign NDAs.

Yet, Heathcliff preferred him. And that was absolutely a surprise because Aidan was pretty sure he could not compete, not by a mile, with the kind of men who usually shared Heathcliff's bed.

Whatever it was, it was to his advantage. Why was he dissatisfied? He could not be that dumb. Anyone he knew would have told him to seize the opportunity and have fun. Nothing was wrong with that, right?

Well, maybe not anyone. His parents would have told him to seek a healthy, beautiful relationship with someone ready to share more than just a bed with him.

But he was sharing more than the bed with Heathcliff already, he argued with himself as he continued his train of thought. The man had made pancakes for him, right that very morning. That had to count for something.

Who was he kidding? The truth was, after some of the blood from his cock had come back to his brain, he could not stop himself from seeing the situation for what it truly was. He, Aidan Spark, had somehow managed to become Heathcliff Stone's sex toy for convenience's sake and only that.

He should have been content with that explanation. But Heathcliff did more than fuck him. They were kissing ... all right, people who fucked often kissed, that wasn't that special, right? Also, they were cuddling. Again, that could not be that uncommon between people who had sex together.

It felt like Heathcliff was trying to seduce him. The realization struck him, fortunately, while he was still waiting for the light to change. Not that he hadn't thought of that before, but he had brushed it off as something that Heathcliff used to tease him.

But why would Heathcliff want to do that? Wasn't it enough that Aidan practically obeyed his every whim – not that he complained, he needed to repeat that to himself – without protesting?

What guys who got seduced by Heathcliff did to defend themselves? For Heathcliff, it was all a game, but for Aidan, it wasn't. Maybe he needed to make it all clear, but how? He could tell Heathcliff to stop making him pancakes, or blow dry his hair, or wake him up with handjobs ... but that didn't sound right.

Maybe it was all more about how Heathcliff liked to compliment him, or tease him, or tell him things he knew were going to make an impression on him, like that thing about how he didn't need a dozen of men while he had Aidan.

But how could he put a stop to all that? Aidan had no idea. Maybe Heathcliff would get upset over being told off when all he did was to compliment him and nothing more.

He sighed deeply. The light changed. He needed to stop thinking of Heathcliff so much. How exactly he could achieve that was a total mystery, seeing how he had to work with him almost daily, then spend the evenings and the nights with him, and also the weekends – as Heathcliff had pointed out that it went without saying that Aidan was not to make any plans for any end of the week for the foreseeable future – and he was also subscribed to all Heathcliff's social media channels. Heathcliff posted so much in a single day that Aidan's feed was flooded like a beach during a tsunami. He could not just turn off the notifications. He had an inkling that he would have hurt Heathcliff's feelings even if the man didn't know about that.

“What am I going to do?” he mumbled to himself.

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It was a good thing that, at least until tonight, he could put aside any thought of Heathcliff since his boss needed him on the ground, to file and re-file all kinds of documents. Usually, he would have dreaded that kind of tedious assignment, but right now, it was all he needed. The next day, he was supposed to be present at Heathcliff's house again with business from work. The Healthy Shakers seemed pleased with what the fitness guru did for the brand, but more was needed.

For the time being, Aidan could just bury himself in work and ignore how fast and deep he was going with the whole Heathcliff thing. It was one of the rare occasions when he wished he were straight. If he had been straight, Heathcliff could not have seduced him. Right? But what if Heathcliff was also good at turning straight guys gay?

Aidan shook his head. What the hell was he thinking instead of focusing on work? He needed his head in the game.

As soon as he took that decision, things became easier. Boring, predictable, and extremely tedious, but, for Aidan, that was the devil he knew.

Hours later, as he stood in the cafe on the corner, contemplating the choices for lunch, Heathcliff's advice on healthy eating began haunting him. It would have been so simple just to grab a burger. Did he really want to spend that kind of money on some avocado toast or whatever that green thing was? He wasn't that sure. Everything Heathcliff cooked was delicious, but now he had to pick something for himself, and his determination to eat healthy food wavered.

"Aidan? OMG, I haven't seen you since forever!"

He knew that shrilly voice. He turned, and Isabel, one of his besties from high school and later college jumped into his arms.

"Hey, Bella," he said back and could feel his face stretching in a broad smile.

A few customers threw them weird looks and Aidan pushed back his friend just a little so that he could take a better look at her. Isabel was still the bundle of energy as always. He made a small gesture with his chin toward the bright screen filled with healthy and not so healthy choices.

"Wanna order something? And how come you're here? Weren't you on some trip or something?"

Isabel waved. "Let's grab a burger and talk. Do you have a little time to reconnect with an old friend?"

"I can give you my lunch time. And really, old friend?" Aidan laughed.

Isabel grinned at him. "You look good, Aidan. Tell me. Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes, actually no," Aidan hurried to speak and got all confused in the process.

Isabel quirked both eyebrows. Aidan wanted to add something, but it was his turn to order, and, after a small silent apology addressed to Heathcliff in his head, he ordered burgers for him and his friend.

"So," Isabel leaned over the table, as soon as they were seated, "how's your boyfriend?"

Isabel was excited, and Aidan had no idea how he would go back on what he had said earlier. "I don't really have a boyfriend," he began in an apologetic tone.

"Hmm, that sounds like you have a boyfriend. Come on, Aidan, spill the beans. Who is it? Is it someone I know?"

If Isabel was into fitness or reading tabloids, maybe yes. What was he thinking? Heathcliff was not his boyfriend.

“It’s a complicated situation, and I don’t think you know him,” Aidan said quickly. “Ugh, I make it sound like my love life is something taken out of some book.”

“Did you, at least,” Isabel leaned over the table and whispered so that only he could hear her, “lose your V-card?”

Isabel was one of his besties, and that explained how she knew all about him. Her direct question still made him steal nervous looks around them. The other people in the cafe seemed busy with their lunches to pay them any attention.

“Yes,” he whispered back in the same conspiratorial tone.

Isabel pulled her fists tight and against her mouth in what probably she hoped to be an attempt to hide her excitement. Aidan was sure her small happy shrill had still been heard on at least a three table radius around them.

“That’s amazeballs, really, Aidan. So, what’s the idea? Why do you say this guy is not your boyfriend? Don’t tell me you lost your virginity on some dating app or something like that? That’s so not your style,” Isabel said quickly.

“I guess not,” Aidan replied, feeling a little guilty for lying to his friend. In a way, it had been because of a dating app that he had eventually got involved with Heathcliff. “Well, he’s a bit of a playboy, I think, so I can’t tell if he’s serious about me or just likes to tease me.”

Isabel took one gulp from her soda can, watching him with eyes big as saucers. “A playboy? You’re always with your head on your shoulders. How come you got mixed up with someone like that?”

Aidan sighed. “Circumstances.”

“He’s hot, isn’t he?” Isabel said with a small sigh of her own.

“Yeah,” Aidan admitted and failed to hide his smile.

“Oh, Aidan, don’t tell me you’re in love!” Isabel’s excitement seemed to grow in waves.

“I don’t!” Aidan out both his hands up. “I’m not!”

“You look like you are.” Isabel grinned. “I’ve known you since high school. I was about to ask you out when I noticed how you were checking the ass on that crazy tall dude who had English with us.”

“What crazy tall dude? And really, you were into me?” Aidan asked, a bit alarmed.

Isabel waved. “Don’t worry. I was into you for like five seconds. I think I have a perfect gay-dar. Does it count if you’re a straight woman and you have a gay-dar?”

“I have no idea what you could use it for --”

“Maybe to find my helpless best friend a boyfriend!” Isabel said brightly. “Unless you’re really into this playboy? Oh, tell me, Aidan, do you think you can turn him?”

“What? Straight? I hope not!” Aidan joked.

Isabel laughed with him. “No, silly. Turn him into a faithful boyfriend, obviously.”

“I don’t think that’s possible. You see, he’s a bit older than me.”

“So you’re into daddies? Silver foxes? Stuff like that?” Isabel questioned him.

Aidan knew sometimes his ears needed some form of protection when talking to Isabel. That girl was a bit too knowledgeable of all kinds of niche porn.

“He’s not that old. He’s thirty,” he explained.

“Ah, ripe,” Isabel grinned, “just how I like them.”

“I don’t think that’s a good term for guys who are thirty. Especially this guy would not like it to be called that.”

“Come on; everybody knows that once you hit thirty, it’s all downhill from there,” Isabel shrugged and said matter-of-factly.

“Seriously? I thought that age was fifty or something like that,” Aidan replied.

“Not if we continue to eat like this,” Isabel said and pointed at their half-eaten burgers.

Aidan was about to comment on how ‘his guy’ was into healthy eating, but caught himself in time. He was giving away too much information. Not that he couldn’t trust Isabel, but it was not only his secret to tell. To the outside world, Heathcliff was free as a bird and one step away from throwing an orgy at his home at any moment.

“But enough about me. How you’ve been? You were pretty excited about your trip,” Aidan said, trying to veer the conversation away from him.

Isabel sighed and looked down on her plate. “It was fine, I guess. I thought I had a thing with someone, but it didn’t work out. And now I just got hired, and I have a feeling that my job isn’t all that’s cracked up to be.”

Isabel had always been honest to a fault.



“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that,” Aidan said. “If it’s any consolation, my job is crappy, too.”

“No way!” Isabel expressed her disbelief. “I’m so glad! I mean, no, I’m not glad that you have a crappy job, but I’m glad I’m not alone. Everyone on Facebook seems to have landed the perfect jobs!”

“Yeah, isn’t it?” Aidan felt Isabel’s enthusiasm for hearing about crappy jobs was infectious. “Everyone’s like, oh, living the life, and all that. And I’m at the office, every day, filing documents that no one will ever read again, or tormenting myself over which font must be better than Verdana for PowerPoint presentations.”

“Ah, siblings in misery.” Isabel stretched her arms over the table to put her hands on Aidan’s shoulders. “Sorry about your job, Aidan, but thank you for being thrown into the salt mines, just like me.”

“Well, whatever makes you happy. Now, come on, what else have you been up to? By the way, have you lost weight, or I’m starting to lose my eyesight, along with my sanity, at the workplace?”

“Yeah,” Isabel said with satisfaction. “I just got into the videos of this fitness trainer and, OMG, Aidan, you should see him! But you might know him since he’s pretty famous and has, like, tons of followers.”

Aidan was sure he knew the guy. Everywhere he turned, he had to hear something about Heathcliff.

Isabel chirped away happily. “His name is Heathcliff Stone. I know, what a cool name, right? And his advice really works! He has a bunch of videos for noobs like me, and that really helped me. I feel so great! Of course, he would not approve of what I eat right now, but it’s my guilty pleasure for the week!”

Aidan studied his next words carefully. “Oh, I’ve heard of him, of course. My company has him advertising some products we make.”

“Really? So have you met him in person?” Isabel’s eyes were all shiny.

“A couple of times,” Aidan lied through his teeth. “Only in passing and in a professional setting, of course,” he added quickly. “He’s a cool dude.”

“Yeah, I thought so. I mean, he’s always so nice. Too bad he’s gay. I mean too bad for me. Although, it might be too bad for you, too, because he’s taken.”

“Taken?” Aidan could feel his ears tingling, like antennas ready to capture the first signals from extraterrestrial life forms.

“Yeah. I was sitting next to this chick on my way to work, and she was reading some stupid tabloids on her huge ass tablet. And I don’t normally care, but it was written in letters this big,” she gestured with her hands, “that Heathcliff Stone said on his livestream that he has someone.”

“He always has someone,” Aidan said and pulled at his tie that suddenly was threatening to strangle him.

“No, no, the chick noticed I was trying to sneak a peek, and she let me read the entire story. They had some video from the livestream attached to the article, and the guy said it, loud and clear, that he now has a special someone in his life who is gorgeous and makes him laugh or something like that. Aidan, are you all right? You look a little pale.”

“I might not be able to eat this burger. But I’m fine; don’t worry.”

He spent the rest of the lunch with his friend only half-listening. Who was Heathcliff talking about? If he had someone he was serious about, what the hell was he doing with him?

Or could it be that Heathcliff was actually talking about him? That couldn’t be, right? It was one thing for Heathcliff to tease him when they were all alone, but somehow this felt too much.

He would have a word with that spoiled fitness guru.

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“I’m glad to see you home before nine o’clock in the evening,” Heathcliff welcomed him.

Aidan had repeated about one thousand times how he would talk to Heathcliff about all that not so innocent teasing, and right now he had no words left in him. Heathcliff didn’t seem fazed by his confusion and pulled him inside. It was only after the door was securely shut behind him that Heathcliff kissed him.

Deeply, sweetly, and completely maddening. Heathcliff caught him against the wall, making a cage with his strong arms and body, and keeping Aidan trapped there, with no hope to escape.

He needed to ask Heathcliff to stop teasing him. But he would do that later, as now he was busy dropping his suitcase to the floor and grabbing Heathcliff with all his might as if his life depended on that kiss.

They spent some time there, kissing, biting each other’s lips gently, and playing with their tongues.

“Tonight, you’re getting fucked,” Heathcliff said with determination as he broke the kiss.

The blue eyes seemed darker and deeper, and Aidan wondered if Heathcliff doubled as a hypnotist in his spare time.

“I must talk to you about something,” Aidan said, as he pulled at the hem of Heathcliff’s t-shirt, to stop his fingers from trembling slightly.

“Work can wait. And I remember distinctively that you’ll be with me for almost half the day tomorrow. So no talk about The Healthy Shakers until then, bunny boy.”

Heathcliff leaned in for another kiss, but Aidan moved his head away.

“Okay, what is it?” Heathcliff asked.

By the frown on that handsome face, Aidan could tell he was in trouble. No, he needed to get this out of his system.

“I’ve heard you have someone special in your life. That you’re in some sort of relationship,” he said, his voice far less confident than he wanted.

“So? What do you want to know?”

Heathcliff’s low chuckle was doing all kinds of funny things to his ears and the pit of his stomach.

“Who is it?” Aidan stared into Heathcliff’s eyes.

“Hmm, you know him very well,” Heathcliff whispered and leaned in, this time successfully planting his lips over Aidan’s.

It was the answer he had hoped for. And the answer he had dreaded, at the same time. What could he do? Heathcliff had fun while he was getting head over heels. It wasn’t right.

“Stop teasing me,” Aidan begged, pushing Heathcliff away.

“Do you think I’m teasing you?” Heathcliff. “Bunny boy, you have no idea what real teasing means. But I’ll show you; don’t worry.”

“Heathcliff,” Aidan warned, “I’m serious. I know this all amuses you, but I’m not like that.”

Heathcliff frowned. “And what exactly do you mean by that?”

Great. He had managed to ruin the evening. Heathcliff was pissed. But this needed to be done. “I’m okay with the arrangement. But I told you. There’s no need to seduce me. It’s annoying, really.”

“Why?” The question came like a gunshot.

“Because it’s a lie. There’s nothing like that between us, and even if it’s just joking on your part, I’m not comfortable with it.”

“Why?” The second round fired.

“Because I’m not interested, okay?” Aidan said quickly.

It was easier to shift the blame to him. This way, he wasn’t accusing Heathcliff directly of being insensitive. He was saying that fooling around with words was out of the scope of their deal.

“Okay,” Heathcliff said, after a couple of tension loaded moments. “I guess you’re mistaken about some things. I’ll show you where you’re wrong, but all in due time. Now it’s just the right moment for me to show you what real teasing looks like.”

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“Isn’t this a bit cliché?” Aidan asked as he moved his hands a little, making the handcuffs jingle playfully.

Heathcliff was sitting by the foot of the bed, all naked, and with a serious look on his handsome face like he pondered on what to do next.

“Cliché? What do you mean?”

“C’mon, handcuffs? You should know I’m pretty lazy by nature, and if you intend to stop me from touching you while you fuck me, it’s not that big a loss.”

What a pretty white lie, Aidan thought to himself. He wasn’t worried at all, but the reason for which he still tried to make conversation was to hide his excitement over what could happen next. Oh, he would yearn to touch Heathcliff, but the mere idea that he would be forbidden to do that was making his cock rock hard, something that was obvious and he could not hide. The least he could do was to distract Heathcliff with conversation. Maybe then he wouldn’t notice Aidan’s raging boner.

“You? Lazy?” Heathcliff chuckled, and moved slowly, climbing the bed.

Aidan shivered slightly and bit his bottom lip hard as Heathcliff touched him, trailing invisible light lines up his thighs and missing his cock on purpose. He was a little annoyed with his weakness for the spoiled fitness guru, but it wasn’t like he could do much about it, especially with his ability to move restricted like that.

“Hmm, anything else you might want to add before I start playing with you for real?” Heathcliff purred.

Aidan licked his bitten lip quickly and pretended to be not at all impressed. “Not really, no.”

“Good,” Heathcliff said and leaned in for a kiss.

Heathcliff's lips were firm against his. He liked that so much. Heathcliff was hard everywhere, and Aidan could feel his head spinning just from a kiss. By contrast, he had been told so many times he had soft lips and wondered briefly what kind of lips Heathcliff liked. There was no tongue contact just yet, as Heathcliff was a teaser to the core and was just brushing his lips against his without a clear purpose, except drive Aidan utterly insane.

He tilted his head, hoping to get more, but Heathcliff backed away slowly, making him stretch forward and probably look a bit silly in the process. A small frustrated whimper escaped his lips before he could censor it.

The only response was a huge grin. Heathcliff knew very well what he was doing, and Aidan was like a mouse in a trap.

"Would you like me to kiss you, bunny boy?"

"Yeah," Aidan admitted. "You're a great kisser, and I like it when you kiss me."

"Okay, since you're so honest, let me give you another kiss."

This time, Heathcliff placed a hand on his chest and played lazily with one nipple, as his tongue began challenging Aidan's to a game of give and take. Too soon, Heathcliff broke their kiss and the touch, too.

Aidan was starting to see what Heathcliff meant by teasing, and it was damned cruel if he thought about it. He should have never started that conversation, and just endured in silence.

"Is this how you're going to torture me all night long?" he asked, feeling a bit miffed over walking blindly into that trap.

"No," Heathcliff replied.

"Oh, great, then you can let me free."

"Hmm, and why should I do that?" Heathcliff began touching him again, tracing the contours of Aidan's chest slowly.

"So that you can fuck me, as promised."

"Nice try, pet. But rest assured that I'm doing this for you. I remember a few complaints, just this weekend, about how you last so little. Let me help you build some ... resistance. And don't worry; I will fuck you."

Aidan groaned theatrically, to show what he thought of Heathcliff's elaborate play. "Only a few days ago, I was still a virgin. Can't we just settle for some vanilla for a while?"

“And why would I do that? You’re a fast learner, and just earlier, you were mocking me about my cuffing you to the bed being some cliché.”

“I take it back. Is that okay?”

“No, it’s not. But trust me, Aidan, you will love it.”

Aidan wanted to have some come back to that, but he did trust Heathcliff, despite not being keen on saying it out loud. As for the promise that he would love it, he knew that would happen even if he were to struggle against it, which wasn’t the case.

Heathcliff moved a little and came back with a small black thing in his hand that looked like a sleeping mask, but made of silk. Aidan licked his lips and threw Heathcliff a questioning look. He noticed how gentle Heathcliff’s hands were as they fixed the thing over his eyes.

“You are too caught up in this thing of who I am and who you are,” Heathcliff explained, his voice soft like a caress. “I want you to think nothing more of it, and focus on your pleasure. Okay?”

“Okay,” Aidan replied with determination.

“Good. Then I’ll take the reins for a while. Will you let me?”

“You don’t have to ask.”

It was unnerving not to see, but also so deeply erotic that Aidan was pretty sure he would blow fast, despite all of Heathcliff’s effort to work on making him last longer.

Now, he only felt. He could sense Heathcliff move around, and also his expectations about what would happen next began rising once more.

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Heathcliff knew he hadn’t planned for this, but it was a good occasion as any to play a little more with his lovely pet bunny. Aidan would soon learn the true meaning of teasing. Bunny boy had no idea the kind of torment he was in, too. It felt natural for Aidan to believe that Heathcliff was so well-versed in having sex with men that feelings could never be involved.

And, for a long time, that had been true, but that wasn’t the case anymore. Heathcliff wanted to make Aidan cry out his name and even more than that. He wanted Aidan to think of no one else, no future boyfriends, nor anything like that.

If he had to trap the bunny, tie him down, and make him see that he needed no one else, he would do that. He would do anything to make Aidan see a different part of him, one that not many people knew, even fewer lovers.

He placed himself comfortably between Aidan's legs, laying on his belly, and bringing that delicious cock at level with his face. He would give Aidan an experience to remember, and he would make sure that it would not be only sex. For now, that was the language he knew, and he would use it until he could figure out what he could do more to convince Aidan he wasn't just teasing him.

He began to stroke gently with his tongue Aidan's hard as a rock cock. By the small whimpers escaping that pouting mouth, Heathcliff knew he was on the right path. Not that there could be any doubt that he was a master of sex. But he needed Aidan madly and helplessly in love with him. And for that, he had to bring in the entire arsenal.

For a while, he licked Aidan's cock slowly, sucking it in from time to time, just for the pleasure of seeing it twitch in his hand, and tasting the salty precum on his tongue. Heathcliff could tell he was just as hard, but this wasn't about him. Also, he needed all his focus so that he could stop Aidan from coming too soon.

Aidan would soon realize what the game was all about. He might get a little pissed about it, but by the end of it, he'd change his opinion. It was all in his power, Heathcliff thought and abusing that power a little sounded like a bit of fun.

Aidan's cock was growing harder, announcing the inevitable, and Heathcliff firmly grabbed it by the root, pulling the skin down and keeping it from doing what it wanted. A few spasms, fortunately dry, let him know he still got it. Aidan mumbled something, and the muscles in his belly were taut, rising and falling, in sync with his tortured cock.

"Were you trying to tell me something, bunny boy?" Heathcliff asked.

"Not really," came the dry, somewhat breathy reply.

Heathcliff smiled. Aidan had a competitive nature, and he would not beg too soon, that was sure. He looked forward to breaking him a little. The bunny would be delicious like that, pleading and cursing, wanting to get off.

But there was still plenty until that point. Heathcliff moved again, abandoning the hard and still unsatisfied cock, and went fishing a condom and the lube from one of the drawers. One look over his shoulder told him what he already knew.

Aidan was such a good boy, just lying there, saying nothing, lips slightly parted, and face a little flushed. But Heathcliff wanted him to stop being such a good boy; he wanted to hear him yell obscenities at him, and demand, loud and clear, in unequivocal terms, what he needed.

Heathcliff knew whose need was more likely at play, but he could not be forward about it and admit it. So he used what he knew to get the satisfaction he was aiming for.

Aidan was still obedient as Heathcliff pushed his ass cheeks apart and began teasing his hole. Heathcliff helped him put his legs on his shoulders and kissed his ankles, making him giggle. He didn't usually have to take so long with preparations, but Aidan deserved the whole nine yards. Also, it was just what he needed to torture his favorite bunny a little more.

"Seriously, you're taking your time," Aidan mumbled, as Heathcliff slowly moved his fingers in and out, adding lube as needed.

"Are you trying to tell me that you're ready?" Heathcliff chuckled.

"Like ages ago. C'mon, gimme that dick," Aidan said in an exaggerated, playful tone.

Heathcliff's lips twitched. Wasn't he a little wonder? Teased and bound, but still in the mood for jokes. It was true that his cock was begging for a reward, too, and he usually didn't neglect his Junior for so long.

He could pretend all he wanted that his hands didn't slightly – very slightly – trembled as he pushed down the condom on his cock. And it was oddly satisfying to hear Aidan moan only half in pleasure when he pushed his cock into the young man's tight hole.

"Oh, fuck, this is so good," Aidan whispered.

That was his line, Heathcliff thought. His hands traveled over Aidan's chest, teasing his nipples again. On purpose, he ignored the hard dick, leaking helplessly and leaving a wet trail everywhere while slapping against the taut belly as Heathcliff began hammering Aidan's ass fast. The hot channel of muscles was clamping down on him with so much force that it took him by surprise.

He could feel his own desire soaring, doing so faster than ever, and he stopped, pulling out, and biting back a curse. Wasn't this supposed to be about him teasing Aidan?

"Just how many times are we going to do this?" Aidan complained, trying hard to catch his breath. "I think I was about to come, like hands-free or something."

"Until I'm satisfied," Heathcliff replied through his teeth.

Aidan moved his head, his breathing slowing down. "Are you pissed or something? I can tell you're pissed."

Having blinded the bunny boy meant squat. Aidan was as sharp as ever.

"I'm not pissed. I'm horny," Heathcliff answered.

"Okay, I could bet --"



Aidan swallowed his words as Heathcliff pushed inside him again, and this time leaned over and kissed him hard. There was no hesitation as Aidan responded in kind, pushing his tongue inside Heathcliff's mouth, and wrapping his legs around him, digging with his heels into the small of his back.

Next time, he needed to consider tying Aidan's legs, too. Bunny boy was obviously trying to keep him there this time, and not let him go.

Their bodies moved in sync, and Heathcliff knew that if they were going at it like that, no one would last. So he interrupted their kiss and straightened up pushing once inside and keeping both there, as Aidan's cock twitched, and his did the same, but without coming this time either.

"Fuck," Aidan moaned, "this is too much."

"It's needed," Heathcliff said. "Look how much you've lasted so far."

Aidan's laugh was a bit hoarse. "I guess. But isn't blue balls like a medical condition or something?"

Heathcliff had hoped to make Aidan lose himself, but he was the one doing that. He laughed, and his erection faded a little. He leaned over Aidan and began kissing him again, not only on the lips but on his cheeks and jawline and neck and sweaty shoulders.

"I kind of see why you'd use handcuffs. I'm dying to touch you right now," Aidan whispered.

The taste of victory was sweet, Heathcliff thought, but Aidan's lips were sweeter. He focused his attention once more on that beautiful mouth he loved so much. His lips hovered over Aidan's.

"So will you beg?" Heathcliff asked.

"Is that all I need to do? Okay, please, please, untie me and get me off," Aidan said, a little breathlessly, his voice dropping to a low whisper.

"Not like that," Heathcliff teased.

"Then how?"

"I don't know. You're the creative one around here, aren't you?"

Heathcliff could tell Aidan was puzzled, but, at this point, he was too busy sinking into his lover's tight ass again. He had hoped he would last long, and make Aidan see the stars, but now he was the hopeless one.

He began moving amply, his hands touching everywhere, making Aidan moan louder and louder.

“Heath, if you don’t make me come this time, I’ll fucking hate you,” Aidan said between frustrated grunts and other sounds.

Heathcliff liked how Aidan sounded, so aroused and honest. And he was sure that they would both go over the edge, and that was not something he intended to leave to chance.

So he wrapped one hand around Aidan’s cock and began pumping it. “Tell me when. Don’t come without me, okay?”

He was the one pleading.

“I won’t,” Aidan promised, and Heathcliff sped up.

Aidan was good at giving him directions. It was so easy to find just the right rhythm between them, Heathcliff discovered.

“Now, please, Heath, now,” Aidan cried out, and Heathcliff lodged himself into his body.

They both came, Aidan messily all over his chest and belly, Heathcliff inside the rubber, but feeling as close as he had felt to another bed partner in all his life that he could remember.

They were sweaty, spent, but, by how Aidan laughed softly, extremely happy. “So this is edging, right?”

“I could have done better,” Heathcliff admitted.

“Nah, don’t beat yourself over it,” Aidan teased. “How could you be anything less than perfect?”

Heathcliff liked when Aidan complimented him. People everywhere complimented him, but it was like their words lost their meaning all of a sudden. There was only someone’s opinion he valued more than anything.

“Did you enjoy it?” he asked.

“How could I not? You could just touch me, and I’m done,” Aidan said with a small laugh.

“Hmm, you’re so easy to please.”

“And is that a bad thing?”

“Nothing’s bad about you. You’re good everywhere. Here and here,” Heathcliff touched Aidan slowly, letting his hand wander over the nicely shaped chest, and lower down the belly to the now soft cock.

“Can I please have my vision back? I swear you sound almost romantic, and I can’t believe my ears. I need my eyes to make sure I do not imagine things.”

Heathcliff pushed the mask away, and from underneath, the pretty brown eyes stared at him curiously.

“If I sound romantic, that’s what I want to be.”

Aidan blinked, and his flushed cheeks seem to get just a little bit redder. “And why would you want that?”

“Because I told you, bunny boy. I like you very much.”

“Ah, damn, you’re still not satisfied?”

“Not satisfied? I think I blew part of my brain with this load.”

“I’m talking about you being an incorrigible teaser.”

Heathcliff sighed. So this would be harder than he thought.

## *Chapter Nineteen – A Bit Of Trouble*

Aidan was in deep, deep trouble. What was he to do about Heathcliff's direct confession? At least, he believed it to be a confession, and it wasn't right to think it so. For some reason, Heathcliff continued his game of driving Aidan nuts and seemed utterly oblivious to how that made his bed partner of convenience feel.

In all truth, he felt pretty damn good. Having Heathcliff tell him that he liked him was a remarkable achievement. It had to be, although Aidan wondered if that was something Heathcliff told anyone who ended between the sheets with him.

To protect himself, he had laughed it off. At least, for now, while they were having a so-called business lunch, he could focus on work. That was easier said than done. Heathcliff looked at him from across the table with all knowing eyes. Most probably, it was written all over him that he was falling for his charge fast.

He coughed and tried to bring Heathcliff around to what he needed him to hear.

"You will have to be a little more pro-active in how you promote the product," he explained. "They want you to drink it in front of the camera, praise its qualities, you know the drill."

Heathcliff frowned. "It would look a bit pushy, don't you think? People understand I must earn a living, but if I try to stuff this thing down their throats --"

"Wouldn't they think you a hypocrite if you advertised a product and you didn't try it?" Aidan quirked an eyebrow, hoping he looked serious enough and Heathcliff wouldn't derail him with innuendo and why not.

But it looked like Heathcliff was all business, too. He leaned back into his chair and crossed his arms over his chest. "I suppose you have a point. But I did taste the product, and I must say it tastes like any generic drink of this type. I won't tell a blatant lie. When I tell my subscribers that my videos are sponsored, it's one thing. But if I began blabbing about how this drink will get them ten-inch cocks or D cups, depending on what they'd like to have, that would be true hypocrisy."

Aidan knew Heathcliff was right, but he still needed to do his job. "You're not advertising some male enhancement product," he said thinly. "These shakes are useful for people who work out regularly."

"I'd rather they took their protein from fresh, clean sources, not off the shelf in the form of a generic shake," Heathcliff replied calmly.

"Oh, sorry, Mr. I-have-plenty-of-time-to-cook-every-meal, but that's not feasible for most people," Aidan pointed out.

Heathcliff looked at him, a bit surprised. “That’s a pretty good argument. Okay, I’ll give it to you. You have a point. Still, you need to meet me in the middle. Everyone knows I don’t drink protein shakes. Everything about me is one hundred percent natural. No shortcuts.”

Aidan threw Heathcliff a brief look. Didn’t he know that first hand? “Your ego, too?” he said, instead of voicing how right he believed Heathcliff to be on this topic.

“Hitting below the belt, bunny boy?” Heathcliff leaned over the table and whispered while his deep blue eyes set on Aidan, making him blush. “You dragged me here, to this place, per your boss’s instructions, and told me we should keep it business-like. Don’t worry; two can play this game.”

Aidan recoiled from the accusation. Of course, Heathcliff was right. “I apologize. It was uncalled for. And you do make a strong point. Please, tell me, what would you suggest?”

“Get me the complete list of ingredients. I will break them down for the people watching, and explain why the shakes your company sells could be used as a replacement, from time to time, to healthy, complete meals. I will still insist on the importance of clean eating and cooking at home. I would present busy people with an alternative, but not any of that mumbo-jumbo with how amazing the product is. I won’t turn into an infomercial monkey. And, yes, in case you’re wondering, not even for the sake of your pretty eyes.”

“Ouch,” Aidan pursed his lips, “you do know how to hit back, don’t you?”

“Of course I do,” Heathcliff said with satisfaction. “You can ask anything of me, and by that, I mean anything that’s not work-related.”

“Really?” Aidan cocked one head to the side. “What if I want you to come with me to karaoke and make a fool of yourself in front of strangers by singing out of tune? Will you do that?”

“Is that your idea of a date? I must warn you; I’m a pretty good singer.”

“Of course you are.” Aidan shook his head. There was no way to win against this guy. He had way too many aces up his sleeves. “Okay, I will take this idea to the higher-ups, and I’ll see what they say. After that, I’ll get back to you, and then you can offer your input once again. What do you say?”

“You didn’t answer my question.”

Aidan blinked. “What question?”

“Is going to karaoke your idea of a great date? Do you like karaoke?”

“I do like karaoke, but there’s no --”

“Let’s go then.”

“What? Now?” Aidan asked, alarmed.

“No, my perfect little professional employee. Some evening. You pick the time.”

Aidan exhaled. “Okay. Now --”

“Hey, Heath, long time, no see!” Someone interrupted him mid-sentence.

The newcomer ignored Aidan entirely and looked like he was about to climb into Heathcliff’s lap. Aidan glanced at him while trying to figure out what the best course of action would be, given the circumstances.

The man looked like the usual type Heathcliff was known to take to bed. He wasn’t Matt or Heathcliff’s friend from the birthday party, but he was as drop-dead gorgeous as them. Aidan could feel his chest hurting a little as he stared at the newcomer and Heathcliff. Now that looked like the perfect picture.

Which was two gorgeous men conversing in a fancy restaurant, looking like they were about to leave together and enjoy each other, as it was normal - that was what Aidan saw. If he needed a wakeup call, it was right in front of his eyes. For now, Heathcliff liked him, but just as much he liked this guy and dozens of others. As amazing as he was as a person and a fitness trainer, Heathcliff Stone was a playboy, a player, and Aidan had no business to believe him. He looked down, finding for the time being, more interesting to stare at his fingernails than pay any attention to what was happening across from him.

“Hi,” Heathcliff said to the newcomer. “Sorry, it seems my memory is slipping ... What’s your name?”

Aidan looked up at Heathcliff over the table. He was so nonchalant in his admittance of not remembering the other man’s name. The newcomer didn’t seem to care.

“Oh, Heath, you’re such a teaser!”

That Aidan had to agree with him.

“It’s Han; how could you forget?” The guy touched Heathcliff’s forearm teasingly, just with the tips of his fingers.

“I know a lot of people. It happens,” Heathcliff said without - at least Aidan saw it that way - one ounce of remorse.

Han seemed to be pretty dense. He just laughed at Heathcliff’s dismissal and continued. “Anyways, I was so dying to see you again. How about we hang out? Unless you’re busy,” he threw over his shoulder while looking briefly at Aidan. “Sorry, you guys were in a business

meeting, right? I could tell after the formal ... everything,” he gestured around, at the papers spread on the table.

Aidan made a move to pick them up. “We were just finishing here,” he said with a perfunctory smile.

Heathcliff placed one hand over the papers. “No, we weren’t.”

Aidan looked at him and instantly felt a small chill. Heathcliff’s eyes were hard, and no trace of his usual playfulness could be seen in them.

“Ah,” Han interjected, completely oblivious to the silent exchange taking place in front of his eyes. “Call me later?”

“I don’t think so,” Heathcliff replied, without taking his eyes off Aidan.

“Tomorrow then?”

Heathcliff finally moved his eyes away, allowing Aidan to breathe. “Can’t you take a hint?”

“Wow, someone’s in a mood,” Han replied and took a small step back. “Never mind. I’m back in town. Give me a call when you’re less busy. Bye!”

Aidan had to give it to Han. He knew how to make an honorable retreat. The blue eyes returned to him, and he gulped. He had a feeling he wouldn’t like what Heathcliff wanted to say next. So he hurried to be the first to speak.

“Why did you have to be so rude with Han?” he asked.

“Why do you care? Is he a friend of yours?” Heathcliff said smoothly.

“No, he is one of yours.”

“No, he’s not.”

“Well, at least, you were acquaintances. And I thought you were nice to everyone.”

“I’m not nice to people pestering me. You should know that. But let’s talk about something else that annoys me. Why are you so quick to abandon the ship? Are you my real babysitter or what? Is enough for some random dude to walk over and you’re ready to hand me over?”

“Wow.” Aidan put both his hands up. “Why are you so upset? I thought you liked handsome men.”

Heathcliff seemed to ponder over what he would say next. “Is this business lunch over?”

Aidan could not fathom what the hell had gotten into Heathcliff. The man was a sight when he was pissed, his eyes cold, yet burning, his handsome face cut in stone. Aidan could not recall ever seeing him like this. He hated to leave things in such a state of affairs and go to work earlier than estimated, but he doubted he could deal with Heathcliff at the moment. Aidan didn't know him well enough.

"I guess," he said with a sigh. "I'll tell my boss about your request, and get back to you with his input in a few days, I believe. Sometimes he takes a while to decide on things he believes important. What are you doing? This business lunch goes on the company's tab!"

He tried to wrestle Heathcliff over the bill, as while he was busy talking, the waiter had materialized next to their table. It was no surprise that Heathcliff managed to fight him off without a problem.

Heathcliff said nothing, but after sending the waiter away with his usual smile, he stood up brusquely.

Aidan hated this, whatever it was. He needed to say something and find out what the hell was going on, but he could not find the right words.

"Come. We're going back home," Heathcliff said shortly.

Aidan traipsed behind Heathcliff out of the restaurant, his heart beating faster, no idea why.

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Heathcliff was getting a bit annoyed with Aidan. So, after being told right to his face the naked truth, bunny boy still didn't believe him to be serious. Yes, that had happened fast, so fast actually that it had taken him by surprise, too.

But he was no confused teenager, and he knew what he wanted, which was for Aidan to understand that he was telling the truth. How hard could that be? Okay, so he had the reputation of a playboy, and it didn't help that Aidan had seen him at work firsthand. He was honest, though, and he hadn't ever told anyone he liked him. He had praised his bed partners for many things, and he had been courteous, but he had never said those words.

The whole thing was starting to feel a little frustrating. Was he moving too fast? It didn't feel like that. For him, things were simple. And Aidan liked him back, and just had to say it, not flippantly, not as a joke.

Maybe he needed to move forward to the next stage and drag Aidan after him. As things were, they would not get anywhere.



Heathcliff needed more than hot sex to convince Aidan he was the real deal. That would come later, he thought, as he looked out the car window while Aidan was driving them back to his place. For now, hot sex still had to do.

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Aidan was unsure whether it was a good idea to deal with Heathcliff right now. He shook his head. What was he afraid of, anyway? Heathcliff was just a spoiled fitness guru, and he needed to see that his constant teasing didn't work. It wasn't like Aidan to back down, so he had to set things right, once and for all.

“What exactly made you act like that at the restaurant?” he asked, without any introduction, as soon as they were inside.

Heathcliff didn't answer. Instead, he pulled Aidan into his arms fast, locking their lips together. It wasn't fair, Aidan thought, as he felt like eyelids fluttering and the usual response growing inside him with Heathcliff's firm touch. One hand was in his hair, making a fist, not hurtful, but a warning, nonetheless, and the other arm was wrapped around his waist, keeping him close to the other.

If things were this simple. Aidan pulled Heathcliff closer, as it was the only thing he could think of. He barely kept a gasp, as Heathcliff hiked him up into his arms, leaving Aidan no choice but to use his legs as leverage and wrap them around the other's midsection.

His back was against the wall, and they were dry humping, but Aidan couldn't say he was complaining. Heathcliff's mouth was hot on his, and it made him dizzy with desire. In short, it wasn't fair.

He was breathing hard when Heathcliff let his mouth free.

“Aidan,” Heathcliff said, his blue eyes still burning, “is it that hard to believe that I like you and only you?”

He gulped, feeling his throat getting tighter and tighter, threatening to cut his air supply. “I ... really?”

“Yes, really. I know what you're thinking. That any moment, I'll kick you at the curb, and there will be another guy in my bed, like usual.”

“You're right,” Aidan admitted. “But you can't blame me for it. I mean, it's part of who you are, right? This playboy persona.”

Heathcliff rocked his hips slowly, making their crotches rub together. Aidan licked his lips and closed his eyes for a second. “It's just sex, isn't it?”

“You’re asking me this like you’re about to cry,” Heathcliff replied.

Aidan’s eyes snapped open. “Screw you, Stone. No one’s crying.”

“I know,” Heathcliff said with a small smile. “I’m just teasing you. But I need you to look at me and understand.”

“If you want that, put me down, and stop teasing me. How will I go to work with this raging boner?”

Heathcliff chuckled. “I believe that’s no challenge for you. I know you to be perfect in every way,” he whispered the last words into Aidan’s ear, making him shiver.

“Seriously, Stone. How can I believe you when you’re like this all the time?”

“Like this how?” Heathcliff pulled back only a fraction so that they could stare into each other’s eyes.

“You’re overwhelming,” Aidan stated. “I’m a complete noob, okay, I admit it, and you’re playing in the big league. It’s enough for you to touch me and I ... just completely come undone.”

“Wow, I didn’t know you were this easy,” Heathcliff said with a smirk.

“Apparently I am,” Aidan replied and frowned.

He was getting a bit weary with Heathcliff’s taunts.

“Elaborate,” Heathcliff demanded directly.

“You’re you.” Aidan sighed. “Handsome, no, gorgeous, okay? Famous. Dozens of conquests under your belt. And I’m me. Normal. Ordinary. Maybe adequate. And also someone who’s never been in this sort of situation. How do you think this feels for me?”

Heathcliff wasn’t smiling anymore. He slowly put Aidan down and moved away. Aidan looked after him, feeling all helpless and vulnerable. If Heathcliff sent him out the door that very instant, he would go. And with all the due regrets, it would be the right thing.

“What would you like me to do?” Heathcliff asked.

Aidan blinked and stared at the other for a while. “What do you mean?” he barely managed to say.

“I understand where you’re coming from. And that’s why I suggest something else. Let’s play by your rules.”

“My rules? I’m not sure I have any.”

“So make them as we go. I do like you, Aidan, and I want you to see it. So, what would make you happy right now?”

Could he really believe Heathcliff? He wasn't smiling or joking anymore. So, maybe he was serious. But Aidan was not some fool to think that Heathcliff Stone was in the mood to change for him and suddenly become all monogamous.

“I think I should go back to work,” he said stiffly.

Heathcliff didn't look at him. He just made a gesture, pointing the door to Aidan with the open palm, inviting him to leave. It felt wrong to walk away like this, but Aidan knew that it had to be the right thing. It was like two parts of him were pulling him apart, each one in the opposite direction. Something stupid, like a verse from a song telling that the heart always told the truth, came to mind. He shook it off.

So, it had come to an end, after all. He would not cry over spilled milk. Slowly, he moved and walked through the door, without a word. Out of the house, he looked up, in a small effort to clear his head. The bright summer sky seemed to mock him.

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He was a complete mess on the inside. The last thing he needed was for his boss to give him a lecture. Apparently, he was in for one, anyway.

“Spark, can't you just control this man?”

“He does have a point, sir,” he replied, feeling tired and in no mood to take his boss's bullshit, too. “His followers and subscribers believe in him because he's always honest.”

“He was fussy about accepting our offer. He's a money-grabber like anyone else,” his boss replied sharply.

Aidan knew that wasn't fair. Heathcliff's agent hadn't negotiated some impossible deal. It looked like his boss found it very convenient to overlook the fact that Heathcliff advertising their product saved them big money in marketing spending.

“I think it would convince plenty of people that what we're selling is of good quality. Having someone like Heathcliff Stone explain the benefits of our shakes is ideal. It would not be just an exaggerated ad. People don't believe in such things nowadays, anyway.”

His boss was staring at him over the tent made by his hands. “Are you questioning advertising methods that have been working for years, Spark?”

Aidan squared his shoulders. “Yes, I am, sir. With all due respect.”

“Let’s make it interesting then.” His boss stood up and rummaged through a folder case. “I want to see these numbers by the end of the quarter.”

Aidan looked at the graphs and frowned. At first glance, the task seemed impossible. But he had faith in Heathcliff and his ability to convince people. The guy’s honesty was one of his biggest perks.

“Get me this, and next year, that creative position will be yours.”

“And if I don’t?” Aidan looked up, staring his boss into his eyes.

“Then you will toil for greatness from the position you presently occupy for a couple more years.”

Aidan pondered.

“No moment like the present, Spark,” his boss interrupted his thoughts. “What will it be? Do you have it in you to put our advertising asset, aka Heathcliff Stone, to work? Or do you think you still have more to learn and it would serve you to be the office’s workhorse for a while?”

“I would like that list of ingredients, sir,” Aidan said instead of a direct reply.

His boss slammed the desk in satisfaction. “That’s the attitude, Spark! You’ll have it by the end of the day! Dismissed!”

Aidan had a mind to ask how come they didn’t have the list of ingredients somewhere around. Maybe he could just glean over it by getting one of those shakers. Funny thing, no one in the office drank them.

“What are you dallying for?” his boss asked, seeing how he remained unmoved.

“Don’t we have the list of ingredients here, at the headquarters?”

“We’re doing this by the book, Spark!” the man barked. “We’ll have the list that is certified by our research lab, not just the fine print from the product.”

“Why? Isn’t that complete?”

“It’s not official enough, Spark. How long have you been with us? Aren’t you familiar with our protocols already?”

Protocols. Sort of the most significant thing the big kahuna cared about. Aidan nodded quickly. There was no need to enrage his boss with his hesitations.

“I understand, sir,” he said while standing up and catching his hand right in time before he ended up saluting like a soldier.

Now the only problem was to interact with Heathcliff. There was nothing left between them of whatever had been until then, but they could maintain a professional relationship. At least, he hoped so.

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“What’s happening?” Michael questioned him. “I only do house calls like this when there’s a serious situation,” he added jokingly.

Heathcliff wasn’t in the mood to laugh, no matter how much he appreciated his friend’s sense of humor. “Aidan is driving me nuts. He doesn’t believe me! Can you believe it?” he said, throwing his arms in defeat.

“Actually, I do,” Michael said matter-of-factly.

“Not you, too.” Heathcliff groaned and covered his eyes.

“Hey, if you didn’t think so too, you wouldn’t have called me.”

Heathcliff sighed deeply. “Yeah, that’s right. You’re the romantic, Michael. How do you do it? I mean, do your boyfriends believe you when you tell them that you like them?”

“I tell them I love them, which is a different thing,” Michael replied.

“Love.” Heathcliff snorted. “It’s too strong a word. It would sound phony, and I don’t love Aidan. I just like him very, very much. It’s not like me to lie.”

“You may not love Aidan yet,” Michael pointed out, “but you’re obviously falling for him.”

“We’re not fifteen,” Heathcliff groaned, “no one’s falling for anyone.”

“Really? Then what’s with the rush? Why don’t you just have fun with Aidan while it lasts?”

“I want more than just have fun! I want him to believe me when I tell him that I like him!” Heathcliff gestured with his hands.

“Hey, take a chill pill, will you?” Michael leaned into his chair. “Let’s say Aidan believes you. What do you expect to happen next?”

“For him to tell me the same.”

“He did tell you the same.”

Heathcliff pursed his lips while looking at his friend. “Yeah, he did. But it’s not enough.”

“All right, back to the previous question. What would you like to happen next? So you two like each other ... let’s take it from there.”

“I want him to fall for me.”

“Okay, stop it right there. Where did ‘no one’s falling for anyone’ go? Your words, not mine.”

“I was talking about me,” Heathcliff said curtly.

“OMFG,” Michael started laughing, “you’re afraid you will end up more in love with him than he in love with you! Okay, excuse me while I do a little victory dance.”

Heathcliff looked at his friend with murderous eyes as Michael stood up from his chair and dabbed or something like that. “Are you finished with your antics? And what kind of victory dance is that?”

“A short version,” Michael said promptly while sitting back into his chair. “I knew you wouldn’t appreciate it.”

“I don’t,” Heathcliff replied. “Now could we return to my current predicament?”

“There’s no predicament. You’re just a bit of a selfish ass. But I’ll help you since you’re my best friend and I would really like to be your best man at the wedding. I have a feeling that role would suit me.”

“Again, with that.” Heathcliff sighed and looked up like he needed to beg the heavens to give him the patience to deal with Michael. “No one gets married, don’t worry. I need Aidan to like me back.”

“I thought you wanted him to love you. Big difference and not only of semantics, Heath,” Michael said.

“Okay,” he admitted, his irritation growing. “Will you help me or not? We didn’t part today on best terms, and I have a feeling I’m losing him.”

“Did you two have a fight? Over what?”

“Over him not believing me. That’s the only thing we don’t seem to agree on. He would throw me to the first guy that came to me, can you even imagine that?”

Michael shook his head with mirth. “I have the perfect advice for you. Let your bunny breathe a little. Everything happens a bit fast; don’t you think?”

“Fast? I had to stop you from going on one knee on three different occasions. And I was right.”

“You were,” Michael admitted with a big sigh. “None of them was the one for me. The question is: is Aidan the one for you?”

Heathcliff nodded shortly. “As we speak, yes.”

“Okay, then here’s my take. Aidan must feel overwhelmed, having someone famous and well known for his sexcapades all over him, telling him how much he likes him.”

“Are you psychic?” Heathcliff stared at his friend in disbelief. “That’s about what he told me.”

“I’m not psychic; I just have an ounce of common sense.”

Heathcliff grimaced. “All right. Go on.”

“So stop overwhelming him. Show him that you enjoy his company outside the bedroom.”

“We did go out for ice cream.”

It was Michael’s turn to look up at the sky, praying without words.

“Show a bit of restraint, Heath. Don’t mention anything about how much you like him for a while. Let things happen naturally. He’ll come around. You’ll see. In the meantime, show him why you deserve to be looked at as more than just some playboy with the sole agenda of fucking as many guys as possible within the shortest time. Think of this as a marathon, not a sprint.”

“Okay,” Heathcliff admitted. “So I should stop telling him that I like him.”

“And pressuring him into responding to that. C’mon, Heath. It should be easy for you. Just have fun, the two of you.”

“Outside the bedroom.”

“And inside it. No one says that you two should be like monks or something. Just tone it down. You’re scaring the boy.”

“Okay, that sounds like good advice. But what if he believes that I’m not serious about him?”

“What he believes tells you what you need to do. Make him believe that you’re serious. You must do the whole enchilada. Friends, family, long talks about the virtues of decaffeinated coffee --”

“No one drinks coffee in this house.”

“You know what I mean. Talk to him. About everything. Make him part of your life, for real. Then he will see his place in it.”

“That should be tough since he’s always caught up in that demanding job of his.”

“Quantity is not everything. Spend quality time with him.”

“You sound like a glossy magazine, Mikey,” Heathcliff said, with a smile.

“Maybe I do. But that’s the whole point.”

“How come you’re not in a relationship, the kind you want to be in, Mikey?” Heathcliff asked, now feeling a little better.

Michael sighed. “I don’t seem capable of finding the right guy.”

“How come?”

“Do you really have to ask? You’re the one who saved me from three marital suicide attempts.”

“I’m sorry. I did what I thought to be best for you.”

“Don’t be sorry. You were right on all three occasions. The first was practically a scumbag, the second had a serious drug problem, and the third ... well, I guess he thought he could cheat me behind my back forever. So, all in all, I have you to thank, despite whatever unpleasant words I had in store for you while being all caught up in rosy dreams of marital bliss.”

“So who’s now on the chopping block?” Heathcliff joked, to lighten the atmosphere for a bit.

He hated it when Michael went all gloomy. There were drawbacks to being a hopeless romantic. Michael didn’t want to see the bad in people when he liked them. Otherwise, he was a relatively good judge of character. But when he was love-struck, he tended to behave like nothing could go wrong in his relationship. Heathcliff had had a tough time with him on a few occasions.

“No one. And I think I’ll just have fun for a while.”

“Are you just going to hook up? You?” Heathcliff grinned. “I’ve never thought I’d live to see the day.”

“I don’t need to cruise dating apps, you ass,” Michael said playfully. “There’s a new dancer. Don’t smile like that. He didn’t sleep with me to get the job. He did it after.”

“So, how come you’re not rushing on one knee?”

“I don’t feel the need. This guy is good in the sack, but otherwise, we have nothing in common. Actually, we’re a bit at odds. He’s a stubborn and quite opinionated prick.”

“And how come you two ended up doing the horizontal cha-cha?”

“I wish I had a good explanation for that. But one moment, we were arguing over something, that people could hear us through the door, and the next, I was taking him over the desk.”

Heathcliff smirked. “You did it in your office? Kinky.”

“Yeah. And the next one, we were back to arguing.”



“So what’s the deal with him?”

“He did ballet. I try to explain to him we’re in a different vein of entertainment. He’s so full of himself, I want to strangle him a little.”

“I suppose he’s hot.”

Michael smiled. “That he is. But don’t worry. This is one relationship that you won’t have to save me from.”

“So, was it a one-time thing or more?” Heathcliff questioned.

“Funny thing, from Saturday until today, we fucked three times. We’re still arguing over how we should do things. If it’s someone to cure me of my hopeless romanticism, he should be the one.”

“Whatever works for you, my friend. But wait, didn’t you go on a date yesterday?”

“Don’t remind me. It was just a disaster and a failed attempt. I was expecting that, though. For now, screwing my employee, as bad as that sounds, will have to do.”

Heathcliff chuckled. “It sounds like you’re already in a relationship with this guy.”

“It’s nothing of the kind. And I shouldn’t even say this. I might have screwed him, but he’s the one screwing with my head. Or, at least, trying to. So, if you don’t need me, I need to meet him again and go over his routine. If he continues to bug me, he won’t spend a lot of time as my employee.”

“Make sure to fuck his brains out until you give him notice then.”

“Now that sounds like good advice, too,” Michael replied with a small smile.

It felt right to hear Michael talk like that. When it came to relationships, Michael was just too intense. A little fun couldn’t hurt him. In the meantime, he needed to play his cards right with Aidan because somewhere, somehow, he had failed.

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“I do have the list for you,” Aidan said after a short greeting. “When should I give it to you?”

“Aren’t you coming home tonight? Just bring it with you,” Heathcliff replied.

Aidan hoped a short conversation over the phone wouldn’t feel too hurtful. The moment he heard Heathcliff’s voice, a mix of feelings began roiling up his gut. He had protected himself for nothing.

“Um, I thought we were like ... done?” he said in a meek voice.

“We’re not done.”

Aidan clasped the wheel hard. He understood why driving and talking on the phone shouldn’t mix.

“Is it what you want, Aidan? To be done with me?” Heathcliff’s voice seemed serious, and a tiny bit sad.

“No,” he admitted, cursing himself for it.

“Then come home. We have much to talk about.”

“Okay.”

He should have felt that it was wrong as he turned the car. But no, it felt good. Actually, it felt awesome, and his heart was beating fast.

## *Chapter Twenty - Keeping It Real*

What would they talk about? Aidan was dragging his feet a little as he walked from the car to the door. He knocked and waited patiently. In the silence of the evening, he could almost hear his heart beating fast. Nervously, he wiped his palms and smoothed down his suit in the process. He had a mind to turn on his heels and run away, no matter how childish that would look.

Heathcliff opened the door, terminating his internal debate. Aidan had troubles looking up.

“Come in,” Heathcliff said gently and made room for him to walk inside.

He still didn’t look at his host as he passed by him. Heathcliff didn’t make a move to grab him and kiss him the soonest the door was closed like on previous occasions. Instead, he was silent.

They were both silent, and Aidan could feel the quiet resting heavy on his shoulders. He needed to break it.

“I brought the, um, list. Feel free to look over it. This one comes straight from our research lab, as per protocol requirements. I think you will find there everything you need, but, of course, if you have any questions, or you need any assistance, I am available.”

He walked to the nearby table and placed his briefcase on it, to take out the paper and put it carefully on the shiny surface. Heathcliff was still not saying anything, and it was unnerving to be the only one babbling.

“I will look over it. But we have more pressing matters to discuss, about you and me,” Heathcliff eventually said.

Aidan didn’t reply. Instead, he fiddled with the list of ingredients, trying to make it sit flat, and smoothing down a turned corner. What would Heathcliff say next? That he considered their deal a mistake? Would he tease him again and have fun at his expense? Heathcliff wasn’t this cruel, at least not on purpose. Although he had known him for only a few weeks, Aidan was not so biased to hold anything against him that wasn’t true.

“First of all, I apologize.”

Aidan’s ears twitched. Had he heard right? “What for?” he managed to say with some difficulty.

“For teasing you. I see how that isn’t fair. Will you please forgive me?”

Heathcliff’s voice was even, slightly calculated, but seemed profoundly sincere.

“There’s nothing to apologize for. I ... well, I believe I exaggerated.”

“All right. I have a mind to tell you that maybe your reaction was warranted given the situation, but I won’t pretend that I know that better than you.”

Aidan turned to look at Heathcliff. “Where is Heathcliff Stone? Are you perhaps a doppelganger?”

Heathcliff began laughing. “Now who’s teasing who?”

Aidan smiled. He felt awkward enough without Heathcliff getting all serious. In a way, Heathcliff had never dealt with someone like Aidan, inexperienced, never having been in a relationship, and all that jazz. But the thought that he could be the one to make the famous influencer all serious and maybe a bit nervous seemed ludicrous. It was up to him to diffuse the situation.

“I’m sorry I walked out. Just that ... Can I just ask for one thing?”

“Sure,” Heathcliff replied.

There was plenty of distance between them, but Aidan could sense Heathcliff’s presence, filling the room, like it was all around. It didn’t feel overpowering, but reassuring and comfortable in a way.

“Let’s just keep it real. We have a deal, right? I mean, we’re both getting what we want without any of these ... complications. I know you’re a natural teaser, and it’s not fair of me to tell you this, but could you please stop teasing me?”

“Done,” was the curt reply.

“Um, okay,” Aidan said.

Why did he feel disappointed? Wasn’t it what he wanted, for Heathcliff to stop telling him he liked him without meaning it? Maybe he wanted Heathcliff to tell him he liked him while meaning it. But that was not possible. So he needed to settle for this.

“But I want something in return,” Heathcliff said.

“Of course.”

“I want you to tell me what you would like to get from this deal of ours. So far, it has been only about me and what I wanted. I want to hear you speak up.”

Aidan blushed. “Um, I’m not sure --”

“Are you comfortable sleeping here most nights? Do you want your weekends to be free of me? Are there things we did that you’re not comfortable with? Should I stop calling you bunny boy?”

“No!” Aidan almost slapped one hand over his mouth. “I mean, I have nothing against you calling me whatever you want.”

“Even if it’s Sparky?” Heathcliff wiggled his eyebrows playfully.

Aidan rolled his eyes. “Maybe we could do without Sparky. The other things, I guess they’re fine, too.”

“You guess?” Heathcliff looked him right in the eyes. “You should be sure.”

Heathcliff was only fair, but it was hard for Aidan to go ahead and admit what he wanted. For as long as Heathcliff had been the one to push the boundaries between them, he had been so busy trying to build fortifications made of sand that he had forgotten what his heart truly wanted.

His heart just had to suck it up, but that didn’t make Aidan feel like less of a fraud. He was like a burglar sneaking inside a house, riding the fridge, stealing the valuables, and ready to bolt at the first sign of a key twisting in the door. An honest person would have admitted to his feelings. Aidan was afraid to do that. As much as nice a person Heathcliff seemed to be, being told by some inexperienced guy that he was his crush could not make him too happy. Or worse, it could make him feel entitled to Aidan’s feelings without returning anything more than a bit of teasing.

He looked ahead with confidence he didn’t actually have. “I am sure. I enjoy spending time with you, Stone. There are worse ways to spend my time, I guess.”

Now he behaved like an entitled brat. Were he Heathcliff, he would send himself packing that very moment. Yet, nothing of the kind happened. He risked one straight look at his host, and his heart beat faster.

It wasn’t only that Heathcliff was handsome. That was a given, and Aidan knew that. What he didn’t realize was that Heathcliff could smile like that. It wasn’t a smirk or a satisfied grin. It was ... He had no idea how to describe it. It made him feel like he was the only one for Heathcliff, that very moment. There wasn’t one ounce of teasing in that smile. Only fondness, with a dash of melancholy. It suited him, and it was not the first time that Aidan thought Heathcliff deserved his very romantic moniker, given by his mom.

It was intense, too, even in its endearing undertones, and Aidan had to keep himself from walking over to him and wrap his arms around him.

Damn. The thing he feared most had happened anyway. He was falling, and maybe he hadn’t yet hit rock bottom, but if things went like that, that would happen sooner rather than later.

But maybe it wasn’t so bad, Aidan thought, as they continued to look at each other, without feeling for a moment that the silence between them was awkward or anything like that. He deserved a first love, after all, and, while maybe it wouldn’t be heroic like in some tragic love story, it would definitely be hopeless.

“Would you like something to eat?” Heathcliff was the first to speak.

What could he complain about? They would just keep it real. And the fact that Aidan was secretly crushing on his bed partner of convenience would be well kept under wraps. In the meantime, he could just as well enjoy himself.

“What’s cooking?” he said playfully.

“Come with me, and you will see.” Heathcliff offered his hand, and Aidan hurried to take it. “Then we’ll sleep. I believe I tortured you enough.”

Aidan wanted to protest, but he felt a bit drained. Maybe playing around with your crush was meant to be exhausting.

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Heathcliff had a mind to congratulate himself for keeping from shouting from the top of his lungs how cute Aidan was and tell him again how much he liked him. But the series of trials was just starting. Even if Michael had told him he could have fun with his bunny boy in the bedroom, he believed it a sign of good faith only to keep his hands and other wandering parts of his anatomy away from Aidan’s delicious rump. At least, for the time being. Bunny boy had to come and tell him directly what he wanted. If that meant waiting for who knew how long, he felt brave enough to do so without complaining.

“Heath,” Aidan called hesitantly, “are we just going to sleep?”

“Yes,” he replied promptly.

“All right. Just checking.”

Aidan could not hide the disappointment in his voice at all, and that was more than satisfying. Bunny boy needed to show that he wanted to be with him, too. That meant he needed to voice his desires, loud and clear.

With that decision in mind, Heathcliff leaned over and kissed Aidan quickly on the cheek. “Good night, Aidan,” he said softly.

“Good night,” Aidan replied and sighed right away.

Heathcliff pretended not to notice. Aidan had the ball in his court. Now he needed to learn how to play without a coach since that was his decision.

He was almost asleep when a timid hand came to rest on top of his. Good thing Aidan could not see him smiling. Maybe that was the rule to apply with shy pets. A good owner knew to let them get accustomed to the environment and their master in due course.

It would be painful to sleep in the same bed with that handsome young man. But Heathcliff had always been ambitious. If that were what had to be done, he would embrace it without protests or delays.

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Heathcliff woke up without the clock as he never had problems with oversleeping. He would follow the routine of preparing breakfast after his focusing exercises for the day and then wake up Aidan, too.

That sounded like a plan, but Aidan was wrapped entirely around him, one arm and one leg thrown over him, in a very possessive gesture. He wanted to laugh so hard, but he would wake up the sleeping beauty in his bed if he were to do that.

Aidan's head rested on his shoulder, and Heathcliff turned very slowly, trying to get a good look at him. What could he have seen in guys like the Matts and Hans of the world? Aidan was really beautiful, and somehow Heathcliff was thankful that others hadn't noticed the same thing. Of course, advertising experts would have said that Aidan's face was a bit too soft to be manly, that his eyes weren't piercing or magnetic, and the average boy next door look never really sold anything.

But Heathcliff found that look perfect. Aidan would grow into a manlier version of himself, as his body was strong and his muscles were harmonious. For now, he was a cute bunny, and Heathcliff wanted nothing more than to watch him grow. He had a feeling he would love all the different versions of his sweet bunny boy.

Now, though, there was the pressing matter of leaving the bed without waking Aidan up. He first took one hand gently and pushed it away, placing it carefully by Aidan's side. The leg was more difficult, and, when he touched it, Aidan just wrapped it tightly around his, and threw his arm over his chest again.

Heathcliff chuckled, but the laughter died the moment Aidan pushed his knee higher and began rubbing it against his crotch.

Well, that wasn't planned. Heathcliff needed to be proactive. Aidan murmured something in his sleep and moved his hand, too, finding quick purchase in Heathcliff's naked pec. Maybe sleeping in just a pair of shorts hadn't been that great an idea. Aidan began squeezing Heathcliff's chest and sighed happily.

Had it been anyone else, Heathcliff would have suspected some foul play. But this was Aidan, even more innocent in his sleep than when awake, seeing how much he wanted to project the image of a perfect yuppie that wasn't fazed by anything.

He was a simple man, after all. Between the knee pushing against his crotch and the hand giving his pec a sensuous slow massage, his cock was getting hard. So he tried to move on one side, taking Aidan's hand from his pec with as much gentleness as he could manage.

The moment he turned toward his bed partner, Aidan's head rested against his chest. Heathcliff caressed the soft chestnut hair slowly, and Aidan made a small sound of contentment.

He was about to call for bunny boy and wake him up when he felt bold lips latching against one of his nipples. Heathcliff sighed. And he had wanted so much to behave.

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Pleasant dreams were not that common, and he could not remember dreaming too often. This one was particularly nice, no, actually, pretty awesome, as he had Heathcliff entirely at his disposal, and the man was encouraging him to do as he pleased.

Aidan didn't know he had a particular obsession with male nipples, but he wanted to taste Heathcliff so much. Seeing how the dream version of the fitness guru was not the usual domineering character from real life, Aidan thought it better to indulge as much as he could.

"Aidan, wake up," a stern voice called for him.

After several seconds of utter confusion, he eventually opened his eyes. He blinked and gasped, seeing Heathcliff hovering over him, with a serious expression etched on his face.

"Oh, is it late?" Aidan shook his head, trying to get rid of that naughty dream from earlier.

Heathcliff had one leg between his and was pressing against his semi. Aidan had to rethink that. It wasn't a semi, it was a full-blown erection, and Heathcliff rubbing it like that only made the situation more difficult for him.

"Were you dreaming something?" Heathcliff eyed him suspiciously.

"Earth to Stone, am I late for work?" Aidan protested, then blushed and quickly looked away.

The only way to deal with that man was to pretend he wasn't disturbed by anything, including a muscular thigh torturing his aching cock.

"No, that you're not." From Heathcliff's voice, Aidan could tell he was amused. "But I must ask: have you been weaned recently or you were just dreaming of sucking my tits?"

Aidan was sure his face was going through various shades of purple that very instant. "Are you pulling my leg, Stone?"

"C'mon, bunny boy, it's a simple question. What were you dreaming about?"



“I wasn’t dreaming of anything! I mean, how many people recall what they dream? Not too many.”

“Well, let me fill in the gaps,” Heathcliff said and moved his thigh against Aidan’s cock again, making him grunt. “I was trying to wake up, see about my business, and a certain cute pet was all over me.”

Aidan was now pretty horrified with his lack of self-control. Heathcliff could lie, but while that was possible, it wasn’t also probable. He had thought his dream was a bit too vivid. “Sorry,” he mumbled.

“Don’t ‘sorry’ me, bunny boy,” Heathcliff said slowly, his voice snakelike and hypnotizing. “I wanted so much to be good, and let you sleep while I went to make breakfast, and there you were, a knee in my balls, one hand over one tit, and your mouth on the other, sucking on it like you were expecting it to give milk.”

“Oh, fuck,” Aidan closed his eyes. “Could you just go about your business and let me here to drown in my own shame?”

“No can do, cutie.” Heathcliff laughed. “You teased the hell out of me, and now you’re going to assume responsibility.”

Aidan opened one eye. “What do you have in mind?”

“I have something for you to suck that will not let your efforts go to waste.”

Aidan gulped. “Do you want me to suck your cock?”

“Of course I do. Let me rephrase that. You’re not leaving the bed until you do.”

“Okay,” Aidan replied with more enthusiasm than he wanted to show.

Heathcliff was quick to move and straddle his chest. His cock pulled free from his shorts, he used it now to tap a playful rhythm against his lips. Aidan put his tongue out and began licking the head to the best of his abilities.

He liked Heathcliff’s taste, and he had just teased the guy before when talking about acquired tastes and whatnot. Now he could use this opportunity to taste to his heart’s content.

Heathcliff adjusted his position so that he could pump his cock inside Aidan’s mouth in a slow rhythm. Aidan enjoyed this a lot, especially since he could sneak his hands under Heathcliff’s shorts and play with his muscular ass.

Fleetingly, he wondered what Heathcliff would do if he found Aidan one morning trying to hump him dry. Would he offer his ass then? People could dream, Aidan concluded and put his

energy and enthusiasm into sucking the delicious cock in his mouth like it was the tastiest lollipop he'd ever tried.

Heathcliff was moving his hips slowly, and Aidan could tell that he was trying to avoid pushing too much. Aidan felt a bit disappointed in himself for not being able to swallow the hard cock deeper. So he used his tongue to lick everywhere and hopefully enhance the sensations for the other.

At the same time, he could feel his cock aching from too much mental stimulation. Nothing and no one was touching it right now, and he could not reach it anyway. For now, he needed to focus on the other's pleasure, as hard as that was.

He squeezed Heathcliff's ass cheeks, imposing the rhythm he felt comfortable with. It looked like Heathcliff wasn't bothered with being handled. Maybe Heathcliff was using him to get off, but Aidan knew that it was a fantasy come true to suck off the man that he had been crushing on for a while now. Preferably, he would do it in all possible positions, and this one was great since he could play with Heathcliff's ass.

Could he dare? He didn't have enough leverage from his position to be too daring, so he settled for moving his hands lower and touch Heathcliff's taint with his fingertips. A small grunt from above told him he was doing the right thing.

Heathcliff was as sensitive there as he was, and that thought was making him happy. At some point, he would ask Heathcliff to let him touch more. For now, he hoped he would get off Heathcliff, and maybe he would get a hand job in return.

"You're so good, Aidan," Heathcliff praised him.

Aidan moved his hands, still partially busy with teasing the taint, but one eventually reached Heathcliff's balls and wrapped around their base, pulling backward. Heathcliff's breathing grew quicker, and his hips moved a bit erratically. Aidan released the tight balls in his hand to let them slap a little against his chin.

Without deepthroating all the way, he was getting better at this, he thought and shuddered as Heathcliff began to spurt inside his mouth thick ropes of tasty cum. He swallowed as he could, and let the excess flow down his chin and on his chest.

Heathcliff finally pulled away and took a look at him. Aidan was breathing hard, and he was sure he looked like a mess, but at this point, he couldn't be made to care.

"Wow, bunny boy, just wow," Heathcliff said with a broad grin. "I was right to tell you were a fast learner. Look at you, taking my cock like a champ. We'll work on that swallowing technique, but you look pretty damned good like this, so I can't complain. Do you mind if I hit the shower first really quick?"

Aidan nodded, and then he frowned. What the hell? Was he getting nothing? He looked down at his own cock, no way near getting soft, and tenting his shorts.

“What’s the matter, bunny boy?” Heathcliff asked, in his signature teasing voice. “Do you want to say something?”

Aidan threw him a murderous look and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. “Yeah, I mean, like what the hell?”

“What do you mean?” Heathcliff raised his eyebrows, and his eyes were laughing even more than his mouth.

“I’m hard!” Aidan pointed out and grabbed his cock.

“And? You have to say it loud and clear, bunny boy.”

Aidan felt his courage fading. He blushed furiously, looked away, and eventually said, “Suck me off, too.”

“Louder, I don’t think I heard you,” Heathcliff said with a small laugh.

Aidan revolted. “Stone, I’m going to stuff your mouth with my cock until you choke.”

“Hmm, that sounds like a promise.”

“It’s a threat.”

“It’s a promise I expect you to honor,” Heathcliff said, and with one fluid move, he pulled Aidan by his legs, bringing him on the end of the bed.

Aidan didn’t have time to protest anymore, as Heathcliff pulled his shorts down quickly, and swallowed his cock fast, right to the hilt.

“Fuck me,” Aidan moaned and grabbed the sheets with both hands to keep himself from just pushing his hips up and cutting Heathcliff’s air supply, as promised.

Heathcliff withdrew just a little. “Put your money where your mouth is, Aidan. Fuck my mouth and put me in my place if you think you can.”

Aidan pushed himself on his elbows and stared at Heathcliff. The sexy devil was playing with his cock, keeping it from the base and slapping his tongue lazily with it. Not without hesitation, Aidan moved one hand to place it around Heathcliff’s nape and pulled him toward his cock.

“Suck me off,” he whispered. “Please.”

Heathcliff's eyes twinkled, but their owner finally decided that too much teasing was a bad thing. Aidan held Heathcliff's head, pretending to push him down on his cock, although he was sure Heathcliff was doing an excellent job on his own.

It didn't take him long. Between the embarrassment of waking up to Heathcliff witnessing his naughty dreams first hand, and giving a sloppy blowjob that had made him rock hard, he could not control himself.

"Fuck, please, take me deep," he begged as he pushed his hips off the bed, and fucked Heathcliff's mouth.

Unlike him, Heathcliff didn't spill a drop. Aidan was still moaning softly, making a small whirring sound like a broken machine when Heathcliff stood up and towered over him.

"You have no idea how to dominate someone in bed. You're too damned cute." Heathcliff laughed, and Aidan closed his eyes tightly, hoping the teaser would take the hint and walk away. "You're still a mess, so come hit the shower. I'll use the other bathroom so that you can take your time."

"Aren't you going to wash me or something?" Aidan mumbled.

"I think you're big enough to take showers by yourself. Plus, if I get in there with you, you might be late for work. Also, I won't send you off on an empty belly."

"All right, good thinking," Aidan said and gave Heathcliff a weak thumbs-up. "Can I lie here for a while, then?"

"Sure. Just don't make me come for you when I finish preparing breakfast. Let's say that this little session would look like a snack compared to the full-course meal I'll be in the mood for if I catch your perfect bubble butt still slacking off in my bed."

"It's a good enough threat so that I can't ignore it," Aidan admitted.

Heathcliff left the room laughing. What had he been so scared the day before? Aidan could not remember. All was good in this part of the universe. The teasing had been kept to a minimum, he had made a fool of himself, but Heathcliff had turned it into something hot and sexy, just like him, and he would actually eat breakfast before leaving for work. What more could he ask for?

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"I suppose I should be off now," Aidan said, his hand on the doorknob.

"Have fun slaving for the man," Heathcliff replied with a small smirk, hands in his pockets, looking his usual gorgeous self.

Aidan had a mind to joke, and ask his generous host, whether it would be better to slave for him, instead but stopped himself in time.

“What? No witty comeback?” Heathcliff teased him.

“I’d rather not. Seeing what great food you make, I would sound ungrateful if I tried to insult you.”

“Insult me? How?”

“By asking you ... ah, never mind,” Aidan said quickly. “I’ve already told you. You’re a slave driver anyway.”

“That’s not an insult, bunny boy. It’s a compliment.”

“Oh, is it? Well, I assume that, with you, being told that you’re domineering and you always have your way is never a problem.”

“But you like me like that,” Heathcliff pointed out.

“It’s a package deal with an awesome home chef and a great ...” Aidan trailed off. What could be the right words to describe what they were? “... business partner.”

“Business partner,” Heathcliff repeated after him, forgetting, it seemed, to add a question mark at the end. “Because of our deal, of course.”

“Thank you for, um, understanding the situation. I bet it would be funny for you to make me fall for you, but I don’t work that way.”

Aidan cursed himself internally. He was running his mouth, and he somehow knew that it was not a good idea to do that. Maybe he was giving Heathcliff all kinds of ideas on how to torture him.

“You mean, you don’t fall for guys? Ah, so you’re heartless,” Heathcliff joked.

“I didn’t mean that. Well, I need to go,” Aidan pointed at the door as if it was a portal to a different dimension.

One where he could escape Heathcliff’s hypnotizing gaze.

“Aren’t you forgetting something? And just when I thought I had you well trained.”

Aidan stared a little at Heathcliff. Then, when he noticed the opened arms, he understood and hurried to hug Heathcliff shortly and kiss him on the lips. He wanted to make it playful and short, but it was obvious the other party involved had other ideas. One hand wrapped around

Aidan's waist, the other coaxing him gently into another kiss while caressing his cheek, Heathcliff appeared to like long goodbyes.

"Come here tonight?" Heathcliff asked, and stared Aidan into his eyes.

Like he could say 'no' to that. Heathcliff pampered him in all possible ways. If that was a trap, he was walking gladly into it.

"As long as we keep it real," he replied.

"I wouldn't want it any other way," Heathcliff whispered into his ear, and then patted his ass to move and leave for work.

This side of real looked pretty damned good.

## *Chapter Twenty-One – Hooked*

Heathcliff had to give it to Michael. The man had good advice, even if he was bad at following the same principles when he was personally involved. So, inviting him to have lunch and hang out at one of their favorite places was what he had in mind.

“So, how are things in your corner of the universe?” Michael smiled the moment he sat across from him.

“Hey, your advice worked, so all is well. The bunny is yet to be stuck inside a cage and roams freely. I hope you’re happy,” Heathcliff joked.

“I’m happy if you are,” Michael said back with a large grin. “And I’m glad that you’re not as overwhelming as you usually are. That means this relationship is good for you. It might just teach you to be more human.”

“I’m plenty human,” Heathcliff protested.

“Not when it comes to romantic involvements.” Michael put one finger up to strengthen his statement.

“That’s where you’re wrong, my friend. I don’t do romantic involvements.”

Michael rolled his eyes. “Are you going to serve me that cliché that you only fuck?”

Heathcliff chuckled. “I don’t have to. You know I do. And now, before you start berating me for treating Aidan badly, you’ll be happy to learn from yours truly that I am actually fonder and fonder of him with each day passing. I don’t see myself growing bored with this relationship anytime soon. On the contrary, I don’t want to see it end, and I don’t even think about that. Hell, I don’t even notice handsome men passing by me in the street. What do you say about that?”

“Wow, did you write that speech down and practice in front of the mirror?” Michael laughed and shook his head. “If you stopped noticing sexy dudes passing by, that means that you’re in it deeply. I can’t wait to see your face when you two will exchange vows.”

“Are you applying some sort of transference? You no longer consider yourself a romantic, so instead the entire world should fall in love?”

“Not the entire world. Just you. Now seriously, Heath, not that I don’t know the answer already, but I have to ask. Have you never been in love? Like never, never?”

“Of course you know the answer. Feelings feel like complications. What’s the point of being gay if you can’t be as free as you want to be? It’s called the alternative lifestyle for a reason.”

“I thought the point of being gay is that you only liked men, and you might even fall in love with them. Sometimes I fail to see your logic, Heath. But I’m at peace. Aidan will avenge me. Keep it up like this, and he’ll have you wrapped around his little finger in no time.”

“Are you trying to scare me out of liking Aidan?”

“Does it work?”

“No.”

“Too bad. I’ll still kick your ass if you make him cry.”

“I’d never!” Heathcliff protested. “I don’t make cute boys cry.”

“Are you sure? I’m pretty sure you leave a trail of broken hearts wherever you go.”

“You know that’s not true. I always tell guys what to expect from me, so they’re never disappointed.”

“Then what about Aidan? Why do you feel the need to pester him to the point of making him fall in love with you?”

“He’s special, and you know it.”

“So what does he expect from you?”

“Everything, I hope. The whole enchilada,” Heathcliff said while opening his arms wide. “So, now that you’re done lecturing me when all I wanted was to share a friendly lunch with you,” he added with a small smirk, “let’s just eat something healthy.”

“Sure. What are you recommending?”

Heathcliff examined the menu and was about to speak when he noticed Michael frowning while looking at something or someone behind him. He turned and looked, too, and saw right away the object of his friend’s annoyed stare. A beautiful brunet, walking gracefully into the restaurant, had his eyes on them, as well.

That had to be the dancer, Heathcliff thought and grinned as he stared at the intruder. “Who’s that?” he asked, although he already knew.

“My dick’s worst nightmare,” Michael said through his teeth, in a low voice.

Heathcliff turned back and looked at his friend. “Wow, language, Mikey. What’s so bad about him?”

“I’ll tell you. Now let’s pretend to be civil. He’s walking over here.”



Michael's frown only deepened and Heathcliff was really curious now. His best friend was never angry at anyone. It was clear that the beautiful dancer had managed to strike a secret chord with Michael, and now he was wondering what that could be.

"Hi," the newcomer said shortly.

"What is it, Jess?" Michael asked with a sigh.

"I've sent you three messages and called twice."

"Hmm, it must have been because I didn't want to talk to you that I didn't answer," Michael said airily.

Was this some lovers' quarrel? Heathcliff pretended to study the menu, but he was all ears. This Jess dude was clearly something special. Michael was never so outspoken, even when he had to deal with unpleasant conversation partners.

From the corner of his eye, he studied the dancer quickly. His profession was written all over him. Even while standing, he kept a graceful pose. He was quite delicate, but only because he was as thin as expected from a male ballerina. Heathcliff noticed the strong wrists in passing. They weren't dainty, as some might have expected, and he was sure the guy was stronger than he looked.

"You're rude," Jess pointed out.

"Jess, I told you. We are not going to go over your routine again. You will have to do the same thing as the others."

"Why? Wasn't I convincing enough?"

There was not one ounce of teasing in Jess's voice or demeanor, but Heathcliff could swear Michael was blushing a little. Just what sort of convincing had Jess bestowed upon his hopelessly romantic friend? Obviously, something that didn't fall quite in the realm of romantic involvements. Now he was dying of curiosity.

"It's not about that. How many times do I have to explain?"

"You know I'm right," Jess said softly.

Heathcliff was freely staring at this point. There was something about this dude. He was not overtly flirty or anything, but, as experienced as he was, he could tell Jess didn't have to be that to convince people of his point of view. Some people forced sex appeal, falling easy prey to vulgarity. But not this one. This one was sex appeal incarnate.

His long fingers were squeezing the back of the extra chair, and although Heathcliff couldn't see what was going on, he could tell that Jess's stare had to be quite intense, set on Michael. In turn,

Michael was staring back and there was a battle of wills going on in there, that Heathcliff wasn't sure who would win.

Michael was usually so affable and courteous. Right now, his eyes were dark, and there was a sort of aggressiveness in how he stood, straight in his chair, his elbows on the table, his fingers linked in front, and a stern expression on his face.

Somehow, that made the man even sexier than he usually was. Heathcliff was mesmerized with the transformation. The two guys he was looking at that very moment were fucking with each other with their eyes, without touching at all.

Maybe a good idea was to break them apart. There was no need for spilled blood in a restaurant catering to vegans. Or other bodily fluids, Heathcliff thought. He could understand now how Michael could have ended up bending the graceful dancer over his desk and giving it to him hard. This Michael with daggers in his eyes could have done that.

“Would you like to join us for lunch?” Heathcliff said politely, using as much of a neutral tone he could muster, without bursting into laughter.

For a second, the two seemed to have failed to hear him. It was like looking at two tomcats fighting for dominance through means of stares alone, and no one and nothing could spoil their concentration.

“Thank you,” Jess turned toward Heathcliff, and smiled. “But I'm otherwise engaged. You're Heathcliff Stone, right? The influencer?”

“I'd rather call myself a fitness trainer, but I might go by that as well these days,” Heathcliff replied with a smile of his own.

“Your videos are a true inspiration. Not that I follow you,” Jess placed a hand apologetically over his chest, “as I must keep with some strict regimens in both terms of diet and physical training, but many of my friends admire you.”

“Tell your friends I appreciate that,” Heathcliff replied.

Jess beamed at him. “I will tell them that you are just as nice a person in real life as you are in your videos.”

The tomcat was gone. This kitten could not have hurt a mouse. Now Heathcliff wondered what chord Michael must have struck with Jess, too. Two perfectly polite people could not be at each other's throats like that without a strong reason.

Maybe that was how attraction worked in some people. And maybe Michael was in for a ride with this wild kitten, after all. He could barely wait to grill his friend about Jess.

“We’ll talk more tonight. Are you coming, I hope?” Michael interrupted their exchange of pleasantries.

“If you hope, then I’ll come.”

“Oh, please, it was just a way of saying. I am your boss, Jess. You must understand. I can’t bend to your every whim, no matter how talented you are.”

Heathcliff had a clear idea of who was doing the bending and quite gracefully.

“I will convince you, eventually. You’ll see,” Jess said and pointed a finger at Michael. “Enjoy your lunch,” he added and turned toward Heathcliff.

He waited a couple of minutes for Jess to disappear from within earshot. “Is this your hot dancer?”

Michael sighed. “Yes, and, as you can see, he’s a total pain in the butt.”

“I don’t know what to tell you, Mikey. He seemed pretty nice to me. Really charming.”

“That he is. Not toward me, mind you. Apparently, he has a beef with me and me only, as I don’t allow him to introduce the Nutcracker to our nightly entertainment.”

“The Nutcracker?” Heathcliff roared. “In a gay club?”

“I’m just exaggerating.” Michael waved like he wanted to get rid of an annoying fly. “It’s not the Nutcracker, but something close. He has this obsession that we should bring more elegance and sophistication to our cage dance routine.”

“So? Why don’t you let him?”

“Do you want to see me go bankrupt?”

“Just one time. Let him. And when he gets booed for not showing off the goods, he’ll know why he’s wrong.”

“I’m not that cruel,” Michael replied. “I don’t want to see him hurt. This artistic type people usually have egos made of glass.”

“So, instead, you’re just fucking his principles out of him.”

Michael grinned. “Maybe that’s what I’m trying to do. I’ll hate to see him go, but it may be for the better.”

“You can’t mean that. There’s a real attraction between you two. You should capitalize on that.”

“Sex does not equal a relationship, Heath, and you’re old enough not to need me to tell you that.”

“Neither lack of sex. Seriously, the dude is hot. And you clearly have a thing for him.”

“Yes, I do. I feel like I want to strangle him,” Michael said with a rueful smile.

“Ah, so he’s into choking?” Heathcliff joked.

“Only you could think of some imaginary sexual innuendo while I’m trying to point out what a stubborn prick Jess is.”

Heathcliff snickered. “I suppose you know better. About his prick and other things.”

“Will you stop?” Michael protested, but his lips were twitching, too. “You better focus on your bunny boy and how to keep him. Nice guys really are in short supply around here.”

“Jess is nice, too.”

“Maybe before midnight. He’s the kind that doesn’t even need to be sprinkled with water to turn bad.”

“Why? That’s when he turns into a gremlin? Or is that an allusion to the wet t-shirt contest night you have during the week?”

“Maybe,” Michael replied and smiled secretively.

“You’ll make him do that,” Heathcliff said.

“I might,” Michael admitted. “Come on, let’s just order something. Being contradicted by my employees works wonders on my appetite.”

Heathcliff was sure Michael was just trying to change the subject. For now, he could let it slide. But he had a feeling that he would hear more about Jess in the near future.

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Aidan wasn’t in the habit of snooping around, but something in the atmosphere at the office was telling him something was amiss. So he decided to move closer to the people gossiping by the water cooler while pretending to be all focused on the materials in the folder he had grabbed from his desk.

“It’s normal to make it a competition,” one of his co-workers whispered to another.

They were both dressed in the same type of scrubby suit, with thin black ties and dark shirts, and one could make their hair in their shoes. These guys were higher on the career ladder, and the low-entry employees were all looking up to them, even more than to the head of the department. That should have been considered a sacrilege seeing how much their boss enjoyed being

considered the best thing that happened to the business world since the invention of the smartphone.

Aidan could not fathom for the world why someone in charge of such a small department that didn't even deal with cutting edge technologies, but just with some so-called healthy drinks, had such big ambitions. What could he hope for? That protein shakes would replace drinking water in the foreseeable future?

“So will there be cuts?” the second copycat character replied.

“No, you know that's not how it works around here.”

“No cuts? Ah, damn, nothing feels better than telling someone they're fired,” the second guy said with a sigh. “I miss those days.”

“In a way, this is worse, for those that don't meet the criteria, of course. Remaining in the same position for two years in a row ... Just imagine how that feels. And it's like a sentence. People who don't get promoted, it's like they're touched by the plague. No one wants to have anything to do with them. It's like failure is transmissible or something. At least, if they get fired, some might have some spectacular comeback. You know, start a business from home, selling socks on Etsy, or whatever. But this, what can I tell you? It keeps them stuck in a swamp of lack of success.”

The other laughed. There was something extremely unpleasant in how the man laughed like he made the sounds a hyena would.

“We'll see in a few weeks who the bottom feeders are. They'll remain stuck there for a lot of time. So let's outperform our last season's figures, shall we?”

The copy-paste couple passed by Aidan without paying him one ounce of attention. Of course, from their position, people had to look like ants.

He shook his head. And he thought Heathcliff was arrogant. Despite being naturally pleasant and easy to talk to, he had failed to bond with any of his colleagues. Everyone was engaged in the fight for the bottom line, hence alliances were formed only with the explicit purpose of dragging someone down. Otherwise, friendships seemed to be a rare thing.

So, something bad would go down soon. He really needed to have Heathcliff work for those numbers. He trusted the man, but his boss was a pain in the ass with his demands. Aidan just hoped he would have time to have some growth in sales to show his boss. Usually, he would not worry about being among the last performers in the office, but he wasn't dealing with normal circumstances. He needed to deliver.

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“Why the long face?” Heathcliff questioned him over dinner.

“Long hours, all that,” Aidan replied and waved.

“Come on, bunny boy; I can feel you’re upset. Why?”

“Work stuff. Don’t worry; I won’t keep up this long face for too long,” he made a lame attempt at a joke.

“Tell me.”

“I’ll bore you.”

“Try me.”

Aidan sighed. “Okay. There will be an evaluation soon, within a few weeks or something.”

“And? I assume your hard work will show.”

“If only. But thanks for the vote of confidence. Everyone puts in extra hours at the office like they’re berserk. Officially, nobody knows about the evaluation, but, in reality, everyone knows everything, or almost. So they are all like busy bees. On top of it all, most of my duties are not the kind to show some palpable performance, unless you include filing and refiling meeting minutiae as something that would bring the company to a new era of prosperity and achievements. The funny part is that, as a newcomer, I’m not allowed,” he did the air quotes thing, “to present better performance than certain individuals that are on top of the food chain.”

“So you worry you can’t fit some Procrustean bed,” Heathcliff said while watching him intently.

“Yes, that pretty much sums up my situation. Although, in my case, they won’t cut anything, but probably just pull at my bones to make me long enough to fit.”

“Focus on what you must do, Aidan. Don’t let the others make you lose your focus. I’m sure that, being the hard worker that you are, you’ll get over these issues.”

“I wish I could say the same thing about me,” Aidan said with mirth. “But your advice is duly noted. The best I can do is to focus on what I must achieve. Which brings us to what you can do for me,” he joked.

“Anything for my beloved pet,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan secretly enjoyed these small endearing allusions coming from Heathcliff. They were nothing but playful banter, and he could live with that. Actually, he thrived on them, as they made him feel like he was truly cared for.

“I won’t ask you to be aggressive in the promotion of the product, but somehow to increase the frequency of mentioning it, even if it’s just for a few seconds. The more times you repeat something, the more likely people will remember it.”

“Okay, it’s done. I must say that I’m glad your company uses organic ingredients for the most part. I could not have told from the taste, but even my taste buds might be wrong once in a while. I have run some research of my own on the ingredients, and now I know for sure that the product your company is selling is as good as something like this can be, which is commendable. What else can I do for you?”

The question was casual, but Aidan could tell there was a playful undertone to it. So he cocked his head to one side and said: “Nothing for now, but if you make me hit my projected sales, I promise I’ll drop to my knees and suck your cock.”

Was that playful enough from his part, too? Heathcliff’s smirk told him all he needed to know. His attempts at being playful and funny were, at least, appreciated.

“Should I remind you that you enthusiastically do that anyway?” Heathcliff straightened up in his chair and looked over the table at Aidan.

He gulped. Heathcliff’s eyes were no longer twinkling with amusement. They were intense and a bit demanding. “I do that, don’t I?” Aidan said and looked down on his plate. “Damn it; I should have kept it as a bargaining chip. I really have no idea what I’m doing. See, I’m not that good.”

“I love your blowjobs, Aidan.”

Didn’t Heathcliff just have a way with words? Aidan could feel the tip of his ears glowing red. “What else do you love about me?”

Oops, not the right thing to say. Heathcliff’s eyes were trained on him, hungry, and giving away all that was on his mind.

“I thought about letting you sleep tonight.”

“Why?” Aidan cast his eyes down and then looked up.

“Because you’re tired, worried, and I just want you relaxed and happy while you’re here.”

“I am happy while I’m here.” The words flew out of his mouth before he could control them.

“And am I glad to hear that,” Heathcliff said with a small smile. “Don’t worry about your job, Aidan. If worse comes to worst, let’s just say that you have friends in high places. Michael was serious about offering you a position at his club. And no, bunny boy, don’t smile like that. It won’t be as the leading twerker in the house, despite how much, let’s say, natural talent you have for that.”

Aidan snickered. “His dancers are so talented, aren’t they?”

“Ah, so you looked at them much?”

“I was just polite,” Aidan joked. “How could I have done that when, all the time there, I only had eyes for you?”

“Such a smooth talker,” Heathcliff praised him. “We’ll get you a new job in no time.”

“Don’t forget to list ass licker as one of my areas of expertise.”

“It’s clear. You don’t want to go to sleep tonight like a nice little boy.”

Aidan protested. “Hey, I’m not little.”

“Especially in certain parts of your anatomy.”

No, he didn’t want to go to sleep without seeing at least a bit of action. After all, it was the highlight of his day.

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“So, what would you like to do?” Heathcliff asked, as they lay in bed, all naked, and kissing slowly.

“How come you’re not your usual domineering self, Stone?” Aidan taunted him.

“Maybe I’m in the mood for other things, once in a while.”

“Do you do that with all the guys who end up in your bed?”

Heathcliff caressed Aidan’s chest and pulled at one nipple, not too hard, but not too gently, either. Aidan made a small, cute sound. “Quite sensitive, aren’t you?”

Aidan rebelled, pushing his hand away, and blushing a little. “Like you don’t know. You can touch my toes or whatever, and I’d still be hard. And you didn’t answer my question.”

“Question? Ah, right. No, I usually just put the guys who end up in my bed in the favorite position of the day and fuck them until none of us can walk anymore. Is that satisfying enough?”

“I guess. So why me? I mean, what’s different? Is it because I was an ass virgin when we fucked first?”

“Maybe. You deserve a little freedom. That, of course, before I become all domineering and have you bend to my will.”



“You’re such a joker,” Aidan replied and reached in turn for Heathcliff’s nipples, to play with them.

“Don’t you want me all at your disposal? Come on; just say what you want.”

Aidan seemed to ponder over his next words. “I’d lick your ass and fuck you.”

Heathcliff laughed. “From naught to sixty in under six seconds. Is that how it’s always with you, bunny boy?”

“Yeah, it is. I guess. I mean --”

“Don’t worry,” Heathcliff tipped Aidan’s chin, “I like it.”

“So will you let me?” Aidan leaned into the caress.

“You’re bent on fucking my ass. You are funny, too, on top of all your qualities. Maybe we’ll get there, who knows?”

“Teaser.” Aidan pouted. “You’re one of those guys, right? Who are incorrigible tops?”

“I don’t know. Guys don’t exactly test my boundaries, as you do.”

“Seriously? OMG, are you afraid of getting fucked in the ass? Come on. It’s really cool. I can tell you that.”

Heathcliff bit his lips not to burst into laughter. “I’m not an ass virgin, as you imply. Guys just like to present their lovely bottoms to me. Who am I to say ‘no’ to that?”

Aidan seemed put off for a couple of seconds. “At least let me lick your ass.”

“All right. If there’s nothing else you’d rather do.”

“I also want to blow you.”

“So get your dick in my face, and you can see to your little obsessions, too.”

“No. I want to focus on what I do.”

Aidan stood up and set by the foot of the bed. Then he began pulling at Heathcliff’s legs to make him move closer, too.

“I’ll give it to you. You’re ambitious.”

“You don’t want --”

“Hush. Do your thing. I’m curious about what you have in mind, too.”

With a satisfied smile, Aidan sank to his feet and pulled Heathcliff close to his face. He pushed Heathcliff's knees apart and attacked the balls and the area underneath them right away.

Heathcliff kept a small gasp with some difficulty. Talking about someone who had no trouble getting to work. Aidan did like to service him, and that thought was endearing.

The curious, hungry tongue snuck lower and began making small circles closer and closer to his hole. To help his little lover, Heathcliff pushed back his knees, presenting bunny boy with the area of his body he seemed so enthralled with.

"Thank you," Aidan said quickly and stuck his tongue directly inside.

This time, Heathcliff no longer kept it in. He moaned and grabbed his ass cheeks to pull them apart, to allow Aidan easy access. Aidan was a bit clumsy but daring, and it was obvious he enjoyed it. The fact that there was no bottom line with Aidan made everything more enjoyable. This was not someone who hoped to get something out of him.

Aidan took his time rimming him. His tongue was curious, pushing more and more inside, setting his nerve endings on fire. It wasn't like he had never been rimmed in his life, but, with Aidan, everything was new in a way. He liked Aidan, his cute eyes, his attitude, and of course, his sweet ass. But it was how Aidan was so into him that was making him feel something else, deeper like he had never felt with anyone else.

"Oh, fuck, if you need any references for 'ass licker' on your resume, don't hesitate to ask." He tried to hide what he felt inside with a small joke, and Aidan stopped to look at me.

"I'm counting on it, Stone." Aidan grinned and got back to work, but his eyes remain set on Heathcliff, challenging him.

"Come here," Heathcliff commanded, and pushed himself up on his elbows.

Without moving his tongue away, Aidan shook his head. Heathcliff licked his lips. "I want to touch you, too."

When had he lost control over this ship? It felt nice and a bit thrilling to have someone want him so much, but also a tad unnerving that he wasn't the one staging the play.

"No way. It's my way of relaxing," Aidan joked, as he interrupted his enthusiastic licking once more. "And you said you wanted me happy and relaxed. That's what I'm doing now."

Heathcliff wished he could play a little game of verbal Ping-Pong with Aidan, but right now, his cock was painfully hard, leaking, and hoping, as much as its master, for his partner to move on to further oral delights.

As if he read his mind, Aidan grabbed his cock at the base and began licking it, his eyes never leaving Heathcliff. He cursed under his breath and set his eyes on Aidan, too. He hoped his eyes could convey what his tongue could not. Aidan pushed the hard candy into his mouth and began swallowing it slowly.

“Don’t force yourself,” Heathcliff whispered.

“How am I supposed to learn then?” Aidan asked, letting the cock out of his mouth so that he could voice his protest.

“Relax more. Don’t go at it like you have to climb Mt. Everest.”

“How am I doing that?” Aidan questioned, cocking his head to one side.

“You have this fierce look in your eyes. Not that I don’t appreciate it, but I think you could be a little smoother.”

Aidan pursed his lips. “I want to deepthroat,” he said and pouted.

“Okay. Then just listen to me and relax.”

He placed one hand on Aidan’s head, guiding him gently, and began speaking softly, offering cues and indications while trying hard to control his own voice, raspy from the growing arousal. Aidan was a quick learner, maybe a little impatient, but slowly he was getting there.

“If you can, just move now,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan nodded with his mouth full. He would keep this young man for himself, Heathcliff thought. There was no way for him to give up on this. Helping himself a bit with the hands, Aidan was doing, as always, his best.

And his best would earn him a fast reward. Heathcliff threw his head back, no longer capable of looking at Aidan because his growing arousal was getting impossible to bear, and began unloading in that sweet mouth he loved so much.

Aidan was taking it, he could feel it, and letting himself go like that made him feel closer to the other. When his much resilient bunny boy withdrew, coughing a little, he felt like smiling. Heathcliff was sure his mouth was stretched into such a broad smile that his face was hurting.

Aidan hopped on the bed next to him, and Heathcliff noticed that his attentive lover was rock hard. He had a focused look on his pretty face, and he was rubbing his cock raw. Heathcliff moved one hand to touch Aidan’s balls and caress them. By the small grunt he heard, he was on the mark.

“Want to come on me?” he whispered.

“Yes,” came the strangled reply. “Can I . . . On your chest?”

“All over me, cutie,” Heathcliff said with a satisfied grin. “And I’ll make you lick everything after.”

Aidan whimpered helplessly, and Heathcliff increased the pressure on his heavy sack, rolling the balls in his hand with practiced precision. It didn’t take Aidan long; Heathcliff laughed as some rogue droplets hit him on the face. He would teach his bunny boy everything and have him ejaculate everywhere on him would be high on the list.

“Great job,” he praised.

With a small, amused moan, Aidan crashed next to him. Heathcliff was quick to pull him close and rest his head on one shoulder.

“Can I clean later?” Aidan begged.

Heathcliff chuckled. “Just rest. You’ll have plenty of other occasions to do that.”

“Good. ‘Cause I think I like the taste of your cum better than mine.”

Talking about confessions, Heathcliff’s lips twitched in amusement. He would get Aidan hooked on everything that was him. And he would take all the time in the world to do that.

## *Chapter Twenty-Two – A Secret You Already Know*

Aidan was pretty happy with how things were going, for now, as for someone like him, they could not have been better. He had tried to think of himself as being completely self-sufficient, at least after leaving home and going to live on his own.

But it wasn't fair to deny how nice it felt to go back to Heathcliff every day. The man always waited for him with a nutritious and delicious meal, a hot shower, and even hotter sex. Well, maybe he was a bit salty about the fact that Heathcliff was still not letting him top, but seeing how much he enjoyed himself as things were, he could not complain.

Was it the right thing to rely so much on someone? He liked to think that things were under control. He did this because it was convenient, and Heathcliff was involved for the exact same reason.

So, everything would, somehow, reach an end. He had no idea when that would happen and what it would mean, but it was clear as day that it was as good as a sort of vacation. Seeing how tough things were at work, the fact that he could enjoy such reprieve in Heathcliff's arms was a good thing, and he should take advantage of it while it lasted.

Who knew when he would have the occasion to have sex with a handsome man like that, who was also considerate, kind, and also so amazing in bed? Aidan would think about complete self-reliance later. For now, he enjoyed all the help he got.

And it wasn't only because Heathcliff was teaching him about sex and how to eat right. It was good for his mental health. He had no idea how others did it because it sometimes felt like everyone was perfectly fine with being entirely independent and not needing anyone.

At least, that was the image they liked to project. He had an inkling that it wasn't the case with everyone, as he had distinctively heard two of his colleagues gossiping about a third who, 'of course could put in the extra hours, with a spouse at home doing all the chores and waiting with a hot meal', their words, not his.

In a way, he was like that colleague of his. Heathcliff was as close to a spouse as he could be. Well, that was definitely a very alluring thought, but Aidan needed to get a hold of himself. That was not how things were.

Things were ... They were just friends of sorts, he liked to believe. For weeks now, they had been sharing the same space, and, with time, Aidan had transferred some of his clothes and other stuff he needed to Heathcliff's house, and he had to wonder whether he should have still paid rent where his official address was. Some days, he didn't go there even once.

Of course, he still had to pay rent. He shook his head. What the hell was he thinking? One way or another, they would part ways, and Aidan needed a safety net. Not that having a rented place

somewhere could count as that. What he needed more than anything was an emotional safety net, and they didn't carry that kind of stuff at Walmart. That was something that had to be homemade, and his DIY skills were close to zero.

With a sigh, he pulled another folder from the stack in front of him. He was about to start his usual tedious task of filing information no one needed when the door to the big kahuna's office opened, and his assistant walked stiffly to where Aidan sat.

For a couple of seconds, Aidan stared at her nervously. What did she want? She could use the phone if the big guy wanted him for some reason. The woman studied him with something akin to curiosity mixed with something else in her spectacled eyes and then began talking in a hushed whisper.

"The boss wants to see you, Aidan."

Those were her words, but Aidan somehow knew, from her conspiratorial tone, that they actually meant: You're in deep trouble. How he knew such a thing was a mystery even to himself, but he had been told on occasion that he could read some people.

"Right now?"

"Yes," she replied quickly and looked to her right, then to her left, as if she wanted to make certain no one was listening to their conversation.

The office was far from empty at that hour. The enthusiasm for putting in extra hours caused by the potential evaluation had waned a little, but half the squad was still hard at work. That meant that plenty of ears were standing straighter than a Doberman's that very moment. His summoning to the boss's office would not go unnoticed. Most probably, the boss's assistant knew that well. So, all in all, the hushed voices and pretenses that no one could tell they were talking about something important were all part of a charade.

Sometimes, Aidan wished he would have the guts to go ahead and tell these people some shocking truth right to their faces. Then, hopefully, he might witness the hypocritical masks slipping, and he would get to learn who the real people were underneath those travesties.

"All right," he said and got to his feet.

The assistant added nothing else and turned on her high heels, with Aidan following closely. What could that be all about? It could be either very bad or very good. The big kahuna didn't do in-between well. He thought that to be a great trait of his personality. Aidan had a different take on it. A creative department could have used less rigidity. Although Aidan could appreciate the advantages of discipline, in certain circumstances, it could also prevent people from speaking freely.

He waited for the assistant to let him enter. His boss was at his desk, his fingers making an upside V in front of him, and, as usual, his glare was impenetrable. It could mean several things, and Aidan could only hope the man would not start shouting the moment the assistant closed the door. His stomach did funny flip-flops when someone was loud suddenly and for no reason.

“Spark,” his boss finally said.

Fortunately, in a steady tone, not overloaded with unnecessary decibels.

“Sit,” came the command.

Aidan sat right away.

“Here.” The man flexed his fingers as if he had kept them that way for a long time without moving, and then pushed toward him a folder.

More things to file? Great, Aidan thought with an internal mental roll. He took it and looked inside. His eyes grew wide, and he could not keep from grinning.

“Those are some sexy numbers, Spark,” his boss said, now louder than before.

“They sure are, sir,” Aidan replied, with unhidden satisfaction.

His boss made a small gesture, cutting the air with one fist. “That’s the kind of graphs I want to see. Erect, beautiful.”

The man’s choice of words was a bit funny if he thought about it. His boss turned in his chair, pressing his hands together again and looking away from Aidan. It appeared as he was looking out the window now, and Aidan could not even see his profile completely.

“I’m wondering, though. How come Heathcliff Stone is so well behaved?”

Aidan felt a sudden uneasiness in the pit of his stomach. “Well, the deal is good for him. As for well behaved, it was only a few weeks ago that he tried to throw an orgy at his house.”

“Yes, I remember. How did that go, Spark? Did you have to hunt down naked men around his house?”

Aidan gulped. “No, sir. Mr. Stone’s guests were civil. I didn’t have to use force of any kind.”

“Mr. Stone,” his boss said, and somehow the way he spoke sounded mocking and annoying. “Is that how you address him?”

Aidan paused. What was that all about? Frantically, he began searching his brain for an answer that sounded right. He decided for some honesty. “We’re mostly on a first name basis, sir. Since I have to spend so much time with him, he insisted that we should drop formalities.”

“And are you comfortable with that?”

His boss was up to something. He could tell. What it was, that was not easy to guess.

“Yes. Why shouldn’t I be? We’re only eight years apart, and he’s not crazy about talking formally, anyway. With anyone,” he added quickly.

“True,” his boss admitted with a short nod. “Is he an easy person to be around?”

“What do you mean, sir?”

With calculated moves, his boss fiddled with another folder on his desk, and, after what looked like moments of deliberation met with extreme wariness from Aidan’s part, he finally opened it. With the same hesitation, he turned it toward Aidan.

There were pictures. Of him and Heathcliff. He held his breath, and stopped himself in time, as he wished to reach for the folder and check to see if there were any racy ones. But his boss was staring at him, like a hawk at its prey, even if he didn’t look up to know that. He could feel it like a small laser dot set on him, ready to fire.

The picture on top of all was of him and Heathcliff at a restaurant. They had both agreed on being cautious about PDA manifestations, so nothing incriminating was there. But what about the others? Until proven guilty, Aidan decided to play it cool.

The shot had been taken from a fair distance, so the image was a tad blurry. Yet, Aidan found it strange to look at himself and the man he was sharing a bed and many other things with, from this side of the fence. It made him feel somewhat vulnerable and anxious. That was how some celebrities had to feel when paparazzi took pictures of them at the beach when vacationing privately. This felt, without a doubt, like an invasion of privacy.

Even if they weren’t touching, or doing anything else that could qualify as a breach of contract, they were clearly happy in that picture. They were smiling at each other, their heads leaned towards the small empty space between them as if they were trying to reach for something they both wanted.

“I often have lunch with him,” Aidan said, hoping his voice didn’t sound as unnatural and stiff as it seemed to his ears.

“Please look at the rest,” his boss encouraged him.

He pretended to be a bit surprised, but he began browsing through the content of the folder, slowly, with measured gestures, so that he didn’t appear too impatient. The candid shots offered nothing that could make him worried. The person taking the pictures hadn’t gained access inside Heathcliff’s house, so there was no actual reason to consider himself in danger in any way.



“What is this all about?” Aidan questioned, measuring his words, beat by beat.

He waited, although his boss appeared to ponder on what to say next. Maybe it was some strategy to have him babble some inconvenient truth. Aidan had no intention to fall for such an easy scheme.

“Rumor has it that Heathcliff Stone found someone.”

Aidan remained silent. If his boss wanted to tell him something, he should go ahead and say it, loud and clear.

“Is it true?” his boss set his hawk-like eyes on him.

“Not that I know of,” Aidan replied while addressing a quick, guilty apology towards his mom and dad who had taught him not to lie.

Technically, he wasn't lying. Heathcliff had stopped teasing him – not that it served to prevent or decrease the rhythm of his falling for the guy – and that meant that his mentioning of having someone special during his livestream that time could be overlooked as a joke.

“All right. So, it was a ruse of his,” his boss said, apparently mostly to himself, as his eyes moved away from Aidan. “How do you feel about homosexual people, Spark?”

“How do I --?” Aidan lost his voice and coughed.

“You can be candid with me. Although,” his boss looked sharply at him, “I must warn you that I could not tolerate even the slightest sign of homophobia in this office.”

“Homophobia?!” Aidan shouted this time. “Did I somehow come across as ... Sir, I don't understand!”

The man waved as if he wanted Aidan to chill and be at ease. “It's nothing you said or did. We are more than happy with how well you keep Heathcliff Stone in check. And the results,” he tapped on the folder with the graphs on his desk, “speak for themselves. And for your performance, of course.”

“If it's nothing I said or did,” Aidan tried to choose his next words carefully, “then did anyone else say or do something that made you think of my having something against gay people? The fact that I get along with Mr. Stone ... Heathcliff so well should be proof enough that --”

His boss put up one hand to stop him again. “I am asking this because what I will tell you next is both confidential and delicate. You see, Spark, a lot of people might make it look like they're okay with various categories of people.” The man looked to the ceiling, as if some speech whisperer was there, giving him cues on how to choose his words or express them.

Aidan followed with his eyes and then shook his head. "That might be, sir, but that's not me. I do not pretend I like Heathcliff Stone."

He almost bit his tongue as soon as the words left his mouth.

His boss continued as if he hadn't been interrupted. "You see, your taking our precious marketing asset to restaurants and other places where he might like to hang out may look harmless to you, but not to everyone else. Some people might interpret it as a sign that something is going on between you and him."

Aidan could feel his hands getting cold, and an unpleasant squeeze roiling his gut. "Nothing's going on," he said, his voice low and hesitant. "It's a business relationship, nothing else."

"Of course." His boss just nodded. "So here comes the delicate situation I wanted to talk to you about. You're okay with Heathcliff Stone, as long as you two are mere acquaintances that happen to get along. But what if I told you that some tabloids might say otherwise? Would your hidden homophobia rear its ugly head then?"

"What hidden homophobia?!" Aidan was rightfully scandalized right now. Even if he weren't gay, just having someone blame him of such a thing was appalling.

"You might not know about it until someone starts talking about you being in a homosexual relationship with another man." His boss pointed at him as if Aidan could suddenly grow horns and begin spouting homophobic bullshit. "Speak clearly. Would you feel offended, or attacked in the very core of your masculinity, if such a thing happened?"

Aidan remained speechless for a full couple of seconds. He could not blurt out at his boss that he was gay, as it seemed a bad idea, but the man's logic was making him beyond astonished. "I would not feel offended. Nor attacked in my masculinity, or whatever," he babbled.

"Are you sure?" His boss leaned over the table and looked squarely at him.

"Yes, I'm sure. Definitely," Aidan said quickly.

"Good." The man leaned back into his chair and threw another look at the ceiling. "Then you'd be okay with certain publications presenting you as Heathcliff Stone's secret lover, and that special someone that he talked about a few weeks ago."

Great. Aidan swallowed with difficulty. He had told Heathcliff to stop teasing him, and now his boss wanted to do it, and with the same thing. "It would be a lie, sir," he pointed out. "I am not Heathcliff Stone's special someone."

"Details, Spark." His boss rocked in his chair, causing a tinny, irritating sound. "It's good for us if Heathcliff Stone appears as someone with serious intentions about getting hitched."

Getting hitched. Surreptitiously, Aidan pinched the back of his left hand. Somehow, that morning, he must have failed to wake up and now he was walking in a dream. "I would not lie, sir," he said as sternly as he could. "If asked --"

"You don't have to do anything." His boss stopped him. "We just need to know if you mind it."

We. What did his boss mean by that? How many people were in on this? Aidan felt uneasy. Even if he were to admit he was gay, that would not make the situation more manageable. Because, as gay as he was, he wasn't Heathcliff's special someone and no one was getting hitched.

"I don't mind it, but I don't see --"

"These pictures will get published, eventually," his boss said as he pointed at the other folder. "This works for us."

"Even if I'm someone from the company working with Heathcliff? Wouldn't that seem odd? Or, I don't know, against the company's policies?"

"Well, we don't encourage our employees to have non-contractual relationships with our business partners since their loyalties should be clear. We know that's not what's going on here, which is good for our peace of mind. As for what it's projected by media or otherwise, it's beyond our control. But if it works for us, it works," his boss said with finality. "I wanted to prevent an unforeseen reaction on your part. As long as you don't mind being talked by some tabloids as if you were Heathcliff Stone's lover, that's something we want to work with. Without anyone knowing, of course."

Aidan wanted to argue against that kind of logic. "I hope I don't have to speak to tabloids and all that."

"If they ever contact you, only two words should be left in your vocabulary when talking to them. No comment."

"Oh, I see."

"That's it, Spark. I'm glad you're not against this and that you're not homophobic. Also, it's a good thing that you're not, let's say, batting for the same team as our main marketing asset."

"Why is that?" Aidan couldn't control his mouth, ignoring his boss's efforts to sound hip for some reason.

"Because this is helpful for your career. If you had been homosexual, I would have never sent you to work with Heathcliff Stone. Instead, you would have probably shown good skills at filing reports and nothing else, as far as this particular contract was concerned, at least."

The good thing was that he hadn't blurted out the truth about his sexual orientation. Now he needed to keep it a secret.

"How would that have influenced ... things?" he dared to ask.

"I don't need drama in my office," his boss said, puffing out his chest. "Plus, it would have made me question your loyalty towards the company. Heathcliff Stone is a true charmer, or so I heard. He would have seduced you, without a doubt. Just to be sure," the man seemed to ponder for a second, "where are you on the Kinsey scale, Spark?"

"Nowhere near being in danger of any kind from Heathcliff Stone, sir," Aidan lied without one ounce of hesitation this time.

"Good." His boss slammed his hands against the desk, startling Aidan, like usual. "This could be the opportunity you have been looking for."

"About the promotion --" Aidan tried to interject.

"We'll see later about that. But you almost have it in the bag, Spark. Dismissed."

Aidan stood up and walked out of the office in a daze. On one hand, he should have been happy. He was finally close to the promotion he was hoping for. But, on the other hand ... What the hell was his boss thinking? Heathcliff was as family-friendly as possible, as things were. There was no need for such a charade. Should he tell Heathcliff about it? After all, the tabloids might not follow him and pester him with questions, but it was as clear as day that they would do that with Heathcliff.

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Unlike other times, when he had no issues with driving straight to Heathcliff's house, Aidan took a longer route and watched warily for signs of paparazzi on motorbikes and whatnot at every stop. He was foolish that he was suddenly so afraid that he could make the subject of some juicy gossip, worthy of getting printed on ordinary paper that could have had better uses. But that was happening, even if only by association. Damn, couldn't some B-list celebrity have their sex tape leaked so that he could breathe right now?

As he sat in front of the door, waiting for Heathcliff to open, as usual, he stole nervous glances around him. But it looked like the street was deserted at that hour, and there were no paparazzi armed with the latest technology to snap photos of him while hidden in the beautiful rhododendron bushes populating the neighbors' lawn. Also, the air didn't buzz with the mechanical sound of drones floating nearby. Clearly, he was getting paranoid, and it was not something easy to deal with.

"Hey," Heathcliff was all a smile in the door, "are you a little late? I feel like I've been waiting for you for --"

“Good evening, Mr. Stone,” Aidan cut him short. “I’m here to tell you something important about our contract.”

He hoped Heathcliff would let him in, without saying anything else. Heathcliff knew how to take a hint and stepped aside, to let him walk inside. As soon as the door was closed, Aidan exhaled and let his briefcase drop on the floor.

“Mr. Stone?” Heathcliff asked, sounding a bit amused. “If you want us to play like that, you just need to say it.”

Aidan glared for a moment, and then he shook his head. “I had the weirdest one-on-one with the big kahuna, and trust me, bedroom games are the last thing on my mind right now.”

“Oh,” Heathcliff said. “I hope you’re not taken off the contract.”

“No. It’s quite the opposite. I’m supposed to be in it deeper than ever, and I might even get that promotion I was telling you about.”

Heathcliff moved closer to him and put a hand on his shoulder. “Does it mean that I can still kiss you now?” he asked playfully.

Aidan looked up and smiled. “Yeah. Sorry about the weird introduction.”

He hooked one arm over Heathcliff’s shoulder, too, and pulled him into a kiss. Things were so familiar and nice between them. Aidan would hate to see them end sooner than he was ready for. Well, he wasn’t sure he would ever be prepared for that, but at least, he didn’t want it to be over now.

Heathcliff’s lips closed over his mouth, and Aidan melted into the embrace that followed. It was a good thing that Heathcliff kept him close because, as usual, his knees tended to gain the consistency of molasse, just like the blood in his veins, as soon as he was kissed like that.

Heathcliff Stone didn’t have to be an influencer, a fitness instructor with the hottest body on social media, or even some sex expert. Aidan was pretty sure anyone who ever got kissed like that was bound to lose his head. His boss had guessed right. Heathcliff had seduced him, and he was hopeless.

“Now,” Heathcliff said slowly, as they reluctantly let go of the kiss, “what worries you, cutie?”

“In a single word: paparazzi,” Aidan replied.

“Really? They have left me alone lately.”

“Well, they might not do that for long. You see, my boss showed me some pictures today. Of you and me. And told me they would get published, eventually.”

Heathcliff turned rigid in his arms and frowned. "I will have a serious talk with my security company. This house and its perimeter are supposed to be completely intruder-free."

"Oh, don't worry," Aidan hurried to say. "They weren't of the intimate kind. Just us, you know, on the street, in restaurants, stuff like that."

Heathcliff relaxed. "Why didn't you say so?" he said and ruffled Aidan's hair. "I thought I needed to thrash the entire house to find hidden cameras. I do like the current interior decoration, and it would be a shame to get rid of it like this."

Aidan giggled. "I'm glad that you worry more about renovations than about your reputation."

"Why should I worry about that?" Heathcliff asked. "As far as I know, we kept our hands to ourselves, well, with some difficulty on my part, I admit, so there could be nothing compromising in those pictures. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, you're right. But you won't believe people today and their obsession about others' lives," Aidan said with a deep sigh.

"Tell me about it." Heathcliff laughed. "Now, seriously, what got you so worried? And that kind of stuff, like two people having launch doesn't sell tabloids, and paparazzi know it very well."

"How would a title like 'Heathcliff Stone is getting hitched to his secret lover' sell the said publications?" Aidan said right away.

Heathcliff's eyes grew wide and then shone with amusement. "Is this what they think?"

For some reason, Heathcliff didn't appear disturbed or even annoyed by the idea. Aidan narrowed his eyes. "Are you trying to tell me that Heathcliff Stone, bachelor extraordinaire, would not have a fit over being presented by tabloids as the next sexiest groom of the year?"

"Is there such a thing? The sexiest groom of the year?" Heathcliff smiled at him.

Aidan shrugged. "I don't know. I suppose. Why? Do you need that title on your prize list for some reason?"

Heathcliff's smile was warm and held not one ounce of sarcasm. Most of the time, the guy seemed an open book, but right now, Aidan had no idea what to make of that smile. There was no reply, and Aidan wasn't expecting one. His question had been rhetorical.

"Anyways, the idea is that my boss thinks I should play along with this. Not play along, in the sense that I should start going out with you and make out in public, but in the sense that I should not deny it, either. It's fucked up, right? Just so you know, my boss doesn't suspect a thing, and it would be best that he remains as ignorant of this as he is right now. Apparently, it was a good call not being out at work. I would have never gotten to work with you if they knew about me."

He was babbling, and Heathcliff's silence on the whole thing was unnerving.

"Really?" Heathcliff drawled. "Were they afraid I could corrupt you?"

"They're right," Aidan pointed out. "You did corrupt me. But they don't know that, and that's how things are supposed to stay."

"I don't know. It would be nice to go outside and just hold your hand, you know. I haven't sneaked about like this since I was a teenager."

"Are you serious?" Aidan checked Heathcliff's face for signs that he was pulling his leg.

There were none.

"Come on. It's perfect. Your boss will think you're willing to go the extra mile for the sake of your company and the success of the shakes you guys are selling, and I will get to show you off in public."

Taken aback, Aidan looked closely at Heathcliff. "It would be a lie. A charade. Are you really okay with that?"

Heathcliff shrugged. "I can live with it. What? Don't tell you totally hate the idea."

"I kind of do," Aidan mumbled and looked down. "I'm not supposed to appear in public as your lover. That's not how we are. And especially not like your half, or whatever, someone you'd have serious intentions to pursue with."

"Aidan," Heathcliff took his hand and squeezed it, "you worry way too much for someone this young. Just go with the flow, at least this time. You might like it."

"This time?" Aidan expressed his surprise. "All I've been doing with you is going with the flow. Sometimes I don't recognize myself."

"And don't you like it?" Heathcliff wiggled his eyebrows at him, making him laugh.

"I do. Maybe too much."

Oh, damn, he and his mouth. He needed to take that back. But it was too late, as Heathcliff swept him into his arms and began walking with him up the stairs.

"What are you doing? Seriously, put me down," he protested.

"You'll eat a bit later tonight," Heathcliff said. "I'm sorry about this, bunny boy, but tonight is sex on an empty stomach. I'll be quick. I promise."

"You don't have to hurry," Aidan protested again, but for a different reason.

Heathcliff laughed. "Then I won't. And that's also a promise."

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He wanted and didn't want to take his time. But Aidan had offered him an unexpected gift tonight, and Heathcliff felt like he could not control himself. It was hard enough to keep from telling Aidan all the time how much he liked him and how special he was to him.

So people would find out who Aidan was, in a very roundabout way, but they would. Heathcliff could not be happier. While Aidan was like putty in his arms while they made love, he was still guarded and skittish when he caught whiff of the slightest talk of feelings. Therefore, Heathcliff had been good, and stopped teasing Aidan, or better said, he had stopped saying the truth over and over again.

Now he could only think of how happy he would be when they would go outside, maybe hold hands and touch each other, instead of walking at a fair distance from one another. Such a simple thing was making him feel like his heart was on the point of bursting out of his chest.

He had been a tad too in a hurry to prepare Aidan thoroughly, as usual. To compensate, he moved inside slowly, letting the other adjust to his length and girth. "Does it hurt?" he whispered lovingly into Aidan's ear.

There were many ways in which he liked to take Aidan. The view from the back was the sexiest, but, right now, Heathcliff wanted to be all over his lover, and feel him close, so the missionary position was the best.

"No," Aidan whispered back. "You worry so much sometimes, Heath. I'm not made of glass, and it's been like a month or so since I'm not a virgin anymore."

"Are you trying to tell me you don't like me to go at it slowly like this?" Heathcliff chuckled.

Whatever his precious bunny wanted, he would get it. But Heathcliff hoped Aidan would ask to go slowly, too, because it felt intimate and so good that he wanted to keep his lover there for hours and enjoy his body, his beautiful smile, and his amazing expression when he came.

"It's good," Aidan pulled him closer, "but it may be too much."

He wanted to ask how that could be too much, but Aidan shut him up with a kiss. The young man was getting better at everything, and at kissing, too. Heathcliff could not distinctively remember kissing other men, except for Aidan. Their tongues were dancing while Heathcliff moved amply, making Aidan shiver and squirm under him in pleasure, by his soft, muffled moans, lost in the kiss.

He had an idea why it was too much for Aidan, as it was for him, too. Their climax was not volcanic, as it often happened, no fireworks, but it came like a flood, inescapable, and, as much



as they wanted to postpone it, their mingled breath grew harsher, faster, and they lost into each other, coming together, like he had no idea was possible so many times, with the same person.

The flood eventually drew back to the sea. But they stood like that, kissing softly, drinking each other, enjoying themselves, with no worries about the world behind his front door.

He was decided to take Aidan through it, and conquer the world outside, too. With that kind of confidence by their side, Aidan would believe him.

Heathcliff felt like laughing as he pulled himself, not without regrets, from Aidan's arms.

"What's funny?" Aidan asked, but he seemed amused, too.

"I'm not laughing at you, but at myself," he replied.

"Really? Why?"

"I think I lost something, but I don't care at all. What I'm winning in return is just so much better."

"Does coming usually do this to you? Make you talk funny?"

Heathcliff laughed harder. "Don't worry. It's a secret you already know."

"I do?" Aidan pushed himself up and looked at Heathcliff from above.

"Yeah," Heathcliff caressed his lover's sweaty forehead, letting his hand drop lower and rest on his cheek. "You do."

### *Chapter Twenty-Three – At A Stop*

“So, are you ready?” Heathcliff looked over his shoulder at Aidan. “Come, take my hand. I promise I won’t be all over you once you set foot outside the house.”

“I have a feeling this might be a little too much,” Aidan said. “What am I going to say at work about this?”

“Just that you are ensuring the success of the company through all means necessary. I’m sure they will appreciate it.”

“The scary thing is that you may be right.” Aidan grimaced, but hurried to take his hand. “Wait, what am I going to say if someone asks me something?”

“Aidan, we’re just going for ice cream. It’s not like there’s an entire paparazzi army waiting for us behind the door. No one will ask you anything, not for the foreseeable future, at least. Unless you want us to attend some social functions together. Then you might worry.”

“I’m glad you’re so chill.” That glare only made Aidan look cuter, not as fierce as he might have wanted. “But I’m not used to people sticking microphones under my nose.”

Heathcliff laughed. “You’re a bit old-fashioned for your age. People don’t stick microphones under your nose anymore. They harass you on Twitter.”

Operation ‘trap the bunny’ was going too well to compromise it by being too impatient. “Of course, we could always stay indoors if you’re so uncomfortable with this.”

Aidan shifted from one foot to another. “I feel like I’m playing along with a farce. And I am. Only that it’s the truth. I mean, no! We’re not like that!”

Heathcliff bit his lips not to laugh. “C’mon, Aidan, deal or not, you have to face the facts. We’re sleeping together and we’re exclusive. And you actually do spend almost every night here, and eat my food.”

“And wear clothes you buy for me, and watch cable you’re paying for ... I’m sure I don’t even buy the toothpaste myself anymore.”

Aidan’s hesitation was endearing, but he needed to play carefully around it, not to trigger some reaction he didn’t want from the scaredy bunny.

“If it makes you feel better, buy the toothpaste you want. But, right now, let’s go. We’ll just hold hands and have ice cream. I promise not to kiss you. Unless you want me to, of course.”

“Okay.” Aidan exhaled and finally walked over the threshold.

Heathcliff could feel warmth radiating from where their hands were linked together tightly.

“We don’t really have to hold hands from the house to the car. There’s no one to see us, and I will need both hands to drive, anyway.” Aidan was trying so hard to put on a brave face that Heathcliff wanted nothing else but to grab him and kiss him hard until they would both melt.

“We do need the practice, though,” Heathcliff replied right away and postponed any thoughts of jumping Aidan’s sexy bones in front of the house.

However, he had no intention to let go of Aidan’s hand, and it was a shame that two hands were needed for driving. Heathcliff wanted to make Aidan happy, by taking him to the place where they both decided that truly had the best ice cream, but he was the one feeling like a kid.

He could not care less about paparazzi, and what Aidan’s boss thought, but Heathcliff was a man who grabbed opportunities when they presented themselves. The end justified the means and he was not one to overlook the chance he had to walk outside with Aidan, hold his hand, and feel great about it, too.

Michael would laugh so hard if he knew. Heathcliff planned on telling his friend absolutely everything, but all in due time. For now, he had Aidan to concern himself with, and he didn’t want to think of anyone else.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Aidan asked, as soon as they were in the car, and he kicked the vehicle into gear.

“Like that how?” Heathcliff asked, although he knew very well what Aidan meant.

“Like you’re in ... I don’t know! You said you won’t tease me anymore.” Aidan got defensive and pretended to focus on driving.

“I’m not teasing you,” Heathcliff replied and moved his eyes away from Aidan. “Sometimes I wish I did just so that you wouldn’t get like this without a reason.”

His words were met with silence, but Heathcliff didn’t look again at Aidan. He got a little pissed sometimes, not at Aidan, but at himself. To shake off his playboy persona, as Aidan had called it, he needed patience. And sometimes, his patience just wore itself thin, and he also could not help himself.

Words had never been an issue for him. He was a man of action, of course, but he could have never thought of himself as being a poor communicator. His millions of followers on social media told him that he did communicate well enough, but, apparently, Aidan could not believe him.

“Are you pulling my leg right now?” Aidan’s slightly nervous voice interrupted his morose musings. “Because there’s this vibe coming off you, so you’re either really pissed, or you just want to tease me even more.”

“It’s neither.” Heathcliff sighed. He stared out the window, at the moving trees and houses. “Don’t let me bother you, and I mean it.”

He needed to get himself in check. Bunny boy was still nervous around him when they got close to talking real feelings. He would not blow it up, by showing his impatience and scaring Aidan away. Now, he needed to think of something, and diffuse the tense atmosphere between them.

A hand came to rest on his thigh and squeezed gently. Heathcliff smiled. That was why he liked Aidan so much. He was such a nice guy, as Michael had pointed out. Right now, he didn’t want Heathcliff upset, so he was trying to mend things his own way. But Heathcliff didn’t want Aidan to come to him and admit to feelings that maybe he had, just because he felt pressured.

He let his hand rest on top of Aidan’s, and caressed it slowly. Still looking out the window, he decided to joke. “I thought you needed both hands for driving.”

“I have a spoiled fitness guru on my hands, so I need to break the rules once in a while. And we’re at a stop.”

“Of course. That we are,” Heathcliff said quietly, mostly to himself.

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Aidan could lick the ice cream glass bowl clean and still feel like he hadn’t had enough. Heathcliff knew good food, like he knew good life, and like he knew good sex. No, he needed to take everything back, and replace ‘good’ with ‘awesome’. It was unnerving to have Heathcliff stare at him with his fascinating eyes and pretend he felt nothing. Hiding his nervousness with jokes was getting a little tiring.

Heathcliff smiled at him. “Want seconds?”

“Seriously? Aren’t you afraid I’m going to get fat?”

“I don’t think you’re in any danger for now. You’re working yourself to the bone.”

“I can’t slow down now,” Aidan said apologetically. “That evaluation should be coming soon. I want to say, Heath. Thank you so much for going the extra mile with the contract and all. The numbers are really looking up.”

“So does that mean that you’ll get that promotion you so much want?”

“Yeah. I mean, if there’s any justice in the world, I should. Sorry, I didn’t mean it like I’m just riding your coattails. You’re practically doing all the work.”

“That’s not true and you know it. I’m just doing my part. I know that modesty is a virtue, Aidan, but I’m afraid that not when it comes to business. I’m not telling you to stop being who you truly are, but give yourself a little more credit. Ever since I signed this contract with your company,

I've only interacted with you. You have taken care of everything. And who's benefitting? The company, I suppose, right? You earned that promotion. If they don't give it to you after this, quit."

Aidan looked up at Heathcliff, and noted how serious he looked. "I suppose you're right," he said with a deep sigh. "But what will I do? I mean, taking it from scratch with another company feels like a bit of work. I should have at least two or three years of experience under the belt so that I don't have to apply for an entry level position again."

"I told you. I'll find something for you. Michael can't wait to work with you if you want. Don't worry about things like that."

"I can't not worry," Aidan said, feeling a little stubborn. "I should rely on my own power to get through this. Relying on you to find me employment wouldn't feel right."

"Why?" Heathcliff seemed interested in learning the reason, and he wasn't just asking.

Aidan played with his teaspoon and searched for the right words. "I would be just like anyone else then. You know; the people who sleep with you so that they get something in return."

"I see. But you're not anything like them. You're special, and I hope you don't want me to repeat that until I'm blue in the face."

Aidan put the teaspoon on his napkin with studied gestures. "I'm glad to hear that."

He could swear Heathcliff had exhaled in what seemed like a sign of satisfaction just then, but he didn't look up to check.

"I understand that you want to succeed on your own. I appreciate that a lot about you. But even the most successful people you see, they all have friends in high places, and they don't hesitate to make use of those relationships when they must. It's called networking, bunny boy."

"Networking, right," Aidan said. "I somehow never got good at that. I have no idea why. I'm no good at kissing ass, either."

"I would beg to differ," Heathcliff said smoothly.

Aidan snickered. "Anyway, I'll see what happens with that evaluation. After that, you will know that I need your help as I'm sure I'll come crying by your door."

He gulped and looked down quickly. Sometimes he was way too honest. What would Heathcliff think of him now? Most probably that he was some crybaby that couldn't keep it together.

"I'm betting on it," Heathcliff said with a low, sexy chuckle. "You'll find a shoulder to cry on, if worse comes to worst, don't ever doubt that. Of course, I will apply some more efficient methods of comforting you once you're done crying."

Aidan smiled. “You know what, Stone? You’re the real deal. I’m amazed how I don’t have to fight dozens of handsome men over you right now.”

“Hmm, maybe because I’ve told everyone off since we’re together?”

Aidan stared at Heathcliff for a couple of seconds, not knowing what to say. His belly was full of butterflies, again. “You really did that?”

“Yes, of course. I am committed to you, bunny boy. How come you’re so surprised?”

Aidan shook his head. “It’s hard for me to take you seriously sometimes. I gotta give it to you. You’re really smooth. But I have no idea what else you would like me to give you. It’s like you practically own me. I’m pretty sure I forgot how to buy socks or bread or something essential that I can’t even remember.”

“Am I overbearing?” Heathcliff leaned over the table.

For three exact heartbeats, Aidan looked into Heathcliff’s gorgeous eyes. Without overthinking his next move, he leaned over, too, and kissed Heathcliff on the lips. He withdrew right away and stole a few nervous looks around. The ice cream parlor was almost empty and it didn’t look like anyone noticed his little indiscretion.

“Wow,” Heathcliff whispered, “what was that all about? Could you do it again?”

“Shut up,” Aidan murmured, his cheeks on fire.

“You can’t kiss me like this and brush it off,” Heathcliff warned playfully.

“I’m not brushing it off,” Aidan replied. “I --” he trailed off.

He wanted to tell Heathcliff, what had been on his mind lately, but he was still too scared. There was a chance Heathcliff was serious about him, too, but Aidan felt that saying the words would rip the magical veil under which he happily enjoyed all of Heathcliff’s undivided attention. Maybe later, when there would be no contract and secret deals to bind them. That sounded like a good decision. They would see then if they still felt the same.

“What would you like to do next?” Heathcliff asked, helping him out of his dilemma.

“I’d like to spend the day with you,” Aidan said simply. “In bed,” he added quickly and looked down. “I’ve come late the entire week.”

“I thought you would like to have more fun out of the house,” Heathcliff pointed out.

“Sure, if that’s what you want,” Aidan hurried to say. “We don’t have to go back just yet. What would you like to do? And if there’s something you’d like to do on your own --”

“Aidan,” Heathcliff interrupted him, “breathe a little.”

He was pretty sure he could not blush more than he did already. But now, even the tips of his ears were on fire.

“Let’s go home. Your plan sounds pretty good. Amazing, if you ask me,” Heathcliff whispered conspiratorially and winked at him.

“All right,” Aidan agreed right away.

He was doomed without any chance of escape. Now he could barely wait for their contract to be over to check if he could continue seeing Heathcliff without being bound by work related stuff. But that was still many months away. Nonetheless, he would keep his mouth shut until the right moment.

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Heathcliff could tell that something was on Aidan’s mind. It was most probably just his wishful thinking, but at the ice cream parlor, Aidan had seemed on the point of saying something important, after that surprising and amazingly pleasant kiss. He could ask directly, but he knew his bunny well enough now to realize that he would not get an answer. The best he could do was to wait patiently and, of course, to have mind blowing sex with Aidan until he was ready.

“So, now that we’re here --” Heathcliff let the sentence in suspense and made a full pirouette, presenting himself in all his naked glory.

He loved it when Aidan looked at him like he wanted to eat him whole, and was pretty sure he would not get tired of that feeling anytime soon.

Aidan didn’t wait some invitation and jumped from the bed, directly into his arms, hugging him tightly. “Am I lucky or what?” he whispered into his ear. “I have Heathcliff Stone all to myself. Some people would hate me if they knew. Wait, now that we’re holding hands, they might know, right?”

Heathcliff hiked Aidan into his arms, planting both hands on his partner’s shapely ass. “I don’t care if you don’t care. Now say it, bunny boy, what would you like to do with me, now that you have me all to yourself?”

“Hmm,” Aidan purred into his ear, “I would do you if that’s what you’re asking.”

“Do me?” Heathcliff chuckled. “All in due time, cutie. I should let you grow up a little.”

“C’mon, I’m plenty grown up,” Aidan pushed himself up and down in Heathcliff’s arms like a spoiled kid, to prove the opposite of his words.

“Anything else? You’ll have to earn that first.”

Aidan pouted and bit Heathcliff's ear. "If I get that promotion, I'll fuck you," he whispered.

"Wow, negotiating terms, are you?" Heathcliff laughed.

"Well, you want me to grow up. If I get that promotion, I might grow up a little."

"Hmm." Heathcliff pretended to ponder over it, as he sat on the bed, with Aidan tightly in his arms.

Aidan's ass pressed deliciously against his cock in this position. He did have a request of his own, and it was a good moment to bring it up.

"I might be able to afford toothpaste. And bread," Aidan said solemnly.

"Ah, that's totally grown up stuff," Heathcliff agreed with a small laugh.

"Now seriously," Aidan pushed himself back to stare at Heathcliff, "wouldn't it be a nice gift for me?"

"You brat," Heathcliff laughed, "according to you, I'm practically the one handing you that promotion. Isn't that a nice enough gift?"

Aidan pouted, but his cheeks were puffing out, like a chipmunk's, a clear sign that he was trying hard not to laugh.

"Well, we could arrange something," Heathcliff continued. "But I want something first."

"All right," Aidan said right away, his eyes lighting up.

"You may not know it, but I get tested regularly."

"Because you're in the health business and you must be healthy, right?" Aidan asked.

"Yeah. And also, well, because of my rather hectic sex life, as some may call it," Heathcliff added.

"Ah," realization dawned in Aidan's eyes.

"It's a routine for me since I'm always careful, but I care about this. I'm not as irresponsible as some people may think."

"They don't know you. You're a very responsible person," Aidan said with finality.

Heathcliff smiled. "I'm glad you have such a good opinion of me."

"It's all justified," Aidan hurried to say.



Heathcliff caressed Aidan's ass slowly, inching closer and closer to the crack. "Can you guess what I'm asking, Aidan?" he said gently.

Aidan's breathing was growing deeper. "I guess you want us to go ... bareback?"

"Hmm, nice to see you got your vocabulary in order," Heathcliff cooed and licked Aidan's ear.

Aidan giggled and shivered slightly. "That would be so hot," he whispered. "Wait. Not until I get tested, too, right?"

Heathcliff laughed. "Why? Are you fucking someone else on the side?"

A small huff followed. "Of course not. It's just common courtesy, right?"

"Well, I basically took your virginity, so we have nothing to worry about. When was the last time you had your health checked?"

"When I got hired," Aidan answered promptly. "I mean, a little before that. I just thought it would be good to know that I'm perfectly fine to join the workforce," he added with a small laugh. "And, I admit, as pathetic as I may sound, that all my sexual adventures took place before I got hired."

"Sexual adventures? What? That hand job?"

"And that blowjob," Aidan said quickly.

"Don't remind me," Heathcliff said dryly.

"I must. It's good for my self-esteem. Let's say it would count for not coming into this relationship being completely clueless."

"Relationship?" Heathcliff nuzzled Aidan's neck slowly.

"Okay, deal, not relationship. Sorry," Aidan babbled.

"Nah, nah, nah, you're not taking it back. It's a relationship. And quite a special one," Heathcliff added. "I haven't gone bareback in like a decade or so."

"So you did it? With whom?" Aidan expressed his curiosity.

"A very special friend, a very long time ago."

"So, is it better? Than with a condom?" Aidan questioned.

"My memories are hazy. So there's only one way to tell. What do you say? Are you up for it?"

Aidan seemed to ponder over something, his eyes darting sideways, but he took one of Heathcliff's hands and placed it over his hard cock. "I'd say I'm very much up for it."

"You're such a little brat sometimes." Heathcliff kissed Aidan deeply.

"Is it a bad thing?" Aidan asked breathlessly as they broke the kiss.

"No. I absolutely love it."

He should just bite the bullet and say what he wanted to say. But Heathcliff could not treat this lightly because it was impossible to take it back. Michael would tell him to go ahead, yet he hesitated, and not because he was unsure of his feelings, but mostly because he feared Aidan wouldn't believe him.

Things would be much easier if Aidan was the first one to say it. If he needed to wait for a long time to hear it, he was willing to wait. At one point, Aidan would realize how real things were between them. No one spent so much time together without feelings getting involved.

How long was he willing to wait? He looked into Aidan's eyes and knew. He would wait for as long as it took.

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Aidan squirmed in Heathcliff's arms, adjusting his position. "Oh, so we only need lube, right?" he whispered, enjoying the way Heathcliff's fingers were slowly caressing his ass. "I bet it feels so good. I can't barely wait to do you, too."

"First, you should get that promotion, right?" Heathcliff chuckled, sending eddies of warmth up and down his spine.

Aidan could not understand why some people were so convinced that couples in long relationships ended up no longer enjoying sex. He was pretty certain his parents were happy that way still, regardless of how long they had been together.

He was getting ahead of himself again. He had been seeing Heathcliff for only a couple of months or maybe a little more. He wasn't counting, mostly because of feeling so blissfully happy in Heathcliff's arms to care. So they might still be in that stage of their relationship when they liked to do it.

However, by how much they were going at it, one of them should have gotten bored by now. And by one of them, he meant Heathcliff. The guy seemed to be as far from getting bored as he was, and right now, he wanted to take things a notch up.

Relationship. Aidan liked the sound of that word. And Heathcliff had insisted that it wasn't just some deal between them. They genuinely liked each other, and Aidan hoped he would have the guts to say the words at the right moment.

Fortunately, he had plenty of time to prepare, and by then, they would both know better where they stood.

Heathcliff helped him to lie on his back and placed himself between his legs. For some reason, he was a tiny bit nervous. Well, if he were to think of it, he was aroused, and more than usual, almost to the point that it felt a bit unbearable.

"Could you hurry?" he complained, and grabbed his cock to make it behave.

Heathcliff was rubbing the tip of his middle finger against his hole, dipping it from time to time in lube. Waiting to be penetrated was a bit maddening like this.

"I want you relaxed." Heathcliff smiled at him from above.

"I don't think I can be that. My dick is this hard," he pointed out, by waving his cock while holding it by the base, "and I'm so horny I can't think."

Heathcliff chuckled at his predicament. "You're not the only one. I can't wait to be inside you completely."

"So just hurry already. Will you, um, come inside me?"

"Would you like that?"

"Yeah, I totally would," Aidan said without one ounce of hesitation.

"Then here I go," Heathcliff teased, and pushed himself inside Aidan, sliding in with little difficulty.

Their bodies know each other well now, and Aidan was over the moon with that. Heathcliff was still big, and he was still tight, but everywhere they touched was heaven, and penetration was no exception.

Aidan shivered as Heathcliff took a bit of time to let him adjust to his girth. "I can tell it's different, or maybe it's just my imagination. My very horny imagination," he murmured.

Heathcliff covered him and pressed their lips together. He began moving slowly, and Aidan helped him, by pushing himself up, at just the right angle, to meet him in between.

"I do think it feels different," Heathcliff said, and there was a small trace of astonishment in his voice as he did that.

Heathcliff hadn't had unprotected sex with anyone else in a long, long time, and that thought was making Aidan happy beyond belief. So he did have something over Matt or Han or that sexy friend of Heathcliff at the birthday party.

He held Heathcliff tightly and raised his hands to caress the short hair at the back of his partner's head. Running his hands up and down Heathcliff's back during sex was one of his favorite things. He could feel those strong muscles rippling under his fingers, and it made him feel happy for some reason. Heathcliff went through all that to fuck him, his entire body taut and working toward making both of them come.

Aidan felt selfish. He wanted Heathcliff to be his alone, and, while he knew that might not be possible, at least, during these moments of amazing intimacy, he liked to believe it was so.

Heathcliff didn't control his voice and breathing as his rocking of hips, hammering hard Aidan's ass, intensified. "Fuck, Aidan, your ass feels so good. Damn, are you any close? I might --"

"Just touch me," Aidan whispered hurriedly, and Heathcliff took the cue.

Heathcliff adjusted his position just enough to grab hold of Aidan's leaking cock. The pumping matched his thrusts in and out Aidan's body.

Aidan could tell it felt amazing, but it was the look in Heathcliff's eyes, a bit dark and hazy, that sent him over.

"Fuck, yes, fuck, yes," Heathcliff chanted, and pushed himself inside hard and deep.

Aidan still trembled with the last ebbs of his climax, vaguely registering something different in how Heathcliff stood still, voicing his own. When Heathcliff finally withdrew, the sensation of something warm inside him, slowly pouring out, made it all clear.

"Fuck," he whispered. "It does feel better, doesn't it?"

Heathcliff laughed while trying to catch his breath. "You can bet your sweet ass it does. Damn, that was pretty fucking amazing, Aidan."

"Wow," Aidan laughed, "it's clear. I can't wait to do you. And raw, like this? I better get that promotion because I think this will be everything I'll be dreaming of for the next weeks."

Heathcliff caressed his cheek slowly. "Come here."

Aidan moved and glued himself to Heathcliff, without minding how sweaty they both were. They were good together like that. They would be like that for a long time if he could help it. There was no way others would be able to snatch Heathcliff away from him now. He only needed to bid his time.

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Heathcliff wanted for a second to tell Aidan that there was no point in waiting. But he knew his bunny boy by now, and he knew how determined he was when it came to promises. However, if the promotion didn't go through, Heathcliff would just propose new terms to Aidan.

He could not believe how fulfilled and satisfied he felt. Fucking with a condom was great, but this was amazing. And he fully intended to have Aidan experience the same sensations as he had, regardless of his hang ups. Aidan was worthy of such small sacrifices and maybe everything felt so good because they were together, regardless of anything else.

## *Chapter Twenty-Four – Publicity Stunt*

Aidan could tell something was not quite right from the moment he set foot into the office. A couple of gossipers by the water cooler threw him strange looks while another guy quickly averted his eyes the moment he looked at him. What could have happened to warrant such a peculiar welcome from his colleagues, when, usually, they totally ignored his existence?

He didn't have time to ponder over the change in atmosphere, as the door to the big kahuna's office opened, and his much straight-laced assistant stuck her head out, scouting the perimeter and setting her eyes on Aidan.

"Aidan." She gestured for him to come closer.

He looked around and noticed how everyone was busy pretending to be working so that they did not blatantly stare. Squaring his shoulders, he walked over to his boss's assistant.

"He wants to talk to you," she said, emphasizing the first word as if there was no other 'he' she could ever mention in her life and expected the other employees to share the same feeling.

Aidan nodded shortly and followed her inside. Was the evaluation starting or something? He had expected something else, although he had never been through one of those. That might explain the strange looks.

"Spark!" His boss boomed, the moment he set foot inside.

The man wasn't big on introductions, and, in a way, Aidan was thankful for that. It brought any unpleasantness his boss wanted to bestow upon his underlings faster, and Aidan wanted to be over with so that he could return to his tasks for the day.

"Explain!" His boss added, and threw a newspaper on the desk, turned toward Aidan so that he could read the title.

Ah, so, in the end, word had gotten to his boss. Aidan was surprised only that it had taken so long. Apparently, there weren't making paparazzi like they had used to; for weeks, he had been going out in public with Heathcliff, and no one, so far, had said anything, not even online. He had teased Heathcliff over his no longer being the trashy media's darling.

Heathcliff had shrugged and smiled, saying that he was more than happy that he was left alone. Also, he had mentioned that his follower base was continually growing, so he had no reason to worry about his fame.

Aidan had expected something to transpire online first, and it was a bit strange to see a real paper publication caring so much about what a fitness guru slash influencer did in his spare time and who he was dating.

So, in a way, he was prepared. He had rehearsed this in his head numerous times, so his answer to his boss's question was direct and short. "Publicity stunt, sir."

The man looked at him over his thick-rimmed glasses, the corners of his mouth pulled down as he had just had half a grapefruit for breakfast and nothing else. "I didn't think you'd be up for such a thing."

Aidan shrugged. "It is the 21st century, sir. No one's as hung up on strict delimitations of sexual orientation anymore."

"Are you dating Heathcliff Stone?" His boss questioned, placing his hands on his desk and leaning forward, to stare at Aidan. He was standing, and he hadn't invited Aidan to take a seat, either.

"No, sir. I know well where my loyalties stand. I asked Heathcliff if he would be okay with this, and he said yes. I believe him 'dating'," he made the air quotes to emphasize his words, "works better with a family-friendly image than his usual, let's call them, indiscretions."

He could not believe he could lie like this, but there he was, standing in front of his boss, and lying through his teeth. He did have Heathcliff to blame for that. That man could convince him of anything, including that this was some great idea. Now, he really didn't know how his boss would take it. One thing was sure; he could not admit he was gay because his boss would pull him off the contract, ruining all his work, and, what was more important, his relationship with Heathcliff. How they would continue after the contract was fulfilled, he would just worry about it later.

"Very intelligent." His boss relaxed and pushed himself back to take a seat in his chair. "I looked at this picture," he tapped the newspaper's front page, showing Heathcliff holding Aidan's hand and seemingly deep in conversation as they were walking down the street somewhere, "and I almost thought it was real."

Aidan pretended to take a closer look at the newspaper. "It's not photoshopped, sir."

"I wasn't talking about that type of real," his boss said right away and scrutinized Aidan's face with sharp eyes. "I thought you would be put off by doing such a thing. Holding a man's hand, on the street, in broad daylight."

Aidan pursed his lips, feeling a small laugh coming up, completely uninvited. "It's nothing, sir. My generation is not that rigid in its views on sexuality. Holding someone's hand is just that, and nothing else."

"Good, good." His boss seemed to ponder over something, leaning back into his chair, and looking for a second at the ceiling. "As long as you're not disgusted by this, I suppose it's all for the best."

“Why would I feel disgusted, sir?” Aidan asked, feeling a slight, sickening sensation in the pit of his stomach.

His boss waved. “As long as you’re loyal to the company, nothing else matters. Are you loyal to the company, Spark?”

“Yes, completely,” Aidan said with conviction that didn’t come one ounce from the inside. “I thought it would work, and Heathcliff decided to play along. No one would suspect him of leading the same lifestyle as before now.”

“Is he leading the same lifestyle as before, though?” his boss asked.

“I wouldn’t know one hundred percent, sir. I do coach him almost every day in what he has to do to promote the product, but I can’t possibly keep an eye on him twenty-four seven.”

“The article says that, on occasion, a car was seen parked in front of Heathcliff Stone’s house overnight. By the looks of it, it’s your car. The company’s car, actually, since we gave it to you to use it.”

Aidan smiled thinly. He was getting good at this lying thing. “On occasion,” he repeated his boss’s choice of words, “I had to Uber home, as I had alcoholic drinks during the business dinners I shared with Heathcliff and some of his associates.”

“Very mature of you,” his boss admitted. “Keep it up, Spark. The numbers are looking up. And I’m glad that our office zero-tolerance policy toward any sort of homophobic behavior has such a good effect on you.”

What zero tolerance policy? Aidan wondered. No one seemed one beer away from behaving like at a frat house hazing, but it wasn’t like there had been specialized training or anything in that respect. Not that he cared for such things, but his boss’s conviction that he was somehow the product of such corporate policies was rubbing him the wrong way. It was like his boss was still suspecting him of being some closeted homophobe that would instigate some gay bashing at any moment.

Maybe he wasn’t gay-acting or whatever that was called, but he didn’t believe in stereotypes. People who were flamboyant and fabulous had their thing and those who weren’t had their thing. Aidan thought he was completely average in all respects, and couldn’t understand what of his appearance or behavior would make his boss think he could have any homophobic inclinations.

“That’s it, Spark.” His boss surprised him by slamming his hands on the desk, as usual. Aidan was sure he would never get used to that, so he still felt startled each time the man did it. “Keep it up. I like your attitude. Don’t let people tell you otherwise.”

Aidan could not understand what his boss was trying to tell him with that. However, he nodded thoughtfully, as if he understood completely.



“Dismissed,” his boss yelled at him as if Aidan was deaf.

He felt a sudden need to salute mockingly, but decided against it, eventually. So he just said goodbye and turned on his heels. He felt somewhat better that the cat was out of the bag.

He wasn't comfortable with lying, but he could understand why it served a good purpose, at the moment. Aidan had an unpleasant feeling he could not get rid of that his boss would not appreciate his being gay, even without all the Heathcliff Stone thing. The man was talking highly of zero tolerance policies and whatever, but somewhat, he seemed to be the one bothered by such things.

Aidan remembered how Heathcliff had pointed out that no one else from the company had ever interacted with him. If he were to think about it, it was pretty strange and did say something about the so-called zero-tolerance policy at The Healthy Shakers. Heathcliff Stone brought in a lot of money with the assiduous advertising he was putting in, yet not one of the higher-ups, let alone the big kahuna, had gone out of their way to meet the man who proved to be such a great asset for the company.

He shook his head as he stepped out of his boss's office.

“Gunning for that office on the corner?” someone talked next to him, taking him by surprise.

Aidan could not say he was surprised to see Penguin Pants by his side. “Why the obsession?” he asked. “And I'm not gunning for anything, FYI.”

His colleague sneered. “Seriously? It looks to me like you're going out of your way to convince the boss that you would do anything. Anything to get ahead, of course.”

“And what's that supposed to mean?” Aidan asked airily.

Penguin Pants scoffed. “You know very well what. You would even stoop so low as to let people believe you're ... that, just so that you could rake in some profits.”

“That?” Aidan smiled coldly as he turned toward his colleague. “I don't think I understand what you're getting at.”

The young man's watery eyes darted sideways. “I won't spell it for you. I can't understand how you're not bothered by it. To expose yourself like that, with Heathcliff Stone,” he added, his lips stretching like a frog's, in evident disgust.

“Ah, that.” Aidan pretended to be struck by sudden understanding. “It's called being gay. You can say it. It's not a dirty word,” he whispered as he leaned toward the other, and making him take a sudden step back.

Penguin Pants frowned. Aidan sighed deeply. He had never thought he would be in the closet or forced there, as times were. But it looked like some people had plenty of problems with others, still, even if not so out in the open as it must have been back in the days.

“I wasn’t talking about that. I don’t have a problem with that,” the young man hurried to say. “It’s about your attitude. Can’t you compete fairly? What should I do now?” he sneered, and his shifty eyes began making rounds again. “Throw myself at Heathcliff Stone, too?”

Aidan knew he should keep silent. But the words flew out of his mouth before he could control himself. “I don’t think that would work. The man has standards.”

Penguin Pants made a small surprised sound, and his jaw went slack, as his eyes grew wide. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I’ll let you figure that out on your own.” Aidan patted his colleague’s shoulder and walked away, feeling a tiny bit good about himself.

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“Hey,” Heathcliff welcomed him, the moment he came in.

Aidan even had a key now, so it truly was like coming home. Heathcliff had given him the key as a casual gesture, but he had been able to tell that the man watched him closely to gauge his reaction.

He walked over to Heathcliff and kissed him until they were both breathless.

“Hmm, not that I’m complaining,” Heathcliff said while watching him with hooded eyes, “but what’s this for? I might end up ruining dinner.” He gestured toward the cutting board filled with various vegetables.

Aidan snickered. “You could never ruin dinner even if you were blindfolded and had an arm tied up. Or both.”

“Are you dodging the question, Spark?” Heathcliff teased him, but his eyes were smiling.

“Not really,” Aidan leaned toward his lover again and pretended to kiss him again, but pulled back just in time to dodge him, and snatched a slice of cucumber from Heathcliff’s cutting board. “I’m happy to be home, that’s all.”

“And it’s just eight thirty,” Heathcliff commented. “Are you planning to spoil me?”

Aidan laughed, and this time, he came to embrace Heathcliff from behind. “Today, I lied to my boss that we’re - quote - dating - unquote. Apparently, your new proclivities finally grabbed the attention of some trashy magazine, and he knows. I’m telling you; I had, like, the strangest conversation with my boss. For some reason, he thought I would be incapable of pretending to be

your gay lover. He was one breath away from accusing me of internalized homophobia, and it's not the first time when he does that. I pulled it off, eventually. I can't believe I lied so nonchalantly. But I think you would have been proud of me. Not that I like being a liar." Aidan could feel Heathcliff tensing a little in his arms. "Are you okay?"

"Your boss might have some issues," Heathcliff replied. "Could you tell him that I'd like to meet him?"

"I could, but are you sure you want to? That man is a toad." Aidan shivered theatrically to make a point.

"A toad with internalized homophobia," Heathcliff said.

"Seriously? He lectured me on the office having a zero-tolerance policy towards the slightest homophobia manifestations. Although he did act kind of weird."

"Hmm." Heathcliff began cutting the ingredients for dinner, and Aidan let go.

"And I did sense a strange vibe coming off him," Aidan said.

"Trust your gut, Aidan. I think you did very well not to be out at work."

"Wow. You sound so serious."

"I am. How hungry are you?"

"Not that hungry," Aidan said playfully.

"Good. It's going to take a while."

Ouch. Something was wrong, and his good spirits from earlier were starting to evaporate. "I'll just go change and take a shower," he said quickly.

"Yeah, do that."

Aidan took a bit longer than needed, busy putting his mind in order. Why was Heathcliff so annoyed? If he were to meet his boss, he would be beyond annoyed. But Heathcliff wanted to meet the man, and that meant that Aidan had to make it happen.

In a way, he understood what was happening. Aidan had gotten the impression, too, that his boss had some issues and was projecting them on others. Yet, how could Heathcliff be sure of that, just based on some second-hand information? Maybe he knew something, and he didn't want to tell Aidan.

For some reason, he felt like a child who could not understand his parents getting upset over grownups stuff. Aidan hated that feeling. He was trying to be mature and everything, but it was

not like experience could be accumulated overnight. There was no possible way for him to rush time, and he didn't want to do that anyway.

The water was slushing down his back, and he was so lost in thought that he didn't hear the door to the bathroom opening. So he was pretty much startled when strong arms caught him from behind and a muscular body he knew so well glued to his.

"I'm sorry I was a jerk," Heathcliff whispered into his ear. "I hate hypocrites, that's all. And it's not your fault."

"Thanks, I guess," Aidan breathed out. "For not being mad at me, I mean."

"How could I be mad at you? You're too nice," Heathcliff continued to talk into his ear while moving his arms down on Aidan's flanks. "So nice everywhere."

Aidan grunted as Heathcliff found quick purchase in his cock and began stroking it with expert moves. Being touched like that was so familiar now, but it still brought him to his knees.

"I'm not a kid," he tried to revolt, "please, don't treat me like one."

His breath was coming in short, raspy, and he could not control his body.

"I wouldn't dream of doing that. I want you so much right now. Can I?"

"You don't have to ask," Aidan murmured, bucking his hips into Heathcliff's crotch.

It felt so good to have Heathcliff slide his cock through his buttocks slowly. It was pure torture to be teased like that, but he didn't want to hurry, either.

"Let me get you ready a little," Heathcliff said and nuzzled his neck, making him shiver even under the calming waterfall of the shower.

Heathcliff was on his knees fast, grabbing his buttocks and licking his hole. "Don't worry; I'll use something better. I just want to do this a little."

"Please, do it." Aidan bucked his ass back shamelessly, crying out his pleasure as Heathcliff proceeded to rim him thoroughly.

He had no idea about nerve endings or the chemistry behind what he was experiencing at the moment, but he knew one thing. It wasn't only because of the technique, but also because of the man doing it, that he felt like that. There was no way he would give up on Heathcliff. He had no experience with anything, but he had to compensate with desire and enthusiasm, which he had plenty.

Heathcliff stood up, and Aidan hung his head low, breathing in and out, a bit overcome with what he felt. Smooth fingers pressed against his opening, lubricating the entrance slowly, with

languorous moves. Heathcliff was occasionally hooking his fingers inside him, making Aidan arch his back and curse softly. That kind of stimulation still felt too sharp, too much, and he wanted something else more.

“Heath, please,” he keened.

Heathcliff’s low chuckle sent small shivers up his spine. It was scary in a way to be so honest with someone else and lay in front of him the effect he had. Aidan felt he was too young to worry so much, but he had never been in this kind of situation, had no basis of comparison, and he wanted to know, for sure, that it wasn’t just him who felt that way.

He turned and looked Heathcliff in the eyes. The man appeared to be a little disconcerted by his sudden move. Without a word, Aidan closed the distance between them, grabbing Heathcliff hard and kissing him firmly on the lips. He reveled in the sensation of exploring his partner’s mouth with his tongue and appreciated the non-combat attitude Heathcliff assumed for the moment.

For once, he was the initiator, the one who crossed the distance between them. Not that Heathcliff wasn’t always appreciative of his tendencies to dominate and do what he wanted. But right now, Aidan knew that those moments were too rare to count as the necessary weight to strike a balance in their relationship.

Heathcliff moved only so that he could be the one with his back against the wall. Aidan knew he was being guided into admitting to the overwhelming strength of his desires, but he could not mind it. After all, Heathcliff had been nothing but a gentle teacher, in all things sex-related.

Aidan glued their bodies together, enjoying the friction between their hardening cocks. All this time, he did not – could not – let go of Heathcliff’s mouth. Heathcliff continued to encourage him, by touching him lightly and using his tongue to caress his in turn.

He felt victorious like that. Heathcliff allowed him all these liberties, and Aidan had a strange sort of intuition telling him that his partner was not usually so generous with such things. He was making a meal out of kissing Heathcliff, and they were soon both panting with unbarred arousal.

Heathcliff could no longer stand it, as it seemed. He grabbed Aidan hard, stopping the kiss, and looking at him. “I want you.”

It was a simple admission, and Aidan was not willing to let any of them wait any longer. He nodded quickly and turned, allowing Heathcliff to steady him and align his ass for swift penetration.

The sensation was, at first, almost too much, knocking the wind out of him, making everything stop. So Aidan took the reins once more, and he was the first to move, accommodating his

lover's cock, enjoying the sensation of being stretched and hit right where he knew it was so good that he could forget about everything and everyone else in the whole world.

Heathcliff's ragged breathing, blowing over his neck, only heightened the sensations. "I love your ass so much," Heathcliff whispered.

So close, Aidan thought and everything dimmed with the impending release. His hand was moving over his erection, faster and faster, squeezing maybe a little too hard, but being too far gone to care. He looked down as he began shooting, expressing his amazement at how fast and how far he did that through short strangled cries.

Heathcliff increased his pace, digging into Aidan's hips with his fingers. Maybe there would be marks the next day, but Aidan could not bring himself to care. It was often that he touched himself, in the places where Heathcliff had left a mark of his being there, and enjoyed the light pain.

"Oh, damn," Heathcliff whispered. "Filling you up, Aidan. Filling your gorgeous fucking sexy ass." He slammed inside over and over until Aidan could barely keep himself on his feet.

Fortunately, they didn't end up on the bathroom floor, with a situation to warrant a call to emergency services. Heathcliff was strong and agile, and he kept Aidan there until every last drop of him was poured out of him and into his partner.

Aidan laughed and turned to look at Heathcliff. "Wow, so you must no longer be pissed now. I guess every inch of your anger stretched me enough," he joked.

Heathcliff responded with a grin of his own. He touched Aidan's ass and made him half turn. Aidan giggled when one of his ass cheeks was pulled aside, and Heathcliff inspected him.

"I guess seeing my cum coming out of your ass does wonders for my temper," Heathcliff said, and played a little with Aidan's hole.

"Oh, does it count so much?" Aidan teased. "Coming inside my ass and all?"

"Don't forget you were the instigator in that particular respect. You practically begged me to cream your ass."

"Let's set things right," Aidan pursed his lips to keep from laughing, "there was no begging. Just, let's say, a mere suggestion, to which you took easily."

"That's me. I can't overlook such requests from guys with gorgeous asses."

Aidan looked away, the casual words too close to his vulnerabilities to pretend not to care.

"Ah, sorry, I should say, I can't overlook any request when it comes from you." Heathcliff tipped his chin and kissed him long and softly.

Aidan brushed his lips over Heathcliff's, prolonging their pleasure. "Of course. That's how things should be. And don't you forget," he added playfully.

"How could I?" Heathcliff grabbed hold of his ass, squeezing his buttocks. "You're everything I think of, every day."

"Seriously?" Aidan asked, forgetting to use the usual teasing voice for such conversations with his partner.

There was no trace of teasing in Heathcliff's voice, either, when he replied. "Yes. And sometimes, it's hard to concentrate on anything else. I can barely wait for you to come back."

Aidan gulped. He pondered for a moment, and then he kissed Heathcliff quickly and proceeded to push him out of the shower. "Come on. Go and cook or something. Thanks to you, I need to wash again."

Heathcliff laughed. "Sending me to the kitchen? What am I? Your sixteenth-century wife or something?"

"I wish," Aidan said under his breath, and quickly smiled. "What sixteenth-century wife? You love to cook. I would never send you to the kitchen if I knew you hated it there."

"True, true," Heathcliff said pensively. "But what did you mean by 'I wish'? You want me to be your wife?"

Aidan rolled his eyes. "Always a joker. Of course not. That was not what I meant."

"Your husband, then." Heathcliff's stare was intense as it set on him.

"Out, out. I'm sure we will end up ordering take out if I keep you from your duties." Aidan pushed his lover playfully and turned to scrubbing his body.

Heathcliff didn't insist, much to his relief. He needed to watch his mouth, or he would say something before it was the right time to do that.

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"Why do you want to see my boss? Sorry that I insist with this, but I need to think up a strategy and tell him something," Aidan said, as they lay in bed, ready to go to sleep.

Heathcliff pondered a bit over his next words. "What you must tell him and the real reason I want to see him are two different things, Aidan."

It wasn't like him to manipulate people he cared about, and he would not do that to Aidan. But Heathcliff was determined to see that man face to face, look at him, and evaluate where on the trash scale he truly stood. His gut rarely failed him, and maybe Aidan was young and had not had

enough experience with people to gauge for himself the other people's real selves, but that wasn't his case.

"Okay," Aidan admitted and put one hand over Heathcliff's chest. "What's bothering you?"

"To be perfectly honest with you, I haven't cared up until now that your company sent a low entry employee to deal with me. Please," he added, grabbing Aidan's hand that was trying to withdraw, "you need to hear this."

"You're right," Aidan said softly. "And it's not like I don't know that I'm the last on the food chain there."

"Exactly. You deserve much more," Heathcliff pointed out. "And I, too, deserve more. Only that, while you're not exactly in a negotiating position, I am. And the fact that your company continues to treat me like your boss doesn't want to breathe the same air as me really grinds my gears. It's time for a meet up, and I don't intend to be all accommodating if you know what I mean."

"They could break the deal," Aidan said.

"Let them do that," Heathcliff replied. "They're not the only ones who know how to read a contract. And it's nothing unusual if I ask to meet the head honcho, right?"

"Sure. Only that, if there is no contract, I won't be able to see you again."

Heathcliff turned and looked at Aidan. "Is it that what's bothering you?"

At the moment, he wanted to grab Aidan hard and kiss him. Aidan was practically admitting to his feelings more and more, and it felt rewarding after so much time of trying to keep his tongue in check.

"Yes." Aidan nodded and looked at Heathcliff, without averting his eyes, like on other occasions.

"Then, don't worry about it. Not only that no one is going to break any deal, but you and me seeing each other no longer has anything to do with that."

Aidan's eyes lit up, and his smile was bigger than the sun. "Wow. So you mean that we will ... I mean, will you ... I want to say that --"

"Aidan, forgive me," Heathcliff said softly and leaned in for a chaste kiss, barely a brush of the lips. "But I need to say it because it tortures me not being allowed to. Think of it what you may, that I'm bad and I just want to tease you. I like you, Aidan Spark. More than I have ever liked anyone in my life. Deal or no deal, contract or no contract, protein shakes or no protein shakes, that's the simple truth."



With that, Heathcliff shifted his position and reached for the bedside lamp. Warm arms wrapped around him from behind. He sensed Aidan sighing, the rise and fall of his chest, and settled for this small victory.

Aidan was like a bunny. But Heathcliff would not be put off by that. Steady and slowly, he would reach his goal, and then his bunny boy would truly be his.

### *Chapter Twenty-Five - High Five!*

His agent wiped his forehead with a pristine white handkerchief and, with studied gestures, folded it and put it back into his pocket as if he was trying to buy more time. Heathcliff tapped the desk with his fingers, knowing well that the small rhythmic sound was getting on Harry's nerves.

"Why now, Heathcliff?" Harry asked him in a sugary voice like he felt the need to appease his client.

Heathcliff shrugged. "I believe I proved myself and my influence well enough. It's time for me to receive some praises for all my hard work directly, and for them to offer the said praises on a silver platter, accompanied, preferably, by some Evian served in crystal flutes. You know I don't often indulge in alcoholic beverages, except when I'm enjoying the company. In this case, I know I won't."

"But the contract is so --"

"Harry," Heathcliff put one hand up, "let me ask you directly. Is the head honcho at The Healthy Shakers secretly a homophobe?"

Harry stood there, his jaw slack, for a while, and then pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket again. "No! I mean, not that I know of."

Heathcliff sighed. "Then does he have something against me, in particular? Why doesn't he want to meet me?"

"Maybe he is just busy," Harry offered half-heartedly.

"Nobody is that busy."

Harry shifted from one foot to another. It appeared that he could not stay still, no matter how much Heathcliff had insisted. It felt like Harry was paying a visit to Heathcliff's office and not the other way around.

"I asked Aidan to tell him directly. He returned empty-handed. What am I supposed to make of that?" Heathcliff insisted.

He had hated to see Aidan so dejected over not being able to secure a meeting with his boss. It wasn't Aidan's fault. That had been just another thing that proved to him who he was dealing with. The boss at The Healthy Shakers would get a bit of shaking if he still wanted Heathcliff's collaboration. Of course, he needed to do that and suggest the blackmail in the subtlest way possible, to avoid hurting Aidan in the process.

The young man had stubbornly refused his offer to help him find employment somewhere else, so that was one fragile egg Heathcliff needed to juggle while putting some assholes in their rightful place.

“That, um ... Heathcliff, look,” Harry begged both with his eyes and his voice, “you know how they insisted on a family-friendly image and all that --”

“Which I promptly delivered,” Heathcliff interrupted his agent. “Or do they need to see me doing the horizontal cha-cha with the one I choose to spend my free time with, just to be convinced?”

Harry shot him another nervous look. “I thought it was a sham.”

Heathcliff had entrusted Harry with half the truth, as his agent was practically like a lawyer and confidante to him.

He hurried to appease Harry’s suspicions. There was no point in leading the man toward the real matter that he needed to keep hidden. “Of course. But they don’t know that, and I trust you not to let them know the truth.”

The fact that Aidan had talked about the so-called sham with his boss was not a piece of information Harry needed to know. Appearances were paramount for his scheme to work.

“You can count on me, Heathcliff,” Harry said. “I just think that we should treat them a bit with velvet gloves. They may not be the most accommodating business partners, but they are good clients for our current situation.”

“Harry,” Heathcliff stood up and placed one hand on his agent’s shoulder, “you’re a good man, but you tend to worry too much. I won’t allow them to walk all over me just because I’m happy and gay, and they’re sour and miserable. Fix up a meeting. I know you can, or I would not have depended on you for so long.”

Harry nodded, and his face lit up. “I will arrange it. Do you know what are we going to talk about? If you need my help --”

“Trust me. I have everything figured out. You just need to be there as moral support. And stop worrying so much. At the end of that meeting, you’ll be proud of me.”

“I’m proud of you anyway,” Harry said. “You’re one of my very few clients who actually offer a return on investment.”

“This new economic landscape has its ups and downs,” Heathcliff admitted. “Just make things happen, and I will be forever grateful. I’ll send you a few details over e-mail.”

Heathcliff bid his goodbyes to Harry and went out the door. He needed very little to be convincing during the meeting that his agent would hopefully obtain.

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“I am glad to finally meet you,” Heathcliff said affably, although he didn’t allow the plastic smile plastered all over his face to reach his eyes.

“As I am,” Aidan’s boss offered him a strong hand and shook his more than it was necessary.

The head honcho at The Healthy Shakers behaved like he needed to prove something. For a second, Heathcliff squeezed the man’s hand hard, enjoying seeing him wince a little.

Along with the boss, two other characters were present, but Heathcliff paid them no mind. It wasn’t like him to behave like that toward strangers, but these were no ordinary people. They were there to support their boss, and they were eyeing Heathcliff with unease as if he wanted to stab their unescapable leader under their very eyes. Or, who knows, do something else that wasn’t *comme il faut*.

Harry was sitting behind him, pretending to be busy with his laptop, and he wasn’t part of the conversation, either.

Heathcliff pulled the folder he had brought along and opened it in front of the other. The man looked at him through his thick-rimmed glasses as if he wanted to understand, without words, what was going on. Heathcliff had no intention to help him out.

Eventually, after a short staring contest, the man decided to look at the folder.

“What am I looking at, Mr. Stone?”

“Numbers,” Heathcliff said laconically. “Please, look closer.”

He placed his hands flat on the lacquered table. They were doing this on neutral ground, so the place of their meeting was rented by the hour. Sort of like for a sleazy affair, but he could not care less about how the others in the room felt. Some things needed to be set right.

“Social media numbers,” Aidan’s boss said slowly as if he could not comprehend why Heathcliff showed him that.

“Yes,” Heathcliff said smoothly. “Now, please tell me, who has the biggest follower base?”

The two sycophants leaned toward their boss, crowding his space, to stare at the papers.

“There is no need for a demonstration,” Aidan’s boss waved. “We know very well where you stand, Mr. Stone.”

“Do you?” Heathcliff asked directly.

“We wouldn’t have worked with you otherwise. You were our first and only choice.”

“Funny. That’s not what I heard,” Heathcliff said in an icy tone.

“People love to gossip. I assure you that what I say it’s true.”

“I have no reason to distrust you. Still, how come we’ve never met?” Heathcliff asked casually and leaned back into his chair.

“I believe our representative --”

“A low entry employee,” Heathcliff interrupted the other right away.

“Has our employee inconvenienced you in any way?”

Heathcliff smiled, showing a bit of teeth. “Not at all. Quite the contrary. But his exemplary behavior had me thinking. If that’s how smart and prepared such an employee is, how the rest of The Healthy Shakers truly is? Especially the boss.”

The man across the table stared at him and remained silent. Most probably, he was wondering what this was all about.

“You see, Aidan tells me that the numbers are looking up for the company. I do bring in significant sales.”

“That is correct,” the other admitted.

“So why won’t you accept to meet me and present me with well-deserved thanks for all my hard work?”

By how the two acolytes on the other side of the table were busy picking up their jaws off the floor, Heathcliff knew he had just struck a nerve.

“I thought Spark had offered plenty of thanks on behalf of our company.”

Hmm, Heathcliff pondered. The big kahuna at The Healthy Shakers believed himself smart and also lucky enough to get away with that. He was wrong on both accounts. Heathcliff had been true to Harry in one respect. He would not allow anyone to walk all over him.

“Are you trying to say that he became my lover for the sake of his employer?”

Now a collective gasp was the answer. How much the others knew about the so-called arrangement, Heathcliff didn’t know, but one thing was sure – no one wanted to hear about that.

“By no means,” the other dodged a direct answer. “That was completely his choice.”

“I see. By your attitude toward me, I would have thought that had been arranged by your marketing department, too.”

“What is it that you want, Mr. Stone?”

Aidan’s boss was irritated, and irritation was a good thing.

“Nothing else but proper respect,” he replied right away.

“How are we supposed to give you that? We might have different views on what respect means.”

“Of course. I would not dream of avoiding putting all my cards on the table. I believe a small adjustment to the contract should be in order. Harry,” Heathcliff called for his agent to spring into action.

He allowed Harry to explain the others what the new contract would entail. Heathcliff could tell Aidan’s boss was far from being pleased, but he wasn’t asking for too much. They might have thought him some brain dead celebrity, but he always did his homework, and he knew what he was worth, given the sales coming in, thanks to his endorsement.

“We are not in the habit of renegotiating, but we might allow a slight adjustment. Not as much as you ask, of course.”

“Otherwise, it wouldn’t be a negotiation,” Heathcliff said, smiling thinly. “All right, what do you have in mind?” He listened calmly to what the other proposed. “I would agree, but on one condition. Part of being treated with the respect I deserve should include having to deal with a representative that is not from the lowest tier in your office.”

“Are you no longer happy with Spark?” the other asked.

“I did not say that. I think you know what I’m asking. If not, think about it for a little while. It will come to you. Hint: I prefer my collaboration with Aidan Spark to continue.”

Aidan’s boss stared at him in disbelief. He probably now thought that Aidan had somehow manipulated Heathcliff into this, and wondered how that shy employee could have done that. Heathcliff had an inkling that Aidan was not as assertive as he wanted when at work, hence his being overlooked for any promotion seemed a likely outcome at the next evaluation, regardless of his outstanding results.

Eventually, the other man nodded slowly.

“Great.” Heathcliff pushed back his chair and stood up. “I can assure you that the numbers will continue to look up.”

Harry hurried after him, and he left the room, leaving the others to figure out what the hell had just happened.

“Heathcliff, you’re a genius!” his agent shouted as soon as they were out of earshot. “But why did you insist on that last bit?”

Harry couldn't be that dense. He was just fishing for info.

Heathcliff patted his agent's shoulder. "Aidan put in a lot of effort for me to succeed. I thought about returning the favor. That's all."

Harry nodded, but he seemed only half-convinced. "Didn't they find it odd for Aidan Spark to continue to work for them while being in a relationship, as fake as it may be, with you?"

"Apparently, it satisfied their need to see me settled down, completely within the boundaries of a family-friendly image."

Harry nodded thoughtfully. "Heathcliff, you say you trust me. So you can tell me you're really seeing Aidan Spark, and it's not a sham."

Heathcliff laughed as they stepped out of the elevator. "You're sharp, Harry, I have to give it to you. Then the last bit I asked should have been no surprise to you."

"It makes perfect sense now. I had my doubts. Well, I'm relieved that this was all."

"Why? Were you afraid I would go on a rant about their homophobic asses?"

Harry laughed. "Sort of."

"Well, I have no intention to kill the cash cow. And sooner or later, if that's how they really are at that company, it will all come to light."

"What can I say, Heathcliff? If I had known they were like that, I would have never come to you with their deal."

"You would have come," Heathcliff replied. "No worries, Harry. I know you like money. But I like it, too, so who am I to judge? In this world, you need to gain power, and power means hard cold cash. Once you have that, you can have even these deep in the closet homophobes start to wave the rainbow flag. And who knows? They might just like it."

"I'm glad to see you so optimistic about it all," Harry said. "But that's who you are and why I like you as my client. You know how to make the best of any situation."

"Well, the feeling's mutual. Call me if they don't send the paperwork."

"Oh, I'm sure they will. Like me, they might have been afraid of you ranting about their homophobic asses."

"Damn, I lost a good opportunity to scare them good," Heathcliff said with a grin. "But I believe my performance was even better."

“That it was,” Harry replied and shook his head with mirth. “Thanks for being such a productive client, Heathcliff. God knows I need that check.”

“Of course. There’s nothing wrong with that. Just don’t spend it all in the same donut place. Try the salad. You’ll love it. I guarantee.” Harry’s expression was so comical Heathcliff could not keep from laughing. “Just start with one green leaf. For my sake, okay?”

“Sure thing, Heathcliff,” Harry said and sucked in his generous belly, as he walked away.

Heathcliff felt pretty damned good about himself. Aidan would get that promotion, finally, and he would earn a little more, too. If he were to think about it hard, he was going a bit against his own interest here, as he would have better had Aidan free of his current employment situation.

Still, Aidan had earned his promotion, and Heathcliff wanted to see him happy. If the head honcho at The Healthy Shakers needed a small nudge to do the right thing, he had no problem with ensuring that.

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Aidan was a bit tense as he watched his colleagues going in and out of the big boss’s office. Some entered with gloomy looks on their faces and came back a bit relieved. Others left the boss’s office with their heads hunched into their shoulders. And very few seemed happy with the outcome once their ordeal was over.

Of course, the big kahuna had to make it a sort of ritual. Aidan felt like he was waiting in line to get executed. The only solace in this was that Heathcliff would wait for him at home, as usual, and Aidan counted on that more than anything.

If he were to remain stuck in the same position, he would rely on Heathcliff for the moment. No matter how gentle a lover Heathcliff was, Aidan felt uncomfortable with the idea. It wasn’t an actual relationship if he was always the one who relied on the other, with no chance to give back something of equal value.

When he tried once to express his concerns over the inequality in their relationship and the lack of value of his contribution, Heathcliff had laughed it off and told him that his ass was a big enough asset. That guy could be such a joker sometimes, and Aidan wanted to prove himself even more.

If he managed to finally land that promotion he so wanted, he would feel a bit more entitled to be on equal footing with Heathcliff. He would not be some stray that Heathcliff had decided to take into his care because the only thing he knew how to cook was ramen. Aidan needed to prove that he was more than just a helpless partner.

When the boss’s personal assistant finally called his name, he had his stomach all up in knots.



“Spark!” his boss boomed the moment he set foot inside.

“Yes, sir!” he shouted back.

The man seemed pleased with his reaction. “I’ll make this short and sweet.”

Aidan kept himself from asking for whom.

“You’re keeping your job.”

His heart sank.

“But also, you’re promoted!” His boss seemed to force his enthusiasm for some reason.

In other words, the man didn’t seem as happy as he wanted to project about handing Aidan the promotion he knew very well that it was much deserved.

“Thank you, sir,” Aidan said. “What’s my new position, if I may ask?”

“Junior advertising copywriter,” his boss declared in a loud, annoying voice. “All clear? Written down? Great! Dismissed!”

Aidan wanted to ask more, like what his new position entailed, and what the benefits were, but his boss didn’t look like he wanted to elaborate, so he chose to leave while murmuring his thanks.

The personal assistant was waiting for him with his new job description. As he listened to her, any unpleasant sensations in regards to his boss’s behavior dissipated. He now had something to show for himself, and Heathcliff would have to take him more seriously.

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“Hey,” Heathcliff hurried to embrace him as soon as he was inside. “How was your day?”

“Pretty great,” Aidan replied and kissed Heathcliff loudly on the lips. “Are you ready to hear this?”

“Hear what?” Heathcliff’s eyes shone as they were looking at each other.

“You’re practically staring at the new junior advertising copywriter at The Healthy Shakers!”

“Really? That’s great news, Aidan!” Heathcliff hooked him up into his arms and kissed him again. “Now that’s a good cause for celebration!”

“It sure is,” Aidan wrapped his legs around his lover. “Now I can really buy bread in this house. And toothpaste.”

“Sure, why not?” Heathcliff laughed. “But isn’t something else you wanted to secure once you had your promotion?”

Aidan could feel his heart skipping a beat. In all the euphoria of getting the thing he had wanted for so long, he had totally forgotten about the promise he had made to Heathcliff. “Do you mean, um, me fucking you?”

Heathcliff’s eyebrows shot up in amusement, a large smile tugging at the corners of his lips. “Don’t tell me you forgot about your promise.”

“I didn’t! I mean, I got a little carried away, and I only thought how I’m going to come home and give you the big news. Damn, oh, fuck, are you really game, Heath? Tonight, I might just die of happiness. Of course, we don’t have to do it tonight.”

“What? You don’t want to?” Heathcliff questioned him.

“Of course I do,” Aidan said right away. “I might come fast. Oh, damn, are we really --”

Heathcliff made their foreheads touch in a tender gesture. “Just enjoy yourself, Aidan. It’s all I want from you tonight.”

“Ah, don’t make it like your pleasure doesn’t count. I would not have it. Although I might suck at it at first since I’m totally new and probably your ass is so tight. I bet it’s tight. Oh, fuck.”

“Aidan, you’re babbling.” Heathcliff stopped his avalanche of words. “Leave everything to me and relax. There’s no point in being nervous. You can’t do anything wrong. Not in my book.”

“Wow, big words, Stone,” Aidan whispered, trembling a little and trying to hide it.

He loved how Heath smelled. It was masculine, without being overpowering, and he didn’t abuse cologne and other products, although he did enjoy his showers more than anyone else Aidan knew. Other than expensive body wash and his own smell, there was nothing else Aidan could sense. He wanted to lick his lover head to toes if allowed. Usually, Heathcliff beat him to it, and that made it almost impossible for him to enjoy the other to his heart’s content. But things would change tonight. Aidan felt empowered and wanted to show his true desires in his relationship with Heathcliff, as well.

Yes, he would be in charge for once. The thought alone was enough to make him a bit lightheaded, like after a few stiff drinks. Maybe he was intoxicated and high on what he felt for Heathcliff, how much he wanted him, and what it truly meant to be in his arms.

“What’s your plan?” Heathcliff asked as he walked up the stairs while holding Aidan.

Good thing Heathcliff could lift. Aidan was sure he wasn't some lightweight, but Heathcliff could carry him around without losing his breath. He had protested against that, at first, but his lover was way too stubborn to allow him to have his way on that account.

"I'm not sure ... No, I am. I want us naked, in bed, in the next three minutes," Aidan said with conviction. "Then, I will fuck you."

Saying it made it a bit more real than one second earlier.

"I'm glad to see you so determined." Heathcliff chuckled. "Any position you might like?"

Position. Aidan gulped and was thankful when Heathcliff finally put him down. Feeling the solid floor under his feet made him a bit more in control. "I don't know," he shrugged, "maybe on all fours?"

He had seen Heathcliff's muscular ass on so many occasions. He had stared at it, fantasized about it, touched it, but he could not recall ever seeing it in a bend over position that would certainly make it impossible to resist.

The mental image was enough to make him hard. Aidan could feel his cock pressing to get free from the confine of his pants. "Maybe I should go take a quick shower first." That was a way to get rid of some of his nervousness first.

"You don't really need to. I like you a bit rough like this," Heathcliff said and caressed his cheek. "This five o'clock shade becomes you, too. Look at you. You're a man now."

Aidan looked at Heathcliff to see if he was joking, but there was no sign of that. Instead, Heathcliff seemed pensive. Well, Aidan would be gentle or try to. No matter how nonchalant Heathcliff was usually, the fact that he would allow Aidan to penetrate him when, in many years, no one had done that, had to come with a certain sense of wariness.

He was not allowed to succumb to his train of thought, as Heathcliff began to kiss him while slowly pushing down his suit jacket. Aidan could feel Heathcliff's fingers, a bit impatient, but firm, unbuttoning his shirt with precise moves.

As pleasant as being undress like that felt, tonight, he was supposed to be the one in control. Aidan wrapped one hand around Heathcliff's nape and deepened the kiss, showing his intentions in the way he was penetrating the other's mouth with his tongue, delving more and more inside. He made himself busy with Heathcliff's t-shirt and allowed his lover to breathe only for the time needed to pull it over his head.

Aidan placed his hands on Heathcliff's sculpted chest, enjoying the shape, the firmness, but, more than anything else the perkiness of the nipples that seemed to beg to be touched, squeezed and pulled. By how their owner was moaning softly into his mouth, Aidan knew he was doing the right thing.

Heathcliff's body was no longer a mystery to him. Sometimes, in the morning, as he lay in bed while Heathcliff, the earlier riser of them two, took a shower, or was already in the kitchen, preparing breakfast, Aidan thought about that and wanted to pinch himself to check if he was really awake. And he was. And the view from the window was that of Heathcliff's backyard where sometimes the fitness guru did his Tai Chi. And the entire room smelled of them both, of sex, most often, and also, of something else that Aidan could not quite put the finger on, but was so familiar, so intense, yet soothing in a way. If he were to think of it, the room and the entire house smelled like home.

Aidan guided Heathcliff toward the bed, taking his role as a leader of tonight's operation as serious as he could. It was rewarding to have that man, as incorrigible and stubborn as he was, listen to him like that, even without words.

They were busy pushing their pants down, knocking their knees by mistake, laughing into each other's mouths, and enjoying the pleasant friction between their bodies that were getting gradually more and more naked.

Heathcliff squeezed Aidan between his legs, making their hard cocks touch.

"Are you really ready for this, Heath?" Aidan asked. "I want you so badly right now that I'm afraid I'll do something stupid."

"Don't worry about a thing." Heathcliff caressed his shoulders briefly and then caught his face into his hands. "I am more than ready for this."

Aidan had a mind to ask what Heathcliff meant by that. But he thought he knew. "It was a good thing I warned you weeks in advance about my intentions."

He laughed as he said that, and Heathcliff smiled at him.

"If you want me on all fours, I need you to let me do that," Heathcliff whispered and bit Aidan's lower lip softly.

"You might think of letting me go, then," Aidan replied, but he was the one to push his crotch into Heathcliff's, enjoying how their cocks rubbed together.

The pressure took the edge off his arousal a little. Eventually, he allowed Heathcliff to roll over and put himself on all fours. Aidan stood up to admire the view. That was, right there, the kind of stuff his dreams were made of. Heathcliff's glorious backside was amazing. Aidan had heard his lover so many times praising his ass, but he was crazy about Heathcliff's behind even more than he could put into words.

He climbed the bed behind Heathcliff and caressed the back of taut thighs, reveling in their firmness. His hands traveled higher and cupped the butt cheeks, perfect, and the result of the intense training that Aidan was well aware of. Curious to see more, he pulled them apart.

Heathcliff's hole was a tad darker than the rest of his skin and looked absolutely delicious. Without giving it a second thought, Aidan leaned in and gave it a tentative lick. Heathcliff shuddered, rewarding his decision to start with that particular appetizer right away.

Aidan wanted to do that for a while, maybe to go lower and lick Heathcliff's balls, too, fill his mouth with them, one at a time since they were so big, but he was interrupted by an impatient voice. "Aidan, get to work already."

"Do you really mean it? And I thought I should take you slowly."

Heathcliff stared at him over one shoulder. "Bunny boy, you tend to underestimate me. I'm no shy virgin. Just a little unpracticed, but I assume that will change now, right?"

The blue eyes were twinkling with amusement, and Aidan smacked one firm buttock to show that he meant business. The playful glint in Heathcliff's eyes didn't change.

He hopped off the bed to go for the lube. Why the hell were his hands trembling like that? He had things under control, right?

Without giving that a second thought, he returned to the gorgeous sight on the bed. Heathcliff was slowly moving his hips, giving him come-hither looks.

With a short exhale, Aidan got to work. Heathcliff's ass was quite pliant around his fingers, and for a while, he watched fascinated as it stretched, with the small occasional squelching sound. "I thought you would be tighter," he expressed his wonder. "Not that you're loose," he hurried to add.

"I might have anticipated this more than you," Heathcliff explained.

"Do you mean you did certain stretching exercises?" Aidan laughed. Maybe if he pulled his mind off the task at hand a little, some of his nervousness would disappear.

Heathcliff played along. "Definitely. A very good routine, actually."

"Heath, do you have secret fantasies about bottoming?"

A short chuckle was the answer. "Even some straight dudes have fantasies about that sometimes. I hope I'm forgiven if I do, too."

"So how come you've almost never acted on them? I'm sure there could have been no shortage of men willing to give you a piece of their mind and something more consistent along with that."

"Funny thing, I have started having them lately."

Aidan swallowed hard. Was Heathcliff trying to say that ... Oh, damn. He was in this deep. Good thing he had already lost his head over this man, or he would have done that right that very

moment. Such a simple confession coming from Heathcliff was enough to make his cock ache with want.

“Then let me fulfill them for you.” He tried to sound casual as he put himself behind Heathcliff.

Oh, fuck, he thought, and groaned loudly, as his cock was immediately engulfed in tight heat. Maybe Heathcliff could have insisted with those stretching exercises more. By how his dick was squeezed right now, he needed to take back all he had said earlier.

Under him, Heathcliff was slowly inhaling and exhaling.

“Does it hurt?” Aidan asked, feeling concerned.

“You should know,” Heathcliff replied with mirth. “I can’t understand how you’re not fussier over how much I fuck you. You’re barely in, and I want to cuss at you.”

“I should work on it a bit harder,” Aidan said with regret and tried to pull out.

Heathcliff was quick to reach him with one hand and pull him back. “Bunny boy, there’s no running from this. If you want it, you need to go all the way.”

“Even if it hurts?” Aidan asked, and grunted softly, as he pushed inside just a little more.

“Yeah, even,” Heathcliff admitted. “Don’t hesitate. I might call you chicken for the rest of your life. That would be a clear demotion from bunny boy, don’t you think?”

Aidan thought so, too. But he didn’t say it. Instead, he took hold of Heathcliff’s sexy ass and pushed himself all the way inside. He wanted Heathcliff to feel good, but he was losing that battle. The squeeze was more bearable on his dick now, and he could feel it throbbing inside.

With some hesitation, he began to move. He could tell his rhythm sucked, it was all over the place, really, and he was definitely a bad top, but it was almost impossible to stop now. Heathcliff was keeping one arm back, to hold Aidan’s hip with the hand to make sure he didn’t bolt, and that was assuring, in a way. If he wanted, Heathcliff could tell him to stop at any moment.

Aidan found some resemblance of a pace and succumbed to it. He was breathing hard, and sweating even more, as he moved in a sort of dizzy frenzy. Heathcliff was giving him all the assistance he could, pulling him toward him with each thrust and bucking his ass back, to meet him midway.

“Fuck, damn, no,” Aidan grunted in frustration, but it felt too good to last.

Within seconds, he was exploding inside Heathcliff, like a fountain barely dug off the ground. Aidan let himself fall on top of his lover, thankful Heathcliff could hold his weight like that.

“Oh, it was so good,” he drawled the words. It took him long seconds to catch his breath. Then it hit him. “You didn’t come, did you?” he asked, feeling guilty.

“Don’t worry,” Heathcliff reached out and caressed him, “this was all about you, anyway.”

“Oh, fuck, I’m such a fucking loser,” Aidan bemoaned his lack of skill as a bed partner.

“You’re not,” Heathcliff contradicted him. “For your first time, let’s say that it was honorable.”

Aidan removed himself from Heathcliff’s body and fell on the bed covering his eyes. “Let’s just keep it to you being on top. I thought I would last more than five minutes.”

“Hey, you enjoyed it, right?” Heathcliff pulled his hands away from his face. “Plus, you surely remember that, on several occasions, I came inside you as fast as you right now.”

“You’re just trying to protect my bruised ego,” Aidan said, pursing his lips. “You lasted at least twice as long, and those were like quickies, anyway.”

“Hmm, what should I do to convince you?” Heathcliff seemed to talk to himself. “I know.”

With that, Heathcliff came on top of him and locked their lips together. Aidan felt relieved. Heathcliff would fuck him now, and the balance would be restored.

His first attempt at being in charge had proved pretty lame. Not that he wasn’t satisfied. Actually, his entire body was so relaxed now, and he felt like a newborn, after the fantastic climax from earlier. Shooting inside Heathcliff’s tight ass was everything. He needed to work more on his stamina for the next time he would try to top. How he would do that, was, at the moment, an unknown factor, but Aidan knew he needed to prove to Heathcliff he could be more than someone who lasted a few minutes on top.

Right now, he could relax into Heathcliff’s skillful touch and kisses. Although he would have thought it impossible to get it up again, his cock was twitching and trying to rise to the occasion once more. He grunted softly as Heathcliff snuck one hand between them to circle his erection with steady fingers, bringing him fast to full hardness.

Aidan closed his eyes, prepared to enjoy Heathcliff’s fingers going lower, preparing his ass for the intrusion. His eyes snapped open when he felt something else. On top of him, Heathcliff had already straddled him and now was pushing his ass slowly down on Aidan’s hard cock.

“Fuck,” he whispered. “Heath, are you sure?”

“Allow me to educate you,” Heathcliff replied with amusement clear in his voice. “You could not get any better lessons from an experienced top anywhere else.”

“I guess,” Aidan grunted, as his cock was caught by Heathcliff’s tight and amazing channel of muscles.

This was even better. It did feel like Heathcliff was in charge, which he was, but being the one doing the penetration still mattered to Aidan. Damn, he thought, his toes curling, and his eyes rolling in his head, as Heathcliff began to move at a steady pace.

He reached for his lover, touching the taut muscles and searching in earnest for his prize. Aidan took Heathcliff's half hard cock and began stroking it firmly, without rushing it. The fact that he was focused on this new task took a little the edge of how intense it felt to have his cock squeezed by that tight heat.

Heathcliff's cock he knew and quite well. Finally, the situation was more balanced, and he could play as he wanted with the other's manhood. From time to time, he brushed his thumb over the swollen head, making Heathcliff encourage his little dares with small grunts and moans.

Aidan felt ambition taking over. As much as Heathcliff was good at milking his cock, he would last longer, or at least enough to have his lover shoot all over him. Heathcliff's sultry eyes were watching him from above, with something akin to surprise in their blue depths. "Is it good, Heath?" he asked breathlessly. "Like this?" he added as he made his moves ampler, going from head to root and back again while applying enough pressure to feel Heathcliff's cock twitching and hardening more.

"Yes, yes, yes," Heathcliff chanted, while he increased his rhythm, and began arching his back beautifully, only for Aidan's eyes to see.

"Fuck, you're amazing, Heath," Aidan whispered. "Please come, or I won't be able to --"

He didn't have to finish. Heathcliff's ass clamped down hard on his cock, and white ropes began erupting from the hard meat in his hand, painting his chest. Some hot droplets landed on his lips, and Aidan stuck his tongue out to lick them. The tangy taste of his lover on his tongue was the only bit needed for the friction and the squeeze on his cock to finally reach fruition.

He cursed and praised and gave away everything as he came. "I love you, Heathcliff Stone!"

Oh. Fuck. Aidan would have thought, but he couldn't care. Not as he was falling down from the heights Heathcliff had brought him to. He would have to, but not as his mind was still blank from too much pleasure.

"Wow, that was quite the confession," Heathcliff said, and he appeared to be taken aback.

Aidan opened his eyes. No, no, no, this was wrong. It was not the moment for that. Quick, he needed to find something. So he laughed, while the last eddies of his orgasm were still making his body shiver. "Yeah, I mean, it's like ... wow, even as a bottom, you're a top. That felt amazing. High five!"



The look in Heathcliff's eyes was one of shock combined with something else. Shit. The guy was pissed. He should not have said that he loved him. It was clearly not a good idea. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

"High five?" Heathcliff asked as he pulled himself away.

"Yeah, it was not a confession-confession," Aidan said quickly. "It was more like 'I love you, bro', you know. When you're with your best buddy and do something cool together."

Heathcliff's face was all a frown now. Aidan knew he needed to diffuse the situation, but how? He had just made things complicated when they were fine just the way they were. Plus, if Heathcliff had felt the same, he would have just said 'I love you' back, and he hadn't. He had been clearly surprised.

"Hmm, I had no idea we were like this," Heathcliff said, and his voice could freeze Sahara.

"We're not! I mean, we're ... Okay, please don't think anything by it. It just slipped."

Heathcliff was with his back to him and was pushing one hand through his hair. By the looks of things, he seemed exasperated.

"Um, Heath? Are you mad? I swear, I didn't mean it like that." Aidan searched frantically for a way to limit to damage.

The ecstasy from earlier had died down completely. Aidan felt a bit cold.

"I'm not mad," Heathcliff replied. "But do you recall how you told me not to tease you? Forgive me if I ask you to do the same."

"Okay," Aidan said quietly. "You're right."

"Good. I'm glad we understand each other."

Aidan remained in the bed, all the energy drained from his body, and watched helplessly as Heathcliff walked away to take a shower. He needed to do that, too, but he could not bring himself to join Heathcliff. Somehow, he had managed to pull them apart while they were closer than ever.

He knew he needed to wait. Damn, what a mess.

## *Chapter Twenty-Six - Meet The Stones (And Some Pebbles)*

Aidan was a complete wreck on the inside as he parked his car in front of Heathcliff's house. He had barely caught any sleep and, in the morning, he had made a run for it, without even eating breakfast, which had been received with a frown by Heathcliff.

He had pondered, over and over, what to say. He couldn't make things worse if he wanted to. But he had, and now it was time to assume responsibility. Going back on what he said was not an option, and if Heathcliff wanted to throw him out for being inexplicably sentimental and emotional, he would at least say all that was on his heart.

Aidan let himself in with the key Heathcliff gave him, knowing that he must have been expected since he had sent a text to announce his unusually early arrival. It was only four o'clock in the afternoon, which wasn't his typical time for returning home.

Home. Aidan's heart squeezed itself painfully. No matter what, he wasn't a coward. Maybe he was a bit crazy to fall in love with such a guy, but he wouldn't hide anymore. It wasn't like this wasn't bound to lead to heartbreak, eventually. So it was better to happen sooner rather than later so that he could mend his broken heart and move on.

Apparently, he had moved quite stealthily so far because Heathcliff didn't hear him. He was with his back turned and seemed absorbed by something in front of him. What Aidan thought odd was Heathcliff's choice of clothes, a bit loose, comfortable, but seemingly a little bit haphazardly put together, which was definitely not his usual MO. The man had style, and this outfit seemed completely out of character for him, being something rather a teacher or a scientist with his head up in the clouds would wear.

Aidan shook his head. What the hell was he doing? Instead of focusing on how to tell Heathcliff everything and get ready for the blow, he was criticizing the man's fashion sense in his head.

He breathed in deeply, making Heathcliff turn in surprise. Aidan didn't dare to look at him and cast his eyes down. He would still say everything, even if he didn't dare to look the man in the eyes.

"Heath, I just want to tell you that I don't regret what I said last night," he began and took Heathcliff's right hand into his. "I want you to know --"

Heathcliff made a small strange sound from his throat, and Aidan looked up and stared into a pair of very amused eyes. Was Heathcliff making fun of him now? He was also smiling, fondly, but a bit quirkily, like he was about to start laughing out loud. Aidan took in the other's face and began blinking. "Did you shave your beard? Why? I mean, not that you can't, but I thought it was like your signature --"

Aidan's words faded away as some noise from behind interrupted him. He turned and stood there frozen, for a second, in complete shock. From the patio, holding one boy around six on his shoulders, another who was the copy of the first under one arm while the kid was struggling to perform some complicated gymnastics, and a third, a girl this time, by the free hand, Heathcliff came in, surrounded by laughter.

Aidan squealed and dropped the other Heathcliff's hand, which he was still holding. What the hell? There were two of them? The one with the kids was staring at him and didn't seem amused like the first one. His gaze was sharp, his eyes trained on Aidan, and making him feel little; he suddenly wanted the earth to open up and swallow him whole.

This one had the signature beard. Aidan moved his eyes back to the stranger to whom he almost confessed earlier.

"Is this my little brother?" The stranger asked. He was the exact carbon copy of Heathcliff, with the exception that he lacked a beard, but had – now Aidan could see it – a few pounds extra on the plus side. Now he was looking over Aidan, at Heathcliff.

"I suppose so," Heathcliff's reply came a little strained.

Aidan squealed again, this time because the stranger hugged him suddenly. "I am so pleased to meet you, Aidan."

"Heath?" Aidan turned toward the master of the house, as soon as the stranger let him breathe.

Heathcliff smiled, and some of the ice in his eyes began to thaw. "Aidan, this is my brother, Max."

"Twin brother," Aidan said slowly like he could not believe his eyes.

"I'm older, as I came out first," Max said and drew his attention again. "My family always call me Maxim. I'd like you to do the same."

Now that was a bit of an odd thing to say, Aidan thought. Heath had just called him Max.

"My brother is a joker," Heathcliff explained. "That's the only phrase in the entire book he has ever read. Also, he used to use it to pick up girls."

"Book?" Aidan questioned.

Heathcliff nodded. "In his case, our mom thought Maxim de Winter to be more appropriate as the inspiration for her second son's name."

"Second? Who told you that?" Max protested, but Aidan could tell he was joking.

"So your mom has a thing for emotionally tormented heroes," Aidan concluded.

Max shrugged. “Women. God knows neither of us proved to be the romantic protagonists our mother liked reading about. Speaking of women, where is that bloodless creature?”

Bloodless creature? Was Max talking about their mother now? He wouldn't dare, Aidan hoped. If the strong-willed characters in front of him were any indication of their mother's personality, Max would better not joke like that.

“The bloodless creature is right here,” a petite woman with sandy hair, dressed as haphazardly as Max, said as she emerged from the patio, as well.

“Great, we're in full formation,” Max said and clapped his hands.

“Wait, wait, wait,” the woman said, as she set her eyes on Aidan. She had large green eyes, filled with intelligence and good humor. “Bunny boy?”

Aidan now really wanted the earth would open underneath his feet. How could Heathcliff tell people about that nickname? He thought it was an inside joke.

“Yes, that's him,” Heathcliff replied.

“O. M. G. He's gorgeous!” The woman marched toward him and gripped him in a hug fiercer than Max's. “How are you, baby? Why does he have black circles under his eyes?” She turned toward Heath to scold him while still holding Aidan in her motherly arms.

“And this is my sister in law,” Heathcliff said, his smile broader. “Hope, let him breathe. I think you're scaring him.”

“No, no,” Aidan said, shaking his head. “I'm fine. I'm just surprised. Why didn't you tell me you have a twin brother?”

Hope and Max exchanged knowing looks. Aidan looked first at Hope, then at Max, expecting a reply to his question, seeing how Heathcliff was completely silent like the cat got his tongue.

“And these are,” Heathcliff said instead, trying to organize the three rugrats so that he could introduce them, “Louis, Robert, and Rebecca.”

The boys took Aidan's hand and shook it solemnly, but Rebecca frowned and took a step back, wrapping one arm around Heathcliff's leg.

“Ah, Rebecca,” Aidan said, “what a beautiful name. Like in the book from which your daddy got his name.”

“Actually, that came from Rebecca Lancefield,” Hope explained. “And Louis and Robert from Pasteur and Koch.”

Aidan tried to keep a straight face upon hearing that. Max and his wife truly had a thing for microbiologists.

“Rebecca, say hi to Aidan,” Hope said in a tone that brooked no argument.

Rebecca was still not happy with that, but she finally offered her hand to Aidan. “When I grow up,” she said with finality, “Heath will marry me.”

Aidan bit his lips not to laugh. Apparently, he had some serious competition to consider. “I’m glad to hear that. I hope I’m invited to the wedding.”

Rebecca cocked her head to one side and searched his face with her inquisitive green eyes, a direct gift from her mother. “Yes, but you can’t be the groom.”

Max and Hope burst into laughter. Aidan had a suspicion he was being left out on that joke, too.

“So, now that we’re all here, let’s hit the road,” Max said. “The kids will take up a lot of room. Can you ride up in front with Hope, Aidan?”

“I’m not sure I’m invited,” Aidan said, trying discreetly to pinch himself to make sure he wasn’t dreaming. “To whatever your guys plan to do.”

“We’re paying a little visit to mommy dearest,” Max said.

It was funny how Heathcliff’s brother talked. It was like any moment, he would be ready to say a joke. There was not an ounce of irony there, though. Aidan was suddenly in a much better mood than he had been when he walked inside the house, and it was all because of the lively atmosphere these guys could bring along with them.

“I could just go home. I didn’t know Heath had guests.” He threw Heathcliff a cross look. The guy could have just texted him.

Heathcliff’s eyes thinned as they zeroed in on him. What was that all about? Aidan felt little again.

“Nonsense,” Hope said and grabbed his arm. “Let’s leave these guys to take the backseat in the SUV, and we could have a nice chat.”

Aidan threw another look at Heathcliff, to ask him, without words, if that was okay. Heathcliff seemed as imperturbable as ever. “Heath,” he said in warning. “I don’t think I should come with you, guys.”

“Oh, you should come. Definitely,” Heathcliff said, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Boys, Rebecca, all grab Aidan and help your mom take him. I need to have a word with your uncle.”

Aidan could not fend off against so many enemies. The boys took to heart their father's request and were now dragging him toward the door. He looked back and felt as astonished as the first moment when he understood Heathcliff had a twin brother. One next to the other, the differences were noticeable, but, otherwise, they were both handsome and charming, and Aidan could feel his heart beat faster.

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"Aidan, I hear from Heath that you're some big shot copywriter," Hope chatted happily while stepping on it, and making Aidan's heart beat faster, but for a totally different reason than earlier.

"He's exaggerating." Aidan tried to catch a glimpse of Heathcliff in the rearview mirror. "I am just in my first year of employment, and I am barely sinking my teeth into this thing."

"Is it something you see yourself doing for a while?"

"I really like it, yes. Can I ask you a question, Hope?"

"Sure thing. Shoot, darling."

Hope, just like her husband, was full of life, and easy to be around. Aidan felt good just being in her presence.

"Do you guys like microbiology much?"

Hope laughed. "Heath really didn't say a word about us, did he?"

"No, he didn't," Aidan confirmed.

If the guys in the backseat could hear their conversation, it would have been something. The kids were a riot, and Heathcliff and Max were doing nothing to quiet them down. Actually, Aidan suspected that they were the instigators of all that ruckus.

"That's the field we both work in, Max and I."

"And why does he call you a bloodless creature?" Aidan asked, not sure if that was the right move, but curiosity getting the better of him.

Hope laughed again. "Oh, that. That's a joke between microbiologists. Women have fewer blood cells than men."

"Oh, I see. Now that makes sense, in a way," Aidan said.

Hope profited that they were at a stop, to touch Aidan's forearm and squeeze it. "You will like Lady Stone, and she will like you."

"Lady Stone?" Aidan asked, now feeling alarmed.

“That’s another joke. Don’t call her that to her face. But you’ll see. She’ll love you. As for Daddy Stone, he will, too. Start with him. He’s easier.”

And now Aidan felt true unease. He had been too shocked to make such a sudden acquaintance of Heathcliff’s twin brother and his family, that he had forgotten to worry about the most important thing of all. He would soon meet Heathcliff’s mom and dad.

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The house in front which they parked looked like something from a romantic book. Aidan could not say if it were some replica of a more famous building, or it was really old, but the property was impressive. Massive rhododendrons were guarding the driveway, and there were flowery smells from the many different bushes decorating the wild garden in front.

“Yes,” Max said as he came and took him by the shoulders. “If you feel like this place is familiar without reason, there is actually one. One day, mommy dearest had the craziest idea to replicate Manderley. Daddy dearest told us how happy he is Heathcliff and I both made it on our own and don’t count on any inheritance from them.”

Again, Aidan wasn’t sure if that was a joke. It was clear a lot of work had been put into that place, and that must have cost a fortune. So Heathcliff came from money, which was another thing the guy had failed to tell him.

Maybe he was guilty of that, too. They had been both absorbed with work, on one side, and with getting freaky between the sheets, on the other, that they hadn’t been keen on talking about their families. However, Aidan was pretty sure he had said more than once he was a single child. At any time, Heathcliff could have hopped in and shared information on his twin brother and his family.

There were met at the door by a butler in livery, and Aidan stepped into a sumptuous hallway with a chandelier hanging from the ceiling. Now daddy dearest’s joke on not leaving anything to his sons started to make sense.

The kids were not at all impressed, and they began running down the hallway, making the butler laugh and chase them. Only the appearances seemed formal in that house. Aidan felt he could breathe a little.

“Ah, my little devils,” a baritone voice boomed, and Aidan watched a man in his late fifties, dressed like a gentleman from a black and white movie, marching toward the kids and taking all three of them into his arms.

His once blond hair was mostly white now, and he had the same benevolent look in his eyes as Max. That had to be daddy dearest, or Daddy Stone, as Hope had named him when talking to Aidan on the way there.

“Everyone come, come. We already have the table set, and Norma can barely wait to ring her bell and annoy everyone.”

Aidan followed, feeling terribly out of place. What the hell was he doing at a family reunion? And why did Heath want him there? He was the only one who wasn't family.

“Ah, I see you've brought a strapping young man with you,” Daddy Stone said, and looked straight at Aidan.

Aidan gulped. He was nervous without an apparent reason. Maybe it was because every man in this family had the same blue eyes that seemed to search your soul when looking at you.

“Hello, sir,” he said politely. “I'm Aidan Spark. I work with Heathcliff. I hope I'm not inconveniencing you.”

Daddy Stone took his hand and shook it vigorously. And then, he pulled Aidan into a firm hug. Was everyone in this family a hugger? “I never thought I'd see the day,” he said once he let Aidan go free only to keep him by the shoulders and look at him. “Finally, Heath is bringing someone home.”

Aidan felt like a major fraud now. It had all been because of circumstances that he was there, and Daddy Stone – he could see why the man's moniker would be that seeing how paternal he was with everyone – was just misinterpreting everything. He had a mind to protest, but Heathcliff came to grab him by the shoulders. “Dad, you're all over my date. I'm telling mom,” he added playfully.

Could Heathcliff do playful? Not in a sexy, a little mean way? That was a face Aidan hadn't known of him. The day was full of surprises, and there was still a family dinner to face.

They walked into a large dining room, and the kids took their seats, jumping about and laughing, in total contrast to the lavish interior. Aidan took little steps, and seeing the woman seated already at the table, he stopped completely.

Now he understood the Lady Stone joke. Heathcliff's mother was a presence capable of filling an entire building, not just a room. Like her husband, she was dressed in pretty eccentric clothes for the age they lived in, the dress she was wearing tapering down to a small waist which had to be kept that way by a tight corset. She was thin, but she didn't look frail at all.

“And who is this, Heathcliff?” she asked, and motioned Aidan forward.

Daddy Stone had been easy, as Hope had said. But this was Lady Stone, and Aidan began worrying whether his clothes were okay and if he looked all right. Had he known he would be in such select company, he would have worn his better suit.



Her deep green eyes searched his face as he stepped closer. She got up and took him by the arms. Like Heathcliff's father, she looked at him, and her gaze was even more piercing than her husband's.

"This is Aidan, mom," Heathcliff replied.

"I see," she said and tipped Aidan's chin and then made him turn his face away.

Now he felt a bit ridiculous.

"Excellent profile. I've been looking for a new subject for my current project."

Heathcliff hurried to come to his aid. "Mom, forget it. Aidan is not going to pose naked for you."

Naked? Aidan wasn't ready for that sort of shock.

"Why? He is extremely pretty. He's just what I need."

"Mom," Heathcliff warned, "there is no way my boyfriend is going to be in one of your paintings."

Oh, so Heathcliff's mom was a painter. Yet another detail that Heathcliff hadn't volunteered to offer.

"I bet it would sell well," Lady Stone counter-attacked her son's protests.

"Every one of your paintings sells well. That's not really an argument. And come on, ring that bell, and have some food brought over. We're starving."

Aidan murmured something to cover for Heathcliff's bluntness, but the lady of the house was already not paying him any attention, too busy to, indeed, ring her bell and have a flurry of maidservants flood the room with trays filled with food.

Aidan sat next to Heathcliff, not ignoring for one bit, how the man's hand was clinging to his shoulders. "What did you call me?" he asked, realizing that something extraordinary had just happened.

"My boyfriend, of course." Heathcliff leaned toward him and placed a quick kiss on his cheek.

Aidan could feel the corners of his lips stretching into the biggest smile ever. As the atmosphere continued to be as animated as before, he found himself dragged into the conversation. He could feel Heathcliff's eyes on him, from time to time, and he couldn't mind at all. It meant that Heathcliff wasn't that mad anymore.

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A walk in the immense garden had not been exactly among the places where Aidan could see himself confessing, but they were there, and he wasn't sure he could postpone it. That, mainly because Heathcliff stopped in front of him and held him by the shoulders, saying, "Aidan, we need to talk about last night."

"I know. I need to tell you something."

"I have to tell you something," Heathcliff said, at the same time.

"Ah, damn," Aidan said. "All right. Should I go first, or you?"

Heathcliff decided. "You."

Aidan took one big gulp of air and released it slowly.

"Wow, is it that bad?" Heathcliff laughed. "You look like you're about to get slaughtered or something."

"Could be," Aidan said, without too much determination.

The buzz of the earlier meal and drinks was wearing off, and now he needed to face reality. "Heath, look, I know what I said last night, and how much that must have upset you."

"Damn right," Heathcliff confirmed his fears.

Aidan breathed in the pleasant air, again. "Even so, I want you to know that I meant it. Every single word."

"What? That I'm like a 'bro'," Heathcliff made the air quotation marks, "to you?"

Aidan stared at Heathcliff and blinked a few times. What the hell was Heathcliff talking about? "No, not that part!"

"Then which part?" Heathcliff asked.

"The part where I said," Aidan closed his eyes, "I love you," he added quickly. "It's true. There. I said it. I know what you must think."

"Hmm, you do?" Heathcliff purred right into his ear, making the hair on his head stand on end. "And what am I thinking?"

"That you should think of a way to let me down gently?" Aidan added the question mark to his sentence and opened his eyes slowly.

Heathcliff chuckled, sending small waves of pleasure down his back. "Yeah, right."

"What then?"

“Hmm, since we’re such in a romantic setting, let’s start with this.” Heathcliff took a step back and looked Aidan in the eyes. “I love you, too, Aidan Spark. And definitely not like a ‘bro’.”

Aidan opened his mouth and could not get it to close back. His jaw had to be somewhere on the ground, lost between the rows of azaleas. “What?” he eventually managed. “Aren’t you going to give me the boot?”

Heathcliff laughed. “I’m not sure I understand the question.”

Aidan shook his head. “Heath, I’m ... I have no idea what to say.”

“Well, you should start by saying ‘yes’,” Heathcliff said.

“To what?” Aidan felt slightly suspicious all of a sudden.

“To doing it in a place I’ll show you,” Heathcliff said and grabbed his hand.

“It’s your parents’ garden!” Aidan whispered.

“So?” Heathcliff said with a shrug and continued to drag Aidan after him.

“And it’s not done! Come on; there are kids around!”

“They are all with my dad, playing with his vintage trains. If it were after them, they would play until tomorrow morning. No one will bother us, I promise.”

“Still.” Aidan tried to continue his protests, seeing how Heathcliff totally ignored him and was pulling him hard, almost making him trip over some roots.

They were somewhere in the back and Aidan could not suppress a ‘wow’ when he saw the old oak dominating a corner. Heathcliff pulled him behind the massive trunk of the tree, laughing.

The sun was going down, so there was still enough light. There was also a light breeze, making him shiver, but that wasn’t the reason why his skin was all goosebumps at the moment. Heathcliff pushed him with his back against the tree and raised one hand to caress his cheek slowly. All this time, his gorgeous blue eyes were set on him, and Aidan could feel his heart beating faster.

“I didn’t expect any of this,” he mumbled.

Heathcliff brushed his lips against his and began kissing him gently. He moved so slow it hurt, Aidan realized, but it was the good kind of hurt, and he wanted more of it. He caught Heathcliff by his shoulders and pulled him closer, deepening their kiss.

There was a small gasp emerging from his throat as Heathcliff worked his zipper and began rubbing his cock steadily. He could not escape the kiss or the firm hand on his dick and wanted

to return the favor. Through fits of giggles, he managed to reach Heathcliff's crotch, too. It was so nice to fill his hand with all that hardness that meant that Heathcliff wanted him as much Aidan wanted him.

"Here, let's try this," Heathcliff said in a throaty, sexy voice, and pulled their cocks together, rubbing them like that while captured in his fierce grip.

Aidan wasn't sure why that felt so good; it wasn't like full-blown sex, but, with Heathcliff, everything was different, dizzying, like a waterfall threatening to drag him to the edge of a high cliff. He wasn't laughing anymore, just panting and gasping into Heathcliff's mouth while his lover was doing the same. Soon, their cum mingled, exploding in unison, to seal the deal of their words from earlier.

He laughed again as Heathcliff let him and watched as the other carefully wiped his hand on a tissue extracted from his pocket. "I would have expected you to eat it or something," he said, leaning against the tree, feeling too spent to care about anything else in the world.

"Hey, I kiss my mother with his mouth," Heathcliff joked. "Don't worry, my love. We will have many occasions to mix cum cocktails."

"My love? Cocktails? Heath, you're so ..." Aidan had trouble picking up the right words to describe what he felt.

"In love with you?" Heathcliff's smile was absolutely gorgeous.

"You are?" Aidan asked. "For so long, I've tiptoed around you, afraid that I would give myself away if I said anything about how hard I was crushing on you."

"Crushing on me? Since when?" Heathcliff asked in a light tone.

Aidan laughed. "Since I watched some fitness video of you for the first time, I guess."

"What?" Heathcliff exclaimed. "Are you seriously trying to tell me that I thought you didn't care about falling in love with me while I was actually your crush?"

Aidan winced a little. "Well, I guess. But, come on, what chances did I have?"

"All the chances!" Heathcliff opened his arms wide.

"You, the incorrigible playboy. You would have been happy to hear someone who watched your videos had a crush on you?"

Heathcliff seemed to ponder. "Not someone. You."

"Well, if I hadn't played hard to get, you wouldn't have liked me that much. Plus, you would have thought I was a stalker or something creepy like that."

Heathcliff moved his head to one side, then the other. "Maybe you're right. Although," he put one finger up, "seeing how cute you are, I wouldn't mind being stalked by you."

Aidan rolled his eyes. "You're just saying. Gosh, I really can't believe this is happening. Is it happening? I'm not in some dream or something, right?"

Heathcliff leaned in and kissed him deeply. "No dream, Aidan. Don't ask me how it happened, but I am in love with you."

"Wow," Aidan barely managed.

"Now let's go before people really start to wonder about us and where we disappeared."

Aidan was sure he was making a face now. "So now you tell me they might think something is fishy with us."

Heathcliff burst into laughter. "No, they won't. They're happy to see me like this, settling down."

"Seriously? Are you settling down?" Aidan asked. "Is not just a temporary thing or something?"

"I'm telling you that I love you, and you still don't believe me. That means I should prove myself more. Can you call in sick tomorrow?"

"Why would I do that?" Aidan asked, but his voice was a tiny bit lost and unsure now.

"Because you might not be able to get out of bed," Heathcliff said while circling his waist with one arm and pulling him into another maddening kiss.

They walked toward the house, hand in hand.

"Wait, can I ask something?" Aidan interrupted their comfortable silence.

"Sure," Heathcliff replied. "Are you trying to find out details about what I'm going to do to you tonight?"

"No," Aidan said, a bit clipped. "Why did your brother call me his little brother?"

"Oh, that was meant as a joke," Heathcliff said.

"Like what joke?"

"He keeps telling me I should bring the one I love into the family."

"So he meant it like in brother in law?" Aidan asked, his heart getting smaller.

"Yeah, like that," Heathcliff agreed. "But don't worry. I believe in love, not marriage," he added.

Aidan opened his mouth to say something but decided it was wiser to shut it, for now. One could not win all battles with someone like Heathcliff Stone. For now, it had to be enough that he was handed the keys to the city. Anything else would have to come later, if ever.

## *Chapter Twenty-Seven – The Mother Of All Misunderstandings*

Aidan was on cloud number nine. It wasn't only because Heath had been adamant about keeping him awake half the night – actually, that made him feel a bit wasted – and not even because of the shared love confession from the day before.

It was because, simply put, everything in his life was falling into place for a change. He had been a bit desperate lately about finding a good job, a good boyfriend, and finally living the life like everyone on social media. Only that, in his case, he didn't feel any need to tout his happy life all over the place and wanted to keep it to himself.

Aidan knew he would have to call his parents and give them all the good news, though. They would undoubtedly be happy for him, both for the job that was getting better now and for the person he had in his life. He wondered briefly when it would be a good time to tell Heathcliff about visiting his parents together. If there were someone busier than the fitness guru, they were probably working for NASA or something. Or at least that was what he felt since Heathcliff was not missing a day, and not even Sundays to stay in touch with his subscriber base. But that made him so famous and likable, and Aidan liked that about him, too.

First things first, he would start with a call to his parents.

“Hey, mom,” he said, as soon as his mother answered.

“Hi, sweetie, how are you?” his mother's voice came through.

“I couldn't be better,” he replied and could feel a grin splitting his face as he said that. “I got promoted at work!”

“That's great news!” His mother was excited. “Joe!” She yelled for his father, definitely wanting to break the news to him, too, but did that without putting the phone even a bit away.

Aidan was the one to take the phone at a small distance from his ear. His mother was a bit of a tyrant, but in a good way, and both he and his father were enduring in silence, most of the time.

“Your son got promoted!” His mom yelled at the top of her lungs.

Aidan smiled and listened to the small conversation between his parents that was about him but not including him, as it happened more often than he liked to admit. He had told Heathcliff about the helicopter parenting ever present in his life, and he had told the whole truth.

Finally, his mother remembered that she was actually on the phone with her son. “That is great, Aidan. You should come to see us soon, or is your job too demanding at this point to take a bit of time off?”

“I will find the time,” Aidan said solemnly. “Also, there is something else.” He drew one deep breath. “I have a boyfriend.”

There were two seconds of silence on the other end. “Who is he?”

Even through the phone, he could see his mother’s eyes thinning with suspicion. She was always so overprotective, and, for the most part, Aidan couldn’t hold it against her. Yet, that became overbearing once in a while.

He needed to be brave for this. “He is a fitness trainer.”

“That doesn’t sound like a real job to me,” his mother replied.

Here we go, Aidan thought. But it had to be done. “He’s actually quite successful.”

“Oh, does he have his own fitness center?” The next question came right away.

“No, but he has millions of subscribers,” Aidan said.

His mother snorted. “Subscribers.”

“Yes, subscribers,” Aidan insisted, emphasizing the word. “He is endorsing a product my company is selling.”

“And isn’t there some conflict of interest to be intimate with him?”

That was his mother’s not so subtle way of asking him if he was sleeping with his boyfriend. He decided to ignore the bait. “No. My company has pretty open views on this.”

“That’s surprising,” his mother said. “What’s his name?”

“Heathcliff Stone, he is --”

“Joe, google Heathcliff Stone!” his mother yelled again.

That was so typical of her.

“Mom, seriously. Anything you want to know about him, you can ask me. I’m right here. I’ll tell you more than anything Google could tell you,” Aidan said.

His mother seemed to have, all of a sudden, a case of selective hearing. She was probably waiting for her husband to provide her with information on their son’s boyfriend.

“Anyways,” he hurried to say, “now I’m heading to work, and I can’t be late.”

“Yes, yes, go,” his mother said. “Are you eating enough?” she remembered.



Again, so typical of her. Now she would launch into an entire interview so that she could make entire radiography of what Aidan's life looked like now.

"Heath is a great cook, mom," he said quickly. "I really have to go. Bye! And give dad a hug from me!"

He cut the conversation quickly. If he let her have her way, he would have to talk to her all the way to work.

In a way, it hadn't been that bad. He had managed to transmit all the information regarding the good news. Now, of course, there was the issue of what his parents would find out about Heathcliff from the World Wide Web. Obviously, it would be a twisted image, and he would have to work hard to change their minds, and present them the truth, and not how trashy magazines wanted to portray his boyfriend.

It was true that Heathcliff had been not until long ago the poster boy for the gay bachelor life on steroids, but he wasn't that anymore. He was settled down, Aidan thought with a smile. Heathcliff Stone was settled down with him, of all people, no matter how much more beautiful or smarter they were. And Aidan could only consider himself lucky for that.

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The office was unchanged, but Aidan felt like it was suddenly smaller as he walked in. He was so happy that he almost wanted to break into a waltz step and maybe engage one or two of the other people present and take them on a dancing trip by the water cooler, like in some forties movie.

Almost. He had gotten the promotion he had worked so hard for, but that was only the first step. Next, he needed to prove himself even more if he wanted to make it in the corporate world he was living in.

He took his seat inside his cubicle. That hadn't changed, but Aidan couldn't mind. One of the few hopes he had was that he would have to complete considerably less paperwork and get more involved in the creative process.

Oh, he could hardly wait for that. Aidan's head was full of ideas, and all he needed was to channel all that into something productive.

"You got promoted," he heard someone talking, perched on the side wall of his cubicle and looking down at him.

Penguin Pants had come to complain about it, most probably. Aidan schooled his face into a neutral expression. "Yes, I did," he said shortly and pretended to be absorbed by the loading screen of the operating system on the digital display in front of him.

“Hmm.”

Hmm? What was that supposed to mean? He looked up and stared into his co-worker’s washed out eyes. He knew he should just let it slide, but now this new version of him, the happy, confident one wouldn’t let him do that. “Do you have a problem with that?” he asked, keeping his face from frowning with much difficulty.

Penguin Pants sighed theatrically. “Not everyone has a boyfriend who could blackmail the upper management into getting a promotion for him.”

Aidan snorted. “Is it really that difficult for you to understand that I got the promotion fair and square?”

“Is that the name of some sexual position you’re trying with your boyfriend? Fair and square?”

Aidan almost recoiled from the direct accusation. Penguin Pants had an ugly crooked smile. The guy knew he had gotten to Aidan with that, and he was gloating.

“Are you jealous or something?” Aidan laid back into his chair and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Jealous?” Penguin Pants’s smile turned into a disgusted grimace. “I’m not gay.”

Aidan rolled his eyes. “I was talking about the promotion, not whom I’m dating.”

“Ah.” Penguin Pants seemed to realize his mistake, and his cheeks turned pink. “Let’s face it, Aidan,” he recovered quickly, “without Heathcliff Stone, you wouldn’t have gotten this promotion ever.”

Aidan could feel a muscle tic starting in his cheek. “Heathcliff Stone is none of your business. He worked hard. I worked hard. End of story. Now, please, if you don’t mind, I have plenty of work to do.”

Penguin Pants shrugged, opened his mouth to say something else, and then his face lit up with the same smile as before. It was clear his job there was done.

Aidan opened the folder with the work for the day, but he realized he was reading the same line for the fourth time without understanding a word. Frustrated, he closed the folder and took out his phone.

It was stupid to get so worked up about something a jealous co-worker was spouting. He would ask Heathcliff about it later, or was it a bad idea? It was like he was accusing his boyfriend of doing something, just based on something a creepy idiot had said.

Eventually, he took one deep breath and returned to work. Although it was difficult to focus on what he had to do, he insisted until his mind was free of the anxiety triggered by Penguin Pants's ugly words from earlier.

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"So?" Michael looked at him through his eyelashes, like he was suspecting Heathcliff of lying through his teeth. "The big L? Are we talking about the big L, Heath?"

"Yes. That's exactly what we're talking about," Heath confirmed with a nod. "Why are you so surprised? I could swear you have pushed me since forever to take such a big step. And you're the hopeless romantic, not me. You should be over the moon right now."

Michael grinned. "I'm afraid I might wake up every minute now. That's all."

"This is no dream. I confessed; he confessed; you know how these things go."

"Who did it first?" Michael asked right away.

"Does it matter?" Heathcliff sighed and threw his arms to the sides.

"With you? Yeah, it does."

"All right, all right," Heathcliff replied with a bit of irritation. "He did it," he added quickly.

"Ah, so you were a coward, after all."

"Shut up," Heathcliff mumbled and pretended to be absorbed by the menu on the table.

"I'm just teasing you. I'm glad for you, Heath, I really am. But you really needed to be pushed to have him meet your family, didn't you?"

For a moment, Heath made a sour face, but he couldn't be mad on such a day. He was too damned happy. "Max insisted on meeting Aidan ever since I talked to them about him. Hope, too. So I was planning to introduce him to the family. Seriously, I was. I just wanted to have him to myself for a little while. Now my parents will surely insist like crazy for me to bring him over."

"And? Will that take too much from the time you're spending with him?"

"You can bet it will," Heathcliff replied.

"Damn, man, you really are in love. I still can't believe it."

Michael's eyes were smiling, too, as he was looking at him. His phone went off, and Michael reached for it. The smile on his face evaporated. He pursed his lips and rejected the call. Heathcliff stared at his best friend. "Who was it?"

“What would you recommend as a light lunch?” Michael pretended to be the one absorbed with the menu now.

Heathcliff didn’t want to let it drop, although it was clear that his friend would have preferred it. “Mikey,” he said in a warning tone, “who was it?”

Michael put down the menu and sighed. “Do you think is it possible to want someone so badly that you also want to strangle him at the same time?”

Heathcliff could barely keep a grin. Maybe he had gotten all soft over Aidan’s confession, and he was crazy in love, but it looked like Michael was going through some crucial changes in his life, too. “So, Mikey, do you have something to tell me? Was that Jess?”

“Yes. But I don’t want to talk about him,” Michael begged, his eyes like a puppy’s.

“No way. I spilled my guts to you; now it’s your turn. What’s the deal with you two?”

“We fight a lot. We fuck a lot, too. It’s complicated,” Michael said quickly.

“Is this still about his cage dance routine?”

“I had him do the wet t-shirt contest, too.”

“And he did it?” Heathcliff asked.

“Yes, he did it. The problem is that he eventually does everything I ask him to, only to come back at me with a vengeance.”

Heathcliff shrugged. “Maybe he considers it foreplay.”

Michael’s face softened. “He’s not cut for this. Dancing for money, I mean. I have no idea why he’s doing it.”

“Maybe he needs the money,” Heathcliff expressed his opinion.

“I wish I knew why,” Michael said. “He doesn’t say. And I would like to help him, but his pride is always in the way. I can’t believe it, but each time I touch the subject of why he’s dancing in a club, instead of doing what he loves most, it’s like I strike a nerve.”

“So you’re ignoring him? Because of that?”

“No. It’s something else,” Michael replied.

“Care to share it with me?” Heathcliff questioned.

“Well,” Michael exhaled, “he was right, in a way.”

“Right about what?”

“He is quite the sensation at the club. He’s an amazing dancer, and yes, that little sophistication he brings to the cage routine,” Michael rolled his eyes at his own words, “is bringing in customers, too.”

“So he makes you some good money,” Heathcliff concluded.

“Yes,” Michael said with a sigh.

“I don’t see a problem. So what is it?”

Michael cast his eyes down.

“Don’t tell me you can’t admit that he was right,” Heathcliff said. “You’re always the good guy. You cannot let such a thing bother you.”

“I’m, um, jealous,” Michael said, his eyes still down.

“Jealous? Why?” Heathcliff was truly taken aback now. “This isn’t like you. Wait, is he seeing other guys?”

“We’re not even together. I mean, not officially.” Michael shook his head like he couldn’t believe himself. “But it’s not that. It’s how I can’t stand other people staring at him while he’s almost naked. I know,” he added with a suggestive roll, “it’s crazy. He’s a cage dancer, after all.”

“It sounds complicated,” Heathcliff agreed.

“As I told you. But I’ll see what I can do to get out of this mess.”

“What mess? You know what, Mikey? I think you’re in love, and this time it’s for real.”

Michael snorted. “Love is not like this. Love is supposed to be a warm fuzzy feeling that makes you have pink dreams and butterfly fly around in your stomach without dissolving in acid.”

“Sure, sure,” Heathcliff replied. He could tell his friend was joking.

“Never mind. Let’s just celebrate your falling in love. You used to be the guy who thought would never do that. So, let’s just order lunch.”

Heathcliff wanted to help Michael, but, right now, he could understand why his friend needed a bit of space. Michael had to figure out things on his own; Heathcliff could attest to the fact that, when it came to the big L, one could not just have others tell him what was really going on.

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Aidan was done with work for the day and ready to head back home to Heathcliff. Once he had closed his computer, the unpleasant thoughts triggered by his co-worker's words came unbound. He needed to get this out of his system, somehow.

He couldn't ask his boss about it; that was out of the question. No one approached the big kahuna with office gossip like that.

Which left him with the only other option available: to ask his boyfriend. Maybe Heathcliff would get upset over Aidan suspecting him like that, but he needed to find a way to do it, if only for his peace of mind.

He took one last look over the rows of cubicles, now almost empty. The first day after getting promoted hadn't been that big a change after all. To make the transition easier, as the boss's assistant put it, he had still needed to put a lot of paperwork in order.

Still, he had Heathcliff to go back home, too, and nothing could go wrong on that front. He would just be honest and tell him about what happened. After all, no one could understand him better than Heathcliff right now.

Aidan already felt better on the way home, just at the thought of spending a relaxing evening in Heathcliff's arms. Despite the tiredness accumulated throughout the day, he had a spring in his step as he climbed the stairs to the door.

Heathcliff had the door in a second. "Hi, honey," he said and opened his arms.

Aidan rolled his eyes and laughed. "Honey? I was supposed to say 'Honey, I'm home!'"

"Maybe another time," Heathcliff said and pulled him inside, almost making him crash against a hard chest.

Aidan was the one to kick the door shut, using one foot, as none of them could be bothered with closing it properly, absorbed by the hot kiss they were sharing.

"Hmm, that's like the best welcome ever," Aidan said and grinned.

Heathcliff's hands were traveling down his back, and there was so much love with his blue eyes that Aidan could feel his heart skipping a bit. "I told my parents about us," he blurted out.

Heathcliff smiled. "Oh. And what did they say?"

"Not much," Aidan said quickly. "I was on my way to work, and I had to cut the conversation short."

There was a small frown knitting Heathcliff's eyebrows together, and Aidan looked away. "Is it something you're not telling me, Aidan?"

Aidan drew one long breath. “My parents ... they are a bit, I don’t know how to say it. Pretentious? Overprotective? No, not exactly. But I want you to meet them. I mean us. Together.”

“Ah, don’t tell me that your mom is reading the tabloids and knows everything about my ex life,” Heathcliff joked.

“Ex life?”

“Yeah. That’s what I want to call it. You know, the time before meeting you. I’m certain I have a bit of amnesia because I can’t remember what I liked so much about it. Ah, I know. I had no idea you existed.”

Aidan snickered. “I should record your words and send them to all the tabloids. They would have a blast with your confessions.”

Heathcliff made a face. “No way.”

“I wouldn’t do that, don’t worry,” Aidan hurried to say. “This is all mine,” he added, as he embraced Heathcliff tightly.

“I’m glad you think that. But are you worried that your mom would think bad things about me due to my reputation?”

“She was starting to Google you as I was still talking to you on the phone. Actually, no. She put my father to do it. Don’t worry, though. I know the real you, and that’s who they’re going to meet.”

“If you’re this sure, how come your kissable lips are still pouting?”

“Well, my mom has these old-fashioned ideas. Can you believe that she doesn’t think being a fitness trainer counts as a real job?”

“It’s not a job; it’s a calling,” Heathcliff said promptly and pinched his cheek. “C’mon, smile. Your mom will love me.”

“No one can resist you; that’s true.”

“I’ll change her mind about fitness, you’ll see.”

“Oh, it’s not that, but for some reason, she wants me to marry someone with a stable financial situation. Oops, sorry,” Aidan said quickly.

“For what?” Heathcliff asked.

“For saying the M word. I know it’s not allowed in this house.”

Heathcliff laughed. “You could tell your mom I have a stable financial situation. I could give you my bank statements so that you could forward them to her.”

“She’s a little too overprotective, I think. The moment I told her about how famous you are, she asked me if you own a fitness center. So it’s not really fitness she has something against. By the way, have you ever thought about that? Building a business in the real world, not just online?”

Heathcliff was looking at him, his eyes filled with warmth. “Are you trying to make me financially sound for your mother?”

“No, no,” Aidan protested right away. “It’s just that I believe you could do it, you know? You could have your own clothing line, and also even make your own recipes for healthy eating and all that. You know, like in a business.”

“And make your employer go bankrupt?” Heathcliff laughed again.

“I could come up with anything related to that.” Aidan got caught up in a bit of daydreaming. “I have a thing for stationery templates. I could make them look fabulous.”

“Wow, wow, slow down, Mr. Copywriter. I’m right where I want to be at the moment. Which is,” Heathcliff added, “about to take you upstairs and make you forget about dinner for like half an hour.”

“Half an hour?” Aidan asked. “I don’t know. I’m kind of hungry,” he teased.

“Or we could eat first,” Heathcliff offered courteously.

“Heath, there’s something I want to tell you,” Aidan remembered the thing that had been on his mind on his way back from work. “It’s a silly thing, really, and I don’t want you to think much of it, but I need to take it off my mind, you know? Promise me you won’t be mad.”

Heathcliff became serious right away. “What is it, love? You can tell me anything. I promise I won’t get mad.”

Aidan drew one deep breath. “There’s this idiot at work. I bet he doesn’t like it one bit that I got promoted and not him. And today, he came to me and told me something about you.”

“What?” Heathcliff frowned.

Aidan cast his eyes down. He just needed to get it out, and then they would just see about business as usual. “He hinted that you got me the promotion. By blackmailing my boss.”

He looked up to see the surprise in Heathcliff’s eyes, but there was nothing like that there.

Heathcliff smiled and winked at him. “Well, I don’t care if they’re gossiping about that. I didn’t exactly want for you to find out about it --”



Aidan pulled away. “Are you serious?”

Heathcliff seemed taken aback. “What? Your boss wouldn’t have promoted you if I hadn’t been there to squeeze his shriveled up balls.”

Aidan could feel tears of anger prickling his eyes. “Really? Don’t you think I’m capable of advancing at work on my own?”

Heathcliff came closer and tried to hug him. Aidan pulled away more.

“Don’t tell me you’re upset because I put in a good word,” Heathcliff said.

“You didn’t put in a good word,” Aidan said through his teeth. “You blackmailed my boss! Damn it, Heath, don’t you see? You make me feel like such a damned loser! How could you do this?”

Heathcliff was now beyond surprised. It was like he had just been slapped. Aidan couldn’t find it in him to feel any pity for that. “I worked so hard for this,” he said. “And you just went and grabbed the prize from the shelf and gave it to me, like I couldn’t have done it on my own.”

“You couldn’t have,” Heathcliff replied sternly.

Aidan turned on his heels and then back again to look at his boyfriend. “Thank you for the vote of confidence.” He poured as much acid as he could over his words.

“Stop it, Aidan. You’re not listening. You couldn’t have gotten the promotion because of your boss, the company you’re working for, which I think it’s fucking rotten, not because of you or how hard you work.”

“What do you know about anything? It’s enough for you to smile and people throw money at your feet! I would have gotten there! On my own! It’s like my efforts were all in vain!”

Heathcliff made a move to touch him again. “Chill a bit. Let’s talk this through.”

“I don’t think it’s anything left to talk about,” Aidan said icily. “I understand that my parents don’t trust me to do anything unless it’s closely supervised, but I thought you would be different. You’re just some ... control freak,” he threw at Heathcliff, although he knew, the moment the words left his mouth, that he was unfair.

“Welcome to the real world, Aidan. Hard work is not always recognized, or appreciated,” Heathcliff began.

“You don’t know that.” Aidan shook his head. “Now everyone at work thinks I got promoted because I’m sleeping with the right person.”

“That’s on your boss or his close acolytes, not on me,” Heathcliff replied, crossing his arms over his chest. “Harry and I both know how sensitive such a thing would be. But I won’t have you standing there, filled with righteous rage when you don’t know one thing about the real world.”

Aidan felt like he was on the point of suffocating upon hearing those words. “Is that what I am to you? A helpless guy who can’t tell right from wrong? Geez, I wonder how I manage to tie my own shoelaces every day.”

Heathcliff sighed. “Look, Aidan, I didn’t mean to --”

“Oh, but I think you meant it,” Aidan cut his words short. “I think you like playing this role, and that’s who you are.”

“C’mon. I don’t quite see why you’re so upset, but let’s have dinner and calm down,” Heathcliff offered.

“Go, have your dinner. I lost my appetite,” Aidan said and turned on his heels, leaving a stunned Heathcliff behind.

His boyfriend didn’t hurry to stop him. Who the hell was he kidding? For one day, he had felt like he had won the lottery or something. Now the reality was smacking him in the face. Heathcliff Stone was no boyfriend material, the arrogant, know-it-all prick.

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Aidan let the car windows down, his need for air bigger than anything else. His phone began ringing as soon as he turned the corner on Heathcliff’s street. He ignored it. All the way back home, his home, which he paid rent for from his shitty paycheck, it didn’t stop ringing.

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Heathcliff wanted to throw the phone at the wall and make it blast into pieces. But he needed to calm down and think this through. He had thought Aidan would come back, but the moment he had heard the car engine running, he had known that couldn’t happen, at least not tonight.

Maybe he would let Aidan chill until tomorrow. Yeah, Heathcliff Stone from before wouldn’t think twice to let an angry lover get over it. But he wasn’t the same from before.

So, instead of seeing about his usual routine, he decided to call another number.

“Am I bothering you?” he asked. “I know it’s late. Well, I think I made a huge mistake.”

## *Chapter Twenty-Eight – Drinks And Trolls Won't Break My Bones*

“What is it, son?”

Heathcliff drew one deep breath. Aidan was upset, and he needed someone with real-life experience to help him deal with this. Rushing after Aidan felt like a bad idea, and he needed to have someone look at the situation and tell him where he had gone wrong.

“I got into a fight with Aidan.”

He waited for a moment.

“I’m listening,” his father replied.

“Good.” Heathcliff let out an audible exhale. “For a moment, I worried that you might say that people fight once in a while, and I shouldn’t worry.”

“If you called me, it must be serious. I know you well, Heath, don’t forget. You wouldn’t ask for help if it weren’t important. Sometimes I wished you would have relied on us at least once in a while. So, what was the fight about?”

Heathcliff recounted quickly the circumstances of the argument he had had earlier with Aidan. “I feel like I did something terrible. He was so upset and angered when he left. Not that I don’t see how he would like to achieve this type of thing on his own, but he doesn’t know --”

“Heath,” his father stopped him. “Don’t find excuses for yourself. That’s the first rule if you want to see the end of this in a manner that won’t leave you brokenhearted.”

“So you’re not on my side?” Heathcliff half-joked.

“You’re not either if you choose to be right instead of happy.”

“I was afraid you might say that. But, still, dad, I don’t understand. Why did he get so upset? He didn’t even let me say that I was sorry.”

“Were you going to say that you were sorry?”

“Not at first. I really thought I was right.”

“Maybe this insecurity is something that runs deep with Aidan. Have you met his parents? Are they okay with his choices in life, in general?”

“He just told me he wanted me to meet them. From what he says, they tend to be overprotective. On more than one occasion, he told me he feels like a victim, well, with air quotes, of helicopter parenting.”

His father sighed on the other end. “That might explain why he feels the need to prove himself. You see, Heathcliff, to his mom and dad, he will always be the kid that needs protection. I think he got enough of that in his life and he doesn’t need the same treatment from his boyfriend.”

“I suppose you’re right,” Heathcliff admitted. “But I just wanted him to be happy. He wanted that damned promotion so much.”

“And because he wanted it so much, you felt like it would be the perfect gift. But this is not how these things work. You know your mother, and how she tends to overwork herself sometimes. If I try to pull her away from her work, she goes full beast mode. And I want what’s best for her.”

“And you know better than to do that, right? So, if someone you love is in this position, of letting themselves get hurt, you just stay and watch?” Heathcliff asked, feeling a tinge a bitterness creeping into his voice.

“No. But you need to be a good strategist and do something in such a way that fragile egos don’t get hurt in the process. In a way, not that I want to criticize you, you took from Aidan the possibility to see how little he means to that company and his boss. Once he would have seen that, he would have wanted to leave there, and never go back.”

“Ah, damn,” Heathcliff said dejectedly. “And now I’m the enemy.”

“Unfortunately, yes, but it’s temporary. Aidan will see clearly once he gets the chance that his boss doesn’t care for his hard work at all.”

“And what am I supposed to do in the meantime? I miss him already,” Heathcliff confessed.

His dad was the only person in the world to whom he could admit to such extreme vulnerabilities. He might have joked with Michael about his feelings for Aidan and asked for help, but his father was the only one who could see him down and that, without his feeling like he was less of the person he liked to be.

His father had always been the parent to whom he had ran with a scraped knee or a bad grade, no matter how motherly his mom had tried to be. She had been, more often than not, caught in her work, and Heathcliff had felt, instinctively, even as a child, that there was something in his mother’s life that was at least as important as he and Max. His father was different in that respect, and his love was complete. That was why Heathcliff was calling him tonight, and no one else.

“Heath,” his father said with affection, “I know you might not be used to this feeling, but it’s all right. It will all be fine. Such moments help you grow.”

“What if he doesn’t want to talk to me or see me anymore?” Heathcliff expressed his sudden deep fear. Anyone else who knew him would have either thought he was joking or really going insane when hearing him say something like that.

“You and Aidan don’t really know each other. Although you knew about Aidan’s parents and their obsession to be overprotective, you couldn’t have understood the implications of your involvement in his promotion. I’m just a bystander, but everything is clear to me. But it couldn’t have been clear to you. You only thought of offering Aidan what he wanted. And there’s nothing wrong with good intentions, son; know that. It is, however, important to learn what to do with these good intentions and how to use them to offer the people you love what they truly need.”

“Thank you, dad. I feel a little better now that I talked to you. So, what should I do next?”

“Be honest. Tell Aidan you’re sorry and give him a bit of space. This is just a fight, after all. If there is enough in your relationship to weigh in balance, that part will win. Don’t expect things to work out from the second you see him, though.”

“Oh, damn, how long will I have to wait?” Heathcliff asked, and pushed one hand through his short hair, feeling already restless with the idea.

“You two work together on that project you were telling me about. That means that he will have to see you and talk to you. That’s your chance to set things right. Tell him what you have to say, and let him process it.”

“For how long?”

His father laughed softly. “Young people. You are so impatient as if life were short. Well, let me tell you, son; it’s pretty long, and there’s enough time to wait for the one you love to forgive you.”

“I can’t just sit idly,” Heathcliff protested.

“And you shouldn’t. Take this time to think about why Aidan got so upset. You will understand some things about him that you haven’t so far.”

“All right. I’ll try,” Heathcliff replied.

He wished his father goodnight and headed up the stairs, to go to sleep. Alone. Usually, he appreciated having the bed all to himself, but now it wasn’t the case anymore. He would miss Aidan tonight, and tomorrow until they would see each other again. His father’s kind and wise words were still on his mind. He truly needed to understand the one he loved better.

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Trying to get drunk and listening to old songs was so cliché, but Aidan found himself in a bar, somehow, instead of going home. It was also a good time to hear a kind word or two from someone who knew him well.

Aidan took out his phone and stared at the list of contacts. Eventually, Heathcliff had given up on calling him and leaving him messages, so his phone was quiet for now.

He couldn't call his parents. To think that only that morning, he had wanted to introduce Heathcliff to them as his boyfriend. How could Heathcliff see him so helpless? It was probably all his fault, but that didn't make it any better.

If that was all he could do, maybe he didn't deserve to live 'the life' and have everything. In fact, he had nothing. The promotion was a sham, and he had no boyfriend. Aidan stared at the bottom of the glass in front of him, reminding himself that he couldn't really get drunk.

There was something wrong with him. Heathcliff had looked at him and seen it right away. His boss, too, or, otherwise, no blackmail would have been needed for that promotion to happen. So he needed to work on himself first before having any pretention that he would deserve to have things handed to him.

His stomach growled. Ah, damn, he hadn't eaten anything since only one hour earlier he had been happily heading over to a lovely dinner with his boyfriend. Aidan snorted. The fairytale was over; it seemed. How could he be so stupid to think a playboy like Heathcliff Stone could really appreciate him? Maybe he had been just convenient, after all, and nothing more.

No, a little voice in his head revolted. That hadn't been it. But Heathcliff had put it all clear about what he thought of Aidan earlier that evening. It was one thing to tease him with nicknames and whatnot, and another to treat him like he needed to be held by the hand like someone who couldn't do anything by himself.

As he browsed through his contacts, finally a name caught his attention. "Hi, Bella," he said in a weak voice.

"Hey, Aidan, what's up?" His friend's energetic voice came through.

"Are you busy?"

"Yeah, watching the paint peel from one of the walls. Seriously, I'm overpaying for this place."

Despite how down he felt, Aidan laughed. "Do you think we could meet up for a bit of chat? I know it's late --"

"Are you kidding? I'm off the door right now!"

It was clear as day that Isabel was bored out of her mind, so Aidan felt less guilty about dragging her out of the house at that hour.

"Where are you?" she asked.

Aidan gave her directions to the bar he was currently trying to use as the perfect spot for drowning his sorrows. “And don’t worry; I’m paying,” he added.

“Why? Are you suddenly rich? Or are you marrying your rich boyfriend?”

“Did I mention that to you? I don’t think I told you he’s rich,” Aidan replied.

Isabel laughed. “You didn’t. I was just fishing for info. So are we going to get wasted? What’s the occasion?”

“I got promoted. Yay,” Aidan said in a voice so sad that he could double as a eulogy speaker in his spare time.

“Wow, you surely are thrilled over it. Was it a negative promotion? Like a demotion?”

Aidan laughed again, but only halfheartedly. “That wouldn’t be possible in my case. The janitorial services at my company are outsourced,” he explained.

“I’ll be there as fast as I can. And then you can tell me all about why you’re sad like you watched our entire collection of tragic love movies on repeat.”

Aidan shook his head. He couldn’t fool his best friend if he wanted. “Well, I will tell you. Just hurry up, and tell me what I should order for you.”

“We’ll figure it out, Aidan. I’m on my way,” Isabel said, and Aidan could hear a door slamming shut, which meant that his friend was, indeed, out of the house.

He used the time needed for Isabel to reach him to mope like a teenager. Well, good, he deserved to sulk and feel bad, seeing how completely reckless he had been lately. Aidan couldn’t take it out of his mind how Heathcliff could believe he could do such a thing and consider it okay. That man had had everything handed over to him in his life. His parents were wealthy, and he was famous.

And Aidan was no one. Heathcliff Stone was out of his league in more ways than one. It didn’t matter. Aidan was pissed at him, like royally pissed.

“Hey,” Isabel called from behind and patted him on the shoulder. “Oh, damn, Aidan, you look like shit.”

“Thank you,” he replied dryly.

“You’re welcome,” Isabel said promptly and climbed the stool next to him while placing her purse on the bar. “So what are we not celebrating?”

Aidan pushed one glass in front of her. “My promotion isn’t real, and my boyfriend isn’t, either.”

“Wow,” Isabel said matter-of-factly.

“Yeah. My point exactly,” Aidan said and took another big gulp from his drink. “It looks like he blackmailed my boss into giving me the promotion.”

“Who? Your boyfriend? How could he do that?”

“Well, apparently, it was enough for him to walk over to my boss and tell him that I should get the promotion or else ... I don’t know what the ‘else’ was, but it had to do something with his no longer wanting to promote the healthy drinks my company is selling.”

It took Isabel a few long seconds to process, and only then Aidan realized he had talked too much.

“O.M.F.G.”

He looked away.

“Your boyfriend is Heathcliff Stone!” Isabel yelled, quite accusatorily. “I thought I saw something in a tabloid not too long ago, but I’ve been so damned busy with my shitty job that I couldn’t even have the time to keep up with the gossip lately. I thought it had to be some photoshopped picture or something! And I was thinking to myself, ‘Poor Aidan, the position he is put in. To be talked about as being Heathcliff Stone’s boyfriend when the only thing he can do is to drool in silence over such a man, like the rest of all humanity, regardless of gender’. And all this time, you were with him! For real!”

Isabel punched him in the shoulder, hard.

“Ouch!” Aidan pulled away a little. “Are you taking up boxing now?”

“Don’t try to change the subject!” Isabel wagged the finger at him. “How could you keep silent about it?”

“It was a secret, for a while, at least,” Aidan said, feeling guilty. “And I thought that I was dreaming or something. Well, it looks like I was, so it doesn’t matter anyway. Shit, I shouldn’t have told my parents about him. Now I’ll have to take it all back. Fuck.”

“Not so fast-forward, Aidan. For how long has Heathcliff Stone been your boyfriend?”

“Several months now. But he’s not my boyfriend anymore, so --” Aidan trailed off.

Isabel shook her head and pursed her lips. “Did you catch him in bed with some dude? Or more? Oh, no, Aidan, did you walk in on him having an orgy with three Calvin Klein underwear supermodels while they were all wearing that kind of underwear and pouring expensive drinks over each other?”



Aidan eyed her friend suspiciously. “That is awfully specific, don’t you think, Bella? What have you been reading lately? Never mind. Don’t tell me. And that wasn’t it. And haven’t you heard me? He got my promotion for me.”

Isabel stared at him as if she was waiting for him to continue.

“And,” he said with a loud sigh, “that is why we broke up.”

Isabel cocked her head to a side. “Who broke up with whom?”

“I ... guess I did,” Aidan said quickly. “Ouch!” he yelled when Isabel punched him in the same spot.

“Over something like this? I wish I had a boyfriend who blackmailed my boss into giving me a promotion!”

“I don’t think that’s the right thing to do!” Aidan protested right away. “And, seriously, I thought you would be on my side!”

Isabel rolled her eyes. “I usually am, but on this, I think you don’t know what you’re doing. And breaking up with Heathcliff Stone? Are you out of your mind?”

Aidan sighed and stared dejectedly at his drink. Isabel sensed right away what was going on with him. That was how they had always been, reading each other like open books. She scooted over, making the stool scrape the floor, and placed one arm over his shoulders. “Look, Aidan, why don’t you tell me why you’re so upset?”

“I’ve worked so hard for that promotion,” he began pouring his heart out. “And it’s like he took all the effort I did from me and turned it into nothing. Now I don’t know if I did deserve the promotion or not. He made it impossible for me to know. I’ll doubt myself every day from now on because I don’t know if I’m good at what I do or not. Do you have any idea how difficult it will be for me at work from now on? Not to mention, people will think of me like a slut capable of anything to get ahead.”

Isabel made a small hissing sound. “Now, I see how that would be bad. Sorry, I got caught up with all the ‘my bestie is seeing someone famous, OMG’ that I didn’t stop for a second to think of what you might be feeling. So, did you call him an arrogant bastard and threw at him the ring he gave you on your six-month anniversary or something?”

Aidan turned his head to stare at Isabel. “Have you ever thought of writing screenplays or something, Bella?”

Isabel smiled at him. “I’m just trying to cheer you up. What did he say in his defense, for real?”

“He thought he was doing me a favor. Instead, he pulled the rug from under my feet. Just when I thought that I was doing something good for a change. That I was proving myself, you know?”

Isabel patted his back. “Aidan, I don’t think there’s anything irremediable that happened. For starters, you should know your worth. A stupid promotion at work doesn’t tell you who you really are.”

“But my boyfriend shouldn’t be the one to tell me that, either.”

“I guess so. Well, unless, what he says is only comprised of very flattering compliments. Then he could.”

“You’re joking again. But I appreciate it, Bella. Just saying it all out loud makes me understand that I’ve been too complacent lately. I need to work hard and prove myself again,” Aidan said with determination.

Isabel shook his head. “Are you going to get back with him?”

Aidan deflated. “I don’t know. He might just be way out of my league. I mean, what do I bring to the table? I’m just a small-time copywriter, actually junior advertising copywriter, well wait, not even, because --”

“Aidan, just breathe. And I don’t think that’s the case. If Heathcliff Stone hung in the condoms to be with you, it might have nothing to do with whatever you’re doing at work, or how good you are at that.”

“Hung in the condoms? I’m pretty sure that’s not how that expression goes.”

Isabel shrugged. “Well, rumor has it that he was great at horizontal sparring, so I think the expression is spot on. You know what? Let’s just try to get wasted, and then go out in the street and sing sea shanties.”

“That might get us arrested,” Aidan pointed out.

“Good. At least then, something exciting would happen in my life, too. Seriously, I can’t believe you lied to me for so long.”

It felt good to have someone he could trust by his side. Even if Bella hadn’t offered, in no words whatsoever, to solve his dilemma for him, he already felt better. The night would be a good advisor, and, in the morning, he would know what to do.

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The first thing in the morning, Aidan cursed his decision to drink and stay up late. He couldn’t get drunk easily, but, for some reason such as the universe loving to play tricks on him, he still suffered from bad hangovers. It was all about his brain shrinking due to dehydration if what he

had read in some so-called health magazine was true. He groaned as he found his way to the fridge for a cold soda.

And then he cursed for the second time that morning. His refrigerator was completely empty. There was no wonder Heathcliff thought he needed to be held by the hand. When had it been the last time he had bought groceries? The empty shelves of his fridge stared at him in their complete and frigid nakedness.

Aidan shut the door to the fridge and just drank some water from the tap in the kitchen, making faces as the supposedly odorless liquid found its way down his throat and into his stomach. His shriveled brain would have to do with that until he managed to get something better on his way to work.

So he needed to take a shower, dress up, and head to work. He slowed down just as he was trying to put his mind in order. What if he needed to work with Heathcliff today? What the hell would he do? He was in no shape to face his ex-boyfriend. Ex-boyfriend? Was he really thinking of Heathcliff like that? Something in his still shriveled and dehydrated brain was telling him he was jumping to conclusions.

With a deep breath, he decided that maybe he could have a serious conversation with Heathcliff about boundaries. Aidan knew that most probably, that would be an argument he wouldn't win, but, at least, he wanted to try. Heathcliff was sure of himself and his actions, unlike him.

Was he ready to give up on Heathcliff over this? Not that it wasn't an important issue, but plenty was hanging in balance, on the other side, like his feelings for Heathcliff. In the light of the morning, he was more inclined to think like Isabel and consider that it wasn't a good idea to break up with Heathcliff over something like that.

At least, he would be pissed. Not for long, as who knew if Heathcliff could stand something like that, but enough to make a point. One way or another, he needed to make himself understood.

That seemed to be a good, mature decision. With that thought in mind, Aidan began preparing to leave for work. In passing, he checked his phone. Heathcliff hadn't tried to contact him again after the wave of calls and messages from the day before. That was a little unsettling. Maybe the man already thought Aidan was too much work, with his quirks, and principles, and attitude.

His heart was growing small, just thinking of it. But his righteous anger came quickly to level up the playing field. Heathcliff couldn't treat him like that and get away with it just because of who he was. Or could he?

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The part with waiting patiently was not precisely to Heathcliff's liking, so he started to flip through the comments on his videos. He replied quickly to a few questions, smiled at the usual praises, and was about to try calling Aidan when something caught his attention.

*Seriously, I cannot believe Heathcliff is such a sellout, promoting such crap.*

Now that was a strange comment. What could that person mean by that? Well, he didn't have to ask that question himself, as the respective vitriolic commentary had started a thread.

*What do you mean? He was clear about endorsing products without going overboard. I think he's great.*

Thank you, stranger on the Internet, Heathcliff thought, and continued reading.

*And what does he say about those stupid drinks? That they're healthy? They have tons of sugar and who knows what else.*

Tons of sugar? Heathcliff was pretty sure the drinks he advertised were reasonably healthy, and sugar was not present at all on the list of ingredients. Maybe this person was just a troll.

*Troll. That's not true.*

It was nice to have other people standing up for him, and maybe even reading his mind a little.

*I'm afraid that could be it - this time, the comment was not from the original poster - I have been drinking these for a while, and I go through some serious rushes, like those from sugar, followed by some severe drops. The label says nothing, but why do I feel lightheaded and like I'm on the point of fainting a few hours after I have one?*

*Maybe you just eat cookies, and you're a fat f\*ck.* The immediate reply read.

Heathcliff frowned. That comment was beyond rude; it was downright mean.

*I keep with a pretty strict diet, so I know exactly what I eat every day. I will see my doctor today. Maybe it's not from these drinks, but I must check.*

*Nah, it happened to me, too. How can Heathcliff promote these when he's so health-conscious otherwise?*

Heathcliff read the thread until its last comment, all the time, rubbing his face with growing nervousness. This wasn't a classic case of trolling. Something wasn't right. He went searching for the list of ingredients Aidan had brought him upon asking. With the piece of paper in his hand, he began to think. Nothing looked out of the ordinary there, but could he dismiss this as a series of unfortunate coincidences?

In the end, he decided to send Aidan a short text and ask him to come over. This was serious and concerned his experience with his subscriber base. His face was all a frown when Aidan rang the doorbell some time later.

“I got your text,” Aidan said in a small voice, as soon as he was in.

Bunny boy looked like he hadn’t had enough sleep. That was something to address later. Right now, Heathcliff needed to make things clear on the professional front. He opened the thread of comments that had grown in size over the last hours and handed his phone to Aidan.

Without a word, Aidan read, his face clouding more and more. “They may be just trolls,” he said eventually as he handed the phone back to Heathcliff.

“They don’t look like trolls to me. Something’s fishy with those drinks.”

“Why do you say that? Just because some people on the Internet said something?” Aidan replied in an irritated tone.

Heathcliff could feel his own irritation growing, too. Aidan was dismissing this with no argument. And this wasn’t about them, but about other people who could be seriously affected if there was something bad or hidden in those drinks.

“No, because they make sense. You should ask your boss about this.”

Aidan snorted. “I’m not going to go to my boss with gossip from random people.”

“These are not just random people. They are subscribers who count on me not to lie to them,” Heathcliff said through his teeth.

“Subscribers,” Aidan scoffed. “They’re just clever trolls, that’s all.”

“Why? Is it so hard to believe that your company might sell crap?” Heathcliff asked, his blood beginning to boil.

Aidan seemed a bit taken aback by his outburst. “Just because you don’t like my boss, that doesn’t mean there’s something wrong with the product.”

“Really? Are you taking his side now? That guy is a major asshole and secretly a homophobe!”

Aidan’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. “And you’re one to talk? You practically blackmailed him into giving me the promotion. Something I didn’t ask you to do!”

Great. They were shouting at each other. There was no way this could work to the advantage of their relationship. But Heathcliff couldn’t just let it drop now. This wasn’t about his being right for the sake of the argument, but about other people’s lives, and his reputation, too.

“That has nothing to do with your promotion, Aidan,” he said sternly.

“Like hell, it doesn’t. Do you want to be in control this much? Well, control your trolls!”

Heathcliff could feel the blood rushing to his head. Aidan was a complete brat. “Go back to your boss and ask him about this. If he doesn’t give me an honest reply, I’m off this contract,” he threatened.

Aidan seemed to ponder for a couple of seconds. “You’ll have to pay compensation if you terminate the contract before deadline,” he said in an icy tone.

“Let that be my problem,” Heathcliff said, crossing his arms over his chest, and placing his feet apart, to suggest he wasn’t playing.

“Well, here’s the news, Mr. Big Shot Influencer. There are plenty of people earning their bread with this contract, and they’re real, unlike your trolls.”

“My trolls? Seriously, Aidan, you make it sound like I personally went to the comment section and started to criticize the product! You have some nerve!”

“Some nerve?! I busted my ass for this, and you had to blackmail my boss!”

“This isn’t about you and me, Aidan!” Heathcliff boomed. “You know what? It looks to me like you need a bit of more time to pull your head out of your ass! Damn it; I should have never gotten involved with someone I’m working with!”

Aidan’s face drained of blood in an instant, and Heathcliff knew he had blown it out of proportions.

“You shouldn’t have. That’s true. Don’t worry; if I wasn’t clear last night, our little arrangement is over,” Aidan said through his teeth.

“You’re breaking up with me?” Heathcliff asked like he couldn’t believe his ears.

“Yes, I am,” Aidan said and brushed his fingers through his hair in a quick gesture. “I’ll ask my boss about it all. Don’t worry; your subscriber base won’t suffer because of some trolls.”

“Aidan,” Heathcliff started. “I want us to talk things through, about your promotion and --”

“I think it’s all clear. And you don’t have to worry about your reputation for this other thing, either. To anyone asking, I’ll tell them you broke up with me because you got bored or something.”

Heathcliff grabbed him and pulled him close. “Aidan, just shut up for a second, please. This is important, but I don’t want to lose you, either.”

Aidan didn't hug him back but didn't push him away, either. Maybe that was a good sign. But when Heathcliff let him look at him, the cold look in Aidan's eyes told him a different story. "Hey," he said softly.

"If that is all, Mr. Stone, I'll be on my way."

"You can't be serious," Heathcliff breathed out.

"But I am. This was a bad idea from the start. You were the one who always did things for me, and never the other way around. I've never done anything for you. That's not how a healthy relationship works, and I should have known."

"That's not true," Heathcliff protested. "You did a lot of things for me. And how do you know our relationship isn't right?"

"Ah, sure, I forgot. I'm the complete idiot in this relationship."

"Aidan, hush; don't say such words," Heathcliff begged.

"I am in complete control of my vocabulary. And, really, name one thing I did for you. I thought so," Aidan said, seeing Heathcliff's hesitation.

*You made me fall in love*, it was what Heathcliff wanted to say, as he stared, in stunned silence, at Aidan walking away and closing the door after him without another word.

## *Chapter Twenty-Nine – Don't Say You've Never Done Anything For Me*

Heathcliff felt like an automaton as he moved through the house. First things first, he needed to sort out what the hell was going on with those so-called healthy drinks Aidan's company was selling. If there was something bad in them, that was bad for him, too.

At least, that was a topic he could think about, as Aidan's sudden decision to break up was still too much for him to process at the moment. A long time ago, he had realized that trying to sort out a disturbing situation or thought required a clear head, and that was something he couldn't use right now.

Aidan's rejection hurt, and he couldn't allow himself to think of it at the moment. Maybe Aidan would cool down and come back, but, somehow, unlike the night before, that thought wasn't so keen on settling his nerves.

He took one of the drinks out of the refrigerator and took a long look at it. Not that he ever drank such stuff, but he kept a few of the ones Aidan had brought for him around, just so that he could use for regular promotion. Could it be that he had mistaken? It was a generic drink, indeed, something he had known right from the start, somewhat healthier in the sense that it didn't have a high concentration of sweeteners and sugar replacements, but, otherwise, nothing too over the top.

He took the cap off and sipped from the bottle. There was no sugar in it, by what he could tell, and what the list of ingredients was saying, too. Well, the label was nothing but printed words on paper.

Without one moment of hesitation, he picked his brother's name from the list of contacts. "Hi, Max. I have a favor to ask."

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Aidan could still feel his eyes prickling as he entered the office. It felt unreal, but he had to get used to the idea, mainly since he had been the one to break it off with Heathcliff. It was all his fault, after all; but Heathcliff was just an arrogant, selfish bastard, too, he tried to tell himself over and over.

If he repeated that enough times, it would become real, eventually. Some small voice trying to tell him he was doing the wrong thing needed to be squashed and reduced to a puddle of neurons that had to have better work to do.

Aidan sat at his desk and tried to work, but his fingers, guided by some irresistible volition that seemed to come from an uncontrollable part of his brain, tapped in the name of Heathcliff's video channel. He stopped resisting at some point, and he began to reread the thread. Apparently, now it had even more replies, and, while some commenters were trying to keep things toned



down, others were simply outraged and convinced that there was something wrong with those drinks.

This wasn't even about Heathcliff, he tried to tell himself. His boss needed to learn about this since it was their product that got in the bad spotlight, after all. With determination, he stood up and walked over to the door to the man's office.

In few words, Aidan told the boss's personal assistant that he needed to see him on a serious issue. For a moment or two, the assistant hesitated, but there must have been something in Aidan's body language that looked convincing enough. Within a couple of minutes, he was seated on the lower chair in the room, in front of his boss.

"What's this about, Spark?" the man boomed.

Unlike other times, Aidan didn't feel impressed. There had been too many shocks in his life lately to care for a boss who liked to yell too damned much.

"People are complaining on Heathcliff Stone's channel about our drinks giving them sugar rushes," he replied promptly.

"People complain too much these days," his boss shouted at him, in the same manner.

"With all due respect, sir, this is unprecedented, and we can't dismiss such complaints."

"How many people are we talking about? Thousands? Hundreds of thousands?"

Aidan could feel his jaw hurting. They weren't selling millions, to warrant such a question. "At this moment, we're talking about dozens."

"Dozens!" His boss leaned back into his chair and pursed his lips, something that really made his face look like that of a giant toad. "Because some people on the Internet are talking nonsense, you come to me? Spark, you almost make me think you didn't quite deserve that promotion!"

The pain in his jaw was getting unbearable. Aidan swallowed hard. "If that's what you think, sir. But, please, hear me out. Today, dozens complain. Tomorrow, their number will increase tenfold. This could become viral and not in a good way."

"Did Heathcliff Stone put you to come to me with this?" His boss said the words with unhidden disgust.

"He didn't put me to come to you with anything," Aidan replied. "He asked me to, and I believe he has the right to do so."

"Why? Because he's your boyfriend?" The last word had come out from the toad-like lips like it was poison almost ingested by mistake.

“No. Because he is a business partner, and his reputation is at stake, too. Also, the boyfriend part is not true, as you well know.”

Aidan couldn't believe he was still keeping his cool under the artillery fire launched by his boss.

“Tell him he has nothing to worry about. Dismissed!” his boss yelled.

Aidan didn't move. “This kind of situation requires an official statement from the company.”

“Are you trying to teach me how to do my job, Spark? Dismissed!”

Aidan felt all his blood rushing to his cheeks. There was something humiliating in how his boss was treating him right now. It wasn't because of some former military training or whatever was making his boss behave like that. The man was a toad, indeed; as for what Heathcliff had said about him, now Aidan felt it to be real.

He stood up but didn't leave just yet. “What should I tell Mr. Stone?”

“Tell him? Is anyone in the hospital or something? No. Just some people complaining because of who knows what reason. But, if you want so much to tell him something, tell him to keep his subscribers in check. If they're badmouthing our product, that's something that will make him lose money, too. It is up to him to convince them our product is within parameters.”

Aidan grimaced. He had pretty much said the same thing to Heathcliff earlier that day. Now, when the words were spoken back to him, he understood how they sounded. Heathcliff should have been pissed at him.

Instead, Heathcliff had tried to talk to him and keep him from leaving. Suddenly, Aidan felt small. Otherwise, everything else was true.

“You know what, Stone?” his boss interrupted his thoughts. “You're off this contract. Apparently, you can't handle such a situation.”

Aidan stood there, frozen. Was that punishment for talking out of turn?

“Did I make myself clear?” his boss said in an unpleasant, menacing voice.

“Yes, sir,” he replied.

He hurried out of the big kahuna's office before being yelled at again. If there was something wrong with those drinks, it was up to him to discover it. In a way, it didn't feel like such a shock to be taken off the contract. It felt, instead, that his boss was hiding something.

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For days, Heathcliff had tried to reason with disgruntled people asking him about the drinks from The Healthy Shakers, and appease them without appearing like a condescending jerk. In the meantime, he had tried to get in touch with Aidan, but to no avail, since he didn't pick up his phone or reply to messages. From the company, he had been informed by a dull and impersonal voice that Aidan Spark was no longer in charge of his relationship with the company.

Max was on it, and he was expecting some data any day now. In the meantime, it seemed as if his entire life was going downhill at the speed of light. There was a loss in subscribers, not a significant one just yet, but Heathcliff knew what that meant. People were starting to lose their trust in him.

As usual, he searched his inner peace through meditation and exercise, but, unlike many other times, except for helping him sleep, that didn't provide him with all the answers. In a way, he knew he was stalling, and that he needed to call his father again, or at least, talk to Michael.

Heathcliff felt strangely alone in all that, and it was self-imposed. For the first time in years, he was starting to realize what it meant to be responsible for his own actions. Not that he was irresponsible, but his failure to keep Aidan by his side was a consequence of many choices he had made along the way in his life.

Maybe Aidan was right, at least a little. He had tried to be in control, dictating everything in their relationship, impatient with both their feelings. He had treated Aidan like a child, and, if the guy just answered his damned phone, Heathcliff would tell him everything, and apologize as he should.

Action was needed, but Heathcliff felt that going after Aidan right now might push them apart even more. He knew what the issue was. At least that was where all the meditation truly helped him -- to realize why he was upset, too.

Given a chance, Aidan had chosen his employer over Heathcliff. That was the real issue that he could not find himself letting go of; it wasn't his habit to be jealous, but, in this case, he stupidly was precisely that. And jealousy was a new feeling he couldn't quite understand, let alone deal with. It wasn't even about sex or romantic implications; it was about trust, and it hurt him to realize how little of that Aidan had in him.

All he had to do was wait. The sound of his phone ringing sprang him into action. "Max," he said right away, "what did you find out?"

"Heath, those people aren't just talking smack. You gave me two samples, right?"

"Right," he confirmed right away.

"Well, let's just say that one is squeaky clean, as much as we can say about such a product, and the other is bound to send people with diabetes ... well, not in a good place."

Heathcliff could feel his blood coming to a halt. “What’s wrong with it?” he asked right away.

“It has more maltodextrin than a variety of drinks I tested for comparison,” his brother explained.

“I believe it is listed among the ingredients,” Heathcliff said.

“Yes, but the amount is the problem. And I know you’re not crazy about it, right?”

“Right. It’s just a cheap replacement for sugar, and nothing else. Just to make it have a bit of so-called palatable taste, I think.”

“It might also help people who exercise since it’s readily available as fuel to burn,” Max continued.

“I know all that. And I don’t condone it anyway.”

“I know. So, Heath, how come one sample was normal, and the other was so spiked with this shit?”

His brother was not one to cut corners. And neither was he. “One came from my fridge, and it’s the stuff Aidan brought over for me to promote during my videos. I bought the other from some random grocery store.”

Max hissed in displeasure. “Well, Heath, that’s nasty. The tests are conclusive, and you can always ask another lab to do them for you, just so that we don’t appear as having ulterior motives since we’re brothers. Still, you need to be careful with these guys. The moment you say something, they’ll just lawyer up.”

“Don’t you think I know?” Heathcliff snorted. “Scumbags always lawyer up.”

“What does Aidan have to say about this?”

Heathcliff chose to be vague on purpose. “He doesn’t say much these days.”

“He could help you out. Stand up for you.”

“But then, his job would be on the line,” Heathcliff replied.

He couldn’t bring himself to tell his brother about Aidan. There had to be something he could do to make Aidan come back. Now it was a bad time, and he needed to solve this issue first.

“If he cares about you, and the truth --” Max started.

“No. I won’t involve Aidan.”

“All right. Just don’t forget we’re all here for you.” Max knew when not to insist.

“I know. And thanks a lot for everything.”

He had barely said goodbye to Max that his phone started ringing again. He just hoped it wasn't some trashy magazine to ask him if he was endorsing poison. It wasn't anyone of the kind, luckily.

“Hey, Mikey,” he said.

“Now, Heath, could you please tell me why do I need to learn from tabloids that you broke up with Aidan?”

Could it be that Aidan had talked to reporters, given the opportunity? It felt unlikely, but maybe he didn't know Aidan that well. “I didn't want to bother you,” he replied simply.

“Oh, fuck. I meant that as a joke,” Michael said after a short moment of shocked silence. “I did read it online,” he added quickly, “but it looked like mere speculation. And I realized we haven't talked in a while. What the hell is going on, Heath?”

“People fight,” Heathcliff explained shortly.

“It's serious, or you wouldn't sound like this.”

“Like what?” Heathcliff asked, with a sigh.

“Like this. And what's this scandal with protein shakes or whatever?”

“Healthy drinks. The stuff I'm endorsing. Well, it's pretty bad. What can I say? It's one thing what they sent to me, and another what they sell in stores.”

“Shit,” Michael said under his breath. “And how did you find out?”

“My followers on social media started raising the issue, so I looked into it. I had Max examine the content from two different bottles. And he found out exactly what I told you. So it's bad, in a nutshell.”

“You're going to expose them, right?”

“That's what I'm planning to do. But I need some time and plenty of care. Max warned me that they would not sit idle and let me do that to them. They'll send an army of lawyers to fry my ass.”

“And Aidan? Oh no, is that why you two fought?”

“Not exactly.”

“If Aidan is the guy I think he is, he will help you if he finds out about this. I suppose not many people know the truth, at this point.”

“Just Max and you, except for me, of course. And let it be this way. Aidan doesn’t need to get involved in this.”

“Why? Even if he’s pissed at you, I think he would be on the side of truth.”

“And even if things are like that, what can he do?”

“He works there. He might be able to do more than you think. Talk to his boss, or find out what’s going on.”

“Maybe,” Heathcliff agreed. “But I don’t want him involved in any way.”

“So you think you’re keeping quiet to protect him?”

“Something like that.”

“I think you’re wrong. Aidan deserves to know. Wasn’t he involved in this project, too?” Michael asked.

“Not anymore. He was apparently pulled from it.”

“Now that’s odd,” Michael commented. “Don’t you think?”

“Mikey, I don’t exactly have time to speculate. I have a big problem, and I need to solve it and that without giving those assholes the chance to sniff what I’m planning. Yes, I intend to leave Aidan out of it.”

“Okay. But don’t be a stranger. It sounds like you need a friend more than anything right now.”

“That’s true,” Heathcliff admitted. “It feels like everything I’ve built all these years is in danger of crashing down. It might not feel to many people that what I do is real work --”

“You don’t have to say anything. You’re the hardest worker I know, Heath. So, shut up. Also, let’s get together tomorrow. I haven’t seen you in days, and I’m your best friend.”

“All right,” Heathcliff agreed with a small smile. “Lunch?”

“I’ll just come over, and we could play some squash later. I’m sure you need to work some anger out of your system.”

“You know I’ll destroy you,” Heathcliff joked.

“I hope so. And if it makes you feel better, it will be all worth it.”

He was still smiling as he said his goodbyes to Michael. The feel-good sensation didn’t last long, though. He needed to plan this carefully if he wanted to bring down those scumbags at The Healthy Shakers.

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Aidan felt like an inside agent in a B-rated movie. He had already identified a pattern for everyone that moved throughout the department every day. If there was information kept away from prying eyes, it had to be well guarded, that, in the fortunate situation that it wasn't stored someplace else.

Snooping around the database available for all employees to see and use had led nowhere, and Aidan hadn't expected any miracles anyway. He needed to dig deeper, or maybe he was just fooling himself into believing he could find out anything.

In the meantime, he ignored Heathcliff's calls and messages, deleting them without reading them. Heathcliff had no idea that the fact that they were no longer together was actually a good thing for him. Getting burdened with someone like Aidan would have come to light for what it was, eventually.

Right now, though, Aidan needed to prove, and not to Heathcliff but himself, that he could do something and make a difference. Watching the social media numbers for Heathcliff's channels dropping was making his heart small. All the while, people's complaints were getting louder, and even Heathcliff's pleasant demeanor and courteous interactions didn't appear to stave off the downfall.

Heathcliff Stone had made a really bad deal by signing up with The Healthy Shakers. Aidan knew enough to realize that getting back from such a situation would be hard even for someone as strong as Heathcliff.

Maybe he had played a role, too, getting Heathcliff to become too trusting, just because Aidan was working for that company. Maybe Heathcliff had let down his guard, and this wouldn't have happened if he had been his usual self.

There was guilt what he felt, also over the fact that he had gotten involved with someone he was not supposed to. But there was something else, too, and Aidan didn't want to go there. Heathcliff was better off without him.

Now, he just needed to focus on what to do to help his former boyfriend. By the looks of it, not much, he was that useless.

Aidan let his head drop on the desk, thinking in not very flattering terms of himself. His phone rang, and he checked it just to make sure that it wasn't Heathcliff again. For some time, his phone had been quiet.

He straightened up in his chair and stared at the screen. It was Michael, and suddenly, he felt his heartbeat slowing down. Could it be that something happened to Heathcliff? Without hesitating any longer, he took the call.

“Hey, Aidan, I thought you weren’t going to answer,” Michael said.

“Hey, Michael. Sorry, I’m at work and ... Is Heathcliff all right?”

“You could and should ask him that directly,” Michael pointed out in a stern voice.

“We broke up,” Aidan explained.

“Quite a big surprise if I may say. Your company is ruining Heath’s credibility. You know that, right?”

“I am well aware,” Aidan replied, somewhat stiffly.

“And? Don’t you care? I thought you two were the real deal.”

“Apparently not.”

“Heath is tight-lipped about why you two fought about, and I see that so are you. I’m just telling you this. If you can, you should help him out.”

Michael was a no-nonsense kind of man, and Aidan liked that about him. But that didn’t mean that such a request was easy to comply with. “And what can I do?”

“You work there, and, I shouldn’t tell you this, as it’s a secret, but Heath has solid proof that those drinks are loaded with cheap sweeteners. Do you really like to be on the wrong side here?”

“I don’t,” Aidan said right away. “How is he?” he asked, his voice meek.

“He tries to put on a brave face, but I know him. Aidan, whatever happened between you two, if there’s something you know about this scandal, just lend him a helping hand. I’d say you should comfort him, too, but I am only calling as a friend. If you don’t want to do that, at least think about who’s truly in the wrong here. I pegged you as a decent, honest person. Was I wrong?”

Michael was making quite a strong point. Aidan pushed one hand through his hair, and right then, he noticed his boss’s assistant leaving and letting the door ajar. He stole quick looks around. At that hour, there was no one else left.

“Thanks for the call, Michael,” he said quickly and cut the conversation.

He turned off his phone with brusque moves and walked toward his boss’s office. They did things by the book at The Healthy Shakers. Also, the old fashioned way, the biggest credo of the company rang into his ears, as he moved quickly, sliding along the wall, like a criminal.

There was no time to think of consequences. If there was solid proof, something that could settle this scandal without putting Heathcliff in a bad light, it had to be there.



He entered the assistant's office first and pushed the door behind him just to appear to be as it had been left earlier. A quick look around the room revealed what he was looking for. He pulled one drawer and began browsing through the folders, but there seemed to be nothing there.

Without one ounce of hesitation, he entered the big kahuna's office. Luckily for him, it wasn't closed. Now he felt even more like an intruder and someone who most probably lost his mind. Passing by the desk fast, he identified a few places where documents could be held.

Aidan was quick as he pulled open drawer after drawer. The clock on the wall seemed to stand still as he was moving about like a scheduled automatic vacuum cleaner, yet, for him, time seemed to fly.

This wasn't right. If there was proof, it had to be there, he told himself for the umpteenth time. In frustration, he pushed back a drawer a bit too fast and caught it just in time so that it didn't slam shut. Then, his eyes landed on the only place he hadn't looked: the desk itself, on which a folder rested, neatly arranged.

Aidan opened it with one finger, and his eyes grew wide as he began to read and try to make sense of the words on paper.

He grabbed it and stashed it under one arm, decided to make himself scarce as soon as possible. At the door leading into the larger room with the cubicles, he stopped for a second. What would he do if he ended up face to face with his boss's assistant?

There was no time to think up lies. He put one hand on the door handle and pulled it open. There was no one waiting on the other side. Picking up the pace, he headed straight to his cubicle and pushed the folder he had just stolen into his briefcase.

After that, he headed for the exit. The proof was there, indeed, but it wasn't going to be for long.

"Finished already?" The boss's assistant almost crashed into him.

"Yes. I'm done here," Aidan said quickly.

"And I thought you would beat my record," the woman commented.

"I wouldn't dream of doing that," Aidan said.

He moved the briefcase from one hand to the other. It wasn't like the assistant had laser vision or something, but he could swear she was trying to see through him, that inquisitive her eyes were.

"Good night," he said quickly and stepped into the elevator.

The assistant looked at him a tad confused as the doors closed. Aidan closed his eyes and let himself rest against the mirrored wall of the elevator. The shirt on his back was soaked through, but he had made it. It would most probably cost him his job, but he had done it.

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Heathcliff was browsing through a list of independent laboratories and was debating which one to go for when someone rang the doorbell.

“Coming!” he shouted as he reluctantly let go of the laptop.

Who could it be at that hour? Maybe just a neighbor to ask him about who knows what. He opened the door, and stood there, surprised. Were kids playing pranks on him now? There was no one there.

The sound a car door closing made him look toward the end of the street. Jumping over the few stairs leading to his door, he hurried to catch the one person he had hoped so much to see lately.

“Aidan!” he called out.

But the car sped up and disappeared around the corner in a heartbeat. Heathcliff cursed loudly and headed back to the house. What was Aidan thinking now, ringing the doorbell and fleeing like that?

Something made a funny sound under his foot, and he looked down. Intrigued, he looked closer, and then picked up the folder left on his doorsteps. Quickly, he began leafing through it. Soon, a broad smile was splitting his face.

Heathcliff walked into the house with the folder in his hands. He didn't need to plan a long fight with The Healthy Shakers, after all. He was no lawyer, but it felt like whatever was there, in that folder, was incriminating enough to cut whatever legal battle might have occurred truly short.

Thanks were in order, too. With the same smile on his face, he picked Aidan's phone number and called.

Only to be sent straight to voicemail. His smile faded, and a frown emerged in its stead as he looked at the folder open on his table once again.

### *Chapter Thirty – Traitorous Little Bastard*

“How come they agreed to see you in such short notice?” Harry questioned, as they rode in the elevator together.

“Let’s say I made them an offer they can’t refuse,” Heathcliff said thinly, and opened the folder in his hand for Harry to see the content.

His agent whistled. “Talking about being caught red-handed. Not only written in black and white, but written by hand. Do we know, with certainty, to whom this handwriting belongs?”

“Not with one hundred percent certainty, but our odds look good. And the fact that this meeting was accepted so fast says everything that’s not written here in black and white. Plus, we have a nice looking signature, too.”

Harry smiled. “And how come such sensitive information landed in your care?”

“Let’s just say I had help from the inside,” Heathcliff replied with a small grimace.

Harry’s smile faded. “There will be repercussions for the said help, without a doubt.”

“Not if I’m on it,” Heathcliff replied.

He could hide his restlessness from Harry like usual, by smiling and shrugging it all off, but, in truth, he was worried, and not for himself.

As soon as they stepped out of the elevator, they were taken over by an assistant in a pencil skirt and high heels. Heathcliff looked over the rows of cubicles, hoping to see a familiar face, but he was almost dragged along by the assistant before he could catch a glimpse of anything of the kind.

Harry tried to sit on the uncomfortable chair offered, but Heathcliff chose to stand. Without any introduction, he placed the folder in front of their host and opened it. “I suppose it wouldn’t look pretty if I were to release this to the press, right?”

The man looked away. “It’s just a piece of forgery.”

“Don’t worry; we could always have a graphologist look closely into this handwriting. And signature.”

The other seemed to waver. “What do you want?” he eventually said.

“Disclose this. It’s your mess; you clean it up.”

“Sure, sure,” the man replied with a frown. “Well, if you don’t give a damn what I’m going to throw along with the trash --” he let his words trail off on purpose.

The assistant in pencil skirt hurried to tap something on a laptop and turned the screen toward Heathcliff. He schooled his face into a neutral expression as he watched Aidan coming out of what appeared to be the same office as he was in, with a suspiciously looking folder under his arm.

“We could prosecute. Should. It’s theft and a felony.”

“And I’d say that’s just a concerned citizen making the right choice,” Heathcliff said airily. “No, you’re not playing this how you want.”

“I’m not going to disclose the content of this document,” Aidan’s boss replied, pushing the folder away with two fingers like it was some wild animal ready to bite him. “It would lead to important losses. I think we could negotiate something, though.”

“So, you won’t prosecute Aidan Spark in exchange for what?”

“We bury this.”

“No way,” Heathcliff said aggressively.

“Then he goes to trial. I suppose your apparent attachment to this person was a sham, after all,” the man leaned back into his chair.

Heathcliff exchanged a short look with Harry. His agent began talking. “Seeing that no one was hurt, we could settle for a simple press release regarding an incident at the factory where the product is made. You could just blame it on technology and misunderstandings along the manufacturing chain.”

It wasn’t exactly the solution he was looking for, but, given the circumstances, Heathcliff had to admit that there wasn’t much he could do. Without words, he thanked Harry by nodding slightly.

“And you don’t show this to anyone.” Heathcliff pointed at the screen.

“Agreed.” The other placed one greedy hand over the folder, but Heathcliff was quick to pull it from under his fingers.

“This stays with me,” Heathcliff said.

“That’s not exactly what we agreed on.”

“You could have made copies of this little movie,” Heathcliff replied.

“You have my word I haven’t.”

“Ah, well, I’m sorry if I don’t believe this to be some gentlemen’s agreement, at this point. Let’s settle for mutually assured destruction.”

“All right. I don’t like it, but all right. So you’ll continue with our contract, as usual.”

Heathcliff shook his head. “No. That is terminated, starting now.”

“You’ll have to pay compensation for that.”

“Twenty-five percent and that’s all. And only because I feel I should have looked into your shitty product closer and seen what crap was in it.”

“All right.” The man rocked back into his chair, showing his frustration. “Anything else?”

“Aidan Spark keeps his job,” Heathcliff said promptly.

He hoped Aidan would listen to reason now and agree to let him find something more suitable for employment. But Heathcliff didn’t want him hurt in any way.

“Oh, it would be a little too late for that,” the man replied, and a broad nasty smile lit up his face. “Aidan Spark is no longer our employee. He sent his resignation by e-mail this morning. He also stated clearly that he wouldn’t ask for references. Not that he would have received any, seeing how he didn’t even bother to give us notice of this,” he added with a snort.

Heathcliff kept a cool face. “Good. I doubt your word would equal the value of a dead skunk.”

“I am someone in this industry, Mr. Stone,” the other said, his smile turning crooked.

“Hopefully, not for long.”

“You promised.”

“Don’t worry; I won’t be your downfall. But one day, you will slip, and badly. And then I’ll make some popcorn and sit in front of the TV watching you being dragged through the mud, as you deserve.”

With that, Heathcliff turned on his heels and made a small sign with his chin for Harry to follow. His agent struggled to get up from the uncomfortable chair and hurried after him.

“You won’t scold me for terminating the contract, right?” Heathcliff asked.

“No. I wouldn’t dare. I may be from a different generation, but I do understand how things work in the world right now. Your reputation is still at stake.”

“I’m glad you’re taking this so well. Your commission will not be affected; don’t worry.”

“No. You don’t worry,” Harry said as he put one hand on his forearm. “I’m with you through thick and thin, so you don’t have to overpay me. Are we looking for other venues right now?”

“I think I’m done with all this corporate bullshit, for a while, at least. I’m thinking more along the lines of starting my own business,” Heathcliff replied.

“That’s good,” Harry agreed. “And if you need me for anything --”

“I have your number. And I will count on you, without a doubt.”

Dealing with the boss at The Healthy Shakers had left a bad taste in his mouth. Now he needed to find Aidan, and fast. Heathcliff couldn’t accept to be avoided forever, even though that seemed to be happening.

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“Are you sure?” Isabel asked as Aidan moved his luggage from one hand to another. “I’m certain that there are plenty of opportunities around, still, for someone as hardworking as you.”

“I need to rethink my life, Bella. At least for some time, until I understand what the hell I want to do with it.”

“What would your folks say?”

Aidan shrugged. “They won’t kick me out the door, that’s for sure. And I really need some time to think things over. I know they wouldn’t want me to work for such dishonest people, either.”

“There was nothing in the papers, no scandal, nothing. Just that lame press release you showed me. And Heathcliff’s apologies for the whole thing, despite it not being his fault.”

He grimaced at that.

“What did you think happened?” Isabel questioned. “By what you told me, there should have been some huge fireworks.”

“I have no idea,” Aidan replied. “They didn’t come after me, either, and I was prepared for that, too.”

“That’s actually a good thing,” Isabel said.

“Well, maybe, but I don’t feel that heroic right now. I did the right thing, but maybe I should have been the one to expose everything, instead of passing the responsibility to Heathcliff Stone.”

“He sounded genuine in his apology,” Isabel pointed out.

“I don’t know. I mean, yes, he did sound genuine. But there’s no doubt he reached some understanding with those creeps. And that means that I don’t know him that well. Maybe I never did.”

“Maybe he negotiated so that you didn’t get hurt in the process,” Isabel expressed her opinion.

“Somehow, I doubt it. I was the one to break up with him, so there was no reason for him to do anything for me in exchange,” Aidan said. “As for his apologies, I guess he chose what was most practical to stop bleeding subscribers.”

“You make it sound like he’s a cynical man, and I don’t think he is,” Isabel insisted.

“He’s great at making a good impression on people.”

Isabel pursed his lips. “Aidan, are you still in love with this guy?”

Aidan looked away. “Why would I be? I mean ... I’m not!”

“You sound angry with him. Did you expect him to destroy your ex-employer or something?”

“I guess I did. But, as I said, maybe I don’t know him that well or at all if I think about it.”

Isabel shook his head. “I choose to believe that he struck a deal to save your ass.”

“Always the optimist, Bella. He must have done it for himself, and despite what you may want to say, I’m okay with that.”

“He stopped endorsing those shitty drinks. That’s enough proof for me that he didn’t do it for himself. C’mon, Aidan; he would have kept the money. That would have been dishonest on his part. As far as I can tell, he made the best out of a bad situation. And yes, I say it again, save your ass in the process.”

“He should have pushed those assholes in front of the moving train while the opportunity was there,” Aidan said through his teeth, feeling his frustration growing again.

Over the last days, he had turned off his phone only to stop Heathcliff from calling him. At the same time, he was grateful for never telling Heathcliff his address so that the man couldn’t pester him in person. He had gone out of his way to find that incriminating evidence, and, in the end, Heathcliff hadn’t used it. Aidan wanted to scream in frustration. After all, it had been all in vain, and he was out of a job, without any prospects of being hired someplace else, and on the way back home, to his folks.

But it was all right. At least, that was his choice, and he would use the time off to figure out what he wanted to do.

“I’ll miss you, you know,” Isabel said, seeing how she couldn’t move him from his convictions.

“I’ll miss you, too,” he replied and hurried to hug her.

It was easier to run away at this point, but he wouldn't admit it to himself. There was much he left behind if he chose to think of it, but not enough to make him stay. The only one time he had decided to do something for Heathcliff, something grand and heroic, and the man had simply said 'no, thanks' through his actions.

At least, The Healthy Shakers must have been shaking a little in their designer shoes. Aidan couldn't bet that they wouldn't do it again, but, at least, he wouldn't be a part of it anymore. Now, he needed to look for what the future held, as scary and uncertain as it was, and put a lock on his heart that was continuously demanding that he should stay. Traitorous little bastard.

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"Are you trying to tell me that you can't find him?" Michael questioned him while scratching one ear in confusion. "We're living in an era of technology, with satellites, and who knows what else watching us while we wipe our asses and pick our noses."

Heathcliff sighed. "He turned off his phone completely. I tend to believe that he threw it in a trashcan somewhere. Also, do you know how many people with the name Spark are in this city alone?"

"Have you tried his address?"

"It was hard to obtain it from those assholes, but I did, only to learn that he terminated his contract and left."

"Most probably, he went back to his parents," Michael said.

"Seeing how he doesn't seem to be anywhere in this city, I suppose so," Heathcliff admitted.

"And you have no idea where his parents live." Michael looked at him with reproach over the table. "Seriously, Heath, did you guys only fuck while you were together? How come you don't know the first thing about your precious bunny boy?"

"I do know a lot of things!" Heathcliff protested right away. "I know what he likes, and what foods are on top of his list, and what side of the bed he sleeps on, and --"

"You don't know where his parents live, Heath. C'mon, don't beat around the bush. You blew it," Michael taunted him.

Heathcliff huffed in frustration. "Are you going to help me, or you're just going to stand there, feeling righteous, and enjoying torturing me?"

Michael smiled. "All right. I admit I've had my fun. Now, let's think a little. Social media? Any proof of life?"



“He didn’t like using it that much. Except for some photos, and the last entry from like eight months ago, there’s nothing there.”

Michael nodded slowly, and his eyelids dropped, looking very philosophic all of a sudden.

“Why are you nodding? Are you impersonating someone?”

“Hush, I’m trying to kick my detective brain into gear.”

“Really? Does it usually take long? Or are you still making fun of me?”

“No. It actually takes little. There is plenty on social media that you’re not even aware of. For instance, a list of friends.”

“Ah,” Heathcliff said, feeling suddenly struck by genius. “So I should just ask his friends about him! That’s brilliant!”

“Not all friends, and don’t turn into a spammer and a virtual stalker just yet. We need to find out who his best friends are and start there.”

“There is actually a girl who’s in most pictures with him,” Heathcliff said. “What was her name now?” He pondered, looking at the ceiling as if the answer was written there.

“A girl? And aren’t you worried?” Michael teased him.

“Shut up,” Heathcliff said, but he was smiling already.

There was a chance to find Aidan, after all, and that, without going through every Spark in the yellow pages. Now he needed to contact the girl in Aidan’s pictures, and go from there.

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“You’re not eating enough,” his mom scolded him as he stood up from the table.

“I’m full, mom,” Aidan replied.

“Let the boy be,” his dad intervened. “Stop being such a mother hen.”

“He needs to eat,” his mom insisted. “Look at him. He’s all pale.”

“I’m okay,” Aidan said again. “I don’t want to bother you.”

“Nonsense!” His mom eventually took the plates from the table. “We told you. Life in a big city is not all that is cracked up to be. There are many bad people there.”

“Marianne, leave the boy alone.”

“Joe, I thought we were on the same page.” His mom turned toward his dad, her hands on her hips.

Great. He had been home for only a few days, and his parents were already fighting over him. Nothing was new, and even that felt a little like home, but right now, he felt so tired on the inside that he only wanted to head to sleep and forget about the world until the next morning. It wasn't the entire world he wanted to forget about, though, but someone in particular who seemed to appear in his thoughts uninvited whenever he tried to rest.

“And he saw it all for himself. Don't worry, Aidan; your mom and I will take care of everything. We'll find you a job, somewhere around here, and you will be happy. Are you worried that you might not meet some nice gay boys here? I'm sure there is a scene, somewhere, if you look hard enough.”

“Dad!” Aidan exclaimed. “Seriously, dating is the last thing on my mind right now.”

“That's good,” his mom intervened. “I told you to be careful with men. They only want one thing.”

Aidan kept himself from rolling his eyes. While his mom was perfectly fine with his sexual orientation, she treated him like he needed to remain untouched until marriage. “I'm not a girl, mom. It's not like I can get pregnant or anything,” he mumbled, looking down. “And I know all about safe sex,” he added hurriedly, scared of what his mom would say next.

“But men can still break your heart,” she insisted. “Like this playboy. Didn't you know who he was before you got involved with him?”

“Marianne, it wasn't because that man was a playboy that Aidan broke up with him,” his dad pointed out. “Have some understanding. Heathcliff Stone is a handsome, famous celebrity. Aidan just lost his head a little.”

His parents knew him inside out and that, in itself, was a pretty scary thought. He wondered briefly why the hell he had spilled all the beans. But it wasn't like there was any other way with them, and he had to live with that. Actually, Aidan thought, there was no other way, and that was why he loved them so much.

“Sure,” his mom huffed. “Handsome. Famous. Celebrity,” she enunciated each word as if she was listing some bad traits describing Heathcliff. “He played with Aidan's feelings. I'm telling you, Joe, if I ever meet that man --”

“I doubt that's even possible,” Aidan cut his mom's words short.

She was already twisting the kitchen towel in her hands in a frightening manner, and Aidan could only imagine that his mom was ready to wring Heathcliff's neck, given the opportunity.

“Doesn’t he know where we live?” his dad asked.

“No, I never told him.”

“Why?” his dad asked again.

“It didn’t come up.”

“But you wanted to introduce him to us,” his mom said.

“Yes, but that was before he thought he could just hand me my hard earned promotion.”

“How dare he!” his mom said with righteous indignation. “Good thing your employer proved to be a crooked bastard. Now you’ll see that staying here with us is much better. And safer.”

Aidan didn’t have the heart to tell his parents that he didn’t plan on staying there for long. He had no plan, not even one in an incipient phase, but as much as he loved his parents, they were also driving him a bit nuts, and he still wanted to be the proverbial chick leaving the nest.

“Thank you for your care, mom and dad,” he said. “I will figure out what to do, and I promise it won’t take long.”

“You can take as long as you want,” his mom said right away. “Just don’t stay cooped up in your room all day long. I don’t want you depressed over that playboy.”

“I’m not depressed over him,” Aidan said in his defense.

“Or the job you lost,” his mom continued. “There’s plenty of fish in the sea. Especially here.”

“I can find work on my own, mom. And please, you’re doing so much for me already. I will find a job and a boyfriend.”

“We could take care of that, too,” his mom said promptly. “Joe, who was that nice boy we saw when we visited the Reynolds? The one with the bow tie? He must be gay.”

Bow tie? Aidan was horrified already. One time, his mom had tried to make him friends with a guy who was into dungeons and dragons. Not that it would have been wrong to like role-playing games, but the guy hadn’t spoken about anything else for the entire evening. Also, he hadn’t been gay, either, and, unlike Isabel, his mother had no sixth sense of identifying gay men whatsoever.

“Rachel’s cousin?” his dad inquired. “He’s to marry next year.”

“To a boy?”

“To a girl,” his dad replied promptly.

There you go, Aidan thought.

“I was so sure he was gay,” his mom insisted. “Pumpkin, don’t worry. We’ll find a nice gay boy for you.”

Aidan had been mortified with the fact that his mother was still calling him that after he had turned fourteen, but he had found he could live with it, as long as she kept it only to a few times a day. That was strike one for the day and a miracle.

“Mom, dad, I am capable of finding a boyfriend. Heathcliff Stone was just a mistake. I know well now not to repeat it.”

His mom looked like she wanted to say something, but eventually, she resigned to shake her head. “You go to sleep now, but I’m not letting you linger in bed tomorrow. It’s Saturday. We’re going to visit some people, and you will not stay up in your room all day long.”

Aidan knew that resistance was futile. His mom would probably take him on a tour of the neighborhood and ask him in a hushed voice if random guys who happened to visit at those unfortunate times, too, were gay or not.

“Okay, mom,” he admitted defeat.

He needed all his strength if he wanted to keep his parents from trying to solve all his problems. And sleep was everything he wanted.

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Heathcliff was taken by surprise by a loud girly shriek. Alarmed, he turned into his chair, only to see the real-life version of the girl from Aidan’s pictures with her tiny fists pushed against her mouth as she stared at him.

“OMG, are you really him?” she said, as she marched toward the table. “I could swear it had to be a scammer when you contacted me!”

The other patrons in the café threw a few partially annoyed, partially amused looks in their direction, but eventually turned to their expensive coffee specialties and idle conversations.

“Sorry,” Isabel said as her voice dropped considerably lower. “I tend to be loud and obnoxious.”

“It’s okay,” Heathcliff replied and put on his most charming smile. “Isabel, right? Please, take a seat.”

“Yes, I’m Isabel,” she replied promptly. “And you’re Heathcliff Stone,” she added, as she sank into the chair opposite from him as if she was melting like a snowball in July.

“Guilty,” he replied and smiled again.

Isabel sighed reverently. Okay, he only liked men, but he had to admit he was beyond flattered by Aidan's friend's reaction.

"Sorry," she said and shook her head. "I tend to be an airhead, too. So you and Aidan, hmm?"

Heathcliff laughed. "What's your question?"

"I just can't believe he kept this from me for so long. I used to be his bestie, you know?"

"Aren't you anymore?" Heathcliff asked.

Isabel hesitated for a second. "Yes, but I don't think he would like it if he knew I was talking to you."

Heathcliff put his hands together. "Isabel, I'm going to be frank with you. I need to know where he is."

The girl shifted in her chair. "He doesn't exactly want to be found."

Heathcliff sighed. "I suspected as much. His phone is out of service. How are you staying in touch with him?"

"Ah, that's easy. I'm just calling his parents' house. Oops, I guess I shouldn't have said that. He's upset with you, you know?" she said and eyed him carefully.

"I know. And if he could just let me apologize, it would be great. I know now that I shouldn't have intervened regarding his promotion. As his bestie, I assume you know about that, right?"

Isabel nodded. "Yeah, but there's another reason why he's upset with you now."

Heathcliff quirked an eyebrow. "What reason?"

Isabel leaned over the table, and her voice turned conspiratorial. "He was expecting to see The Healthy Shakers crash and burn over that thing."

"Ah, I see," Heathcliff replied. "I wanted that, too, but it was his sweet ass on the line, and it wouldn't have been a victory if he had ended being dragged in front of a judge and who knows what else."

Isabel blinked a couple of times rapidly. Then she made a weird quiet sound. What a strange and funny girl, Heathcliff couldn't keep himself from thinking.

"I told him!" she manifested her enthusiasm in the same quiet, yet agitated manner. "I told him that you probably negotiated to keep him out of trouble!"

"And? What did he say?" Heathcliff was now leaning over the table, too.

“He was pissed,” Isabel replied. “He didn’t believe it, either, but I so knew that had to be it. By the way, that was a heartfelt apology. I almost cried,” she confessed with a hand pressed over her chest.

“I felt like a total fraud while saying all those things, although I am truly sorry for everything that happened. I wish I could tell the whole truth, but I couldn’t have Aidan suffer over it,” Heathcliff admitted. “I should have known those guys were assholes from the start.”

“You couldn’t have known.” Isabel patted his forearm sympathetically. “Aidan had no idea, and he worked there.”

“So he wanted me to bury his employer, damned be the consequences?” he asked.

“Yeah, something like that. Then he ran away back to his parents. I told him to stay, but he wouldn’t listen.”

“Could you, please, help me, Isabel?” Heathcliff pleaded. “I need to talk to him.”

Isabel pursed her lips, looked at him closely, and then exhaled. “He’ll kill me for this.”

“I promise he won’t,” Heathcliff hurried to say.

“Do you really love him?” Isabel asked, her eyes filled with hope.

“Yes, I do,” Heathcliff admitted simply.

“And you swear, hand on heart, that he didn’t catch you with some Calvin Klein underwear models in bed, pouring expensive drinks over your hot bodies?”

Heathcliff felt disoriented for a moment. “Um, what? No. No underwear models. Wait, did he tell you anything of the kind? Because I swear, I haven’t been with anyone else ever since I met him.”

“No, he didn’t say anything,” Isabel replied promptly, and a grin split her face.

“Aidan tends to be insecure. He just doesn’t know how handsome and smart he is. I need to tell him that, and everything about what happened. Could you please, give me his parents’ address?”

Isabel seemed to ponder, but only for a brief moment. “Sure. Let me just write it on something.”

She began fiddling with her bag.

“Wait,” Heathcliff stopped her, “just send everything over the phone. Isn’t it easier?”

Isabel stood there, with her hands buried in her bag, and looked at him like he was suddenly growing wings. “Are you giving me your phone number? Like personal phone number?”

“Sure,” Heathcliff said slowly. “I’m sure that’s what’s needed for you to send me the details, without any hassle.”

“And I’ll have to delete it after?” Isabel asked, her eyes like a puppy’s.

“Why should you delete it? You know what, Isabel? I can’t understand how Aidan could keep you away from me, either. What would you like to order? Anything goes, and it’s on me. I promise I won’t say anything even if you order something that’s unhealthy.”

Isabel melted a little more into her chair. “I can’t believe it. I’m having coffee with Heathcliff Stone. No one would believe me. One day, I’m getting in shape watching your videos, and the other, I’m across the table from you.”

“Are you using my videos to train? What do you think of them?” Heathcliff asked excitedly.

“I love them,” Isabel said dreamily.

“All right. I’m totally sold. It’s no wonder why you’re Aidan’s bestie,” Heathcliff said with a smile.

“Why?” Isabel asked right away.

“I’ll tell you over whatever you’d like to drink.”

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Aidan was going down the stairs, still straightening his clothes, as his mom was already at the door and shouting orders to him and his dad to get ready when the doorbell chimed.

“I hope to dear God that there aren’t some Jehovah’s Witnesses ringing my doorbell right now,” she said loudly enough to be heard outside, as she went to open the door.

“Hello, Mrs. Spark. Is Aidan home?”

Aidan stopped dead in his tracks. That couldn’t be possible, right?

His mom was strangely silent, but only for a second. The next, she started yelling. “Joe, come quickly! There’s a celebrity at our door!”

### *Chapter Thirty-One – Run, Baby, Run (But Then Come Back)*

Aidan was at the foot of the stairs in a heartbeat. Crazy scenarios, like his mother attempting to kill Heathcliff by strangling him with a kitchen towel, were going through his mind. His mom, however, didn't seem quite so bent on homicidal tendencies as the day before, but in sort of a shock, the number one reason why she was asking for her husband to come already and provide the necessary support.

Without wasting a moment to wait and see how that would unfold, once his mom would shake off the initial shock, and his dad would come downstairs, too, Aidan ran to the door, most probably breaking some world record for ground speed but hopefully, not an ankle, too.

He didn't even look at Heathcliff, rushing by his mom, and just grabbing his unexpected visitor by one hand and pulling him into the race.

“Aidan!” his mom yelled after him.

Oh, great, the shock was wearing off.

“Run,” he said to Heathcliff and broke into a sprint.

“What? Why?” Heathcliff asked, but sped off to keep up with him.

“No time to explain! Just run!”

Aidan linked his hand tightly around Heathcliff's and ran into the street, only to stop one inch from crashing into his neighbor, Mrs. Fitz.

“Hi, Mrs. Fitz,” he shouted. “Bye, Mrs. Fitz!” he added, as he maneuvered himself and Heathcliff around the neighbor's walking frame.

“Bye, Aidan!” the octogenarian called after him. “Is that your boyfriend?”

“Not now, Mrs. Fitz!” he yelled over one shoulder. “I'll tell you everything!”

“I'll just ask your mother,” Mrs. Fitz's words faded in the morning air as they continued to run.

The neighborhood seemed to be particularly animated at that hour, so Aidan continued to yell greetings and dodge questions as he pulled Heathcliff after him until they finally left the houses behind and ended up by the edge of a large pond, crashing on a bench, his usual favorite spot as a teenager.

They were both barely breathing, mostly him, actually, since Heathcliff didn't appear that affected.



“Why on earth are we running?” Heathcliff asked, still obviously startled over Aidan’s sudden decision to trek the town like for a marathon.

Aidan waved and coughed, trying to regain his breathing. Heathcliff’s warm hand rested against his shoulder blades. “Take it slowly. Just in and out, and don’t try to talk for a while.”

He nodded and focused on his breathing. “Ah, damn!” he finally managed. “Why are you here? My mom must be sharpening her knives right now, and dad ... Well, I guess he’s the more reasonable one, but don’t count on it that much.”

“Sharpening her knives?” Heathcliff asked, now clearly alarmed. “Aidan, what exactly did you tell them about me?”

Aidan turned toward Heathcliff. “Do you really have to ask? You’re some corporate lackey, and I didn’t even know it!”

“Corporate what? Hey, hey, let’s dial back a little,” Heathcliff said, frowning a bit, but without removing his hand from Aidan’s back.

The touch was comforting, and it shouldn’t have been. Aidan wanted to grind his teeth in frustration over that, but couldn’t. “I served you the opportunity to finish them off on a silver platter, and what did you do?”

“I chose to save you,” Heathcliff said matter-of-factly.

“Sure. I’m helpless, am I not?” Aidan said through his teeth.

“They wanted to accuse you of theft. Seriously, what were you thinking when you stole that folder?”

“Do you really have to ask? I was trying to save your reputation! It was frigging sinking!”

To his surprise, Heathcliff started laughing.

“Why the hell are you laughing? I’m pissed at you! Like royally pissed!” Aidan protested.

“You’re cute when you’re angry,” Heathcliff replied. “And you were awesome, doing that for me. Thank you for saving my reputation.”

“I didn’t save anything,” Aidan bristled, trying to ignore the warm fuzzy feeling in his chest upon hearing Heathcliff’s praise. “You just went and struck a deal with them.”

“Trust me, Aidan,” Heathcliff moved closer, “I had to swallow my pride and principles to do that. But you know what? It was all worth it because there was something more important in balance. It would have been tough to foil their attempts to drag you down, no matter how right you were.”

“But,” Aidan felt the need to protest, “the truth was worth it!”

Heathcliff sighed and took Aidan by the shoulders to pull him close. “What you did was remarkable. And a bit insane if I may add.”

“Great. And now I’m in for a lecture,” Aidan said with a roll of his eyes.

“No. No lecture,” Heathcliff promised. “Just hear me out. Yes, it was a bit insane, but also pretty heroic and knowing that you did it for me just topped everything. I won’t contradict you. Truth is important. But luckily, there was no one hurt. Had that been the case, they wouldn’t have gotten away so quickly. So I went there, decided to scare them good, and also to protect you. They had footage of you from the security cameras,” he explained.

“Shit,” Aidan said. “I should have known about that. Maybe disable those first, but there was no time.”

Heathcliff chuckled. “Easy there, Tom Cruise.”

“You’re making fun of me.” Aidan crossed his arms over his chest and pouted.

“Maybe a little. Forgive me; you’re just so easy to tease that I can’t help it. Now it’s my turn to ask. Why did you run away from me like that?”

Aidan could feel himself blushing to the tip of his ears. “Because,” he said defiantly.

“There should be a phrase or a statement of some sort after that word,” Heathcliff said with a small laugh.

“I don’t want to be the one who’s always cared for,” Aidan said quietly.

Heathcliff leaned in to hear him. “Is this about your parents? That all helicopter parenting thing?”

“You don’t know them,” Aidan said with a deep sigh. “If it were for them, right now I would play dungeon and dragons with a guy who’s definitely not gay.”

“That made little to no sense, but do go on. I realize I haven’t done much listening since the beginning of our relationship, and I do want to start now.”

“Never mind. The point is, they want me to be safe. And I don’t want to be safe. Ugh, that came out wrong. I want to be able to take risks and prove myself. Is that too much to ask?”

“Not to me,” Heathcliff said right away. “I can’t help it when you’re this cute. I want to keep you safe, but I want you to be happy, too. Do you think we could work around that and find some middle ground?”

The feeling of warmth from where Heathcliff was holding his hand on him was now spreading. Aidan wanted nothing more but to melt into that touch, turn and kiss Heathcliff. “Oh, shit,” he stopped himself in time.

Heathcliff was still half-way to kiss him, too, but stopped, surprised. “What?”

“My mom still wants to kill you. I bet,” Aidan said.

“Seriously, what did you tell them about me?” Heathcliff’s eyebrows knitted into a frown.

“Just that you handed me my promotion and that you bowed to the corporate gods,” Aidan replied promptly. “The rest, I swear, whatever you hear them saying, it’s all because of what they read on their own online.”

Heathcliff took one deep breath. “It’s all right. I think I can handle your mom. But let’s deal with that a bit later. I want to show you something.”

Aidan watched Heathcliff as the guy fiddled with his phone and after a while handed it to him. Taking it, Aidan stole a look at Heathcliff, surprised with the serious expression on his handsome face. Then, he stared into the phone, and his eyes grew wide. “What’s this?” he eventually managed to ask.

“I thought about what you told me about building a business and everything. And about how much you like cool stationery,” Heathcliff added with a small laugh. “Plus, what could be riskier than this? So, what do you say?”

“Spark & Stone?” Aidan asked, still staring at the screen and not quite believing what he was looking at.

“Yes. I want you to be my partner. I hope you don’t have other engagements. Don’t you want to give it a try? You have all these awesome ideas which I don’t.”

“But partner?” Aidan asked again. “Heath, I have no money. Hell, I’m not even broke. I have debts to pay.”

“Well, I suppose it will be easier to repay it from your share of the profit, then. Plus, it should serve as a good incentive to work hard and make us money.”

“I don’t know what to say,” Aidan murmured.

His head was spinning, and his heart ..., well, his heart was doing whatever it wanted at this point.

“Are you worried that I’m going to keep you like a wilting flower in a vase?” Heathcliff joked. “Hah, tough luck. You’re the one who’ll work harder of us two; I’m sure of it. I’ll be there to

look pretty and smile while holding whatever we'll be selling. I will be the lazy one while you work your ass off."

"You, lazy, pff," Aidan said. "Heath, this is ... I mean, we're not even together anymore, right?"

Heathcliff's smile faded. Then he suddenly grabbed Aidan, making him turn and pushing him into the wooden bench. Aidan just whimpered in surprise as their lips connected, and surrendered when Heathcliff's deft tongue pushed past and began giving him a passionate and aggressive massage.

He pulled himself with some difficulty from the kiss. "Wow," he whispered.

"Do you still need another proof that we're together?" Heathcliff asked and kissed him deeply again.

It felt so good Aidan forgot for a moment that anyone could see them there. "Wait," he said, and wrapped his arms quickly around Heathcliff's neck, seeing his boyfriend frown again. "Somebody could see us and tell mom."

"She must be really scary," Heathcliff said. "Hey, I missed you, bunny boy."

Their foreheads touched. "I missed you, too, Heath. I can't believe this," Aidan whispered. "How come no Calvin Klein underwear models are crowding your bed right now?"

Heathcliff threw him a strange look. "What's with this obsession with Calvin Klein underwear models? Both you and Isabel --"

"Ah, the traitor!" Aidan said with a huff. "You're such an awesome kisser that I totally forgot to ask you how you found me!"

"Don't blame her. Blame my irresistible charm," Heathcliff said with self-importance and then laughed. "Seriously, did you really think I'd be with some other people? And why, for the love of all that's holy, underwear models?"

"That was just Isabel putting stupid ideas in my head," Aidan replied quickly.

"She's awesome, your bestie. And please, don't be hard on her. I really had to work to convince her to give me your parents' address. Do you have any idea, whatsoever, how I felt after you disappeared from my life like that?"

Aidan swallowed hard, closed his eyes, and then opened them to stare at Heathcliff. His boyfriend seemed serious, no longer smiling. "Do you really mean it?" he said quietly. "I thought you would forget about me."

“Forget about you? You’re sort of a tough act to follow, bunny boy,” Heathcliff said and regained his smile. “Plus, where would I find someone so bent on risky behavior like you? My protection instinct needs a proper challenge.”

“You’re making fun of me again,” Aidan said, but he couldn’t be upset anymore.

“Only because I love you. C’mon. I’m ready to face your parents.”

“I’m not,” Aidan said quickly. “Damn, what am I going to tell them now?”

“Just the truth.”

“Which is?” Aidan asked.

“That you love me and you want to come back with me.”

“Ah, that truth. I can handle that,” he said. “The part where they start grilling me will be tough. And that’s because I told them I was over you when I wasn’t.”

“And?” Heathcliff asked, the same gorgeous smile lighting up his face. “Do you need me to enumerate some reasons why you love me?”

“So full of yourself,” Aidan said and rolled his eyes. “No, you won’t talk. Promise me you’ll be silent.”

“Hey, I think I know how not to let my mouth run --”

“Hush, promise me. My mom is an alien. She’ll know all the things that you try to keep hidden, and that will not make a good topic of conversation with parents present.”

“Bunny boy, are you having some impure thoughts?” Heathcliff teased him.

“You’re the one with the impure thoughts! Who knows what my mom will make you say? You can’t lie to her!”

“Aidan, you worry too much. I will know what to say to her. Will you trust me a little?”

There was something guarded in how Heathcliff said those words. Aidan nodded. “I will, and I do trust you. They’re my parents, and they have a way of asking uncomfortable questions. I’m used to them, but who knows what you might think?”

“Are you now worried that I might be the one not to like them?” Heathcliff asked.

“Yeah, pretty much,” Aidan admitted with a sigh. “Now I have to start by thinking up a proper apology for how we ran away.”

“That was quite surprising, I must say. Not that I regret it,” Heathcliff said. “I thought I would have to endure at least a few long hours until I could do this,” he added and pressed his lips against Aidan’s again.

Aidan closed his eyes and opened his mouth, to allow Heathcliff to kiss him thoroughly. It was like the last days hadn’t even happened. There was something so familiar and comforting in how Heathcliff was holding him that he could forget, for a little while, about the lecture they would both be in for once they got back.

Unfortunately, that little while had to be little, indeed. With great reluctance, he pulled himself from the kiss. “We need to head back. With each minute passing, my mother is surely inching closer to the phone to call the police.”

Heathcliff laughed. “You’re joking, right?”

“Half-joking, maybe,” Aidan admitted.

Well, that was that. Just that morning, he had gotten out of bed, feeling utterly depressed and with no high hopes in life. Now, as Heathcliff pulled him up and held his hand, he felt like a totally different person. He was happy, he realized, as he stared into Heathcliff’s eyes, and as much as it was strange, it was the simple truth.

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“I apologize for not introducing myself properly earlier, Mrs. Spark,” Heathcliff said smoothly, as soon as they entered the house.

Aidan felt the need to take a step back and hide behind Heathcliff, and then he realized that he wasn’t truly scared. His mom and dad had never really made him feel afraid, but maybe embarrassed and that still counted.

“It’s not like you need that much of an introduction, young man,” his mom replied promptly.

Aidan opened his mouth to say something, but his mom didn’t let him. She walked over to them and took Heathcliff’s cheeks into her hands. “You truly are handsome. No wonder my little pumpkin would fall for you.”

Aidan felt his jaw going slack on its own accord. “Wait, wait, wait,” he intervened. “Who are you, and where is my real mom?”

“Aidan,” his mom said gently and moved her attention from Heathcliff only to caress his cheek. “Your father and I had a very long talk. Now, come, let’s have some hot chocolate together.”

Aidan threw a confused look toward Heathcliff but followed his mom into the living room. His dad seemed completely relaxed, still dressed in his good clothes, and reading the newspaper,

which was something he liked doing every day. He stood up and came to offer his hand to Heathcliff, with a big smile on his face. “Ah, and this is the young man for whom Aidan chose to throw all caution to the wind.”

“Pleased to make your acquaintance, sir,” Heathcliff replied and shook the other’s hand vigorously.

“We were actually expecting the police, so we are more than pleased with this visit, instead.”

“The police?” Aidan asked, alarmed.

His dad turned toward him. “We are really worried about what you did, Aidan, and just didn’t want you to worry.”

“There’s no need to worry, Mr. Spark,” Heathcliff intervened. “That issue was taken care of, already. No one will come to bother Aidan.”

“Ah, that’s good,” his dad’s face lit up. “Did you hear that, Marianne? No one’s coming after our boy.”

“You two didn’t say a word about worrying about this,” Aidan said.

“We were surprised to hear what you did since we taught you to be safe all the time. But we were also proud of you. We are always proud of you,” his dad added.

They were quickly ushered by his mom to take their seats. Aidan still felt like he had walked into a different reality. “Dad,” he leaned over the table, “is mom secretly sharpening her knives as we speak?”

“Now, now, Aidan, you’re scaring our guest for no reason. And why would your mom sharpen her knives? Her tongue is sharp enough, as I well know it,” his dad said with a small laugh.

He chose not to tempt his luck. Everything was going smoothly so far. Then his mom served them hot chocolate and cookies, and, of course, the going smoothly part ended.

“So, Heathcliff, what plans do you have regarding our Aidan?” she asked directly.

“I have just invited him to join me in a new enterprise. Success is not guaranteed, but we both plan to work hard,” Heathcliff answered promptly.

“Aidan is a very hard worker,” his mom said. “But that isn’t my main concern. You have quite a colorful experience, young man.”

And then his mom gave Heathcliff the look, the one that basically said ‘don’t dare to lie to me or else’. Aidan feared for his boyfriend, but there wasn’t much he could do to save him now. Whether he liked it or not, Heathcliff was on his own.

“That was before Aidan,” Heathcliff replied right away. “It all changed when I met the right one for me.”

Aidan felt the warm and fuzzy feeling from when they were kissing on the bench returning in full force. But was it enough to convince his mom of Heathcliff’s good intentions?

“That remains to be seen,” his mom said, as expected. “People don’t change that easily.”

“Mrs. Spark,” Heathcliff said and reached over the table to take her hands into his, “I am very much in love with your son. I know how much you value his safety, and I am here to tell you that it will be my number one priority. And I want to thank you for raising such a wonderful man.”

Aidan’s eyes grew wide. Was his mom melting under Heathcliff’s gorgeous smile, or was he imagining things? Then Heathcliff’s words caught up with him. Safety? Number one priority?

“We’ve always looked after him so that he doesn’t get hurt,” his mom explained, her glare totally gone now from her features.

“But we are ready to pass on that responsibility,” his dad intervened. “We talked about it, Marianne, so don’t give me that look. Do you really want the boy to stay here with us and be bored out of his head?”

“I’m not bored,” Aidan protested.

“Yes, you are. Also, obviously missing your boyfriend,” his dad pointed out.

“I thought you two would be upset,” Aidan said softly.

His dad smiled. “The fact that Heathcliff came for you says a lot about his character. Unlike your mom, I’m not as suspicious. I want to know you first,” he added, addressing Heathcliff now. “Will you spend this weekend with us?”

“Sure,” Heathcliff replied. “As long as Mrs. Spark has nothing against that, of course.”

“Please, call me Marianne. And yes, of course, you are welcome to stay. In the guestroom,” she added quickly. “Not in Aidan’s bedroom.”

“Mom!” Aidan exclaimed.

“What?” His mom seemed surprised. “Your bed is too small for the two of you. There not enough room for --”

“MOM!”



“Sleeping! What did you think I was going to say?” His mom glared at him now. “And it’s clear that you need to pull your mind out of the gutter. All the more reason for Heathcliff to sleep alone while under this roof. Of course, once you two are married --”

“Mom,” Aidan began gesticulating, “don’t use the M-word!”

“The M-word?” his mom inquired. “What do you mean?”

“We barely know each other! No one’s getting married!” Aidan tried to save the situation without giving away what Heathcliff thought of marriage. He had an inkling it wouldn’t sit well with his parents.

“Barely know each other? Your father and I married two months after we met. What do you need more time for?”

“People don’t get married so fast now,” Aidan explained quickly. “They need more time to --”

“Don’t worry, Mrs. Spark, we won’t take long to know each other well enough,” Heathcliff cut him mid-sentence.

Aidan looked at his boyfriend, utterly astonished. Hadn’t he been clear when he had told Heathcliff his mom was a frighteningly excellent human lie detector?

“Well, I think we could live with that for now,” his mom replied. “I guess I should understand young people more. We were all for getting married fast, but not everyone is like us. Maybe we’re old-fashioned.”

“That’s not true, Marianne,” Heathcliff said. “If that’s old-fashioned, there’s nothing wrong with it.”

Now Aidan glared openly. Was Heathcliff pushing his luck or what now? Apparently, his mom’s built-in polygraph was out of service at the moment because she didn’t seem at all on the verge of telling Heathcliff to stop lying or else.

“That is great to hear, Heathcliff.”

“Please, call me Heath,” the immediate reply was.

“All right, Heath. Wait till I tell Mrs. Fitz who’s going to be my son-in-law,” his mom said with satisfaction.

“Mrs. Fitz? The one with the walking frame?” Heathcliff asked.

“Yes. She always says she knows everything, and I’ll have the satisfaction to tell her something she doesn’t.”

“Mom, you’re making Heath uncomfortable,” Aidan insisted.

“She’s not,” Heathcliff turned toward him and took him by the shoulders in an affectionate gesture.

Aidan couldn’t believe his ears or his eyes. His mom was beaming as she was looking at them, his dad had an all-knowing smile, and Heathcliff was lying through his teeth about marriage. All right, it was his mom’s fault for bringing up the M-word, but Heathcliff shouldn’t have led her on like that. He would have to have a word with him as soon as they were alone.

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Heathcliff almost missed the soft knock on the door, as he was getting ready to sleep. He pulled his t-shirt back, making sure to look presentable enough in case his future mother-in-law wanted to bring him extra sheets or blankets.

“Come in,” he said, as soon as he was properly dressed.

He smiled as he saw who it was. Aidan was moving stealthily, closing the door behind him with infinite care.

“Hey,” he said and walked over to his guest, catching Aidan between him and the door.

Bunny boy looked as yummy as ever. Heathcliff wasn’t particularly happy about having to sleep alone, but it was for a good cause. Tomorrow evening, they would be back home, and he would make sure that Aidan got enough physical demonstrations of how much he had missed him.

“Hey,” Aidan replied in a soft voice, and it was clear that he was nervous about being there.

“Aren’t you going against your mom’s word by sneaking into my room at night?” Heathcliff asked, but moved closer on purpose, loving the reaction from Aidan’s body with each of his steps.

“Kind of,” Aidan replied quickly, and cast his eyes down. “You made quite an impression on my parents. Especially mom.”

“That’s good, because I like them, too. I think they’re pretty awesome,” Heathcliff said and raised one hand to caress Aidan’s neck slowly.

By how nervously that Adam’s apple was bobbing up and down, he could tell that he wasn’t the only one missing their physical intimacy.

“But you shouldn’t have led them on, you know? On that marriage thing. Once they realize we have no intention to get married --”

“Who has no intention to get married? You?” Heathcliff teased.

Now Aidan raised his eyes and glared at him. “C’mon, Heath, it’s not like I don’t know what you think of that.”

“That? What’s ‘that’?” Heathcliff teased him some more.

“Oh, damn, do you really want me to spell it? You don’t believe in marriage, and basically just told my mom she could consider starting to shop for what clothes she would wear at our wedding!”

“And? It’s good for her to be prepared,” Heathcliff said.

Aidan pushed against his chest hard. “She’ll know you lied. It will be hell to pay. Somehow, she was all milk and honey with you today, but she can be quite frightening when she wants to be.”

“I understand. But I didn’t lie,” Heathcliff said simply.

Aidan’s pretty mouth opened and closed a few times. “Are you making fun of me right now?” he barely managed.

“I’m not doing that at all,” Heathcliff replied.

“Heath, is something wrong with you? We’re talking ... marriage?”

“Yes, we’re talking marriage.”

“But you said --”

Heathcliff laughed and pulled Aidan close to him. “I thought a little about it all, and I realized that there is a way to keep you close and also from running away from me. It truly dawned on me why people are getting married, after all. Most probably they have enough of dealing with bunnies that tend to run away all the time.”

“Seriously?” Aidan’s words were muffled as Heathcliff was keeping him with his head buried into his shoulder.

“Yes. I’m completely sure I don’t want anyone else but you. And where will I find another bunny with the heart of a lion, like you? It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity, and I’m not going to overlook it. Do you understand?”

“Are you asking me to marry you, Stone?” Aidan finally pulled his head free and stared at him. By the naughty smile lighting up his face, it was clear as day what he was thinking.

“Yeah, I am. Will you marry me?”

“Will my name still be Spark?”

“I have nothing against that. And Spark-Stone is a pretty good family name. Strong. Bound to leave a lasting impression.”

“If you say so,” Aidan commented, but it was obvious he barely kept from laughing.

“Hey,” Heathcliff tipped his boyfriend’s chin, “first things first. What’s your answer?”

“My answer?”

“To my marriage proposal, obviously.”

“I don’t know. You have the reputation of a playboy.”

“I’m a good boy now. I swear,” Heathcliff teased back.

“How good?” Aidan cocked his head to one side, throwing him a look full of innuendo.

“So, to hear your answer, will I have to prove myself first?” Heathcliff picked up the glove, without hesitating for a heartbeat.

“I should know what I’m getting myself in first, right?”

“Sure thing.” Heathcliff laughed and began pulling Aidan toward the bed. “Are you sure I’m not heading for some shotgun wedding scenario first thing in the morning?”

“Hey, my mom may be frightening, but not that frightening,” Aidan replied and followed without protest.

Heathcliff pushed Aidan to sit on the bed and climbed into his lap. There was a definite sense of satisfaction in how Aidan’s hands came to rest on his ass right away. At the same time, Aidan was staring at him wide-eyed.

“I must be dreaming,” Aidan said softly, as his fingers continued to search for a way to reach underneath his lover’s shorts.

“Let me give you a hint,” Heathcliff replied and leaned in to taste Aidan’s sweet lips again.

“Hmm,” Aidan purred, “is that supposed to make me realize it’s all real? Because kissing you feels like a dream.”

“Maybe you should feel me a little more,” Heathcliff said with a small chuckle.

Aidan shuddered as if tickled. Heathcliff had no intention to make his lover beg for it. Instead, he pushed Aidan into the bed, covering him head to toes with his body. It didn’t take them long to struggle to hump each other dry through their clothes, as thin and few as they were.

Heathcliff pushed Aidan's t-shirt above his nicely shaped chest and cupped the pecs, squeezing them not so gently. Aidan moaned and arched against the touch, as their lips were wildly chasing kisses and small bites.

"I missed you," Heathcliff said as he pulled at Aidan's nipples, enjoying the small shivers and gasps coming from him.

Aidan was like putty in his hands right now, but Heathcliff was looking for something else.

"Did you miss me, too?" he asked, unable to hate how vulnerable his voice sounded.

"Do you need to ask?" Aidan's eyelids fluttered like caged butterflies. "Like crazy," a whisper followed. "Just this morning, when I woke up, I had no idea what to do with myself."

Heathcliff kissed him shortly. "I'll take that as a 'yes'. Just for the record, you're not allowed to run away from me again. I'll buy a leash if there's no other way to keep you. First, I will try with a ring and proper vows."

"Wow, you really mean it."

"I do. There's nothing else I want more in the entire world right now but to be bound to you. Forever."

"Forever?" Aidan asked in a small voice.

Heathcliff nodded solemnly. It looked like nothing else was needed because Aidan took the reins right away and brought him close for a deep kiss. It was such a nice change of pace to have the usually shy bunny turn the tables on him. Heathcliff didn't mind it at all.

They fumbled and tumbled and eventually managed to get in bed with Aidan on top and Heathcliff laughing like tickled underneath. "It looks like someone grew a pair lately," he teased his lover on purpose.

A comical sound between a growl and a giggle was the reply that immediately came. Heathcliff wanted to laugh back some more, but Aidan dipped his head lower and bit his chest. "Ouch! And teeth, too!"

A rebellious strand of hair covered Aidan's face as he looked up. "Wanna know what else I have growing right now?" he asked playfully.

"I don't think I need any hints. That 'else' is poking the inside of my thigh right now," Heathcliff replied and moved, hiking his hips upward and making Aidan grunt.

"Oh, fuck, Heath, do you have any idea --" Aidan swallowed his own words and looked away.

“No need to talk, bunny boy. Sometimes what you do speaks louder than words. Especially in your case,” Heathcliff added and caressed Aidan’s cheek lovingly. “I know that you want me.”

Aidan nodded, his eyes already moist, his lips parted, letting Heathcliff know that still, a bit of encouragement was needed. Heathcliff pulled him close, guiding him with steady hands, showing him the way.

Not that much guidance was required, after all. Aidan was, as Heathcliff knew it well, a fast learner. He let out a small gasp as Aidan went down on him, taking out his shorts. A warm mouth was on his cock, and Heathcliff cursed under his breath. Too caught up in everything that had happened lately, he had forgotten, in a way, how much he missed this.

He placed one hand on Aidan’s head, not to guide him, but to beg him, without words, not to let him go. Aidan sucked slowly, steadying Heathcliff’s cock with one hand and alternating small, playful licks with deep swallowing moves, his eyes flickering up, to look at him from time to time.

“Aidan, you’re so good,” he praised. “Too good,” he added, as his breath grew ragged and he began coming into his lover’s beautiful mouth.

Aidan kept him down with both hands and took in everything.

“You took me by surprise,” Heathcliff joked.

Aidan moved fast and placed a kiss on his lips, shutting him up. He didn’t protest as Aidan gave him a sample of his earlier load; he actually enjoyed it more like this. The last shudders of his climax were dying down, but he could still feel goosebumps everywhere as they kissed like that.

“I don’t have anything to use,” Aidan said softly, his eyes still shining. “To fuck you,” he added in a small voice. “I should just let you sleep.”

“Let me sleep?” Heathcliff grabbed Aidan fast. “I believe we need to improvise a little. That is all.”

“Improvise?” Aidan cocked his head to one side. “What do you mean?”

“It means,” Heathcliff caressed his lover’s beautiful lips slowly, “that you should just make it wet enough.”

Aidan laughed, but Heathcliff was quick to push his fingers into his mouth. Without any other hint, Aidan began to lick them, his sultry eyes a sufficient indication about how much he wanted it.

Had he not been so spent, Heathcliff would have felt his cock getting hard again. For now, he had to deal with the small shivers of pleasure Aidan's tongue wrapping skillfully against his fingers ignited in him over and over.

"It might be a start," he said, and his voice sounded deep, like no other time before.

He moved enough so that he could start working on himself. But Aidan didn't look like he wanted to sit idle, and he let himself sink lower until he reached the new object of his interest. Heathcliff bit back a small moan, as Aidan put, again, his mouth, lips, and tongue, to good use.

"Are you sure this will be enough?" Aidan asked, sounding hopeful and innocent, through the short slurping sounds he was making while rimming Heathcliff.

"If you don't fuck me now, I might have to hold it against you, bunny boy," Heathcliff replied.

Aidan laughed, and this time, he hesitated no more. He stood up enough so that he could make their bodies connect in the most intimate of ways. Heathcliff kept himself from hissing as the expected stinging sensation appeared, and encouraged Aidan by grabbing him by the back of his neck and pulling him in for a kiss.

He planted the other hand on Aidan's ass, making him sink deeper into his body. Even if it hurt a little, it was nothing he couldn't deal with. He had an inkling he would get used to having his future husband doing that to him quite often.

"Heath, I don't think I can last," Aidan whispered between gasps and moans, as soon as Heathcliff let him breathe. "Is it okay if I come? And if I do it inside?"

"You don't have to ask me that," Heathcliff said softly. "Do it like you mean it, Aidan."

Aidan buried his head into the crook of Heathcliff's shoulder as he moved faster, erratically, a clear sign he was close. Heathcliff helped him over the edge by moving his fingers to push past the ring of Aidan's backdoor. Although only half-aroused, he felt Aidan's climax as it was his own.

For long moments, they just stood there, connected, both physically and emotionally.

"Can I just sleep here?" Aidan asked.

"As long as you don't fear your mother as much as you told me," Heathcliff replied, laughing softly.

"I'll think of something to tell her in the morning. Or sneak into my room before dawn," Aidan said, his words followed by a loud yawn.

"Good idea," Heathcliff said and placed a small kiss on Aidan's sweaty forehead.

“Which one?” Aidan asked.

Heathcliff wanted to make a joke, but just two seconds later, Aidan’s soft snoring stopped him. They would just figure out things as they went.



## *Epilogue*

“It was a real pleasure having you two with us for the entire weekend,” Aidan’s father said, as they were both sitting on the porch, looking at the people passing by, a bit in a hurry after spending what must have been a lazy Sunday.

“And it was a pleasure for me to be here, and get to know you, Mr. Spark,” Heathcliff replied.

Joe waved. “Joe, please. We don’t do formal in this house too well.”

Heathcliff laughed. “Aidan struck me as preppy the first time I met him. I thought that was the result of a strict upbringing.”

Joe smiled. “Aidan struggled to get a good job. Or, should I say, what he thought to be a good job. He also thought that was part of the act. There are all these books he’s been reading. I guess he knows better now.”

“He is handsome. And he looks great in a suit,” Heathcliff said, as he hurried to defend his lover.

“I wouldn’t contradict you. I want him to act more his age. All this struggle to appear more mature doesn’t become him. He has many other qualities.”

“That’s correct,” Heathcliff admitted.

“Heath, can I trust you to look after him? At least until he grows up a bit,” Joe said, placing one hand over Heathcliff’s forearm and looking him in the eyes. “You might have noticed that we had him late in life. We’re almost old enough to be his grandparents, not his parents.”

Heathcliff nodded. It wasn’t any of his business, but if Joe wanted to talk about that, he wouldn’t pretend he hadn’t noticed.

“That’s why we tended to be a little overbearing in raising him. For so many years, we tried to have a child, and, when he came to us, it was nothing short of a miracle. I’m sorry for burdening you with family history that doesn’t concern you.”

“There’s no burden. And I do believe every bit of family history should concern me since that is what we will be soon,” Heathcliff replied.

“That’s good. You are a good man, Heath, and I’m glad Aidan found you. I also trust you to let him spread his wings more than his mother and I. I realize that I’m asking you two contradicting things.”

“I think I understand completely where you’re coming from, Joe,” Heathcliff said. “And I want Aidan to grow and become the man he wants to be, too.”

“I’m glad to hear that. I really am,” Joe said. “Know that you two have our blessing, and that includes even letting Aidan take a few risks, now and then. Just pay no attention to what my wife wants to tell you. If it were after her, Aidan would still be her baby.”

“And what do you mean by that?” Marianne asked, making both men turn into their seats. “Heath, make sure Aidan eats. He tends to skip meals when he’s focused on something.”

“That should be no problem,” Heathcliff replied with a smile. “Living healthy and teaching others to do that is, after all, my business.”

“I’m ready.” Aidan was the last to join them on the porch.

He had a small suitcase in his hand.

“Then we should be on our way? That’s all you’re taking with you?” Heathcliff asked, pointing at how light Aidan seemed to travel.

Aidan shrugged. “I thought about settling only for what’s really needed. Also, mom insisted on drying clean all my suits.”

“Good thinking. There won’t be much need for dressing formally for a while,” Heathcliff said.

“That’s what I thought.”

Aidan’s smile said everything that was left unsaid. Heathcliff stood up and stretched his hand; Aidan hurried to take it.

“It’s so good that you’re driving. The guy who brought me here must have taken his driving license in another universe. I’m glad I didn’t throw up even once on the way here,” Heathcliff joked.

“Did he drive too fast?” Aidan asked.

“Insanely. Well, it might have been my fault. I overpaid so that he could take me here fast,” Heathcliff admitted.

“You don’t have to worry about that with me,” Aidan said. “We’ll make sure not to miss one stop. Did you hear that, mom and dad?” he added, louder this time, and turning toward his parents. “Heath, just tell them what a responsible driver I am.”

“He is responsibility incarnate behind the wheel,” Heathcliff said promptly. “One time, I noticed someone in their eighties driving past us. I think he could get a special prize for slow driving.”

Aidan scoffed and glared, but began laughing. “You don’t want me to get all fast and furious now, do you?”

“Of course not. I love you just the way you are. And don’t worry; your death metal playlist compensates for how slowly you’re driving,” Heathcliff joked again.

“Boys, have a safe trip back home.” Joe stood up and patted them both on the back.

Marianne came to embrace them, holding each tightly until Aidan had to protest that they really needed to go. Heathcliff looked at that family image and felt his heart grow in his chest. To think that not more than thirty-six hours ago, he had no idea how to have Aidan back except for throwing himself at him and begging.

*Several months later*

“Are you sure we have everything ready? There’s nothing missing? No one?”

“Aidan, relax. I thought all the wedding jitters had worn off already. This is our party, and we should enjoy it.”

Aidan stopped for a second and laughed. He leaned into Heathcliff’s shoulder and sighed deeply. “I can’t believe it’s done. I mean we said all the words, and, by the way, you really did go over that top with that vow – I mean, were you trying to make me feel bad or something?”

“Aidan, Aidan,” Heathcliff tried to stop the cascade of words pouring from Aidan’s mouth, “your vow was amazing, and I would never try to make you feel bad. Actually, all I want is to make you feel good.”

“My vow was amazing? I basically said a few lame things like how I would love you forever and blah-blah-blah. You didn’t tell me that you would go all romantic and stuff. Who were you trying to impress, really?”

Heathcliff pulled Aidan close and kissed him. “You. I was trying to impress you.”

“Really? All you have to do to impress me is to cook naked in the kitchen or something.”

“Is that something you’re into?” Heathcliff questioned his husband. He had to get used to that, although he had practiced in his mind for the last few months.

“I might,” Aidan said quickly and looked away. “But no,” he added right away. “There are knives and hot oil that could jump out of a pan or something. You know what? You should wear more clothes than usual when you cook. I can’t let you do that wearing nothing but shorts.”

“Aidan, you sound like your mother now. And I do remember quite distinctly that you prefer me half-naked in the kitchen. All right, I didn’t know you would want me completely naked, but I will think about it. Plus, I’m a master cook. Nothing scares me.”

“Well, that may be it, but I might be in the mood to jump you instead of thinking about food. Then we might end up burning the food, and then the kitchen might catch on fire --”

“All right, bunny boy,” Heathcliff stopped him. “I can see that you’re still nervous. What’s this all about?”

Aidan hesitated for a second, then looked around as if any of the guests might try to overhear him, only to let out a sigh and whisper something quickly into Heathcliff’s ear.

“So, isn’t it great news?”

“Are you trying to tell me that, on our wedding day, you were busy calculating numbers?”

“What? You’re not happy we’re breaking even?” Aidan asked.

Heathcliff rolled his eyes. “Obviously, I married a workaholic. I will have to keep you in bed more.”

“I wouldn’t mind that,” Aidan replied. “It’s been three days since we --” he stopped himself in time.

Isabel was walking over to them, like a small-scale hurricane on high heels. “You guys, the ceremony was awesome!” She jumped into their arms, managing somehow not to topple any of them in the process. “And wow, Heath, that declaration of love!”

“I know, right?” Aidan said. “Totally extra.”

“Totally,” Isabel confirmed.

Heathcliff made a face.

“Totally cute, I mean,” Isabel added quickly. “Seriously, my dudes, it was an awesome ceremony, and this is an even more awesome party. I doubt I’ve seen so many gorgeous looking people in one place. My smartphone might catch on fire, so many pics I’ve taken. Heath, do you think you would be very, very, very upset if I sold a few – not the raciest ones, of course – to tabloids? A girl must make a living.”

“Isabel!” Aidan exclaimed in shock.

Both Isabel and Heathcliff started laughing. “Oh, no, he called you Isabel, not Bella,” Heathcliff said. “This means something’s about to go down.”

“How do you know that?” Isabel questioned.

“Well, whenever Aidan wants to draw my attention, he calls me Heathcliff Stone, like he’s some grandmother ready to scold a ten-year-old.”

“It’s because of his mom,” Isabel said, nodding in agreement. “If you two ever have kids, he’ll be the annoying dad, I’m sure.”

“Are you two done talking about me in the third person while I’m standing right here?” Aidan asked.

“Almost,” Isabel replied promptly. “Heath, have I ever told you about Aidan’s first crush? It was a guy --”

“It’s official,” Aidan stopped her. “On my wedding day, I will be carried away in cuffs for killing my best friend in a fit of anger.”

“Who would you kill on your special day if not your bestie?” someone intervened into the conversation.

Heathcliff turned to find Michael staring at them with a huge grin on his face. Apparently, there was also someone else there with them, even if he stood a little behind. “Mikey, Jess, I thought you guys would be already busy setting the dance floor on fire.”

“Not just yet,” Michael said. “We thought about dragging you all there, too.”

“Just so that you can brag that your boyfriend is a danseur?” Heathcliff half-smiled.

“That, of course, but also to ramp up the entertainment around here. Don’t you think it’s getting a little stale? Jess, what do you think?”

Isabel began squealing, taking all of them by surprise. “O. M. G. Jess! You’re that Jess! I saw you in Swan Lake! What an incredible performance!”

“Since when do you watch ballet, Bella?” Aidan asked.

“Since I’m taking classes,” Isabel said brightly.

“Are you abandoning me for ballet? You know fitness is better for the heart and overall shape.” Heathcliff pretended to be brokenhearted, placing a hand over his chest.

“If you forget all about Heath’s videos for ballet, I can only condone your choice, young lady,” Jess said ceremoniously, while obviously barely keeping from laughing. “Come on, boys and girls, are you ready to party like it’s 1877?”

“1877?” Heath asked in wonder.

“Ballet jokes,” Michael explained quickly. “Come on; we promise you we’ll play it nicely while parents are still awake.”

“Hmm, sounds promising,” Isabel said, patting her cheek with her smartphone. “What will happen once the parents go to sleep?”

“Well,” Michael said with a huge smile on his face, “after that, you will all learn why Jess leaving my club was the biggest loss since I decided to change the cocktail menu and get rid of choices such as Sex on the Beach.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Isabel asked, more and more intrigued. “Aidan, help. These guys are taking advantage that I don’t know a thing about what they’re talking about.”

“Jess used to be a cage dancer at Michael’s club,” Aidan explained.

“No way!” Isabel exclaimed. “Are you going to do some striptease routine once all the old people are gone?”

“Young lady, don’t talk about us as old people,” Aidan’s mother chided Isabel, making them turn.

The parents were in full formation, much to Heathcliff’s content. They seemed to have hit it all quite well, and his mother, in particular, enjoyed being treated by everyone like she was a movie star. Apparently, everyone wanted to know who Heathcliff Stone’s mother was.

Max and Hope were struggling to keep all their kids in check, as they rushed to them. “Are we all here? Good,” Hope said quickly. “I have no idea how much time I can keep the kids from running around and toppling the cake.”

“Is there a plan for them to do that?” Heathcliff asked.

“It’s in the works,” Hope replied promptly. “Let’s say it would be good if you had a plan B in case they succeed.”

“Why do I feel like we’re under assault?” Heathcliff asked, looking around. “Not that I don’t love you all, guys, but you are pretty much into my and my husband’s hair like you want something.”

“Of course we want something,” Max said promptly. “It’s a group hug! And a group picture!”

“Haven’t we taken like a thousand already?” Heathcliff asked.

“So? What’s one more?”

Heathcliff shook his head and pulled Aidan closer. Aidan took him by surprise and grabbed him hard, then placed a wet sloppy kiss on his lips, making everyone cheer. Even through his closed eyelids, Heathcliff could tell all cameras were on them. Well, he couldn’t be mad. After all, he was in love, and, like all celebrities, he had had a hot affair with his babysitter. The only difference was that he married him, too.

THE END