

Storyboard-22

My hunk, Tristan, I should get in the habit of thinking of him that way; it's a hard, powerful name. But my Hunk feels so much... better.

Anyway, he's asleep in the passenger seat. The one time he woke up, after I filled up the car, and coffee, in Wittmann, he punched me. If I hadn't been as fast as I am, I'd have lost an eye, instead of having a sore jaw and a few loose teeth. He was asleep again before I could get my defense up. Fortunately, I didn't spill any of the coffees I'd bought.

Got to love travel mugs. Even those bought at a gas station.

You hear stories of how, when we sleep, we're at our 'purest'. There are no masks then, no lies. What you see when you look at a sleeper's face is who they are.

I look at him and I see hardness, violence, death. Even sleeping, he's on guard. And if not for what he's coming down from, he'd probably have woken the other two times I stopped for coffee.

Those gas station travel mugs are so fucking small.

I don't like that he's on drugs. Drugs are a crutch—coffee isn't a drug. But he said he has it under control. Has an entire system in place to force him not to take more. I believe him.

I shake the mug to see if there's any left, then put it in the back and take another. I hope we're getting close, because I only have three left, and after hours of driving, following his directions, I am so far along the beaten path, it's a corpse. I really don't want to have to be driving in the dark. I'm going to have to slow so much to stay on this, I might as well park until the next morning.

His directions were written before he fell asleep, neat, precise handwriting and exact directions, with distances accurate to the sixteenth of a mile. It's the only reason I don't think I'm lost, yet. If this place is further than what he wrote, then all bets are off.

The road doesn't improve, but it widens. Then there's a house on the left, and a man stepping into the middle of the road. At this distance, I can only tell that he's tall and lanky. On each side of this road, that's barely wide enough for the car, is a ditch I don't think I can muscle through to get around him, no matter how much muscle this car has.

I'm close enough now to see he's old and has a sidearm on which his hand is resting. He wears military fatigues. There is tension in his body. He isn't going to move.

I slow and come to a gentle stop a few feet from the man, and he seems surprised. He looks to the passenger side, then me again, before stepping around to my side. The severe expression makes me consider gunning it, but according to my Hunk's direction, this is it. Which means this could be a friend of his.

Why does the idea he had a friend piss me off?

Because it's so contrary to the violent creature I've met, that's why.

I crank the window down before Old Man Gunner there reaches me. The car's that old.

He stops and looks at me. His blue eyes are as sharp as his features. His nearly white hair is in a military crew cut Gramps would be proud of.

“Who are—”

I push myself against the backrest as Tristan pulls his big gun and aims it at the old man. His eyes are open, but I’m not sure he’s awake.

“Get that thing out of my face before I rip it out of your hand,” Old Man Gunner orders, and my desire to tell him off for daring to use that tone when talking to my Hunk is slammed down by how familiar it sounds.

Gramps uses the exact tones when ordering his people, or me when I’ve pissed him off. I can proudly say it hadn’t happened in a couple of years now.

That’s because he isn’t aware of most of what I get up to. Oh man, would I hear that tone if he knew even a fraction of what Grams knows.

“Jacob,” Tristan said. Well, Old Man Gunner has a name. That sucks. Tristan looks around, nods to himself, then holsters the gun.

“Who’s that?” the old man demands.

“The guy driving me.”

“What?” I ask. Is that all I am to him?

“You know the rules,” the old man says. Fuck him having a name.

“He isn’t going to cause any trouble.”

Like hell, I won’t.

“If he does, you’re paying too.”

Like hell, he will.

“I’ll deal with him if he does.”

Oh please do.

Jacoby is eyeing me.

I might be smiling too hard now. Not the only hard thing on me. Man, being with my Hunk is an emotional roller-coaster.

“Fine, but consider this a notice.”

“Sure,” Tristan replies in a tone that says, ‘I don’t give a fuck’. He motions for me to drive.

Now that I’m focused on the road, and not Old Man Gunner, I can see how gunning it would have been a bad idea. This is more potholes than roads. I nearly have to come to full stops before taking them or I’m going to rip the undercarriage of this car. If there’s a way to drive around them, I don’t see it.

We pass houses. Ten of them, each well maintained, but old. They are far enough from this... this can’t be called a road... whatever this is, to have their own gravel driveway and far enough apart to have their own lots. Four of them have someone standing at the doors by the time we pass. Two are men, two women. The men are middle age, one woman is old enough to have a cane, the other is young, around sis’s age, but better looking.

With two more, the curtains part enough for someone to look at us, but I can’t see them. The others I only know there is life there because I make out moving shadows through the windows.

There’s a creepy sense to the whole thing. Like that horror movie in that summer camp place, with the guy in the hockey mask... or is it the one with the clawed gloves? My

only saving grace is that I'm with the guy who'll do the killing if it comes to it, and I'll happily help.

There is a long stretch with no houses, up an incline, then a house that's different from the others at the end of whatever I'm driving on is called.

It's... not modern, the construction seems as old as the others, houses aren't my thing. That's what real estate websites are for. But it has a lot of more modern things attached to it. Solar panels, scanners, spotlights, a microwave dish, A small satellite one. Two Wi-Fi repeaters. I'm going to get connectivity no matter where I am outside this house, cool.

The house itself has an addition, and a detached garage. That's probably where the car goes, but I stop before the house.

"Stay here." My Hunk exits the car and... well, it isn't quite a shamble, but he's not over this yet.

I get out and follow him at a respectable distance. There was no order in his tone, so it was more of a suggestion, but he does have that big ass gun and I don't want a big ass hole me if he objects. I want something else big of his in my ass.

There's an alarm system next to the door, and it looks state-of-the-art from what I see before he steps before it, keeping me from seeing the code he enters. Or I figure it's what he's doing. He's in front of it for a long time. Maybe he's having trouble remembering the code? Wouldn't that be funny, him having to ask me to hack the security on his house?

He enters.

I wait a beat, then follow.

I hear him deeper in the house, but I'm busy taking in the living room.

Well, there is a couch, so it's got to be the living room.

A shower starts and oh, could I do with washing his back?

Maybe he won't mind?

I step by the opening to the kitchen on the way to the sound, and I stop again. It's empty. No table, no fridge, no stove. Nothing. If he paid for his electricity, he'd be saving a lot of money. Does he order out a lot?

Is there anything in those cabinets?

The addition is accessible by the door on the other wall. I know that because I can work out the layout in my head and because that door is metal with a small window in it and has an electronic lock.

I'm peering inside before I can stop myself.

Come on, who wouldn't be curious with this setup?

I'm disappointed.

Oh, there's plenty, but nothing I'd feel the need to install this level of security for. It's a workshop of some sort. Tools hang on the wall, nice and orderly. There's a rack with a lot of guns further down. Cabinets for files and other stuff, a computer, bulky with what looks like shielding.

The shower stops. That was quick. Maybe I can go help towel him dry.

I exit the kitchen and the next door is a bedroom turned into weight training room.

The equipment has been repaired multiple times. Yeah, I'm not surprised he fixes everything. It's basic, a barbell with what? three hundred pounds worth of weights? And more on a weight holder? A handset with its own racks of weights. I can't tell from here, but the ones on the bars look really big.

No wonder he hits so hard.

I turn to continue to where I'd heard the shower and stop in my tracks.

My Hunk stands there, glaring at me, naked, and I take him all in. He's pure muscle under that black, scarred, skin. I can see the strands as he tenses, and I take a defensive stance. I am intruding in his house. At least he isn't reaching for the gun in his shoulder holster, the only thing he is wearing.

He cracks a smile, but it vanishes immediately.

"I told you to stay in the car."

"You've known me how long?"

He narrows his eyes. "Days."

I smile. "And in that time, what exactly did I do that led you to think I'd do what you told me?"

He sighs and runs a hand over his face. I'm as surprised by the action as I am by his surprise at doing it, then the annoyance as he brings his hand down. There are a few seconds where he seems to be fighting for control, then his face is neutral again.

"Leave Bart."

I grin. "Make me." I raise my fists. I will temp him until he gives in.

"I won't fight you." No dismissiveness, no roll of the eyes at how ridiculous the idea I can take him on is. Just a statement he isn't going to give in.

"I can start shit, you know."

"What do you want, Bart?"

I look at my raised fist. "Isn't it obvious?"

"A beating isn't what you're after, and I am not going to fuck you." All tiredness leaves his voice as it turns hard. "What do you want?"

I drop my hands. "You."

He laughs. It's loud, harsh, and short as he stops it suddenly and looks annoyed again. "You don't even know what I am."

"You're someone who doesn't treat me with velvet gloves just because I'm smaller than you. You aren't afraid of hurting me."

The fear is fleeting. No, I imagined it. My Hunk doesn't fear.

He steps forward. "I don't want you."

I look him in those cold brown eyes and smirk. "A part of you definitely wants me." I grab his hard cock and—

Fuck, he hits hard.

I bend over after hitting the wall, arms over my chest. I force my breathing to slow and straighten, grinning. "That's more like it." I run at him, and I get the roll of the eyes this time as he deflects the strike, then slams me face-first into the wall.

“Stop,” he growls in my ear.

“Make me.”

“I am not in a state for this, Bart.”

I reach behind, but he slaps my hand away hard. “Part of you is.” Except that now I can feel him trembling. I look over my shoulder and there is anger there, but other things. A lot of emotions. What’s going on? I open my mouth to ask, but a phone buzzes.

It takes three of them before those emotions are gone. When he takes it out of the pocket on the holster and flips it open, he’s the Hunk I love again.

“Jacoby?” he asks, detached, cold. “How many?” he asks after listening.

Oh, this is going to be good.