

The Artist



Jensen's a lawyer, looking for a purpose to his life. Jared's in an abusive relationship. Spilt coffee and amazing sketches result in them crossing paths. "After a while I managed to get his name and sometimes a short conversation with him, but even then it was only from the road – kinda awkward, you know? And then one day I watched him climbing back through the window and that's when I saw him."

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Jensen:

"...and I have no idea how I managed to survive a year with him. Honestly, he makes me sick. Did you know that he wears a wig?" she spits out in disgust.

"Ma'am," I get out through gritted teeth, forcing myself to remain polite. "I understand how you feel about him, but maybe we could get back to the papers? You need to sign over h-"

She cuts me off again. "He should be ashamed to call himself a man! I mean, now someone like you," she simpers, leaning closer to me, her bosom practically wobbling in my face. "You would treat a woman right, wouldn't you?"

Clearing my throat and shoving my chair back, I leap to my feet. "I think we're done for today, Ms Charlton. I'll have these sent to you as soon as possible. Don't forget about the meeting tomorrow with Mr Charlton and his lawyer."

She finally leaves, but not before winking at me like we have some sordid secret. Two hours in that woman's presence is more than enough to remind me just why I like men so much.

"Here." A cup of coffee is placed under my nose, and I look up at my godsend.

"Grow a dick and marry me?"

Danneel laughs, "You know I would, baby."

Gulping my manna from heaven, I lean back in my chair, groaning at the ache in my back. "Can I go home now?" I ask with a childish whine, shooting pleading eyes at my secretary.

She smiles sympathetically, "That bad, huh?"

"You know it."

"I'll clear up your schedule for the rest of the afternoon. Go get your beauty sleep. You really need it."

"Hilarious," I mumble. "See you tomorrow."



Exiting the company building, I gulp desperately at my coffee, trying to ease my exhaustion, frustration and annoyance. This all fails entirely when I stumble and end up spilling my coffee all down the front of my shirt.

Throwing my head up to the sky and beginning to curse God for being so cruel to me, my rant trails off at the sight of him. God, he's beautiful.

Seated on the slightly slanted roof of the shop across the road – with the sun glancing off his hair, casting a golden glow to his skin; his long legs stretched out before him, bent at the knees – he looks surreal.

He's facing the main road so I have a full view of his profile, long and lean, a bit on the skinny side, but his form-fitting jeans and sweater hint at a muscular physique.

Unable to restrain myself, in fact, unable to exert any control over my own body, I find myself drifting towards him. There is a look of intense concentration on his face, his attention fixated on his notebooks, interrupted only with the occasional glance towards the road below him.

It's only when someone bumps into me that I realise that I've just been standing dumbstruck in the middle of the pavement, gazing up at a man who obviously has no idea he's under observation.

A heated blush blooms on my cheeks and I drag my eyes away, continuing on my route to the parking lot. That's when I realise the coffee shop is strategically positioned – directly opposite the man – and decide that I could really do with another coffee, especially considering the fact that I'm currently wearing my last cup.

I find a seat by the window so I have full view of – ahem – the road outside. Needless to say, I spend the next hour ogling the oblivious man, memorizing his features and the way his hand glides over the notebook. I think he's sketching, his movements too broad to be merely writing.

Every now and then, he has a frantic moment, sketching furiously and with a small crease running across his forehead, but mostly he just caresses the page lovingly with his pencil, his face serene, his movements tranquil.

"He's beautiful isn't he?" a voice murmurs softly from beside me, and I jump, turning quickly towards the waiter. My lips part, about to begin claiming ignorance, but he just raises his eyebrow, glancing pointedly at the – now icy – cup of untouched coffee that I'd ordered upon entry.

After scowling at the guy for catching me out, taking in his long hair and sharp blue eyes, I turn back to watch as the sketcher smiles at a nearby pigeon. "Who is he?"

I catch the sadness in the waiter's eyes before he can school his expression into a neutral one. "He sits sketching every day..." His voice becomes grim, his eyes dark, "You're not the first customer to notice him."

Before I can ask what he means, he shakes his head and get to his feet, "Just leave him alone, okay?" And with that he turns and stomps away, leaving me to wonder he meant.

Ordering a croissant to keep up appearances and munching it blindly, I watch the enigma as he sketches, his lean body calm and relaxed, like there's nothing he enjoys more.

Then, in the space of sip of cold coffee, everything changes. The man freezes, panic skirting across his face and, even from where I'm seated, I can clearly see the colour draining from his cheeks.

He leaps up as if he's on fire, spinning around, his sketchbook dropping as he races to where the second story window opens up onto the single story roof. He slips lithely through, sliding the window shut behind him. A split second later, he's out of sight.

In tantalisingly slow motion, the sketch book slides down the roof, creeping towards the edge. I jump up, feeling a sudden surge of protectiveness over the book, and throw down some cash before running out the coffee shop and across the road, narrowly missing being hit by a furiously hooting car.

I'm there just in time to catch the book, grabbing it to my chest, ignoring the curious stares from passersby as I jog to my car. I'm going to return it but I just desperately need to see what he was doing.

Once safely inside my car, I flip it open to the first page. My jaw literally drops, mouth hanging open as I gape at the sketch, heart aching with a bout of homesickness. It's of a house, in a countryside that could only be Texas, huge and wooden, with a stretching porch and a massive garden. In the back I can make out a barn, where a man is busy brushing a horse down. He looks so much like my dad, with his denim overalls and well-worn boots, that a small smile plays on my lips.

In front of the house, there is a young man – about twenty – lying on the grass, laughing with a little girl who's wearing a cowboy hat way too big for her. They remind me so much of Mackenzie and Josh that I feel dizzy. A woman stands in the front door smiling as she holds out a plate of cookies, just like Mom. Examining the sketch carefully, I can't help but marvel at the pencil marks that came together to form this – this image of home.

Tearing my eyes, I force myself to turn the page. It's just as brilliant; of the woman in the previous sketch, standing before the stove wearing an apron. But it's her expression that takes my breath away. She has that half exasperated-half amused smile on her face that Momma always wears when I annoy her in the kitchen.

Smiling, I flip over the page to a sketch of a beautiful girl with a tender, intimate smile on her lips. She's on the porch-swing, a half opened book on her lap.

The next is of a bride and groom. I recognize the guy as the one who was on the lawn in the first sketch, but not the girl. The man looks slightly older, but is smiling broadly at his bride. He's smartly dressed in a suit and she's gorgeous in a silky white dress, and I just know that this is how Josh will look when he gets married.

The next is of a little girl – so like Mac – beaming from atop a horse, her face flushed with happiness and adorable dimples denting her cheeks. Beside the horse, two dogs are yapping playfully at its heels.

The pictures come alive: the dogs' motion visible even on the stillness of the page. But it's the emotions – the emotions are the heart of it all, as though the artist poured his love for these people and animals into the pages.

With a big grin on my lips, I flip over the page.

I nearly drop the book.

It's the same house as the very first sketch, but it couldn't be more different. The strokes are hard, cold, used only to give shape. There's no warmth. There are no people in the sketch.

It's barren.

Detached.

Empty.



Jared:

I wake to the merciful sound of silence. It takes a moment before I remember why. He has a business meeting today.

A smile ghosts my lips as I slowly stand, stretching and wincing only slightly. I treat myself to a long, hot shower before slipping on sweatpants and heading over to the computer to do some work.

It's one of my little secrets. Something he doesn't know about. Every day when he leaves for work, thinking I'm just sitting in this dingy place doing nothing, I'm actually putting together video clips or slideshows or whatever else comes my way. I have formed this website displaying some of my previous work. If people approve, they send me their requests.

Sometimes it's simple: Put together a romantic slideshow of a happy couple, with music and the whole shebang. But there are more challenging ones that also come along: taking a few random clips that have been shot badly and making it into an A-grade video clip.

I enjoy this, enjoy losing myself in someone else's happy life. But the main reason is because it pays. Customers are sent a snippet of my final work and if they are happy with it, they send the money to my account. Only then do they get the completed version. It works well.

I'm trying to save money. Somewhere in the back of my mind, there's a tiny bit of hope – hope that someday, maybe, I might be able to get out of this. It's foolish, I know it is, but it's still there, in the distant memories of a time when my life was clear. When I wasn't ashamed of who I was. When I held my head up high and laughed true.

I wish I was still like that, but that me is gone. In its place is a failure, something disgusting and impure. The only time I can ever forget that is when I'm immersed in my work or when I'm sketching. Brief moments when I imagine myself someplace else – someplace safe where someone loves me; but those moments quickly disperse with a single glance in the mirror – a single reminder of what I've become. I don't deserve any of that and I sure as hell aren't worthy of anyone's love.

After emailing a short clip, I carefully log out of everything and delete all traces that I've even been there.

Grabbing my sketchbook, I head out the window onto the roof, to my usual position and let out a soft breath of air as I open up to a blank page, studiously ignoring the sharp, stabbing pain at the glimpses of previous sketches. Swallowing thickly, I begin to sketch.

Sometimes I have some idea of what I'm going to draw, other times I just go with the flow, letting my hand glide over the cool white of the page. As the meaningless lines begin to take shape in the form of the street below, I let my thoughts wash away, leaving my mind blank as I focus only on my hand and the page before me.

The hours fly by unnoticed, until the sound of a door slamming inside makes me freeze. It can't be him. It's too early. He never comes home early.

"Jared!"

He's in a bad mood.

I just manage to slip inside, shutting the window with immense relief that he didn't see me out there. It's one of the rules: no one should know I exist.

Another rule is that a meal always needs to be ready when he gets back. I begin heading towards the kitchen, but thick, sturdy arms snake around my waist, his large body almost smothering my own as he slams me against the wall, and I withhold a shudder at the press of his erection against my ass.

"Where's my dinner, boy?"

"Sorry," I whisper softly, turning my cheek further against the solid plaster as his fingers make their way down to fumble at my fly. A few seconds later, his naked flesh is pressing against mine.

"So fucking hot for me, aren't you, Jared?" he hisses, and I feel the head of his dick pressing against my opening. That's all the warning I get before white-hot pain shoots through every nerve in my body, my mouth opening in a silent scream. When his hands tighten around my throat, I realise he's been drinking, his business deal probably went down badly.

Usually he keeps the bruises moderate, or at least out of sight, but I know tonight's not going to go that way.

When he's finally finished, my knees give out, and I sink down into a heap, my head bowed. I ignore the pain, ignore the prickle of tears, ignore everything even the disgust that seethes through me; having long ago learned that he only gets even more turned on when I show how much it hurts. Instead I manage to stare blankly down at the floor, keeping my face emotionless.

"So good for me, boy. Don't want to be angry at you, but you have to learn that laziness just isn't acceptable. It's not healthy. I just want what's best for you." He heads for the showers, but not before telling me to clean up my act and including a 'concerned' warning that his dinner needs to be ready by the time he gets out, the implied 'or else you'll wish you were dead' is there, we both know it, even as he grins and kisses me one last time.

Jensen:

The rest of the sketches are just as devoid of emotion. Not that they aren't absolutely amazing pieces of work, but it's almost as though I've been spoiled by the previous sketches.

Feeling ill, I flip through the rest of the sketchbook. Occasionally there's a small section that has some emotion; like the very last drawing, which I presume he was doing today. It displays the street below. As a whole, it is extremely well done, but the focal point is definitely the two dogs at the forefront.

The dogs are both on identical leashes and are being pulled along by the same owner. They are identical in everything except for their eyes. One dog is subdued and submissive, its eyes dulled and empty. The other – the other has a fire in its eyes: a sort of defiant flame, burning brightly beneath the surface.

♥

The next day, I stumble to a halt before Jared's apartment.

He isn't there.

I kick down the disappointment, feeling stupid. Obviously he isn't there, it is six-thirty in the morning – no one sane is awake at six-thirty in the morning, and usually I wouldn't be caught dead up at this hour.

The coffee shop is just opening so I settle down there, feeling every bit the stalker I am as I gaze across at the roof.

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"What the fuck are you doing back here?" a voice hisses from behind me, and I turn to find yesterday's waiter glaring at me. Raising an eyebrow I reply innocently, "I just wanted a cup of coffee."

He glowers at me, "Listen, mister – whatever your name is, Jared's a good guy, just stay the fuck away from him."

"Jared?"

I can see the man inwardly cursing himself for the slip. "Look, I know your type. Just leave him be, okay, man?"

I blink up in surprise, "And what exactly do you mean by 'my type'? I just want to get to know him, what's wrong with that?"

"You act like you care. You buy him stuff. Make him trust you. Then you screw him and screw him over, leaving him in an even worse situation than he was before."

"Whoa, what the hell, dude? You know fuck all about me and my intentions! I would never do that! Not to anybody. Now get the fuck away from me."

Not backing down an inch, he glares at me, "What is he to you? What do you want from him? D'you want a good fuck? Or do you just want to hurt someone who's already hurting, even more? Why don't you go find a whore somewhere? Just leave Jared alone."

"Fuck, are you insane?" I snarl, "I just want to get to know him! Who said anything about hurting him? And..." I pause in my tirade, his words sinking in, "Wait, is someone hurting him?"

The waiter falls silent, glancing around the room to check that no one else has come in, and then he drops into the seat opposite me.

Before he gets anything out, we're distracted by movement on the roof across the road – Jared. But, my relief at his arrival is short-lived, disappearing the second I catch sight of him properly.

He's moving stiffly, as if in a great deal of pain, and he has a blooming bruise over his jaw, cheek and eye. Unsteady on his feet, he sways precariously – as though his world is swimming. He's too near the edge. With my heart in my throat, I leap to my feet and sprint outside, completely ignoring the waiter close at my heels.

"Jared?" my voice shakes as I call out from beneath him. He blinks unsteadily down at me as I try again. "Jared, get away from the edge. You'll fall."

Confusion clouds his features and he staggers closer to the edge, his eyes searching for something – the sketchpad.

Quickly pulling it out my jacket, I hold it up for him to see. "Look, it's okay. I've got your sketches here. So, what do you say to taking a step away from the edge?"

I can see him considering it, his body swaying backwards, and I relax slightly. But before he can, his knees buckle, his eyes widening in panic as he keels forwards and over the edge.

Luckily, I'm directly beneath him and I shift automatically, attempting to catch him. We both crash into the ground, my back protesting painfully at the collision with the pavement, and I'm winded for a few seconds. It takes me a while longer to regain my senses, just trying to focus on the face that he's in my arms. But that joy dies when I realise he's unconscious.

People, who have been gathering around us, help me up. I clutch Jared tightly to my chest, woe betiding all who try to take him from me. Brushing off concerned questions, I stagger towards the car, remembering at the last moment and turning towards one of the passersby, "Can you pass that notebook please? I'm taking him to hospital."

"Yeah, right, you are," a sarcastic voice mutters behind me, and I turn, glaring at the waiter.

"You gonna stop me? He needs to be checked over."

A frown creases his forehead and he scowls, "He's not going anywhere alone with you." Snatching up Jared's sketchbook from a gaping passerby, he mutters, "I'm coming with you, I'm on his medical contact list."

I raise my eyebrow. "Why are you on his contact list?"

The man shrugs and reaches down for Jared's legs, helping me carry him. "Long story."

♥

A few hours and tons of awkward questions later, the doctor finally emerges, turning to talk to the waiter. "Mr Kane... you said he was injured from a fall off a roof?"

"Well, that's what knocked him unconscious, but he looked like he was in pain before the fall as well."

With a nod, the doctor continues, his face grim, "Further examination of his body revealed serious bruising in all stages of healing. And..." he pauses, glancing at me.

The waiter steps forwards, "You can speak in front of him, he's a close friend of Jared's.

Slowly, the doctor finishes, "And the SANE examination revealed signs of violent sex, if not rape. We've taken DNA samples, should there be a police investigation."

My mouth drops open as I stare at him, unable to comprehend his words. I don't even hear what 'Mr Kane' says in response, and before I know it, the doctor's gone and the waiter is nudging me into the ward.

The room stinks of detergent, stifling and too clean. Jared is lying with the blanket low at his waist, wearing hospital clothing. The shirt is cut in a low V, the buttons undone, exposing the dark colouring on his chest. His face has an air of innocence, so like that of a child's, and seeing him broken like this, is just so wrong.

Silently the waiter comes to stand beside me, his voice low and quiet, "My name's Chris by the way."

I nod dumbly, barely caring as I mutter, "Jensen. Who did this to him?"

Chris' fake distorts; anger violent in his eyes. "His husband."

My eyes dart up at him angrily, "You knew? You knew and you never went to the police? What the hell is wrong with you?"

Ignoring my fury, he lets out a heavy sigh, sinking down in the chair beside the bed, gazing down at Jared. "The first time I saw him, he was on that roof. I was... curious about him... he reminded me of this kid I used to be best friends with back home. I always used to look out for that kid – Riley – so I guess I projected some of that onto Jared when I first saw him, he's just... I don't know, he just looked like he needed someone to watch out for him. I tried talking to him – asking him out for some beers, but he was... skittish..."

"After a while I managed to get his name and sometimes a short conversation with him, but even then it was only from the road – kinda awkward, you know? And then one day I watched him climbing back through the window and that's when I saw him.

"He was yanking Jared by the arm, pulling him away from the window. I didn't know which room he was in, so I called the cops. They arrived at the apartments, but only a few minutes later they left... turns out the husband's some hotshot lawyer. Way too influential to be held for marital abuse." His tone is bitter and harsh, and it takes me a few moments to absorb what he said.

The husband is a lawyer. I'm a lawyer. I probably know the guy, probably bumped shoulders with him a few times, never knowing, never suspecting anything like this.

He reaches out, brushing Jared's hair from his eyes and continues, "I couldn't do anything, I didn't have anywhere enough money to take the man to court, and Jared barely even spoke to me after that – I guess he was too afraid.... Then, about a year ago... this really wealthy guy came into the restaurant, he was all flashy clothes and shit. He watched Jared for hours and then he came the next day and the next. Eventually I told him Jared's name..."

"A few weeks after that, Jared didn't show up for a couple of days, and I was getting really worried and the man saw it. He eventually got me to tell him... everything... He found Jared at the hospital and visited him often. He seemed like a really cool guy. Jared trusted him, I trusted him. He convinced Jared to run away with him. Jared agreed... I was so relieved that he was finally getting out, thinking that he had finally found someone who would look after him like he deserved.

Chris' face darkens, his eyes meeting mine, flashing with anger. "A week later, Jared showed up, bloody, broken and hurting more than any man should, both emotionally and physically. He was dumped right in front of the restaurant. I called the ambulance and he was admitted yet again. His husband showed up a few hours later, acting the concerned caring husband everybody thought he was.

"I tried to stop them from letting the husband take Jared with him, but who am I? That night I think Jared got the worst beating of his life. He didn't show up until about two weeks later and the signs of the beating were still evident. But more than that, he just looked defeated, like he'd given up on everything. I wish like anything that I was gay, or that I at least had enough money to get him out of here, but... he's just so afraid of his husband..."

He breaks off, voice hoarse, and turns back to Jared.

"What happened to his family?" I murmur softly, trying to fill in the blanks between the clearly happy guy who used to steal his momma's cookies, and this battered man before me.

"I don't know..." Chris gets out quietly, "He trusts me not to hurt him, but he barely speaks, and when he does, it's never about his past."

"Fuck..." I sink down to the floor, head in my hands, "This is insane. This is absolutely fucking insane."

Then I look up, straight at Chris, "I don't care what it takes, we're getting him out."

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Jared:

White.

I blink for a few seconds, grimacing at the pain shooting through my eyelids as I try to adjust to the painful bright light. Maybe I'm dead.

When my world slides into focus, I realise with a pang of disappointment that I'm in a hospital. That in itself is wrong. I'm not allowed to be here. He made that crystal clear after last time. He's going to kill me when he finds out.

Letting out a pained groan, I roll onto my side, fighting back the tears as the pain rockets through me. Once it's eased to a dull ache, I realise there's a man slumped in the chair beside the bed, and I begin scrambling back. Who is he? What's he doing here?

At my movement, the man's eyes flicker open, and I'm suddenly hit by – Green.

He smiles gently at me, crow's feet creasing at the corners of his eyes, and I feel something stir deep in my chest. "Who are you?" I manage to croak out.

Slowly leaning forwards, he murmurs softly, "My name's Jensen."

"What are you doing here?"

"Well, you kinda fell off the roof and landed on me, I got you to hospital."

Inwardly cursing myself for being so stupid, I force a smile, "Thanks, I guess..." I swing my legs over the edge.

"What are you doing?" he reaches out, his hand falling on my shoulder, and I my body tenses, hiding the flinch.

"I'm fine, I'm just gonna-" As I begin to stand, my whole world sways, the ground getting closer. Hands hook under my arms, hoisting my back up, stabilising me and setting me back down on the bed.

Jensen chuckles softly, his hands smoothing up and down my arms, his face near mine, "I don't think you should be moving yet, Jared."

"How do you know my name?"

A fascinating flush spreads over his cheeks and he heads for the door, sticking his head out and calling someone. That someone comes in the form of – "Chris? What are you doing here?"

I stare at the two of them, not even realising that I'm shuffling backwards on the bed until my back comes in contact with the wall. Chris gently eases himself down on the bed beside me, smiling gently, his rough, rugged manner softening as he whispers, "Hey, kid." When I manage a small smile in return, the happiness on his face is worth it. "I got something for you..." he pauses dramatically, shooting a grin up at Jensen and then shoving a hand into his backpack, pulling out my sketchbook. My sketchbook. He doesn't even know how much that thing means to me. "Jensen here caught it when it fell off the roof. He would have returned it, but he didn't know how to contact you. That's why he was there when you fell."

Swallowing the lump in my throat, I murmur softly, "Thank you..." I look up at Chris and then at Jensen. "Thank you."

Before anything else can be said, loud shouting breaks out in the passage outside, sounds of a scuffle, and then the door bangs open and he barges in. I flinch at the anger contorting his features, and know – without a doubt – that the second he gets me alone, he's going to kill me.

No hospitals ever. Hospitals ask questions. Questions to answers that he knows can't be said.

"What is going on here?" he snarls, his gaze snapping from me to Jensen, freezing there.

"Jeff," Jensen gets out, his voice cold and empty.

"Ackles." Jeff's lips curl into a sneer. "Fancy meeting you here."

Jensen strides towards Jeff, stopping directly in front of him, fists clenched. "I should have known it was you – you always were a sick bastard, defenidng those rapists and paedophiles."

"Don't meddle with my business, boy."

"You're not going to get away with this, Jeff. Not this time. I hope you realize that now."

"Oh? And just how are you going to stop me?"

Jensen's tone is absolutely deadly, as he replies coolly, "You're just going to have to wait and find out."

And with that, Jensen turns back to me, his eyes softening as he comes to kneel beside me, his hand sliding gently over mine.

"Jared. I'm not going to let him touch you ever again. I won't let him, you hear me? But I have to get you out of that house. Will you stay with me? Just for a while; just until we get this bastard behind bars?" His voice is steady and sure, sounding as truthful and honest as anything. I opened my mouth to say 'okay', but images of Scott saying similar things suddenly flash before my eyes and I turn away from those mesmerizing green eyes, hearing Jensen let out a soft sigh. "I'm not going to hurt you... I would never hurt you, but if it makes you feel safer, Chris can stay with us too, will that be okay?"

I sneak a glance over at Jeff, who is currently shaking in anger, and I know that despite whatever Jensen might do to me, it can't be worse than what Jeff will do when he gets me behind closed doors. Self preservation kicks its hibernating head up and I take a deep breath and nod.

“Jared, what are you doing, baby?” Jeff gets out through gritted teeth, and I know just how hard it is for him not to leap across the room and throttle me.

Jensen moves without hesitation to stand between us, “I think he’s just made the best decision of his life. You aren’t going to lay a finger on him again. Ever.”

Looming over Jensen, clearly trying to use his few extra inches of height to intimidate him, but Jensen doesn’t even sway back slightly. With a disgruntled huff, Jeff spins around and storms to the door. “This isn’t over, Jensen. I’ll see you in court.”

“I’m counting on it.”

Once he’s gone, I let out a breath I hadn’t realized I was holding, and slump back against the headboard, cautiously eying Jensen as he talks softly to Chris.

My eyelids grow heavy, dipping down, and I sink down on the bed, embracing the prospect of unconsciousness.

Right before I drift off, a warm hand gently cards through my hair, and my last thought is: Green.

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Jensen:

“Do you know how old he is?”

Chris looks up with a warm smile, “He looks so young, doesn’t he? He’s twenty-three.”

A moment passes, both of us gazing down at the motionless form beside us.

“And... you’ve never... I mean... You’ve never wanted to...”

With a knowing glance, Chris shakes his head, “I’m not gay – but, he’s just. He’s so innocent, man. I want to hide him away someplace safe, I want to drag him to my momma, let her feed him and fuss over him. I guess, he’s kind of like the kid brother I’ve never had.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean about wanting to hide him away. Fuck... I only saw him for the first time two days ago... Christ...”

“That’s pretty much how it went with me,” Chris murmurs softly. “The very first time I saw him was two weeks before I saw Jeff and called the cops. I guess he just has that effect of people.”

We share a smile.

When the door slams open, we turn to see Jeff dragging a very familiar face after him. “Mike?”

“Jensen? What are you doing here?”

Jeff shoots me a frustrated glare and turns back to the bald man, "Dr Rosenbaum. I believe you were about to release my husband to me."

Mike glances at me, "Jensen, what's going on? Mr. Morgan claims that some man has been keeping him from seeing his injured husband. Is it you?"

Jeff cuts in, "Yes, he has been keeping my husband from me. Now, you and I both know that only family members are allowed to visit patients. This here is a major violation of mine and my husband's rights. We will want to sue. And I am taking Jared immediately. What kind of hospital allows strangers to visit patients?"

"Mike, can I talk to you, without him?"

With another glance at me, Mike nods, "Mr. Morgan, I must ask you to leave the room for a few minutes while I have a talk to Mr. Ackles here."

In face of Jeff's fury, Mike just stares evenly at him, and eventually the man turns tail and storms out, slamming the door dramatically behind him. Mike locks it and turn back to me.

"Jensen, what the hell's going on? You know you're not allowed to see patients unless you're family."

"Jeff abuses Jared. He has for years now. He can't go back with him, Mike. I won't let anyone hurt him again."

Mike's eyebrow slides up at my words, but before he can say anything, we're interrupted by Chris. "Who is this?"

"Chris, this is Mike; he's my ex-boyfriend from college." I turn back to Mike, "I didn't know you were working here. I thought you moved to Canada."

Mike grins goofily, "I did, but then I met another doctor who was applying for a position here, and I decided to join him."

"Ahh," I nod knowingly, "Well, go on, do tell. What's his name?"

Mike gives a put-on lovesick sigh and breathes dreamily, "His name's Tom."

The sound of a throat being cleared stirs us from our conversation, and Mike turns back to Jared's form, instantly becoming the professional doctor I still have trouble believing he is.

After checking Jared's chart, Mike runs through Jared's injuries. Once he's done, he lets out a low whistle. "That Jeff guy really did a number on him, didn't he? I can't believe I was just going to let him check Jared out."

I tug the blanket back up to Jared's chin, tucking him in gently before looking back up at Mike, "But what are we going to do? Jeff's right, I have no claim over Jared. Legally Jeff has every right to drag Jared out of here, I'm actually amazed he hasn't done it already."

Mike shakes his head slowly, "I think he's afraid of what you'll do. I don't think he was expecting any of this.... But don't worry, I'll do everything I can to make sure Jeff doesn't get his paws anywhere near Jared."

"Thanks Mike," I get out gratefully, my eyes never leaving Jared.

His hand falling on my shoulder, Mike gives me a gentle squeeze. "I'm just going to call Tom."

A few seconds later I hear his low voice whispering, "Hey, babe... no everything's fine. Well actually it's not really that fine. Could you come to Ward 121? Can you bring the security guys up with you? No, I'm fine, don't worry. Okay, see you soon."

I hear the sound of a phone snapping shut. "He's on his way."

I nod, and silence falls heavily in the room; interrupted only by Jared's soft, unconscious whimpers. Mike clears his throat, "So...Chris?" I never caught how you became involved in all this."

"I'm a friend of Jared's."

Suddenly there's a sharp rap on the door, followed by, "Mike?"

Mike quickly unlocks the door, letting in a tall, dark haired man, with a handsome face and blue eyes. Nothing on Jared, of course, but I can see Mike's appeal.

"Jesus, Mike, you scared the crap out of me. Next time please tell me what's happening when you sent me an S.O.S?"

Mike just grins.

Tom is surveying us, eyes lingering on Jared. I suppress the ridiculous urge to step between and shield Jared from this man. He lets out a sigh, turning towards Chris, "Hey, Chris."

I frown, "Wait, you know each other?"

Chris steps forward, "I hoped we wouldn't have to see you again."

Tom smiles grimly, "Yeah, me too. I had security escort Jeff out, but I'm sure he'll be back when he figures out what laws we've broken."

Mike and I exchange glances; Mike lets out a huff, "Okay, how do you two know each other?"

"The last time I took Jared to hospital, Tom was his doctor. He helped me fight against Jeff. But as I said before, Jeff won."

Tom nods, "He's too good a lawyer, we had no chance... At least this time he can't sue, seeing as though Chris has been on Jared's emergency contact list since last time."

"Yeah," I cut in softly, "But Jeff is a calculating cold-hearted bastard, who would do anything to get his way. There are often accusations that Jeff uses threats to win juries over, but it can never be proven. We just have to get Jared away from him long enough for us to piece together the whole case – Tom, you have the photographic evidence from last time?"

"Yeah," he nods slowly, "Why?"

"We're going to need solid proof to take before the judge. Meanwhile, Jared is going to stay with me, Chris, you're joining." I pause as the waiter nods.

"Yeah, I hate my job anyway, been thinking of quitting for ages."

"Good, okay... I'm going to give a call to one of my buddies in the police department; he'll meet us at my place and start a proper investigation. If we get any disruptions from Jeff, we'll deal with it."

At Tom's wide-eyed glance, Mike chuckles, "Oh, and did I mention Jenny's a lawyer?"

♥

"You think I'm weak," Jared murmurs softly as I tuck the blanket around him.

"No, quite the opposite actually."

"You wouldn't be wrong," he whispers as though I hadn't spoken. "I am weak. I'm pathetic. I know I am."

"Why would you even think that?"

He lets out a bitter laugh, "I live with a man who hits me when the food's too salty; it doesn't get much more pathetic than that."

I reach down, ignoring his flinch, and brush the hair from his forehead, "You're not pathetic. You just had some shit thrown at you that no one should have to face. And, you don't live with him, you lived with him. You're not going back there."

Jared swallows thickly, turning his head away, "You know what the last guy who said that to me did?"

"I'm not like him. I'm not going to hurt you."

"Oh, no. It never starts off as hurting me. It starts off as a game, just playful fooling around. That is, until I do something that needs to be punished. Oh, and god forbid I ever fight back – that's when it gets really fun."

"You could punch me in the face right now, and I swear to you, I wouldn't feel any inclination to punish you. I'd be hurt, sure. But that would be the extent of it."

Jared lets out a soft sigh, turning his gaze up to the ceiling. "I've tried to get out before, it's impossible. He's never going to let me go."

"Hey," I murmur softly, waiting until he meets my eyes. "I'm not going to let him touch you again."

"You can't promise that..." he whispers, "You don't even know me."

"I know enough."

♥

"Hey, man," Chris greets with a lazy smile from the porch, "You have an awesome place."

I grin proudly, "Yeah, took me ages to find, and it's a bit far from the city – long drive to work – but it's worth it to have all this space."

"Yeah, I hear you. You know what would make this even better?"

"What?"

A smirk spreads across his lips, "A coupl'a beers and a barbeque."

I roll my eyes at him, "I can do the beers, the barbeque you can forget. There's stuff in the kitchen, help yourself. I made Jared some soup earlier, and I ain't hungry."

"Hey, how come he gets special treatment?" he teases with a grin.

"Because, he's adorable you're just fugly, dude."

"Fuck you, asshole," he shoots back good naturedly, "I know I'm a charmer – all the ladies say so."
He takes a swig at his beer and his face grows serious, "So, what did your cop buddy say? He interrogated me for, like, an hour, man. Is that normal?"

"Yeah, he's just trying to collect as much evidence as possible. He's taken the photographs, DNA samples and statements from Mike and Tom, and is trying to get the case to the Crown Prosecution Service – it's the higher court regarding marital abuse situations."

"And then Jeff will be behind bars?"

"Well, that's what everyone's hoping for. But it might be several weeks before the full case is heard, and even then, we don't know what the outcome will be. For now, I have Rick – he's my police contact – ensuring that one of Jeff's bail conditions is going to be that he stays away from Jared during the time leading up to the trial."

"You do know he's not going to pay much attention to a tiny detail like that?"

A grin spreads across my lips, "Oh, yeah, I'm counting on it." Chris raises his eyebrow at me and I slip my hand into my pocket, pulling out a small camera. "All we need is a photo of Jeff disobeying his bail requirements, and we're a step up in the court's sympathy... Plus, then I get to punch him and not get in trouble."

Chris taps his beer against mine with a growing smile, "I like the way you think."

♥

"Hey..." I murmur softly, stepping into the room. "What are you drawing?"

To my surprise, he blushes, hiding it behind his back and scowling, "Nothing."

Huffing disbelievingly, I meet his gaze, "Nothing, huh?"

He lets out a soft sigh, "When can I get out of bed?"

I know he's just changing the topic, but I humour him anyway. "Whenever you feel up to it, just... take it easy for a while, yeah?"

Beginning to sit up, he winces, clutching at the duvet. Instantly ducking down to take his arm around my shoulders, I help him up, "There you go, kid. Take it easy."

Then I realise that he's only in boxers. His sleep-warm skin presses against me, my fingers sliding over his waist as I stable him. Shoving back the awareness, I pull him closer, "You okay?"

"Yeah," he nods, leaning against me, letting me take some of his weight for the first time. I look away to hide my pleased smile, only to spot Chris in the doorway, grinning at me.

♥

That night, after Jared's fallen asleep and I've tugged the blanket up to his chin, I press a soft kiss to his forehead. Just as I've turning to leave, I catch sight of his sketchbook peeking out. Biting my lip guiltily, I reach out, flipping to the end.

And that's me, staring back from the soft paper. My breath escapes as my finger slide along the soft strokes. He's drawn me to look so beautiful. I can barely believe that it is me. Then I realise with a jolt that this sketch is alive.

Just like the earlier pieces of work.

Jared's beginning to live again.

I sit there on the floor, grinning like a goofy idiot, but not caring in the slightest because I can hear Jared's soft, even breaths behind me, and he's here and he's safe and he's drawn me and I think he's going to be okay.

-

Jared:

"Jared?" a voice calls, and I jerk, stirring from my dreams of empty houses.

"Come on, boy, open your eyes."

My heart sinks when I realise who it is.

"Jared!"

I slowly open my eyes, staring up at the ceiling.

"Jared, listen to me, boy. Stop this foolish nonsense at once! Come home, Jared. I miss you."

I continue to gaze blankly up at the ceiling.

His voice rises, "Jared, look at me! You stupid boy! You're nothing without me! You wouldn't be alive if it weren't for me! You owe me!"

"He owes you nothing." My head snaps around, towards Jensen, who is busy clicking away at his camera. At Jeff's stunned expression, Jensen smirks, "What? You really think I'd let you hurt him again? Thanks for cementing our case that you're a complete psycho, Jeff."

"You – you asshole!" Jeff snarls, climbing through the window, "You're just a rookie, Jensen! You really think you're going to be able to take me in court? I've gotten people off for doing far worse."

When Jensen just smiles back, I want to yell at him for being so unafraid. Doesn't he know what Jeff is capable of? "See, that's the thing, Jeff. You've gotten sloppy. Your ego is your downfall. You win all these grand cases, but when it's closer to home, you have no ground to stand on, you've made too many foolish mistakes – never covering your tracks, coming here – and you know it. All that could save you is Jared specifically standing up in court and saying that you are a loving, caring husband, which I can assure you, he would never do."

"Fuck you, Jared's mine, mine to hurt and mine to fuck," Jeff snarls, shoving Jensen, and I stumble to my feet, not wanting Jensen to get injured – anything but that. But then Chris is there, getting between the two, slamming Jeff back against the wall.

Jeff's fist pulls back, crashing into Chris' face, and then they're on the ground, fist flying, insults being spitted, backs slamming. I want to say that I'll go with him, that I'll go back. I don't want Chris to get hurt. I don't want him and Jensen to suffer because of my own mistakes.

But it's over before I can do anything, Jeff stumbling to his feet, muttering expletives, and disappearing from the room. And, in the wake of the slamming of the front door, there's only silence.

And then, to my surprise, Jensen grinning, "We got it."

"Got what?"

He waves the camera happily, "Another piece of evidence to add to the overflowing pot. Chris, you okay?"

There's a grunt as the man heaves himself up, glaring over at Jensen and clutching his nose. "Next time, I get to hold the camera and you get to be punching bag."

"Aww, you big baby," Jensen teases, "I'll get you some ice. Jay, you doing okay?"

"I... yeah... what?"

They grin at me – Chris with a wince – "We're going to win the trial."

-

♥

Jensen:

"No, Momma, everything's fine. I just needed to take some time off; I've... Momma, just listen to-"

I let out a soft sigh and drop my head down onto the kitchen table. “Yes, I’ve been eating, just... just let me talk, okay? Yeah, something came up... a friend of mine is having some trouble... yeah, of course I’m advocating for him... No drugs, no, nothing like that... but I just... that’s why I’ve taken some leave. I have to help him win.”

I head over to get out some coffee, pouring some for each of the others as well. “Okay, yeah, I will... Love you, Momma. Yeah... yeah, Bye...”

Groaning as I inhale the warm caffeine, I holler to the back room, “Chris, coffee!”

I get a groan and a ‘Fuck you!’ in return, grinning at the man’s predictability. He’s worse than me in the mornings. I grab the other mug and head towards the porch, where Jared is sitting on the stairs.

“Hey,” I murmur quietly, lowering myself down beside him and handing him the coffee.

“Thanks...” He whispers, sending me a small smile and causing my insides to tumble stupidly.

“You’re welcome.” He’s only wearing boxers, and my eyes slide over his miles of bare skin. “Aren’t you cold?”

As if triggered by my words, a shiver races through him, and I chuckle softly, holding my breath as I dare to slide my arm around him, tugging him those last few inches until he’s pressed snugly against my side. “This okay?”

He’s silent for a long while, staring down into his cup of coffee. Then he slowly turns, setting it down beside him. Tilting into my arms, he presses his face against my neck, and I feel him inhaling deeply. My arm tightens around him, hugging him firmly against him, my head resting on his crown of hair as I sip at my coffee. His hand reaches out, intercepting my mug’s route, dragging it to his mouth. Laughing affectionately, I stroke my hand gently up and down his side, “Coffee thief.”

The moment is more intimate than it should be – the two of us, sharing coffee, Jared tucked against my side, his cold nose pressing occasionally at my pulse-point – but, as I hook my ankle around his, I realise that there’s no way anything that has to do with Jared in only boxers could not be intimate.

“It’s going to be okay,” I whisper softly, pressing a kiss to his brow.

♥

“We’re trying to get him to settle for a ten year sentence, but he’s standing solidly on his ‘not guilty’ stance.”

“What happens if he doesn’t settle?”

“That’s when the real court comes into play, and all the evidence gets shown. I’d been hoping to avoid it,” I glance towards the bedroom, where Jared is sound asleep. “He’ll have to testify.”

“He’s stronger than we know, Jensen,” Chris murmurs softly, shoulder nudging mine gently.

“Yeah... I know... he just... he shouldn’t have to be...” I get to my feet, turning away, “I’m just going to check on him.”

Chris is silent as I leave the room; shivering slightly in my boxers, my feet padding softly on the wooden floorboards. "Hey," Jared whispers as I enter: startling me into stubbing my toe against the cupboard. The hopping around obviously leads me to tripping, and I land in a heap at the foot of his bed, letting out a low groan at the sound of Jared's huff of laughter. It is so totally worth it, though.

His foot nudges me gently, "You alive?"

"No," I grunt, hefting myself up an elbow, gazing up at him and trying to scowl. "Thought you were asleep."

"I was..." he murmurs, eyes sliding off to the side. That's when I notice his sweaty face, bangs in his eyes, hair haphazard, cheeks damp and too flushed to be natural.

"You okay?"

"Yeah, just a stupid nightmare, 's all."

"About Jeff?"

He winces, gaze dropping to his lap. "No. Don't worry about it. Just something that happened long ago."

I take a hunch. "Your family?"

All his walls slam down, his body turning away. "Goodnight, Jensen."

"Was there an accident?" I probe gently, reaching out to drop a hand on his shoulder. "Jay?"

"It doesn't matter," he mutters, "Just drop it."

"Jay... I know what it's like to lose someone... My dad died three years ago... he had a heart attack.... You can talk to me..."

"They're not dead, Jensen."

"What?"

He's silent for a long time, only our breathing audible."

Then he inhales deeply, "Last thing I heard from them was 'You're making your mother cry! Get the fuck out of my sight!'"

"Jay..." I slide my hand gently down his arm, slipping my fingers in his, "I'm sorry."

"They were strong Christians... I should have known better than to tell them, I guess."

I gently pull him into a hug and whisper softly, "I'm so sorry, babe."

We both freeze at the same time.

"Fuck, I'm sorry, Jay... It just... I mean..."

He shakes his head and sags into my arms. "That's the first time I've been called that."

"s the first time I've called someone that."

"Can I call you Jenny?"

"No," I growl.

"Jenny-bean?"

Another growl.

"Jen."

My snarl dies on my lips, and I laugh into his hair, "Yeah, that one I'll be okay with.

"Will you stay?" he whispers softly before stumbling, "I mean, if you... you wanted to... I... never mind."

With a smile, I slip under the covers, pulling him back into my arms, "Night, babe."

"Still feels kinda weird," he murmurs back. "Might take a while before I get used to it."

I rest my cheek against his head and let out a soft sigh, sinking into the mattress.

Jared falls asleep quickly, his breath evening out and his body growing slack in my arms, and I heft him closer, brushing a kiss over his forehead.

Chris emerges a few moments later, smiling gently down at us for a few seconds before he remembers he's supposed to be butch, then he waggles his eyebrows and leers, but the damage is already done – he's such a softy.

I flip him the bird and grin up at him.

♥

"Soooo..." Chris drawls when he wakes the next morning – midday – and grins down at me. "There anything you want to tell me?"

"Fuck off, Kane."

"Ouch, you wound me!" but he looks anything but.

"Just..." I reach out, grabbing him by his t-shirt, lowering my voice, "Just keep it down, man. There's nothing there yet, I don't want your moronic jokes scaring him off. This means a lot to me."

"Okay, okay," he raises his hands in surrender, "No more jokes, got it."

♥

We settle into a fairly weird routine, but it works for us. Jared sketches – a lot, heading down to the foot of the garden, sitting beneath the old oak; Chris has a job in the bar just up the road, and he

disappears there during the evening, leaving the house to us. That's usually when we settle in from of the television, comfortably close to each other, and sometimes, if I'm lucky, he falls asleep on me. Since that night, I spend every night in his bed, waking to have him curled around me.

He's what I've been missing all my life.

And Chris – Chris is like the annoying friend I never even knew I needed, and he's like a protective mother bear to Jared, and it's clear just how much he loves the kid.

The best part is that the more time we spend together, the more relaxed Jared gets, the more likely he is to initiate contact, the less likely he is to flinch. Each tiny step forward makes it all worth everything.

I love him. I really do.

♥

"Jen..." he whispers softly, his hands sliding over mine, halting my stroking motion down his chest.

"Yeah, babe?"

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"Never asking for more."

"Babe..." I breathe softly, pressing chaste kisses down neck, "Even if we never do anything more than this, I don't care. You're more than that to me."

"Jen," he turns in my arms, his hazel eyes gazing up at me. "You should leave me."

"What?"

"You and Chris... you guys are... You don't deserve all this crap. Just... take me to a motel somewhere – I won't go back to Jeff this time and I have some money so I'll be okay. And... and then you can go to work again and Chris will-"

"-Jay, just stop. Listen to me, I want to be here. So does Chris. You mean a lot to us, babe," I smile sadly as his scepticism, stroking the hair from his eyes as I whisper, "It's true. You're amazing, Jared. You make everything so worth it, I'd do it a million times over if I have to."

He shakes his head, his gaze fixed on a spot at my collar, "You're wrong, Jen. I'm not worth it."

"Babe," I pull him into a tight hug, "Just trust me on this. I want you here. I want to wake up with you every morning; I want to see you hiding behind the cushions during a horror movie..." He huffs a soft laugh, his breath tickling my ear, and I hug him that tiny bit tighter. "Seriously, though, I don't want you to even think of leaving, not unless it's because you're sick of my company, you hear?"

Nodding slowly, he pulls away, biting his lip.

"Hey," I whisper, tugging him in for a soft kiss – just the barest brush of lips – before pulling away, "Let's go check whether Chris is awake enough to join us to the beach, how's that sound?"

♥

The trial arrives before we even know it, and everyone starts stumbling around like headless chickens as we begin to get ready. Rick and me go over all the details meticulously, scraping through every inch of evidence, solidifying the case and preparing for any curveballs thrown our way.

But the worst, even above sorting through the photographs of the abuse, is preparing Jared for his testimony. As soon as we begin running through questions, Jared starts to lose colour, his eyes losing their spark and his body beginning to tremble. It's so hard to be a lawyer in front of him – telling him that his emotions will instil support in the jury – and so often our sessions end with me dragging him into my arms, wishing I could just drag him away from everything.

And then there's the uncertainty regarding the quickly approaching confrontation with Jeff. His presence is going to derail Jared even more.

All I can hope is that Jared's strong enough to get through it all. And if he can't – I'll be here to pick up the pieces.

♥

"I love you," I whisper for the first time, curling around his shaking body.

"You shouldn't," he chokes back. "Don't."

Gently brushing a kiss over his lips, I murmur with a smile, "I do... More than anything..."

"Don't..." he pleads softly, beginning to slip away, and I drag him back against my chest, fitting my knees behind his legs.

"Shhh, babe. It's okay... just sleep. It's going to be okay."

-

Jared:

The trial lasts forever.

Mike, Tom, Jensen, Chris, others, they all head up to the front, talking – talking about me. About my injuries, my abuse history, my isolation thanks to Jeff's rules, my whole life spewed out for everyone to see.

I wonder what they're all thinking – pathetic, weakling, can't even get himself out of an abusive situation, doesn't have a family, not worthy of love – I don't want to know.

But Jensen's always there, his eyes soft and gentle, soothing me without uttering a word.

Then it's my turn.

Telling them how I told my family I was gay. How they shouted; how I ran. How I ended up on a bus to nowhere. How I ended up on the streets. How I was taken in by Jeff. How he seemed so kind and caring. How he called my family to try find out more, but returned, shaking his head. How amazing Jeff was as a lover. How well he looked after me. How proud he was, taking me to his business parties, showing me off to his friends. How that all changed. How he wanted me to stop looking for a job. How everything started to fall apart after that.

How much I loved him.

How much it hurt when he patched me up afterwards, gentle words and soft kisses over the bruises.

When I'm finally allowed to sit down, I'm barely holding myself together. Jensen makes his way towards me, reaching out to squeeze my hand, his eyes conveying so much affection and emotion, that it nearly makes me cry.

Then he heads back – the riveting, articulate lawyer.

And then it's Jeff's turn.

He tells a completely different story, portraying me as the damaged sub who gets off on pain, and how much he hated hurting me, but did it because he loved me and because he could never refuse me when I begged.

When he continues, oozing with a Dominant's knowledge, playing the role seamlessly.

But Jensen steps forward, drawing up the photographic evidence and points out that dom-sub relationships should cause no lasting harm or excess pain.

Jeff slams that down by giving a rueful shrug, stating that just because he's a bad dom, doesn't mean he should go to jail for it.

The room falls silent, and I can see by the curl of Jeff's lip that he knows he's got a foot in.

For the first time, I see Jensen's certainty flicker, but then he shakes his head and smiles, "Your honour, I have one last piece of evidence that I would like to show. I had police clearance to record this, and this will disprove Jeff's admirably inventive stance, and show that he violated his bail-requirements during the past two months."

The screen is taken over by a video of a dim room, and it takes me a while to realise that it's Jensen's bedroom, and that's me being spoken to.

"Jared, look at me! You stupid boy! You're nothing without me! You wouldn't be alive if it weren't for me! You owe me!"

"He owes you nothing." The camera zooms in on Jeff's stunned face. "What? You really think I'd let you hurt him again? Thanks for cementing our case that you're a complete psycho, Jeff."

"You asshole!" Jeff snarls, climbing through the window, "You're just a rookie, Jensen! You really think you're going to be able to take me in court? I've gotten people off for doing far worse."

“See, that’s the thing, Jeff. You’ve gotten sloppy. Your ego is your downfall. You win all these grand cases, but when it’s closer to home, you have no ground to stand on, you’ve made too many foolish mistakes – never covering your tracks, coming here – and you know it. All that could save you is Jared specifically standing up in court and saying that you are a loving, caring husband, which I can assure you, he would never do.”

“Fuck you, Jared’s mine, mine to hurt and mine to fuck,” Jeff snarls, getting closer, the camera jolting around, the room spinning on the screen. It levels out in time to see Jeff’s fist slamming into Chris’ face.

It clicks off, and Jensen turns around. “I think that pretty much displays your view of Jared. ‘Yours to hurt and yours to sleep with’. Anything else you want to add to that, Jeff?”

Jeff just remains silent, his face a sickly shade of gray, and Jensen nods, “I thought not.”

♥

And then we wait.

♥

“We find the defendant, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, guilty. We hereby sentence him to ten years imprisonment for repeated sexual assault under the Penal Code 262, another five for sexual battery and, as penalty for blatantly disobeying the bail requirements, he receives two more years, and he will be registered as a sex offender.”

There’s silence for a stunned second, and then I hear Chris’ loud, whoop from behind me, and a grin spreads over my lips as Jensen throws his arms around me, hoisting me up in his excitement. “We won, babe,” he whispers breathlessly. “You’re free.”

♥

THE END