

*A Sip...*



*A Torquere Press Short*

***Destiny Goes Spare***  
***By TC Blue***

Raj was grinning as he sank the eight ball yet again, though this time he set the pool cue he'd been using on the table and stepped back, finishing the last swallow of beer in his glass.

"Right, then. Guess you'll owe me one next time, mate." He grinned at his long-time friend Greg as he set his empty down and took his jacket from where it had been resting over the back of a chair.

Greg blinked. “What, you’re leaving? Come on, man, it’s your birthday! I thought we were gonna... celebrate!”

Raj snorted, though he was careful to do it silently. He knew exactly how Greg wanted to ‘celebrate,’ after all, and while Raj wouldn’t have said no to a little bout of fox-in-the-henhouse - or roosterhouse, in Greg’s case -- even four months earlier, there was no way. He’d found his destiny, after all, and he’d be damned if he was going to do anything to screw that up. Which fucking Greg’s undoubtedly tight little ass would absolutely accomplish.

“Sorry, but Andrew’s got something planned. Told you that when you called this afternoon, yah?” Because he had. He knew he had. Raj had a very clear memory of telling Greg that they could meet at the Dew Drop for a couple games and a pint or two, but that he’d be leaving by seven. And here it was, seven fifteen, and Greg was acting shocked. Silly little queen. Raj’s good friend, but still a silly little queen.

Greg snorted, the sound somehow delicate, but then again, so was Greg. “Oh, *Andrew*,” the guy said, obviously sneering but not enough to have Raj objecting. Greg had learned that lesson very well in the first month after Raj’s fateful meeting with his future. “It’s always Andrew. I swear, Raj, it’s like he has you under some kind of spell!”

Well, and Andrew did, Raj figured. A spell made up of being bloody well adorable, smart, funny, and never underestimating Raj’s intelligence the way so many people seemed to. Of course, Andrew’s huge sodding cock didn’t hurt, either. Or not in the bad way, Raj reminded himself with a smirk.

“Right,” he answered, “Well, just call me bloody Darrin, then, because I’m bewitched.” He rolled his eyes at Greg’s baffled expression. “*Bewitched*? American TV show, 1964 through 1972?” Raj snorted at the even more obvious lack of comprehension on his friend’s face. “It’s your own bloody country’s pop cultural history. Why do I know this when you don’t? Samantha Stevens? Tabitha?”

“Uh... come on, Raj,” Greg pleaded, as though Raj hadn’t said a word. “One more game. I’ll buy you birthday shots, even.” And that sweet little grin was almost tempting, but Raj knew exactly what would happen if he gave in.

One game would lead to three, and shots would become more shots, and when Greg finally got up the nerve to proposition him, Raj would be just drunk enough to hit the poor guy... then there would police, if not jail, and Andrew would be incredibly... not pleased. And as Raj was determined to have a *happy* birthday, that wouldn’t do. At all.

“Sorry,” he said again, although he wasn’t, really. “You’re a good bloke, but Andrew... well, you know how it goes, yah? G’night, mate.” Because he was for damned sure going home and getting whatever the hell surprise Andrew had for him. With any luck, it would involve rubber sheets and an entire bottle of oil. Like a grown up version of a Slip’n’Slide, but with nudity and some sort of sex.

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The party was going well, Andrew thought with a good bit of pride. And it should be. God knew he'd been planning it for well over a month. Since he'd finally given in and accepted that Raj had been absolutely right when Raj said Andrew would love him. Since Andrew had proven himself right when he'd agreed that first night, too.

It still struck him as oddly sudden, sometimes. Mostly when he woke up to find Raj stretched out next to him, those long limbs sprawled everywhere, taking up far more room than should have been possible. Then it struck him as perfectly right because Raj usually mumbled something or other and wrapped around Andrew's body, and it always felt... easy. Peaceful. No trauma or drama or strain. No urge to escape that hold unless the alarm was going off, ordering one or the other of them to work.

And Raj was twenty-one. That magical age that meant Andrew could stop feeling slightly dirty about the things they did together. Sure, eighteen was legal, but twenty-one... well, maybe it was just him, Andrew realized, but twenty-one and thirty-four just felt... better than twenty and thirty-four. Which was part of the reason Andrew had gone to so much effort to make the party as special as he could. He'd even e-mailed all Raj's out of town friends.

He didn't have half a clue as to who most of them were, but they were all in the 'friends' portion of Raj's contact list, so he figured he'd get to know them eventually, assuming they showed up. It shouldn't be that difficult, either, as there had only been ten. Even with the short notice, Andrew hoped a few might make it.

For the moment, the party consisted mostly of a few of the lawyers from Andrew's firm and their significant others, along with possibly twenty or so of Raj's very colorful local friends and acquaintances. He was still surprised that Raj's drinking and pool buddy hadn't shown yet, but Andrew couldn't bring himself to be upset about it. Not even slightly. He'd seen the way Greg watched Raj, after all.

In fact, Andrew was entirely sure that he might be jealous... or would be if he didn't trust Raj so much. But he did trust his lover. Had from the get-go, no matter how things had gone with his last relationship. Raj wasn't James, and that wasn't something Andrew ever needed to remind himself of. In fact, one thing Andrew was certain of was that... if Raj ever felt the urge to 'have a bit of a rough and tumble,' as Raj put it, Raj would say so. *Before* doing it, so they could fight and fuss and then talk it out. Figure out why, and whether it was something that had to happen, and whether it would mean breaking up or just... broadening their horizons. He'd made the same vow to Raj. And that... well, that was better than any promises of eternal fidelity could ever be. Whether it ever came to that or not, it was... easier to accept the possibility, with having talked about it.

Andrew laughed as Raj sauntered over and kissed him lightly, those blue eyes just shining at him, glowing almost. "You are a sodding brilliant boyfriend, Drew," Raj murmured, kissing him again and adding a grope of Andrew's ass to the mix. "Thanks for this, love. I knew you had

something up your tailored-bloody-sleeve, but I never expected... *this!* I've made a mental note, however, that 'surprise' means surprise *party*, so don't think you'll be pulling the wool again, yeah?"

"Understood, baby. I just wanted to do something nice. It's your twenty-first, you know?" Then Andrew grinned and he figured it looked just as suggestive as it felt, because Raj was smirking in that way he had. "And just so we're clear, Raj? It's not wool I'm thinking about pulling right now."

Raj grinned and leaned in again, though this time he bypassed Andrew's mouth, and Andrew shivered when he felt those soft lips against his ear. "Pulling... sucking... whatever you're up for, love," Raj murmured, gripping Andrew's ass hard enough that he yelped. "Think we can steal away for a bit, I do. Master bath, five minutes." And before Andrew even knew what was happening, Raj chuckled and was gone, moving towards the table of catered finger foods against the wall.

"Shit. Just... shit," Andrew grumbled, hunching a little in what he was sure was a useless effort to hide his sudden and rampant erection. "Bastard does that on purpose." Still, it was far better than Raj *not* doing it, and it was Raj's birthday so Andrew figured he could let it slide. Slip. Whatever. "Christ, I'm just making it worse." Of course, that was even more reason to get himself up to the damned bathroom, wasn't it?

He managed it by ignoring everything going on around him, just sliding along the wall to the stairs and then calmly climbing them, like he'd just forgotten something and was going to retrieve it, though Jake Armstead's "Subtle, Andrew... good thing your boy doesn't sit in when you're in court," as he passed the man sort of implied that he'd failed. Then again, it was his house, and he could do whatever he wanted. Even with the entire first floor full of guests.

Yeah.

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Raj stood, drink in hand, having a half-assed conversation with some bloke from Andrew's office who'd been damned civil on the two occasions Raj had accompanied Drew to work affairs. Raj thought his name was Mitchell or Marshall or... something, but he couldn't quite be arsed to care. Not when he was having so much fun watching Andrew make his bumbling and obvious way up the stairs, in any case.

His lover was too bloody adorable for words, Raj thought, while Mitchell-Marshall went on about an exhibit he'd seen at the British Museum in London a few years earlier. Then the man started in on some artist Raj had never even heard of.

Fortunately, Raj saw his artist friend Joubert wandering across the room, some pink and fizzy drink held in his hand, so he waved the bloke over. "Joubert," he announced after receiving the obligatory birthday wishes, "This gent works with Andrew. He's a big fan of... Meerschaum

Muselix, was it?" He gave Mitchell-Marshall a grin. "Joubert paints, mate. Now, have at it. I'm off to get my end away."

Unlike Andrew, Raj didn't much care who knew what he was going to do. Thus he didn't bother with being stealthy, or even trying to hide the obvious bulge in his jeans. He just wove his way through the people in the house, calling out a few "be back soon" type comments, and then he ran up the stairs. He slipped into the master bedroom and locked the door behind him before making his way around the bed to the bathroom door.

"H'lo, love," he purred, then laughed when Andrew grabbed him and spun him to lean against the vanity. "Well, well. Someone's ready to have a go, yah?"

"Ready to have a come," Andrew corrected, those soft, manicured hands already in his pants, Raj noticed with a grin. "More specifically... your come in particular."

Seconds later, Raj was staring down at the top of Andrew's head, his fingers buried deep in soft, dark hair as Andrew's lips closed around him. "Love it when you talk like a stuck up prig, pet," he groaned, only to have any further words halted in their tracks by wet and heat and suction, Andrew's tongue sliding, swirling, stroking his already pulsing shaft.

He closed his eyes in the hopes that denying himself the sight of his lover -- his destiny -- swallowing him whole, those pretty lips turning redder, becoming just a bit puffy, would slow the inevitable conclusion that was already raging, racing from the base of his spine to his balls, but it wasn't to be. The darkness Raj sought was broken by the memory of exactly how Andrew looked on his knees. Then he heard the subtle snick-snick-snick of Andrew's zipper slowly being drawn down, and that was it.

"Drew," he grunted, holding his love's head still, fingers tight against Andrew's scalp as he pushed himself in and out, taking Andrew's mouth, his throat. And "Drew..." again, more of a whimper as he spilled hard, cock and balls throbbing with release, shooting long, rough streams of spunk that Andrew accepted with his usual pleased moan.

"Bloody fucking hell," Raj grunted, pulling himself from Andrew's laving tongue, from his hot mouth. "C'mon, love. Up you go. Give and take and all that rot, yeah?" And Andrew was laughing as he stood and kissed him, sharing Raj's own flavor with him. "C'mon... want to give you a hand, Drew."

With that, Raj turned them both, then spun Andrew to face the mirror. He pressed himself against his love's back, one hand sliding around Andrew's side to rest on that hard stomach, holding the man's shirt tails up out of the way while he wrapped the fingers of his other hand around Andrew's beautiful cock.

"Give me it, Drew," Raj murmured, watching their reflections in the mirror and giving Andrew a long, slow, tight stroke. "Want to see you come for me, love. And later, when everyone's gone, pet? I'm going to suck you dry, then fuck your tight, hot ass until you scream." And that was all it took, because Andrew's face grew tight, eyes screwing shut, mouth falling open, and his love's

cock pulsed hard, throbbed mightily, then shot wild, rapid spurts over Raj's fingers and into the sink.

Raj smirked, pulling his hand back and licking the viscous fluids from his own fingers.

"Mmmm... think that'll hold you, love, or do we need to go again? Doubt they've missed us yet, after all." Because it hadn't been more than five minutes. Maybe six. They'd both been on edge, after all.

God, he still loved seeing Andrew blush, not that it happened as often as it had in the very beginning. That just made it all the more precious when it did. "I, uh... I think we're the hosts. And you're the guest of honor. And... God, Raj, how do you get to me so easily? We should... Shit, we should go back down."

"Down the stairs or on each other?" Raj demanded, kissing Andrew's cheek, because it was just too much fun to tease his love. Even so, he wiped off Andrew's spent cock carefully before tucking it back into those open pants. "And I get to you, Drew, because you love me. Which is only fair, because it's entirely mutual. Would be bloody awful otherwise, yeah? Now, go. Off with you. I'll clean up here and be there in a bit. Bit more subtle-like than trailing right behind."

One more kiss, this time to Andrew's lips and slower, soft and sweet, and then Andrew was fastened and tucked and presentable and gone. With come on his breath, Raj realized, but he didn't call Andrew back. Instead, he rinsed the last of the mess from the sink and his own hand, then wiped his cock clean and assembled himself carefully. Brushed his teeth and hair. Gave himself a wicked grin in the mirror.

"Time to rejoin the masses," he told his reflection, still smirking. He'd have his private party with Andrew later. This brief interlude had just been an appetizer, so to speak. For Andrew, anyway.

That thought had him chuckling all the way from the bedroom to the living room downstairs, where it faded with the last words he'd expected to hear, in the very last voice he ever would have imagined in Andrew's house.

Bloody hell.

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Andrew had seen the new arrivals as soon as he'd reached the bottom of the stairs. Of course he had; they were damned hard to miss, what with both of them being tall -- the man maybe an inch or so taller than Andrew and Raj, and the woman only a few inches shorter. They had that cultured look, like they'd just stepped out of an issue of *Fox & Hound* or some other hoity-toity magazine Andrew would never think of buying. Even dressed casually, like the rest of the guests, they looked... yeah. Cultured.

They hadn't looked out of place with the lawyers and artists and bohemian types, exactly, but... different. And then one of Andrew's coworkers pointed him out and for whatever reason,

Andrew was suddenly nervous. Maybe because the way they were walking towards him seemed so purposeful. Then “Well. Robbing the cradle, you git?” the man said, and Andrew heard the accent and gave the man a good, hard look.

Older than him, Andrew decided, though not by much. A year or two, maybe. Sort of... what Raj would call ‘roughly hewn’, because the man’s features were slightly coarse, but in the good way. He was obviously fit, and clearly didn’t mind showing it because the man was wearing some damned tight jeans and an equally form-fitting T-shirt under an open button down shirt. Including the designer boots on his feet, Andrew figured Mister Englishman was wearing close to a thousand bucks, and that wasn’t including the watch.

The woman, on the other hand, seemed somehow familiar, though Andrew was sure he would have remembered her if they’d met before. She looked to be maybe thirty or so, with soft blue eyes and refined features. Slender and toned in a very feminine way, she had nicely arched brows that seemed natural since they weren’t pencil thin and perfect. Dark blonde hair fell in waves past her shoulders. She wore three gold bangles on one wrist and a plain gold band on her left hand. Her strappy heels and simple red dress screamed subtle wealth and made the man’s outfit seem almost vulgar by comparison.

“I’m sorry?” Andrew said, because he’d obviously missed something. “What?” Then the woman laughed and the sound was so familiar, so... Jesus. She sounded like Raj. Even looked like him, which was strange. Raj hadn’t mentioned having a sister, much less a sister with a rude... husband? Well, whatever.

The woman shook her head and gave the man a look that seemed affectionate but annoyed. “Honestly, Archie. It isn’t as though he’s a doddering, drooling old windbag. And it’s terribly poor form to insult a man in his own home, especially before you’ve been properly introduced. Not that you’ve ever cared before, of course. Sarah Ashburn,” she announced, turning a slight smile to Andrew, but far from relaxing him, it only made him more tense. Christ, he was meeting Raj’s family. His sister and... whoever the rude bastard was.

“Andrew Kennedy,” he answered, shaking her hand carefully. “Welcome to my home.” He really hoped it sounded more like a statement than a question.

The man frowned. “I suppose it’s too much to ask that you’re one of *the* Kennedys.” And, oh, that just got Andrew’s back up.

“Maybe a few centuries back,” he said, trying not to sound as pissed off as he was rapidly becoming, “but not closely enough to presume on the relationship, if that’s what you mean.”

The woman, Sarah, smiled and shook her head. “Ignore Archie, Mr. Kennedy. Ever since he married well, he’s been insufferable. And more class-conscious than he has any right to be.”

“Sarah,” the man growled, but Sarah only rolled her eyes.

“So, uh... I’m guessing you’re here for Raj’s party?” Andrew tried, because if these people really were related to his lover, he didn’t want to start fighting with either of them, though the sister seemed okay. He still wasn’t clear on how Archie was involved, though. He just hoped to God the man was a cousin or something, rather than a sibling.

“Shall I assume that Roger hasn’t mentioned us then?” Sarah laughed again. “He can be remarkably close-mouthed, that boy. Ah, well. We’ll soon put that to rights. Is he here?” And good Lord. There was no right way of saying ‘he’s still upstairs because I just blew him, and then he jerked me off, and he’ll be right down’, was there?

“Uh, yeah. He’s, uh... you know, he didn’t tell me he had a sis...” he stammered just as Archie suddenly shouted across the room and everything went... still.

“Roger Randall Ashburn! Explain yourself, young man!” Archie demanded, arms crossed, eyes narrow as he glared.

“...ter...” Andrew finished lamely before turning to see that Raj had indeed rejoined the party.

“Oh, bloody hell,” Raj said, looking as panicked as he sounded. “Mum. And Dad. You’re here. Uh, together. Bloody... h’lo.” God help him, Andrew thought. Just... God help him. He hadn’t just met Raj’s sister and whoever. He’d met Raj’s *parents*. And Raj’s father, at least, already hated him. Fuck.

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“I can’t believe this,” Andrew stormed -- quietly, because Raj’s parents were in the dining room, which was empty since the party had come to a screeching halt. “What the fuck, Raj? Those are your parents? They’re like... fuck, your dad is *my* age! And your mom... how the fuck can Sarah be your mom? Did she have you when she was like... ten? Because this is just... fucking impossible! I don’t... it’s...” He couldn’t even find the words for the world of wrong that had suddenly dropped over his life.

Raj sighed and Andrew seriously wanted to... he didn’t know what. Not hit the man, because he would never do that to someone he loved, but... something.

“Drew... love,” Raj started, and that was enough.

“Don’t ‘Drew-love’ me, damn it! This is... this is fucking insane, Raj! Or... or is this some weird father fixation? Is that why you fell for me so fast? Because you want... ugh, I can’t even say it!” Christ, he felt sick. And kind of betrayed, in a weird sort of way.

“Then don’t!” Raj was finally yelling back, but he wasn’t being quiet about it, which just made Andrew that much more sure that Raj’s parents -- his *parents*, for fuck’s sake -- were going to hear every word. “It’s not got a single thing to do with either of them! I love you because you’re *you*! And I don’t need a bloody father figure! One sodding Dad is all I can take, got it? It’s



hardly as though I was hiding them, is it? Mentioned my Mum and Dad more than once, haven't I? But if I'd known their age would be such a huge bloody issue, I'd have told you!"

Everything Raj was saying made sense. Andrew knew it did. And yet he was still pissed off. He couldn't help it. "Well, you didn't."

Raj growled and suddenly Andrew saw the resemblance to Archie, which didn't help things at all.

"It's hardly the sort of thing that comes up in conversation," Raj snarled, hands clenching into fists at his sides. "You've not mentioned the ages of *your* parents, have you?"

Another point for Raj, which only made things worse. "You should have said," Andrew insisted, though he was starting to feel stupid and stubborn and just plain wrong. Still angry, but... like an angry idiot.

"Said *what*?" Raj snapped, those blue eyes hot and sort of wounded looking, which only made Andrew feel like an even bigger moron. "That my Mum was a rebellious little slut who had me at fifteen? Or that Dad was trying to prove how 'manly' he was when he did the deed? Which one of those wouldn't have had you thinking 'oh, poor Raj with his teenaged parents, he must have had a hard sodding life'? And why does it even matter?"

And just like that, Raj deflated, the anger obviously leaving him completely, leaving behind the hurt look in his eyes. "Never wanted you to pity me, Andrew. And I honestly didn't think it mattered. Mum and her family raised me right. I had a great childhood. Then I came to the States with Dad when I was sixteen so Mum could do some traveling and such, and that was good, too. And then there was you, and I thought... thought I had the best life anyone possibly could. I didn't expect you to go spare on me, though, so..." He sighed. "Never mind. I... I guess I'll talk to you later."

Andrew was still staring like an imbecile when the kitchen door closed behind Raj. He heard Archie's "come on, son, there's a fold-away in my suite" and then the front door was closing. He heard it. And still, he couldn't manage to do more than stand there and blink.

He didn't even know Sarah was still there until she strolled into the kitchen, two tumblers of ice and some amber liquid that looked like Scotch in her hands.

"Well," she said simply, handing him one of the drinks, and yeah. Scotch. He could smell it. "I have to say you've completely bolloxed that up, Andrew. May I call you Andrew? After all, we're almost family, considering."

Andrew took a long, slow sip of the barely chilled liquor. "Considering?" he echoed, still trying to figure out exactly what had just happened. One minute he and Raj had been fighting, and the next... God.

“Considering you’ve been shagging my boy,” Sarah said, and Andrew was almost sure she’d timed her matter-of-fact words with his next sip. Her eyes were sparkling when he stopped spitting Scotch through his nose, in any case. She raised her free hand waving off whatever he might have been about to say, and Andrew realized that was a good thing, since he had no idea of what that would have been.

“Look,” she went on, “I can understand you being a bit shocked. Especially with Archie being such an enormous prat. I used to think his ‘say whatever he thinks’ philosophy was charming, believe it or not. Likely because he was saying everything I wanted to hear, but that’s really rather irrelevant. The truth is, Roger... Raj, I mean... has never been one to do anything he didn’t want to do. And he’s never made any horribly wrong decisions. Unlike several of his cousins.” She smiled. “I suppose I was lucky in that he never got into the sort of trouble he couldn’t get himself out of. Especially with his young men. Boyfriends.”

And Sarah seemed far too comfortable with Raj’s sexuality, Andrew told himself. Far too accepting of the fact that he and Raj were sleeping together. Or had been, because Andrew had no idea of whether they were still seeing each other after the way Raj had... walked away like a wounded puppy. Damn it.

Andrew sighed and took another, longer swallow of Scotch. “You don’t care that he’s gay,” he said after swallowing slowly. “But his father does, right? Thinks I’m corrupting his child?” Because that would explain the man’s immediate hatred, Andrew figured. He could even almost understand. Almost understand it, but he for damned sure couldn’t excuse it.

“Hardly,” Sarah drawled, the stretched word sounding appallingly well bred. “Archie is as gay as you are, which means Roger comes by it honestly, at least. My husband is more concerned that you’re some sort of opportunistic American, to be frank. He would much rather have Roger settle down with some other young Englishman of similar position and income.”

God, he was tired of not knowing what the fuck was going on. Tired of being in the fucking dark, for God’s sake, and Sarah really wasn’t helping. “Huh? Um... Raj works in a hardware store. I don’t know what passes for rich in England, but...”

If Sarah Ashburn laughed at him one more time, Andrew was going to... have another drink, damn it. So he walked out into the dining room, then to the bar that he’d set up for the party, where he grabbed the bottle of Scotch, taking it back to the kitchen with him. He might as well be prepared.

“Okay, what am I being stupid about now?” He sighed and poured for both of them.

“You seem to be a bright man,” she said, still smiling the amused little smile that she shared with Raj. “I believe someone said you’re an attorney.” Andrew nodded slowly. “Did you ever think to do any research on your young lover?”

Well. “I thought about it. Of course I did. But... I didn’t care that much,” Andrew admitted, feeling more idiotic than ever before. “I figured he’d tell me anything I needed to know, you

know? And if I did it and he found out, he would have thought I didn't trust him, and I couldn't take the chance... and now you think I'm a fool, right?"

But Sarah smiled and patted his hand. "Only as much as any man in love is a fool, Andrew. And perhaps I shouldn't be the one to tell you this, but as it's Roger's twenty-first birthday, I believe you have a right to know."

And that didn't sound at all ominous, Andrew thought grimly.

"I'm sure he was going to tell you," Sarah added, though she didn't sound as certain as her words implied, "but... as of this morning, Roger Randall Ashburn became eligible to receive his inheritance from my late Uncle Talbot. Uncle passed away when Roger was ten years old, but he did love my boy. As if Roger was his own, in point of fact. That income has been held in trust ever since, and with careful investments, the initial amount has grown considerably." She sighed. "Archie is rather concerned about our son's two hundred thousand pounds. And fears -- quite reasonably, considering Archie's own moral flexibility -- that someone will take advantage."

Okay, maybe that made sense, though Andrew was still kind of floored by knowing Raj's father was gay. And apparently still married to Sarah, which was none of his business, Andrew reminded himself. Still, it did explain Raj's lack of siblings. But what kind of idiot would think Andrew needed to scam someone for... what? Maybe half a million dollars when all was said and done, though Andrew didn't know the exchange rate at the moment? Not that it wasn't a fair bit of cash, but still. So he asked, then found himself breathing slowly and deeply, just to keep the spots from dancing any faster in front of his eyes.

"A year?" he repeated. "A year. Jesus fucking Christ."

"Indeed," Sarah murmured, sipping her Scotch slowly. "And possibly the Estate itself, if Roger's cousin Basil doesn't stop getting into trouble, but that's neither here nor there at the moment. So. I recommend straightening things out with Archie as soon as possible, Andrew. Unless you've decided that Roger is too much effort, of course."

"That's just insulting," Andrew said, answering the question that had been more of a statement than anything else. "But we've only been together for... Christ, three and a half months. I'm not about to ask him to run off to Connecticut and marry me or anything. I mean, okay. Some day, sure. But not right now, and definitely not because of some inheritance I don't give a shit... sorry. Some inheritance I don't *care* about, Sarah. But when -- I mean *if* -- we ever get to that stage, I can promise you that his money will be his. Not mine. His."

Honestly, the idea of kicking back and living on Raj's inherited money was sort of... repulsive. It would be nice to know it was there if they had an emergency of some sort, but Andrew made more than enough for them to live on. Assuming there was still a *them*, he reminded himself. But there would be. He just had to get past fucking Archie and convince Raj.

"Right, then," Sarah said loudly, clapping her hands together, which startled Andrew from his thoughts. Literally, because he jumped. "Unlike my husband, I don't automatically assume that

everyone is a con artist. And I rather like you, Andrew. You seem... rational. Stable. And you do seem to care for my boy. So we'll get this sorted and I'll do my best to get Archie out of your lives. Aside from holidays, of course. Family, you know."

At least Raj had one sane parent, Andrew consoled himself as he walked Sarah to the door. That was more than Andrew could say for himself, most days. "Oh, shit. Did you need me to call a cab?" he asked, his hand already on the knob. "I think your, uh... husband probably..."

Sarah rolled her eyes. "I've my own rental, thanks. If I had to spend more than five minutes in a vehicle with Archie, I'd likely kill him. But thank you for asking, Andrew." Then she stepped onto the porch, bag and wrap in hand, though Andrew hadn't noticed her gathering them. "May I ask... how much are you regretting those e-mails inviting us to Roger's party? Because it seemed quite lovely until Archie and I ruined it."

"N-not at all," Andrew mumbled, though that solved the mystery of how they'd known... and would teach him not to go prying into Raj's e-mail ever again. "I... good night, Sarah."

"Yes," she said dryly, though she was smiling just a bit, "It was a pleasure meeting you, too." And then she was gone, leaving Andrew to groan in private at his own bad manners.

Then again, he reminded himself, he wasn't English. British. Whatever. He still didn't get the difference, no matter how many times Raj tried to explain.

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Raj frowned at the bloody ridiculous breakfast his father had ordered for him. Eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, oatmeal for God's sake, breakfast pastries, pancakes and the smallest cup of fruit Raj had ever seen outside of the dollhouse his boss was building for his little girl's fifth birthday.

"Bloody hell, if I eat all this, I'll explode!" he announced, frowning even more.

Archie shrugged and dug in to his own breakfast -- an egg white omelet, half a grapefruit and decaffeinated coffee. "Didn't know what you liked," he answered. "Thought it'd take your mind off that blighter you hooked up with, too."

Oh, for fuck's sake. Less than twelve hours, seven of which Archie had slept through, and Raj was already sick of his father's nasty little comments about Andrew. "Give it a fucking rest, Archie," he demanded. "We had a fight. Because of you, by the way. Doesn't mean I'm through with him, or he with me. And you don't know what I eat in the morning because I've seen you all of eight times in the last six years."

Which was true enough, because as soon as they'd gotten off the plane and Archie had realized that sixteen year old Raj could take care of himself just fine, off he'd gone. He'd made sure Raj could reach him if necessary, but... yeah. Poof. Like the big bloody poof he was, Raj thought with a grin.

“Don’t be bloody daft,” Archie ordered. “Bloke like that -- older, getting ready for retirement -- why else would he want a young piece like you, if not for the money? If you weren’t my son...” Okay, and that was just disgusting, but not unexpected.

“Sod off, you old pervert,” Raj said, still smiling because... that was his dad. Mercenary enough that he couldn’t see anything different in the people around him. Except Raj, who Archie apparently thought was an idiot. “Andrew’s only thirty-four. You’re older. Are *you* planning on retiring any time soon? Speaking of which, how’s... what’s his name? Troy? Richard? I can never remember.” Because Archie changed lovers like some people changed socks. Whenever they got tired of his constant demands for more, more, more.

“William,” Archie answered with a frown. “And he’s... different, Roger. But that has nothing to do with the way you’re setting yourself up.” He sighed. “Might not have been the best dad. Know that, I do. Always figured it was better to stay away from you. Not expose you to my... bad habits, yeah? But everything I’ve ever done makes me right qualified to see what’s happening here. This bloke of yours. This Kennedy who’s not a bloody *Kennedy*? Did some checking, I did.”

And if that was supposed to have him worried, then Archie was in for a disappointment. Because Raj trusted Andrew. Completely.

“He’s a lawyer, boy. Pulls down a good bit of dosh for one so young, too. Left a very successful lover his own age to move here. An architect or some such rot. So you tell me why he’d go attaching himself to some kid half his bloody age if he didn’t have some sort of nefarious purpose in mind.”

“Half his age would be seventeen, Archie,” Raj said bluntly as he speared a sausage link and bit the end off. “And you do know you just called him young, right? Also, so we’re clear, Andrew didn’t have a single fucking clue about who I was when we met. Or ‘hooked up’ as you put it,” he added after chewing and swallowing the spicy pork. “I understand that you think you’re looking out for me. I do. But I’m a grown man. I’ve been making my own decisions for years, and I’m not going to stop now.”

Archie sighed. Heavily, like he’d been holding up the world and it had just proven too much for him. Which was funny, Raj thought, because his father was definitely no God. Devil, maybe, but God? Not even close.

“Right. Fine,” Archie grumbled, sounding put out. “What’s your plan, then?”

Raj smiled, just a quirk of his lips, but he knew his dad saw it. “I’m thinking I’ll finish this sausage and maybe have some bacon and fruit. Then you can give me a ride back to Andrew’s so I can tell him I’m sorry for leaving like that. Some make-up sex, then a few ‘I love you’-s, and I’m bloody well golden.”

“Oh... sod all,” Archie groaned. “You love him?” The man shook his head sadly. “I blame your mother. Always did have an unnatural fascination with romance, that woman.”

True, actually, but... “Lucky for me,” Raj answered, “Otherwise you never would have gotten close enough to her for her to have me.”

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Andrew was sitting on the porch when Raj and his bastard of a father drove up, and while Andrew could see that Archie was surprised, Raj obviously wasn't. In fact, Raj was out of the car before it had even stopped, and while the young man wasn't running towards him, Andrew was pleased to see that he was walking pretty damned quickly. And smiling, because that was the even more important part. Raj was coming to him and smiling.

“Hey, baby,” Andrew said softly when Raj stopped in front of him. Then he waved at Archie, gesturing for the man to come, too. “Look, I...”

“Sorry, love,” Raj said, cutting him off. “Sorry about... all that. It was just... everything together. Mum and Dad showing up. You, um...”

“Freaking out?” Andrew offered when Raj blushed. “I did. I know I did. I just... Jesus, it's still kind of disturbing that your folks are my age. But,” he added when Raj's smile faded, “you were right, Raj. It has nothing to do with us. And I talked to Sarah for a while last night. She explained about your dad. Uh, sort of. So if you'll forgive me, then...”

Oh, that smile was back -- so bright, so damned happy. And all his, Andrew thought possessively. That smile was all for him. Full of apology and relief and happiness and love. That last was the best part of all, Andrew realized.

“Missed you last night,” Andrew whispered as he lifted one hand to Raj's cheek and pulled his lover closer. “Missed you too much, baby.” Even if he'd used the time to figure a few things out, he'd still missed Raj. More than he'd ever thought possible.

The kiss was slow and deep, with languid strokes of tongue on tongue, and it was only Archie's loudly cleared throat that had Andrew pulling away, though he was grinning.

He wrapped his arm around Raj's back and pulled him up the steps to the front door. “You might as well come in, Archie,” he announced. “I think we need to talk.”

So they did, and if Andrew was laughing on the inside when he showed Archie the papers he'd spent a good portion of the night before drawing up, he tried not to show it once the man turned baffled, disbelieving eyes to him after reading them carefully. Twice.

“That would be a legally binding document stating that I hereby give up any rights -- real, implied, or assumed -- to any portion of Raj's inheritance. It gives him full ownership of any gifts over five hundred dollars in value, in the event that we separate. And I'm more than willing to call the firm's notary and have her make a house call so we can get this thing signed and

filed.” Andrew nodded sharply. “I’m not after Raj’s money, Archie. I just... love him, whether you understand it or not.”

“You’re serious,” Archie sounded like he still didn’t believe it, but Andrew nodded. “You’re off your bloody nut, mate. Round the bend, completely and utterly gone spare.”

Andrew looked at Raj’s hand, holding his so tightly on the couch between them, then cocked his head and met those sky-blue eyes. “Spare, and... all that. Means crazy, right?” Raj laughed, but he was agreeing, so Andrew nodded again. “Guess so, Archie. I’d rather give up any right to money that isn’t even mine than give up Raj. If that makes me crazy, then so be it.”

It was almost like they’d planned it. Like they’d had some sort of ‘in case of psycho-Dad moment, break glass to derail insanity’ thing in place, because Andrew found himself moving closer, eyes still locked with Raj’s blue. Then their lips met and Andrew sighed, softly and happily.

This kiss was deeper than the last, more intensely emotional, and it seemed to go on forever and only for an instant. When Andrew pulled back, Archie was wiping a tear away, though. “Oh... sod off, the both of you,” the man grumped. “Tried my best, I did, but bloody Roger’s a stubborn burke. Takes after his old man, I guess. And his romantically-inclined mum. Enjoy your bloody ‘love match.’”

Andrew watched Archie stalk from the house, and then grinned. “We’ll sign these on Monday,” he murmured, but Raj disagreed.

“Won’t be signing at all, love,” Raj declared. “Trust you, Drew. Love you, trust you, know you’ll not be fucking me over. And speaking of fucking, didn’t we have a plan for that last night? Because *birthday interruptus* seems to have put things on hold.”

And, yes, Andrew told himself, laughing as Raj dragged him from the couch and to the stairs. They had a plan. And a future. Crazy or not.

Andrew was going with ‘not.’

Destiny Goes Spare

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