



CHERYL DRAGON

BACKING BRIAN

RAIDER'S BODYGUARD SERVICE

Backing Brian

A Raider's Bodyguards Story

By Cheryl Dragon

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Backing Brian
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Chapter One

The Western wear shop designed like an old saloon wasn't yet open, but the flurry of activity made Brian smile. His dream was coming true, and in a couple weeks, the shop would open. Brian's cell rang, and he grabbed it off the hardwood counter.

"Hey, Mrs. Raider," he answered teasingly. His sister, Penny, had pulled off the biggest wedding in Texas history and jetted off to Hawaii with her bodyguard hubby, Grayson Raider.

"Stop it," she replied.

He could hear the smile. "How's that sex on the beach? Make sure you use sunscreen. You burn."

"Brian, it's my honeymoon. I'm not doing that on the beach. You're terrible. How's the shop?" she asked.

"Coming together. You didn't have to come up for air to check on me." Brian was so happy for his sister. The couple glowed with passion, and Penny marrying a Yankee had sent tidal waves through the family. The fact that it didn't bother Penny at all told Brian it was forever.

"We'll be back in time for the grand opening, but we're sending you an early present." Her voice was soft.

Brian knew it was more than a gift. "Present?"

"Dad mentioned you might have some issues. Protestors and stuff."

"Please. It's leather, boots and jackets. Pure Texas with a bit more class. They're only going to protest because I'm gay and a Beaumont. It's nothing. Ignoring it is best." Brian had heard it already, and nothing would stop him.

“But you are high profile because of Dad’s money. Isn’t that the excuse you used when I went to Italy?” she replied.

“Oh no, you don’t. No, Penny, I’m not a sweet girl who needs a bodyguard.” Brian knew being gay meant he might as well be wearing a dress to a lot of his family, but Penny didn’t think that way. Brian worked out and could defend himself, but the gay label came first. Still he loved everything Texas, riding, roping and leather.

“Big tough movie stars use bodyguards. Grayson went to a lot of trouble to pick the right team.”

“Team?” Brian leaned on one of the pillars in the store. The rope to wind around them was still in a box. He had so much to do. “I don’t need men underfoot to get in the way.”

“Think about your employees, Brian. All the workers and delivery people. It’s not just you that could be hurt or scared. The bodyguards will keep things under control.” Penny made it sound so sensible and easy.

“Is this what I did to you?” he asked.

“Pretty much. And you drooled over Grayson. I won’t do that to Jones. Just take the help. Family perks from your new brother-in-law.”

“Is this Jones a Raider?” Brian knew how attractive those men were. That was another type of distraction he didn’t need.

“No, Jones is an employee from the L.A. branch. He’s dealt with this stuff before—all that gay marriage back and forth. It’ll be fine.” Penny sounded confident.

“This is Texas, not California,” Brian reminded her.

“Will you relax? He’s a professional. And when Grayson and I get back in for the opening, he’ll review the situation and decide what’s best. Now, I’ve got to get changed for the luau. Promise me you’ll play nice with Jones and let him do his job.”

“When is he arriving?” Brian asked.

“Promise me,” Penny pushed back.

The front door opened, and Brian looked up. A tall man with shoulders that took over the doorway stole Brian’s focus. Black hair, dark eyes, and muscles for days. Jeans and a gray T-shirt were filled out to perfection, but the black boots were the hottest part. Those told Brian that this guy knew style. Brian’s gaydar tingled.

“Fine, I promise to play nice. Gotta go. Work to do. You need to get back to making me a niece to spoil and style.”

“Brian!” Penny replied.

“Aloha.” Brian disconnected and turned to the new guy. “Can I help you?”

“Brian Beaumont?” His deep voice made Brian pray this was Jones.

“Guilty.” Brian smiled. “You are?”

“Jones Preston from Raiders. You’re expecting me?” He held out a hand.

“Just got the news from my sister.” Brian took his hand, and the spark made his shake a little too long. He pulled back and wiped his palm before he turned into a giggling idiot. “I’m still putting the place together. Not much for you to do.”

“Protection is all the time. My team is scouting the area. Interviewing other owners and making sure what we’re dealing with. Seeing if anyone will be trouble.” Jones looked around. “Nice set up.”

“Thanks. But really, I picked a gay friendly area. I can’t imagine there will be an issue. It’s the conservatives. My Dad runs in those circles. So it could be an issue there. Texas can be weird about things like that. My Dad is big; so odds are they won’t hurt me or anyone. It’s just a big show.”

“Let me worry about that.” Jones walked closer. “For the next two weeks, you let me worry about your safety and you listen to me. I’ve got your back, and I’m not putting up with any arguments or games.”

Brian could think of dozens of naughty games to play with a man so tightly wound. Jones oozed power and control. “I appreciate my brother-in-law’s concern. I’ll let you do your thing. But I’m not a damsel in distress. I grew up in Texas. I know what I’m dealing with. Not sure L.A. guys can handle it.” Brian leaned in with his hands on the counter and tightened his muscles to show off.

A barely noticeable tug at the corner of Jones’ mouth gave Brian a thrill. The man wasn’t all gloom and business.

“I’m sure you can defend yourself. These situations can get heated and tense. Protestors can turn crazy. You need more than muscle for that. You need a neutral party to calm things down.” Jones glanced at Brian’s nice sculpted arms.

“I’m not looking for trouble. It’s not like I opened a gay bar or dating service. Penny and I always loved fashion. I like leather and the Texas look. Being gay owned doesn’t make this a gay business. It’s not like my leather jackets are done in rainbow.” Brian took a deep breath. Part of him believed he’d found his place in the world. He knew what he wanted, but still he felt so alone. Was the world against him?

“I understand. Once you’re open and people are here for the merchandise, things will probably calm down. It’s the grand opening and the prep time...this is when you’re most vulnerable. Others are forming opinions without information. Anything can happen.”

The urge to keep arguing with the sexy man kept Brian’s mouth going. “But nothing has happened. No threats or protests.”

He’d only been in the space for a couple days.

Jones nodded. “Fair enough. But you’re barely started by the looks of it. Grayson said the lease began a day or so ago. Troublemakers take time to get followers. The classy ones are putting pressure on your dad to do something to stop you. Move you to L.A. or New York. It might be quiet. Or it could escalate. You have deliveries coming. Strangers will be in and out. Very vulnerable. One could slip in and plant a bomb.”

“A bomb?” Brian shivered at the idea. “Come on. Get real.”

“I am. With my guys watching, no one will get in and cause trouble. All strangers will be watched and names taken. It lets people know we’re paying attention so if someone tries something, we know who was in the shop. Just asking for identification is a deterrent.” Jones was confident and serious.

Brian relaxed. “That’s where you come in. Protecting my employees is important to me. They shouldn’t be in danger because of my personal life.”

“So you’ll let me do my job?” Jones asked.

“Not sure I ever had a choice.”

“It’s your shop. I can’t protect you without your cooperation,” Jones admitted.

“Met my sister?” Brian asked.

Jones shrugged. “No, got my orders from Grayson by phone.”

“My sister is a force of nature. She gets her way. You report I’m resisting, and I’ll never hear the end of it. But I’ll cooperate.” Brian studied Jones, wanting to flirt and cooperate naked, but the all business signals shut down Brian’s boy cruising. Clearly, Jones was serious about his

work. “So how do you think you’re going to handle all the Texas stuff? I promise, this isn’t L.A.”

Jones smiled wide. “No, it sure isn’t. But I’ll manage.” The soft Texas drawl rolled off Jones’ tongue.

Dazzled, Brian wanted more of Jones and that magic tongue.

“You’re from Texas?” Brian asked.

Jones smiled. Brian recovered quickly, but Jones had thrown him off balance. Jones seemed at ease.

“I lived here until I was eighteen. As soon as I could, I left for a safer place.” Jones didn’t talk about his sexuality much. At least not at work. “L.A. is much safer.”

“Dallas isn’t bad in the city. I escaped to New York for college, but this is home. I’ve accepted it; now, they’ll accept me.”

“Like it or not?” Jones admired Brian’s courage and conviction.

That and his piercing green eyes. Brian’s brown hair was short and would pass any manly inspection. The lean muscled form also met with Jones’ approval. Brian could protect himself, but Jones knew his interest in Brian’s body was not at all professional. He’d avoided involvement with a client thus far, but the day had arrived. Jones was attracted to a client. To deny it was pointless, but Jones had to push it away. His job was far more important than a fling.

“Texas is home. I’m not running. I like my Uncle Lubby’s little ranch. I could ride and rope as well as any kid growing up. I bet you’re good with a rope.” Brian flirted.

“I do okay.” Jones wanted to give in. Back in L.A., if they’d met in a bar, they’d be making out by now. Jones would take him home, and after a night of great sex, they’d be over. But Jones valued his job. No way would he ruin his reputation.

“So you went to L.A. and became a bodyguard?” Brian prompted.

It was normal for people to want to know something about the person they’d let into their life to protect them. This was less flirt and more sanity. “I started as a bartender and then found I preferred the bouncer role. I got hired by some minor celebrities who wanted security.”

“The boy toy in a gay bar,” Brian teased.

“It was a gay bar, but I was hired for muscle, nothing more. This celebrity liked the biker types. Anyway, it got me other work, and discretion goes a long way in this business. I ended up

at Raider's." Jones looked Brian in the eye. "So I know something about Texas and about being gay. Trust me, I'll keep you safe."

Brian nodded. "Thanks."

Jones wanted to get closer. To feel the heat from Brian. He'd been single a long time. Random sex never gave Jones what he wanted, but most relationships never got as deep as the information he'd just shared with Brian.

Back to business, Jones had to do his job first. But Brian was easy to talk to. And even in jeans and cowboy boots, Brian came off educated and polished, accent or not. Brian was lucky. He had family that supported him and cared for his safety.

"Why don't you show me around the shop? I need to know all the little spots, any entry and exit points and who is authorized."

"Show off my shop? You don't have to twist my arm or even ask twice." Brian smiled and strutted in the open area.

"Hats and boots to the left. Jackets and clothing to the right. Buckles and accessories up front. Follow me." He led the way through to the back.

Jones admired the view. With Brian's shirt tucked in so neatly, Jones got a great look at Brian's tight ass.

"Inventory is back here. Beyond there, an employee break room. My office in here." Brian flipped on the lights.

Jones walked in. Cozy, no windows. Private. "So the back door is through the store room?"

"Yeah, deliveries will come in the back. Penny's friend Andrea is designing an excellent line of boots with high heels in the current fashion. Great crossover. Penny is having a lot of fun working with leather for the plus size ladies' selection."

"Exclusive? Very expensive stuff." Jones saw a man who had more money than he knew what to do with—a condition Jones never had. His parents probably still lived in the same trailer. His dad didn't promote any communication so Jones had stopped trying. But money had disadvantages, too. If Brian were a no one, not a Beaumont, the odds of anyone bothering his business or caring he was gay would be practically nothing. The world was strange. Brian had everything, and if he'd stayed in New York or moved to L.A., the gay thing could be an advantage.

“Why be here? Why not open your shop in New York or L.A.?” Jones asked frankly.

Brian frowned. “Texas is home. You can’t run from your roots. You’ve got to face who you are and where you came from eventually. Nothing says I can’t branch out coast-to-coast, but for some reason it has to start here.”

“Keeps me working.” Jones didn’t know what else to say. The inner strength Brian had made Jones want to get closer, give in and enjoy. But Brian wasn’t Jones’ normal roll in the hay.

“And maybe you’ll get to see your friends and family while you’re here. Free trip home. I won’t need you guarding me twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week.” Brian stuffed his hands in his pockets.

Right. Brian probably already had a sex life, and Jones wouldn’t be allowed to ruin it. “Of course, I won’t intrude on your private life. If you plan on company, I can stay outside in the truck. But you will have a man watching your safety around the clock.”

Brian moved close. “I don’t have a steady boyfriend. If you want to see me naked, just ask.”

Tense, Jones looked around. They were alone in the office. “No. I mean, I don’t do that with clients. I’m professional. I meant we’ll keep you protected, and you can live your life as normally as possible. Someone might try to intimidate you rather than protest.”

“Right. No messing with the clients. Tell that to my sister who is on her honeymoon with her bodyguard. Or her friend, another Mrs. Raider. If they fire you for doing what they did, what we want to...” Brian laughed. “Won’t happen. I’ll have Penny nag Grayson to death.” Brian inched closer.

“I’m not a Raider.” Jones liked Brian’s direct approach and wanted to give in, but was Brian really what Jones needed? On some level, Jones sensed a bit of the Dom side, but why was he leaving it all up to Jones.

“No, and I’m not your boss. You don’t do what I want because I’m the client. You do it because you want to submit and please me.” Brian’s devilish green eyes sparkled with lust. “Or you don’t do anything. You’re my very hot bodyguard so we’ll see if you can resist. But we’re two grown men, in the gay scene long enough to know how to make it work or let it go. Either way, it’s got nothing to do with your job.” Brian slid a hand behind Jones’ neck.

Jones had a few inches on Brian and twenty pounds of muscle, but Jones felt the flutter of anticipation. Brian had the power; Jones wanted to be taken. Maybe coming back to Texas wasn't so bad? He leaned down as Brian added pressure.

The kiss scorched Jones. Wrapping their arms around each other, Jones sunk into the kiss. He let Brian set the pace. Brian's fingers dug into Jones' hair, tugging him back as the front door opened and closed.

"My team." Jones couldn't let anyone know he was doing this.

As if Brian read the panic in Jones, Brian kissed Jones' chin and stepped back. "Go on. No one needs to know about our playtime. I really don't have a boyfriend so you'll have to guard me up close day and night."

Jones nodded and headed out to the front to meet with his team. Casual sex with a sexy Texan who liked to be the boss... Jones licked his lips. Brian tasted good. Jones would have to keep the creative and bossy man safe and happy.

Chapter Two

As Jones consulted with his team, Brian worked on the front display and debated his impulsive move. Jones was gay and hot. In New York, Brian would have had no qualms about hooking up. Jones would be back to L.A. in a couple weeks anyway. But Brian was supposed to be settling down in Texas with a business and a life.

Not that he planned to live like a monk, but Brian clearly remembered being sick and tired of the sex games in New York. It felt good in the moment, but he went home alone or got lost in a crowded gay bar. Even if the guy came home with him and slept over, Brian still felt alone in the end.

Looking over at the crew of fit and serious men from L.A., Brian didn't feel alone. Jones was a Texan. He was strong, not a submissive, lost and looking. The attraction pulled Brian, but reality whispered. Jones was a short-term fling. Brian wanted to find Mr. Right and settle down, but Jones wasn't that guy. That strong back and chiseled jaw made Brian wish Jones was Brian's to keep.

One last romp. Brian had already made the move. He wanted Jones that bad. As long as no one knew, what was the difference? This man would be a good distraction from the idea that something bad might happen.

It was all Penny's fault, and Andrea held some guilt in this, as well. Their romances put Brian in the mindset to view his bodyguard as sexual potential. Penny had sent him a hot guy! Why couldn't Jones be an ugly, bald hulk? She'd sent him a hunk! The least she could do was send a straight piece of eye candy.

There was no choice. One last fling then Brian had to stop falling for guys who were all about the physical or wouldn't stick around. He needed to go for a relationship with a future.

Gay or not, New York wild in college or not, Brian was a good old boy from a big southern family, and he wanted a partner to face all those barbeques and holidays with.

As strong as Brian was, he needed support, too. He didn't want to wait around, playing the field until his forties and hoping to settle down like so many men he saw in the bars. Life would catch up with them, and Brian didn't want to face middle age alone.

Lost in thought, Brian almost jumped when Jones came over. The team was gone. "Where are your friends?"

"Two are out front, and one is at the back door. You're stuck with me now. Where is your staff? I expected more people." Jones leaned on the counter.

"Yes, they'll be here tomorrow. Display cases and racks came in today. Tomorrow, we'll start setting up." Brian leaned on the counter close to Jones. "So why don't you like Texas?"

Jones stiffened. "It's a lot easier to be out and not harassed in L.A."

"High school was rough?" Brian understood that.

"Wasn't yours?" Jones asked.

Brian recognized a non-answer. "Sure but that's high school. Most people have some trauma in high school. Penny was overweight. My little sister is the only one who sailed through that I know of. Only one prom queen. Most people just survive it. Why run?"

"You ran to New York," Jones pointed out.

"True. For the fashion scene. I knew what I wanted to do, and that meant getting some fashion experience outside of Texas. Penny went there, too. I got the experience and a business degree. Hung in for an MBA then the itch to see this happen took over." Brian smiled at his shop. "You dreamed of being a bodyguard?"

Jones frowned. "Dreams didn't really enter into my childhood much. At least not ones that I expected would happen. We didn't have much."

"Sorry. So you're a success now. Your parents must be proud. I mean, fierce boots like that aren't cheap." Brian felt bad assuming everyone had a nice normal childhood.

Jones looked at the boots. "They're nice. L.A. has good leather stores. Your place would be perfect there."

"One store at a time." Brian could see Jones clearer now. It wasn't Texas. It was a poor childhood and the gay thing. Brian needed to know one more thing. "So you're not dating anyone back in L.A.?"

“No, I’m not good at relationships. Most Doms want more control and power than I’m willing to give. At first, they think I’m a challenge, but I’m not.”

Brian knew Jones wasn’t a traditional sub. His guarded nature and issues still shone like a suit of armor. It also pulled at Brian like no man before. Certainly not this fast. “I’m not your average Dom, either. I never get serious. I don’t like the drama. No need to get so over the top about some fun and sex play.”

He leaned in and slowly kissed Jones.

The heat seared as Jones opened his mouth and their tongue played. Brian loved the physical play of BDSM, and he loved being in control, taking what he wanted and being obeyed. But he’d never wanted to break a sub or have all the responsibility of a long-term thing.

Jones also seemed to be in it for short-term play. Brian slid his hands over Jones’ arms then chest. So much power, so much to control and enjoy. Deep down, Brian wondered what would happen if Jones did totally give in. The man was so intense, and Brian wanted to experience that passion.

Jones pulled back. “My guys can’t see this. I’m not losing my job. Not that I’d be fired for being gay, but if my team doesn’t respect me and I can’t be professional, I’m ineffective. I don’t own the business so it’s not the same as Grayson.”

“I get it.” Brian nodded. “It’s good to own a business, but there are issues. Some people think my dad financed this or he has a stake. I used my trust fund, but it’s mine, Dad can’t stop me or change this. You can’t escape your family. It’s all rough. My mom tries to be excited for me, but I know she’s worried about what people are saying.”

“You don’t care what people think about you?” Jones asked.

Brian lifted one shoulder. “What’s to think about? The gay thing is old news. The business is real. People don’t need an excuse to make a fuss if they don’t like something. It doesn’t bother me. I’ve got you keeping me safe. Plus we can fool around in my office, if you’re ever in the mood.”

Nodding, Jones stepped back. “You’ll be stuck with me all night. Better to let you do your job during business hours. Mind if I use your office to make a call? My guys will keep you safe.”

“Sure. Anytime. I’m not an office type. It’ll be for keeping paperwork and stuff. I’ll get started on the rope.” Brian went over and opened a large box. Jones dialing things back didn’t discourage Brian a bit. Actually, he liked the play even more.

* * * *

Jones went into the office and wondered if the flirting wasn’t really bad judgment. He should shut it down and go back to strictly business before things got truly physical. He’d never crossed the line before. Being home made him vulnerable, looking for something to make him feel good and distract him from memories and reality. Not that his guard would come down in protecting Brian, but Jones’ orderly world was off balance.

He grabbed the office phone. Odds were his father would be out with his buddies, drinking or shooting. Talking to Mom was all Jones could handle. Dialing, he cleared his throat and wondered how parents could still mess with their kids as adults. He hated the tension.

“Hello?” his mom answered.

“Hi, Mom, how are you?” he asked.

“Jones?” Her tone became hushed. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine. Is Dad there?”

“No, he’s out.” Her voice grew louder, and she exhaled. “So nothing is wrong? You never call so I thought the worst.”

They never called him either, but Jones didn’t go there. “I’m in Texas for a job. Just thought I should call and see if you’re doing okay.”

“We’re managing. And you? Still a bodyguard and…” Her soft voice spoke volumes.

“Gay. Yes, Mom, I’m still both. So, I guess I’m not invited over for Sunday dinner?” The message was clear and the same as always.

“Your father would lose his mind. He doesn’t understand. He never will. I wish it could be normal. Better.”

Jones wanted that as a kid, but he’d always felt different. He could excel at sports and beat up anyone who tried to bully him, but he couldn’t even fake it with a girl. Some things he couldn’t hide. “Not normal. Take care of yourself.”

He hung up before things got anxious or emotional.

No one could say he didn’t try. Jones believed his mom deserved more. Dad’s work ethic was random, but Mom cooked and cleaned like it would help. Their relationship wasn’t the best,

but she'd never leave. He'd made the effort and now turned back to his job. Checking his email and messages on his phone, he found nothing new. Now, Jones needed to get back to Brian's body, guarding it and not groping it!

* * * *

Two hours later, Jones dismissed the outside guys and went to check on Brian. In the office, Brian hung up the phone and scribbled something on a list.

"It's seven. You might want to get some dinner before you burn out," Jones said.

Brian looked up. "Sorry, you and the guys can go get whatever. I'll lock up. I'm heading home soon."

"No deal. I already let the guys go for the night, but you're stuck with me."

"You okay?" Brian stood up and moved close to Jones. "Since you made that call you've been out of it."

Jones smiled. "You've known me five hours."

Why did he want to tell Brian how right he was? Jones had friends to talk to back home. Only in Texas did Jones feel so exposed.

"True. But I'm pretty good at reading people. I get it, none of my business." Brian held up his hands in surrender. "So stop thinking and distract yourself."

Jones liked the idea, but he didn't want to be the tourist and cruise the gay bars. Not here. "If you give me the names of your employees, I can run checks on them tonight and then we can go through your residence to be sure it's secure."

"No, I don't think so." Brian grabbed Jones' belt buckle and worked it one handed. "Tomorrow, you can do the employee stuff. I chose my staff carefully. And my condo, you'll see it when we get there. But I think there's a much better distraction for the here and now." Brian kissed Jones softly.

The scent of Brian and the flirty taste made Jones dive in, kissing Brian as if Jones were the dominant one. Brian returned the affection; clearly both of them were flexible in the BDSM play. It wasn't Jones' whole sex life, but the little signals from Brian let Jones know it was okay.

Brian kissed Jones' cheek. "Tell me what you want." Brian's strong hand freed Jones' cock, and Jones' brain clouded in lust. His hips snapped, thrusting his cock into Brian's palm. "I want to get you off."

“Works for me.” Brian slid his hand to the back of Jones’ neck and put a little pressure there.

Jones had never experience such a subtle man. Nothing in Brian rushed or demanded. Jones knelt. For a moment, he stared at Brian’s erection pulling at the denim then he opened the buckle and fly. Brian’s cock sprang free, and Jones’ own member pulsed with need.

Wanting to take his time, like Brian, Jones kissed Brian’s sac then pressed kisses up the length of Brian’s shaft. Only occasionally did Jones let his tongue touch Brian.

The groans Jones got were exactly what the bodyguard needed to hear. Someone wanted him and liked him. Jones loved to please men. Right now, Brian was the only man in the world. Sucking the head of Brian’s cock, Jones rolled his tongue around the tip.

“Nice start.” Brian thrust into Jones’ mouth and griped his hair tighter. “Harder.”

Jones tugged Brian’s jeans lower and held Brian’s firm bare ass, squeezing those cheeks as Jones swallowed and sucked hard until he felt Brian’s balls. Moaning, Jones fucked Brian with his mouth, turning his head to keep his lover off balance.

“Damn, you’re good.” Brian bucked in then pulled free, offering Jones his sac instead.

“I can make it last. Go slow.” Jones wanted the cock.

“Later, I like some rough play on my balls. Or are you looking for some rough sex in your ass?” Brian cupped Jones’ chin and ran a thumb over his lower lip.

“I’m not into really rough stuff. I want to please and give.” Jones enjoyed a little play, but he couldn’t control his reaction and didn’t like pain. “A little spanking is one thing, but beyond that...”

“You come or do you freak?” Brian asked.

Jones relaxed slightly and kissed Brian’s hip. “I’m not big on pain. I want the sex more.”

“I’ll get to the bottom of you.” Brian’s hands caressed Jones’ shoulders. “Now get to work, or we’ll be here all night.”

Jones sucked one ball into his mouth, pulling and scoring with his teeth. Brian’s hips rocked, grinding to Jones’ face. Jones squeezed the other nut hard.

“Good,” Brian encouraged.

Sucking the other ball in, Jones tugged and changed the pressure until Brian moaned constantly.

Jones wanted the shaft, but he tongued those balls until Brian pulled free and shoved his cock in Jones' mouth. Groaning in the erection, Jones sucked and swallowed as his hands tightened on Brian's rear.

A few minutes later, Brian eased back.

"The tip," he said through clenched teeth.

Jones smiled at Brian, telling Jones how to suck a guy off. Bossy, sexy Doms were nice, but Jones was no novice. Working the tip, he teased the ridge under the head and felt Brian jerk.

"Jones!" Brian shouted.

Cum filled Jones' mouth, and he smiled with satisfaction.

The throb in Jones' cock made him swallow. This wasn't anonymous sex or Dom/sub play at a club. This was personal. They turned each other on, kinky stuff or not. He licked and kissed Brian's cock. Then he gave extra attention to Brian's sac.

"You had your way. You got me off," Brian said.

Jones nodded as he understood the game. Now, he needed to please Brian. "Thanks. What do you want?"

Brian pulled up his jeans and fastened his belt before zipping the fly. He sat in the plush leather chair. "Stand up, and keep that hard cock out."

Without shame, Jones stood. His cock strained for Brian. Clothed or not, Brian was the sexiest man Jones had ever gotten close to. The spark between them was undeniable. His cock bobbed from his open fly as he waited for more instructions.

"Jerk off for me." Brian leaned back in his chair and slid his dark brown boots up on the desk.

Jones needed no further inspiration than Brian being there and those eager eyes watching him. Starting slow, Jones rubbed his shaft. Brian smiled, and Jones' shaft pulsed with confidence. Licking his fingers, Jones rubbed the spit on his sac to tease Brian further.

Jones twisted his balls then wrapped his fist around the shaft. Slowly, he jerked. Every time his eyes closed, Jones forced them back open to see Brian.

"We'll be here all night. I thought you'd be better at jerking cock," Brian teased.

"I don't go solo too often. Most men like to do this stuff to me." Jones stepped closer but kept jerking his erection.

“I’ll do plenty to you in my bed. Now, I need to see that you want me.” Brian sat up to be closer to the heat.

“I want. I can fuck you to show it.” Jones’ mind was catching in the need for Brian.

Brian pinched Jones’ sac and held the pressure until Jones felt the release take hold. “Oh hell, Brian.” The cum rose, and Jones jerked more.

“Come for me. I want to see it.” Brian worked Jones’s sac.

The cum shot free, and Jones let the pleasure take over. Masturbation had never been so good. It was Brian. This man did something to him.

Then Brian’s eager tongue lapped up the cum on Jones’s hand and cock. Brian sucked the tip of Jones’ member. Jones thrust out of reflex.

“Good?” Brian asked.

“Yeah.” Jones took a slow breath.

“Great, now we can really get started. At my place.”

Jones tried to zip up, but Brian slapped the hands away. He licked all over Jones’ cock and balls before putting it away. Then Brian stood and kissed Jones sweetly on the mouth.

This would be a hell of a job as long as no one tried to hurt Brian. Jones pulled his lover close—no one would succeed in hurting him. Jones knew that much.

Chapter Three

After a late dinner at a loud sandwich shop, Brian was relieved to know Jones hadn't gone totally L.A. He wasn't a vegan, and that Texas drawl slipped in more and more as they conversed. Jones actually blended pretty well.

While Brian's father had large estate on the outskirts of the city that afforded tons of land, Brian had gone with his own place when he'd come back. No reason to bring drama or men home to his family. Plus Brian wanted privacy for play and to design when he wanted.

"A condo? I didn't think they existed in Texas." Jones surveyed the hallway as they headed to Brian's door. "No land."

"I got used to apartment and dorm living in New York. For running a business, it's ideal. I don't have time to manage land." Brian unlocked the front door.

"Me first." Jones pushed the door slowly and flipped on the lights. "Any pets?"

"No. Honestly, I'm not that big of a target. I'm not listed. I'm not throwing a pride parade for the grand opening." Brian hated being defined by his sexuality. Sure, he'd immersed himself in it during the college years, but it wasn't the only thing in his life.

"People don't need much to get riled up. They go looking for reasons. In this economy, with the frustrations out there, a rich boy opens a store... Doesn't need to be about the gay thing."

"Creating jobs, making money. The people who can afford my stuff aren't hurting that much." Brian folded his arms but understood the argument.

Jones opened the door fully and stepped on an envelope. "Mailboxes are downstairs, right?"

“Yes, in the lobby. They all have their own keys. It’s a safe building.” The blank envelope gave Brian a chill as Jones picked it up.

Someone had slid it under the door. It could be a neighbor or friend, but he didn’t know many people in the building. He’d spent most of his time working. The house looked undisturbed.

“Anyone here have a problem with you?” Jones asked.

“No, I’m new.” Brian looked over his shoulder. The hallway was empty.

Jones opened the envelope and freed the paper from it. “Go back to New York and burn in hell,” Jones read.

“Nice.” Brian felt a fury he hadn’t since high school.

“Shaky writing. Angry. It only takes one hater.” Jones set it on the table by the door and methodically checked the condo.

Brian followed a few feet behind. Finally, Jones ended up in Brian’s bedroom. A quick check of the closet and Jones relaxed. “We’re good.”

Brian nodded. Deep down, he felt better with Jones here. The note wasn’t what he’d expected. “I locked and bolted the front door. We’re safe now.”

“You okay?” Jones asked.

Brian couldn’t control ignorance or fear in others. He couldn’t stop people from hating him. But he could control the sexy man now in his bedroom. “I’ll be okay once you’re naked.”

Pulling Jones in for a kiss, Brian saw the conflict brewing. Jones was so in control in this bodyguard mode, now to shift to sex toy... Brian wasn’t going to let up tonight.

“You’re sure this is what you want to do now?” Jones asked.

Brian pulled Jones’ shirt over his head and tossed it toward the closet. “Now, unless you’re not on board.”

It was an out. Jones could walk if he wanted to, but Brian needed to distract himself somehow. Running his hands over Jones’ sculpted abs and up to those perfect pecs, the arousal took over, and Brian rubbed Jones’ cock through the denim.

The flesh firmed under Brian’s hand, and he knew Jones was into the play. “I need the distraction. No one will hurt me with you around. I’m not going to sit up and worry about it all night. Play hard, sleep hard and get my shop together. Sound like a plan?” He yanked the belt buckle open and quickly shoved the jeans and boxers down.

Jones kicked off his boots and the clothes. "Better?" he asked.

Taking in the naked man, Brian had to admit it was a wonderful elixir to anything. "Much better. You should be a naked bodyguard. No one would even notice me." Brian stepped closer and nuzzled Jones chest, letting the scent of his new man fill his world.

Jones stood there without a sound, he didn't try to undress Brian or move things along. Brian smiled and kissed Jones' left nipple. Either Jones needed a little dominance or he'd figured out that Brian needed the distraction. "I think you need to be punished. Someone violated my condo. You're not a very good bodyguard."

"Your body is just fine," Jones replied.

"You are very bad." Brian bit Jones' nipple.

The soft moan from Jones' throat gave Brian a hint about Jones' pain tolerance. Brian liked to play more than truly punish. That's what they needed. Play would take reality away.

"Belt or a paddle?" Brian walked around to Jones' rear.

"Your choice," Jones said.

Walking to the closet, Brian reached into one of his garment bags and produced a leather paddle. He nudged his bodyguard. "Bend over, hands on the bed."

Jones paused, and Brian saw the resistance. The man he played with was not just a sub. Jones went deeper. Brian suspected that Jones liked to dominate, too. They both liked to play Dom or sub more than to strictly hold to a lifestyle. But after ten seconds, Jones bent, and that firm ass called to Brian. Rubbing the paddle over Jones' tight rear, Brian saw the muscles on Jones tense and relax.

Brian kissed along Jones' spine as he gave Jones a soft tap. A few more taps and Brian saw the change in skin tone. Jones' shoulders rolled, but his ass didn't move. Nor did it flinch when Brian gave it a hard smack. Zeroing in on the spot, Brian decided the targeted approach would be best.

"Like it?" Brian asked.

"Yes," Jones said.

A true sub would've thanked him. Brian would uncover Jones' desires fully before long. Brian kissed the pink patch of skin and let the paddle fly five times. Jones' groans made Brian pause. No way was this sexy man getting away with a spanking alone. In one motion, Brian turned Jones over and pushed his ass to the bed.

“Didn’t like it?” Jones asked.

Brian gripped the base of Jones’ cock. As much as Brian had wanted to suck off Jones in the office, he’d had to keep control. Now, they both deserved it. He sucked Jones’ cock roughly, squeezing his sac as Jones lifted for more.

Nipping at the head, Brian wanted to drive Jones crazy, but the man had discipline and tolerance. After rubbing his lips along the shaft, Brian switched to glide his teeth along the erection. Jones sucked in air, but the pleasure was written all over his face.

Brian was in the zone, too, wanting to taste Jones’ cum more than anything in the world at that moment. Licking the tip, Brian sucked and flicked the head until Jones lifted. Only then did Brian go down on Jones fully, swallowing the thick member.

Sliding a hand under Jones’ ass, Brian squeezed the punished cheek. Jones lifted and grunted. Cum filled Brian’s mouth, and he moaned as he swallowed. Licking up the extra, Brian bit and tugged at Jones’ sac until he groaned.

“Not bad,” Brian said.

“What’ll make it better?” Jones asked.

“We’ll see.” Brian stood and stripped off his clothes. His cock was suffocating, but being dressed kept him in control. Naked, he’d screw Jones in no time.

Jones sat up on the bed. His eyes said he wanted to take over, but his hands stayed on the blanket. Fully ready, Brian kissed Jones’ mouth without letting any other part of their bodies touch.

“Roll over,” he said against Jones’ mouth.

Exhaling, Jones shook his head.

“Yes, no more playing.” Brian tossed the paddle out of reach. It wasn’t the pain that bothered Jones, Brian could tell Jones sat comfortably now. They both needed the sex. Jones was pushing to negotiate the position. If this man wasn’t a switch, Brian would eat his leather chaps. He’d bet Jones liked to play Dom as much as he liked to play sub.

He opened the drawer of his nightstand and got a packet of lube and a condom. “Over.”

“Hard.” Jones kissed Brian and rolled onto his side.

Brian pushed Jones the rest of the way. “You’ve got to earn spoon sex.” *Or take it.* Brian wondered what would trigger this guy to flip. What a turn on!

Rolling on protection and lubing Jones' ass, Brian took the time to enjoy the power. He'd gone Dom to get guys in college. Once he'd found out how many men wanted to submit, it had been easy and very satisfying to sexually explore them. A switch had given him a taste of submission. Since then it was flexible play, but Jones was a challenge like none Brian had had before.

Brian thrust into Jones' ass, and Jones gave fully. Balls deep, Brian never wanted to move, but he rocked to that tight ass. Staying buried, Brian pressed his chest to Jones' strong back. Brian managed short thrusts as Jones squeezed and teased with his well-disciplined muscles.

Jones looked over his shoulder, and Brian couldn't resist. The kiss made it better as they strained to make it work. Brian fucked harder, and Jones shuddered. Too fast but so good. The internal release throbbed around Brian's cock, throwing him into climax without warning. He ground to Jones and bit his lower lip as the man came.

"Now what? TV?" Jones chuckled while catching his breath.

"No, a shower and bed. It's almost eleven. I think breakfast might be naked time." Brian dropped a kiss to Jones ear before rolling off his bodyguard.

"As long as you don't try to dodge me, we're good." Jones stood.

"Why would anyone dodge this?" Brian asked. He wanted more than sex. He wanted to see if his theory about Jones being a switch was true. Two weeks to play and explore.

* * * *

Waking, Jones felt the tingle in his ass cheek. He wasn't into pain or humiliation. In truth, Jones was only into the Dom/sub thing because it meant he didn't have to make a move or decide what to do. He just had to please someone and play out the scene to get off.

But the urge to do whatever he wanted burned deep. With Brian, it was an inferno. Kissing Brian's shoulder, Jones rolled out of bed and headed for the kitchen. After throwing some bread in the toaster, he poured a glass of juice then grabbed the butter.

He froze. He'd never behaved like this in a client's home. But he'd never let a client do what went on last night. Jones felt at home, and it freaked him out. It was wrong.

As the toaster did its job, Jones checked the front door. Brian had snuck out of bed and stood by the table looking at the note. There was nothing new. That didn't mean it was over.

Someone had gone to the trouble of getting into the building somehow. The front door was keyed, but anyone could slip in behind someone or play the lost key excuse.

Brian looked so good. Jones slid up behind him and kissed the back of his neck. Wrapping his arms around Brian's body, Jones took the paper and put it down. "Sex, breakfast and then work."

"That doesn't sound like begging to me. Besides, this guy won't go away. My distraction phase can only last so long. This note is real." Brian tried to move, but Jones held on tight.

Muscle won, and Jones had a little more time. He walked them back to the bedroom, and Brian didn't argue physically.

"Who's in charge here?" Brian asked as Jones stripped off their underwear.

Jones pushed Brian to the bed and held his legs under Jones' knees. Rummaging in the drawer, Jones produced lube and a condom.

"Right now, I'm in charge." Jones rubbed Brian's erection and felt it throb. It was for Brian's good, Jones told himself. But Jones had always wanted to take control.

Triumph sparkled in Brian's eyes. "I knew you were a switch."

He kissed Jones with new arousal.

Jones wanted to talk more about this, but Brian was so excited that they needed the release. He put on the rubber and lubed Brian's tight ass. "For now, it's sex play. I'm in charge the rest of the time for your safety."

"Want me to fight? I'll be bad for you." Brian tickled Jones' sac.

Grabbing Brian's wrist, Jones pinned it to the bed as he rolled Brian on his side. When Brian tried to roll over on his stomach, Jones held the sexy shop owner. He spooned behind Brian and pressed his cock to Brian's firm backside.

"You can tie me up if you want." Brian craned his neck back and kissed Jones.

Jones enjoyed the deep kiss and slid an arm under Brian to pinch his nipple. Simultaneously, his other hand reached around and stroked Brian's cock.

"Oh God. You son of a bitch!" Brian buried his face in Jones' neck as his body responded to Jones' thrust.

Jones held Brian tight and filled him again and again until Brian rocked back for more and moaned with need.

"Harder!" Brian demanded.

“What?” Jones eased off.

“Please, harder!” Brian begged.

“Better.” Jones kissed his lover’s neck and twisted his sac and nipple with more pressure.

“Yes!” Brian slammed back on Jones’ cock.

The internal spasm from deep inside Brian made Jones brace. He wanted this to last. Control or complete pleasure, Jones fucked Brian faster to prolong his climax. Jones listened to Brian’s sweet groans as he recovered. But his cock still throbbed in Jones’ hand.

“Why do you pretend to be a Dom?” Jones asked.

Brian shivered and clung to Jones’ arms. “Stats. More subs than Doms. I didn’t want the hardcore lifestyle stuff. I wanted to play and enjoy sex. Why do you pretend to be a sub?” Rather than wait for a reply, Brian licked Jones’ chin and kissed him hard.

Permitting the affection, Jones felt the heat building in them. The play fueled the sex, and it was all one delicious ride. Pulling back, Jones bit at Brian’s lip. “Like you care.”

He thrust harder.

“I do.” Brian groaned. “Tell me. Fuck me fast!”

“For the record, you’re not good at begging.” Jones released Brian’s nipple and started to jerk his cock to get the rich man off.

“Please, I can’t handle it all. Jones, fuck me!” Brian bowed and tried to hold onto the sheets and then to Jones.

There was a reason Jones loved to spoon, as a top or bottom. The leverage, the power and the tight feel of that ass. He’d thought about it often—how he’d take his sub if he ever found one. By Brian’s reaction, he was enjoying it.

“I fuck you because I like it.” Jones squeezed the tip of Brian’s cock, and the man began to shudder.

“Jones!” Brian shuddered.

Wrapping his arm around Brian’s torso, Jones twisted the untouched nipple on Brian’s muscled chest. Brian groaned as his body pressed for more.

Jones let Brian catch his breath, but the second those hips began to move, Jones pulled free. Releasing Brian, Jones dumped his used protection in the trash.

“What did I do?” Brian didn’t move from the position. “You’re not done.”

“You played yesterday. Now, you’ll blow me right.” Jones grabbed Brian’s head and pulled him to the edge of the bed.

Brian kissed Jones’ erection but eased back. “I want you in me.”

“Then stop talking and swallow.” Jones tugged at Brian’s hair.

Sliding into Brian’s mouth once the protests were done, Jones shivered and finally fucked that big mouth. Protection was necessary, but the feel of Brian’s tongue on Jones’ sensitive flesh, nothing compared to this. Never. “I’m in you now. See what a spoiled sub you are?”

Brian sucked and licked eagerly as Jones relaxed. Reaching out, he slapped Brian’s ass and watched him flinch. But Jones felt Brian’s moans. The vibrations tormented the man in charge. It was a rush he’d never known before.

Quickly, Jones delivered another sound slap to Brian’s ass and kept it up until Brian’s moans became constant. That cute ass arched up for more. The extra stimulation sent Jones over fast, and he came, hard, jerking into Brian as Jones squeezed those ass cheeks with both hands.

To Jones’ surprise, Brian made no move to back away or let the cock free from his jaws. Instead, Brian continued to suck and lick even after he’d swallowed all the cum.

“I think you’ve had enough.” Jones straightened up and took a step back.

Brian wrapped his arms around Jones’ waist and kissed his sac. The intimacy made Jones want to give in, but to what he wasn’t sure. He pulled Brian up and kissed his mouth. The men fused in a passionate embrace neither seemed able or willing to break.

When Brian tried to pull Jones into bed, Jones backed up. “You’ve got work to do today. Enough play. Time for that shower.”

“We can play there.” Brian climbed off the bed.

“No more play until work is over. And my work is never over.” Jones gave Brian one last hard kiss on the mouth and headed for the bathroom.

“We’ll see,” Brian said boldly.

Jones smiled but kept his back to Brian so he couldn’t see. This was new ground, and Jones wanted to explore it, to see how much Brian wanted and what he’d do for Jones.

Chapter Four

In the passenger seat of Jones' rented SUV, Brian tapped his foot. "Why can't we take my car?"

Jones shook his head. "If someone wants to hurt you, they'll do their homework. A different car is an asset." Jones drove to the backside of the shop where his man was already in place.

It wasn't so much the car as the sex that had Brian in knots. He wanted more. He needed to be fucked! Playing Dom for someone who got off on being a sub worked, but this blew Brian's mind. Jones was sexual nirvana, and Brian wanted to spend the day naked and tied up, basking in the new level they'd found.

If he couldn't have physical intimacy, Brian needed to get closer to Jones another way. "So why do you play sub when you're really not?"

"I don't play anything. People make their judgments. The sex is better with play." Jones parked the car.

"Come on." Brian didn't buy it and locked the door with the button when Jones went for the handle.

"Fine. The first question anyone asks is what do you do for a living? At a bar, at a party—it defines you."

"Sure." Brian followed the train of thought.

"'Bodyguard' gets guys fired up. Like I'm a strong, sexy servant or something. They like to be the boss, to be protected and yet know I could take them down. Feeding that fantasy gets me a lot of guys. Not actual clients but sex... Grayson is going to fire me." Jones refused to meet Brian's gaze.

“He’ll never know.” Brian added. “Unless you move to Texas and declare undying love for me. It’s a fling, and what we do is between us.”

Jones smiled and nodded. “You’re really just who you are. No act or games. Most of this comes with layers.”

“That takes too much time and energy. I gave it up years ago. I tried it, and it wasn’t me. Yesterday wasn’t a game, either. I like a little control and play sometimes.”

“You could hire a bottom.”

Brian laughed. “Hell, no. I don’t pay for sex. I’ve had servants all my life. Housekeepers, tutors, riding instructors and all that crap. People did what I said because of who my father was and his money. Maybe, that’s why I really love being a sub. I don’t get a say; I get to please. No pressure. Obedience can be freeing. You can boss me around as much as you want. I like it. Sometimes, I’ll rebel. I like that, too.” Brian unlocked the doors and got out the vehicle.

* * * *

Once inside, Brian went to work. His stuff arrived early, and things were hopping in no time. Jones conferred with his men so everyone was on board.

Brian knew part of it was about the note from late night. He had to be strong and shake it off. No way was the Beaumont name messing up his dream. Things would be different. He had a new condo but no servants. A cleaning service would come in weekly but no butler or housekeeper. It was liberating.

When Brian went to the stock room to throw out an empty box, Jones followed. At first Brian hoped for sex, but with so many people around, he knew that wouldn’t be it. Then he read the serious expression on Jones’ face.

“What?” Brian asked.

“The guys said a couple people were out front earlier, harassing your people as they came in.” Jones shook his head. “We need to be cautious. Let me know where you need to go, errands or anything. I’m with you, but if we can plan things, we can make it safer.”

“What happened with the people?” Brian asked.

“My guys got rid of them for now by asking too many questions. But they’ll probably be back with more once they’ve regrouped. Some people enjoy causing trouble.” Jones patted Brian’s shoulder. “We’ll be fine. Just stay on your toes.”

Brian shrugged and stepped closer. "I'd rather be alone in bed with you, but the store must open on time."

"Or they win." Jones wasn't falling for it.

"You're right." Brian stepped back. He had to keep his priorities straight. "Tonight, I'm having dinner with my Uncle Lubby and Aunt Tilly at their ranch. Nothing fancy. No other plans today. You don't need to bring the three stooges."

"Those three are my best guys. But okay, just me. I'll stand watch out front." Jones turned on his heel and headed back to the main area before Brian could insist Jones eat dinner with them. Brian had never had a bodyguard before. Jones was no servant, and Brian wanted him to get to know his favorite aunt and uncle. Hell, Brian wanted to get to know Jones better.

The front door chimed, and Brian went to see who'd come in. His mother and little sister, Trish, were a flurry of peach and mocha today. Their hair was teased up in spooky accuracy to that old southern saying "the higher the hair, the closer to God."

How he missed Penny! She was the only truly modern woman in the family.

"It's so chaotic!" Mother said.

"We're not open yet." Brian gave her a kiss on her cheek and held his breath from the overdose of musk perfume she favored. He kissed Trish on the cheek. "Hey kiddo."

"I'm not a kid." She turned three shades of red but didn't break her ladylike shell. Trish's eyes fell on a pair of high-heeled boots in a calico pattern. "Those are perfection."

"Please, a good boot with a hooker heel. A real lady can afford boots for riding and heels for dressing up." Mother's opinions always came out like gospel, but she was the daughter of a preacher infamous for his love of hellfire sermons.

Jones walked up and nodded to the ladies. "Excuse me, but today might not be the best day for visitors and tours, Brian."

"Who are you?" Mother asked dismissively.

"I'll bet he's Brian's new boyfriend." Trish looked Jones up and down more than once.

"Actually, I'm the bodyguard. Grayson had us come in just in case," Jones said.

Brian noticed how little Jones said. The man wasn't excessive with speech in general, but Mother tended to make people nervous. Jones didn't seem the easily shaken type, but Mother was now Jones' boss' mother-in-law. No pressure there.

"I'm very safe," Brian added.

“Right. Grayson is a dear for a Yankee.” Mother gave the situation a half nod.

“How long will you be in town?” Trish put on her best pageant smile. Brian had seen it too many times and it sickened him. Most men melted. But Jones was on the wrong team.

“Until the opening at least. Don’t worry. Your brother is safe with me. But it seems there are some protestors who’ve shown some interest. Maybe it’s best if we take you ladies out the back.” Jones nodded to front window.

“Oh my.” Mother glared at the small crowd with signs that had appeared. “Your father did get cornered by the press. I told him to be silent on the topic.”

Brian kept it together. Getting his family home safely was the most important item on the list now. But those jerks just had to come when his family was there. It was no coincidence if they hadn’t gotten a quote out of Dad. “Call your driver, Mother.”

“We should stay here. We’ll be safer with the bodyguard.” Trish smiled up at Jones.

“No, you should leave because the more people there are as witnesses, the more encouragement the protestors get.” Jones let the ladies out through the stockroom.

Brian followed but texted behind their backs to his gay friends. Two could protest if they wanted to play the game. And gays could organize very vocally!

After a quick goodbye, Brian turned and kicked an empty box. “Damn, I don’t need bad press or my family cornered.”

Jones stood calmly. “They say all press is good. Don’t worry. It’s all noise. Your family name was bound to fuel some talk, but the products are great. Your sister wanted those boots. And your family came to support you. It could be worse.”

Brian chuckled. “Trish wanted you more.”

“I don’t play with women. Dom/sub is one thing, but I only do men.”

“Good answer.” Brian needed the release and leaned in, kissing Jones hungrily, and the stress melted away.

Jones gave in for a few minutes then pulled back. “Business. I was serious about the products. I don’t know heels, but those hats being unpacked looked pretty impressive.”

“Thanks. I need a minute to myself. I’ll be in the office. Then I’ll talk to the staff.” Brian took a deep breath as he walked to the small room. With a man like Jones around, the protection didn’t seem annoying so much as tempting.

* * * *

After a full day of work, Jones and team made sure all the employees got to their cars safely. The protestors had harassed people through lunch, but by three in the afternoon, they got bored bugging delivery people.

Jones let the other guys go and helped Brian lock up the shop. Brian had a nice black cowboy hat in his hand as they walked out.

“Gift for your Uncle?” Jones asked.

“Nope, you.” Brian popped the hat on Jones’ head. “Damn, now you’re even hotter.”

They got in the SUV, and Jones locked the doors, driving off silently. Safety first, plus he’d never been in this situation before. He removed the hat and set it in Brian’s lap. “I can’t accept it.”

“You like another one better?” Brian asked.

“No, it’s great. You don’t need to give me things. I’m not your boyfriend.” Jones didn’t want to get too attached.

“It’s a gift, that’s all. Don’t read too much into a hat. Consider it free advertising for me.” Brian put it back on Jones with an extra shove. “We need to ride.”

“Now?” Jones asked.

“Why not? A little riding then dinner. You can ride a horse, can’t you?” he teased.

“Of course. There are ranches and horses in California.” Jones laughed at how people thought all California had was movie stars and fancy vineyards.

Brian directed Jones to a ranch on the outskirts of Dallas. They parked by the main house, and Brian headed out toward the barn.

“Shouldn’t we let them know we’re here?” Jones wanted some sense of the security, but they were already in the barn.

“No, I told them I needed a ride first. They’re family. The hands are off so no one will be around. We can use the guesthouse to shower. I love it here. So normal.” Brian saddled a horse expertly.

Jones picked a horse and saddled it. Some things never left. As soon as his hands were working the leather, he relaxed. When he mounted, he felt a calm he hadn’t in years.

“Come on. It’ll clear your head.” Brian led the way out to the open land.

“Stay in the fence,” Jones said. He needed to do his job, but this felt more like a vacation than work.

“Relax. Uncle Lubby shoots trespassers.” Brian looked over his shoulder and winked at Jones. “So stay close to me.”

Jones nudged his horse and caught up with Brian. “Must be nice to have all this space and the quiet.”

“It’s what people make of it. Dad has five times the land and money. Uncle Lubby has a good spread and is content here. I always wanted to stay here.” Brian took a deep breath as his horse picked up speed.

Jones matched his pace. “I’d like to be content.”

All his life, Jones watched his parents struggle. Jones worked hard but never felt as if he got ahead. Certainly, he’d never found the right man. To be secure and content in all areas would make Jones feel as rich as Brian’s dad.

“You can be content. You seem pretty close.” Brian smiled. “It’s all in your head. What do you want to do? Like yourself and what you do, and you’ll be happy.”

“Being alone is okay?” Jones asked.

“Sure. Calm and confident is attractive, and you’ve got that. The rest is a state of mind.”

“Very new age for a rich Texan.” Jones turned the horse and headed back for the barn. They’d been out too far in the open.

Brian followed. “Where are you going? Don’t you like it here?”

Jones loved it so far, which was why he needed it to end. “You need to get ready for dinner. I’ll drive around to get the feel of the place. During dinner, I’ll stand guard. I like the fresh air.”

They put the horses away and gave them water. Brian was quiet, but Jones was impressed that Brian didn’t seem to mind the manual labor as they brushed down their horses.

“Your aunt and uncle don’t have staff?” Jones asked.

“Not much. A few hands are day workers. They have a housekeeper since Aunt Tilly’s arthritis got bad. They like doing things themselves. I learned more here than in college.” Brian nodded for Jones to follow him.

Inside the guesthouse, Jones took off his hat, and Brian planted a kiss on him that made him stagger back. Returning the kiss, Jones held the hot man close.

“Stop it, we’re guests here.”

Brian held Jones. “You’re not doing a patrol. You’re having dinner with me. No arguments.”

“I thought you liked to be bossed around?” Jones smiled despite Brian’s insistent mood.

“You can fuck me in the shower. We have to be on time for dinner though, or Aunt Tilly makes me wash dishes.” Brian tugged Jones by the belt toward the bathroom.

Jones gave in, stripping Brian as the sexy man returned the favor. They kissed as they stepped into the hot spray. Without power play or negotiation, they lathered each other between kisses. Their cocks hardened, rubbing against each other. Jones grabbed Brian’s wrists and pinned them to the shower wall.

“Fuck me?” Brian asked softly.

“Not now, not in a rush.” Jones kissed Brian as he rubbed their soapy cocks together. Jones desperately wanted to give in, but no protection, no play. He had to be strong.

“Please,” Brian said against Jones’ mouth.

“Nice try.” Jones moved to kiss Brian’s neck as they rocked to each other. “Come now, and I’ll fuck you tonight.”

Brian yanked his arms free and wrapped them tight around Jones’ neck, deepening the kiss so neither could speak.

Jones held Brian and took it all in. It wasn’t just sex. They could try to keep it casual, but Jones felt more for this man than he’d ever felt for a boyfriend. It made no sense, but Jones clung to the man and the growing feelings. It was like a home he’d never know. It’d end, but he wanted to pretend they had a limitless future.

Their hips worked toward the physical release, but Jones kept a shred of control as Brian’s frenzy hit. He shook and swore, fucking for more. Then Jones kissed Brian again, letting his own climax hit. Fast and powerful, Jones ground to Brian and came in an orgasmic rush. Stepping back, Jones let the water rinse his body before he lost it and pulled Brian out to the bed.

“Tonight,” Brian said.

Jones nodded as Brian rinsed off. “You’ll get it and beg for more.”

“Come on. Dinner.” Brian smacked Jones’ wet ass.

“Are you sure there will be enough food?” Jones hated to be the uninvited guest—not guest. Bodyguard. He was staff, nothing more. Jones needed to keep that in his head. Hot and great sex or not.

“Please, my aunt cooks like she has three sons. They wanted kids, but it never happened. So they’re really into each other and their ranch.” Brian tossed Jones a towel. “She’ll stuff you full of food and show you pictures of me as a kid.”

“If I was your boyfriend, you mean.” Jones dried off and got dressed before lust took hold again.

“She’s pretty observant. She’ll know you’re more than the bodyguard.” Brian smiled.

Jones wanted to ask what he was and what they were doing. But Brian had already answered that. Brian was committed to Texas. Jones lived in L.A. When Jones left for home, the fling was all over. And Brian had a plan. Jones admired the ambition. He went with a joke to cut the tension. “But your aunt has pictures of you as a baby naked on a rug in a cowboy hat, right? I need entertainment.”

“She might. I’ve got leather, assless chaps at home. I’ll wear them for you tonight if you’re good. You’ll earn it with what Aunt Tilly will put you through tonight.” Brian kissed Jones quick and put his hat on.

Chapter Five

Once safely back in his condo, Brian felt a little off. It'd gone better than expected. Too well.

"They adored you." Brian loved that his aunt and uncle took to Jones, but it made him look at things a little differently. Jones had obviously enjoyed himself at the ranch and with Brian's family. Before today, Brian could pretend Jones hated Texas and wouldn't be happy here. All of that was in Jones' head. Brian started to hope Jones might stay.

"They're just nice people. Great hospitality. Your aunt is a wonderful cook." Jones locked the door and looked for notes.

Brian waited while Jones flipped on all the lights and checked the place. "No, believe me, they're fans of you. You're normal. My parents try to get them to hobnob with the elite. My uncle isn't that type."

"Then don't take me to your parents' house, or I will stand watch during dinner then eat in the kitchen with the servants." Jones nodded. "All good. You okay? You haven't said much about the protestors today."

Brian shrugged. "No reason to upset my aunt and uncle. Besides, two can play at that game. I've got supporters."

"It's not a game, Brian. What are you thinking?" Jones took off his hat and set it gently on the table.

Not interested in a debate, Brian started to pull up Jones' shirt. "I'm thinking you promised to do something tonight. I'm thinking my aunt would adopt you if she could and that sort of man doesn't ignore his promises." Brian unbuttoned Jones' shirt and pushed it off before he kissed up Jones' gorgeous torso.

“No tricks, Brian. What are you planning? Calling the police? Let me handle it.” Jones ran his hands through Brian’s hair but didn’t pull him away.

Brian kissed over Jones’ collarbone and along his shoulder. “Do your job tomorrow. Now, you’re a sexy man who is supposed to be dominating me and screwing me senseless. In Texas, a man’s word still means something. So fuck me.” Moving behind Jones, Brian nuzzled the perfectly muscled shoulder blades. Then Brian slipped out of his shirt and pressed his chest to Jones’ back. “Unless you want to reverse tonight?” Brian wanted to feel Jones come deep inside his ass where Jones belonged, but Brian could be flexible to please Jones.

“I think we’re both aware of our true nature.” Jones reached around and snagged Brian’s belt buckle.

“So boss me,” Brian challenged.

“Get naked.” Jones pulled Brian around to stand in front of him.

Brian stripped off the rest of his clothes and stood there proud and hard. He waited for instructions, not wanting to delay the sex with punishment.

“Now mine,” Jones said.

Freeing Jones’ belt, Brian stepped very close so they were nose-to-nose. Brian yanked at the button fly. Sliding his hands around back, Brian slid his eager fingers under the boxers and slowly pushed the fabric down.

Brian knelt and eased off Jones’ boots. Then the socks and clothes were gone. Looking up, Brian never wanted this to end. He kissed Jones’ calf and inched up toward what he really wanted.

“Now you have the patience of a saint?” Jones teased.

Brian kissed Jones’ inner thigh. “I can be very good or very bad. Do you want me to be bad? Tell me what you want.” He bit the taut flesh of Jones’ thigh and watched that beautiful, long cock grow.

There were mixed messages clouding Jones’ eyes. Brian tried to read the stern expression, but Jones was good at masking. A bodyguard would need to be. Did he crave affection or want to paddle Brian now?

As his lover stayed silent, Brian decided the move was his. It could be a test of patience, or maybe they both feared taking it to the next level since they didn’t have a future. Living in

different states, not even close, they'd lose this. But Brian couldn't think about that now. He had to strike while Jones was throbbing hot.

Brian kissed Jones' hip, bypassing his erection completely. Without permission or request, he stood and kissed Jones boldly on the mouth. Thrusting his tongue in Jones' mouth, Brian baited Jones playfully.

The switch in Jones was instantaneous. He gripped Brian's shoulders firmly. Shivering, Brian gave in to the power, and Jones took what he wanted, pushing Brian to the bedroom.

Brian went face down on the bed willingly. Jones grabbed Brian's arms and pulled them behind his back. "Turn over," Jones said.

"No, I want this." Brian planted his feet and arched his ass.

"And I thought I was in charge." Jones pressed to Brian's back.

"You like the spoon position; I like doggie. You're in charge. I'm just being honest." Brian shuddered. Maybe Jones didn't care about what Brian wanted, but Brian needed to tell him. Brian heard Jones rummage in the drawer. It wasn't lube, but Jones' tongue that first teased Brian's ass. Just as Brian began to enjoy it, the tongue was gone and cool lube replaced it. Bracing to be turned, Brian couldn't resist with his arms folded behind his back.

As much as he wanted this man, in this position, Brian knew he'd enjoy anything with Jones. His cock throbbed against the blanket, wanting attention as well. Sex had never been so pure and freeing.

The rustle of a condom wrapper made Brian tremble in anticipation. He buried his face in the soft linens. Instead of a position change, Brian felt the sweet press of Jones' cock.

"Yes!" Brian relaxed and eased back to Jones.

Jones kissed Brian's shoulder. "You think about any man you want. But you're mine for now."

"What?" Brian bucked back in pleasure, but his mind processed Jones' words.

Jones reached under and stroked Brian's cock. "I've hooked up enough. Anonymous sex isn't as hot as it used to be."

He thought Brian could think of someone else? Wanted to? "It can't feel good?" Brian craned his neck to look back. "I can't move enough."

Jones released Brian's arms, and Brian instantly pushed up so he rested on one elbow and twisted his upper body. Wrapping his other arm around Jones' neck, Brian pulled his Dom in for a kiss.

When Jones gasped and returned the kiss, Brian let the heat spread. Jones' hand worked Brian's cock, but the passion went deeper.

"We can try any position you want. Please, I need this. I want it with you," Brian said against Jones' mouth.

Jones thrust hard and kissed Brian again. The pace increased, and Brian held tight as Jones drove him to a release deep inside. "Jones!" Brian shuddered.

"Poor little rich guy gets his way. What a submissive." Jones ground to Brian, fucking hard to release with a grin. "I should really punish you, but you'd like it."

Jones rolled off and Brian turned to face his man. "I would enjoy it. So would you. Your choice." Brian stretched and tried not to look too happy. Jones was annoyed. Brian didn't know how to make this better. It was selfish, but Jones could shut down the sex play at any time. One minute, Brian felt close to the hot bodyguard, and the next, there was distance.

"I'll make it up to you tomorrow. Anything you want." Brian tangled his leg with Jones'.

Jones nodded and frowned. He moved up to the head of the bed. "What's that blinking light?"

Brian glanced. "Oh, I've got a message. Who would call me at home? Everyone has my cell." He grabbed the receiver and dialed for his voicemail.

"Why do you have a landline?" Jones asked.

"My aunt set up the place for me while I was in New York." Brian started the new message.

"Go back to New York," the voice whispered.

Brian pulled the phone away. "That's weird."

Jones took the receiver and replayed the message. He punched buttons and looked at the display. "The number is blocked."

Brian shrugged and snuggled close to Jones. "Is it that bad?"

"No, not even a threat. Probably the guy who left the note. But your supporters will only instigate the protestors." Jones held Brian.

He didn't deserve Jones. Brian knew it was just stolen time. But he felt safe and wanted it to be the real thing with a possible future for them. "I like my friends showing support. It'll make me feel less alone. At least, you're tuned into the gay culture enough to have figured it out." Brian nipped Jones' shoulder.

"It fuels the fire and sends the message that there's something to protest. We need to downplay the issue. You're opening a business not campaigning for gay marriage in Texas."

Brian grabbed the blanket from the foot of the bed and pulled it onto them. "I'll call them off tomorrow, but if it doesn't help, I can always call them back."

Jones shifted the pillows. The silence made Brian crazy.

"I'm sure you have plenty of men after you in Texas. They'll protest for you and do you doggie. I'm just trying to keep you safe. I can't always do what you want. My job isn't to be your friend or fuck buddy." Jones rolled onto his side, facing away from Brian.

Brian tugged the blanket tight around him and faced away from Jones. For a spring night, things got very chilly.

* * * *

Jones hated guilt. That's why he avoided relationships. He'd learned clingy didn't help a sexy image. But Brian had gotten the position he'd wanted last night, and still, he was aloof today.

The message had Brian a little freaked out, but it put Jones on his guard, as well. Normally, danger brought couples closer together. But Jones couldn't comfort and screw Brian non-stop, no matter how much he wanted to.

When Brian sent his staff home at six the next evening, Jones did the same, expecting Brian to head back to the condo. Make up sex was what Jones needed, but first, he had to punish his rebellious sub for being distant today. Maybe Brian needed some discipline, and this was his way of getting it?

But as the last of the staff trickled out, Brian didn't go for the office. Instead, he went for the big box of rope in the middle of the floor.

"What are you doing?" Jones asked.

"I need to get this up and out of the way." Brian shook his head. "It takes some muscle. Want to help?"

"I sent my guys home. We should call it a night." Jones didn't like the exposure.

“Come on. If we both get to it, it’ll be done.” Brian looped a piece of the heavy rope and started to wrap the base of the pole with it.

“How do you get it to stick?” Jones moved closer.

“Stake it and wrap it tight. It’s for looks.” Brian made it three feet up and staked the rope.

“I’ll get a ladder from the back.” Jones retrieved the tallest one and set it up. The whole thing was crazy! But as he saw the rope overtake the pole, Jones had to admit the look added something to the room. At least, only two poles needed the treatment.

An hour later, they were a pole and a half down. The hard work had them shirtless. Jones pressed the rope tight as Brian wound it, tempting Jones without even trying. This time around Brian caught Jones in with the thick rope and crossed it over Jones’ shoulder.

“What are you doing?” Jones relaxed on the pole for a minute, but Brian didn’t let go.

Jones heard the stake go into the pole behind him. When he tried to move, Jones found himself trapped by Brian. “Don’t play. We need to get this done and go home.”

“I’ve been thinking about this.” Brian came around the pole and kissed Jones.

The pressure ignited between them even as Jones tried to avoid the kiss. Brian’s hand worked on Jones’ fly and his cock was free in seconds.

“No, Brian, not here. Not now. After that message.” Jones wanted the play, but not the real danger. He’d try anything, but the condo was safer. “You’re my sub. Obey me.”

Brian laughed. “Right. But I’m so looking forward to being punished that it’s a win-win. Last night was the best sex of my life, but that sucks because you’re going to go away. So I’m going to have my fun regardless of danger or rules. Life is too short to run and hide.” Brian knelt and sucked Jones’ cock until it throbbed.

Jones struggled against the rope but didn’t really want to escape. He’d run enough in his life. Away from Texas and parents who didn’t understand how their only child had turned out wrong in their eyes. He’d run from men who’d used him or wanted more than Jones felt was safe. But this was different. Love wasn’t safe either.

Brian nuzzled and rubbed up Jones sac.

Struggling, Jones knew what he wanted. He’d give Brian a round he’d never forget tonight. This was hot, and Jones wouldn’t shy away now. Switch play let the unexpected in, and obviously Brian embraced it.

“Easy,” Brian said. “You’ll get rope burns.”

“You’ll be raw tomorrow,” Jones replied.

“Promises, promises.” Brian swallowed Jones’ cock to the based and fucked him with his mouth.

“Oh God!” Jones couldn’t think or brace for the onslaught as Brian took what he wanted. The climax shot through Jones like lightning, and his cum filled Brian’s mouth. So much for control—the pleasure took him.

Brian kept on sucking and teasing as he enjoyed the reward. “Good. You’re so good.” He stood slowly and pulled his erection free of his jeans.

“What now? I’m tied up the wrong way.” Jones rested his head on the pole wanting more from his sexy man.

“No, I’m perfectly happy with your position.” Brian pressed his cock to Jones’ still-sensitive member. “I can get off on you so many ways. You started this, I liked the shower move.”

Jones smiled. Brian wanted him. They could be good if they could be together. “Do it quick so we can get out of here. I’ve got plans for you.”

Brian kissed Jones and rocked his hips, grinding to Jones’ erection. The aftershocks kept Jones still. Brian played for a bit then gripped their two cocks together in his palm, jerking them both off.

“You want me,” Brian said.

“Yes!”

“You want to keep me?” Brian asked.

“Yes!” Jones confessed.

“Now,” Brian gasped.

Jones watched the cum dot his stomach as Brian’s release made Jones shudder. Jones wanted to have Brian so badly it hurt, but the reality wasn’t so easy.

A shot and the sound of glass breaking took Jones’ thoughts from romantic and kinky to fear and the inability to do his job.

“Get down,” Jones demanded.

Brian went down to the floor and tried to pry the rope loose. Screeching tires went off in the distance, and Jones could breathe seeing Brian was safe. “I think they’re gone. Let me out.”

“Looks like a bullet hole.” Brian stared at the front window.

“Now, Brian.” Jones pulled hard at the rope.

“Relax. The pole blocked you.” Brian kissed Jones’ shoulder as he stood and moved to free his lover.

The second Jones was loose, he ran and looked, a bullet lodged in the pole near the ceiling. A bad shot but a warning. He needed to call the police. He needed to get dressed. But first, he pinned Brian to the pole and kissed him possessively. The adrenaline only made it hotter when Brian held him tight.

“Call the cops,” Jones whispered as he pulled away and zipped their flies.

* * * *

A police report and investigation later, Jones checked Brian’s condo carefully before they relaxed. Once they were locked inside, he checked for messages. Nothing.

“I’ll get the glass guy out there tomorrow.” Brian began to undress and eyed his pillow.

Jones knew exactly what they needed. The attack was a mood shifter, but Brian wouldn’t get away with that stunt and not pay for it. Undressing, Jones went to Brian’s closet and found the sex toy stash in a gray garment bag. Clever, no one would look there.

The leather paddle and rope—regular rope not the huge stuff Brian had used earlier. Forming a lasso, Jones twirled it as Brian climbed on the bed with his back to Jones. As soon as Brian had both feet off the floor, Jones let the rope fly and snagged both of Brian’s ankles. Jones anchored them tight, tying Brian up fast.

“What the—” Brian tried to free himself. “Stop. I’m not in the mood.”

“Tough. You let them ruin your mood, you let them win.” Jones climbed on Brian and grabbed his wrists, winding them in another length of rope. Not quite hog-tied, but Jones wanted Brian to move some. “You need to be punished for your stunt.”

“I’m sorry. You’re right. You would’ve caught the guy if I hadn’t tied you up.” Brian went into the doggie position and offered his ass, content in the rope. “I deserve it.”

“You do, and you want it.” Jones went into the drawer and put out the necessities. Rubbing lube over Brian’s cock then coating his asshole, Jones saw the posture shift as Brian’s erection grew. Brian would be a lot of work, but Jones understood this sexy Texan.

Brian didn’t say a word as Jones rubbed the paddle over Brian’s tight ass and hard cock. Jones’ arousal pounded, but discipline needed to come first. Then he’d fuck Brian senseless—Jones’ favorite way.

Looking down at the red rope marks on his body, Jones felt the fuel to spank bubble up.

“You like tying me up?” He swung the paddle.

He completed two smacks before Brian replied, “Yes, I need it.”

“You needed to be bad.” Jones delivered three more swats all over Brian’s ass.

Moaning, Brian held still. “I am bad. I endangered my family, my friends and you. For my silly dream of a store. I deserve the hate.”

Jones paused to process the confusion. So easy, so honest. “We don’t hate you. You deserve your dream, but you need to be safer about it. Those few haters out there are my job. Trust me.” Jones connected again and forced one more on the center of the cheeks.

“It’s not fair.” Brian struggled against this ropes, his voice echoing the frustration.

“Give into it. Let it go.” Jones landed the paddle over and over. “You’ll get through it.”

“And you’ll be gone!” Brian shouted. “I need to do this now, or it’ll all be gone. I can’t have it all and keep it.”

Jones paused and let Brian’s need sink in. “A man like you can have anything you want.” It wasn’t fair, but that was life. Jones knew it all too well. His life had never been fair let alone as charmed as Brian’s. His sub was learning a hard lesson. Rubbing the paddle over Brian’s sac, Jones watched Brian buck unsure what would happen.

Once Brian calmed, Jones studied his work and held his breath. The red spots were more than Jones thought Brian could take.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“More,” Brian said.

He watched the red deepen while other spots stayed pale. Jones had control, but Brian made him go too far. “No, you’ve paid for your behavior.”

“Don’t stop,” Brian insisted.

Jones kissed the spot he’d abused most and felt Brian flinch. Enough was enough.

“One more, please,” Brian begged.

A pain release was something Jones had only seen. He’d never experienced it or given it to anyone. With power and precision surging, Jones delivered a final swat where his lips had been. Brian shook, screaming at a primal level that made Jones harder.

Jones untied Brian's legs as the tension evaporated. Rolling him over, Jones kissed Brian's cock, his chest and, finally, his mouth. Brian returned the kiss hungrily. Jones set the paddle aside and knew it was time.

Taking his position between Brian's legs, Jones pushed them apart and tilted Brian's hips up. The fact that Brian was still hard made Jones need it more. Internal releases were a challenge Jones loved. Reaching for his supplies, Jones added lube to Brian's tight ass and put protection on himself.

"Jones." Brian held up his bound wrists for help.

The way Brian said it hit Jones deeper than he expected. He never wanted to be Master or Sir to Brian. They weren't meant to be strict or traditional. But Brian sure liked that cathartic pain play. After untying Brian's hand, Jones kissed where the ropes had been. "Mine."

"All yours." Brian nodded and wrapped his arms around Jones' neck. His big green eyes opened and locked on Jones'. They both needed relief, and Jones pressed his cock to the man he loved.

Standing next to the bed, Jones slid into Brian's ass and stroked his cock. The pleasure registered on Brian's face, but he kept his eyes open.

"Good," Jones said.

"You like me like this?" Brian asked.

Jones smiled and nodded. "You like your ass red."

Brian smiled back and licked his lips. "Yes. Every so often, I need a serious round. Thank you."

Squeezing Brian's cock, Jones picked up the pace. Neither would last long, and the intimacy drove him. Brian deserved a man strong enough not just to wield a paddle and fuck him but to stand up to Texas and all the stuff Jones had run from.

"You deserve better," Jones said.

"Harder." Brian trembled.

Jones jerked Brian off and fucked him harder. His own release building, Jones leaned in and kissed Brian, trying to capture as much of this man as he could before it was all gone.

Moaning, Brian gripped Jones' shoulders and lifted to encourage those hips. "Jones!" he shouted.

The cum from Brian's cock pushed Jones more, and the shudders from inside Brian triggered Jones' release before he was ready.

"Brian!" Jones fell on the sexy sub and ground to his ass like an out of control first timer. Even his first time, Jones had had more control. But that's what Brian did to Jones. He had to accept this man was his passion. Coming in Brian's ass, Jones shook and held onto the man he wanted so much it hurt.

Holding Jones, Brian encouraged the kiss as they came down.

"Doggie is good, but this is pretty great," Jones said between kisses.

"I thought you liked spoon?" Brian nipped at Jones' chin.

"That, too. Doggie is functional but always felt impersonal until you." Jones hated how anonymous that type of sex could feel, but maybe, it was just the men.

"I know, but we'll try it facing a mirror and see if you like it more." Brian winked.

The idea sparked something in Jones' satisfied body. "Okay. But for now, we should move." Jones rolled onto his back so he was fully on the bed.

Brian followed with a groan. His head rested on Jones' shoulder and that red ass shone. "It feels so good," Brian said.

Wanting to touch it, but not wanting to cause Brian pain, Jones caressed the least abused cheek. "You're full of surprises."

"Touch it." Brian curled his arms and legs around Jones.

Jones loved being wrapped together like no one could separate them. "You need lotion or something. It'll blister."

"Rub some lube there. We'll see how it looks in the morning," Brian said against Jones' neck. "I don't want to move."

Jones found a fresh packet of lube and squeezed it onto Brian's red ass. Brian shivered and held tighter. Carefully, Jones rubbed the wetness over the area. "You are so high maintenance," Jones said when he saw the smile on Brian's face.

Chapter Six

The cardboard taped over the hole in the glass bothered Brian. His shop hadn't even opened yet, and there was already a flaw. And Jones could've been killed because Brian was busy playing and he'd forgotten there was a threat. Now, Brian needed to be strong for his employees. As he stood before the staff, he saw the protestors were back and reporters were with them this time.

"We've got a few idiots out there. They don't like me; it's not about you or the shop. It's who I sleep with." Brian glanced at Jones in the crowd but kept his gaze moving.

"You're not the only queer here," replied a young man he'd hired as a cashier.

The applause made Brian feel better. He knew some of his staff were gay, but that wasn't a requirement to be hired. "Well, I didn't hire anyone for their orientation. It's your fashion sense and eye for style that got you here. We're not making a statement, other than fashion. But we're not leaving either."

Energized, the group went to work. Jones approached, and Brian felt his pulse pick up but kept his needs in check. Jones had done everything he needed, but were they totally okay? So many distractions kept them from connecting the way Brian wanted. Brian wouldn't blame Jones if he were angry.

"You should address the press. It'll help calm things down." Jones nodded to the camera crews out front. "We'll let them in and keep the protestors out."

Brian swallowed hard. "You're sure?"

"It won't go away until you tell the public what you told your employees." Jones was in full bodyguard mode. It turned Brian on, but he needed boyfriend support, not just protection.

“Okay, you’re the expert.” Brian pondered where to stand and what to say. TV wasn’t normal for him, and the butterflies took over.

He chose the roped pole with a boot display to the right of it. “Ready when they are.”

Jones got on his cell, and the bodyguard out front let the reporters through the door. The reporters came in and shook Brian’s hand. After a brief run down, they each did a quick interview for their station. Same basic questions. Brian gave them the same message with a more professional delivery. It was a business, not a statement of his personal life.

The camera crews left, and Brian breathed better, especially when the police began to move some of the protestors away and things started to feel a little more normal.

“You warned your friends to stay away?” Jones asked.

“As far as out front, yes. I told a few of them if they want to come by for support I’d appreciate it, but not signs or drama. I left their names with your guys. Or is that not safe?” Brian didn’t like feeling under siege. If it were anyone but Jones, Brian would’ve freaked out by now.

“Sure, it’s fine. You were good on TV. Strong but not militant.” Jones gave Brian a quick smile.

Brian started to melt inside. “I wish I’d thought ahead and dressed for the news.” Brian looked good but not great in his dress shirt and boots with jeans. He should’ve worn a hat, looked a little more cowboy.

“No, if you dress up for it, people can tell. It’s better to look natural.”

“But this shop is about fashion. I need more western in my wear. I should’ve borrowed your hat.” Brian winked. Being back in the store felt odd, but Brian had to be normal. He was the owner. Jones could’ve been hurt. It hadn’t seemed real and yet the broken glass was still in the trashcan.

The fact that Jones wore that hat everyday made Brian feel great and a bit possessive. Brian wanted to keep Jones and not as a bodyguard. It was crazy and selfish, but after almost a week together, Brian couldn’t deny his feelings. But talking to Jones could be tricky, getting him out of the bodyguard mode and into a relationship state wasn’t easy. Sex took center stage then.

But Jones was on the job, and his staff watched every move Jones made. He was the leader, and he had to be a professional. Brian respected that. He also wanted Jones’ opinion. Talking was professional.

Brian walked over to Jones. “My parents called. They want me to push back the opening.” It wasn’t a lie, but Brian already had his mind made up.

Jones shook his head. “No good. All you’ll do is give the haters more time to plan and cause trouble.”

They’d have more time together. Brian had considered it only from the chance to spend time with Jones. “You’re right. But the guards. Once we’re open to the public, the haters can walk right in.”

“If they cause trouble, you kick them out. I’ll work with Grayson. We’ll find you a good security guard. An off-duty cop is always good. You’ll be fine. Once the flash of the opening is behind you, those jerks’ wives will be here spending their money, and it’ll all calm down.” Jones’ brown eyes met Brian’s.

“Thanks. I feel better.” Brian smiled. “I couldn’t let anything happen to my staff or you.”

“Grayson can always extend my job if he feels things are rocky. They’ll settle down. And Grayson will be back from his honeymoon in time for the opening so you’ll be set. No one will get hurt.”

“Yeah.” Brian knew Jones was right and loved his job. This might mean a promotion for him if Grayson was impressed—back to L.A. with more money and responsibility? Jones deserved it. What went on between Brian and Jones was more than sex, Brian felt that. Jones could hide it now, but in private, it was palpable and very evident.

He wanted to ask Jones to stay. But there was no Raiders in Texas. Even if there were, Jones had made it very clear how he felt about Texas. He seemed to fit in, but that was a bodyguard’s job. Jones couldn’t forget his history.

“You must be itching to get back to L.A.” Brian couldn’t hold onto what wasn’t his. “I’m sure Grayson will take care of it. Nice to have him in the family.”

Jones opened his mouth to reply, but a flurry of noise and activity from the stockroom took both men’s attention. Aunt Tilly and Uncle Lubby hustled in from the back.

“Oh here they are. Are you okay?” Aunt Tilly hugged Brian. “You have to be more careful.”

She released Brian and hugged Jones in the same manner. Brian chuckled as Jones’ eyes widened in shock, but he returned the hug.

Jones cleared his throat. “We’re just fine, Ma’am. Thanks for the concern. Your nephew is safe.”

Uncle Lubby sighed and shook both men’s hands. “You scared us. Seeing it on the news like that.”

Brian got the full guilt bomb. “I’m sorry. I thought Mom would’ve called you. I called her this morning to ask them not to come down or worry. I thought she’d have passed that on.”

“Oh, don’t feel bad. Your Mama has her hands full with that father of hers. His health.” Aunt Tilly tapped her temple.

Grandpa’s dementia had been getting worse. Another reason to come home and spend a little time with the family. Brian knew it was a strain on everyone. The money helped, but all the money couldn’t stop old age and disease. Grandpa got the best treatment, of course. “I’ll keep you in the loop from now on. Promise. But I don’t want anything to happen to you.” Brian looked to Jones.

On his cell, Jones nodded. “We’ll take care of it.”

“Don’t fret. We’ll be fine. I got the pickup with Tilly riding shotgun with the rifle.” Uncle Lubby hugged his wife. “She’s a good shot.”

“No more shooting, please.” Jones walked back with one of his two guards from the front. “This is Lionel. He’ll follow you home, just to be sure.”

“Son, we don’t need a sitter.” Uncle Lubby waved it off.

Aunt Tilly nudged him with her elbow. “Now, stop. Penny’s husband put these men here for a reason, and the arthritis could slow down my trigger finger. It’s very nice of you, Jones. Thank you.” She hugged Brian and Jones again then tugged her husband toward the back.

Lionel gave Jones a questioning look. Jones shrugged it off. Once Aunt and Uncle were off with the added security, Brian took a deep breath. “Sorry. I should’ve called them.”

Jones smiled. “I expected your mom to do that, even if you told her to stay away. Your aunt and uncle are the type of parents everyone should have. Too bad, they never had any kids.”

“They’re great. Told you Aunt Tilly is crazy about you,” Brian teased.

“Just doing my job.” Jones squared his shoulders.

Brian sensed the staff listening in, and he wanted to have Jones to himself for a minute. “Can we talk about the opening day in private? I want to throw out some ideas and concerns.” He tried to make his sound very important.

“Sure.” Jones headed back toward the office. Brian followed and closed the door, hoping for time alone with his lover, not his bodyguard.

Jones sat in the guest chair, his stomach in knots. His own family had made no move to even call him since he’d made contact with his mother. Yet Brian’s aunt hugged Jones as if he were family. He hadn’t had anything like that in a decade.

Brian’s parents might be odd and elitist, but he had family that loved him more than danger, money or pride. “Your aunt and uncle are amazing people,” Jones said.

“I know. I missed them most of all when I was in New York.” Brian sat behind his desk. “And I appreciate the strong front for my staff, but I’m concerned things could get more intense. If the police don’t catch who fired a shot through the window...”

“All you can control is how you react. More security is fine, but if you back down, they win. It’ll only encourage them.” Jones kept his professional face in place.

“I know in my mind, that’s the right thing. But my sister will be there. Aunt Tilly will be at the opening, too.” Brian shook his head.

“And it’ll be just as dangerous if you push it back a week or three.” Jones wanted to help. He understood the conflict, but there was nowhere else to go. “Big name, big money and a big issue people can take a side on.”

“If I weren’t gay, they wouldn’t ever notice my shop even opened.” Brian chuckled to himself.

“So, publicity is good. The other good thing is you’re single. So they aren’t harassing your partner at work or making his life hell. That would make it harder for you to be strong.” The pain bit as Jones finished his sentence. He wanted more from Brian, but they’d settled into a delicate balance of sex, play and work. Jones’ career was back in L.A. and he was safe there. Anonymous like everyone else. He had friends and a routine.

“It’s made it a lot easier, having you here. You understand the issues.” Brian looked at his grand opening flyer. “Starting a business is scary.”

“I understand the gay issues and the security problems. The family stuff I’m free of, and I’ve never opened my own business. You’re braver than you know. Don’t let them throw you.” Jones so wanted to take Brian back to L.A. where they could be safe and out and together. But he couldn’t ask Brian to move, walk away from family or all that Brian had worked so hard to build.

“Seems like it should be easier. It’s not a gay bar.” Brian opened his laptop.

Jones took a chance. “If it was L.A. or New York, it would be easier. You could always start there, and once you’ve established your brand and image, Texas would still be here. They’d want you to come here and set up shop. L.A. isn’t that far.” He made it sound as casual as he could, but it was going out on a limb for Jones.

“Penny recommended that actually. I thought it over, but I wanted to start here. Western wear comes from Texas. It needs to start here and branch out. Maybe that sounds crazy, but it feels right to me.” Brian rubbed his forehead.

“No it’s not crazy. Your job is the creative vision. I’m the temporary muscle.” Jones got the message. Brian was wrapped up in his career, and that vision wasn’t flexible. He deserved to take Texas by storm because he had the courage and the talent. Jones had to let go of what he wanted and focus on his own goals. Life hadn’t been easy, but it didn’t get easier if he wallowed.

He took a minute to reflect on what mattered. He had a job he loved, and he was damn good at it. Grayson trusted Jones with Penny’s brother. Raider’s Bodyguards was his future. His potential felt good there. All Jones needed to do was work this job right through to the end.

“What are your other concerns?” Jones asked.

“You’re not just the muscle, Jones. I’d be a mess without you. The note, the message and the gunshot. I could’ve gotten you killed with my selfish sexual play, and you told me that.” Brian sat back.

Jones had to halt this negative thinking. A victim had to get mad to protect himself. Brian was approaching self-blame and self pity. “Don’t do that. I should’ve insisted you let me go. I enjoyed it. Maybe if I wasn’t so busy enjoying the sex, I’d protect you better. But no one has the right to threaten you or take a shot at you in your business. Don’t get depressed or any of that crap. Get mad and defiant. Your place will open with flair and get all the notice it deserves.”

“Flair?” Brian smiled, but it faded fast. “Sorry. Too late. I’m guilty of endangering others. For my dream. How selfish is that?”

Jones held up his hand. “I’m no therapist, but if you have the means and a good business plan to follow, you should go after your dreams. What’s wrong with that? You’ve got guts. Your dad made millions somehow. You got his daring business sense.”

“I guess. Sorry, I usually do this with Penny. We’re good at talking each other out of our own fears. What was your dream?” Brian asked.

Jones didn't want to go there. It was very personal, and he needed to get back to the professional place. At least in public. But maybe it wouldn't hurt for Brian to know how simple dreams could be.

"I grew up poor. Trailer park and a dad not too interested in work. My dreams were a nice little ranch where I could have a house and raise horses and chickens. To have what I needed and give my mom a safe, stable place to stay. I'd work it all solo if I had to. I wanted to work."

"I'm sorry, you deserved better."

"Everyone does, but now, I protect people. It's an extension of all that. No ranch or anything, but I know I can get sick, and I've got insurance. I can pay my bills. More secure than my childhood." Jones didn't want Brian to see him as the poor kid, but they had very different starting points in life. "Being gay only made it extra challenging. You know that."

Brian smiled, and it stuck this time. "My dad went nuts. My grandfather kept trying to exorcise the gay demon out of me. My mom cried. Trish was confused. But I had Penny. I had it pretty good compared to some. No one kicked me out or disowned me. Grandpa tried, but Dad refused to turn his back on blood."

"I can't wait to meet Penny. Grayson's a new man since he met her." Jones needed a mood changer. They both had to reset and get back to business. Reaching back, he flipped the knob on the door.

"We do need to get back to work." Brian smiled, despite his words.

Jones rounded the desk and pulled Brian to his feet. When Brian made a move for Jones' fly, Jones pinned both of Brian's hands behind his back. "Not that."

"I don't think my ass can take another round. Besides, people would hear that." Brian blushed.

"Liked it?" Jones let his ego puff up.

"Hell, yes." Brian kissed Jones.

That's what Jones needed now. Both of them could use a dose of affection. A make out session seemed a little high school, but Jones had never had that from a guy in high school. He'd tried so hard to be what people wanted and got nowhere. This was his prize, even if he couldn't keep Brian forever. Finally, he'd have memories of love and not just sex.

Love messed up everything but was irresistible. Jones knew his mom loved his father; she'd stayed with him no matter what. Love wasn't always good for you.

He curled his arms around Brian's waist. Then Brian snaked his arms around Jones' neck. The kiss deepened but never crossed to the sexual trigger. Their hard bodies pressed together, fully clothed. Jones kissed Brian's neck and inhaled his scent. The memory of this could keep Jones going. He was loveable and could make someone happy, but Brian needed different things.

Breaking the kiss, Jones stepped back. "I've got work to do. But you need to do what makes you happy and not worry about the rest of it, Brian. The people who really love you will support you, and the rest of them don't matter. You'll win the customers over." He adjust his hat and walked out of the office before he said something he'd really regret, like how much he was in love with Brian.

Chapter Seven

Things had been eerily calm since the shot through the window. As Brian closed up, the shop was ready for tomorrow's grand opening. More hardware was in place, and Jones had even put one of the guards on night watch out front in a car. The security system they'd installed was good, but Jones wanted to catch the offender.

Walking to the back door, Brian felt an odd loss. He was getting his dream, but it meant Jones would be leaving. "Talked to Grayson?" Brian asked.

Jones nodded. "My team is booked on a flight tomorrow evening. Grayson feels he can handle it from there. He knows what he's doing; I've briefed him. You're all set."

One more night. Brian wanted to say something. The right thing. "Thanks" was insufficient, but "I love you" was too much.

As Brian locked the back door and remotely set the alarm, footsteps echoed in the alley. Someone shouted, "Go to hell!"

In the darkness, shots rang out.

Brian felt a large form tackle him. Not Jones but one of the other guards, Lionel, whispered, "Stay down. Hit the alarm."

Nodding, Brian fumbled for the remote and hit the panic button as his heart slammed in his chest. He wasn't hurt, but what about Jones? The alarm blared so he couldn't even hear his lover's voice to be sure. Terror gripped him. Jones could be shot dead for all Brian knew.

Through the noise, he heard a struggle and a scream.

"Got him," Jones called.

Lionel stood up, freeing Brian. Uninjured, Jones had plastic restraints around the assailant's hands and feet. The gun sat on the pavement. Relieved, Brian focused in the dark. He

needed to improve the lighting out back. But it was the voice swearing from the ground that caught Brian's attention.

"You're a sinner," the old man yelled.

Brian shook his head. "Get him up!"

"The old ones are slippery. They wiggle out of handcuffs." Lionel didn't move.

"You'll burn, all of you!" The familiar voice cut through Brian.

"I know, Grandpa. I know." Brian looked at Jones.

Within minutes, they took him inside. Brian called his mother while Jones and Lionel tried to contain but not hurt the frail preacher. Sitting him in a chair, they secured his arms.

"He's got dementia?" Jones asked Brian.

"Yeah, but he knows who I am. He's with it enough to drive here. Then he gets to that "if you can't save them, kill them" mentality." Brian felt bad for his grandfather. The old man would never approve or accept Brian's sexuality, but he wasn't a murderer, at least not normally.

The police arrived and took statements. They tried to evaluate Grandpa's mental state and called an ambulance. The paramedics checked out all the men, and while Grandpa was shaken, nothing was broken.

Jones walked to Brian. "Paramedics want to take him for a psych hold and evaluation."

"He has dementia." Brian shrugged. "Thanks for handling this. Let's wait for my mom. She's dealing with this and knows Grandpa's doctors."

"Sure." Jones stepped in. "At least, it's over. A few protestors are nothing. The old man admitted to the note and the phone message. Even the drive by."

"I can't believe he has the strength to fire a gun." Brian looked at the one hundred pound man who used to be so filled out and powerful he'd scared Brian as a child.

"He's strong. I tackled him." Jones patted Brian on the back.

Brian wanted to hold onto Jones and never let go. If it wasn't for Grandpa, Brian would've done it. But that would set off the old guy again. Plus Jones had never let their relationship show in front of the other bodyguards. Brian wouldn't start that now.

One of the guards let Brian's parents in the front door, and Brian steadied himself.

"Everyone is fine," he said.

His mother walked past Brian and knelt by her father. "Daddy, are you okay?"

"We'd like to take him for an evaluation," the paramedic said.

“Oh no. He’s been diagnosed, and his doctors are very good. You just check with them.” She fussed over the old man. “What’s this? He’s tied up?”

“Ma’am, he shot at your son and three other men tonight. And your father admitted to the gun shot last week. He’s a danger.”

“He couldn’t possibly. He has a twenty-four hour home health aide. He’s supervised.” Mom’s plastered on smile felt fake to Brian.

“I shoved that new one out of the way. They can’t tie me down or force meds on me!” The old man yanked at his restraints hard enough to move the entire chair.

“New one?” Brian asked.

“Well, yes, they need a break so he gets a new one every couple of weeks. It must be a bad fit,” Mother answered.

“So if he slipped away from one, would they tell you?” the police officer asked.

“Maybe, maybe not. One did call and say he’d lost my father a couple of times last week, but they found him again. Dad was always safe. He gets lost and turned around.” Her lips quivered. “Daddy, did you do this?”

“I’m not a prisoner. I’m going to keep my family right with God or die trying.”

“Clearly, he needs to be an inpatient,” Brian’s dad commented.

“No, not in a place. A home.” She shuddered.

“Mom, he’s a danger. At his home, he has access to a car and guns.” Brian couldn’t believe her denial.

“His aim was pretty good. If we didn’t get in the way…” Jones shrugged.

The silence hung in the room.

“I know there’s a medical issue, and I waited for the family, but we have to take him in. We’ll take him to the hospital and let them do a psyche evaluation and get the doctors reports,” the officer said to Brian.

“I understand.” Brian walked the police and paramedics to the door.

As the officials left with grandpa, Brian saw Grayson and Penny pull up in her Lexus SUV. As soon as her pumps hit the pavement, Penny rushed to him and hugged Brian. “You’re okay?”

“Fine.” Brian hugged his sister and shook hands with Grayson. “Great team you sent me. I’m fine, and Grandpa didn’t even have a scratch on him.”

“I’ll get the run down from Jones. You just worry about the family.” Grayson went to work and huddled with Jones and the other guards.

Brian and Penny shared a reluctant look but joined their family in mid-drama.

“I’m calling the lawyer. How could they do that? He’s sick. And I’m not going to put my father in an institution,” mother insisted.

“Mother, please. He could have killed someone or shot himself. He’s not supposed to be driving. He could’ve crashed into a bus full of kids when he tried to reload. He needs to have limits.” Penny went over and gave her father a hug.

“So that’s what you’ll do to me? If I’m a little wild and suffer from forgetfulness, you’ll put me in a home?” Their mother’s voice caught in a sudden burst of emotion.

Penny folded her arms over her full cleavage. “You take a shot at one of my kids, and I’ll put you in a home in a heartbeat. Now, it’ll be the best home money can buy and we’ll visit you twice a week, but you won’t be free to get confused and hurt people or yourself.”

For once tonight, Brian smiled. He’d never seen his sister so forceful and decisive. It was a new Penny, or rather, the true Penny out in the open. “Marriage has done wonders for you.”

Brian was more than proud of her. He appreciated not having to be the bad guy here.

“Fine. We’ll start looking at places tomorrow.” Mother relented. “Tonight, we need to call his doctors and get him out of this mess. We’ll call about the health aide, too. He should’ve called us if the issue was this bad. We can take my father back home and keep him safe.”

Jones whispered to Grayson, who nodded. “Lionel and Mike. Go with them. We’ll keep one on the building. The opening should be quiet now. I’ll cover here with Jones. You two stick with the old man until your flight tomorrow. Home or hospital, keep him under control. Jones will get you in time.”

The men nodded and followed along. Brian didn’t envy them, but at least, Jones wasn’t babysitting all night. Brian needed to thank Jones properly.

As the room cleared out, only Grayson, Penny, Jones and Brian were left. Grayson handed the keys to Penny. “Why don’t you and your brother go home and get caught up. Order some dinner. We’ll secure things here and meet you back at Brian’s.”

Brian almost objected. He wanted to spend time with Penny, but they had a few weeks to visit with the family before going back to New York. Brian only had one more night with Jones.

But it probably wouldn't help Jones' career to reveal they'd been sleeping together. Brian had to keep it together as his world unraveled.

"Sounds good." Brian followed Penny and texted Jones to make sure he came back to the condo. No matter what, Brian would have one more night.

* * * *

After going over all his notes and every incident, Jones made sure the shop was secure. Grayson looked over the scene, and they headed out.

"Good work. It's always the last one you'd expect in this family." Grayson shook his head.

"I'm just glad I didn't break his hip," Jones admitted.

"You did your job. Anything happened to Brian and I'd never have heard the end of it from Penny." Grayson exhaled. "Hope Texas wasn't too rough on you. I appreciate you taking this job. Going home is hard."

Jones nodded. "It wasn't a problem. I worked the job, and the rest didn't factor in." He parked the rental at Brian's building. He'd seen the text and needed to see Brian, as well. But he didn't want to intrude on obvious family time.

"Come on up and get some dinner." Grayson exited the vehicle.

"Sounds good. I left some stuff here." It sounded innocent and plausible. He was the guard on the body.

Jones led the way and heard the laughter from the hallway. He knocked, and Brian opened the door. "It's about time. Penny was telling me about Grayson trying to hula."

"Hey, some things are private." Grayson walked in and kissed his wife before grabbing a slice of pizza.

Jones joined in, feeling odd, but Penny was friendly.

"I can't thank you enough for keeping Brian safe. He's a sneaky charmer like Grandpa. Glad to see he didn't give you the slip." Penny patted Jones' arm.

"Not for a second. He was very cooperative," Jones said.

"I was an angel." Brian smiled.

Penny arched an eyebrow and smiled. "Good. There's always a first time for everything."

They ate and chatted about Hawaii. Jones had nothing to offer—he'd never even seen Florida. But he could listen and dream about a trip with Brian. The couple had clearly had fun and adored each other. Grayson was a good guy, Jones was happy for his boss.

An hour later, Penny and Grayson were headed out. Penny hugged her brother. "See you tomorrow." She smiled at Jones. "You too."

"Nice to meet you, Ma'am." Jones nodded.

"You've got wheels. One more day and tomorrow you're back in L.A." Grayson shook Jones' hand.

"Yes, I'm good." Jones closed the door behind them and locked it. "Your sister is great."

When he turned, Jones got the full force of Brian hugging him tight. Those soft lips pressed to Jones' neck. He could feel all of Brian's fear and frustration.

"It's okay. It's done. I'm sorry it's your grandfather. The dementia is scary. My dad is about as bad, but a lot less religion and a lot more hate. Your dad sounded pretty reasonable. We're all okay." Jones held Brian tight, memorizing the moment.

"My mom is crazy. Grandpa could've killed someone." Brian sighed.

"Not you. I had you. Your mom is in denial, but I think your dad and Penny will straighten her out."

Brian pulled back until they were forehead-to-forehead. "One night. I'm not wasting it." He kissed Jones.

Relief and pain crushed Jones. He'd been braced for the rejection; the end had to come. Now, it had. But one last night with Brian would make it easier to survive tomorrow. "No kinky stuff tonight." He squeezed Brian's rear. No fetish play when it was their last time.

Brian pulled Jones' shirt out of his jeans. They understood each other as they made their way to the bedroom. Jones pushed Brian on the bed and licked down his sexy form from chest to calf and back, tracing every inch so he'd never forget.

"I have a request," Brian said.

Jones looked Brian in the eyes and waited. Would Brian ask Jones to stay? Jones wanted Brian to ask. When Jones had suggested Brian move to L.A., it was rejected fast. Texas was their only hope now.

"Spoon." Brian reached for the lube and protection.

"Fork." Jones returned the nonsense talk.

“No, I want the spoon position.” Brian kissed Jones and rolled a condom on his hard cock.

Jones’ entire body throbbed with need and love he couldn’t confess. Tonight was sex not love. “You’re sure? I know what position you *really* want.”

“I want this now.” Brian licked and squeezed Jones’ sac.

The lust took over, and Jones rolled Brian onto his side, kissing Brian’s neck while rubbing lube where they needed it. Jones couldn’t wait. He held Brian, drove deep and felt a completeness and need he’d only felt with Brian. Still, the adrenaline hit as Jones fucked Brian. So close and so passionate. He kissed Brian as their hips rocked to each other.

The harder he fucked, the more Jones kissed Brian. Jones feared if his mouth were free, he’d say something foolish and ruin the night. Gripping Brian’s cock, Jones jerked him off fast needing to feel the release in his lover. Brian wanted Jones, which eased the pain of loss somehow.

As Brian came in Jones’ hand, he shouted. “Don’t stop, Jones. Please.”

Jones would rather hear “don’t leave”, but he held on and didn’t stop while dropping kisses in Brian’s hair. He fucked Brian until he couldn’t think about or even feel the pain anymore. Only pleasure took up space as Jones felt Brian’s ass tighten.

“Harder,” Brian begged.

Jones slammed into Brian twice more, and the climax took over. He shuddered and pinned Brian face down on the bed as Jones ground to that tight ass. Brian groaned into the pillow and arched up for more.

As Jones caught his breath, Brian slipped out from under him.

“You’re damn good.” He kissed Jones.

“You, too.” Jones stretched and flopped onto his back. “What are you doing?”

“My turn.” Brian grabbed protection and lube.

Jones removed the used condom and put it in the garbage. “You’re forgetting who’s in charge here. You’re the sub.”

“Last night. No fetish, no rules. I fucked you on our first day.” Shrugging, Brian poured lube on Jones’ cock and balls and down his crack.

Jones lifted at the cool sensation, which only spread it more.

“Doggie?” he predicted.

“No, on your back. Your real favorite.” Brian pinned Jones chest-to-chest and took his mouth. Jones wrapped his arms around Brian’s neck and let the arousal build slowly. He’d give Brian anything.

“You’re not planning on getting any sleep tonight, I hope,” Brian whispered.

“No, I’ll sleep on the plane.” Jones wanted to extend the fun and put off the pain as long as possible. He spread his legs and tilted his hips to give Brian the access. Being a switch wasn’t so bad when his partner knew when Jones needed a little dominating. Brian was so perfect for him. Jones bit his lip to keep from saying the wrong thing as Brian’s fingers played on Jones’ ass.

The play and the kissing continued at a teasing pace until they were both hard and ready to get down to business again. Brian rocked to Jones’ ass, and Jones’ eyes closed at the perfect feeling of being stretched.

“Don’t close your eyes. You look at me.” Brian’s hand squeezed Jones’ cock hard. He slowly worked Jones’ cock, reinforcing the power to give and cease Jones’ pleasure.

Opening his eyes, Jones knew it was right. Brian looked good as they fucked. The pleasure and need hit hard, and Jones bucked up to Brian.

“Easy. Don’t make me tie you down.” Brian drove faster into Jones.

Lifting, Jones moaned. “You wouldn’t dare.” He grabbed the ass he’d paddled only a few nights before.

“Beg me for it.” Brian fucked Jones and stroked his cock simultaneously. The intimacy hit, and Jones was a goner. He came inside as his cock gave Brian the reward he wanted.

Jones waited for Brian’s release, but Brian held still, his cock hard deep in Jones.

“Come in me,” Jones said.

“Beg me to tie you up,” Brian challenged.

Jones laughed. “No, I’m fucking you next.”

“No, I’m in charge now. I’ll go slowly, make you come again on my dick before I tie you up. Unless you beg for it.” Brian bit Jones’ nipple.

“I can’t...” Jones had never done that. Two internal releases, never.

“I can try. Or you can give in and let me have my way.” Brian thrust hard.

The shockwaves rippled, but Jones wanted something more. He wanted to be kept. To have Brian tie him and keep him here forever.

“Please tie me up, Brian.” Jones left off the forever part.

“You can do better.” Brian pinched Jones’ sac.

He couldn’t resist. The need took him. “Please! Tie me up and take me as long as you want. I’m yours!” Jones shouted.

Their last night had only begun.

Chapter Eight

As soon as morning came, Brian felt the shift. Jones was up early and in the shower before Brian's eyes even opened. He checked the clock. They weren't running late. No cuddling or kissing today.

The late night had been exactly what they'd wanted. Maybe it was for the best. Brian got ready, and when Jones exited the shower, Brian entered.

Just the sight of Jones drove Brian crazy. Not seeing Jones would be painful. Brian had toyed with the idea of having the relationship talk. They'd shared personal stuff. But the rejection when Jones chose L.A. would be too much for Brian on the grand opening day.

Plus, from what Jones had shared about his family, Brian couldn't blame Jones for wanting the distance. Still, Jones seemed at ease here.

Brian needed to stick to his original plan. It would work or it wouldn't. A gesture and an invitation. What Jones would do about it was totally out of Brian's hands. Judging by how high Grayson was on Jones, career would be a factor.

* * * *

Two hours later, the door opened to the public, and Brian let himself enjoy the moment. His family, with the exception of trigger-happy Grandpa, was there supporting him. Penny was trying cowboy hats on her hubby while Grayson didn't look entirely comfortable with the style. Mom and Dad examined the more traditional boots while Trish tried on the modern fashions. Jones stood in the back with the security guard Grayson had hired on a trial basis. The other bodyguards were still watching Grandpa with one out back.

For a second, Brian felt as if he were taking up too much of everyone's time and effort, but they all looked happy in the moment. Except for Jones. That stoic face of a bodyguard was blank, and Brian hated it.

The store was filled with customers wandering around. Many mentioned they'd seen the place on the news, but no one was out front today. Maybe the shooting had scared them off. Maybe Brian had won. He didn't care either way. The store was open, and the worst was over.

Penny walked up and nudged Brian. "Looks good. Aren't you glad we sent Jones here?"

"Yes." Brian meant that more than Penny knew. "But I convinced you to take Grayson. Look how great that turned out."

"Do you think I'm blind?" She rolled her eyes at him. "You two are doing it."

Brian looked around to be sure no one was in earshot. "He's leaving for L.A., Penny. It's over. Random hookup."

"Random? He looks like someone kicked him in the gut. And you keep looking over there like you want to... Well, I'm not going to say what you look like you want to do. But you know what." She wagged a finger at him.

"Let me handle this, okay? I didn't make you marry your bodyguard." Brian knew no one else but Penny would pick up on these things, and he loved her for it. But things didn't always work out.

Uncle Lubby and Aunt Tilly walked in the front door like a Texas round of fireworks.

"Oh, it's so pretty!" Aunt Tilly gushed.

"Fine looking leather." Uncle Lubby shook Brian's hand.

Aunt Tilly hugged him. "We're so proud."

"Thanks." Brian's face burned.

"And we're so glad it was just your Grandfather off his rocker." Aunt Tilly put her hand on his chest. "I was so worried."

"Not with Jones around." Uncle Lubby nodded. "Let's go say hello then fuss over Penny's honeymoon."

Penny jumped in. "It's Brian's day, but I should say goodbye to Jones, too, since he's getting on a plane later today." She led the way to Jones.

Straightening some boots, Brian tried not to be as obvious as he felt watching his family gush over Jones. Penny listened intently to all the praise and stories.

Trish clomped up in a pair of boots so high they made her as tall as Brian. “Can I, big brother?”

“One freebie per family member. Your choice.” He smiled.

“I love them.” She hugged him. “And your boyfriend’s cute, too. Seems shy and sweet.”

Brian’s shock must’ve been all over his face because Trish laughed. “I’m not blind or as old fashioned as Mother wants. I like him.”

“Well, too bad. He goes home today.” Brian braced himself to go home alone.

“You need to throw a big fuss and keep him.” Trish turned and walked off to break in her new shoes.

Brian glanced over and saw his aunt and uncle fawning over Penny and Grayson now. Brian made his move and went up to Jones. “Got a minute?”

“Sure.” Jones followed as Brian led them back to the office. There were congratulatory gifts and baskets everywhere. But Brian had set one box aside a few days ago.

“What’s up?” Jones asked.

“I wanted to thank you. And don’t say it’s just your job. You were nice to my aunt and uncle and certainly closer to me than a bodyguard.” Brian pulled a box from under his desk. “I know you’re leaving, but you can take a little bit of Texas with you. The good part.”

Jones cleared his throat and looked down at the box. “You already gave me the hat. I don’t expect anything.”

“That’s why it’s a gift. Open it.” Brian kept at least three feet between them or he’d lose control.

Jones opened the box. “Wow.” He grabbed the leather jacket and pulled it up. “It’s great.”

“More.” Brian smiled.

Looking in, Jones saw the other part. “Chaps?”

“We never got to them. Enjoy. I thought you could use them. Your riding is a little weak so you should get out there even in California.”

“You’re a wild one.” Jones nodded. “Thanks. You really didn’t have to.”

“I know. But Texas style, *my* Texas style, looks good on you.”

Jones slid on the jacket. It fit perfectly, showing off those broad shoulders and powerful arms. “It’s great. I wish I had more time, but I’ve got to go.”

“It’s early.” Brian checked his watch. The morning had flown by already.

“I have to get the other guys and go to the hotel so they can pack up and check out. Then return the rental, check in at the airport and go through the security for the flight. I hate rushing.”

“I know. It’s not in your nature.” Brian held out his hand. “Well, thanks. Good luck.”

“Thanks.” Jones shook Brian’s hand. Brian willed Jones to say something. Anything.

“If you ever want to visit, I think Aunt Tilly would love to have you around.”

Jones pulled his hand back. “Your family is great, Brian. I’d never impose, but I wish I had an aunt and uncle like those two. I better go.” He closed the box on the chaps. He still wore the jacket as they walked back out to the front of the store and went their separate ways.

Standing behind the counter, Brian watched as Jones seemed to move in slow motion. He said his goodbyes and was out the door without a look or a smile in Brian’s direction.

Brian leaned on the counter and pretended to be okay. It was seconds before Penny stood next to him and put a hand on his back.

“Now, who looks like they were kicked?” Brian asked.

“You. Did you ask him to stay?” she inquired.

“Couldn’t. Well, sort of. It’s complicated.”

She sighed. “You’re using your brain too much. When the heart takes over, it’ll all work out. Just don’t let ego stop you. Heartbreak is worse than trampled pride.”

Taking a deep breath, Brian stood straight. “It’s up to him now. I tried.”

“Good for you. Grayson wants a word when you’re free.” Penny nodded.

Distractions were good. Brian headed over to talk to his new brother-in-law.

* * * *

Leaving Brian and the shop was harder than anything Jones had ever done. Harder than leaving his family for L.A. Harder than being eighteen in L.A., without a job or a clue. Harder than coming back to Texas.

Love was the cruel joke in life.

As he waited for the others to gather their things at the hotel, Jones checked out his new jacket. He tried out all the pockets so he wouldn’t have any issues at security. He found a scrap of paper in one. An inspection tag or security device? Jones pulled it out, ready to toss it in the garbage can. But it wasn’t trash.

He unfolded the paper and recognized Brian’s handwriting.

Jones, I can't follow you to L.A. I can't ask you to stay in Texas if you won't be happy. I'm here waiting for you. You're in charge, always. Love, Brian.

Jones felt as if someone had taken all the air out of the room. Brian wanted him to stay? After rereading the note, Jones shoved it into his jeans pocket and took a deep breath.

"You okay?" Mike asked.

"Yeah," Jones replied. "I am."

"Come on. We have to hustle. I hate the rental crap." Lionel lugged his bags.

"You're going without me." Jones grabbed the keys. "I'll drop you off, but I can't go now."

Lionel turned on his heel. "If there's a development in the case, we'll all stay."

Jones liked his crew. "No, it's not a problem with the case. I have to stay. It's personal. I'll talk to Grayson about it. Come on." Jones got behind the wheel and drove with singular purpose.

Mike shook his head in the back seat. "You know how they hate it when we cancel travel plans if it's not for the case."

"Leave it alone. It's the guy," Lionel muttered over his right shoulder.

Jones smiled. "I'll talk to Grayson."

It'd work out. It had to.

Once the men were at the drop off, Jones turned and burned rubber back to the shop. It'd been hours, but it felt like days. The grand opening was over, and things seemed normal now.

One staff member smiled at Jones. "He's in the office," she said.

Jones nodded his thanks and opened his collar a few buttons.

"It's the right thing," he said to himself. Fear and excitement mixed as Jones went back to the office.

The door was closed, and Jones knocked sharply, ready to change his life for the right for a change.

"Not now!" Brian replied.

Brian was annoyed. They weren't happy apart.

Smiling, Jones twisted the doorknob, and it wasn't locked. He opened the door. "Now."

The look on Brian's face told Jones everything he needed to know. He'd seen the look before but never dared to believe what it meant from Brian.

“Got your note.” Jones closed the door and locked it behind him.

Frozen as if his boots were made of lead, Brian looked around. “I’m serious, Jones. I can’t go to L.A. I need to be here. I might be a sub, but it won’t work for me.”

Jones moved closer and rounded the desk. “I’m staying here. We’re not normal Dom/sub, and I don’t want you to listen to me all the time. That’s not us. Switch works for us. But I need you. Here.”

He pulled Brian in and kissed him with true possession.

Brian gave in, relaxing fully and sagging against Jones.

“I love you,” Jones said as they kissed.

“Me, too. I couldn’t ask you. I wanted to, but I couldn’t move for you. How could I ask you to move for me?” Brian buried his face in Jones’ neck.

“I should’ve known.” Jones kissed Brian’s cheek. “But damn, always ask. Say anything and everything you want. We need to not mess things up.”

Brian nodded. “You’re right.”

Jones pulled Brian back to arms length and held his face with both hands. “Tell me.”

“I love you, Jones, so much,” Brian said.

“Good. Because I’ll be living off you until I find a job.” Jones laughed. He’d done this once before—picked up and changed his life in an instant. This was right. He knew it deep down.

Brian moved in closer. “You’ll be living with me forever, and I’m pretty sure Grayson will have a job for you. He said something about Raider’s Texas after you left. He’ll be here a lot with Penny anyway.”

Jones didn’t believe it. “You put him up to it?”

“Hell, no. I told him you did a great job. He was already impressed with you or you’d never have been assigned to watch my ass. So I’m sure you’ll have a job.” Brian kissed Jones’ chin.

“I should call him. I’m ditching a flight and costing the company money.” Jones reached for the desk phone.

Brian grabbed Jones’ hand and put it on Brian’s rear. “Nope, I’ll cover the costs, and we’ll have a family meeting tomorrow. Sort it all out. Get everything in the open.”

“Family?” Jones repeated.

“Yes, the only downside of me is my family. They’re crazy, but we stick together. I promise I won’t let Grandpa hurt you.” Brian hugged Jones tight. “Ready to be a Beaumont?”

Jones hadn’t belonged to a family in so long he felt lightheaded. “They might not want me.”

“It doesn’t work that way. Family happens without a choice, and you love them. That’s how mine works anyway. And you’re one up on Grayson. You’re Texas born and raised. No Yankee for me. They’ll love you. Aunt Tilly and Uncle Lubby might adopt you.” Brian kissed him.

Jones let the Texas reality sink in as he kissed his boyfriend. Family, love and a little kink. He never would’ve guessed Texas really was where he belonged.

About the Author

A lover of unusual things, Cheryl Dragon enjoys writing unique stories with sinfully hot erotic romance. Never at a loss for ideas, there are plenty of stories in her brain waiting to be written. Her two favorite book settings are Las Vegas and New Orleans...where anything can happen!

Cheryl lives in the Chicagoland area with her deaf albino cat. By day, she crunches numbers, which leaves the creative juices free for her erotic romance novels.

Author loves to talk to her readers and can be found at www.cheryldragon.com.

***Also Available from
Resplendence Publishing***

Duck! by Kim Dare

Raised among humans, Ori Jones only discovered he was an avian shifter six months ago. Unable to complete a full shift until he reaches his avian maturity, he still can't be sure of his exact species.

But with species comes rank, and rank is everything to the avians. When a partial shift allows the elders to announce that they believe Ori to be a rather ugly little duckling, he drops straight to the bottom rung of their hierarchy.

Life isn't easy for Ori until he comes to the attention of a high ranking hawk shifter. Then the only question is, is Ori really a duck—and what will his new master think when the truth eventually comes out?

Taken by the Pack by Cheryl Dragon

Phases: Book One

Danny loves Alaska, but it doesn't seem to love him back. The full Wolf Moon sparkles over Fairbanks, but he's alone for those long nights. He wants to come out of the closet and date, but his frail family might implode. All he wants is the right man in his bed.

Brandon and Justin are lovers and wolf shifters native to Alaska. They're out to protect their way of life, and sometimes that means extreme measures. When Danny's brother proposes aerial wolf hunting, Danny enters their sights. Danny was the closet case in high school, and now, he'll be their sex toy. The shifter pair is ready to do whatever it takes to stop the hunting and maybe add a sexy human man to their pack.

Bedtime Story for a Stolen Child by Ana Mayle

Stolen away from his cradle as a child, Leinad has been a plaything of the Faerie for thirty years. He has been broken and put back together so many times that he cannot even remember what he used to be. He has given up all hope of escape, until a soft breeze through his cell leads him home, only to find out that home has gone on without him. A man with Leinad's face is there in his place, with his siblings, acting out his life. A changeling. The creature who enabled his imprisonment and torture for all those years.

Daniel Tessel is a thirty year old folklorist. He is meeting his brother and sister at their family cabin, to spend the anniversary of their parent's deaths together. His biggest worry is the séance his little sister is insisting on, and trying to stave off her inevitable disappointment. That is, until he looks up during the ritual to see his own face watching him from the window. He is pulled into the consequences of a plot he cannot even remember, accused of stealing his own life. Confused, angry, and frightened beyond reason, Daniel tries to escape from Leinad, but there is something pulling them together.

Revenge and passion are two very similar things. Blood sings, lust and tempers rise, and before they know it, neither is quite sure who the real monster is anymore. Or if it will even matter in the end.

Marrick's Promise by Kim Dare

Marrick thinks that being thrown to the lions will be the ultimate adrenaline rush, and he's not disappointed. But his plan is to try everything life has to offer once. He has no intention of visiting the lions again.

Blaine and Luther don't expect to give any of the human sacrifices they share another thought once they leave the den. This man's different. They have no intention of letting this one go. The only question is, while they are willing to share Marrick with each other, are they willing to share each other with a human who could become as important to each of them as they are to each other?

Extinction by Carol Lynne

Professor of Environmental Science/Wildlife studies at UNLV, Jack McBain has spent his adult life trying to track a legend overheard during his youth. Born and raised in the Canadian Province of Newfoundland, Jack remembers his grandparents telling stories of a race of people eradicated by European settlers in 1829. According to the legend, the Beothuk people didn't die out as first thought, but were transformed into wolf shifters.

When Newfoundland wolves began to appear in great numbers, the European settlers began killing them under the guise of population control. In 1910, the last of the Newfoundland wolves was shot, making them one of the few extinct species of wolves in the world.

Following spotty leads, Jack begins to track what he believes are Beothuk/Newfoundland shifter wolves. His search leads him to the Lake Mead National Recreational Area outside of Las Vegas. There, on Spirit Mountain, he finally comes face to face with not only the shifter he's been looking for, but the man of his dreams he didn't know he needed.

Tropical Hedonism by Dakota Rebel

After a boating accident, Sean Harris wakes up staring into the eyes of a handsome doctor. Even when he discovers that he is on an island within the Bermuda Triangle, and there is no way for him to get back to his old life, he can't be too disappointed if it means being stuck with the doctor.

Dr. Wesley Carpenter cannot believe that the younger Sean Harris would want anything to do with him. After half-heartedly turning down the advances of his patient, he realizes that resistance is futile.

The men find themselves falling for each other quickly, but ghosts from their pasts and outside influences try to get in the way of their happiness. Sean and Wesley may be on the island forever, but neither is sure if that guarantees they'll be able to continue their Tropical Hedonism.

Mind F*cked by Mia Watts

Sage has the ability to read minds, but only in high passion moments when thoughts transmit at a higher frequency. But the gift is double-edged. Sage is inordinately handsome. Some might even say he's a walking orgasm. So what's a half-breed to do when every person he meets seems intent on seducing him, and how will he know if the man he chooses will love him for more than his looks?

Joe has never been the object of anyone's lust before. Now Sage, the hottest guy he's ever laid eyes on, has Joe starring in his sexual fantasies. It would be perfect if only Sage could shut up for one minute, and quit talking about his own hotness—or about how he can read minds.

Meanwhile, Joe and Sage must secure the last three Zodiac Stones and prevent their theft while they wait for exhibition. Can they put their sexual tension aside long enough to stop a clever thief? And even if they do, will Joe's heart be a casualty of their inevitable fling, or could Sage really be looking for more than a one-night stand?

Also Available from Resplendence Publishing
The Not Quite Wicked Series

***Wolf in Men's Clothing* by Dakota Rebel**

Little Red Riding Hood has nothing on Rhys. On his way to his grandmother's house, Rhys' car breaks down in the middle of nowhere. Fortunately for him, there is a big, bad rescuer watching and waiting to sweep him off his feet.

***Just Right* by Bronwyn Green**

When Department of Natural Resources officer, Gwendolyn Locke, hits a black bear on the way home from work one night, her entire view of reality changes. She discovers that shape-shifters exist, and she's just become Goldilocks to three gorgeous, very aroused men who also happen to be werebears. Being snowbound has never been so hot.

***Open Sesame* by Mia Watts**

Alister Baban overheard a business discussion that netted him and his Uncle Cassimer a lot of money. When the Simsim Group stock crashes and declares bankruptcy within weeks, the owners immediately suspect the Babans of playing dirty.

Oz Adamo, one of four brothers who owned Simsim Group, agrees to abduct Alister to obtain information and win back the lost pensions of former employees.

Tied to a bed and lusting after his captor, Alister fights the sexual attraction he has for Oz. They want information and he isn't about to give it. But Oz loves a good challenge, and shrewd, serious, sexy Alister is naked and his—at least for now.

***Heart of Ice* by Brynn Paulin**

Kai is perfectly unhappy with his life. Cast into a role as shop boy and forced into marriage to save his family, he sees nothing good in his future. In fact, his betrothed, Gerda, seems to hate everything he enjoys. Especially winter and his attraction to dominating his partners. His prospects look grim...until the Snow Queen arrives.

Wyn has spent her life alone, living vicariously through those who love winter. When she learns of Kai's predicament, she knows she must save him. If only she could save herself. She craves

his dominance, but there's one tiny thing standing in their way. No human can touch her without experiencing chilly agony. And that might bring any relationship to an icy death.

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