



## **Unwrapped**

### **By BA Tortuga**

Christian paid his sixty dollars and parked his Volvo in the fenced lot. Ten days. Ten days of parties, tequila, sun, and karaoke. Lounging by the pool, shore excursions with hot Latino guys...

He couldn't wait.

He grabbed his suitcases out of the trunk and headed for the shuttle bus that would take him to the terminal. Ten days where he wasn't Mr. Isham. Ten days where he didn't have a room of ten year olds to teach. Ten days out of fucking small town Texas and on the Rainbow Holiday Cruise.

Fucking A.

The driver helped a pair of dapper old gents onboard before the shuttle headed for the cruise terminal, and Christian watched idly out the window. There were very few families, mostly couples, men and men, women and women. There were more Hawaiian shirts and board shorts than he'd seen since his last trip to the beach, three years ago.

He saw some singles, though, including one hottie getting a bag out of a sleek black pickup. The man was tall, with a black cowboy hat pulled down to shade his face. Tight ass, jeans like a second skin, black T-shirt of joy. It was a picture right out of some cowboy porn fantasy. Christian could just lick him from top to bottom.

Then the guy turned toward him, and there was something familiar about the stubborn jaw, something oddly well-known about the set of the guy's lips. Too bad he couldn't see the shaded eyes. Christian frowned. He hadn't been cruising in years. Dallas, maybe, once a year, maybe, but this was hours away.

The bus moved on, and he was able to settle back in his seat and forget the uncomfortable niggles. If there was someone he knew, well, they were on the Rainbow Cruise, too, right? No problem.

The cruise terminal and check in were pretty straightforward.

Stand in line here.

Stand in line there.

Stand in line some more.

Easy.

Get your card. Sign for all charges you might incur. Bump into some guy. Some hot guy.

"Scuse me." *Can I lick you in apology?*

"Oh, hey, no problem." The guy turned to smile at him from under that big black cowboy hat, and the urge to lick fled pretty fast. Jesus. Who would expect Ryder Carroll to be on a gay cruise?

Christian stared a second, then it was his turn to get his picture made in front of the wheel. He turned away as fast as he could. No way.

No fucking way.

It couldn't be.

Couldn't.

That big bastard had been riding his ass for twenty fucking years.

Of course, if it was Ryder, the guy wasn't riding him now. In fact, he seemed to be running away. Fast.

That worked for him, right?

God, the man was probably one of the few het guys on board, hunting for pussies. Why would anyone do that on a Rainbow Cruise? Why would anyone be that much of a fucker?

Then again, he didn't see Ryder again through the whole check-in process. Maybe he'd been mistaken after all.

He sure fucking hoped so. Shit, he'd be in huge trouble otherwise.

Vast.

Damn it. Ryder Carroll was the town's favorite bad boy, the local mechanic, and the one person who might just be able to convince the old boy network that Christian needed to lose his teaching job. He'd have to keep an eye out. He just wanted to have a little fun, not lose his entire goddamn career.

He headed for his cabin finally, intent on dropping off his bags. He had an interior room on one of the upper levels. It wasn't as fancy as the outside rooms; he'd had to sacrifice the balcony and the window for the space. The big bed. He hoped it would get some use. Some hot, sweaty use. It had been ages since he'd had it.

He turned the corner, headed down the long hallway and... BANG. Someone slammed into him.

"Careful!"

"Shit!" Big hands closed around his arms, and a suitcase landed on his foot. "Sorry. Sorry, man. I was... Shit."

Wide brown eyes stared into his, Ryder Carroll right there, in the flesh. Just what he'd been dreading.

Christian blinked. "Ryder. Hey. I... No worries."

Fuck.

Fuck.

He wasn't in Mr. Isham mode here. The piercings were in everywhere, the ink was visible. Hell, the glasses were in the suitcase for emergencies or late at night after he'd taken his contacts out.

Ryder looked hellaciously different, too. The usual mechanic's baggy coveralls were gone and, fuck a doodle doo, the man was stacked. His guns were bulging with muscle, and Christian could count the guy's pulse in those jeans.

No fucking fair. "Good cruise, man."

"You, too." Ryder let him go like he was on fire, stepping back to grab the fallen suitcase and disappear into the stateroom across the hall.

No way.

No fair.

No way.

Christian sighed and got his door open, looking for the flyer that told him where all the good parties were going to be.

He was going to party, damn it. This was his once every three years vacation, and he deserved fun in the sun, and maybe a private moment or two that rocked his world.

And Mr. Gee-I'm-a-Superstud Riley could just go get fucked.

So there.

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Ryder got dressed for dinner, thanking all that was holy that it wasn't a formal night. He knew he looked best in jeans and a tight T-shirt, his boots and his hat. He pulled his belt through the loops on the waistband, determined not to think of his neighbor across the hall.

Christian Isham. Fuck a duck. What was the teacher doing on the Rainbow Cruise?

And why was Ryder suddenly so hot for teacher? He'd never looked twice at Christian except to taunt the man for being so not charismatic he was almost transparent.

Except the mousy little fucker... wasn't mousy anymore.

Wasn't at all.

That tight white T-shirt had exposed a shitload of secrets.

Tattoos. Pierced nipples. Ryder's cock tried to rise, and he thumped it. Dinner. Hot guys who were not Chris Isham.

Hot guys who were looking for a hot fling and a cock to blow. Surely that wouldn't be Isham's MO. Shit, the fucker was probably on the cruise as some sort of social studies experiment. That was it. Some boring assed teachers grant deal -- studying idiots on a boat.

Right. He checked his look one more time, deciding he had as much to hold over Isham's head as the man did over his. He would be fine.

Hell, it was a huge fucking ship. It's not like he had to frigging deal with the uptight little shit.

Isham didn't look as uptight with all that ink showing. Still, as much as Ryder had given him shit just to see if blood ran in Isham's veins instead of antifreeze or something, he'd never gotten a rise out of the guy. Not so much as a motherfucking peep.

Sighing, Ryder tucked his key card and a couple of condoms in his pocket and headed out.

Heading down the stairs, he saw a stunning little man with a tuxedo shirt on, transparent except for the collars and cuff. The man's back was covered in black work, the design pointing down toward the tightest ass on earth.

Shit. His body went hard and hot in a rush that almost left him breathless. Hell, yes. He'd follow that ass to dinner and hope it sat with him. He could so get him some of that. He loved a good body mod, and he knew guys who had them usually liked a little rough play, which was his thing.

Then tuxedo man turned the corner and he caught sight of the curve of jaw, the long nose. Christian Isham. Jesus fuck.

Ryder put on the breaks, heading back up the stairs. He'd go the other way down the hall, hit the bar before dinner.

The ship was already rocking when he got down to the Promenade level, the bar filled with men and women already two sheets to the wind. Ryder wouldn't mind tipsy, but that kind of sloppy drunk before supper was a little scary. He found a quieter corner and holed up with a gin and tonic, realizing how out of it he was in BF nowhere Texas.

Not that cowboys and rednecks couldn't tie one on, but normally they showed for supper mostly sober. Mostly. Besides, if Ryder really tied one on he got belligerent. He tried not to do that these days. God knew he'd done enough of the wild shit back in the day, back when he was young enough that the law'd just chuckle if he got caught raising hell. He sipped his drink, deliberately not meeting the eyes of a couple who were whispering together and trying to get his attention. He played sometimes, but he liked his guys a little more focused on him, not looking to add a third.

He saw Christian walk in, the man looking like a fucking dream -- and obviously like bait, because no less than three leather daddies started circling. His gut clenched a little with a feeling very close to jealousy, which surprised the hell out of him. Ry swallowed another sip of his drink, feeling it burn, before setting it aside. No sense getting bombed. Especially over Christian-stick up my ass-Isham. The little shit was one of those uppity types -- perfect little house, tiny little car, buttoned-up snob. Except the man was laughing right now, shaking his head at one of the bears stalking him. That and the outfit was hardly buttoned up. Jesus. It was obscene -- hell, you could see which way the man dressed from twenty feet away in those pants.

So far no one had gotten it growing, which shouldn't have been so satisfying. He was contemplating that when someone blocked his view. Which was ridiculous.

"You want to go up and get something at the buffet?" the man standing in front of him asked. Pretty. Stocky, medium height, blond. Not Christian. Shit. No, that was bad.

"No thanks, man. I want to see what they have at dinner."

"Waiters and menus." The guy winked at him, though. "If you change your mind..."

"I'll definitely look for you." Ryder let himself smile, flirt just a little. The guy was probably his type, and it was stupid not to let go a little.

"Cool."

The doors opened and people started filing into the sparkly dining room with all the tables.

Ry headed in, too, grinning at how fancy it all was. Tablecloths and crystal sat on the tables, along with more silverware than he'd ever find a use for. There were tiny knives for butter and little spoons for who knew what and some kind of fork for seafood. And really, how many glasses did one man need?

His card said table three-fifty-one, and the little hostess girl led him to a little two-top in the corner. "Pretty table, huh?"

The little gal looked at him, expectantly.

"Nice." Knowing his luck he was sitting alone. That would just be the icing on today's stress-filled cake.

"Have a nice dinner." She nodded, smiled at him, and walked off. Man, these folks worked their asses off.

He settled in, the secondary waiter coming to put his napkin on his lap and pour him water. Another waiter came and asked if he wanted something from the bar. Then Carlos, his head waiter introduced himself.

Carlos was a talker from Argentina, a heavysset man with a scarred face who could have been an enforcer for the Perons. It was fabulous thought, too, the man all covered in camo and heading through the jungle. It made him smile.

"Carlos? This is Mr. Christian. He is at this table, too." The little girl led Christian Isham right up to the table, that tightly clad crotch right in his face.

No.

No fucking way.

Ryder looked up, though, and sure enough it was really Isham. It was like it was weirdly inevitable.

Jesus, look at those eyes. Clear and blue and beautiful. Those damn glasses didn't do the man justice.

"Ryder." The man's chair was pulled out and Isham sat.

"Christian." He gripped the seat of his chair, fighting the urge to stand and run. Cowboy up was his motto.

The menus were handed to both of them, Carlos yammering about specials and what was good and what all he recommended. There was steak, and some kind of shellfish, and some weird things with prunes.

Christian smiled at the man, nodding like he was paying attention. As soon as Carlos left, Christian put his napkin on the table and set the menu aside. "If you'll excuse me, I'll leave you to your supper."

"Nah." Ryder stood. "This is more your gig, right? All prissy and shit. I have an invitation to go to the buffet."

Christian's cheeks went red hot, blue eyes narrowing. "Absolutely. Prissy is my middle name. Maybe if I'm lucky, I can find a hot waiter to play hide the plug after the late seating. It's one of my favorite games." With that, Christian grabbed his glass of wine and settled that napkin right back down, mouth set in a hard line.

His mouth fell open, a flush rising in his cheeks. His. Ryder hadn't blushed since he was thirteen. "Jesus, Isham."

He got a look, wicked and perverse and sexual as all get out. "What?"

What the hell, what? He'd known this man most of his life, and Ryder had never had a single sexual thought about him. Until now.

"You're not sexy." He blurted it out, and it wasn't what he meant at all. He meant that Christian Isham was the hottest thing on the ship, and it wasn't right, damn it. It shouldn't be happening.

The flush on Chris' cheeks went away, the lean face going pale, and suddenly it was way too quiet in the dining room and too many eyes were staring at him. That had come out so fucking loud. Christ.

Christian didn't say a word, just stood and walked away, leaving him standing there.

Ryder glanced around, and the murmur of disapproval didn't really get to him. It was more the guilt for humiliating Christian the way he had. That hadn't been fair at all, especially as hot as the man looked tonight. Biting off a curse, Ryder tossed his napkin down and got the hell out of Dodge.

Buffet here he came.

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He was an idiot.

A total fucking moron.

Christian had spent the night in his cabin drinking until he passed out; then he woke up, ordered room service and stayed put until the steward ran him out.

He wasn't sure why he'd engaged Ryder at dinner the night before. Hide the plug. What had he been thinking?

He had too much to lose, a career, a house. He just needed to keep out of the man's way altogether, have a little quiet fun, get a tan, keep his fucking head down.

He headed to the adults-only section of the ship with his sunglasses, iPod, and sunscreen, preparing for a day of sun and silence. The pool and hot tub were just what he needed to get his head back on right.

Christian settled in on an empty lounge. It was one of a pair sitting together, and the other had a towel on it, so he figured he'd lucked out. Usually couples ended up getting all the good seats.

He pulled off his T-shirt, put on his glasses and turned Nine Inch Nails up loud. Fuck, yeah.

He was working up a good case of sun when he decided to hit the pool. Someone passed him just as he tucked his iPod into its waterproof carrier, heading for the chair next to his, but he kept his eyes down. He wasn't cruising on the cruise, at least not today. Today his soul was just a little too bruised to be shown to strangers. He wasn't sure it was going to be ready until tomorrow, the day after.

Maybe not at all. He'd have to see. Later. The whole thing with Ryder had unnerved the hell out of him.

The water felt good, though. Cool and soothing, and it was a more than a little soothing, too, to his ego to see the guys around him admiring him. Several of them audibly complemented his ink. It was nice, to be appreciated, to know that guys found him hot, no matter what Ryder said.

He let himself smile, relax a little. He grabbed a glass of water, turned down the offer of an umbrella drink, and settled back in his chair.

The guy next to him looked his way, the long, muscular body flexing. Nice. Then the man frowned. "Christian? Christ. It's like a comedy of errors."

He turned to look, closed his eyes for a second, then grabbed his shirt and the big beach towel. Maybe he'd just go get a massage. God knew he needed one. His neck was like frozen rope.

"Wait, okay?" Ryder sat up, reaching out to take his arm, the long fingers wrapping all the way around. "I want to apologize for last night. I know you probably don't care, but I didn't mean it the way it came out."

Man, he hadn't known Ryder knew how to apologize. All the bastard had ever done was give Christian shit. From, like, high school on.

"No harm, no foul." Like he gave a shit whether a knuckle dragger thought he was worth noticing or not. Okay, he did, but he would never admit it to anyone else. "I'll try to keep out of your way, man."

"Yeah. Yeah, okay." Ryder stood, letting him go. "I'll leave you to it."

He sighed and gathered his shit up, heading up to the spa. Massage it was. A long one.

A really long, relaxing one.

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Ryder stared at his steward. "What?"

"It is Christmas Eve, sir. You cannot stay in here. Shoo." Sanji stared him down, which was quite a feat for a man who came from a culture that shunned eye contact with strangers. The man wanted Ryder to get out of the stateroom and go do something. Anything. The place did have kind of an... odor.

Ryder had tried to get out and party. He really had. But after every foray out of the cabin had ended in him and Christian snarling at each other, he'd gone to bed with a movie and room service and stayed there.

Looked like he was going out now, though. "Okay, Sanji. Where should I go?"

"The disco," Sanji answered with no hesitation. "Go and get sushi on the Promenade, and then go to dance."

Ryder grinned. Okay, yeah. He could do that. "Gimme five to get dressed and then the room is yours. I want one of those pig-dog towel things."

"Yes, sir. With an ornament."

"Cool."

He waited for Sanji to leave before washing up a little and sliding into black jeans, his good boots, and a button up shirt in black with a gold design on the back. Ryder grabbed his hat, checked the stubble and decided to leave it. It looked fucking hot.

He made it through the throng on the Promenade deck, getting a coffee, some sushi, and a big piece of carrot cake. A man needed his energy for drinking and dancing.

The place was wild -- people partying, dancing in the aisles, hanging onto each other. The bar was already buzzing -- the music blaring, lights flashing. Damn. Ryder blinked a little, adjusting to the low light. He'd wanted this, right? He could get his groove on here.

He ate, ordered a beer, toe tapping to the music. The beat was driving, pounding, and suddenly he wanted to get up, dance. Fuck all the stress and the weird fate-like thing going on. He was on vacation.

Ryder grinned, feeling easy in his bones for the first time the whole damned cruise. He could move and he knew it, whether it was polishing belt buckles with a cowboy on his every other year trip to Vegas, or shaking his ass on to a dance groove in a disco. His long body lent itself well to dancing somehow.

It was easy really, to stand up, push onto the dance floor and just start moving, Bodies rubbed against him --

short and tall, lean and muscled. Hot. That was it. That was the ticket.

He let the men around him rub and lean, not really touching anyone, not even that horny. He was just jonesing on the music and the movement. On being allowed to be who he was, which was a fucking luxury. A man got tired of that fucking closet.

Maybe three songs in, someone bumped against him, a little harder than the others, and he reached out, making sure the man didn't fall. His hands closed over the guy's arms.

Now, that felt nice. His captive had a solid, lean body, and moved well. Like a wet dream, actually. He could have let go, let the pretty man move on, but he didn't want to, and when he tugged a little, that sweet hard bastard moved closer.

Hands landed on his waist, their bodies fitting together like tongue in groove. Oh, hell yeah. Dancing good. They rocked together, and between the shadow of his hat and the darkness of the corner of the dance floor they'd found, Ryder couldn't see the guy's face. He could only feel.

It didn't matter. Not at all. What mattered was that this perfect little body pushed and rubbed, slid against him so good he was aching. It had been so long.

His hands slid down the lean back, barely covered with a little muscle shirt, down to find the tight ass. He grabbed a double handful, moaning a little. Tight with muscle, perfectly round, it worked for him on all levels.

He got a happy little sound that he felt more than heard.

God. He'd been so damned ready for so long, and then he'd gotten on the boat and it had all gone wrong. Looked like things were right again. Thank God.

The music slowed and they pressed together, a long, hard prick riding his thigh. Ryder pushed his leg up, really giving Mr. Hot and Ready something to rub on. Damn, that was fucking amazing.

"Oh..." Lips found his collarbone, his throat, that hot tongue moving on him like a fucking dream.

"Mmmhmm." He didn't want to talk too much. No sense in ruining the mood. That had happened too much on this cruise.

They kept moving, slow and steady, that flat little belly rubbing on his prick.

Ryder started backing the guy away from the dance floor an inch at a time, past the weird, kidney shaped couches. They needed a really dark, private space. Back in the back, in the shadows, behind the curtain. He shook his head at another couple heading the same way. No. Not this time.

This was his space. He'd puff up if he had to. He could do big, scary redneck. It was his thing. The two backed off with a chuckle, and he muscled his captive into the quieter space. Hell, yeah.

The other guy's back hit the wall, and Ryder lifted him near off his feet, pushing up with his hips. Hands cupped his head, lips on his jaw now. He moved the fraction of the inch it took to kiss that mouth, exploring the flavor of his dancing partner. Whiskey and sugar. Oh, God.

One leg wrapped around his body and, fuck, he could feel the nipple rings against his chest, teasing him. Hot little fuck.

He humped, his breath really starting to come fast. His cock ached, pressing against his zipper. One hand reached down, the heel working him hard.

"Fuck." Ryder pushed into that hand, needing the pressure, the heat. How long had it been since someone had touched him?

"Got you. So fine." The voice was familiar, the eyes finally meeting his lust-addled and dazed.

Ryder didn't let himself think. If he did, this would go bad. Real bad. Instead, he let his head fall back, closing his eyes. "Skin. I need skin."

"Uh-huh." That hand worked his jeans open, got his cock out, and started working him.

That was what he needed. That was what he craved so much that he couldn't care that he knew this was Christian Isham and that if anyone at home found out he would lose everything. He wanted.

Christian gave him what he needed, thumb working the tip on each upstroke, hand moving with the music. Damn. Damn, that touch wasn't shy at all.

He spread his legs a little more, bracing himself so he could thrust harder. Thank God he had condoms in his pocket, because he was going to reward Christian with the blow job of his life after he came.

Jesus, Christian knew how to make a man need. The man's free hand pushed into his jeans, rolled his balls, which was bold and crazy and perfect.

Ryder went up on tiptoe, the heels of his boots leaving the floor. All it took was another tug to his balls, another squeeze of his cock and he was coming, stifling his shout with a kiss, mashing his mouth against Chris'.

Christian kissed him through all the aftershocks, tongue sliding slow and easy against his. Then, as Ry tried to catch his breath, those fingers tucked him back in and gave him a pat before Christian backed away, melting into the crowd.

Shit. Ryder blinked, trying to get his bearings, trying to find the man in the swirl of bodies. It was impossible, though. The place was too damned dark.

Fuck a doodle doo. He. Christian. Yeah.

Damn.

Merry Christmas to him.

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Christian headed for the deck, sliding out the little door just off the disco, getting some air.

Oh, fuck him, that had been hot.

Nuclear hot.

Stupid and foolhardy and possibly fatal.

But whoa hot.

He leaned against the rail, gulping in air as he tried to convince his cock to calm the fuck down. How could it, though, with the smell of Ryder on his fucking hands?

He thought he might just make it after several minutes of staring at nothing, but before he could get his shit together and head for the washroom, someone came up behind him. Jesus. He wasn't that much in the fucking way was he? He almost snarled, then decided not to. He'd tempted fate enough, taking what he'd wanted.

"Sorry. Just getting some air." His voice sounded wanton as fuck. Needy. Rough.

"Mmmhmm. Made you easier to find. It was dark in there." Hard hands landed on his hips, gentle as they could be. He was turned away from the rail, and then all he could see was Ryder's hat as the man knelt before him.

"R...ryder?" His cock was going to grab the zipper with his PA and just jerk the damned thing down.

"Hush." Ryder made sure he didn't have to worry about it, opening his jeans for him, pulling his cock out.

Oh, fuck.

His prick popped out, throbbing, bobbing in Ryder's face.

"Mmm." It was a moan, long and deep and the sexiest sound he'd ever heard. Ryder rubbed one rough cheek against him before pulling a condom over his cock. He mourned the loss of heat all of the two seconds it took for Ryder to suck him in.

"Oh..." His fingers wrapped around the rail, holding on tight.

He.

That.

Whoa.

The man had talent. Ryder took him in all the way, lips sealing around the base of Christian's cock. Christian's belly went rock hard and this sound tore out of him, harsh and raw. Ryder kept hold of his hips, sucking him in and backing off, up and down.

He couldn't see anything around Ryder's hat, but he didn't have to see. All he had to do was feel.

Those huge hands found skin, his jeans sliding down just enough to bare his ass to the breeze. God, it felt good.

"Fuck..." His head fell back and the world spun, the boat tilted, and he moaned, so close.

A low sound vibrated around him, and Ryder sucked harder, one finger sliding along his ass crack. Jesus, that made his toes curl. He loved that, loved how ass-play felt so right and so naughty at the same time.

That was all it took. He shot hard, his teeth clacking together.

Ryder held him, keeping him upright, solid as a rock. His cock slid from Ryder's mouth, and the man broke all the rules by tossing the condom over the rail.

"Damn." He wasn't sure what he meant to say, but that's what came out.

"Yeah." Ryder stood up, swollen mouth kicked up on one side in a wry smile. "I lied. You're sex on two legs, man."

"I." He shrugged. He didn't want to go there. It would ruin things. "Wanna go... dance again?"

"Yeah." Ryder took his hand, fingers lacing with his. "I do."

"Cool." He nodded, but they didn't move back inside. They stood there a second, the wind buffeting them.

"I have a big ole bed in my cabin." Ryder didn't shy away from meeting his eyes. Not one bit.

"I know where that is..." He didn't look away. He wasn't ashamed.

"You do. Come on." Ryder's hand slid up under his elbow, steering him toward the nearest stairs.

The boat was busy, people everywhere, and they just pushed their way down the stairs, avoiding the pods of people. They got down to their floor, and Ryder led the way into the suite across from Christian's stateroom. It may have been on the same floor, but that was all the resemblance it bore to his cabin. The bed was huge. Bigger than the one he'd worked so hard to pay for.

He'd always known mechanics made good money, but damn. He'd picked the wrong career. He should have been a plumber or something.

"You got a towel dog." He'd kept all his so far -- from elephant to monkey.

"I did. I like the kung-fu pig look it has." Ryder picked up the towel animal with the Christmas ornament

hanging off it and carefully put it on the chest before reaching out to him.

His brain said this was a shitty idea, but his cock -- which was firmly in control -- said hello, nurse! He stepped right up, let their bodies press together. He'd thought it was good when they were dancing. Here in the quiet with just the two of them, Ryder felt like heaven. Hard, hot, and solid, the man was a wet dream.

Christian groaned, head falling back as they rubbed. *Thank you, Santa. Thank you for this amazing gift.*

Ryder panted for him, breath hot on his skin. The man was oral as all hell. Chris was incredibly grateful.

One hand was tracing his ink, following the spiky design south. The vines covered three quarters of his skin, twining together and creating an arrow. A tattoo guy with a sense of irony was worth a fortune.

"Who knew?" Ryder was making these amazed and amazing noises, touching him all over.

"No one. No one knows any of it." He chuckled, looking at Ryder's body. He'd never seen it in anything but a too-big jumpsuit. In it, Ryder was a hulking mass of man -- ham-handed and bulky. Out of it, the man was breathtaking. Long, long legs led up to lean hips, a narrow waist and a ridged belly that was obvious under the tight T-shirt. Add in the wide chest and the tattooed arms and Christian might explode from pure joy.

He grabbed Ryder's shirt, plucked at it. "Want to see."

Maybe needed to.

"Yeah." Ryder grinned like a pirate, but those fingers were shaking when the man slid the buttons from the holes.

The man made his knees weak. He helped, baring that broad, fuzzy chest. He was smooth, and he needed to know how Ryder felt against him.

"C'mere." Looked like Ryder felt the same. The man pulled him right up, smushing them together. His nipple rings dragged all along Ryder's chest, and he went up on tiptoe. Ryder kissed him, hard enough that he couldn't breathe, taking his mouth by storm. Oh, fuck. Fuck. Ryder's stubble burned so good. It was going to leave a mark.

That was okay. They had days before he had to go home. Which was good, because those fingers were leaving bruises.

Bruises.

Oh, fuck.

Hot.

Christian groaned into Ryder's mouth, letting the fine bastard know how much he needed.

Ryder grunted, turning them away from the door and toward the bed, still dancing sort of. The move brought Ryder's cock rubbing against his lower belly.

"Damn..." He wanted to feel that again, wanted to see it this time.

"Still too many clothes." Ryder was good at that mind-reading thing. Maybe it was a Christmas gift, because Christian had never noticed the man being particularly empathic before. More assholish. More something.

Still, Christmas miracles and all that. Whatever. He just wanted to fucking wallow in all those muscles.

Ryder pushed him down on the bed, then started stripping off the rest of those tight clothes, hat and boots flying. He stripped down, too. He wasn't as ripped as Ryder, but he was cut and he had the ink, the metal. If a guy was into it, it was hot enough.

"Jesus." Ryder's fingers found his nipples, plucking at them.

"Yeah." Nipples. Cock. Ball sac. One behind in that sensitive strip of flesh leading to his hole. If it didn't look so fucking weird, he'd do his bellybutton.

Ryder started searching, those hands and eyes on him everywhere. The ring in his cock got special attention, Ryder tugging it, rolling it against the skin it pierced. That made him spread, arch, offer. Fuck, he loved a man that could touch him like he wasn't going to break. Some guys were so timid with the rings.

"Yeah. Look at that." Ryder spread him wider, hunting out the ring behind his balls. Those fingers played with the ones on his sac on the way down, tugging and twisting and playing. "Christ. You're the hottest thing I've ever seen." Ryder bent to lick one of his nipples, teeth tugging, too.

"Oh, fuck. Yeah. Yeah, again." He got his fingers tangled in Ryder's hair, tugged some. "Setting me on fucking fire."

Ryder chuckled, then pulled harder before sucking the bit of flesh into his mouth.

Christian's eyes rolled back in his head, his happily recovered cock leaving wet kisses across Ryder's ripped belly. He couldn't remember the last time it had been this good. Maybe it was because it was so bad, so wrong. Maybe he just needed to let it all go for a tiny bit.

"Tell me you're into fucking." He hadn't had a hard fuck in too long.

Ryder's head snapped up, those amazing eyes meeting his. "Hell, yes."

"Oh, good. I could use one. A good fuck."

"Man, I got two, maybe three in me." That grin was insanely happy, hot as hell.

He shuddered. Honestly shuddered in pure fucking joy.

"Let me get the stuff, huh? I put condoms in my pocket, but I wasn't cocky enough for lube." Ryder left him for like, three seconds. Not long enough for any doubt to creep in.

It was worth it, too, to look at that fine, hard, tight ass. "Jesus, you're stacked."

Ryder glanced back at him, grinning. "Thanks. I like the rings, man."

"I do, too." He took his cock in hand, stroked himself nice and slow, base to tip.

"I bet. I've never been brave enough." Ryder was back with a tube of lube.

"It burns, but it's worth it." They all had been.

"Yeah. I bet you like it, huh? The burn?" Ryder reached down with his free hand, stroking Christian a little, too.

He nodded. What, he was supposed to lie? Who'd do all that if he didn't like it? It made him soar. "A little pain is a good thing."

Let the man put that in his pipe and smoke it.

"That's stunning." Ryder's thumb rubbed over his cock ring, not looking turned off at all.

Christian would have answered, but his eyes crossed, the zing and tug against his cockhead fucking perfect.

"Fuck. Distracting me." Ryder stroked down one more time, then the lube tube made a little popping sound.

"Distracting you? Shit..." He didn't remember his own fucking name.

"Gonna get you ready." He could feel it before Ryder ever touched his ass. The heat of the man's hand, the cool of the slick lube. Then one finger was pushing into him.

His legs spread, heels pressing into the mattress so he could dig in.

That one finger moved in and out before Ryder added a second. The stretch felt amazing, burning like crazy.

"Fuck, yeah. More. Feels fucking good." He fucked himself hard on Ryder's hand. When it was the fat prick, he was going to scream.

"No coming yet, man." Ryder grinned, but Christian could see the strain, the need, right there.

"I can hold it."

"Good." Those long fingers twisted a bit, hitting the sweet spot dead on.

"Yes!" His fucking abs went rock hard and he grunted the word, twisting almost violently. *Oh, please. Please, you beautiful son of a bitch. Do it again.*

Ryder didn't disappoint. He'd thought the man was good with his mouth, but that hand... Christ. If he didn't want Ryder's cock so bad, he'd beg for the whole thing.

"Good. Good." His eyes rolled and he kept moving, letting Ryder make him fly.

"Tight. Nice and hot, Chris." Ryder pulled away, then, leaving him empty and wanting. Good thing the man wasn't gone long. Just enough to glove up.

He grabbed one knee, pulled hard, spread himself wide open. He wanted that prick, slamming into him, filling him up.

Ryder moaned, fitting against him, cock pushing at his hole just like that. No time wasted. He nodded, encouraging the man. Grabbing Christian by the hips, Ryder pushed into him, cock slicked up to ease the way.

He curled up, grabbed Ryder's shoulders, and slammed back down.

"Jesus fuck!" Ryder shouted it out, starting to move, hard and fast.

Christian met every fucking thrust, chin ducked, body working hard.

Ryder bent, biting at his shoulder, his throat, making him feel it. Then the man nudged his face up and kissed him. They went after each other like starving men, like desperate fiends.

Ryder started to lose the rhythm, one hand coming down to pull at Christian's cock. Too soon. It was too soon. Fuck, he didn't want it to end. Not yet. Not something so fucking good.

"I-- gotta. I can't... Damn." Every muscle in the big body on top of him went tight, Ryder shaking with effort.

Christian gave it up, arched, ass working that fine prick as he shot his brains through his cock.

"Yes." Ryder rocked above him, cock jerking inside him.

He ended up back on the mattress, eyes rolling, heart beating but good.

Ryder slumped down on him, but not for long. The big guy moved to get rid of the condom, and he figured so long afterglow, but Ryder was back, kissing on him a little.

Oh.

Oh, okay.

Hey.

Christian pressed closer, lips clinging to Ryder's, keeping them both shut up. That was okay with Ryder, too, he could tell. No talking, no thinking. This was Christmas magic, right?

Absolutely right.

Damn it.

\*\*\*

Ryder woke up warm and hanging off the bed a little. Just one leg, but it had been a long time since he'd shared a bed. Years.

Shared a bed. Christian. Oh, God, what a stupid thing. Stupid, but so, so good.

Christian had tats. Piercings. The man was... Stunning.

Stunning and perverse and hotter than a two dollar pistol. Shit, he'd come three times last night -- the last time with Christian's fingers working his gland while he pulled and twisted the ring in the tip of Christian's cock.

They'd touched each other just about every place two guys could, and Ryder wasn't done. He could feel his cock firming up, pushing against the mattress, just at the memory. He rolled over so he could jerk at it a little, making his cock even harder.

Christian moved closer, humming softly as their skin met. One hand slid over his belly, heading for his prick in a move natural as breathing. Ryder hummed, pushing up into the touch, feeling everything tingle, from toes to the top of his head. Sensual man.

That hand wrapped around his cock, thumb rubbing idly, in slow, steady motions. Ryder spread wider, lifting up so he could get some good friction. His balls ached a little, but it was good, not bad.

"Mmm." He felt Christian's eyelashes against his chest as the man woke up, then he got to see the pretty eyes, full on.

"Morning."

"Hey. Nice hands." He was gonna keep it as light as a man could when someone was holding his dick.

"Not as good as yours." Ryder couldn't say Christian wasn't a giver, for fuck's sake.

"They like you all right." Hell, his hands, along with the rest of him, were fascinated.

Christian gave him a crooked little grin. "I might have noticed."

"Oh, good. Means I was doing something right."

"You were doing something, all right." Christian moved, straddled him, lined their cocks up like a natural.

His eyes crossed, and he bit his lip, his hands settling on Christian's hips. "So were you. I think it went like this at least once."

"At least." Jesus, the man had a glorious laugh -- deep and naughty as all get out.

The words trembled on his lips. Words like 'how did I not know this?', but he held them in.

It didn't matter. Now did.

Right this second.

He kissed Christian like there was no tomorrow, because who knew if there was even an hour from now. He wanted more. A happy groan pushed into his mouth, Christian pushing and rubbing and wrapping one hand around their cocks.

"Mmm." He added to the feeling, his hand closing over Christian's. That way they were both touching.

Damn. Christian's eyes met his and he noticed there were gold flecks in the man's eyes. They rocked together, eyes locked on each other's. It was fucking intense. Just fucking intense.

"Ryder..." Christian started jerking some, bucking against him.

"Hell, yes." He pushed up harder, his balls tight and hard.

The tug right at the tip of his cock sent him soaring over the edge. He came all over Christian's skin, painting new patterns on all that ink. His patterns, as impermanent as they were. He'd have to let go sometime soon, but for now he had this.

"Oh, fuck..." Christian's head fell forward, spine curling as the man humped.

Ryder pushed up as far as he could, biting down on Christian's skin, right at the shoulder.

Heat sprayed over his cock, splashed on his belly as Christian barked out a short cry.

Ryder fell back on the bed, panting, knowing he'd need to hit the bathroom soon. Maybe put out the don't disturb sign. "Room service?"

"God, yes. They have amazing pancakes."

"Yeah. Let me put the do not disturb sign out." Not that he was moving. He was thinking of moving. That had to count.

"I could call." Christian didn't move either.

"You could. I like pancakes. Eggs. Pineapple." Cruise ships had the best pineapple.

"Coffee. But not that nasty orange juice."

"No. No juice." He finally lifted himself up and kissed Christian hard before heading to put the 'shh, sleeping' sign out.

Christian was on the phone when he got back, ordering an obscene amount of food, giving him time to get to the bathroom.

He scrubbed up a little, did his business, brushed his teeth. There was an extra toothbrush from the little pack of extra stuff they gave you, so he laid it out for Christian. Christian was standing at the balcony when he came out, the sun shining down on the man's inked body.

"You didn't get juice, did you?" He let himself really look, really survey what he had there.

"Hmm? No." Christian was lean, but solid, the man decorated with amazing black swirls and tribal designs. Ryder was only beginning to understand the man's stamina, too, the way that little body could go and go.

He could spend some more quality time getting to know it, maybe. Ryder figured he'd like that a lot.

"Bathroom is yours if you want it."

"Thanks." Christian turned, showing him that long, pierced prick, the decorated belly. Those sensitive little nipples that he'd played with for hours.

His fingers actually twitched, but Ryder figured they needed a little time off. A little recovery. Just a little before he used them to make Christian scream again.

Now they needed a rest. Some food.

Christian stopped right before he hit the bathroom, looked at him. "If you want me to leave, just let me know. I... I wouldn't out you to anyone."

"Thanks. Thanks, man. I want you to stay, but I swear, same deal here. My lips are sealed on that."

He got a smile -- something real and bright and fucking knee buckling. Where the hell had Christian been hiding all these years?

"Cool, I'll brush my teeth and shit."

"Cool." He watched that ass disappearing into the bathroom, wondering where he'd been, too. Zipped up in his coveralls and wallowing in misery, he guessed.

Maybe it was time to bust out a little, just to see what happened.

\*\*\*

There were carols on the Promenade, egg nog on the Main deck. Games in the Riviera. Shit going on everywhere.

All Christian wanted to do was stay in Ryder's huge bed and see who could make the other one crazy first.

They had all but devoured each other, tried all sorts of crazy shit Christian had never even thought of with anyone else, and he still wanted more. Ryder wasn't

complaining, either. In fact, the man was sitting behind him on the bed, tracing the ink patterns on Christian's belly.

His abs jerked and shifted against Ryder's fingers. The man was a machine.

"So, why all the ink?" There hadn't been a lot of talking, but he could tell Ryder had been wondering.

"Couple of reasons. Partially to keep me from forgetting there's life outside the job. Partially because they're hot. Partially because it gets me off."

"Yeah. They get me off, too. Hot, honey. Real hot." Ryder slid one finger across his nipple. "So are these." That quiet little honey had snuck in somewhere between lunch and the coffee and cookies at four.

Christian's nipple tightened, just like it was trying to keep the man's attention.

Ryder pinched it a bit, rolling it between those rough fingers. The man had the best calluses.

"Damn..." He stretched up, eyes on those fingers. "Do that again?"

"This?" Ryder did, adding an extra tug to the ring that went through his flesh.

"Fuck, yes." This was the best Christmas present ever. One good enough that it made his eyes cross.

"So pretty. Your skin is amazing."

Christian blushed, one hand reaching for Ryder. "Moving up from not sexy?"

"Hey, I told you I never meant that." Ryder chuckled, warm air brushing his skin. "I just meant you were never someone I thought of when I thought sexy, and then boom. You show up here."

"I get you. I never thought... those overalls don't do you justice. At all." His skin goosepimpled up. "Now I want to fucking worship every inch."

"Any time you want." His other nipple got some serious attention, Ryder plucking at it until it ached, the skin dark and swollen.

"Oh, fuck. Fuck. Baby..." His eyes rolled back in his head and he reached for Ryder, pushed the man over.

Ryder grunted, lying back for him, letting him have whatever he wanted.

Christian took a kiss, straddling Ryder's hips so that he could touch, taste, lick all over that amazing bod. The man had a beautiful neck, strong and tanned and corded. He had to wonder where the tan had come from, because the man had it all over, and it didn't look fake.

"You sunbathe in the buff?" That was a happy making thought.

"I do." Ryder's cheeks heated, which made him blink. "I have a nice deck at my place. Private."

"Yummy. I'd pay good money to watch that." Shut up, Chris. Just Shut up.

"You would, huh?" Ryder's body undulated for him, muscles shifting smoothly under skin.

He nodded, teeth finding one dark little nipple. He nibbled, bit, teased it to hardness.

"Uhh." Ryder shifted, hips starting to rise and fall.

It would be amazing, to see a tiny little ring there, to lick the hard tip where it stretched over the metal. Ryder's hand came up behind his head, holding him there. Yeah. Someone liked that. He settled to it, tugging the tiny nipple in his teeth, then flicking the tip with his tongue.

Ryder made these amazing noises, deep and husky and needy. He'd only ever heard rough words from the man before.

He found a little rhythm, teasing one nipple, then the other. Each time he moved, their cocks bumped, slid.

"Oh, fuck, honey. Yeah. That's nice." It was more than nice. He could feel the wetness at the tip of Ryder's cock.

"You're going to feel me tomorrow." He tugged a little bit harder.

"I'll probably feel you for weeks." One hand slid down his back to touch his butt. "You'll feel me, too."

"I hope so." He pushed into the touch. "I let you do things I haven't let anyone else."

"God." Ryder kissed him, pulling him up from that wide chest to take his mouth. Those hands were hard, fingers digging into his skin so good as their tongues fought. He had bruises on his arms, on his hips and thighs. Now he'd have more. It was too damned much.

"Harder." He groaned, addicted already to that touch.

Squeezing, Ryder gave him heat and pressure and more of that crazy making touch. The man was just a force of nature.

His cock slid along Ryder's abs, ring bumping as his prick kissed that hot skin.

"You're wet. Hot." Ryder grabbed his cock, pressing it against that flat belly.

He nodded. "Want you again."

"How do you want me, honey?" Long fingers slid back to his asscrack, slipping between his cheeks.

"Is yes the right answer?" He bit Ryder's earlobe. "I could ride you, or I could bend over for you."

"Oh, God." Ryder laughed out loud, the sound pleased as all fuck. "Bend over. Please."

"You got it." They grinned together, then he went on hands and knees, ass offered to whatever Ryder could think to do with it.

"Fucking A." Ryder scrambled for the nightstand, coming back with lube.

It felt so good -- that hunger, the need, the eagerness. Made him feel like he wasn't quite as big a slut as he was being.

Ryder's hand felt amazingly hot on his skin when it rested at the small of his back, steadying him. He could smell the lube, which was strawberry or something. Then he could feel it. It slid over his hole, shockingly cool, and he felt his body tighten, ass muscles jerking a little.

"Shh. Breathe, honey. Just breathe." Ryder massaged his hole, opening him up. Every few seconds, Ryder's thumb flicked his guiche.

"So hot."

"It is. I swear to God, this is like art, honey." That thumb was finally what pushed inside him, Ryder's free hand landing a stunning slap to his ass.

His eyes flew open and shit, Christian hadn't even known they were closed. Fucking magic. "Ryder. Oh, fuck. Yes." This couldn't be real.

"Uh-huh. You beg for it, honey. I swear." That voice was raw, shredded, like Ryder needed so bad he couldn't hold steady even in his throat.

He nodded. "Please. I need you, man. Make me feel you."

"I can so do that." Another slap landed, the sound as hot as the feel.

They found a rhythm -- the slaps firm and steady, his body pushing into each one. He rocked back and forth between the invasion and the beating, and Ryder gave him everything he needed. Christian made some amazing fucking sounds if he did say so himself, eyes rolling back in his head as Ryder sent him flying.

Everything finally came together, his ass pushing back, Ryder settling behind him with that whole big

body, not just one hand. Ryder's cock felt huge when it pushed inside him.

"Jesus..." His ass settled on Ryder's thighs, the tenderness, the burn just perfect.

"Christian. Honey." Ryder's chest rubbed against his back, those hips spanking him now as Ryder began to move.

"Yes. Yes. Best Christmas present ever. I swear to God. Santa says I've been a very good boy."

Ryder's rough laugh made him grin.

"You know it. I swear, I thought... well, I was wrong."

"Yeah. Yeah, both of us. Not wrong now." Go him with the coherence.

"No. No. This is right." Ryder rocked, harder and faster, the mattress sliding a little on the bolted down bed.

Each thrust in slapped his burning ass, Ryder making him fly.

Ryder sat back a little, grabbing his hips instead of leaning on him, really going to town. Those porno noises were just fucking amazing.

He pushed himself up, using his abs to keep himself upright, drive himself down. That motion got Ryder's prick right where he needed it, pegging his gland.

"There!"

"Fuck. Oh, fuck." His body had clamped down, and Ry obviously liked it, because that cock swelled inside him, filling him deeper.

"Please. Ry. Baby. Please." He was out of his fucking mind.

"Fuck, I like that. Baby." Ryder slapped his hip, feeling the muscle there, pounding into him until he wanted to scream.

He leaned his head back onto Ryder's shoulder, his entire fucking body a taut spring.

Ryder reached down with that freed hand and touched his cock, driving against his gland one more time. At the same time.

Christian wanted to scream, but he didn't have enough air. Everything was involved in coming so hard he couldn't think. Ryder groaned, the sound almost like it had been ripped out of that heavy chest. Then that long body was folding over his, Ryder filling the condom inside him.

They slumped down onto the bed together, breathing like they'd run a marathon. Christian grabbed one of Ry's hands, brought it up to his mouth.

"God. Why the hell have I been wasting time hazing you when I could be doing this?"

"Who the fuck knows. Why was I busy acting like a prig when I could have been riding that amazing cock of yours?" He kissed one of Ry's knuckles, then another. "Tell me I can watch you sunbathe on your private deck sometime?"

It was a stretch, sure, but fuck, it was Christmas. Weirder goddamn miracles had occurred.

\*\*\*

"Ah! Mr. Christian and Mr. Ryder. Both of you at the table at once." Carlos looked so pleased, his scarred face creased in huge smile.

Ryder grinned at the waiter, nodded as he held the chair for Chris. It was New Year's Eve, and they had decided to do it up right on the last night of the cruise. Chris chatted easily with Carlos, answering questions, nodding and laughing. Ryder caught himself just looking a second. Damn.

His Chris looked like a wet dream -- loose gauzy white shirt showing off ink, tight black leather pants holding that rosy red, well-fucked little ass. Huge hickey beneath his jaw. Beautiful.

He'd started thinking of Chris as his pretty quick. His cheeks heated at the idea.

They hadn't worked out how they were going to figure this shit out, but he wasn't anywhere near giving up on it. The best part was Chris seemed to be right there with him, talking about shit like going to Albuquerque in the spring and all.

It was crazy, but he knew he could chalk a lot of their earlier problems with both of them having a lot to hide. Like called to like, and they'd had to avoid it, right?

"You're thinking again, baby." Chris' voice was like heated whiskey. "Let it go."

"Huh? Oh. Yeah." He grinned, letting Carlos put his napkin on his lap, which he'd never get used to. "What's good tonight, Carlos?"

"Tonight, the lobster and the prime rib, hmm? Also the escargot."

Chris' nose wrinkled.

"What?" Ryder laughed. "They taste like mushrooms." He'd tried them in Vegas once.

"Really? Okay, fine. I'll live dangerously. Snails and lobsters it is."

"Most good, Senior." Carlos smiled. "Champagne? For the holiday night?"

Ryder nodded. "Yeah. Yeah, I like that."

"I can handle bubbles. Absolutely."

He felt the toe of Chris' boot, nudging his ankle.

"Cool." His cock perked up, trying to take interest, even though it really ought to be at the point where it could never rise again.

They'd done things that were probably illegal in every corner of the universe. Hell, they'd missed two entire ports of call, focused on nothing but making the boat rock.

He'd have to tip the steward.

A lot.

He grinned, his cock definitely rising now. That one where he'd been inside Christian while he'd tugged on the chain Chris had clipped between his nipple rings...

"Yes, we can."

He blinked, looked over. "Whut?"

"Whatever you're thinking. We can. Absolutely."

"Oh. Oh, I was thinking about chains and rings." Oh, God. A chain from the cock ring to the nipples. "Do you think this is just about sex?"

Chris licked his lips, tilted his head. "Nope. I think it's about sex, food, and a mutual appreciation of art featuring alligators."

They'd managed to buy a lot of that on some island that they'd stopped at. Alligators, booze, and a tank top for Chris that just said 'Taken'.

"Well, there you go." They had to stay through dinner. They'd take champagne back to the room to toast the New Year. "I like it. We'll go with it."

"Once we've run through those, baby, I promise we'll find other things to base this on."

He caught those pretty blue eyes, knowing he would do the same. And there would be no more shit giving at the grocery store or the garage. "I think we can find mutual interests, yeah. Eagles music. Tattoos."

"Muscle cars. Dancing. Surprise Christmas gifts." Chris' lips parted a little. "Callused hands."

"See? Lots in common." He pushed his foot against Christian's, his breath starting to come fast.

"Tons." Chris leaned forward. "Did I mention that I had a late Christmas present for you, baby?"

"No." No, he'd remember that, he figured. "What's that?"

Warm lips moved right beside his ear. "Remember how much you liked the idea of my ass, plugged, ready for you?" Filthy son of a bitch.

"Uh-huh." He'd rhapsodized about it one night, about how he'd thought about it since Chris had mentioned it that first horrible night at dinner.

"Merry Christmas to you."

Oh, Jesus fuck. He couldn't wait to strip Chris' clothes off and see his present in person instead of just in his dreams.

He grinned at Chris, his body singing with the kind of joy he wasn't about to give up, no matter how hard it was when they got home. There was a whole world of amazing stuff he and Chris could open up. Together.

Unwrapped

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