



## **Black Mustard: Justice**

### **Dallas Coleman**

"Put 'em in youse pocket, mon 'tit fils. Them strangers, there, they won't take you 'way."

Gran'me' handed him a handful of teeny tiny black seeds, some of them trying to fall from his fingers. She wrapped her gnarled hands around his and hissed. "Non! No droppin' 'em, 'tit. Not in the house. No inviting the boogies."

Lord. Gran and her hoodoo. "Oui. Oui. I ain't gon' drop 'em."

Eloi shoved the seeds in the pockets of his good jeans, next to his lighter and the gris-gris bag his sister'd brought this morning. His hair was slick with the huile de chance Mamma'd brought over at first light.

You'd think he was dyin' or something, 'stead of going to the courthouse.

Still, all the magic might could help, huh? Leastways a little?

It weren't everyday a La Bauve got called before the judge, and Lord knew his type didn't fair so well locked away.

"Don' you worry on it none. Me, I got the hoodoo. Ain't gon' be none of mine own in the jailhouse."

"No. I ain't done nothing bad." Nothing much, really. Maybe a little beating up on them that deserved it, but just 'cause folks had schooling didn't make it all right to be wicked with a scared 'tit monde of a gal. She'd not been even old enough to drank, and still she was there

cryin' with them four big old boys grabbing at her. He'd jus' cleaned house over to the club, hadn't he? Grabbed the bat from up under the bar and went to town. Hells, if he wasn't no swamp baby, he'd not even be in this fix.

He'd be a damn hero.

All the women in his whole life were in the room now, five of 'em watching and wringing their hands -- from Gram'me' down to baby Minnie, who was jus' in the high school, black eyes huge in her sixteen year old face.

"Lawds, y'all. I ain't gon' be gone for long." Hells, he was the workin' one, him and Lucy, but Lucy had a no-account man of her own and five little boys. Zenobia was the only one of 'em worth a nickel, but that Baton Rouge nursing school cost all she had and some Eloi had, too. She'd done drove in last night, to pray over him and wash his hair with holy water.

"No, sir. Them lawyers, we ain't letting them have at you." Mamma's eyes was lit from inside, fear and worry burning her. Didn't Eloi feel bad for it, too. He was the good 'un. The solid one. The man that brought the money home, wasn't he?

But that gal he'd saved, she'd been right and truly scairt and he had to help her out, didn't he? Yes. Yes, sir.

He just wished like anything that he'd figured out them boys was big money and old Creole before he beat 'em.

Not a mudbug like him, lord no.

"I gotta go, now. I won' be long."

Please, Jesus. Make it so.

He reached into his pocket, touched his lucky lighter,  
them tiny seeds rolling 'round.

He couldn't be long.

His womenfolk needed him bad.

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"You tell me that little fuck's going to the pen, going  
to take it up the ass."

Loic looked over at Danny Roubichoux, then met  
Danny's daddy's eyes, the senior Mr. Daniel  
Roubichoux, whose spending money was, as Mr. Plante  
had explained to him, more than a piss ant baby-faced  
lawyer like himself might ever have a chance to see in  
his whole worthless life. They sat in the hallway -- the  
Roubichoux and Gordon Maille, whose mother's  
response to both her son having his arm broken and the  
accusation of rape was to write a check and tell Gordon  
to 'keep us out of it, boy'.

"We've got a rock-solid case, Dan."

Dolly Franks hadn't pressed rape charges after all, not  
against Danny or the Maille boy, either one. Loic didn't  
suppose he could blame the girl, not really. The check  
they'd handed her had a lot of zeros on it, enough zeroes  
that Loic de Hiver sort of felt sick about it.

The La Bauve man, though, he wasn't going to be  
offered hush money, no sir. That man was going to be  
hung out to dry.

Little and dark, with a bright, quick smile and not  
enough money on him to even pay for a lawyer, Eloi La

Bauve was going to, indeed, be sent to the pen and would, most likely, take it up the ass for the extreme crime of making sure Danny Roubichoux, Gordon Maille, and Endo Hollis -- who'd fled to Houston as soon as the shit hit the fan, thank you very much -- didn't gang rape a pretty little waitress who had more tattoos than juries thought an innocent gal ought.

God, Loic hated his job.

The money was good, though, and bleeding heart liberal lawyers spent their careers eating ramen noodles and wearing \$79 suits from the Men's Warehouse, getting screwed by hard-luck cases and not making the payments on their house or their Lexus, thank you very much.

Not that Loic had a Lexus, not yet. His ink from UT's law school wasn't really dry yet; hell, the only reason Plante, Miller, and Achioux had taken him on was the fact that Giles Plante had been his roommate for six years and Loic had single-handedly gotten the lazy, charming fuck through the bar exams. That was all the push he'd needed, though. He'd tried ten cases for the firm now, including one that was a sure loss. "The Silver Tongued Loic" they'd called him. He liked it. He liked making juries see his way in things. He liked winning. He liked knowing that, when the partnership committee met next fall, his chances had moved from dismal to damned good.

Pleasing these clients, though, would move damned good to a sure thing, and there was very little Loic de Hiver loved more than a sure thing.

"You just take care of it." Mr. Robichoux, Sr. snarled at him a little, his too-big, too-white dentures making him look more and more like a shark with every year. "Son, if it wasn't a done deal, Jacques Plante would never have sent this kid to do the work. He'd've sent a real lawyer."

"I said, it's a solid case. We'll get what we want."

"What I want is for that junglebunny to fry."

"Watch your language, Danny. That is not appropriate here." Or anywhere else, either. But one nasty slip of the tongue like that could turn a jury, a judge, and this was supposed to go quick and easy.

Loic saw Justice Hibbideux head down the hallway, Le Bauve beside him. Hibbideux was one of those left-leaning, bleeding hearts. There wasn't a bigger sucker in four parishes. Le Bauve was in jeans and a button down shirt, black hair slicked back, looking like he'd just slipped out of the marsh. Justice, on the other hand, was one of them throwbacks -- blond and short and square, stocky.

Square jawed.

Like a little bull.

Loic shook his head, hoping against hope that they didn't stop, didn't draw the boys into conversation. Justice looked like he was going to walk on by, but Eloi La Bauve stopped, almost vibrating with it. "Y'all gon' do this? After what y'all do to that 'tit fille?"

"Fuck you, Mudbug."

"Danny. Stop it. Hibbideux, control your client, please?"

Justice looked down his stubby little nose, which wrinkled like he smelled bad. "I hope the money's worth it. It sinks in, you know? Stains your soul."

He looked down at his hands, at the heavy gold watch that he had bought himself for Christmas, at the crisp, white shirt he wore. It was. It was worth it.

"Sticks in your craw, oui? Like bad honey." La Bauve reached into his shirt pocket, pulled out a cigarillo, then pulled a silver lighter from one pocket, tiny black seeds or dirt or what have you spilling everywhere -- landing on him, on the Roubichoux, on Gordon.

"Jesus!" He jumped up, brushing himself off, the little things flying. "You can't smoke in here! What is this mess?"

"I cain't? You sho'?" La Bauve's voice got lower, accent as thick as gumbo. "I jes' need me a puff or two." That lighter clicked, the dark, hand-rolled cigarillo lit just like that. It occurred to Loic, distantly, that his granny would have called that a shit-dipped cigarette. Shit-dipped. Lord, he hadn't thought of that phrase in ten years, easy.

Since she'd died, for sure.

Mr. Robichoux, Sr., poked him in the shoulder. "Do something, son!"

All he could do was bark out, "Hibbideux! Control him!"

"Eloi, put it out." Justice looked more amused than alarmed, honestly. Possibly more tickled than amused, even.

La Bauve blew a long, slow stream of smoke out, the scent odd, spicy, redolent of something Loic remembered from his childhood, maybe.

It wasn't tobacco, that was for sure.

Gordon sneezed. Twice. Loic, though, he coughed a little, the spice and burn carried deep in his lungs.

"Damn it."

Le Bauve took the cigarette, pinched the cherry off into his fist and closed his hand around it without even a wince. "It's better now, eh?"

"We're on the docket, Hibbideux."

"That we are. Let's go win our case, Eloi." Justice's hand looked huge somehow on the skinny man's arm. How the man didn't look scared just stunned him, really.

Eloi La Bauve was going to go to prison for assault. At least for ninety days, and that was if he was lucky.

Ninety days was a long time for a man to miss work. Long enough to lose his family home.

Still, La Bauve shouldn't have stuck his nose where it didn't belong, shouldn't have attacked a trio of wealthy, good men. Right?

"I hope you handle things in the courtroom better than you handled that situation, son."

Roubichoux was giving him a headache.

"We've got a solid case. Let's go get ready. They'll be calling us in soon."

Gordon shook his head. "I've been hearing rumors that Le Bauve's granny's got the hoodoo. That cigarette deal sure smelled like hoodoo."

"What, exactly, does hoodoo smell like, you horse's



ass?" Roubichoux, Sr. was getting red-faced. "Honestly, y'all's momma's should have listened to us and sent all you boys up East for school."

Loic wasn't sure any school would take them, no matter what they had.

"De Hiver, you tell these boys hoodoo is a sham."

Loic opened his lips to do just that, but all he could do was cough, not a single word came out. He waved his hand in apology, grabbed his bottled water that was sitting there. Damned cigar.

"Stop that coughing, now! You're supposed to be some silver-tongued damned devil!"

"You're turning a little purple, man, you okay?"

"De Hiver! You stop this nonsense."

He looked at the men, fighting for breath, trying his dead-level best to let them know what the hell was going on. It didn't work, though; the more he tried to talk, the tighter his throat got, until he felt like he was sucking air through a coffee stirrer.

Loic grunted, growled a little under his breath, then grabbed his laptop case, counseling himself to patience, and headed toward the courtroom, those damned tiny seeds falling from the case, from the cuffs in his pants. The tiny damned things had gotten everywhere. Hell, they were probably in his throat.

Daniel Roubichoux, Sr. stood, too, hand reaching to catch Loic's arm. The tanned hand just missed, Daniel Roubichoux overstepping, sliding on something, just a couple of inches in the fancy, slick shoes. That couple of inches was all it needed, though, and one foot went up,

one foot went out, and the old man went down with a bone-rattling crash.

All three of them stood there a second, staring. Then Danny reached down, "Daddy? Daddy, you okay?"

When there wasn't an answer, Loic grabbed his phone, dialed 911.

He just hoped that he could say something.

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Justice sat on the courthouse steps, lit up a Camel, and stared.

Never in ten years of his professional life had he seen a three-ring circus like this. First Eloï lights up God knows what in the foyer. Then one of de Hiver's clients falls and busts his head wide open like a ripe watermelon. That was bad enough, and he was all about just resetting the court date when Loic de Hiver -- quite possibly the most buttoned-up, close-mouthed, conservative bastard in ten Parishes -- comes up to the judge and starts screaming his name.

Not the judge's name.

Not de Hiver's name.

**His** name.

"Justice!" the man had squawked. "Justice. Justice! Justicejusticejustice!"

He'd never seen anything like it. Judge Lawrence had slammed the gavel, the police had come. Then the EMTs had come back, Loic de Hiver foaming and carrying on.

About that time -- which was the time where judge

Lawrence was making those 'let's recess' noises, Gordon Maille stepped out into the courtroom and confessed.

Just flat out confessed.

"We were going to rape her and that little junglebunny stopped us. I told them he knew the voodoo!"

Still.

Wow.

"Mercis for yo' help, Justice."

"I'm not sure I helped anyone do anything, but I'm glad I was here to witness it." Justice shook his head.

"I'm not sure I'd believe it if I hadn't."

Eloi shook his head, grinned a little. "The Lawd works in mysterious ways."

"So I hear." He sighed, shook his head. "You heading back to work tonight?"

"I am. You come in; I'll buy you a drank."

"Not tonight, my friend. I'm heading to Texas. There's a man on death row in Huntsville, and I'm helping his team with some appeals."

Not that it would work. It never worked in Texas, but it was written on his soul to serve, so serve he did. One day, he would make a difference.

"You be careful, then. Don' get stuck in the Ouest. We need you in the Bayou."

Justice blew out a long, steady stream of smoke. "Shit, Eloi, my family have been hip deep in gumbo for five generations. I'll always come home." He looked up into the sky, rubbed the back of his neck. "Smells like rain, eh?"

"Oui. Coming up a cloud. You bes' get."

Justice stood and Eloi hugged him, the scent of protective oil and swamp water, of washing soap and tobacco strong and wild and yet, somehow, extremely comforting. It was genetic, he supposed, something Cajuns were born knowing.

The scent of bayou magic.

He didn't stand to watch Eloi leave -- that was bad luck -- he just headed down to get in his truck and make the drive to Texas.

He pushed the button on his iPod when he got in, the sounds of Jen and Keith Respin's voice downloaded from his email this morning.

"Justice, here's the information you needed. We'll see you soon. Bring your praying knees."

"Ask him to bring pralines."

"Please bring my pushy, pregnant wife pralines on the way, as well."

Justice hooted, slapped the dashboard, and listened as he drove.

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"I'm sorry, Mr. de Hiver, the tests are inconclusive."

"I'm sorry, I simply don't have an explanation."

"I've sent your MRI to a specialist in Baton Rouge."

"Can you visit Houston? Possibly stay for a week or so? They have the best image technology in the country."

Twelve months, hundreds of appointments, hundreds

of thousands of dollars, and all Loic had was in his hands.

He headed up the stairs to his parents' home; there was still a room for him there. Always was. Always would be. Their son wouldn't be homeless.

No. But he would be broken, effectively mute, penniless, and desperately unemployable.

Twelve months and all he could say was a single word. "Justice."

He screamed it in his sleep. He murmured it. When he sang, it was the single word that fell from his lips. They'd checked for MS, strokes, tumors. Epilepsy, drug interaction, head trauma. Cysts. Aneurysms.

Everything.

And none of the test came up with a positive.

Not one.

Not even the psychological tests.

They could prove he wasn't faking it -- hence the sleeping test. They could prove he wasn't hiding anything about his condition and God knew his written skills were just fine.

He simply couldn't speak.

Loic nodded to his mother, who was knitting, rocking in her rocking chair and humming something. Daddy was at work at the docks. Same as he had been for thirty five years. Maybe, Daddy had mentioned, maybe there would be some work for him down there. Carrying boxes or something. Something that didn't need him talking.

Loic knew Daddy blamed him.

Loic was fairly sure he blamed himself, too. He just didn't know why exactly.

He headed into the tiny room in the back, plugged in his computer and got the dial up working. Okay, he told himself, time to get a job.

What came out was: Jus. Tice. Jus. Tice. Jus. Tice. Just."

Christ.

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"You're what?"

"You heard me, Justice. I'm pregnant. As in with child. As in heading out of this crime-infested, humid, hellhole and going back to New Mexico to live with my sister." Anna stood there, biker boots planted, Mohawk painted a bright blue.

"I thought you were queer."

"Most men do." Anna stared him down. "I'm into dicks, just like you."

"Yes, but I'm not knocked up. Where's the father?"

One tattooed shoulder shrugged. "I haven't the foggiest."

"I."

She held one hand up. "Don't, okay? I've heard it. I was at a bar, I drank a lot, I went to a big party. There was fucking, now there's a baby."

"Wow." God, he was glad he wasn't a girl.

"Yeah. So, I'm leaving. You have my week's notice. Find a new gopher."

"Hey!" He scowled over. "You're more than a gopher! You're also a lackey and one hell of a Girl Friday."

Anna flipped him off in one, slow gesture, her cracked black fingernail glinting in the light and Justice couldn't help but crack up. He did like her.

"Do I have to be nice to you now or something, since you're knocked up and giving notice? I mean, I feel like I should harass you or something. Make you run laps." Could pregnant girls run laps?

She shook her head, looking like a great big porcupine. "Hell, no. One, I don't run, even when being chased with an axe. Two, you should be kissing my boots for giving notice and not just disappearing. Hell, I was even nice to you, like in a serious way. I put an ad out on Monster last week when I found out. I have fifty seven resumes for you to look at."

He thought about growling about the fact that it had taken her three days to come talk to him, then he heard what she'd said to him. "Fifty seven? No shit?"

"Four hundred and eighty eight applicants. I only chose the ones you might like."

His eyes wide. "Did you put the salary on the ad?"

Because, shit. He could barely afford to pay himself and the rent, much less Anna. This whole life was a calling, more than anything else.

"I did." She shrugged. "Times are hard all over. Shit, there's a couple of baby lawyers, one guy with experience, even."

"No shit?"

Man, that would be helpful, someone who could litigate alongside him. Someone who'd passed the bar.

"Yeah, I put them on the top of the pile." She put the papers on his desk. "You decide which ones you want to interview, and I'll call and make appointments."

"You're sure you want to go?"

Anna nodded. "This is no place to raise a baby, Justice. I'm sorry, but this goddamn place isn't where my soul is. It's humid and stinky and there aren't any mountains reaching up over the desert. That's what I need."

"I can understand that, I suppose." There was a reason he was still in New Orleans, even after the Storm, even after everything.

"I thought you might be able to." She winked again and headed out. Justice just sighed and rubbed his forehead. Great.

Just great.

Damn it.

This was the last thing he needed right now. He was working with the Innocence Project on a newly convicted case and he thought he might be able to get her appeal to actually work.

Maybe.

If he had luck and God on his side.

At least he wasn't trying it in Texas. That was just suicide.

Justice answered a few emails, answered a couple of phone calls, then sucked it up and grabbed the pile of papers.



The top name was a kid that he'd heard rumors about -- one of those climbers who'd do anything for a reference. It was doable, but the appeal could take time...

The second name made him stop and stare, blink.

Well, he'd be damned.

Loic de Hiver.

Applying to work for **him**.

Shit fire and save matches.

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Loic pulled up into a space, looked at himself in the rearview and told himself he was not nervous.

Not.

If fucking Justice Hibbideux didn't want to hire him as a paralegal, fuck him.

God, he was scared.

He grabbed his bag, his pad of paper. The lady he'd been emailing with -- Anna -- she said they understood about his unique condition. Loic sure hoped so; Hibbideux had been there when it happened, for Christ's sake.

The law office was in a tiny, bottom floor office in an older building that seemed to have been fairly well kept up. The second floor looked like an apartment or something. He looked at the list of businesses, but they were the standards -- one architect, a dentist, one podiatrist, and a pilates slash yoga studio.

Normal.

Reasonable.

At least until you noticed that everything but Hibbideux and the architect were out of business.

Mon Dieu.

He headed in, stepping over a huge black Rottie that cocked one eye at him, curled one lip to show off huge, white teeth.

"Samson. Stop. Let the man in." The office door was open, Justice Hibbideux standing there. "Hey, Loic. Come on in. We've had break ins, so I bring him down from upstairs."

Loic nodded, held out one hand, silently. He needed this job, damn it.

Needed it bad.

"We'll meet back in my office. Anna let me know that you aren't speaking, so that's fine. I do most of my business by email and I have an answering service, otherwise all I'd do is yammer on the phone. Weird, ain't it? How life has changed? Shit, twenty years ago, none of us could imagine an office without a receptionist and now most folks don't have a frigging phone. Sit."

The office was a wreck -- papers and computers and newspapers and photos everywhere. The desk was old, the chairs older, but the desktop looked up to date. He sat, tried not to wrinkle his nose, but he knew he was caught when Hibbideux brayed with laughter.

"I know, man. It's a mess. I know where all the files are, though, and usually Anna kept me up better. She's just wasn't all here her last week and then I've been on my own, with her doing some long-distance shit for me

from Arizona. Hell, she's my answering service. You... whoever gets the position will deal with her via email a lot."

He looked at Justice -- the little bulldog man looked nervous, almost, a hint of sweat on the forehead, the beginning of dark circles under his eyes.

Loic grabbed his notebook and scratched out, "Don't be nervous. I know it's weird."

Hibbideux looked at the note, nodded. "That it is. They know what's wrong yet?"

Loic shook his head.

"That sucks. I felt bad, when I heard."

Loic shrugged. What did a person say to that, assuming he could say anything worthwhile?

"So, I don't have to ask you if you know your shit." Hibbideux met his eyes. "What I want to know is why here? Why me? I'm not your kind of lawyer."

Loic was ready for that question. Hell, he'd asked himself the question a thousand times. He grabbed his pad, scribbled, "I need a job. Big firms won't hire me because of the ADA issues. You are a sucker for a hard case. I'm a hard case. I know how to do the job. I won't screw you over and I'm good at what I do."

At least he had been.

Now he was diminished, but that was okay. He was learning to deal with that. He could do this.

Justice took the pad from him, read the note, tilted his head, then nodded. "Okay. Yeah. That's fair and honest. Job's yours, if you want it."

He blinked, honestly surprised. He'd expected to get

through the interview and then get a politely worded letter of refusal, not an offer after a couple of notes.

Justice shrugged. "You're right. You know the job, and I'm a softie. Not only that, but I like to listen to myself yammer. You're no competition."

The words stung, and he looked up to snarl, then saw the laughter in Hibbideux's eyes. Fuck.

He slowly flipped the man off, and happy laughter filled the office. "See? There you go! We can work together. I like it."

Loic nodded. They could. He could do this.

"I have one more question."

Loic nodded.

"Can you start tonight? We have a death row case that I'm just beginning the ground work on. If we leave now, we can have a meeting with Modette -- she's the accused -- and get some stuff accomplished over supper."

Hibbideux started rustling papers, moving shit around. "She was accused of killing four men in a drug store robbery -- she's got a hard core habit, but her common law husband, Rydel, there's evidence she was coerced and that he, in fact, committed the crimes. I know she deserves to serve time, but she doesn't deserve to die... Where the fuck is her file? I have a condensed file with all the pertinent info in a Tulane folder over here. I just had it in my hot little hands."

Loic shrugged his jacket off, then reached out, yanked the folder off the top of a huge pile of research, and waved it.

Justice grinned, nodded. "That's it. Start reading. I'll call down to the prison and get us in. You a coffee drinker?"

Loic nodded.

"Sugar and cream?"

He nodded again.

"Good, me too. I'll grab us each a cup and set you up an email account. Welcome aboard, man." Hibbideux headed off, cell phone on one ear, jabbering away.

Loic sat for half a second, blinked a little, then grabbed his laptop so he could make notes, send Dad an email, that sort of thing.

Looked like he had a job.

Go him.

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"Loic, man? Where the fuck are the dissertations from Debbie Mitchell and Rich Hardison? I need to read them again."

Justice pushed the folders around his desk, hunting.

His phone beeped, the text coming in from the front. "I have the Mitchell file. The Hardison file was in your briefcase."

"Why the fuck is it in my briefcase?"

Ding.

"Because you wanted to take it to a transcriptionist so you could search via word."

Oh, right.

"Thanks!" He bent over, grabbed the folder and

started flipping. He knew that Rich had said something weird about Rydel making Modette take something before the robbery. He knew it.

If it hadn't been Rich, he'd have to hunt deeper.

Damn it.

He muttered under his breath, searching through page after page, trying to build something out of this case.

Anything.

One hand landed on his shoulder, startling him, and he jumped, looked up into the eyes of the man who had become the single most important man in his practice in a very short five weeks. It had taken them one road trip to figure out that Loic was the Felix to his Oscar.

Honestly, Justice would have bet that Loic would never have come back for day two -- which, in truth, was defending a group of prostitutes that had castrated a brutal pimp and was some of the most fun he'd had in court in years. Those girls were fierce.

Justice grinned. "Dude, what's up?"

Loic pulled out a set of cards that he kept in his pocket for simple things. "Lunch."

"Yeah? You want to go together or do you have a date?"

Loic flipped him off, slow and lazy.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's hell, being a queer pro-bono lawyer that can't talk."

Loic's eyebrow lifted, lips twisting, then the phone came out, fingers flying fast and furious. When he didn't look down at the beep, Loic stared at him and he stared back. "What?"

Loic pointed. Firmly.

He looked down, grinned at the message.

"What's your excuse, asshole?"

"Asshole? Listen to you! I remember when you wouldn't stoop to calling me anything but Hibbideux. Now you're texting perversities at me."

Loic stared him down.

"I bet that's like... sexual harassment or something."

More staring.

"Lunch. Shrimp at Duvet's?" They both liked it there, it was quiet, quick, good, and had free wi-fi, so Loic could text away and they could chat.

Loic nodded, handed him the Mitchell file, the papers marked with dozens of pink and orange sticky notes, all scribbled on in Loic's blocky handwriting.

"You still need this or is it mine?"

Loic tapped the post-it note on the front cover. "Don't fuck with my tabs, Justice."

"Right. You still need it."

He grabbed his wallet, his phone, his iPad. "Come on, fearless wonder, let's eat. Maybe you can move your lips and pretend to talk this time."

The sound of Loic's hand swatting his ass made him cackle as they headed out.

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Loic was searching through miles of electronic documents, hunting something -- anything that would help them get Modette off death row. Weird, wasn't it?

He'd never seen himself doing this, but he'd talked to that poor woman -- well, okay, she'd talked, but he was learning about that, about listening.

About hearing.

And she'd had things to say. Jesus. How Modette had been so high that she'd thought they were on a carnival ride, medical reports from beatings, vaginal tears, burns. It hurt his feelings, hurt his soul, but that woman had a joke for them every time they came in, had a smile for him, a hug for Justice.

"I'm not scairt." She told them. "I ain't scairt to meet Jesus, but it ain't right, them telling me when I got to die. 'Sides, I can help women in here, help them find goodness and real life."

She had been helping, too. Teaching classes, taking classes, speaking about the dangers of heroin. It was honorable.

Loic couldn't believe someone with a soul like hers could be a cold-blooded murderer.

A cup of coffee and a paper-wrapped sandwich appeared at his elbow, Justice dropping it off on the way across the office.

He watched the stocky little banty rooster man move. Every day was a long day, every case got Justice's attention, and every morning when Loic got in, Justice was here already, pitch black coffee in one hand, cigarette in another, stubby fingers clacking on the keyboard, answering the last few hours emails, sending editorials to some poor newspaper, writing another senator.



They'd discovered that they worked together like a dream, too. Justice was a bulldog -- refusing to stay down, no matter how many times the law or the conservatives or the big money knocked him down. Justice believed in his clients -- each and every one of them -- and was willing to bleed for them. Loic had never known a man like that before, and he was fairly sure he never would again. When he added in his own skills -- research, organization, and a not-altogether surprising skill for spying, they were an amazing team.

Loic was more than a little bit in love -- if not with the man's body, then with the man's drive.

He knew Justice was like him -- the man was the go-to guy for the Alliance here -- and he thought Justice would be interested, if he made the offer, but the fact was, Loic wanted this job, needed the work way worse than he needed a piece of ass.

Justice turned, looked back at him, saddlebags under the man's eyes. "You good, cher?"

He nodded, that little endearment making his mouth dry. He was. Justice needed a nap, though. He could tell.

"Excellent. It's catfish. I'm going to get my shit ready for court in the morning."

He lifted his hand, made the A-Okay sign. He'd be here.

Watching.

Working.

Wishing.

\*\*\*

Justice sat on the balcony of his apartment, staring out at the lights, the Friday night folks coming home from work, going out to supper. The heat was weighing on him, the humidity in the air so thick that showering just made it worse. On a normal night, he could smell the spice from Zyedco's on the corner, smell the river like a low-level, weirdly comforting funk that permeated everything. Smell the flowers from a foot away from his head, their perfume heady and perfect and belonging nowhere on earth but right here.

He took another shot of his bourbon.

It wasn't a normal night, though.

It wasn't at all.

He hadn't even bothered to take off his slacks, his button-down, even his shoes when he'd locked up for the weekend, stumbled upstairs with a pounding head and tear-blurred eyes and grabbed a bottle and a low ball glass. His tie was off, but it had been off downstairs, before he ever got the call.

Jesus, life wasn't fair.

He heard the knock like it was from a million miles away, then he heard the scrape of the deadbolt scratching along. He didn't look.

He didn't have to.

There was one man in this city with a key to his place; one man who'd have seen the locked office and thought to worry.

Loic's worried, pinched face appeared in the door.  
"Justice?"

"You ever find it ironic that the only word you can say is my name, cher?"

Loic scribbled. "You ever find it ironic that your name is the only legal term that makes sense? What the fuck is wrong?"

"Modette."

Loic's head tilted, eyebrows lowering, and one of those long hands made a curious motion.

"Heart attack. This morning. Massive. She didn't even make it to the infirmary."

Loic stumbled forward. "Justice!"

Justice was fairly sure Loic meant 'shit' or 'fuck', maybe 'goddamn', since that was the right amount of syllables.

He nodded, the tears coming close again. "She just died, cher. I was there with her, not twelve hours earlier, and she was singing to me, telling me some of her bullshit stories." And he wasn't ever going to be able to help her.

Loic sat next to him, one hand on his thigh, and Justice reached down, needing to hold onto something. Loic was solid, warm, just what he needed.

"God damn it, ain't I ever going to make a difference? To anyone? We keep fighting and fighting and, if some asshole with money and delusions of grandeur don't get in our way, then the good Lord does."

It wasn't fair.

It wasn't. Modette had deserved her story to be out there, to teach her classes.

Loic didn't say a word -- like Loic could, for fuck's

sake -- but that hand stayed on him, holding on.  
Touching him. Like a rock.

"I mean it." He poured another couple of fingers, offered Loic the glass, pleased when the man took it.  
"We fight and fight, and shit still happens. I just... fuck, I'm mad. I can't believe we're not going to run up to the prison and go see her Monday."

That hand shifted, rubbing his thigh, and Justice took it as a sign to keep going, keep talking.

"We do this and do this -- nobody fucking respects us, how hard we work, how we're trying to make things fair and decent and good in the world. Assholes are making a fortune being assholes and you and me? Shit." He wasn't starving -- hell, if he was honest, he wasn't even close to hurting -- but it wasn't fair, damn it.

Loic shot his drink, hand still right there.

"She wasn't perfect, cher, I know this, but she was my friend." Somehow or the other, they all became his friends. He leaned down, put his head in his hands, let himself wallow in it a minute.

They were off work hours, weren't they?

Shit yes.

Off work and mourning and drinking.

\*\*\*

Loic watched and listened, the rambles a familiar song, something he had in his bones, now.

Justice rang in him, balls deep.

He hummed and let Justice rant and reminisce while

he luxuriated in the feel of that rock-hard thigh against his palm. The way the muscles jumped and jerked made him a little stupid, really, a little dry-mouthed.

A lot hard.

His thumb was on the seam of Justice's jeans, rubbing in the slowest line, touching and feeling all at once. This close Justice smelled like Ivory soap and tobacco, whiskey and leather.

He licked his lips, swallowed his moan and the need to lean down and rest his head in Justice's lap, inhale deep, suck in Justice-flavored air, all in the same motion.

One of Justice's fingers -- ink stained and square -- traced the line of his cheek. "Shit, you're fine, cher. You should drink whiskey more often."

He knew he blushed; he could feel his skin heat. Still, he shrugged, unable to not lean a little, move toward that touch. "Justice."

Justice nodded. "Yeah, cher?"

That sweet hand moved again, touching him so right. Oh, please. He whispered the word, but what came out was "justice" again.

Somehow, it was okay, though, because Justice's finger moved to outline his lips and he opened up for it, wrapped around it.

Sucked.

Oh, fuck, Justice tasted so fucking good. And the moans. The deep, bourbon-soaked hunger sounds filled the air, and he'd done it, him.

Broken and fucked up and still.

Justice wanted him.

"Cher." Justice's eyes liked to burn the place down, the stare like a flame licking between them.

He nodded, and the motion slipped more of Justice's finger into his lips, let him suck just that much better.

"Been wanting. Been wanting to touch."

Well, he was right here. Available, even, and hard as a rock. He let Justice's finger pull free with an audible pop, then spread his arms. "Justice."

Seriously.

"Cher... You sure?"

He'd never been so sure of anything in his entire fucking life. Still, it looked like Justice wasn't going to get the clue until Loic climbed up into the man's lap, let his mouth drop down, kissing Justice like it was a condemned man's last wish.

Oh. Better.

\*\*\*

Justice groaned and his high ball glass hit the balcony, rolling off and clattering against the window boxes.

He couldn't.

This wasn't.

Bon Dieu!

He wrapped his arms around Loic's lean body and dragged the man closer. Loic's tongue wasn't stupid, no, not stupid at all. It danced in his mouth, pushing his lips open, touching his teeth. Justice's eyes rolled and, even

though he hadn't had enough to drink to be dizzy, the entire world spun about, leaving him breathless and gasping, gripping Loic's arms like a drowning man.

Loic backed off, winked at him. "Justice."

"Oui. Need you, yeah? More." Loic nodded at him, smiled, and Justice's heart skipped a beat. "Cher. Cher, please."

He reached out, fingers molding around Loic's cock, measuring it through the thin slacks. Oh, fine. Long and lean, like the man it belonged to, that sweet prick bobbed like it needed him as bad as he wanted it.

His thick fingers were clumsy as all fuck as he tried to work buttons open, zippers down, and Loic pressed closer, hiding from the crowds down on the street -- silly, normal folks going to supper, to drink, to dance, all missing the wonder, the miracle he had in his damn hand.

"Ain't gon' share, cher." The little word play made him chuckle, made Loic hoot.

It was a fine thing, when he freed Loic's cock, exposing the long shaft to the night air. His fingers wrapped right around and he let himself stroke, base to tip, moving easily. Loic grunted, teeth sinking into that full bottom lip, hips rocking not at all carefully. The scent was perfect -- bayou and soup, whiskey and hunger. Justice's mouth watered.

He leaned back, drawing them deeper into the growing shadows in the lee of the house, the nearly faded sunlight held at bay by the rainbow flags waving in the breeze.

Storm was coming, praise God.

A wild one and he was celebrating it, right here with his Loic. He used his thumb on the tip, pressing in the barest bit, hunting a sting. He knew he found it when Loic jerked, bucked up, and his name rang out, like the best kind of curse.

"Oui. Oui, cher. Just like that." He moaned, watched every second. "Just like that. Need to see."

Then he'd take Loic in and see the rest -- top to bottom -- and let Loic see him.

Loic nodded, hips moving faster, butt bouncing on his lap, cock driving in his fingers like his cher had the need riding him, a dark vacher on a wild horse. He kept his fingers tight, kept finding those things that made Loic want.

The wet drops of pre-come slicked the way, eased it enough that he could squeeze harder, swipe his thumb just that much faster. Loic's fingers pressed into his skin, making bruising promises that the man better damn well keep.

"Come on, cher. Come for me. Need."

Pearl-white heat spurted up over his fingers, onto his wrist, a line of wet heat.

Loic shook for a minute, trembling above him, before he tugged good and hard, bringing them together, the weight making the old chair creak and complain.

"Lord, cher. You. Me."

Loic snorted, eyes rolling. "Justice."

"Yeah." He pressed Loic's hand to his fly, to where he ached. "There ought to be."



Loic's wild, hungry smile was about fine.  
Just almost good enough to eat.

\*\*\*

Loic grabbed Justice's shirtfront with one hand, grabbed his open and falling slacks with the other. They didn't need the booze or his notepad where they were headed.

Justice's seams creaked, but the man stood, followed him the few short steps into the living room with the big, overstuffed leather couch, the soft, soft green blanket draped over it. He shoved hard, sending Justice down while he kicked his pants off and locked the balcony door. Justice's hands weren't being stupid, he was glad to see, tearing at buttons and zippers, baring that hard, solid belly, the thickest, fattest cock he'd ever seen.

He stepped forward, eyes on that hard, dark prick, the tip swollen and wet for him. Oh, Jesus. Why on earth had he ever waited for that? That was a piece of work. Loic knelt between Justice's sprawled legs, shoved the man wider so he had all the access he needed.

"Cher... Damn, Loic."

He would have shushed Justice, told the silly bastard to lean back and let him work, but words weren't his friends anymore, so he planted one hand in the middle of the man's fuzzy, broad chest and shoved. Stay.

Stay right there and let him play.

Justice -- brilliant fucking man -- got the hint and stayed, abs rippling, breath huffing out of him. Loic

moaned and leaned down, let his cheek slide up along the shaft, knowing the hint of stubble would rasp so good, would make Justice feel him. The grunt he got made him smile and do it again, fingers slipping down to roll those velvet soft balls.

"Jesus, cher. Don' stop, eh?"

No. No, he didn't think he would, not any time soon.

His lips wrapped around the tip of Justice's cock, tongue tracing the ridge at the head, following every bump, every inch of heated flesh, all the way around to the beginning of that leaking slit. Salty and bitter, the flavor was just he wanted, and he licked the whole way, flicking with the tip of his tongue.

The sac in his hand tightened, wrinkling up, echoing the hunger he heard in Justice's low cry.

Oui. Oui. Yes, Justice. So good.

One heavy hand landed on his shoulder, and he let it stay there, but he didn't take Justice in all the way yet. No, Sir. He wanted to explore.

He played at the tip -- slapping and lapping, licking and pushing in a little with his tongue -- making sure to repeat the touches that made those rough sounds push out of Justice's chest, made more of those needy drops slip onto his tongue and tease his taste buds.

"Cher. Close, eh? Gon'."

No. Not yet.

He tugged Justice's balls gently, stretching the sac out enough to drag Justice away from the edge of coming.

He wanted to know every single inch of the man's cock.

When Justice relaxed back again, Loic started his explorations again, this time beginning at the base, tongue testing the wrinkled skin where sac met shaft, then up to where the heavy mass of bright gold curls hid soft-soft flesh.

He nibbled the line that the heavy vein made right under the skin of Justice's shaft, smiling at the moans he got, at the way Justice's ass creaked on the leather, bare butt catching. That was it; he wanted Justice's need, that hunger that fed all of them when there simply wasn't any hope left.

That fire that would blaze again, let Justice take the next hard case, try to save the next lost soul.

Like him.

The thought shook him, and he pushed up, took one more hard, desperate kiss, eyes staring into bright blue. "Justice."

"Oui. Cher. You got it. Me. As much as you want."

From another man, the words would be meaningless, but this was his Justice, his north star. Justice didn't lie, even when it won cases.

"Justice."

That was the best yes he could give before he swooped down, Justice's cock stretching the corners of his lips, tip nudging the back of his throat.

"Loic!" His name was as much of a yes as Justice's had been, and Justice's body repeated it, bucking up, pushing deeper. This time he didn't even try to stop Justice's need; he simply held on and rode, sucking for all he was worth.

"J't'aime. Loic. Please."

Love.

Yes.

Yes.

He pulled harder, hands wrapped around Justice's hips to drag Justice in deeper, so he could feel every inch. Every ounce of need.

Those square hands landed on his head, body curling around him as Justice convulsed, hips punching into his lips. The scent of sweat and whiskey, need and Ivory soap and the barest promise of hot sauce hit him again in a rush, and he swallowed, pulling out the first of what seemed like an endless series of splashes against his tongue.

Justice.

This was what Justice tasted like.

The fingers on his head gentled, Justice taking a sobbing breath as Loic's hair was smoothed, stroked. "I. Damn, cher."

He slowly let the fading cock slip free from his lips, kissing the tip on the way.

"Did I hurt you?"

He chuckled, shook his head. No. No, it wasn't his first time. Just the first time in a long while.

"Good." Justice lifted his chin, leaned over, and kissed him, long and slow, lazy. Not like the man was in any hurry at all. "Stay? Eat. Sleep. Do it again. Stay."

He nodded. Yeah. Yeah, he could do that.

"Good."

\*\*\*

Justice woke up with a sweaty octopus wrapped around him, and he had about a half second of panic before he realized that two arms, two legs, a nice long penis, and a tongue only counted as six and he was two appendages away from being dragged into the deep.

Man, he needed a cup of coffee and an Advil.

He kissed Loic's forehead, then slipped out of bed to start the Mr. Coffee before stumbling to the bathroom. By the time he got back out, Loic was there, doing the pee-pee dance. "I'll pour coffee. Have at. There's no spare toothbrush, sorry."

He wasn't the one-night type, as a rule.

Hell, he still wasn't one right now. He'd go get Loic one from the CVS later today.

He poured two coffees -- one white, one sickly sweet -- and grabbed two leftover beignets from the box and the bottle of Advil. There were four left, thank God.

He took two dry, sat on the sofa, and turned on the morning news. Blah blah blah weather blah blah blah arson blah blah economy sucked blah blah fucking gay people trying to get married blah blah blah. Depressing.

Loic stood in front of the television, stark assed naked, lean legs spread, eyebrow arched. Oh, better.

"Mornin', cher." He held up Loic's coffee.

"Justice."

"Yeah." He grinned, refusing to give up the coffee when Loic grabbed it, and tugged the man closer.

"Come kiss me."

He'd deal with morning breath.

Loic straddled his thighs, spreading like butter as their lips met. The kiss was sweet and slow and unafraid. Settled.

He let go of the coffee cup, draped his arm over Loic's shoulders. Their bellies met, leaned together, and he sighed into the kiss, his headache easing off just like that. Loic smiled for him, grinned against his lips.

"Yeah." He grinned back. "There's beignets."

"Mmm." That was a good sound. Almost as good as the sound Loic made when they rubbed together again.

"Like how you wake up, cher." He liked a lot about how 'up' Loic was. Loic's answer was another kiss, and one more, proving that Loic was right there with him.

He'd started rubbing, started moving, when his phone started ringing. He didn't even have to look. He knew who it was. There were arrangements to be made, media to contact, Modette's story to tell. Hell, they probably had another court date Monday and...

Loic tapped the tip of his cock, hard, and he jerked, blinked. "Hey!"

Loic stared at him, one eyebrow lifted.

"What?"

That tap came again, then Loic sighed, kissed his nose, and leaned over and grabbed his phone, handing it over with a half-smile. He had the good sense to be a little ashamed. "It's not that I don't want to, I just..."

Loic snorted, grabbed his phone and started typing. "Shut up, asshole. I know."

"We need to make sure Modette's taken care of."

"I know. We will." Loic met his gaze, serious, right there for a long minute, then the fingers started flying again. "But I need to make sure Justice's taken care of."

Oh.

Oh, damn.

He groaned, his heart doing this weird little pitty-pat thing that made him more than a little breathless.

Loic nodded, then kissed him again, hand on his belly, easing him back, putting the phone down on the coffee table, closed. Quiet. That was right.

It was Saturday. He didn't have to do everything right now.

He didn't have to save anyone but them.

\*\*\*

Sunday was spent meeting with Modette's family, making the beginning of what had to be a million funeral arrangements, and dealing with Sheila, the warden at the prison -- who, Loic was surprised to discover, was a gentle, dear, generous woman with a soft voice and a will of iron.

Justice had taken the family to sort through Modette's effects and he was in the office, checking over paperwork. Sheila smiled over at him, her eyes dark in her café au lait skin. "Can I help?"

He shook his head, rolled his eyes playfully. Paperwork was the bane of any lawyer's existence.

"Thank y'all, for all you're doing for Miss Modette. She was a special lady."

Loic nodded. She had been. It was a blessing, that the Good Lord had taken her before the government could make the decision to do so.

He blinked at himself. He sounded like Justice inside his own head. Figured, didn't it? That the man was sunk deep into his skin.

It wasn't like the man hadn't been sunk into him ten ways from Sunday all day yesterday. Justice needed a warning label that read, "Stocky, but full of stamina. Use lube."

Sheila's voice broke into his thoughts, which was probably good, given that the office at a maximum security prison wasn't the place to spring a woody. "Is it true, that you lost your voice in court?"

He shook his head, grabbed his iPad. "No. Before court. They call it Broca's aphasia. It's absolutely insane."

"Broca's aphasia? Did you hit your head?"

He shook his head again. "No one knows -- there were a series of unfortunate events that day."

"Unfortunate events?"

Justice's wry laugh filled the room. "Y'all talking about Modette?"

Focused bastard.

Sheila snorted. "Nope. His voice."

"Ah. It was hoodoo."

He looked over at Justice, tongue like led in his mouth. "Justice?"

Justice grinned at him, looking like a huge kid, a big dork. "What? It's true. Eloi La Bauve's granny hexed



your skinny butt. Got the Roubichoux's too. It was amazing, well, barring the whole it didn't get better thing."

He stared. "Are you insane?" he typed.

Justice shrugged. "You got a better answer?"

Sheila chuckled. "La Bauve, eh? They come from a line of folks?"

Justice nodded. "Granny's got chickens in her backyard and everything."

"Hoodoo isn't real," he typed.

"Sure it is." Justice grinned at him. "Doctors don't have a better answer, do they?"

He stared.

"Have y'all gone and apologized to them? Asked them to take the curse off?"

He blinked at the warden. This was insane. No one could think that.

"That's not a bad idea. I'll call Eloi. Maybe stop by the bar."

"Justice!" That was insane.

"What? He got off. At least you're not an incontinent drooler, now. Hell, I hear that both boys ended up with crotch rot, too. 'Course that might not be hoodoo. That might be sticking things where they don't belong."

Sheila nodded, face serious, weirdly wise. "Some boys have that habit."

"Those two especially. Maybe we'll stop there tonight, have a chat."

Loic's hand slapped down on the table. He would not. He was not going to go and let himself be

embarrassed in front of Eloi La Bauve like some common...

His mouth snapped shut and he listened to himself, to the thoughts that he was damn glad he couldn't say out loud.

Jesus. La Bauve had been innocent -- he'd known that even then, even at the beginning, and the money had kept him silent.

No.

No, the money had made it easy to lie.

He'd have let that man go to prison to keep his apartment, his car, his five hundred dollar suits. Eloi would have gone to prison and the women the man supported would have suffered and he would never have given it a second's thought.

Jesus.

He opened his mouth to beg forgiveness from Justice, but nothing came out. Two sets of eyes stared at him, both shocked, although Justice looked a little knowing.

Not enough to piss him off, mind, but enough to make him bow his head.

"After we're done with this, huh? Can't hurt."  
Justice's hand was on his shoulder, heavy, solid.

Right.

He typed out, "Yeah. You talk too much, boss."

"Always have, cher. Always will. It's a thing."

He rolled his eyes, but found a real smile for Sheila. She snorted, tossed her head like a fractious horse, and gave him a look.

"Come on, y'all. It's Sunday and I promised my kids

I'd be home in time to make collards."

"Good thing you got yourself a man that knows how to cook to make the chicken."

"Watch your mouth, boy, or I won't invite you to come for Easter. We're doing a whole hog."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. Swear to God. I'll grovel at your feet, if you want. I'll do damn near anything for a big mouthful Jamail's pork." The words fell onto the middle of the floor and Loic swore he could damn near hear them hit. Plink. Plink. "I mean. Wait. I. Well, shit."

Justice stopped, cheeks going red hot, and Sheila brayed and it was more than Loic could do not to laugh along at his chatty, often thoughtless lover.

"Hey. Hey, I said damn near anything..."

\*\*\*

Justice headed into Phillipe's, Loic in tow.

He knew Loic thought it was a stupid fucking idea, but he'd seen magic, more than once. Seen folks do things they normally wouldn't, know things they couldn't.

Besides that, apologizing to a wronged man couldn't hurt.

Eloi was working the bar, bright white smile greeting him. "Lawd! Justice! Texas let you go?"

"Long time ago, my friend." He grinned over, the expression honest. "Comment la vie?"

"Bien. Bien. Ça va all right, eh?"

He slid onto a barstool, Loic right beside him. "Two

bourbons. Zenobia doing good in school?"

"Oui. Oui. She come home soon. Work." Two glasses were pulled, wiped, filled. "Mr. de Hiver."

Loic met Eloi's eyes, nodded, offered the man a tentative smile.

"Loic's been working with me, Eloi. For months now."

Eloi's nose twitched. "Been more than working, eh, or I'm tous pourri."

"Stop that. You've been rotten from birth, you leech." He sipped his drink. "And it ain't none of yours if we are. I need him, Eloi -- I need to hear him talk to me. Need to let him talk for them that can't."

"Hey. Hey, I did nothing to him. Nothing." Eloi stepped back, held his hands up, and Loic grabbed his iPad, starting typing furiously and turning the screen to Eloi. Eloi just shook his head and Justice took it from Loic's hands.

"I'll help, huh?" Loic looked at him, shocked, and he stared back. Not everybody knew how to read, after all. Loic forgot things. Forgot how lucky he truly was. Justice looked to the screen, started reading.

"Mr. La Bauve, I wanted to apologize for everything -- for wronging you. Not for thinking ill of you, but for not thinking of you at all. My heart was in the money and that's all I knew. I know better now. I don't believe in hoodoo, and I don't believe this will cure me, but that doesn't matter. What matters is that I'm sorry."

The man was still viciously eloquent. Justice just needed to get those words back and into a damn

courtroom on the right side.

Eloi's head tilted, that grin getting bigger. "It don' matter if'n you don' believe. It believe in you, catin."

Loic rolled his eyes at the little endearment, but nodded, held one hand out to Eloi. Eloi grinned and shook Loic's hand hard, a scatter of little black seeds falling from the Loic's watchband, tinkling on the bar.

Loic looked down at them, and Justice picked one up, stared at it. Little and dried out and wrinkled. 'Used' was the word that popped into his head.

Worn.

"Lookit that." Eloi swept the seeds away, even taking the one from his fingers. "Them's dangerous things there. You oughtn't go playing with le moutard, oui?"

"What?"

"Bourbon's on the house, y'all." Eloi snorted, reached out and drew crosses on Loic's forehead, lips, throat. "I done forgive you. Go and do good stuff now. Not here. I gots to clean."

"Clean. Right." Justice finished his drink, and Loic's, since the man wasn't making a move to take it. God, he hoped Eloi hadn't just made the man feeble. Not that he'd believed apologizing to Eloi would work or anything, but a man could hope a little, right? Right. Absolutely right.

He put a twenty in the tip jar and took Loic's arm, led the man outside into the heavy, wet nighttime air. "Well, that was exciting, wasn't it? Damn, that was a pretty little apology. Don't know where you got into any mustard seed at the prison, though. It was mustard seed,

wasn't it? Lord, you wouldn't think that shit grew just anywhere where a man's watch would get into it."

"Justice." Loic sighed, stopped, looked at him.

"What?" He stopped, looked back, eyes fascinated by that slowly growing smile before Loic opened his mouth again.

"Shut up, and take me home."

End.

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Justice

SPICE IT UP

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