

The otter went limp on my back, his cock slipping out of my ass. “I thought the Orrs were all tops,” he said, panting lightly.

“And I thought FBI couldn’t fuck guys they were investigating.”

“I’m not—” Elias stopped. There was no point in denying something I already knew. Him hurrying to come when I called wasn’t entirely altruistic. His job was to keep tabs on what I was doing. “I’d expect you to be more pissed about it.”

I chuckled. “I’m an Orr. If I didn’t want the law to worry about me, I’d stay home.” Elias ground against my ass, his soft cock sliding around. He wasn’t getting hard again for a while, not that he was topping me again. “I’m the one guy in my family who can understand what’s to gain by enduring bottoming for the right guy.”

“Enduring, huh?”

“Enduring,” I repeat.

With the history of being fucked used to show how powerless the kids were in my family, it’s basically impossible for one of us, Whitney excepted, to enjoy being fucked.

My fathers didn’t do that with me or my brothers. It’s another way they demonstrated they loved us. But since sex was never hidden in my family, we saw how they were with other guys, and each other, and we picked up on the mindset. As the more emotional one, I’ve been on the receiving end of my brothers’ cocks more often than I care to remember.

Another way our fathers showed they love us is that they allowed us to top them on special days, but unlike how I acted with Elias, they never gave the impression they enjoyed it. That is beyond them.

“So I’m the right guy?” Elias asked, rolling off me. “Almost sounds like you want us to go steady.”

I snorted and then sighed at the hurt expression on the otter’s face. He was serious. I would have picked up on that if I wasn’t getting myself together after the bottoming session. “I’m sorry.”

He shook his head. “My fault. You’re an Orr and you have your god, I know you guys don’t do relationships.”

I rolled on my side. I could convince him he was different. That he was the one guy with whom I’d make an exception and share my god. One of my fathers would do it without hesitation to get something out of him. Any of my brothers except Wolf would as well. Wolf takes, he doesn’t bother with games.

I don’t either, but for different reasons.

“I’m still sorry. I forget sex means something to people outside my circle.”

The otter rolled his eyes. “It means something to you too.”

“But not the same thing. It’s a form of worship, not bonding.”

He pointed to my groin. “And you’re ready to worship again.”

I grinned. “I’m always ready, but you aren’t.”

“It isn’t because I’m soft that you can’t do your thing.”

“I have enough empathy to know you aren’t interested right now.”

Elias didn’t reply, looking at the ceiling. “Word is,” he finally said, “that you have enough empathy you can give some to others.”

I sighed. I did my best to keep that to myself, but my brothers knew, and they talked. They couldn’t make fun of me in silence. “We all have our cross to bear.”

He snorted. “Only an Orr would call being empathic a cross to bear.”

“It’s what I am.”

“And because of that, I know you didn’t ask me to Amarillo just to let me fuck you.”

I sat and leaned against the headboard. “Eight years ago, five boys matching Wanna Be’s criteria went missing here. Do you know anything about it?”

“Not off the top of my head.” He placed his hands behind his head. “If they’d been reported, they would have been flagged. We’ve been looking into all missing kids for the last decade.”

"It made the papers here. The local cops looked into it."

"Do you remember what they were classed as?"

"Runaways."

He nodded. "That wouldn't have been raised to our level. I should let my team know about it."

"Before you do that, how about you help me look into these kids? That is why I asked you to visit."

Elias rolled his eyes. "You just wanted to pump me for information, in case we were already looking into them."

"I'm pretty talented at pumping."

He looked at my crotch again. "Yeah, you are." He considered something, then took his phone off the charging pad on the bedside table. He looked at the time—it was mid-afternoon—then made a call. "Sir," he said. "Agent Johns here. I need to take that vacation time you insist we take."

He looked at me. "Yes, sir. No, I don't think you want me to do this officially; he's an Orr."

He mouthed 'sorry'. I know what I am. "I'll do my best, but he is who he is. Unless I suggest we spend the entire time in his hotel room, this will get messy." He chuckled. "Yes, Sir, they would get messy in his room also. Thank you, Sir. I'll make sure this doesn't reflect badly on the Bureau." He disconnected.

"You know it's too late for that, right?" I said. "You're working with me. That never reflects well among the law enforcement organizations."

"But I'm doing it as a private citizen, not an agent. Assistant Director Bodenman will make sure anyone who complains understands the Bureau isn't involved in this."

I stared at him. "Assistant Director?" I don't exactly keep track of people within law enforcement, but still. "Since when?"

He tilted an ear. "Four years ago. He was promoted when Assistant Director Johanson took over for Director Capris."

"What was the FBI assistant director doing in Montana at a crime scene?"

Elias shrugged. "Probably getting away from yet another pointless meeting. Zee has regretted accepting the position since taking it. He almost never gets in the field anymore."

"Can't he step down?"

"The director claims he's yet to find someone with his qualifications to take over the position. Which I don't mind. It's nice finally having someone that high who actually understands the reality of what my department does. Johanson was okay as assistant director, but every time one of our case's magical status made the news, she'd be on our floor demanding to know how we could allow that to happen. Like we were back in the '50s and no one knew magic was real. It takes a major screw-up on our part to get Zee to storm the floor."

"He didn't correct the reporter when she called him the Agent in Charge. He didn't correct me, for that matter."

The otter shrugged. "I can't tell you why."

I tried to resolve if I should be annoyed at the buck. Wasn't telling me where he stood in the Bureau a show of respect? Right, like Zikabar Malhotra Bodenman respected me or my family.

"So, you can't call on the FBI's resources while you help me?"

"I can ask, but I can't have this be an open case. Your family's too problematic. Director Johanson's almost certain to demand I bring you in as a suspect."

I rolled my eyes. "I would love to see that happen."

"No, you wouldn't."

I raised an eyebrow.

"We have resources, Wyatt. We know what your family is capable of, and we have ways to counter that."

My smile turned brittle. "That sounds like a threat."

He shook his head. "It's the reality we live in. Our job is to keep the peace. Your family has a history of breaking it. We need to be ready for the day you go too far." He's not proud of that. That the world isn't the quiet place that would make his job unneeded. That for as much as he *likes* me,

it's his job to prepare to arrest me.

I understand the position he's in. But my family has a history with organizations in positions of power trying to stamp us down. This... this isn't going to end well.

"Look," he said, forcing the smile. "This isn't about us. I'm not here to do anything to you. I know you aren't going to do things strictly legally, which is why I'm not going to help you as an agent of the FBI, just as someone with investigative experience. This keeping an eye on your family thing is above both our paychecks. So how about we let the higher-ups deal with it?"

I nodded. How little Elias knows us.

"How about you get the shower started," I told him, and with a grin, he was into the enormous bathroom. I took my phone and messaged Alex. I'd call, but even with the water running, Elias could overhear me.

Just found out the FBI has countermeasures with us in mind. Is it news to you?

The answer took a few seconds to arrive. I've known for a few years, but haven't been able to get the details. The Brislows are protecting the people in the know.

Of course, the Brislows would be involved. Zikabar is basically in their elder's bed, but not so they can control him. And they wouldn't tell us about it because if there's one person who knows how prone to overreacting my family is, it's Denton Brislow.

After a full minute without another message, I decide Alex isn't going to ask me to use my friendship with Eddy to get the information.

I put my phone on the pad as I feel Elias's eyes on me. His expression is forcefully neutral, but I can read the sense of betrayal there. I should feel bad about it. Not that anything he told me was a secret per se, but he really thought this didn't involve us.

He thought we'd be spared those politics.

Only, I'm an Orr, and I'm nothing if not my family.

"Do you prefer letting me deal with this on my own?" I could manipulate him. Make sure the spark of emotions he has for me flamed into something that would blind him to who I am.

But I'm not that much of my family.

He shook his head. "There are kids involved." He turned back into the bathroom and closed the door.

And because I'm an Orr, I join him anyway, but because I understand his position, all I do is wash his back.

* * * * *

The house was quaint. A small yard in front of it that was well maintained, with a large tree growing in the center. The house was a faded blue, almost powder blue at this point, but the paint wasn't peeling anywhere.

I didn't want to be here. This wasn't going to be pleasant. But Elias pointed out that we had to talk to the people involved.

"What are we going to say?" I asked him after the shower. "Hi, after eight years of no one giving a damn about your son, I've decided to look into his disappearance?"

"You'll be surprised how much a parent will want someone to care, especially after years of no one doing that."

"And what happens when I don't find anything?"

He raised an eyebrow at me, a small smile on his muzzle. "Do you think you won't find anything? That you, an Orr, will do no better than the police?"

I should have been pissed at how he played me. Instead, I puffed my chest out. Like the police had anything on me.

The family pride hadn't lasted as long as I'd have liked.

He knocked on the door and I had a card in hand before it opened.

The man was a wolverine, but only in appearance. There was nothing left of the defiance his species was known for. His eyes were empty. He was a shell going through the motion of a life that had no meaning anymore. He looked at us and didn't even ask what we wanted.

I offered him my card. "Wyatt Cartwright, I'm an investigator with Royal Security. My firm

has been hired to look into a series of disappearances, and we suspect your son is one of them. Can we ask you a few questions?"

I should have warned Elias, because the stare he gave me would have ended this right then if the wolverine wasn't lost in his grief.

"He's gone," the man whispered. "There's nothing you can do."

"Sir," Elias said, "I understand there's nothing we can say or do to make the loss of your son any better, but with your help, we might be able to bring the person responsible to justice. Keep this from happening to another family."

The man nodded but didn't move.

"Can we come in?" I asked.

He moved out of the way. It was all the acknowledgment we'd get. I stepped in.

The entryway opened into a living room with pictures of a man and his seven-year-old son. I couldn't tell if they'd been there before he vanished, but they'd been there for years. An attempt to keep himself from forgetting he'd had a son.

The pain of that loss made it hard to breathe. The pit opening below him. The fall into despair with nothing to hold on to but memories. The knowledge that it would never—

"You okay?" Elias asked and I took a breath, got my feelings under control. This was why no one in my family wanted my gift. I kept Elias from sitting in the seat next to the couch. It was little Jeremy's favorite seat. He sat on the couch while I look at the pictures.

"What do you remember of that day?" Elias asked, and I wanted to snap at him for his utter lack of understanding.

"We got up at the crack of dawn," the wolverine said in a tone devoid of emotion. "Jeremy loved to watch the sunrise, and we had a great view of it by the kitchen window, so we made pancakes. Peanut butter on his. Never syrup, always peanut butter. He loved peanut butter."

I glanced into the kitchen and I could envision them moving about, laughing, Jeremy making a mess of his plate spreading peanut butter over his pancakes, his father scolding him, trying not to laugh.

Fuck, it hurt.

Of course, he remembered that day. It was the day he died. The last day his life made sense. Elias should have known better than to ask him that, to force him to relive that pain.

This is why I didn't want to talk to the families. I could get all that from talking to the cops, getting access to the reports, and not feel any of it. I wanted to run. Get out of the house, find a place I could breathe again.

Instead, I was locked in place listening to the man recount the last morning with his son. How he should never have allowed him to go to the park, but this was such a safe neighborhood, nothing like this should have happened here. Amarillo wasn't like the big cities. Everyone here knew everyone else. They looked after one another.

They'd done this to his son, was the thing he didn't say. They'd allowed his son to be taken. He hated them, wished it was one of their children who had vanished instead of his Jeremy, and he hated himself for wishing this pain on anyone else.

How could he go on? How did he even breathe? I was suffocating from the pain, the loss, the hate, the self-reproach. How hadn't he killed himself?

He couldn't.

He had to be here for when Jeremy came back home.

That was the worst part of it. He couldn't stop hoping. He knew Jeremy was gone, but he couldn't stop thinking that maybe he was wrong. That maybe Jeremy would escape who had taken him, and return. After all, his son was a clever boy. He'd outsmart whoever had taken him and come home as soon as he was able, and because of that, he had to be here. He had to wait. To go on.

The hand on my shoulder made me tense and the wooden back of the kitchen chair I was using to keep me standing cracked. I couldn't even remember stepping into the kitchen. I'd been lost in the emotions. The memories. The pain.

"Are you okay?" Elias whispered, and I shook my head. I'd never be okay. I needed to forget my son, but to do that would desecrate his memory. I had to keep going, even though all I felt was

emptiness. Because maybe he was out there, trying to come home.

“Wyatt?”

The breath shook my entire body. Wyatt Orr. That’s who I am. I took another breath and smelled the emptiness of the house. Of the husk of the man living in it and I got angry at him for using his son to give up on his life. This wasn’t what Jeremy would want. He wouldn’t want his father to be dead alongside him.

I took control of my anger, used it to keep the other emotions from overwhelming me, but kept it from growing. Maybe I was justified in being angry for Jeremy, but his father was also a victim in this. His son had been taken and I couldn’t unleash the anger on him for not knowing how to react to that.

“Are you done?” I asked Elias, teeth clenched so tight, the words barely made it out. He nodded, and I headed for the door, keeping my walk calm. Not that the wolverine would have noticed. He was lost again. Dead to the world.

“What happened?” Elias asked once we were outside and took a step back as I glared at him, nearly losing control of my anger. This anger was all mine. This wasn’t the side effect of Arnold’s gift. I was angry at the wolverine, at me, at Elias. I was angry because I could see in the otter’s eyes he’d learned something during that conversation and I didn’t give a damn about it. All I could think of was that he’d forced me to go through it and I wanted to make him pay.

I swallowed hard, kept my influence in check. Arnold’s side effect of anger had forced me to learn to control the anger, and that control didn’t stop with *his* anger.

“I basically relieved his day,” I say.

“Yeah, I—”

“No,” I snapped. Close my mouth; reign in my emotions. “My gift lets me work out how people feel, and his emotions are so raw they overwhelmed me. And you caused it.”

I saw the protest in his eyes, and I dared him to voice them, to give me an excuse to unleash everything on him. I’d take him right here, the consequences be damned. I’d leave him begging for more and never satisfy him.

He kept his mouth shut and nodded.

I was pleased and disappointed at the same time. I wouldn’t get to take him.

“What do you need to do?” He asks.

“I need to go back to the hotel and take this out on someone,” I answer. “It can be you, but considering how you feel about me, you don’t want that. You’re not going to like what I’m going to do.”

“I brought you here, so It’s my fault, right?”

I snarl my answer.

“Then I should be the one you take it out on.”

That was almost enough to shut me down. His willingness to take responsibility for his actions, regardless of what the consequences would be.

If I was capable of love, I think I’d have fallen for him right there.

Instead, I headed to his car. It was a rental since we couldn’t travel on my bike. I noticed the tent in his pants on the drive to the hotel. That was my fault. My influence was leaking. There was only so much control I could exert, and this was how my family made people who piss us off pay. Another thing me and my brother learned without ever being subjected to it.

Some of our fathers are just too willing to use their influence.

I managed to wait until we were in my room before ripping the clothes off our bodies and then...

Then I unleash myself on him.