

“So?” I whisper to Emil as Tristan vanishes up the stairs. “Did you spend the night with our friendly motel clerk?”

“Pop, really?” he replies, offended. “How about I spent the night in my bed, in my room?”

I snort. I have to. “You didn’t complain once about how loud we were during breakfast.”

“Dad was off...” he nods to the stairs. “You know.”

I grin. “He came back really early, and I had the most wonder night, ever. And you didn’t complain about us keeping you up. So you were not in your room.” I grin.

Emil doesn’t blush. He can play at being offended, he can even play at being embarrassed. But what he doesn’t do is blush. I think that part of him was burned away by how his grand father abused him for the few days before me and Tristan rescued him. I didn’t meet him when he was a kid, so I don’t know if he was already like that after his father tried to murder him, but I somehow don’t think surviving attempted murder removes someone’s ability to feel shame the same way being repeatedly raped by your grandfather might.

“Does Dad know?”

Now, I laugh, and Ralf glances in our direction before going back to moving the bench into position to push it into the RV with his contraption. It’s like a hand-jack, but motorized and able to lift it much higher.

“I love him, and your dad is beyond observant about nearly everything, except you. I tried to explain to him what you and that school mate of yours were doing when you were ‘studying’ in your room, and he just wouldn’t believe me.”

“She had a girlfriend,” he replies.

“That doesn’t mean she can’t have been into a funny, good looking smart ass like you.”

“Really? Would you have sex with a guy you were interested in if he was with someone else?”

“Not anymore, I wouldn’t,” I reply easily. Tristan would make me pay for it, and not in the way I like.

Emil stares at me. “So before Dad, you would have sex with a guy even if he was with someone else?”

I shrug. He keeps looking at me expectantly. I sigh. “Emile, the kind of guys I like, they only go along with it if they want it too. You think your dad would just be with me because I said I want something? No one ever matched up to him, but the men I go for know what they want. When they want me, I don’t question it, I enjoy it. If they were using me to cheat on someone? How is that my problem?”

He shakes his head, and there’s some disbelief there. I guess I burst one of the few ‘bubbles of good’ he has about me.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell him anything,” I whisper as Tristan returns from his conversation with Ryan.

The clothing is intact, no blood, and Ryan is following him down. I guess it didn’t devolve into a fight. That’s good.

“Things are good?” I ask when he sits next to me.

He nods, but I don't miss how he and Ryan's eyes are locked on each other until he vanishes in the kitchen.

Emil's back to watching a documentary while I watch Ralf come out of the RV and used his contraption to move the box containing our weapons to the RV's door, then takes them inside. I wonder if he's going to give us enough time to go over all of them to make sure he hasn't forgotten anything.

When Ryan exits the kitchen, he parks himself on the other side and... is that a glare or a glower? Whatever it should be called, not pleased is definitely part of it. Ralf doesn't seem to notice how his brother and Tristan are staring at each other, even those he looked in both their direction at some point as he brought the other box of our weapons to the RV.

Then he parks the contraption and sits at a keyboard. I can't see the computer, but for all I know it's connected via fiber-optic to the rig. Then he takes the print out and hands it to Tristan, who looks it over before handing them to me.

Here are the things I notice.

The heading: Walker's Garage. No address, no number.

The parts used have parts numbers. Even those he said he'd be printing. Is that so this looks as legitimate as possible? Or does he have an inventory system even for parts he builds from scratch?

And the total is exactly the amount he told us it would be at the start. Down to the penny.

"Where am I sending the payment?"

Instead of an email address, he gives me a website that's a series of seemingly random digits, letters, and characters.

I think there's a raised eyebrow when I don't ask him to slow or repeat them, but I'm not sure because I typing on my phone really fast to keep up.

The website that appears looks like a proper financial site, except for the lack of names, and that it's just a payment interface. He's lucky I know things like the bank transit numbers, accounts, and institution identifies of Mommy Dearest's charities by heart. How do any of the local pay him?

Cash, probably.

I hesitate before finalizing the transaction. It's not that I give a damn if he was to use this to empty the bank accounts; not exactly. I'm sure that whatever else he'd do with it, Ralf would put the money to better use than Mommy Dearest's charities do. My concern is the alarms it would raise. It might lead to the other accounts being investigated. I'm confident I've hidden how I've taken the money, but I'm only one guy. If this has Dear Old Dad higher forensic accountants to examine everything...

In the end, I remind myself of what Tristan, my paranoid husband, said. Ralf doesn't care about stuff like cheating people.

Okay, I'm paraphrasing. Maybe adding some stuff. But that was the sentiment.

I finalize the transaction, and he hands me a business card.

Walker Garage, with a phone number.

"If you're in the area again and need a tow."

"They aren't coming back," Ryan says.

Emil's already inside the RV, and I make sure Tristan goes in before I do.

"Stop before getting off their gravel," I call as Tristan starts the RV. "In case he forgot to put something back in." I open the bench. "We don't want to be—" Every weapon is exactly where Tristan had stored them as best as I remember. I check under the sink, and the Desert Eagle's back there. There's a Beretta secured between the top of the shower and the roof, off the access to check the pipes.

Every weapon is where I expect them to be.

I'm sure I forget to check a few, but when I drop in the passenger seat and start the laptop, I'm pretty sure they'll be there too when Tristan checks. And he is confident too, since we're already on the state highway.

He glances at me as I enter the website address from memory. I'm disappointed, but not surprised, when I get a 404 page.

I look at my monster. "You are right. There is a hell of a lot more to these two than it seems."

He nods and we drive away from them.