Planning Makes Perfect

by ObsidianRomance

Summary

You need to read "Confined Spaces" and the other installments of the "A Matter of Coincidence" Verse to understand this story.

Jared and Jensen are getting ready for their son's arrival, but first they have to come to terms with the fact that Arianna and Brooke are growing up.

Notes

Banner: made by Kadysn and I adore it! Ari and Brooke are TOOOOOO cute.
Beta YohkoBennington (thank you my love!)
“Jensen!”

Jensen startles out of a nightmare, chest heaving and sweat on his forehead. He opens his eyes to see Jared hovering over him, concerned look on his face and arms braced against his shoulders from where he shook Jensen awake.

“Jen, wake up.” Jared shakes Jensen again but his boyfriend is already awake and taking uneven breath as he realizes he isn’t in his dreamscape anymore. “You were having a nightmare.”

“I was?” Completely rhetorical, the question doesn’t need an answer. Jensen knows he was; the fact that he’s still unsettled and shaking proves that. “I…I…” Sitting up, Jensen runs a hand through his hair and looks directly at Jared. He reaches out to pull the sheet off Jared’s body and get a clearer view of his boyfriend’s torso and, most importantly, access to Jared’s baby bump. He lets out a sigh of relief. Jared’s belly is round and prominent and his sleep shirt it working hard to cover it. Sighing again, Jensen puts out a hand and coasts it over the swell, traveling downward in slow searching movements. “Thank god.”

Jared narrows one eye at Jensen and looks at him like his boyfriend is suffering from momentary insanity. “Umm, Jen? What’cha doing?”

Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes with one hand, Jensen shifts closer to Jared. “I’m…I’m just making sure you’re still pregnant.” Sliding his hands lower, he cups the underside of Jared’s belly and feels their son snuggled in Jared’s womb. “Which…you still are.”

“And you’re surprised by that?”

“Well…I had a nightmare and…”

Jared’s face warps and he lets out a startled noise, both hands flying to his middle. “And I wasn’t pregnant? There was no baby? You don’t want a baby?”
“What? What? No!” Jensen smacks a hand to his forehead and finds himself fully awake. He feels like an idiot. He should have known Jared would have misinterpreted his previous statement. Aside from being insecure and hormonal, he also gets nervous about the premonitions held in dreams and nightmares. “No, Jay! There was a baby…I mean…” Running a hand through his hair, Jensen shifts closer to Jared and laces their fingers together over Jared’s belly. “I want this baby. I’m so excited for this baby. I can’t wait for Chase to arrive so we can meet him and,” he gives a smile bright enough to shine in the darkness, “I’m going to love him, and you, so much.” He sneaks a kiss to Jared’s jaw and feels the tension leave his boyfriend. “So no more worrying, okay?”

An embarrassed laugh leaves Jared’s mouth while he shakes his head, hair falling into his eyes when he tilts his head down and looks up at Jensen with a smile. “Of course you are. God…I’m so stupid sometimes.”

Jensen pushes the whole heel of his hand to Jared’s lips to shut him up but the gesture comes with a playful laugh and an eye roll. He knows Jared isn’t stupid, not by a long shot. Jared is perfect and sexy and smarter than anyone he’s ever met. He makes Jensen’s heart speed up just by being there next to him. It’s been almost two years since they started seeing each other but Jensen still can’t get enough. His heart is hammering in his chest with renewed energy, the fear of the nightmare wearing off and love following in its place. Jared is looking at him, looking so vulnerable and Jensen is filled with a weird desire to put his hands all over Jared to make sure he is alive.

Apparently the nightmare has left some lingering fears and Jared knows him well enough to realize that’s why he’s frozen in place.

“What did you dream about?”

“You’re going to think it’s stupid.”

“No I won’t.” Jared scoots up the bed and sits against the headboard. He keeps a hand on his middle and rubs like he knows exactly where the baby is sitting.

Jensen knows it’s the truth. Jared may tease him for his silly fears or concerns but he never thinks they are stupid. They get each other. “You were having the baby…like…seriously two minutes away from actually giving birth. And you…you were pushing and I had to tie you down because you…you were a zombie.”

“A zombie?” Jared asks with both eyebrows raised.

“Yeah. I don’t remember why or how but you were a zombie and I had to tie you to our bed and try to not get bit while I helped deliver our baby. Only…you kept snarling and fighting me and when I finally saw the head crown and then watched the baby’s face come into the world…he was a zombie too and I…well…you woke me up then.” Jensen lets out a nervous laugh. As foolish as he knows his nightmare sounds, it comes with deep undercurrents of actual fear. He’s not exactly afraid of losing Jared to a zombie epidemic – though that would be petrifying – but he is terrified of something going wrong during Jared’s labor and somehow losing both his boyfriend and their son. He shivers and puts a hand over his face. “It was fucking scary, Jay. I couldn’t do anything. No matter what I did, it didn’t matter. You were dead and Chase was too.”

Jared goes tense at the words. “Are you…do you think maybe your freaking out about Chase coming in a few weeks? Because if you don’t want to go through with the homebirth…if you’re not comfortable with it…then…we don’t have to do it.”

Jensen can tell how much it breaks Jared’s hard to say those last words. Jared’s been gung-ho on operation homebirth since the moment they first talked about it. “No…Jay, that’s not it. Besides, I
“I know you would.” Jensen leans closer and cups Jared’s face, fingers trailing over his jaw and under his chin so that he can direct Jared’s gaze towards his own. “But I want Chase to be born here, in our home, in the place we made him. I’m not freaking out about Chase coming.” He isn’t. Not really. He and Jared have been covering all their bases with their midwife and have their birthing plans down to a T, including their emergency one. That doesn’t mean Jensen isn’t going to obsess over them until Chase comes; he’s absolutely going to go over them in his head until he knows Chase’s life is in totally capable hands. “I’m just freaking out about…I dunno…us, maybe?”

“Us?” Jared lays a hand over the one Jensen is still using to cup his cheek. “You’re worried about us?”

“I dunno…maybe? I just…You know I think my dreams about zombies are scary because they make me feel so helpless when I have to watch my loved ones suffer and die. I just worry. I can’t live without you, Jared. I’m sure of it. And when Chase comes, he’s just going to be another piece of my heart walking around outside my body. I wouldn’t survive losing you, or any of our kids.”

Letting out a sigh, Jared pulls Jensen’s hand from his jaw and holds it tight. “I don’t plan on becoming a zombie anytime soon and Arianna and Brooke are more than lively enough to let you know they don’t either. You’re not going to lose me, Jen. Not ever.”

“Then marry me,” Jensen blurts out. He wishes he could take it back as soon as the syllables leave his tongue because it isn’t the right time for that discussion. Now that he’s said them, however, he wonders if there ever will be a good time. He hasn’t convinced Jared of why, exactly, getting married would change anything between them. They best he could come up with is some alpha male bullshit about wanting the world to know that they are together, that Jared is in a committed relationship with him and the law and state have to acknowledge that.

“Jen…” Jared sighs again and changes tactics. “Marrying you is going to prevent me from becoming a zombie?”

“No,” letting out a huff of air, Jensen shakes his head. “Come on, Jared. Seriously. If I’m never going to lose you and you’re never going to lose me, then marry me.”

Jared stays silent for a moment. “Why?”

Rolling so he can tuck his knees underneath him and lean towards Jared, Jensen pours enough emotion into his words to drown Jared. “Because I love you. Because I wanna be your husband and make sure no one can deny that fact or the strength of our relationship.”

Jared goes quiet but his breathing picks up as he starts exhaling loudly through his nose. Everything else about him is still, but his eyes look scared. With a sudden jerky movement, he grabs the sides of his belly and hisses.

“Jared?” Reaching out towards his boyfriend, he adds his own hands to the mix.

“I’m…I’m fine. Just false contractions. It startled me…he’s fine.”

“Are you sure? I mean…” Counting back in his head, Jensen’s heart speeds up when he thinks of Chase coming too early. It’s been a small worry of the doctors, considering Arianna and Brooke came early, but they’re not overly concerned. Twins come early sometimes, that doesn’t mean Chase is going to. “Maybe we should…We could…we should call someone, just to double check.”
Jared lets out a stifled groan of discomfort but keeps shaking his head the whole time. “No. It’s okay. I’m fine. I just need a minute.” He goes quiet again and slips both hands under his sleep shirt to caress his distended middle. As he does so starts humming soothingly, so softly that Jensen barely catches it.

“Did I upset you? Is that why…”

“No. Well, yes. I mean…Yes you upset me but I don’t think that’s why Chase feels like going rough on me,” Jared admits. He sighs and keeps rubbing his stomach, trailing both hands up the center of his belly and then stroking them downward along the edges. “It’s just…you do realize I’ve heard those words before? You know I was with someone who swore he loved me, who swore he wanted to marry me. And I ended up losing a baby because of him and with a broken arm and more emotional scars than I care to think of. So…I hear those words about marriage and I feel like if I believe them then I’ll just get hurt again…that our babies will get hurt. It makes no sense, I know that, but I can’t risk everything we have. It’s too perfect, Jensen. I’m too scared to mess it up. I’m scared you’ll stop meaning those words and then I’ll be the idiot who went and got tangled up in all of them. For me, there’s no coming back from that.” Jared finishes with a groan and he curls forward over his stomach.

Jensen wants to tell Jared that there’s no coming back from what they have on his end of the deal as well. He knows Jared has a broken heart but it still hurts every time Jensen is reminded of how deep those scars go. A part of him wants to get mad. He’s frustrated as hell and he’s only human, he can only take so much. He isn’t a never ending well of patience, but at that moment life slams on the breaks and he catches the way Jared squeezes his eyes shut and hangs his head, lips parted from loud open mouthed panting. “Jare? Baby?”

“Can we not talk about this right now? Please? I think the stress is stressing Chase out too.” Jared opens his eyes enough to shoot Jensen a look full of begging and need. “I just…I can’t. Not now. It makes me feel nervous and terrible and…it makes me wish I was better for you. I need to talk about it more with you…but not now.” The discomfort on his face lessens and he falls back to the bed, turning on his left side and facing Jensen.

For the first time in a long while, Jensen isn’t sure what to do with Jared. “Are you sure you don’t want to go to the hospital?”

“I’m sure. I feel better. Chase is just lying in a bad place and my body seems to like practicing for the real deal.” Groaning, he stretches one arm above his head and tried to lengthen his torso, giving the baby more room to spread out in hopes of getting him to situate himself someplace more comfortable.

Licking his lips, Jensen lets himself lay beside Jared, moving slowly and wrapping an arm over Jared’s side so that his palm lays flat on the man’s spine. He exudes gentle pressure through his fingertips, earning himself a happy sigh from Jared. “Is that better?”

“Mmm hmm.” Jared closes his eyes and nods. “I don’t deserve it right now but keep doing that.”

“Jared, stop. Seriously. Stop. I’m not trying to stress you out but you need to stop thinking you’re not worth everything. You are!” Jensen keeps up his massaging at the base of Jared’s spine. “You’re perfect and I’m so happy with you. You don’t need to be ‘better.’ I know you know that.”

“Logic isn’t my forte right now.” Jared shakes his head and buries it in the pillows. “You know that you’re it for me, right? It’s why I made sure our girls had both of our names and that Chase will too.”
Jensen knows that. He loves that Ari and Brooke are little Padalecki-Ackles. He loves that Chase will be one too. Their conversation isn’t over but maybe this time really was one of those times that was actually “not the right time.” Jared’s doing a ton of work growing their kid and making sure their current two don’t kill each other. He doesn’t need any more stresses on his plate. “I know, Jay. I do. But right now I’m worried about you.”

Jared let out a tired snuffle and cracks open one eye. “I’m not turnin’ into a zombie or anything.”

“You promised you wouldn’t,” Jensen whispers, words coasting over Jared’s cheeks as he gets closer and lays their head on the same pillow.

“I know. I remember. I promise I’ll stay me.” Jared keeps a hand on his middle and looks down at it. “He likes when you’re nearby.”

“I like it too,” Jensen lets out. The words hold more than just the truth, there is a yearning behind them and he knows Jared will catch it.

Jared arches into Jensen’s touch and looks at him in the dark. “Chase might be messing with my brain lately but is that enough?”

“Is what enough?” Jensen asks. He’s less worried now because his flat middle is up against Jared’s round one and all he feels are Chase’s familiar movements. Nothing out of the ordinary.

“If I promise to love you and stick with you and stay human…is that enough?”

“Yes, Jay. Of course it is. It’s all I need.” Thinking for a moment he amends his previous statement. “Well, I need for you to relax and keep our little cutie safe. I’m sorry for bringing up emotional shit…it’s just…the nightmare had my mind racing and I think I started freaking out for a minute.”

“A minute? Jen, you were thrashing around so hard I thought you were going to give me a concussion.”

With a snort of laughter, Jensen knocks his forehead against Jared’s. “Sorry. I’m good now. I just needed to remember that we’re good. But we need to actually sleep. We have two,” Jensen pauses and looks over his shoulder at the clock, it was well after midnight, “two year olds who are going to be getting up early to celebrate their birthday.”

Jared cups a hand over his mouth in disbelief and his sleepy eyes warm with sentiment. “Ohh, god, they’re two…aren’t they?”

“Technically, yeah. But in 14 hours it has been two years since I helped deliver the most beautiful girls in the world.” Jensen smiles at the thought. “And you proved to me that you’re the strongest man in the world.” The memory makes Jensen let out a happy hum. Two years went by so quickly but sometimes it seems like ages ago that Arianna and Brooke were wailing mucus covering wiggly things in his hands. This year they get to have the twin’s birthday party at home, where Jensen’s family can be part of it for the first time, unlike their first birthday celebrated in Texas.

It’s going to be a huge day, even more so because of what Jensen has up his sleeve. He’d be kidding himself if he thought he could fall asleep now. He’s too excited about watching the girls get dressed up like princesses and finally revealing his big surprise. He wants everything to be perfect and as long as Jared gets some sleep and doesn’t go into labor, it will be.

His thoughts are cut off when Jared’s lips press into his own, parting slightly only to delve back into the kiss with more fervor.
“I love you Jen.”

As much as Jensen knows they should go back to sleep, he can’t deny the temptation of spending some time saddled up against each other and enjoying mutual lips service. Besides, it’s kind of a surefire way to make sure Jared is very much alive and currently not a zombie. Everyone knows zombies don’t move their lips like that or make such perfect sounds.

The girls will wake them far too early and they won’t be ready for it but Jensen knows he won’t complain. Needing an extra cup of coffee is worth the flutter that Jared’s sending down his body.

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Arianna and Brooke look like two princess straight out of every Disney movie ever made. They’re dressed in these ridiculous gowns made of all things tulle, pink, and glittery. Jensen isn’t sure where Ari and Brooke found those dresses, he only knows Jared came home from the store one day complaining about how Ari and Brooke almost were part of a national disaster when they found only one princess dress and stubbornly decided to not share.

The crisis was averted when an employee took pity on Jared, or valued his eardrums, and dug up another dress that had just been returned. After that, both girls were obsessed with being princesses.

Jensen is blaming Jared’s mother. Ever since Halloween, their daughters are obsessed with costumes and dress-up.

It got to the point where there was no way Jared couldn’t make their second birthday party princess themed.

That explained why Jensen is wearing a tiara and Brooke is sitting on his lap while clapping her hands, proud of her work in “decorating” her father.

Jensen doesn’t care. He’ll do anything for his girls, donning a tiara included. He grabs his pint sized princess and gets her to sit still enough so he can wrangle her hair into two pig tails. Thankfully, she is too distracted with the claps of the new shoes Jared bought her and her sister.

Arianna is already good to go. She’s “helping” Jared put snacks out, which mostly consists of her sticking a pretzel in her mouth before taking it out and trying to put it back in the bowl. Jensen’s sure she is being anything other than a help but Jared keeps tell her that she’s papa’s little helper. The words sounds so sweet that Jensen isn’t going to ruin the moment, even if Jared is spending twice the time he usually does to put out a tray of snacks.

The girls are bundles of giggling, running, squealing energy by the time guests start showing up. Jared manages to side step Brooke as he makes his way to the door, opening it to reveal Jensen’s parents. Donna is wearing a huge smile and has her arms filled with presents. Alan is just behind her, toting a similar load of gifts.

Jensen laughs out loud. He’s not surprised his parents went overboard and he doesn’t think he’ll ever tire being reminded about how much people love his kids. He also knows his mother looks about ready to fall over. “Here, mom. Let me help you.” Stepping forward, he relieves her of the brightly wrapped boxes and gift bags and steps aside to let her in.

“Thanks, baby.” Donna stands on her toes and gives her son a kiss on the cheek. She pats his other cheek lovingly, just as she always does, before turning to Jared. “Oh, sweetie! Look at you!” She cups Jared’s face and pats one of his cheeks as well. “You sure you’re not going to have that baby before Christmas?”
“Pretty sure. Got a few more weeks left.” Jared puts both hands on his middle and shrugs at Donna. “I feel kinda huge though.”

Donna smile comically transforms into a frown and she hits the heel of her palm to her forehead. “I put my foot in my mouth, haven’t I? I didn’t mean to say you look big. You look fantastic; you’re all baby. It’s just...I think he’s going to be a big baby. I mean, look at his gorgeous parents. If he takes after either one of you, he’s still got a lot more growing to do.” Donna smiles and puts her hands on Jared’s middle, moving them along the curve and her smile growing the minute she feels the baby move. “Ohh! Hi, little one.” She bends down to speak to Jared’s stomach. “Hi, baby. I’m your grandma.” Pulling upright, she rubs her hand over the swell in quicker movements before letting her hand fall to her side. Jared is biting his bottom lip, giving her a look like his eyes are on the verge of watering up. “What?” Donna asks and throws Jensen and Jared a confused look.

Shaking his head, Jared wipes at his eyes with the back of his hand. He’s not crying but the reflex is a result of the palpable emotions coursing through him. “Nothing. I’m just...I’m so glad you’re here.” Jared pulls Donna into a hug, eliciting a surprised yelp out of Donna before she regains her composure and hugs back. “I’m just so glad you and Alan can spend the girls’ birthday with them this year. It’s where you belong.”

The words hit Donna and she hugs Jared tighter, rubbing her hands over his back and standing on her toes while trying to fit her chin over his shoulder. “We’re happy to be here, sweetheart.” Donna pulls away and holds Jared’s hand. “We’re happy to have you as part of this family and vice versa. Now, come.” She pats his knuckles. “Come sit down with me and reassure me that my son is talking good care of you and not letting you work too hard.” She tugs Jared’s arm and gives a reassuring smile. “Come.”

Jared returns the smile and looks at Jensen. He returns his gaze to Donna and nods. “Okay.”

Before they can go anywhere, Arianna attaches herself to Donna’s leg. “Mimi!” She grins up at her grandmother, pushing tassels on the princess hat she’s wearing when they fall into her eyes. “Hi, angel-face!” Donna scoops her into her arms and gives her a great big squeeze. “Happy birthday!”

Arianna acts shy, giving a coy smile and hiding in the crook of Donna’s neck under all the attention. Donna brushes a tendril of hair out of her face and kisses her cheek. “Do you wanna come sit with me and papa?” Arianna nods and it’s all the answer Donna needs before heading into the living room, Jared in tow.

Jensen knows he’s got a giant grin on his face from what he just saw. He knows Jared’s been more emotional as of late but what happened between his boyfriend and his mother is more than that. He’s happy to be able to have his parents with them to celebrate. Family means everything to Jensen and he knows there are a lot of hardships in life so he plans on taking every opportunity to celebrate the good times together. Alan clears his throat and Jensen remembers his father is still waiting with an armload of gifts. “Dad, ohh! I’m sorry.” Jensen shakes his head apologetically and deposits the gifts he’d taken from his mother in the corner of the room before returning to help his father. “You bought them too much.”

“‘Too much’ isn’t in a grandparent’s vocabulary,” Alan jokes as he puts the last of the gifts to join the others. Pulling Jensen into a quick hug he asks, “How you doing, son?” He raises an eyebrow, “nice tiara.”

“What?” Swatting at his head, Jensen remembers Brooke’s makeover. “Oh...yeah.” He gives a
“I’m good. Really good.” Running a hand through his hair, Jensen laughed. “I can’t believe I have two year olds.”

“I can’t believe you have two year olds. You know, at least Mackenzie gave us some warning. You had to go ahead and spring things on us like you always do and go from single man to happily taken partner with two daughters in the less time than it takes for more people to make their kids.” Alan laughs and watches his wife become a living jungle gym for Arianna and Brooke. “Not that I expected you doing it any other way. And I love those little princesses. I love Jared like a son, and you know I’ll love that little boy just as much when he gets here.”

Jensen hears what his father has to say and bites the inside of his cheek. He knows what Alan means. There’s never been a day of his and Jared’s relationship where the girls were not part of it in some way. Though there was a slow built to their relationship, it kind of landed him with the package deal, making his parents grandparents without any of the usual build-up to grandparenthood. At least they got to experience it with Mackenzie and Josh and now his and Jared’s son. He knows that his father means everything he just said and it brings a smile to the corner of Jensen’s eyes. “Thanks, dad.”

“For what?” Alan asks.

“For what you said. For…”

Alan cuts him off. “You don’t have to thank me for anything. That’s what family does, right?”

“Right,” Jensen nods in agreement. They don’t need any more words, even if they did, Jensen’s not sure he could find a way to express how much it means to him that his family means that much to him. He supposes he got that quality from his own parents.

He’s about to close the door when he sees Mackenzie and Justin pull up. He waits while they get Addison out of the car and holds the door open for them. “Hey, Kenzie.”

“Hi, Jen.” Mackenzie kisses Jensen on the cheek and cradles Addison to her shoulder as she rushes inside. “Where’s Jared?”

“In the living room with mom and the girls,” Jensen directs with a nod of his chin.

Mackenzie makes a satisfied noise in acknowledgement and continues onward.

Watching his sister brush him off for seemingly more important people, namely his boyfriend and his kids, makes him feel a little bit forgotten. “Do I even matter anymore?”

“Not when she has a newborn and you have a pregnant boyfriend,” Justin replies as he walks through the door, Addison’s diaper bag and two big presents in tow. “Babies are like magnets to Mac now. She’s kinda obsessed with your husband. If Jared wasn’t gay, I’d be worried. Seriously, have you seen their text messages?”

“No, why?” Jensen shakes his head as he reaches out a hand to shake Justin’s in greeting.

“Oh, man. It’s like they’re having some torrid love affair. Seriously. Look.” Justin puts the gifts down and fishes Mackenzie’s phone out of Addison’s diaper bag. He scrolls through the text messages and finds the one he is looking for, he holds it out for Jensen to read.

Jensen leans forward and narrows his eyes. Mackenzie sent Jared a text several days ago reading, “my life is meaningless without you! Seriously. I don’t think I would have ever gotten sleep last night. Thank you so much my love!” Letting out a whistle, Jensen shakes his head. “Their lives are
meaningless without each other? Really?"

With a laugh, Justin slaps Jensen on the back. “Hey, I dunno. All I know is that Jared is like some vault of knowledge in helping us with Addison problems. He’s a freaking lifesaver sometimes. Seriously, I guess you’re lucky I’m not gay, because I might have a crush on your boyfriend.”

Going mock-serious, Jensen shoots a cautionary glance at his brother-in-law. “If you try anything, I’ll have to kill you.”

Throwing his hands up in defeat, Justin backs towards the living room. “Woah, hey. He’s all yours. Besides, we couldn’t pry him away from you if we tried, Mackenzie included.”

Laughing, both men make their ways towards their family. Brooke sees Jensen coming and crawls off her grandfather’s lap and runs towards him. He catches her in the middle of her stride and swings her up into the air. “Happy birthday, Brookey!” She giggles and calls his name, reminding Jensen of the fact that one year ago, today, he became their father in every sense of the word.

Jared is smiling at him, looking so damn gorgeous that it makes the naughty part of Jensen’s brain light up with ideas for later.

He can’t help it.

His brain kind of always goes there. At the core, it’s not sexual. It’s mostly the desire to hold onto Jared and never, ever let him go. He’s dreamt of someone like Jared, of a life like the one they have, since he can remember and he’s thankful for it every damn day.

Right now, however, he has to share.

Mackenzie is doing a stellar job of hogging all the real estate on Jared’s belly and she talks to her nephew. Jared puts up with it, giving an eye roll and shaking his head at Jensen like he’s asking for help.

Jensen knows Jared’s been doing better under all the fawning and the attention. He basically got none of that when he was pregnant with the twins and it took him a while to get used to how handsy Jensen’s family is. He sidetracks Mackenzie by reaching for Addison and demanding some quality time with his niece so he can get some practice in remembering what it’s like to hold a baby so little.

Josh and Ali show up a bit later and by then people have fallen into a comfortable rotation of snacking, lounging on the couch, and riling up all the kids.

The doorbell ringing again surprises no one but Jared, although the Ackles clan puts on a good show of acting surprised.

“Jay, can you get that?” Jensen asks over his shoulder as he looks away from putting out a tray of food on the dining room table.

Jared throws him a bitch face, and Jensen has to stifle a laugh. Jared’s frustration in trying to get off the couch is only going to make the moment all the more memorable.

Without a verbal complaint, Jared manages to get to his feet, glaring at Jensen. He points to his middle, “this isn’t easy, you know?”

“I know, baby. But my hands are all covered in sauce and I…” Jensen shrugs. “Can you just get the door?”
Jared pouts and looks at Donna. “Forget what I told you before. He’s not pampering me.” Even while trying to sound annoyed, Jared fails and he ends up smiling. He pulls the door open and is about to throw out another pseudo complaint about Jensen but the words die on his tongue when he faces the doorway. “Mama?”

Jensen slides out of the kitchen and along the wall, landing himself in the hallway so he can watch Jared react to his surprise.

Sherri Padalecki has a huge smile on her face. “Hi, baby!”

“What are you…how did you…why are you…” Jared licks his lips and tries to search for an answer despite failing to even get the question out. He stops trying and pulls his mother into a hug.

Sherri laughs, hugging her son and wiggling left and right, rocking their bodies slightly. “Surprise, baby.”

When Jared pulls away, he has tears in his eyes. Jensen can see them from where he’s standing and he’s not surprised. They haven’t seen Jared’s parents in a year and he knows how much Jared misses them. They’ve spoken via webcam often and Arianna and Brooke know Sherri and Paul just as much as they know Donna and Alan. They can point them all out in pictures and talk about them. Of course, Ari and Brooke tend to associate Sherri with presents since she sends them so many, but they also kiss the screen when they see her. They got stuck on calling her “mee-maw” and calling Paul “tam-paw,” which is their unfortunate pronunciation of “grandpa.” And even though their daughters know Jared’s parents, he knows part of Jared wishes they saw Sherri and Paul more.

Jared’s tears trigger Sherri’s and she wipes at her eyes, ruining her makeup but seemingly not caring. “Oh my god, look at you. Jared, baby…look at that baby belly! You’re so big.” She puts her hands on Jared’s middle and smiles.

If Jared is sensitive to her mention of his size, he doesn’t show it. He just nods and covers his mother’s hands with his own. “Yeah.”

“You look so good.” Sherri laughs and pulls one hand away to wipe at her eyes. “You…you…god, you’re going to have another baby.” She goes in for another hug and lets out a happy sob.

Everyone is watching them with smiles on their face, including Jensen. He realizes, for Sherri, seeing pictures of Jared being pregnant must be entirely different than actually seeing the proof face to face. He lets out a content snort of air, proud of himself for being able to give Jared this moment.

Jared turns his head and stares at Jensen in confusion. “Jen? How?”

Sherri answers for him. “We couldn’t afford to come out for the girls’ birthday and for when this little guy,” Sherri rubbed a circle over Jared’s middle, “comes. So…Jensen bought us tickets to surprise you.”

“Us?” Jared questions, apparently remembering that he’s been too focused on his mother to pay attention to anything else. Looking over Sherri’s shoulder, he catches sight of Paul. “Dad!”

Squirming out of Sherri’s hold, which was quite a feat for being heavily pregnant, he made his way towards his father and hugged him.

“Oof!” Paul stumbles back a step before clasping Jared around the back and letting the younger man cling to him for a moment. “Careful, Jay, you don’t want to squish the kid before I even get a chance to spoil him rotten.”
Jared lets up on the hug and laughs.

“It’s good to see you, Jared. It gets awfully lonely living in a house of women.” Paul smiles. He’s not crying but his eyes are shining with the enjoyment of seeing his son for the first time in a long while.

“Missed you too, dad.”

Paul gives an affectionate thump to Jared’s shoulder blade, smiling in thought. “You look good.”

Jared laughs and before he can hug Paul again, a ball of brunette energy brushes between them.

“Hey, preggo.”

“Megan!” Jared starts the whole hug cycle over again.

“Are you surprised?” Megan asks with a devious glint to her eyes.

“What do you think?”

“Just don’t go into labor, okay?” Megan looks down at Jared’s belly and commands, “you stay in there. Deal?”

After more hugging, tear, and laughter, Jared makes a determined march towards Jensen, grabs the collar of his shirt and pulls him into a forceful kiss, the gesture wiping the grin right off the older man’s face and replacing it with a flush in his cheeks.

“Jen…you…” Jared can barely get words in. His lips refuse to leave Jensen’s and he’s kissing him so hard that they get a cat call or two before they break apart and take in a loud inhale of air. “I love you so damn much.”

Jensen gives a grin. He loves surprising people, he always has. From the time he could successfully pull of a surprise, he’s seen the charm in it. Clearly, this surprise went off without a hitch. Jared’s glowing and his family is infiltrating their house, hugging the rest of the party guests and gushing over Jensen’s nieces and nephews. “You like you’re surprise, baby?”

“I love it. I…I can’t believe that you did that.”

“How could I not? I wanted our whole family to be together. It isn’t the same without them, right? And I figured…now we can spend Christmas together too. I know the girls will love that and so will your family.” Jensen is prepared for Jared’s huge smile but he wasn’t expecting another onslaught of kissing.

“I…” Jared gets another good kiss in before breaking away and starting again. “I love everything you just said. I love you. I’m so fucking lucky.” Kissing Jensen again, he can’t stop a happy laugh from escaping through the kiss. “And they’re going to stay here? With us?”

“Of course, Jay.”

This time, Jensen’s ready for the kiss and he catches Jared’s weight, curling his back so that there’s
room for Jared’s baby bump between them.

They break apart when Arianna lets out a high pitched exclamation. “Mee-maw!” She takes off like a shot and lands in Sherri’s arms.

Jensen thinks it could only be more perfect if Brooke had the same sentiment. As soon as the thought enters his head, he sees Josh crouching down next to Brooke and pointing a finger towards Paul. It’s all the encouragement Brooke needs because she makes grabby hands towards her paternal grandfather.

“Tam-paw!”

The minute Paul gets Brooke in his arms, Jensen’s sure that things are actually perfect. Jared’s smiling at his family and they are so happy to be intermingling and filling the house with laughter. Despite all the fears in the way and the emotional hang-ups, they’re a family.

A real one.

Arianna and Brooke are in a cake coma.

They’ve opened more present than a Jensen thought possible and then promptly played with all the bows, gift wrap scraps and boxes.

There was singing and picture taking; so many pictures that Jensen still sees little spots dancing before his eyes. The giant princess cake was worth it the minute the twins smashed cake in each other’s faces and tried to steal as much icing as they could.

They skipped their nap in lieu of the party and now they’re coming down from their sugar high while curled under Jared’s arms, one on each side, with sleepy drooping eyelids.

Jared has an arm wrapped around each of them, keeping them snug against his side, their little heads resting on his distended middle. Brooke is talking to the baby and Arianna keeps patting Jared’s belly like it’s a good puppy. Months ago, the girls really figured out the whole new baby deal and they seem content to interact with their father’s growing belly.

“Okay, I think these little princesses are about to turn into pumpkins. Why don’t you put them down in their cribs for a little while?” Sherri suggested.

No one argues and Jensen leans down to grab one girl in each arm. They barely fight him, only letting out weak moans of protest before they melted against Jensen and leaned their sleepy cheeks on his shoulders.

“I’ll come too.” Jared rocks back for a moment before getting to his feet and following Jensen.

It doesn’t take long for them to settle each girl in her cribs. There’s a discussion about getting the girls beds in the very near future which makes complete sense but causes Jensen to pout at the realization that they are now raising ‘big girls’ who don’t need the safety of a crib.

When they make a return trip down the flight of stairs, hand in hand, they’re both startled at what they walk into.

“Surprise!” Every one of their guests yells in unison. They’re holding Mylar balloons with
For the second time in a day, Jared is left blinking and shocked. This is the first time Jensen joins
him. He can’t say anything so he just stares slack jawed at his and Jared’s family members. Jared’s

grip on his hand tightens and he hopes two surprises in one day isn’t too much for his boyfriend.

Looking around, he sees baby shower decorations up where second birthday ones were. They’ve

been up quickly but there is no mistaking the fact that their families have hijacked the twin’s second

birthday and transformed it into a baby shower. “What…what did you…how did you do all this?”

Donna smirks and puts an arm around Sherri’s shoulders like they’ve been friends for years and it

makes Jensen wonder just how often they’ve talked on the phone. “Well, I called Sherri once Jensen
told me he was going to surprise Jared with her arrival and I figured maybe surprise both of you with

a baby shower.”

Jared snorts and shakes his head in mock-disbelief. “I guess I see where Jensen gets his ‘surprise’

quality from.” He goes cross eyed for a moment when his mother takes a step forward and puts one

of those ridiculous daddy-to-be sashes over his head and tugs it so it falls diagonally across his chest.

“Mama…”

“Ohh suck it up Jared. Don’t you know baby showers aren’t always for the parents to be? Let me

have my fun.” Sherri’s tone is playful and happy as she swats at Jared’s hands to stop him from

fussing with the sash.

Laughing and looking from his mother to Sherri, Jensen’s glad both of the women have formed a

united forced in throwing this makeshift baby shower. They don’t really need anything new for the

baby but the lightheartedness of the gathering is infectious and Jensen smiles at Jared’s fusing. He

goes to step away but Sherri grabs him by the arm.

“Oh, no you don’t. You’re not getting out of this either.” She slips a similar sash over Jensen’s

head, wiggles it in place and pats it in approval. “There. Now you two are a matched pair.”

Jensen looks down at the sash and shrugs. “You’re not going to make us play those stupid games

are you?” he asks to both of their mother’s grinning faces. “God, you’re loving this aren’t you.”

“How could we not love this?” Donna replied. “And of course we are going to play dumb games.”

Both men give a pleading look for help to their fathers but come up empty handed. Surrendering to

the baby shower, they shake their heads and let Megan and Mackenzie lead them to the couch where

there is a whole new set of presents.

Megan gets a crafty look on her face and Jensen’s afraid to figure out what that means. She pulls out

a spool of ribbon and scissors before turning to size up Jared. Biting the corner of her cheek in

thought, she rolls out some of the ribbon, snips it, and loops it over her shoulders. “So...’dumb
game’ number one – I’m going to come around with the ribbon and scissor and everyone is going to

try to guess how big Jared’s belly is by cutting off a length of ribbon. The one who gets closest wins

a prize. Who wants to go first?”

It isn’t surprising when Mackenzie jumps at the chance. The rest of the family members follow suit,

Jared chiming in every now and then when he thinks they are unraveling way more ribbon than

necessary. By the time it gets to be Jensen’s turn, he’s almost afraid actually participate. He lets the

spool come undone for a bit before going to cut it. At the last moment, he second guesses himself

and rolls out some more ribbon.

“Hey!” Jared puts a hand on his hip and scrunches up his nose. “Just remember who you go to bed
with at night.”

The cautionary tone in Jared’s words is enough to have Jensen roll the ribbing in a bit before cutting it. As a result, it’s no surprise that Jensen’s ribbon was way too short to even go around Jared’s middle. He doesn’t care. He’s got a happy boyfriend who’s ‘flattered’ by Jensen’s incorrect guess.

As corny as the baby shower is, both men are laughing. Jensen’s happy for practically the same reasons he was happy about everyone spending the day together to celebrate Arianna and Brooke’s birthday.

The rest of the evening is spent opening presents or tiny boy clothing and tiny boy shoes. He’s never seen such cute little cowboy boots but now that he has, he’s decided that Chase is going to wear them every day. Frankly, he’s shocked that everyone was able to pull of such an ambush of a baby shower while still including so many gifts. Where had they hidden them all?

He can’t help but think that Chase is infinitely lucky to be coming into such a kooky family who he knows will love him more than anything.

Hell, Jensen feels lucky to be part of this family.

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