Jack

by jessies_girl

Summary

Jared's SWAT unit gets ambushed when they oversee a weapons deal by a corrupt police man and the mafia syndicate head Jeffrey Dean Morgan. Morgan feels like his big shot dealer on the force was trying to double cross him and takes Jared hostage. Morgan's protégé, Jack, has the task of guarding Jared in shifts with his friend Ben.

Jared feels he knows Jack from somewhere, but Jack is sure he never met Jared. Then Jared notices a detail about Jack that reminds him of his childhood friend Jensen, who disappeared when he was 5 and Jared was 8...
Chapter 1

Jared Padalecki was playing cards with his buddies and fellow SWAT Team officers Jason Manns and Chad Michael Murray when the alarm sounded. Cards forgotten, they geared up and rushed to the waiting vehicles with the rest of their unit.

Captain Charles Malik Whitfield quickly briefed them about the mission, making sure everyone knew this was going to be one dangerous operation. There were weapons involved. Not just the weapons the team was carrying and what could be expected on the targets, but a shipload of high caliber rifles, semi-automatics and even rocket launchers were in the mix.

Jared considered all this as he pulled down his balaclava and added the helmet. A quick glance into his friends' eyes assured him they were equally focused.

"Remember, be discrete, observe, and act on my mark, no matter who or what you see," Captain Whitfield repeated. Jared frowned under his gear. That was not something the Captain - or Charlie, as they called him off duty - usually emphasized. He must have known something they didn't, and felt they shouldn't know beforehand.

The drive to the abandoned warehouse was relatively short and like the well trained unit they were, Jared's team smoothly found their spots to wait for Captain Whitfield's signal. Jared knew there were weapons involved and that there were roughly eight to ten perps, about the same number as the count in his unit. So they needed to be alert and on point.

They arrived at an abandoned industrial area. It had once been the center of a conglomerate of firms and factories, but due to an accident with radioactive material it had to be abandoned. That had been many years ago, before Jared had been born. Now, roughly three years ago, new probes and tests showed the radiation level was back to normal yet no firm, company or similar had been willing to revive the place. It was a plot full of ghost buildings.

Jared and his team got dropped at the edge of the ghost plot. They had been briefed with a map during the drive, as well as a blurry picture of one of the big guns who were meeting. A man known as JD.

When they reached a building in the rough center of the ghost plot, Jared noticed a black SUV with plates indicating the local PD. He frowned. He'd not been aware the police were already present. Charlie hadn't mentioned that. A glance over to Jason told Jared, he'd found more vehicles on his side.

Using only hand signals, Jared's team silently entered the building in question, sneaking closer to where they could hear the muffled voices of a conversation.

"Take positions. Wait for go," the intercom in Jared's ear buzzed. Jared found a great spot. Mostly hidden by whatever machinery, he had a full view on the curious meeting taking place. He was situated at the bottom right corner of a rectangular open space, having a view on the two incongruent parties.

With the backs mostly to him were only two men, dressed in suits, one of them sporting a bald head Jared could have sworn he knew. He was talking to a man opposite him that could match the blurry picture of JD. JD was flanked by six sidekicks, two of which appeared to be fairly young. The others, just like JD, were middle aged, all training guns at the two suited men.
"Tango Zulu in position," Jared softly stated, pressing the intercom. "Full visual."

"Juliet Mike, copy and dito." Jason's reply was instant.

"Charlie X-ray, copy. Restricted visual," Chad informed his team. Most of the team, but for Jared and Jason, only had a limited view on the scene.


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Jeffrey Dean Morgan had an uneasy feeling tickling the deepest pit of his stomach. Something about this meeting with Mitch and whatever his name was didn't sit right. Jeffrey, or JD as they called him, had met with Mitch several times over the past two years and never had had any reason to distrust the man. Tonight, however, something seemed off, and it bugged JD that he didn't know what triggered his Spidey-senses.

"Come on, Mitch," JD called. "Same deal as always. It's three crates of fire power, it gets the usual amount of dead presidents, even if Jack here does the transaction. Gotta train the new blood some time, right?"

Mitch however, wasn't too happy about not seeing JD in the eye for this transaction. Jack, a young, blond guy standing next to JD, face stoic and impassive, had been there for transaction the last few times already, but usually was confined to background guard work. Same as the other young man next to him.

"I'm warning you, JD. You know what's at risk for me," Mitch replied. "If precious Jack messes up...." Mitch didn't finish with words, but with a hand gesture. JD frowned. And if Mitch wasn't totally blind, Jack's eyebrows narrowed, causing Mitch to briefly focus on the distinct scar on Jack's right temple.

"Jack is trustworthy. Which, right now, I can't say about you, Chief Inspector," JD countered icily. He was satisfied seeing Mitch tense at the form of address. "So, do we have a deal?"

Mitch straightened up at that, his partner shooting nervous glances at him. This wasn't playing out the way he'd anticipated. But Mitch knew, if he backed out now, him and his partner in crime would be bird food. He had no choice but to take the bull by the horns and play nice. Jack stepped up, getting ahead of JD.

"Do we have a deal?" He repeated JD's words with a firm voice. Mitch waited a few heartbeats and then nodded.

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"Tango Zulu, close in with team," Jared's intercom buzzed to life. "Wait for command."

Jared knew his team had gotten the order and moved up accordingly. He expected the Go at the
moment the actual trade was being made.

From his new spot he saw the young man step up and repeat the question JD had posed. Jack's voice had sent an involuntary shiver down Jared's spine that luckily he managed to shake right off.

Jared took aim at the young man when subsequently he approached to hand over the mafia money to Mitch. Chief Inspector. Jared could worry about the significance of this later. Right now he had to focus on the task at hand.

As Jack stepped into the light, Jared heard the intercom crackle a clipped "go" in his ear. His finger tightened on the trigger, aiming for Jack's right shoulder, to put him out of action. Right then the light of one of the makeshift spotlights illuminated Jack's face and Jared almost seized up. He knew that face. He knew that scar.

The shot rang out and Jack went down, grabbing his right shoulder as Jared's bullet winged him and all hell broke loose.

"You filthy traitor!" JD roared as he hastily scrambled to take cover. "Jenkins, GO!"

Suddenly, from the depths of the building, a whole mass of JD's people swarmed the place, forcing Jared's team to take cover instead of attacking. They were grossly outnumbered.

Jared didn't know why his brain wasn't reacting the way it was trained to, but his blink of an eye distraction caused him to inexplicably be seperated from formation. Instead of being the front of the attacking line he found himself surrounded. He had to get back to his team.

Diving for cover, Jared heard a bullet zing past and his eyes moved on their own volition, seeking out Jack. Jack was keeping his head down, trying to minimize any target he gave. He used a brief pause in the fire to crawl a bit towards safety, where he was met by the other young man on JD's side for support.

The next pause in fire, Jared noticed an opening and gunned for it. It was his chance to get back into his line. Watching Jack save himself had deflected his focus and as Jared got into a crouch to run, it was only a few steps he managed to go before the floor in front of him exploded into a zillion pieces as a grenade, as he guessed, hit, and his consciousness froze and then faded.

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JD had taken cover behind a few man sized metal crates as the crossfire had begun. He couldn't believe Mitch would set him up like that. His eyes searched out Jack on the ground. He'd gone down with the first shot and JD found himself relax slightly when he saw Jack inching his way towards cover until Ben ran up to him to give him a hand.

Jack was JD's biggest hope to take over his empire one day. If he'd been killed... JD forced himself not to finish that thought. The kid was like his son. When he'd napped the boy some seventeen years ago, it had been to try and assuage the pain of the loss of his own boy who - in the moment of a temper tantrum - had run across the street just to be hit by a bus. Jeffrey Junior aka JJ had been instantly killed. He'd been six years old and the only kid JD had had.

His empire needed an heir and he wasn't ready to start over, so a few weeks onwards, JD had come across this young fellow he'd watched playing outside with an older boy. He'd actually reminded him
of JJ and JD hadn't hesitated ordering the napping.

He'd called the boy Jack, found out he was actually a year younger than JJ had been, but showed a good bit more promise than his own boy had. Three weeks later the boy had stopped correcting him when he'd called him Jack. Today, JD was sure Jack had no more memories of who he'd been the first five years of his life.

Jack had been a quick study, a great fighter, an even better marksman and it was time he'd get eased into calling the shots. Jack and Ben found cover behind another of these crates and JD returned his focus on the open patch in the building.

Mitch and his buddy were sprawled out, unmoving, along with another person who looked like a member of a SWAT team. JD's men had advanced, pushing the rest of the SWAT team back. JD noticed Chuck standing over the fallen police man, gun aimed at the head.

"Chuck!" JD boomed, stepping out of his cover. "Live hostage!"

Chuck looked at him and nodded, then knelt down to secure the unconscious fighter with a couple of handcuffs. He directed two of JD's men to get their hostage stowed in their pickup and, motioning towards Ben and Jack, JD made to get to transport and out of this mouse trap. The rest of his people would follow eventually.

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Ben was steering the pickup, hostage stretched out in the cargo area, a bleeding Jack next to him, as he stopped briefly to take on JD.

"Jack, you good?" JD asked, taking in the blood soaked sleeve of Jack's shirt.

"Just a scratch, JD. I'll live," Jack replied with a tight smile. JD nodded and looked at Ben, who was sporting a scowl.

"Something wrong, Ben?"

Ben met his eyes briefly before focussing on the road. "Nope. Just wondering what we're gonna do with the helmet in the back."

"He's insurance," JD explained.

"You think Mitch snitched us out?" Jack asked.

"Looks like. Never would have expected that," JD nodded. "Good thing I always have my backup team there, no matter how well I know my trading partners."

"Well, he ratted us out, he got what he deserved. Saw a bullet splatter his brains all over," Ben added, gripping the wheel tight as he rounded a corner. "What are we gonna do with our hostage?"

"He'll be in the dungeon," JD decided. "Jack, you and Ben take turns watching him. Get confirmation that Mitch was a snitch."

"Right," Jack nodded. "And when we have that?"
"Kill him."
When Jared came to, he knew immediately he was not where he'd hoped to be. The heavy suit and what came with it were gone, and before he even opened his eyes, Jared noticed the heavy thing weighing down his right wrist was not a medical bracelet.

Slowly he cracked one eye open, trying to take stock. He was wearing his uniform's pants and a t-shirt, right hand shackled to... probably the wall or floor. The room he was in was - like the cot he was on - simple. Four walls, no window, one door, and... one guard.

Upon seeing the guard, Jared involuntarily opened his eyes wider. It was him. Jared wasn't sure if he should be happy or upset that obviously that guy wasn't hurt bad. He knew he'd screwed his aim when he'd seen the scar.

Automatically, Jared's eyes sought out the marred skin, his pulse speeding up. It just couldn't be. Could it?

His guard was sitting on a chair he'd turned backward, arms propped on the back rest, handgun strapped in a holster around his right thigh, eyes fixed on Jared with a neutral expression on his face. He didn't look nervous, angry or scared. But Jared noticed the guard was aware that he was watching him.

With an internal sigh, Jared fully opened his eyes and sat up. He noticed the iron chain that connected his arm to the wall gave him some leeway but not enough to get to where his guard was sitting.

Looking up, Jared found himself staring into green eyes that were trying to figure him out, to see into his soul. Jared held the stare. He knew it was all about not backing down, not showing weakness or fear. He wanted to look at the guard's scar, to scrutinize it in order to make sure he couldn't be mistaken. He wanted to study the guard's features, looking for more similarities. But Jared refused to be the one breaking the stare.

After about five minutes of silent sizing up, Jared decided upon a different tactic. Without taking his eyes off the dark-blond guy, he moved to sit on the edge of the cot, propping his elbows on his knees, not showing the shackles bothered him.

"Any chance I get a drink of water?" Jared rasped. He didn't have to pretend being thirsty. His mouth felt parched.

The guard just looked to Jared's right and, following the gaze, Jared found two bottles of water at the foot end of his cot. Grateful, he stretched to reach for one and found he just about reached his target before the chain pulled tight. Jared grabbed a bottle and took a few sips.

"Thanks," he smiled, but the guard only watched impassively. "Name's Jared."

The other man blinked and nodded minutely. Jared felt slightly disappointed although he didn't know why. He had held a tiny speck of hope that the man who looked so familiar would show a reaction. Anything that would tell Jared he was onto something.

A sharp knock on the door made his guard move away from it. Then the lock was turned and another young man stepped in. Jared recognized him. He'd been present at the gig gone wrong.

"Hey, Jack. JD wants a word. I'll take over, so long."
Jack glared at his friend for a moment, then nodded and turned to leave. Jared noticed the newcomer staring after Jack, eyes dropping to Jack's ass as soon as the man had turned. The door clicked shut and was locked once more from the outside.

"Jack your boyfriend?" Jared addressed the new guy.

The man turned and glared at him. "Shut your mouth, helmet. None of your business."

Jared nodded. "Right," he smirked. "Trouble in paradise, or... unrequited."

The moment Jared was done talking, the new guy was on him, gun tucked under Jared's chin.

"One more word out of you, and you'll have a new hole to breathe through," the man snarled.

"Go ahead, shoot me," Jared shot back. "I'm sure JD will have your ass for it."

"Yeah? What makes you think that, helmet? He could be just happy I've taken you off his hands."

"I know he needs me alive and functioning," Jared returned, forcing a smile.

"And how would you know?"

"Because if he didn't," Jared stated, "I'd already be dead. So, if I were you, I'd keep my hands off me." He smirked.

The new guy upped the pressure of the nozzle under Jared's chin, glaring. Then he withdrew the weapon and shoved it through Jared's face, before backtracking to stand next to the chair Jack had occupied.

Jared used his free hand to wipe at his nose which was bleeding as a result of the rough handling. He studied the bloody smudge on his hand before wiping it on his pants and then crossed his arms, staring back at the man.

Five minutes later another knock on the door heralded Jack's return. Jared fixed his eyes onto Jack, watching him, studying him. Jack glanced at Jared, taking in the bloody nose. He frowned.

"What did you do that for?" Jack asked his fellow guard.

"He pissed me off," the other man shrugged. "He's lucky it's only a bloody nose."

"You're missing the point, Ben. You are lucky it's only a bloody nose," Jack replied icily.

Jared raised an eyebrow at that. He'd thought the two were friends at least. But there seemed to be some underlying animosity at large. Maybe Jared had hit the jackpot with his remark about unrequited love. He would do well to observe it further.

"I'll take over again. See you later, Ben."

Jack's dismissal was obvious and Ben only took a deep breath before vanishing through the door. Once they were alone again, Jack grabbed the chair and positioned it closer to Jared. As before, he straddled it back to front, arms crossed on the back rest, openly watching Jared.

"You gonna piss me off, too, Jared?" He then asked.

"You want me to?" Jared returned.
"Actually, what I want is for you to tell me why you look at me like I've got three eyes," Jack challenged, cocking his head.


"That why your aim was so shitty?" Jack was actually curious.

"Maybe," Jared scoffed.

"Well, good for me, bad for you. At any rate, it's just another scar in my collection. The ladies are gonna go craaazy," Jack flashed a fake smile and then returned to staring at Jared.

"Why did you take me here?" Jared asked. "I mean, all you do is stare at me. Won't your boyfriend get jealous?"

Jack's eyes darkened as he frowned. "Boyfriend?"

"Ben, or whatever his name is," Jared shrugged, internally gloating that he'd managed to get the man talking. "Should have seen him undress your ass with his eyes when you left."

"I bet," Jack made a show of rolling his eyes. "He still didn't get the memo."

"What? That you're not into dick or just not into him?" Jared cocked an eyebrow, knowing he was risking quite a bit by treating Jack like he'd treat his buddy.

"That's for me to know and you to wonder," Jack parried and pulled a red Balisong butterfly knife out and inspected it as if it was a crucial piece on the chess board. Jared knew Jack was warning him, making sure he saw the blade and how comfortable he was with it.

"Right," Jared acknowledged, eyeing the knife. "Again. Why did you take me? Why not just kill me?"

Jack looked up from his knife, scrutinizing Jared's face.

"Problem with dead people is, they don't talk so well," he then said matter-of-factly.

"Okay. So you want to know something," Jared deducted.

"Give the man a cookie," Jack drawled sarcastically. Then he donned his serious mask again. "Did Mitch put you on to us?"

"Oh," Jared huffed. "Straight to the point. Good. Ummm... who's Mitch?"

Jack's eyes flared up briefly, reminding Jared of reflecting sunlight on green tinted glass. But as quick as it came it was gone again and Jack squared his jaw.

"Mitch, the one who I was going to finalize the deal with? He set you and your team up to it. Double crossing JD's group," Jack explained, never taking his eyes off Jared. "My group."

"Um, I'm assuming you mean the bald dude, who's now residing in a body bag?" Jared asked.

"Yes. Mitch Pileggi. Chief Inspector Pileggi. A cop. You are a cop, too," Jack spelled out each short sentence with pristine accentuation. "He set you onto us, was a mole, snitched JD out... right?"

Jared leaned back, taking in a deep breath. He was beginning to understand. That's why the Captain
had told them not to react, no matter what they saw. That's why he'd felt the bald man had been familiar. Jared had the feeling he just stepped into a whole pile of steaming hot shit.

"Truth is, Jack," Jared started, "I got no idea what you're talking about."

Jack growled angrily, getting up to step into Jared's space.

"I'm not lying, Jack. My team, we answer to Captain Charles Malik Whitfield. Not to Chief Inspector Mitch Pileggi. We got the call as if it were any other. Was told to follow protocol no matter what. I think it's likely the Captain knew who would be there. That Mitch would be there. But I haven't got the ghost of a clue if Mitch set you up, or if Mitch was set up as well. I... I can't help you here. I'm sorry, Jack."

Jared kept his voice steady, not backing down from where Jack's face was merely a foot away from his own. Hazel eyes staring into bottle green ones. The scar on Jack's temple like a beacon in Jared's peripherals.

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"But Jared," the little blond boy pleaded. "I promise I won't tell my parents you let me use your knife. I just wanna learn how to carve sticks, like you."

"Jensen, if anyone finds out I let you hold the knife, my parents will take it away from me. I'm sorry."

Jensen sat back on his haunches, face crestfallen. "It's not fair. Why do you get to have a knife?"

"'Cuz I'm seven. And you're four, Jensen. I bet when you're seven, you're gonna have an even better knife than this."

"Really?"

"I promise, Jensen," Jared replied, looking into big, bottle green eyes. "I promise."

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Jack held Jared's stare effortlessly, for endless minutes, it seemed. Jared felt like Jack was trying to decipher his very soul. Finally, Jack backed up again, retaking his seat on the chair.

Time was passing and Jack wasn't budging, eyes never leaving Jared. Jared had never felt that vulnerable before. Finally he went to lay down on the cot and closed his eyes.

A knock on the door startled Jared. He had no idea how much time had passed. Sure enough, Jack was still sitting on the chair, green eyes trained on him. At the knock, he pocketed his knife and went to stand next to the door when it opened.

Ben was back with a small bag of sandwiches and some more water. He looked at Jack and tossed the bottle and bag over to Jared to catch.
"He talk?"


"Geez, what crawled up your ass," Ben scowled.

"Well, certainly not you. The sooner you get that into your head, the better," Jack replied evenly. "Whatever he did or did not say, I will tell to JD. Not to you. Feel free to ask him yourself."


"Have a quiet night, Ben," he said. Jack picked up the chair and placed it at the wall next to the door. Then he opened the door to step out.

"Jensen," Jared said. Jack paused and looked at Jared over the shoulder. "His name is Jensen."

"Well, my name is Jack. Good night, Jared."

The door closed behind him, leaving Jared with Ben.
Chapter 3

"Shit, shit, shit," Charles Whitfield was pacing up and down in front of his decimated squad. "How on earth did that happen? Where is Jared?"

He'd thought they were well prepared for the party they were going to crash, but their contact had failed to mention the truck load of back-up the weapons dealers had. Now he had to explain two dead policemen, who despite obviously playing for the wrong team still were colleagues, three injured SWAT members and one missing.

"I don't know, Captain," Jason replied. "Jared was supposed to take out the single guy. I don't know what happened. He never misses."

"And when we were caught in the crossfire, he got seperated. Never happened before, man. He seemed distracted," Chad added.

"You all know you can't afford being distracted," Charlie growled. "You are the best of the best,fellas! You know better than to be distracted. It ends in disaster as you can clearly see."

"Just wonder what they want with Jare," Jason muttered. "I mean... they could have just killed him or left him for dead but no, they had to snatch him." He was angry; angry and scared.

"Yeah, makes no sense," Chad agreed. "We have to find him. Pity those two traitors can no longer tell where this 'JD' has his lair hidden."

"Something is really fishy here," Charlie announced. "I can smell it. And I don't mean Mitch and Stan." He paused, thinking. "Right. Let me see what I can find out." With that, Charlie left, leaving behind a few puzzled faces.

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Jack found JD in the lounge, nursing a glass of bourbon. He approached the older man who nodded at the spot opposite from him and Jack went ahead to take a seat.

"Did he talk?"

"Yes," Jack replied. "But you won't like it."

"Oh?" JD raised an eyebrow.

"Jared says he doesn't know who tipped off the cops," Jack explained, leaning back and crossing his leg over his knee.

"Jared, eh?" JD repeated, looking at Jack who evenly held the stare and nodded. "So, do you believe him?"

JD knew Jack was an excellent judge of character. Some of his men called him a human lie detector, which is why JD had asked Jack to "interrogate" their hostage. Jack had something about him that made people trust him, although Jack himself did not trust blindly.
Ben was someone Jack did not trust, although JD wasn't sure if that had anything to do with Ben's obsession with Jack. Ben's father had been JD's right hand. When he was killed in a deal gone wrong, JD had taken on twelve year old Ben and raised him alongside Jack. Jack had been fourteen then and reveled in the task of taking on big brother duties.

That had changed slightly when Ben started trying to get into Jack's pants and was rebuffed. JD had talked to both of them, asking them to accept and respect a "no". Ben hadn't been happy but as far as JD could tell, abided by that rule. Jack had never said anything to make him think differently.

"Yes, I do. He said he didn't really know Mitch, didn't answer to him, but suspects his superior might have been tipped off. He didn't know by whom, however."

"Superior?" JD raised an eyebrow and took a sip of bourbon.


"Right. Good work, son," JD smiled. He had an idea. "Try and find out if this Whitfield was on location. After that, dispose of Jared. He's a crappy shot."

Jack glanced at his right shoulder. "You mean because he missed me?"

"Son, SWAT are the best. They always hit their mark. He might not have wanted to kill you, but your shoulder should be a right mess. It isn't."

"He claimed he was distracted, Dad," Jack remarked. JD looked straight at him. Jack rarely called him dad. Not because he wasn't his dad, Jack didn't know that. But people, even their own people, looked at him differently if such relation would be showcased. Only a few trusted men knew Jack was his son. And only one of them knew he really wasn't.

"Distracted? By what? Your pretty ass? Am I gonna have to pull rank on him like on Ben?" JD snorted and Jack smiled thinly, shaking his head at JD's joke.

"Ben would do well to memorize I never was his property. He is a lot slower on the uptake."

"Slower than...?" JD's forehead crunched up in a frown and Jack grinned.

"Nevermind. Jared claimed I reminded him of someone he once knew." Jack met JD's eyes.

"Someone called Jensen."

Eyes widening slightly, JD emptied the rest of his bourbon in one big gulp and shuddered as the alcohol ran down his throat.

"Jensen? What kind of dumb ass name is that?" He asked, blinking slightly before bursting out in a guffowing laugh. "That kid is messed up."

"Maybe," Jack replied. "But I wouldn't dispose of him, yet. He could come in handy."

"Oh?" JD was curious and relieved that Jack didn't seem to pick up on Jensen.

"Depending on what will unfold in the wake of this bust up, it would be wise to keep him as insurance policy. So if you wanna pull rank on Ben, keep him from killing Jared."
Jared wasn't too happy about being left with Ben. That boy was volatile and hated his guts, so Jared tried to find a way to lay down on his cot in a way that didn't leave him too vulnerable. In addition to that, he'd seen Ben bring a baseball bat in. Jared was pretty sure it wasn't to practise his hit rate. He would have to try and sleep with his eyes open.

He didn't get much of a chance to escape Ben's hostile attitude for long, though. Ben had stared at him eating, doing exactly what Jack had been doing - watching his every move. Only having Ben scrutinize him made Jared feel really uncomfortable. It was creepy. Sure enough as soon as Jared had somewhat settled on the cot, Ben started talking.

"So... who's Jensen?"

Jared opened his eyes and frowned. "What?"

"Don't play dumb, helmet. You told Jack 'His name is Jensen'. So, who is Jensen?"

"None of your business," Jared muttered, closing his eyes again. But he didn't relax. Every fiber in his body was ready for action.

A loud metallic clatter almost made him jump up. His eyes flew open and Jared found himself staring at the metal bat inches from his face. Ben must have banged it against the edge of the cot first.

"Who. Is. Jensen?"

Jared sat up again, Ben allowing the motion by slightly moving his bat. He realized his captor wouldn't just let it go. And Jared wasn't prepared to pass on the chance of finding out for sure just for the sake of keeping things from this asshole. Ben might as well find out without him telling. So there was nothing to be gained by denying him.

"A friend I once had," Jared replied, a defiant glare in his eyes. Ben's eyes narrowed for a moment.

"What does that have to do with Jack? He knew him, too?" Ben was casually toying with the bat and Jared didn't know whether to watch the thing or the man.

"Doubt it," Jared replied evenly. "He disappeared a long time ago."

"Then why did you bring him up? Or is he one of your SWAT friends? Boyfriend? C'mon, spill!"

"Honestly, as I said before, that's none of your business. Should I spell it out for you?" Jared was getting annoyed. At his situation and at bring stuck with a hostile and weird Ben as his guard. A split second later Jared felt the cool metal of the bat pressing against his throat.

"You'd do well to remember your place, helmet," Ben spat in Jared's face, eyes wild with barely contained anger. "Jack isn't here to save your ass. Hardly anything worth saving as it is, if you ask me."

"Yeah, but nobody asked you," Jared retorted.

Ben withdrew the bat and swung it into the wall right above Jared's head. Jared managed not to flinch. Ben was so close Jared could practically feel the air between them vibrate as Ben was working on controlling himself, trembling with anger.

Finally Ben decided to retreat. He went to the chair and sat down, bat resting on the ground between
his legs, held upright with both his hands rested on the hilt. It was quiet but for both of their breathing for close to ten minutes. Then Ben chose to talk again, audibly calmer, but not any less menacing.

"I know I'll enjoy beating you to a pulp once JD decides you've served your purpose," he declared. "Bet then Jack wouldn't be so interested in your scrawny ass no more."

Jared started. He was beginning to understand. Parts, at least. The mess he got himself into just got bigger and bigger.

"Look, Ben. I know you want to get into Jack's pants and from what I've seen, he's not interested. But what does that have to do with me?"

Ben glared at him.

"I know Jack. I know the signs. And I can see you think he's hot. Everyone thinks he's hot. Fucker!"

Jared decided to stay quiet. He was alright with Ben being at the other side of the room. He didn't need him to close the distance once more.

It was quiet for a few moments, then Ben started pacing once more, dragging the bat across the floor. Jared cringed at the noise... metal on concrete.

A knock and the tell tale click of the lock being turned stopped Ben in his tracks. The door opened and in stepped Jack. He saw Jared on the cot first, the Ben, the bat still on the floor.

"Get your ass to bed, Ben. JD decided our guest can steam in his own juices during the night," Jack spoke softly.

"But...," Ben started, causing Jack to lift his head and look directly at him.

"He's cuffed to the wall. The door's gonna be bolted from the outside. Unless he can chew his way through steel and concrete, he'll stay put, Ben."

Ben glared at Jack but wordlessly made his way past the other man. Jack glanced at Jared, face impassive, eyes unblinking. Then he closed the door and locked from the outside.

Jared let out a sigh of relief. After a minute, he stretched out on the cot again in an attempt to find some rest.

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It was late when Captain Charles Whitfield entered the common room to find his men. As he walked in, six sets of eyes looked expectantly at him. Charlie dropped the bundle of files he carried on the center table.

"Turns out a recruit mentioned the planned deal between Pileggi and someone called JD. Still trying to find the name of the recruit. What we have to do now is to identify JD."

Chad and Jason exchanged a look. Some initials were not much to go by, but better than nothing.

"Raided the databank for local offenders with said initials. Why don't you check through, see if anything sounds or looks familiar."
Chad grabbed the files and pulled out a first picture. They'd seen a blurry photo of JD and then saw the man in the warehouse. Neither Jake Dahill nor any of Jesiah Defoe, Jules Duffey or Jimothy Davids were a perfect match.

"Do we even know those are really his initials?" Jason sighed. "I mean he could just be nicknamed JD because he's in love with Jack Daniels."

Charlie looked at Jason, nodding. "True, but we have to start somewhere."

Chad rolled his eyes and picked up the second folder. He quickly tossed aside the files of Junior Davide Okocha and Jeremiah Damarcus Williams as they were not even the required ethnic group, but narrowed his eyes at the mug shot of one Jeffrey Dean Morgan.

"Charlie?" He called. "Do we have a recent pic of this one? That mug shot is like seventeen years old."

Immediately Jason and the other team members studied the photo. Mike Rosenbaum plucked a pencil from the table and took the copy Chad held, adding a makeshift beard.

"Damn, Charlie. Chad is right. This could be JD," he then said.

"I agree," Jason nodded along with the rest of the group.

"Right," Charlie smiled. "On it."
Jared woke up courtesy to his bladder that was ready to burst. He'd been up half the night, trying to ignore the pressure. Groaning, he turned around and sat up. His eyes settled on dark leather boots topped by worn blue jeans and an anthracite Led Zeppelin t-shirt.

Bottle-green eyes observed his every move and Jared couldn't help blushing slightly. Jack's face didn't betray any emotion. The only thing telling Jared that Jack noticed he was checking him out was a slow blink of his eyes.

"Hungry?" Jack asked.

Yeah, Jared was hungry. But he also needed to empty his bladder, pronto.

"Famished," Jared admitted. "What time is it?"

"Just after six am," Jack replied without even glancing at the watch on his left wrist. "Coffee?"

Jared swallowed at the thought of drinking anything.

"Addict, here, but...," Jared trailed off to concentrate on controlling himself.

"Bathroom break," Jack nodded, making Jared wonder if the boy could read his mind. He nodded, staring at the scrappy ground at Jack's feet.

Jack got up and pulled out a key, motioning to Jared's shackled wrist. Jared readily held out his arm. Jack taking his hand in his own to unlock the shackles sent a spark through Jared's body that made him hold his breath.

Jack gave no sign he'd felt the spark as well. He stuffed the key back into his jeans pocket, trading it for the knife. Holding it in his hand seemed enough for Jack. He felt no need to left the blade spring free. Instead he opened the door and nodded at Jared to go ahead.

"End of the hall, door to your right," Jack instructed.

Jared nodded and walked ahead. The hall was empty and a split second Jared was toying with the thought to make a run for it. However, he had no idea how to get out of the building, or whether there were other guards. Plus, he wouldn't get far with his ready to burst bladder.

When he entered the bathroom, Jared was elated to see it had a window. A tiny one, but if he had time, maybe he'd be able to squeeze through. The toilet was in the corner and Jared headed straight towards it. As he unzipped, he realized Jack was standing in the door, watching him.

"Um, how about a little privacy?" He asked.

Jack looked at Jared, shaking his head, right hand playing with the still closed knife all along. Jared shrugged and sighed but he wasn't about to argue when he needed to pee so bad. He continued to free himself and couldn't bite back a shallow moan of relief as he emptied his bladder. He pushed the sensation of feeling Jack's eyes on him to the back of his mind.

Finally, Jared zipped himself up again and stepped over to the tiny wash basin to wash his hands. He chanced a glance at Jack, not surprised to see him standing just as before, watching him.

He didn't know why, but as he was lifting his head, Jared's eyes roaming over Jack's body, his gaze
got stuck at Jack's crotch. Not that he had studied it much before, but it definitely seemed to Jared that Jack was packing. Jared was transfixed by that thought and when he finally lifted his eyes fully, he found Jack staring right back at him.

"When you're done checking out the goods, can we get a move on? Room service doesn't last all day, unless you'd want Ben as your host."

Jared's eyes widened slightly and he nodded, drying his hands and then stepping out ahead of Jack. Jack escorted him back to his prison and waited for Jared to sit on the cot once more.

"How do you take your coffee?"

"Um, black, two sugars, please," Jared replied and Jack disappeared, locking the door. It took Jared a moment to realize he wasn't shackled and he made use of this, checking out each corner of the room as well as the door and the chair.

The door looked solid, a new lock in there, and thus most likely a dead end with no tools. Soft steps approaching let Jared scramble back to the cot. The door opened and in stepped Jack.

"Hope you like cream cheese bagels," he said, dropping a paper bag into Jared's lap as he handed over a steaming mug of coffee.

"Thanks," Jared nodded and Jack granted him with a brief smile before turning to leave.

"Jensen," Jared called after him, causing the other man to stop with his back towards him.

"I told you, my name is Jack," Jack repeated with an undertone Jared couldn't really pinpoint.

"Jensen loved cream cheese bagels," Jared continued. Jack turned around, lips slightly open. But he didn't speak. "He was only five when he disappeared. But he was my best friend. They never found any trace of him. I was mad at the police cause they couldn't find him. So I decided when I'm old enough, I'd join the police to do a better job, to find people that disappeared. I hope I will find him one day."

Jack just stared at Jared, mask back in place. After a moment or two he crossed his arms in front of his chest.

"Why are you telling me all this?"

"Because, Jack, you still remind me of him. More and more with every moment. The way you just crossed your arms... just like Jensen always did when he was challenging someone to prove him wrong. Or, your eyes... you get lots of green eyes, but this bottle green is unique. Or your face, facial shape... and your scar."

Jack had been listening intently but at the mention of the scar his eyes flashed dangerously.


Jared was taken by surprise. He hadn't anticipated the scar being such a touchy subject after the confident, nonchalant way he'd reacted to it before. It was the first time Jack had displayed a real emotion towards Jared.

"Okay, sorry," Jared mumbled. He stayed quiet and after a few moments, Jack turned around and left, slamming the door behind him.
Charles Whitfield had a grim smile on his face when he accepted the files on Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Jamie Frances – the potential suspect and the informant. Now he had something he and his team could work with. They had to figure out a way to find Jared. They owed it to themselves, and to his family. When he entered the room, he looked into the expectant faces of his men and smiled.

"Alright, boys," he called. "Here's all the info I could find on the possible JD as well as on the one who dropped the info to my superior. Let's make two teams to evaluate the info."

Soon they all put their heads together, meticulously working through the info. Charlie had managed to get the latest driving license picture of Jeffrey Dean Morgan and the team agreed that indeed he was the one called JD.

Chad and Jason were going through JD's file, jotting down every bit of information they thought might be helpful. Interesting enough, the man had no real criminal record. The name was in the database from an incident seventeen years prior where he'd had failed to show in court after a speeding offense which he refused to admit to. There had been an altercation with the executing officer which had resulted in fists flying, ultimately causing the court case.

After failing to show for it, he'd been sentenced to a fine as well as a driving ban for three months. That was the last they had on him as far as criminal records went. Personal records were much more informative.

He'd married young, and was a father of a young boy just before taking over his father's mechanical engineering firm. The address of the plot was the same they had been at during the fateful gig.

JD's wife had died just a year before the road rage incident. What caught Jason's eye, however, were diverging reports about JD's boy. Listed as Jeffrey Morgan, Jr. on Kindergarten records, his name changed to Jack Morgan at grade three.

The time between Kindergarten and grade three was listed as home schooled. Apparently the boy had had an accident which had caused the man to keep him home for a good while. When he enrolled him back in school, not only had the name been changed. There was also a new school. JD had moved his son across town, no obvious reasons, and changed his name.

Neither Jason nor Chad could make sense of it unless the boy had been damaged badly enough that these changes could be seen as an attempt to keep him safe. However, there were no records at all about the accident, a hospital stay or the injuries sustained at all.

The boy had sailed through school, however, finishing with top grades and honors. He had enrolled in a prestigious university's online program for pre-law, specializing in criminology.

Chad was staring at a high school yearbook picture of Jack, taking in a scar on the right side of his face, which he took as having to be from the accident he'd had. The longer Chad stared at the photo, the more a niggling voice in the back of his mind piped up that he'd seen the face before.

"Hey, Jason, will you look at JD's boy and tell me I've seen him before?" Chad nudged his friend and colleague. Jason lowered the file he'd been reading and focused on the pic.

"You have," he then said. "I believe that is the guy Jared had been aiming at."
"Right!"

Charlie walked over and let them present what they found out. He nodded thoughtfully at their discoveries and then looked up.

"Find anything on this Jamie Frances, Mike?"

"Not much, Captain. Parents deceased, no siblings. There's no information on his formative education, but it says here he was in training at Quantico for 16 weeks and then discharged. Reason is classified. But, he's twenty and lives on his own. Apparently on his inherited wealth. Home address on Pine Street," Mike declared.

"Pine Street?" Chad's head shot up. "Jason, didn't this JD have a business address on Pine Street?"

Jason leafed through their pile. "Yep. 3175 Pine Street. Appartment #33."

"You're shitting me," Mike gasped. "Frances stays at appartment #34."

"And here we have our connection, gents," Charlie smiled grimly. "Question is, did Jamie just catch wind of the story and try doing the right thing, or is he somehow involved?"

***

JD just finished a phone call when a sharp knock on his door resounded. He looked up and smiled thinly when he saw Ben enter.

"You wanted to see me, JD?"

"Yeah, my boy. Have a seat."

Ben scowled at being called boy, but complied. His left leg was bouncing nervously on the ball of his foot, a motion that didn't escape JD's scrutiny.

"What are you nervous about, Ben?" As always, JD was straight to the point. Ben's leg stopped moving and he looked up.

"Well, I'm sure precious Jack has been bitching about me not treating our royalty prisoner with golden gloves," Ben said derisively.

"He's talked to me, yes," JD replied. "However, I wasn't aware you're at odds with Jack." It was as much a challenge as it was a question.

"Wha... I just don't like it when he tells me what to do. One would think he is the one calling the shots here."

"Well, I put him in charge of our hostage, so it is within his power to tell you what to do and how," JD pointed out. "Which still doesn't explain why you hate that man so much. Is it because he shot Jack?"

"What? No!" Ben snapped back a bit too forcefully.

"Not convinced, Ben. I know you've had your eyes on Jack ever since you started thinking with
your dick." Ben blushed a furious shade of red at this. "He's told you he's not interested. And I had thought you finally got the message. So, what did our prisoner do? Look wrong at Jack?"

"Look, I don't care who this dude looks at. He's not my type," Ben growled.

"Hm, or maybe he caught you looking at Jack?" JD prodded on.

Ben was quiet, glaring at JD. He was thankful that the man had looked after him when his parents were gone, but he was way too made up with his own boy and his abilities. No matter what Ben did, it was always Jack this, Jack that. Which made the fact that Jack wasn't interested in Ben the way he was interested in Jack all the more hard to handle.

Ben hated Jack. But he was still drawn to him and couldn't explain to himself why. And that made him hate the situation even more.

"Right, so that's it," JD concluded when Ben stayed silent. "Listen carefully, Ben. You're a good guy. Smart, good looking, likeable. But your jealous streak is counteracting you every time. Let go of it. Set your focus on other things once you've learned you won't get what you want. You can go far in this business, but only if you accept your losses and move on. Let it go."

JD got up from his seat, signaling to Ben that the chat was over. Ben got up and left, putting in a real effort to refrain from slamming the door behind him.

Oh I have moved on, JD, but I'm sure you won't like my new focus. Not at all.

***

Jared was sitting on the cot, feet up and back rested against the wall. He had made use of not being shackled and searched the whole room, but much to his chagrin he hadn't found anything that could help him escape.

He'd been thinking about Jack and his reaction to mentioning the scar. By now, Jared was fairly certain that Jack was really Jensen, but he hadn't remembered anything of it. Yet it appeared as though Jack was curious. Maybe the story of the cream cheese bagels was shaking loose some memories?

Jared decided to keep up voicing his little memories of Jensen when Jack was present. It excited Jared on a few different levels. Maybe he'd tell Jack the story of Jensen's scar next.

Footsteps outside his door made Jared perk up. Was it time for lunch yet? Had something happened? Would they let him go? He just hoped whoever put his head through the door next, it wouldn't be Ben.
Jack closed the door to his room behind him and leaned against it. His face betrayed none of his emotions, but his heart was beating rapidly in his chest as Jared's words kept looping in his brain. He'd been doing his best to rationalize how all of this made him feel.

He knew as a fact, when Jared had said Jensen the first time, it had felt like a tiny stab in his brain. He couldn't explain or rationalize it. JD's fractional reaction when he told him about it had kindled the spark.

Jared telling him about his green eyes and looks didn't do too much as Jack knew people looked alike even if there was no relation. And he had known Jensen age five. Growing up he would change somewhat.

What threw him, however, was the preferences and mannerisms Jared had mentioned. Those things were hard to change even if you tried to. They were ingrained in people.

Thinking of his scar made Jack's heart rate accellerate even more. He had no recollection of how he got it. JD had said he was in a car accident that killed his mother and left him with a nasty head injury, hence the scar and him not being able to remember anything before the crash, nor his mother.

Jack had felt bad for years that he didn't remember or recognize the woman JD had shown him on pictures. Pictures of him with her before the accident had jostled no memories either and he'd always felt no attachment to seeing his own small self either.

Jack took a deep breath and walked over to the couch, flopping down on it and resting his arm across his aching head.

What if Jared was right? What if he really was this Jensen?

That'd mean so many things, things that made Jack feel sick to his stomach. After a fruitless attempt to chase these thoughts from his conscience, Jack got up and started his laptop.

While he was waiting, his thoughts were revolving around Jared. Jack was pretty sure he was more straight than not, having had a few girlfriends in school. He'd also had the odd make-out session with a guy or two, but more out of curiosity. And of course, he'd had Ben chasing after him since the boy had been fifteen.

At first it had amused Jack, but when Ben didn't accept his no, Jack had chosen to punch his answer into the boy. Ben had been less obvious after that, but never really stopped.

With Jared, Jack had immediately felt drawn to him. He was easy on the eyes, seemed to have a great sense of humor and had practically oozed confidence. Jack had no idea what to make of his reactions to their hostage and thus chose to hide behind a long practised mask.

The laptop played a little melody, informing Jack it was ready for use. He opened his browser and hesitated a moment before typing Jenson in the search bar. He stared at the letters for a few moments before changing it to Jensen on a gut feeling. It looked right. Then he added + kidnapping and hated the fact his finger was trembling as he hit enter.

Only a handful of results popped up. Apparently an Officer Jensen had arrested a suspect in a kidnapping case in Frederick, MD ten months ago. Three years ago a Marcus Jensen had kidnapped his ex-wife's dog in Chico, CA.
Then there was a book by D.L. Jensen which dealt with a kidnapping, which appeared about four years prior. And the consecutive article was about a Jensen SV-8 involved in a kidnapping in Boston in 2004.

The next headline made Jack freeze before clicking on it. It was dated seventeen years back, about a boy kidnapped in the neighboring town. The 5-year-old had been riding his bike with his 10-year-old brother, when a dark SUV had cut in front of them, causing the older one to ride into a front yard where he crashed his bike, and when he got back up, "Jensen was gone."

Jack felt his head spinning and his pulse sped up. Closing his eyes, he forced himself to take a few deep breaths. He had to find out what Jared knew about Jensen's scar. And the kidnapping. Not bothering to shut down his laptop, Jack jumped up and left his room.

***

Ben was watching Jared eat the sandwich he'd brought him. Not that he'd wanted to, but JD ordered it. Can't have the hostage starve to death, eh? The reason Ben was waiting, was that he was itching to get some more information out of him. Anything that JD would want to know. Anything that precious, fuckable Jack didn't get out of the helmet.

When Jared was done, he looked up at Ben, staring in silence. Ben glared back at him and let his bat swing next to him as an underlying threat.

"Time to lock you up again, helmet. Jacky boy is getting soft and lenient, or plain demented, to not lock you up. Arm out."

"Maybe he just knows what sympathy is," Jared replied. He received a backhand across his face for his efforts and felt his lip split open as Ben shackled his wrist once more.


"Sympathy earns you respect. A word you probably don't know the meaning of," Jared countered, looking at Ben defiantly. "Jack is much more of a man than you are."

Jared was aware he was riling Ben up. He was hoping of goading him into making a mistake. So far it only earned him another jab in the face.

"You better shut your mouth, helmet. Before I punch every one of your teeth out. Jack won't look at you twice if you got a grandpa face. Yeah... he's that shallow."

Jared huffed, stifling a laugh. "You mean because he doesn't look twice at you, halfwit? I'm betting it's not because of your visage. Your character is much more ugly, that's for sure."

Ben aimed another punch at Jared, teeth clenched in rage, but Jared was done taking the punishment. He brought up his shackled arm and used the chain to his defence. His main aim was to keep the bat out of play and he managed to land a vicious shot at Ben's ribs. Ben staggered back, groaning in pain.

There was blood dripping from both men's faces and Jared realized a second too late that letting Ben back off meant he could now swing the bat. He tried to get hold of Ben's sleeve to prevent it but the chain pulled tight before his hand could reach it. Ben's blood smeared face drew into a sickly smile
as he lifted up his weapon of choice.

"Oh my, helmet, I think it's time I introduced you to my friend," Ben growled and let the bat bounce in his hand a few times before taking a full swing at Jared's ribs. Jared grunted as the impact first hit his left arm, numbing it on the spot. His mind was clouding from the pain and instinctively he cradled his arm with the shackled right one, exposing his ribs for the next swings.

Jared lost track of time. He had no idea how often he got hit and how often his kicks had hit Ben. But suddenly it all stopped. Jared could still hear punches and hits, but he wasn't on the receiving end anymore. Cracking one eye open, he saw Jack landing a hit on Ben's already bruised nose, then the metallic clank of the bat being tossed behind was heard.

"What the FUCK do you think you're doing, Ben?"

Jack was glaring at Ben, who was holding his face. Ben evaded Jack's gaze, looking down, breathing heavily.

"Get out!"

There was no leeway in Jack's tone and Ben turned to walk out the door without sparing either men inside another look. Jack watched his retreating back until he turned a corner.

"Are you alright, Jared?"

Jared struggled to sit up, still cradling his arm. He took a tentative deep breath and then gave a tiny nod. "Arm's numb, ribs ache. But nothing feels broken."

"I'm gonna kill him one day," Jack grumbled as he unlocked Jared's shackles again.

"He's not worth it," Jared replied.

Jack stared back at the other man, face unreadable. There was an intensity in his gaze that made Jared struggle to contain a shiver.

"Jared? Tell me about this scar," Jack asked quietly, slightly touching it. "Please."

Jared sat up a bit straighter. "Alright. It... kinda was my fault."

Jack raised an eyebrow but remained quiet.

"I got a new bike for my seventh birthday. A shiny black one with a Batman design. Y... Jensen loved it. Begged me to try it out. I... couldn't deny him anything. He was like my little brother."

Jared was quiet for a moment, closing his eyes. For a moment he could have sworn Jack's lips were trembling.

"It was a wrought iron fence, with diamond shaped inlets. He... you hit it head first. I was so scared. There was so much blood. Of course I had no idea then that head wounds tend to bleed badly. Later on, my dad told me you were lucky you hadn't lost your eye. One of the diamond shaped spikes had sliced your head open like a spear. Another inch further and it'd have cost you the eye."
Jared lifted his hand and traced the shape of the scar next to his own eye.

"It healed nicely and we both ended up riding the bike again. Then, after I had turned eight - you were five - you were riding it in a race with your brother Josh. You were adamant you could only beat him with this bike and you were gonna race around the block with me being start and finish."

Jared fell silent, looking at his feet. He heard Jack stepping closer.

"Josh came back alone," Jack whispered tonelessly. "I read the article. Thank you, Jared."

"For what?"

"For telling me. I... am starting to remember things, I... I kinda saw the fence when you were describing it just now," Jack rasped. "It wasn't your fault."

Jack squatted down, face to face with Jared. He looked into the other man's hazel eyes for a moment and then closed the distance and pressed his lips to Jared's.

Jared felt like a spark lit up his lips when Jack's touched his. Then Jack pulled back, his eyes searching out Jared's, asking if it was okay. Jared lifted his right arm and gently pulled Jack's - no, Jensen's - head closer again until their lips touched and locked.

***

Ben had stormed off in a rage, planning on taking his anger to JD, make him see that Jack wasn't cut out to be the leader JD saw in him. He was too soft, too compassionate. He'd been halfway to JD when he realized he'd left his bat behind.

With a huff he turned and walked the long way back to Jared's prison cell. As he approached, he heard soft words and quiet. Silently, he entered the room. What he saw froze him to the spot for a moment. Then blind rage overtook him. So Jack had been blowing him off time and time again, but
he had no quarrel kissing their prisoner.

Ben stepped in and grabbed his bat, which was laying discarded in a corner. He hadn't been quiet any longer and the two other men noticed his presence and turned. Just as Jack was getting up from his crouch, Ben swung the bat at him. All his pent up anger and jealousy translated into the swing and when the bat connected with the side of Jack's head, Jack sprawled on the floor like a sack of potatoes, out cold.

"No," Jared whispered in disbelief, body tense. Ben didn't seem to hear him. He was towering over the fallen man, staring down.

Jared's eyes sought out all the crucial spots to determine if Jensen - it really was Jensen - was alive. With relief he noticed the rise and fall of his chest. A bit further down, the red handle of Jensen's Balisong was protruding from his jeans pocket. Jared tensed. He had no weapon whereas Ben was armed with the bat. If he could get to Jensen's knife, he might have a chance.

Assessing his opponent quietly, Jared decided he'd have to go for it before Ben would snap out of his victory induced trance. Mentally counting to three, Jared concentrated on the knife and dove for it. His fingers wrapped around the handle at the same moment Ben turned to realize what Jared was doing.

With a flick of his wrist, Jared engaged the butterfly knife and brought it up, intending to cut the arm that was swinging the bat once more, this time aiming for Jared's head.

The force of Ben's swing buried the knife deep in his forearm, causing him to cry out in pain. The bat dropped down a moment later when Ben clutched his hand to his wound and stared at Jared, wild eyed. Then he turned tail and dashed out the door, which he kicked shut. Jared heard the now familiar snick of the lock sliding in place. They were trapped.
Chapter 6

The little convoy marked SWAT parked around the corner from 3175 Pine Street. Charlie had found out that JD Morgan not only had an apartment next to the one of their informant, he actually owned the building. Many of the apartments were rented by private people, such as Jamie Frances. Some of them were listed as employees of JD Morgan as well. What had puzzled Charles Whitfield however, was the fact that the apartment Frances had listed as his address, was officially listed under a different name.

Chad had studied the blueprint of the building and set up the best strategic spots for them to attack the apartment JD was listed in. He and Mike were going to lead one group from the main entrance, whereas Charlie and Jason were supposed to head around the back, check some vacant apartments and then circle around through the semi enclosed court behind the building with their men.

"Alright, listen up," Charlie called out via the intercom to all his men. "Main target is apartment #33 - third floor. You know the drill. If it turns up empty, the basement is of interest. Do me a favor, don't be too trigger happy. Jared could be out there. And we want to get JD alive. Roger?"

"Roger," his team replied.

"Right. One last thing, remember to always check your six."

***

Ben had made his way to JD's room, leaving a crimson trail as the blood kept welling up despite his desperate clutching of the wound. He hoped Moby wasn't out on a job because he was the best alternative to a medic they had and he needed his arm stitched up fast.

Not bothering to knock on the door, Ben barged in, startling JD into a frown and then shocked surprise as he took in the injury to Ben.

"What the fuck happened to you?" JD called as he got up and swiftly fetched a towel to wrap around Ben's arm tightly.

"Fucking helmet stabbed me," Ben snarled.

"Stabbed?" JD raised an eyebrow and Ben nodded. "How did he get hold of anything to stab you with? Where's Jack?"

"Jack's a traitor, JD. It was his knife."

"No, no, no," JD shook his head. "I know Jack. You trying to tell me he handed his knife to that cop?"

"Yeah. Must have," Ben panted, trying to ignore the pain in his arm. "I saw him making out with that helmet."

"You sure you're not hallucinating, Ben?" JD inclined his head at the other man's injured arm. "'Cause that doesn't sound like Jack at all. As you might remember."
"What can I say, JD? I know what I saw. Wouldn't surprise me if he leaked that busted deal."

There was a knock on JD's still open door, revealing Moby.

"Hey there, JD, I think I got something on...," Moby started but JD cut him off.

"Later, Mobe. I need you to stitch up Ben's arm. And I need to find Jack. You seen him?"

Moby took one look at Ben and the blood soaked towel around his right fore arm.

"Damn, what happened?"

"Knife wound," Ben hissed as he unwrapped the towel and sat in a chair.

"No, keep pressure on it. I'll get the kit. And no, JD, haven't seen Jack."

"I'd check his laptop, JD," Ben rasped. "If I'm right there could be evidence there. Or maybe the phone records, I dunno."

"I still think you're full of shit, Ben," JD growled and went to his desk to get his Walther P10. Then he left the room.

***

Jared stared at the door for a moment, feeling trapped. Then he turned and fell to his knees next to Jensen, putting his good hand on his shoulder. He looked down at the slack face, watching blood running down Jensen's cheek and neck from a cut above his ear.

"Jensen," he called, giving his shoulder a slight shake. Jensen's head rolled left to right but he didn't respond at all.

"Jensen, come on. I need you here," Jared muttered, a bit louder, adding a bit more force into his hand on the shoulder. The success was the same.

Jared was getting apprehensive about Jensen's lack of response and moved his hand from his shoulder to his chin.

"Jensen! Don't do that, man! Ben is gonna come back with a gun for sure. I can't haul you out of here! Hell, I can't even get out. JENSEN!"

Jared noticed his pulse was speeding up as he was getting more anxious about his childhood friend. Jensen's eyelids were fluttering minutely but that - apart from his breathing - was the only sign he was alive. Jared wasn't sure why he was reacting the way he was. His job required a cool head in hairy situations. And yet, he had a hard time forcing down the panic that was rising in him.

"JACK!!!" He shouted with another hard shove on the other man's shoulder and was relieved when he got a groan for his trouble. "That's it, Jack, c'mon, open your eyes. We need to get out of here, Jack."

Jensen cracked an eye open and moaned. "H'd hurts."

"Yeah, I'm sure it does. You took a hell of a hit there. Can you look at my hand?" Jared held up his
hand and relaxed when Jensen directed his eyes there. "Awesome, Jack. Do you know who I am?"

Jensen squinted and then nodded briefly. "Jar'd," he replied. "'m not J'ck."

Jared smiled at that and held out his right hand. "Wanna try and sit up? We need to get out of here. I'm sure Ben will be back soon. And I doubt he'll bring roses."

Jensen grabbed Jared's proffered hand and sat up. Immediately he squeezed his eyes shut and brought his free hand up to hold his head. "K'ilin' me," he mumbled.

"I hope not," Jared replied. "Do you happen to have a key for this door, Ja.... um... Jensen?"

"Hm?" Jensen looked at Jared who pointed at the door. "Um, yeah... pocket."

Jared didn't hesitate to fumble the key from Jensen's pocket. He walked over to the door and listened for a moment. When everything was quiet, he inserted the key and turned it to unlock. Only, nothing happened. With a frown, Jared tested if the key could turn further, but he only met resistance.

"It's not working, Jensen," he muttered, hating himself for the slight bit of panic that crept back into his voice.

"Lock 'p, th'n unlock," Jensen slurried as he gripped the cot to pull himself upright.

"Lock up?" Jared pulled a face but did as Jensen said. The lock clicked in place once more. When Jared unlocked another time, he could hear the bolt outside move and indeed, the door opened. He let out a relieved sigh and quickly scanned the hallway ahead. So far they were in the clear.

"Come on, Jensen, let's move." Jared walked up to the other man and tried to assess his functionality. Jensen was standing, but swaying slightly on his feet, like a sailor in heavy sea. The left side of his face was covered in blood but at least, so it seemed, the cut wasn't actively bleeding anymore. "Can you walk?"

Jensen squared his chin and nodded, determination clearly visible in his handsome features. He was looking pale and unsteady, but when he stepped up to Jared it was convincing enough that Jared was confident they'd have a chance at getting out. He checked the hallway over once more and motioned for Jensen to walk ahead.

***

JD hated himself for even considering following Ben's suggestion of checking Jack's laptop. What made him finally go for it was the memory of Jack telling him about the cop mentioning his resemblance to Jensen. JD had been sure Jack was not paying any heed to those words, but the tiny bit of niggling doubt was there.

Knocking on Jack's door just in case, JD let himself in when there was no reply. He looked around and quickly spotted the laptop on the desk in the corner. Walking up to it, JD noticed it was running, screensaver in place. He sat on the chair in front of the screen and hit "Enter". To his surprise, no password protected the laptop after energy saving mode. JD felt a bit of relief as it seemed to indicate Jack had nothing to hide. The relief was short lived, however, when he focused his view on the open browser page.
A cold shudder ran down his back and a feeling of foreboding settled deep inside the weapons dealer. Jack had paid attention to the cop's words. He'd found out enough to find this cursed little piece of journalism online that had probably lifted Jack's world from it's axis as much as it just did JD's.

JD was no man on pity or sympathy for others. He had no problem ordering a man's death or even doing it himself should the occasion require it. This, however, hit close to home. He loved Jack. He'd raised him. He'd nursed his needs and fed his mind. JD knew Jack had no bad bone in his body, but he grew up knowing what their business was and still had an innate sense of justice - up til now with a blind spot to the business he was getting involved in more and more.

JD knew, Jack would feel betrayed, robbed, and therefore would be most likely not thinking clearly. If he let the cop go - and the cop knew as well - they would both be a big hazard to his business and freedom. There was just one way to stop them from talking, and with regards to Jack, JD hated it for the first time in his life.

He picked up the laptop and smashed it into the wall behind him, screaming out his anger. All those years of guiding Jack... for nothing. Just because the hostage they ended up taking was probably the only person in a thousand mile radius that could have recognized Jensen. Gripping his handgun tighter, JD grit his teeth and walked back to his apartment to find Ben.

***

Ben watched on as Moby tied off the last stitches. Usually, he started feeling nauseous looking at anything bloody that was not a simple scratch. But the anger boiling in the pit of his stomach drowned out any of those sentiments. He'd enjoy carrying out whatever it was JD would ask him to do.

Just when Ben finished that thought, JD returned to the apartment and Ben almost did a double take at the turmoil displayed on JD's features. A wolfish grin spread on Ben's face. He was sure whatever JD found was damning enough and he was ready to carry out anything JD wanted from him.

"Where's Jack?"

JD's voice was hard, and yet Moby and Ben both detected a faint quiver in it.

"Locked him in with the helmet," Ben replied as Moby wrapped a bandage around his freshly stitched up arm. "Let me just get my gun and..."

"Locked him in? Ben, don't play me for a fool. Jack has keys, too." JD raised an eyebrow.

"Um, yeah. He's, err... guarding the hostage," Ben stuttered.

"Tell me one thing, Ben," JD said sternly, crossing his arms. "If the cop stabbed you with Jack's knife, which Jack gave him, what on earth would make you think he'd stay put? Are you sure he didn't stab you in the brain, boy?"

Ben gasped like a fish out of water, not knowing what to reply. If he told JD what he did to precious - or maybe not so precious anymore - Jack, he'd make an erupting volcano look tame.

"You better hope Jack's still there, Ben. Moby? Gather the crew as fast as you can."
JD turned and strode purposefully towards the staircase to get to their 'dungeon'. Ben rushed to get his gun and then jogged to catch up with JD.

Down in the basement it was obvious pretty fast that the dungeon was empty. JD’s face became unreadable as he quickened his steps to enter the room, Ben hot on his heels.

Inside, JD took in the scene. Ben's bat lay discarded and bloodied on the floor, a fair amount of splatter, mostly dried, was littering the ground in front of the cot.

"This your blood?"

Ben grunted, unconsciously clutching his bandaged arm. A small puddle of still wet blood was sitting by the foot end of the cot. JD studied the splatter a few minutes, frown growing deeper on his stubbled face.

"Did you stand there with your arm dripping for a while?"

"Um, no....," Ben replied.

"Lay it out for me," JD asked.

"What?"

"Where was the cop when he stabbed you? Where were you? Where was Jack?" JD was getting impatient as he spelled out what he wanted.

"Helmet was sitting on the cot. Jack was on his knees in front of him. Kissing him. I came this way and the ass helmet jumped up and stabbed me. Dropped the bat and shoved Jack off and then I locked them in." Ben's heart was thumping at the half truth he dished up.

"You think I'm stupid, boy?" There was a menacing vibe in JD's voice now. "You been here, how did the bloody puddle get over there? And how did the blood get on the bat? If it ran down your arm, it should be on the handle."

Ben was quiet. His face was burning red and he tensed, not sure what to reply.

"That's not your blood. If it was the cop's, you would have bragged about it. Let me tell you what happened. You came in, saw Jack with the cop, and your dumb ass got jealous so you knocked Jack out. Cop stabbed you and you fled. Cos you know Jack has a key. Only him being out you thought there'd be enough time, ain't that right?"

"I...," Ben started, but JD got into his personal space.

"You don't know Jack. You don't know why he did what he did. You hate him despite your infatuation with him. Now get your ass in gear. We need to find them. Just listen carefully, Ben. I don't care what happens to the cop. Really, I don't. But mark my words, boy. You kill Jack, and I will kill you!" JD stabbed his index finger against Ben's chest at his last word. In the ensuing silence, a faint clatter resounded at the far end of the hallway.

In a flash, JD and Ben turned and just caught a glimpse of a figure turning the corner. Jack and their hostage must have been hiding in the bathroom and now decided to make a run for it.
Chad and Mike had made their way up staircase A to the third floor. Apartment #33 was halfway between staircases A and B. Stealthily the team spread out and approached the door, which was ajar. Slight shuffling emerged from inside and Chad made eye contact with Mike.

Mike nodded and held up three fingers, then two, then one. With the precision of a well oiled machine, the team stormed into the apartment. Chad found himself looking into the startled face of a middle aged man who wasted no second dropping the bloodied towel he was using on his hands to go for his belt.

"Hands up!" Chad barked, aiming his semi automatic at the man. Realizing he'd get himself killed, the man froze and obeyed while Mike and the others checked the rest of the apartment. It was empty. "Where's JD?"

The man pressed his lips shut tightly, causing Chad to step closer, weapon now aimed at the man's crotch.

"That's gonna hurt like a mofo. Where is JD?"

"Basement," the man mumbled, clearly fond of his family jewels.

Mike hit the intercom on his uniform. "Level 3 clear. Target in basement. Over."

***

Jared was staying on Jensen's heels, letting the younger man lead him through the maze of hallways. Their own footsteps echoed loudly, making it impossible to hear if they were followed. But Jared had seen JD and Ben look at him as he'd sprinted from their hiding place. There was no way they weren't followed.

Finally Jensen stumbled against a door, bracing himself and fumbling to insert the key he'd held at the ready since they had left Jared's prison room. It took him a second to clear his vision enough to successfully complete the task.

"Hurry," Jared muttered quietly behind him. Now that they were at a stand still, the hectic pattern of people running was heard, growing louder with every step. Finally the lock snicked and Jensen pushed the door open.

Jared grabbed his friend's arm and dragged him along as he ran onto the court yard towards the far end. There was a gate there leading off the property. Jensen had wanted to lock up again but there was no time.

Half way across the yard, JD's voice boomed out loud.

"Halt right there, Jack, or your friend is dead!"

The two men knew better than to ignore the demand. Jensen turned to face JD but he refused to lift his hands. Jared, who had run on two steps further, followed suit. He felt trapped. Worried. And kinda naked without his gear and arms. Ben slowly walked up to them, while JD stayed put where he was, about thirty steps from Jensen.
"Why, Jack?" JD asked, hurt vibrating in his voice.

"You know why, JD. My name isn't Jack," Jensen replied evenly. "You lied to me. My whole life you lied to me about who I am." Jensen was getting louder, but his throbbing head was making it difficult for him to focus.

"What?" Ben shrieked, looking confused and bemused at the same time. He was standing some twenty paces off Jensen and Jared, gun trained at the latter. Jensen ignored his little shout out.

"You took me away from my real family, fed me some bullshit and you want me to believe you loved me?!" Jensen's chest was heaving.

"I did. I raised you. You owe me, Jack."

"You kidnapped me! I owe you nothing! Jared..."

"He's just a cop, Jack!" JD shouted.

"He's my friend!"

"Ha, well, he's your dead friend," Ben cut in and flicked off the safety on his Glock. Lifting the gun, aiming and firing proved more difficult with his injured arm, but Ben was a good shot. He pulled the trigger.

Jensen had realized Ben was done waiting, and darted off to give Jared a mighty shove. There was a powerful punch on his left shoulder which made his brain explode in pain. Jensen knew he was falling but couldn't get his arms up to brace his impact with the ground. His head was filled with a noise, loud like the Niagara Falls. Floating above it there was muffled shouting and shooting and finally Jared's face appeared above his. Jensen mustered a smile. Jared was alright. And then his eyelids turned to lead and he passed out.
"Ha, well, he's your dead friend!"

Jared turned to look at Ben, the speaker, at these words and saw his gun aimed right at him. Instinctively he went to duck, but before he could even complete that move he heard the shot ring out, almost simultaneously with Jensen ramming him out of the way. From the corner of his eye he saw Jensen go down hard.

"No!" Jared shouted, distraught. Ben was walking up to them, gun still aimed at Jared.

"Fuck! Ben, I warned you-," JD shouted, seeing Jack on the ground. Another shot rang through the air cutting him off.

Ben made two more steps before falling backwards as if sharply pulled on a string, a circular hole materializing in the middle of his forehead.

Jared swiftly turned to look behind him and smiled as he recognized his team streaming through the busted gate, Jason having his gun still up, now aiming in JD's direction. Jared realized it was over and immediately thought of Jensen.

"Jensen," he hissed, turning back to his fallen friend quickly. Jensen was on the ground, a puddle of blood forming on the ground below his left shoulder. He was breathing and had his pain filled eyes open, seeking out Jared's. Jared noticed the moment their eyes locked a slight smile pulled on Jensen's lips before those green eyes closed and he went limp.

"No, Jensen, you have to be alright," Jared muttered, quickly letting his hands wander over his friend's body to find out where exactly he was hit.

"Stupid cop, shoulda killed you when he first said you were talking crazy talk in his ear!" JD shouted over once more. "You ruined him, ruined everything! You stole my boy from me!" Jared looked up, surprised the man wasn't on him trying to finish what Ben started. But JD wasn't in any position to get to Jared as he was effectively wrestled to the ground by Mike and Chad.

"Jared!"

Jared looked up to look into Jason's smiling eyes. He didn't miss the gun pointing at Jensen though.

"Jason, I'm good. He's not the enemy. He saved me. JD...," Jared briefly glanced over at the commotion at the other side of the court.

"JD is taken care of, Jared. Are you hurt?"

Jared realized Chad and Michael's team must have come up from behind JD. They must have found their way through the basement and had taken the head of crime by surprise. As JD was being wrestled into cuffs, Jared saw he was struggling and seemingly trying to get towards him.

"No, I'm good. We need a medic though, Jensen is hurt."

"Jensen?"

"Long story, Jase, please, get an ambulance here fast. He's got a concussion and now he's taken a bullet for me."
"Isn't he part of that group?" Jason frowned.

"Yes and no. You have to trust me here, Jason. He's a victim as well. Please, get the medic here," Jared explained, keeping his hand pressed firmly on the bullet wound in Jensen's back.

Jason looked down at the unconscious man. Jared's hand on his shoulder was glistening red and the man's left side of the face was covered and smeared in now dried blood. He nodded.

"Alright. But you know we have to take him in, Jared."

"I know."

Jason stepped back and pressed the button on the intercom to request medical backup. He knew Chris Kane, their medical versatile squad member, would sort out the ambulance and come find them. When he received confirmation that help was on the way, Jason went down on his knees to help Jared.

Chris arrived just a minute later and got to work, cutting away Jensen's shirt to have clear access to the bullet wound. He rubbed it down and applied a bandage to it.

"Can you check his head, too?" Jared asked.


"Guy with the head shot swung a bat at it. Jensen was out for about ten minutes. His speech was slurred and he was wobbly but as far as I could tell, orientated," Jared explained. Chris nodded, prodding around the cut and checking Jensen's pupils.

"Difficult to say, concussion for sure, possibly no internal bleeding but that would have to be determined by a CAT scan," Chris explained. Just then the sirens of the ambulance got louder and louder and Chad was leading a cuffed JD past them towards their vehicle.

Jared glared at JD, who hadn't said anything more since he'd been taken down. JD's eyes were glued on Jensen's still, bloody form and for a moment Jared thought he'd seen something like regret in the older man's eyes.

"I'm sorry, Jack," JD mumbled as they walked on.

***

Jared watched the ambulance leaving, the words of the EMT still reverberating in his ears. 'He's stable. Jensen is stable. As soon as the vehicle had been out of sight and the sirens could no longer be heard, Jared felt tired. Exhaustion was washing over him as realization set in. He was safe.

"Hey, man, I thought you said you weren't hurt." Jason's worried voice registered in Jared's brain, making him look up. Jared frowned.

"Your arm, Jare. What happened to your arm?" Jason persisted.

Now that his friend mentioned it, Jared noticed that not only his arm was throbbing mercilessly. His whole side was on fire. Adrenaline was rapidly leaving Jared's body and he groaned in pain.
"Jared!"
"The bat happened, okay? Ben was using it on me and when Jensen saw it he stopped him. Only then Ben whacked him over the head with it. Cos he was sticking up for me."

"Damn, Chris? Check Jared's arm, please. We might need another ambulance." Jason called as Chad and Mike approached.

"Jared? Why were you calling that guy Jensen?", Jason asked his friend with a frown. "JD called him Jack? Isn't JD's son called Jack? So why do you call him Jensen?"

"Jack is Jensen," Jared said, gritting his teeth as Chris probed his arm. "Jensen was kidnapped as a kid. I assume JD made him believe he was his son and called him Jack. I... aaahhhh, watch it, butcher!" Chris had proceeded to prod Jared's ribs, drawing out this reaction by Jared.

"Sorry," Chris mumbled. "I don't think we need an ambulance, but you should be taken to the ER."

"I can take him," Charlie piped up. He'd joined the group a moment before and had heard Jared's last words. "How do you know Jack isn't really Jack?"

"Used to be my friend and neighbor," Jared mumbled. "Jensen, I mean. He has a unique scar. I was with him when it happened. Would recognize it anytime."

"Ah... right temple?" Chris asked. "That one looked gnarly alright. What was it? Broken glass?"

"Wrought iron fence," Jared replied as Chris busied himself wrapping a tight bandage around Jared's arm and torso, effectively immobilizing Jared's arm. "He was four. Recognized it back at the ware house but I couldn't believe it. We all thought Jensen was dead."

"Damn, Jare, is that why you missed him?" Chad growled. "Let yourself be distracted by that scar?"

"Almost got you killed, man," Mike added. "You really know better..."

"Shut up, Mike. Not like I was prepared for it," Jared muttered. He followed Charlie to their vehicle, not surprised when Jason, Chad and Mike all climbed in as well.

"So, did he recognize you? Or what?" Charlie was trying to keep Jared talking, just in case. And he was gathering information.

"No. I tested him, he had no idea who I was. Said he didn't know any Jensen. But I think I jarred his memory... he was getting apprehensive. He believed his scar was from a car accident. When I told him how he really got it, he kinda had a flashback. He... he's kept me safe these past few days. He's not a bad guy."

"I'm sure we'll find out all about it, later," Charlie nodded. "By the way, the perp Jason killed, he was our informant."

"Ben?" Jared frowned. "Doesn't surprise me. He's a nasty piece of work."

"Was," Jason corrected him. "He was trying to kill you. I didn't miss. But his name was Jamie, not Ben."
Jared felt like a Christmas parcel, ribs wrapped up tight, arm in a sling. Luckily in his arm there was only extensive tissue damage, nothing broken. Still, he'd feel it for a good while to come. In addition to this he had to deal with three cracked ribs, which were painful but none was at risk to puncture his lungs.

Jason, Chad and Mike were waiting for him outside the ER and needled him about the doctor's prognosis. Jared filled them in, thoughts drifting to Jensen when he'd finished. Damn, he hoped the bullet hadn't caused too much damage.

"Earth to Jared," Chad called, waving his hand in front of Jared's face, trying to draw his attention. Jared started and swatted it away with his right hand.

"Get your hands away, Chad," he muttered. "What do you want?"

"He asked how long the doc's think it will be until we can beat your ass in training again," Jason repeated Chad's question.

"Um, probably gonna be two or three weeks. And when did you ever beat me, Jase? Have you heard anything about Jensen?"

"Last I heard he was out of surgery but they're keeping him under for the day. Charlie is with him now, setting up a security system. Damn, Jare, you got a thing for him?" Jason raised an eyebrow but Jared ignored it.

"Where's Charlie?"

Mike pointed out the way and told him the room number. Jared trudged on, leaving his friends and colleagues wondering. He jogged up the stairs and found Charlie talking in the hallway to a young cop.

"Hey, Charlie," Jared greeted as he approached. Charlie looked up, taking him in. Then he pointed at the new cop.

"Sergeant Kendrick Sampson. He's to guard Jack Morgan in shifts with two other officers. Keni, that's Jared Padalecki, a Lieutenant of my SWAT team."

Jared nodded at Kendrick, shaking the offered hand. Charlie eyed Jared's sling.

"You look cozy. Doctor's verdict?"


"Well, for the time being he's Jack Morgan. But I'm looking into this case. There must be files on it in the department." Charlie realized it was not what Jared wanted to hear, but the injured man was still primarily a suspect. Whether or not he was a victim remained to be seen. "He's got a grade three concussion, which is why they are keeping him under, to monitor the next 24 hours if there'll be any swelling on the brain. So far no internal bleeding materialized in the scans."

Jared slowly let out the air he'd sucked in when Charlie had started talking.

"As for the gunshot, bullet traveled in a weird way. Somehow entered from the side, just below the armpit, glanced off the shoulder blade and exited next to the AC joint. Caused some tissue damage
and chipped a bit off the shoulder blade. Just wonder how that happened because with the bullet coming from a standing person..."

"He was pushing me out of the way, Charlie. Outright tackled me. If he hadn't, you'd be digging the bullet out of my guts. He's not the bad guy here!" Jared was working hard to keep his emotions at bay.

"Yeah, you've said so before, I heard. For your sake, I hope you're right," Charlie replied calmly, laying a sympathetic hand on Jared's good shoulder.

"Can I... can I tell his parents?" Jared's voice hitched and he hated himself for it.

"I'm not sure that's a wise thing to do. Not until we're 100% clear about his identity and involvement in this," Charlie said firmly.

"But...," Jared started.

"No buts, Jare. I'm sorry. But that's an order."

Jared started at the floor, teeth worrying his bottom lip as he contained himself. Then he nodded.

"Right. Can I see him?"

"Jared...

"I know, but I just have to see him for a moment, just to convince myself he's okay." Jared's eyes were pleading with Charlie.

"Right," the Captain relented. "You got one minute."

Jared smiled gratefully and quietly entered the room, where a nurse was busy setting up the drip leading into Jensen's arm. His head was wrapped in pristine white bandages, same as his left shoulder. Jared watched the man breathing for a few moments and then rested his eyes on the distinct scar on his right temple. There was just no way Jared could be mistaken.

True to his word he stepped out after a minute. Charlie and the sergeant were discussing last details.

"Alright, Keni. I will have someone relieve you in six hours, but I will need you here again early in the morning when they've decided if they're gonna wake him up," Charlie concluded, stretching out his hand to shake. The sergeant obliged with a smile.

"No problem, Captain. I'll make sure he'll stay put if necessary," Kendrick smiled. "But if what Jared here says of him is correct, I don't think there'll be any trouble."

Jared smiled at that. "Thanks, Keni."

"No problem. But call me Kendrick. I hate nicknames. Only Charlie is stubborn ass enough to keep up Keni," Kendrick pulled a face, earning a huff from Charlie and a chuckle from Jared.

"Right, then, let's get you home, Jare." Charlie sighed and put his hand on Jared's good shoulder once more and gently guided him towards the exit.
Chapter 8

Charles Whitfield was leafing through the files on the Ackles kidnapping he'd had someone bring to his office. It more or less confirmed what Jared had told him. There was a photograph of five year old Jensen in the file.

The Captain lifted the picture up and scrutinized it. He looked into a smiling face, big, bright eyes peaking out from under a mop of longish dirty blond hair. Next to his right eye was a mark. The scar. It was only partially visible due to the hair. Most likely the reason for the mop.

Charlie checked through more evidence and reports and came across another picture. Jensen looked younger, hair somewhat shorter, and the scar in question on full display. It looked healed but only just. Turning the picture over, Charlie's eyes widened. The backside was sporting a stamp of the same clinic they currently had Jack Morgan in. And there was a hand scribbled name underneath. Dr. Beaver.

Snatching his phone, Charlie let the dispatcher connect him to the clinic. Five minutes later he picked up his keys and was on the way back to the clinic. Dr. Beaver was still active and currently on duty.

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Charlie knocked on the door marked Dr. J. Beaver and waited for the call to welcome him in. He'd arrived at the clinic and asked around for the man, getting told he was on his break and most likely in his office where he had scheduled a few patient counseling appointments later.

The Captain waited for a minute and then decided to knock once more. When he lifted his hand however, the door opened and a bearded man in his sixties opened him. Grey flecked hair framed the spectacled face and grey blue eyes looked at him questioningly.

"How can I help you, Sir?" Dr. Beaver asked after taking in Charlie's uniformed appearance.

"Captain Charles Whitfield, at your service. I could use your medical opinion on a patient, Dr. Beaver," Charlie explained. "It's about identifying someone and a bit of a story to go with it, so if you have a moment, I'd like to talk to you in private."

Dr. Beaver's eyebrows climbed up his forehead at the Captain's words. Then he stepped back and held his hand out as a silent invitation.

"Come in, Captain. Although I must remind you I have sworn to keep medical confidentiality, unless you have a court order cutting me free of it," the old man replied.

"I know, and no, I don't have one, yet. Depending on your opinion however, I'd be willing to request one."

"Consider my interest piqued," Dr. Beaver quipped. The two men sat on opposite sides of Dr. Beaver's mahogany desk. "Alright, Captain Whitfield. How can I be of assistance?"

Charlie pulled out the photograph he'd found in the kidnapping file. He placed it on the desk, upside down, revealing the stamp and name on it.
"I heard you've been here for twenty years now, Dr. Beaver. This picture here was taken eighteen years ago. I'd like to know if you remember the case." With those words, Charlie flipped the pic over.

Dr. Beaver picked it up and held it close, moving the low riding specs up on his nose. He scrutinized the photo for a few moments, stared at a space somewhere above Charlie's shoulder.

"I remember," Dr. Beaver finally spoke. "Four year old boy, almost took out his eye in a bike riding accident. Required some stitches and a Tetanus shot. He was lucky that day. I heard he wasn't as lucky a year later."

"Do you remember his name, doc?"

"I do, sir. But I take it you already know, or else you wouldn't have this picture," the doc replied.

"Humor me," Charlie smiled.

"You know I'd need that court order for that, don't you?"

"I will request it as soon as I know we're talking about the same person, doc. I promise," Charlie declared.

"You know that's not good enough," Dr. Beaver stressed, pointedly looking at the policeman. "However, I don't know why it is of interest, since I've heard the boy disappeared and is presumed dead. So I will give you the name if you tell me what's going on."

"Deal," Charlie smiled. "If the name fits, I will request the order and explain what's what."

The men shook hands on it and Dr. Beaver placed the picture back on the desk.

"This boy's name is Jensen Ackles. I knew him back then because his aunt was a nurse here at the hospital. The family was crushed when he was taken."

Charlie sat up straight for a moment and then nodded. True to his word he pulled out his phone and dialed up the judge to order the necessary papers. A few minutes later he received the prelim copy via mail on his phone.

"Right, permit me one question. You said you knew the boy. Did you also know friends of the family? Of the boy?"

"Vaguely," Dr. Beaver replied. "I think Jensen and his brother had a friend named Gerard... or Garrett. Or Jared?"

Charlie nodded. "Okay. Guess now it's my turn."

He pulled up a picture on his phone and laid it down next to the picture of four-year-old Jensen. Dr. Beaver leaned forward, studying the opened picture.

"Would you say this is the same scar, doc?"

Dr. Beaver swallowed and lifted the photograph once more, then held it next to the digital pic on the phone. It was quiet for a few moments until Dr. Beaver sat back in his chair, eyes now on Charlie.

"I can't believe you found him. He's alive! And yes, to answer your question, it is the same scar. Scars are very distinct. In shape, location... even age doesn't change that. Where did you find Jensen?"
Charlie nodded. "Long story. This man - Jensen - is currently a patient in this very hospital. He..."

"I'm sorry to interrupt, Sir, but that's impossible. If he was here, we'd all know already. The police would know, I mean, that he's been found."

"I can assure you, he is here. But his name is Jack Morgan," Charlie explained. "There'd been a... blunder in one of our operations. One of my men was taken hostage. His name is Jared Padalecki. When we freed him, he was in the company of Jack Morgan, who Jared claimed was really called Jensen Ackles. We need proof for his claim, because it could be important in court."

"In court?" Dr. Beaver frowned. "Jensen's always been a good boy. Can I ask what he did?"

"He was involved in the hostage situation. Jared said he helped him escape, though. So if there's proof he is a victim too, it might help even more."

Dr. Beaver nodded. "So, you said he's here?"

"Up in the North Wing," Charlie nodded.

"Neurology? Is he Dr. Day's patient?"

"I believe so. He suffered quite a concussion and got winged by a bullet. They want to wake him up later today."

"Poor boy," Dr. Beaver sighed. "Does his family know yet?"

"No. I wanted to make sure, before I tear open old wounds. I will request a DNA test as well, just to be safe," Charlie explained. "Thank you for your help, Dr. Beaver."

***

Sherri Padalecki hugged her boy so tight she was almost afraid to smother him when he'd popped up on their doorstep. He'd been missing and she'd never been so scared she might lose a child of hers.

"Mom, don't... my ribs," Jared hissed when his mother had treated him to a hug of the kind he was usually dishing out.

"Oh, dear, I'm sorry, Jared. I am just so glad you're back, alive and... mostly well," Sherri replied.

Jared had called her when he'd left the hospital, not wanting her to worry a second longer than she had to. It might be almost twenty years ago but he still remembered how hard Jensen's family had taken his disappearance.

Thinking of Jensen made Jared's pulse speed up again. He wanted to burst out the news to his mother, go next door to tell Jensen's family. But he knew Charlie was right. He might be sure it was Jensen, but they needed proof.

"I'm so glad to have you back in one piece, Jared. I phoned your brother, he's on his way here. Your sister is still in Atlanta, but I messaged her right away. And your father will be home, soon, as well. Are you hungry, sweetheart? Did they feed you well? Did they..."

"Mom," Jared interrupted her flow of words. "I'm okay. And yes, they fed me but I haven't had
anything for a few hours now."

"I'll get you something immediately, darling. Just get comfortable on the couch, will you? I saw Donna yesterday, she'd asked about you. I will have to call her later to let her know you're back. She's been worried. I think after that thing with Jensen..."

"Mom!" Jared cut in. He wasn't ready to talk about Jensen, since he wasn't allowed to say a word - yet. "Please, can we talk later? I'm just hungry and tired."

"Oh, of course, Jared. I'll have you fed in no time. Then you can rest. I can't believe you're back and safe."

As his mother disappeared in the kitchen, Jared slowly walked into the living room and kicked his feet up on the recliner. He took a deep breath, relishing in the familiar smell of the fireplace, the leather polish and the carnations his mother loved. There were always fresh ones in a vase on the side board. Before he knew it, Jared curled up on the couch and dozed off.

***

Jensen felt like he was floating in cotton wool. Everything was muffled, sound, vision... pain. Only the pain was slowly gaining in strength. His shoulder felt like it had been treated with a meat grinder and his head throbbed in tandem with it. He groaned softly.

"Jack?"

An unfamiliar female voice floated around in his head, calling him. Next, the blurry face of a red headed woman faded in and out of his vision. He groaned again and squeezed his eyes shut. An incessant beeping picked up volume and speed, spiking the agony that was rising inside Jensen.

"Jack? Can you hear me?"

Jensen turned his head towards the voice and squinted. Slowly the red mob of hair focused briefly before blurring out again. A soft hand touched his right shoulder, stroking it soothingly.

"It's okay, Jack. I know you're in pain. I have to see you're awake and coherent, though, before I can take away the pain. Can you open your eyes again and try to focus on me, Jack?"

"'m Jens'n, n't Jack," Jensen mumbled and then concentrated on pushing away the pain and opening his eyes. After a minute or two, he was finally able to keep his eyes open and not have the image before him blur. "Who are you?"

"I'm your neurologist, Dr. Day," the red head replied. "I'm treating you because of the blow to your head you received. What can you tell me about that, Jack?"

Jensen squinted again. He could tell that doc all about what happened. What came after it, however, was somewhat blurry.

"Caught Ben m'streatin' Jared. Told 'm off 'nd he left. Wh'n he came back, he had th' bat. Couldn't move outta the way f'st enough." Jensen swallowed. "Next thing I rem'ner we're in the courty'rd 'n' Ben has a gun. He...," Jensen trailed off and blanched. "Is Jared alright? Was he hurt?"
"Relax, Jack," Dr. Day said, an eye on the monitor where the rapid beeping told her, her patient was working himself up. "I was told you might ask about Mr. Padalecki. He's just fine. A bit bruised but alright. You are the one with the bullet hole, Jack."

"My name isn't Jack, doc," Jensen repeated his earlier words. He'd have thought Jared told them who he really was. "Can I see Jared?"

"I'm afraid not, Jack. One, Mr. Padalecki isn't present and two, you're being charged with felony, or something, so no visitors for you." Dr. Day's voice had changed. There was a harshness in it that hadn't been there earlier.

"I just wanna see he's okay, 'ts all," Jensen repeated, unable to get himself to relax. His pain spiked and despite the doc's words that Jared was alright, Jensen kept seeing the gun trained at Jared going off.

"And I told you it's not possible, Jack. Now I need you to calm down, you're not doing yourself any favors here," Dr. Day kept her eyes on Jensen's vitals which became even more erratic when he realized he was tied to the bed by his wrists.

Suddenly, the hospital room changed before his eyes and everything got dark. He was in a closed off space, unable to see, unable to move. His hands and feet were bound tight and as much as he screamed, nobody heard him. Nobody came to help him. Not his parents, not Jared or Josh... or even Jeff, Jared's older brother. He was alone, with strangers, locked up and tied up in a dark, moving room.

***

Sergeant Kendrick Sampson had taken on his second shift of guarding Jack Morgan just before Dr. Felicia Day had entered his room with two doctors-in-training. She had instructed him to wait outside until she called him or they left. He'd heard muffled voices so far, too soft to make out what was spoken.

Suddenly, the voices upped in volume and there were several medical alarms that were going off at the same time. Kendrick had never been one to hesitate, so he didn't wait around until someone called him and entered the room.

Frantic doctors were trying in vain to calm an obviously panicking and thrashing patient. One of the trainees was drawing a clear liquid into a syringe, heading for the IV bag to inject it.

"That'd take too long," Dr. Day shouted. "He needs it IV stat! Jack, JACK! I really need you to calm down here!"

Kendrick shook his head at the scene. The three doctors were standing a foot away from the bed to prevent being kicked by their out of control patient.

"Can you try holding him down, sir?" Dr. Day had noticed the policeman. "I don't know if it's his head injury or if he's just going crazy but he's aggravating his situation. Jack? Come on, cool it. Jack!"

Kendrick made up his mind immediately. Seeing a brief respite in the struggles of the man's arms, he stepped in and put his hands on Jack's shoulders. He frowned. Jack? Hadn't the Lieutenant said his
name was really Jensen? It was worth a try.

"Jensen, hey man, I got you, calm down, buddy," Kendrick said firmly, hands not budging despite the man's continued struggles. "Jensen. It's okay. You're safe. They're gonna put you out if you don't calm down. You don't want that, do you, Jensen?"

Abruptly Jensen's eyes flew open and the struggles lessened considerably.

"That's it, Jensen, that's good. Calm down, buddy. You're safe."

Jensen's eyes focused on Kendrick. "Jared?" He asked breathless. His whole body was glistening with sweat and he was shivering.

"Jared is fine. I saw him, talked to him. He asked about you," Kendrick said softly. "You can relax, buddy. He was in here while you were sleeping."

"Hurts," Jensen panted.

"I'm sure it does. The doc's gonna give you some of the good stuff, right?" Kendrick replied, looking questioningly at Dr. Day. The doctor nodded and picked up another syringe, holding a slightly amber colored fluid and quickly injected it into the IV. Jensen felt a warmth spreading from his hand up his arm and through his body, washing the pain away.

"Thank you," he mumbled, exhausted.

"You could have had that sooner, if you hadn't decided to panic, Jack," Dr. Day announced.

"I told you my name isn't Jack," Jensen repeated, but his voice lacked strength. The pain med was taking its toll.

"Maybe you should have listened to him and called him Jensen, doc," Kendrick implied with a grin. Dr. Day frowned at him and opened her mouth to reply, but Jensen beat her to it.

"Might've worked," he mumbled. "Or maybe you could just untie me. I'm not going anywhere, promise."

"That's not for me to decide," Dr. Day raised her hands.

"I'll see what I can do," Kendrick chimed in, earning a grateful glance from Jensen, before the injured man closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.
Charlie entered his office at the station. He'd ordered that JD Morgan be brought to an interrogation room. There were a lot of questions he had to ask the man. Putting the coffee mug down on his desk, Charlie picked up the file on Mr. Morgan.

The file was a lot thinner than the business they'd caught JD in would suggest. Either the man hadn't been in the business all too long yet - but Charlie doubted that - or he'd been very lucky. Or... he was just that good.

With a frown Charlie quickly took another sip of the already cooling liquid and sat on the only empty corner of his desk. All the had on JD Morgan was a traffic offence, a few parking tickets that were dating several years back, and a complaint about having the TV on too loud by a former neighbor. An elderly woman who passed a few months later. Charlie frowned. Just who was JD Morgan?

His father, James Derek Morgan, had inherited him the business plot JD now owned and operated on. Machinery, that seemed to be the family business. Charlie was wondering if that machinery sale had already been an illegal weapons sale from the start. He'd had to check any files they might have on James Morgan.

A quick glance at the wrist watch made Charlie empty his mug in big gulps. He got up, ready to head towards interrogation room C. In the door, he hesitated a moment and then doubled back to grab the file labeled Jack Morgan as well.

***

Sherri Padalecki carried a tray with a few sandwiches and a big mug of vanilla latte - Jared's favorite - into the living room and almost cooed at the sight that met her eyes. Her grown, six-foot, four-inch tall son was curled up on the couch, dozing fitfully. Sherri put the tray down on the coffee table and squeezed in next to her sleeping son.

Studying his face in slumber, she noticed several healing bruises and she frowned. What kind of people would do this to another person? Kidnapping? Beating? Well, at least they fed him. She let her hands rub softly along his stubbled cheek and Jared stirred.

"Mom?"

Jared sleepily lifted his head.

"Shh, sweetheart," Sherri said softly. "Brought you some food, but if you wanna sleep some first..."

"No, mom. I'm hungry." Jared sat up and grabbed a ham and cheese sandwich. When he had finished it, he picked up the steaming mug and slurped the first swallow before sighing contently.

"Missed that."

"I'm sure, my boy," Sherri replied warmly, resting her hand softly on his shoulder. "Do you want to talk about anything? How did you get away?"

"I had help, mom," Jared started. "I... I'm not supposed to talk about it, for the moment at least, but..."
it's just bubbling inside me, you know?"

Sherri nodded. "I do. But don't worry, Jared. If it helps you to tell me what's... bubbling inside you, I won't pass it on until it's alright to do so. I promise."

If Jared knew one thing, it was that his mother valued a promise like an oath. Jared felt his eyes tear up and fought hard not to let them fall. His attempt at a smile was anything but convincing, but Sherri pretended she didn't notice. She knew her son didn't need her freaking out. He needed her strong for him, and she could do that.

"When I came to in the place they'd taken me, I was cuffed to the wall. I had... guards. I didn't know why they didn't leave me at the scene. Found out they thought I knew who 'ratted them out'."

Jared paused for another sip of latte. "I was scared they'd kill me once they knew I was of no value to them. Guess they kept me alive for police negotiations or something. I'm kinda sure J... Jack had something to do with it."

"Jack?"

"One of my guards," Jared nodded. "I sure as hell know Ben, the other guard, was just waiting for JD to go ahead and tell him to kill me. But not Jack. He... he defended me against Ben, he wasn't... he isn't bad, mom." Jared's tear brimmed eyes sought out his mother's and she smiled at him.

"You sound quite fond of him, Jared," Sherri whispered. She was wondering if her son was suffering from something like the Stockholm syndrome. Could that happen that fast?

"I guess I am," Jared admitted. "He helped me escape. He took a baseball bat to the head for me, mom. And later a bullet. I think...."

Jared trailed off, not knowing how to continue. He studied his fingers for a bit, warring with his emotions and his orders. Finally he looked up.

"Mom, I... I think I found Jensen."

***

Charles Whitfield took a seat opposite Jeffrey Dean Morgan, his colleague Ty Olsson as backup next to him. Ty was terrific at being the quiet, cold, dangerous bad-cop type. His blue eyes could scrutinize suspects to the bones as it would seem. He was working homicide and Charlie had thought he had valid reason to bring him on board.

JD looked up, a bored expression on his bearded face. He looked like a man who knew he'd get away with murder, which puzzled Charlie somewhat, given the circumstance of having been caught red handed, so to speak.

Ty had crossed his arms in front of his chest and stared at the suspect with bored intensity. Charlie knew that look sooner or later tended to make those opposite it nervous.

"Mr. Morgan," Charlie started. "I take it you know why you're here."

"I know," JD replied, refusing to look at Ty. "I also know you can't prove it."
"Prove what?" Charlie asked.

"Indeed," JD nodded and smirked. Charlie's eyes narrowed. He'd wipe that shit eating grin right off his self righteous face.

"Well, I do have substantial proof to place you at the location of an illegal weapons deal and in a house where a hostage of said deal was held against his will," Charlie declared.

"Right. And who places me at the location of that deal? Your hostage?"

JD proved himself tough as nails, and after a few more failed attempts to rattle the man with facts, Charlie decided it was time to let the man stew in his own juices. He nodded at Ty and both men exited the room, leaving JD alone.

"What a prick," Ty stated. Charlie just nodded his agreement.

"I was thinking of..." Charlie's attempt to relay his plans was cut short when Osric Chau, a young forensics helper, jogged around the corner and straight towards Charlie and Ty.

"Captain Whitfield. Detective Olsson. I got proof."

"Proof?" Charlie raised an eyebrow and looked at the envelope Jason held out to him.

"The tests you had done? Here's the proof that Lieutenant Padalecki was right. Jack Morgan's DNA is a 100% match to the one of Jensen Ackles."

Charlie's eyes lit up as a smile spread onto his handsome face. He snatched the proffered envelope from Jason's hands and thanked the man.

"Ty, let's go rattle a snake."

Two minutes later both policemen were in their seats opposite Morgan once more.

"Mr. Morgan. What can you tell me about May 16th, seventeen years ago," Charlie demanded without a grand introduction.

"Seventeen years ago?" JD frowned. "What the hell does that have to do with why I'm here?"

If the date had rattled the man at all, he was doing an admirable job not to show it.

"I will tell you when I'm done here. So? I'm listening."

Charlie relaxed back in his chair and copied the crossed arms Ty displayed. After a few minutes of silence, it became clear JD wasn't going to answer.

"Right. You don't want to talk? Fine. I'll tell you. It's the day your son died."

"My son didn't die," JD growled.

"I'm sorry," Charlie said and scratched through some papers. "It says here that he was involved in a car crash on Hickory Lane, and your son was declared brain dead a few hours later."

"He wasn't dead. I relocated him to a more suitable clinic abroad because obviously these morons here were too incompetent to save him." JD was trying to hide it, but Charlie was getting to him.

"Do you have any records of that?"
"What?"

"Are there any records, bills... whatever, that can prove your son was treated abroad?" Charlie repeated.

"No. What for?"

"Why did you change his name?"

"I... because he had problems pronouncing his name after his facial injuries," JD explained lamely.

"He's speaking fine now, isn't he?"

JD refused to answer that. Charlie nodded and exchanged a quick glance with Ty.

"Right. What about two months later, July 7th?"

JD frowned. "July 7th? I got no idea what you wanna hear."

"How about the truth? Your son died, so you kidnapped a young, innocent boy and raised him as your own." Charlie's words were harsh as he slapped the clipped newspaper article he'd printed out from the net on the table in front of JD, who stared at it, wide eyed.

"We have proof that the man you claim is your son, and who's currently recovering from a gunshot wound in the clinic under the name of Jack Morgan, is really none other than the boy that was kidnapped seventeen years ago: Jensen Ackles." Charlie tapped his index finger on the name in the article repeatedly.

JD's face had gone a sickly shade of pale and he furiously pressed his lips together. The silence was almost palpable in the room. Then at last, JD burst out in a snarl.

"I should have killed the helmet right away, before he could have poisoned Jack with his lies and stolen my boy from me. I should have blown his ugly mug..."

"You have the right to remain silent," Ty spoke up for the very first time. Although he was not yelling, his voice held enough force to shut JD up. The middle aged man slumped back his chair and studied his shoes.

***

Kendrick Sampson had just gotten off the phone with his superior. After checking with Captain Whitfield, he was glad to relay some small bit of good news to the man he was guarding, Jack Morgan. Or rather, Jensen Ackles. Kendrick didn't know why, but both the Lieutenant and the prisoner himself had convinced him of that.

Quietly, as not to disturb the slumbering man, he opened the door and stepped up to the bed. The prisoner, who was quite handsome as Kendrick had already noticed when he was holding him down during his panic attack, looked even younger in slumber. He hated to wake the man, but he knew Jensen would appreciate the news.

"Mr. Ackles?" Kendrick called softly. When there was no reaction, he tried again, a bit more forceful this time. "Jensen!"
Green eyes opened to tiny slits and it took the man a minute to open them fully.

"'s up?" Jensen mumbled, tongue heavy with meds and slumber. He recognized the brown-skinned officer from earlier on and knew the man didn't mean him any harm.

"Good news, man. While I can't untie you fully, I got permission to free one arm. Guess you'd appreciate the chance to scratch your nose when it itches."

Jensen cracked a tiny smile. He was really out of it still, but not enough to be oblivious to Kendrick's words.

"Awes'me," he mumbled and closed his eyes once more. Floating between sleep and wakefulness, he was vaguely aware of the other man taking his hand and the slight snick of the cuffs being disengaged. Then his hand was replaced at his side and Jensen drifted back to sleep, a thank you on his lips.
Chapter 10

It was three days after Jared had been freed by his SWAT team and Captain Charles Whitfield gave in to Jared's pleas to visit their suspect/victim in hospital. The judge who would handle the case had given the green light under the condition that Charlie would be present as well.

Jared was a bit nervous. He had no idea how Jensen would react to seeing him again. Charlie had given Jared the permission to tell him they had positively identified him as Jensen Ross Ackles. They would notify his family in the afternoon.

As they approached Jensen's room, Jared was surprised to see nobody standing guard. He looked at Charlie, who caught on and shrugged.

"Multiple reasons possible, Jared. Keni could be inside or Jack, err, Jensen could not be in the room in which case Keni would have gone with unless it's surgery."

Jared's eyes widened slightly at that prospect. Charlie noticed his reaction and laid his hand on Jared's arm.

"Don't worry. I'm sure he's fine."

"He'd been shot, Charlie. Because he wanted to protect me. And he almost had his skull caved in by that lunatic."

"Jared," Charlie called, serious expression on his face when his hand halted Jared. "He may not be who you think he is. I mean, you were right about his identity, but he is still part of Morgan's group. It's most likely he participated in his criminal activities. He will go to trial for sure. You knew him as a kid. You were a kid then yourself..."

"We are friends, Charlie. We are friends! He saved my life in there, helped me to escape. He may be an adult now, but he's still Jensen. He's a good guy that ended up in a bad place. Him helping out Morgan... I mean, what do you expect? That bastard raised him into it. Jensen was a kid, he didn't remember who he was... I dunno, it's probably some kind of Stockholm Syndrome or something." Jared was working himself up without even noticing it.

"Maybe that's the case for you, too, Jared," Charlie suggested.

"What? No!"

"Why not?"

"'Cos I felt the connection the second I saw his scar, Charlie. That was before I had even been in the hostage situation. If anything, it's the childhood trauma resurfacing. 'Cos I tell you, it was a very tough time for me, too. You have no idea how guilty I felt. How much I missed him. So call it whatever you want, but I don't think it's Stockholm's."

They had been standing in front of the door for a bit now and Jared hadn't been able to keep his voice down. He felt like he just found his best friend again and everyone was trying to take him away. He stared at Charlie in silence, eyes pleading with his superior to understand him.

The creaking of the door opening pierced the silence. Both men turned around to see the Sergeant's face as he opened the door.
"No need to shout, gents, come on in," Kendrick grinned and Jared wondered what all they had heard inside. He nodded at his colleague and stepped inside, eyes promptly falling onto his childhood friend.

Jensen was sitting in a chair by the window, left shoulder covered in white bandages as well as a few sterile strips covering the stitches in his head. He was wearing only soft-looking jogging pants and his left wrist was attached to the armrest with two hooked up sets of cuffs. His emerald eyes instantly sought out Jared's and seemed to brighten up. A tiny smile pulled on the corners of his mouth and Jared felt a pleasant shiver ghost over his spine.

"Hey," Jared rasped and proceeded to clear his throat.

"Hey yourself," Jensen smiled in reply.

"How are you doing?" Both men asked at the same time and froze upon realizing it. For a few eternal seconds the room was quiet enough to hear a needle drop. Then Kendrick shattered the quietness with a snort, earning himself the incredulous stare of three sets of eyes. He lifted his hands in surrender.

"Okay, okay.... um... mind if I step out for a moment? I gotta take aim at a low bullseye." With that Kendrick hurried past Charlie and Jared, winking at the latter. As he made his escape, he missed Jensen's green-eyed smirk. The door closed behind Kendrick and the silence returned.

Jensen let his eyes roam over Jared, to see if there was any visible harm. He cleared his throat.

"So, are you alright?"

Jared nodded and pointed to his ribs. "Just badly bruised. Nothing I haven't had before. What about you?" Jared's gaze was stuck to Jensen's bandaged shoulder. Jensen followed his gaze.

"Hurts. But not as bad as it did when the bullet was still in. Jared..." Jensen trailed off, eyes briefly looking at Charlie before settling on Jared's feet while his teeth were worrying his bottom lip.

"What?" Jared asked softly.

"I'm sorry you had to go through all that. It was never part of JD's plan to go for hostages... and Ben... I should have seen what he'd do. I should have stopped him."

"Ja... um, Jensen?" Charlie cut in, immediately finding the young man's expressive eyes on his. "It might not have been JD's plan to take a hostage, but I do know he planned on killing Jared."

Jensen stared at Charlie and then nodded minutely. "I know. I thought I had convinced him it'd be a bad idea. I... did you just call me Jensen?"

"Yeah," Charlie confirmed. "I did."

"We ran your DNA against the one in your medical records from back when you smashed your head in with the bike," Jared explained. "They'd done a full analysis back then on request of your father. We can charge JD with kidnapping now. It also means we can inform your parents, and the circumstances will work in your favor, right, Charlie?"

Charlie didn't reply. He was watching Jensen who'd suddenly gone pale, eyes staring into thin air.

"Jensen?"
The concern in Charlie's voice startled Jared into looking back at his childhood friend.

"Jensen!"

Jensen heard both men calling for him from far away. He knew they were there but his mind was elsewhere. He was back in the dark place, all alone but for the voices that were calling him... his mother, his father, Josh and Jared... his baby sister cried. The voices calling Jensen faded out until all of a sudden there was JD's face in front of his.

"Jack! JACK! You better stop this now, Jack. Right now!"

"M...my name is J... Jensen," he whispered. A split second later his cheek was on fire, throbbing mercilessly in rhythm to his rapid heartbeat.

"Jensen doesn't exist anymore, Jack. The sooner you get used to it, the better it'll be for you," JD said firmly. Steps walked away, a door closed. Someone sobbed. He sobbed.

"But my name is not Jack," he muttered as hot tears ran down his face.

"Jensen, snap out of it, please!"

Jensen moaned and squeezed his eyes shut firmly. He flinched involuntarily as a large hand settled over his.

"You're scaring me."

Jensen slowly opened his eyes and Jared's blurry face materialized in front of his. Blinking rapidly to get rid of the tears, Jensen felt embarrassed as he realized what must have happened.

"I'm sorry," he mumbled. "I'm okay."

Jared snorted.

"You're far away from okay, Jensen. Charlie called for Dr. Day. If this is brought on by your head injury..."

Jensen firmly shook his head. "It's just flashbacks, Jare... they'll go away."

Whatever Jared was going to reply was put on hold as the door opened and Dr. Day, followed by Kendrick, entered the room.

"Hello everyone," Dr. Day greeted as she entered the room. "Jack, what happened?"

"Jensen," three voices corrected her and she raised her hands in surrender.

"I'm sorry. Jensen."

"I'm okay, doc, really," Jensen replied, wiping off a tear that made it down his cheek. "Just some flashbacks that I can deal with."

"Like last time?" The red headed doctor asked.

"Not as bad. I guess things are coming back to me and I have to work through that, but it's nothing I can't handle," Jensen replied, free hand unconsciously rubbing over his bandaged shoulder.

"Alright. Tell you what, I need to make a final check regarding the blow to the head you received
and then, if Dr. Sheppard, who dug the bullet out of your shoulder, is happy with his handywork, you can be discharged from here."

Jensen nodded and nervously glanced at Jared. Dr. Day immediately pulled out her pen light and went about her routine, while Charlie, Jared and Kendrick watched on.

Three minutes later, Dr. Day repocketed her arsenal. She looked at Charlie. "I don't know if you're giving him a lift then or how things are being handled, but from what I can say, he'll be fit to leave today."

Charlie nodded. "We'll handle it, thank you, doc." He shook Dr. Day's hand and watched her leave. Then he turned back to look at Jensen.

"Right, how about we all get comfortable here. Keni, if you wanna step out, you can be dismissed from duty today," Charlie said while sitting in a chair opposite to Jensen. Jared fetched another chair from the other side of the room as Kendrick openly pouted at Charlie's persistent use of the much loathed nick name.

"I know when I'm not needed anymore, Charlie. I'll be waiting outside, just in case Dr. Sheppard decides Jensen needs to stay put." With that, Kendrick smiled at the other men and left the room.

"How are things gonna be handled if I can leave here, Sir?" Jensen asked in direction of Charlie.

"It depends. One scenario would be you getting situated in a cell," Charlie started, earning a scowl from Jensen as well as Jared. "In that case I'd pay your parents a visit to inform them that their son has been found."

"No." Jensen sat up straight, eyes wide. "I... I would like to be there. I would like to be the one to tell them. They... they don't deserve to hear their son has been found but he's in jail. It..." he sighed. "It'd kill them. I want to be there. I need to see them with my own eyes as much as they need to see me. Please?"

Charlie looked at Jared before returning his attention on Jensen.

"There are other possibilities. The judge has decided to put up a bond. I realize it's a lot of money, but it could have been worse. Judge Ferris has taken into consideration your special circumstances and the fact you've helped Jared here."

"It doesn't matter how much it is, Sir. I can't pay it. I don't have my own money, it's always been a family affair," Jensen almost choked on the word *family*. "And I believe JD's account has been frozen. That means..."

"I will pay the bond," Jared cut in.

"Jared, no," Jensen gasped as Charlie nodded to himself. It didn't surprise him that Jared would volunteer. He'd almost expected it.

"Jensen, yes! I'm not gonna let you sleep in jail. You helped me, let me help you. Because to me, we've never stopped being friends!"

It was quiet for a bit as Jensen was taking in Jared's words and mulled them over. After a few minutes, he nodded and made eye contact.

"You won't regret it, Jared. I promise."
"I know I won't," Jared smiled. "What do I have to pay, Charlie?"

"The ten percent would be five-hundred bucks. If Jensen runs, it's five-thousand." Charlie informed his colleague.

"Consider it done."

A knock on the door alerted them to Dr. Sheppard, who entered and greeted the men.

"G'day, Mr. Morgan. It's good to see you awake and kicking," he smiled.

"It's Mr. Ackles, doc, and it's good to be up. Thanks for digging the slug out and stitching me up."

"Oh," Dr. Sheppard replied, deciding to find out about this later. "Right, how about you uncuff the man so I can check my handywork, Captain."

Charlie got up and obliged and soon Dr. Sheppard had finished his check up. He was happy with the stitches and the mobility of the shoulder and declared his patient fit for discharge.

***

Jensen was breathing in the fresh air deeply as he and Jared stepped out of the police department where Jared had deposited the bond for Jensen's bail. Charlie had decided it was okay for the two to officially go to Jensen's parents together to deliver the mainly good news.

Jared had offered Jensen to stay at his place until the trial, unless he wanted to stay in his childhood home. Jensen hadn't been sure what to do but accepted the offer. To him it felt like he still knew Jared like back in the day. It was almost scary.

The moment Jared parked his Mustang in front of his parents' house, Jensen felt his palms become sweaty. The house was alien and familiar at the same time.

"You ready?" Jared asked softly. He couldn't even begin to imagine how things were for Jensen.

"I don't think I'll ever be ready so let's just do this," Jensen replied, forcing his voice to be steady.

Together they walked up the porch to the front door. Jensen felt like he was glued to the wooden panels as Jared rang the bell.

After a few moments, a middle aged woman opened the door and smiled as she recognized her neighbor's son.

"Jared, how nice to see you." Donna Ackles hugged the tall, young man. When she let go of him, her eyes fell on his companion and Jared felt her hand squeeze his. "Who's your friend?"

There was a slight tremor in her voice and Jared knew why. Jensen looked a lot like his older brother Josh.

"Donna, I... found Jensen," Jared said softly.

Donna pressed a hand against her mouth. "I don't believe it," she whispered as she stepped up to her lost boy. She couldn't believe it but her eyes and her heart told her Jared was right. Slowly she
stretched out her hand to touch the young man's arm.

"Jensen?" Her eyes were full of tears as she looked at him. A shy smile appeared on his face and he took her hand into his.

"Hi Mom," he rasped. The next moment he felt himself being pulled in the fiercest, most loving hug he'd ever received.

"You're alive," Donna sobbed against his chest. "I can't believe you're alive!"
Donna Ackles was busying herself making fresh coffee. Her hands needed to keep moving to prevent them shaking. Every now and then her eyes darted to the living room where Alan, her husband, was softly talking to Jared and her long-lost boy, Jensen. Their long-lost boy.

She'd always refused to believe Jensen was dead, but she hated to admit she had lost hope she'd ever see him again. And now he was sitting on her couch. He was shy, reserved, probably scared, too, but he was unmistakably her son.

The ping of her phone pulled Donna from her thoughts. The message was from Mackenzie, her youngest. The girl had been only a year old when Jensen had been taken. Donna had sent her and her brother Josh a message asking how soon they can be home.

- Why do you need me home, Mom? Did something happen?

Mac had been at her friend's to study for some upcoming exams. Since it was the weekend coming up, she had planned on possibly staying over.

- Nothing bad. But yes. There is someone here I need you to meet.

- Um... that sounds ominous. And scary. Okay, guess it's important. I'll be over in twenty mins, ok?

Donna smiled and sent a thumbs up and a kiss back to her 18-year-old daughter. The coffee machine gave its last puff to signal the coffee was ready. Carefully, Donna assembled cups, milk, sugar, and spoons on a tray and carried it to the living room.

"I didn't know how you take your coffee, Jensen, so I thought everyone can assemble their own poison," Donna smiled as she placed the Batman mug in front of Jensen. "I don't know if you remember this, but that mug was yours."

Jensen stared at the mug as if he was trying to suck the memories from it. He'd always had a thing for Batman. The doorbell chime tore him from his musings.

Jared cast a quick glance at his friend as Alan got up to let the newcomer in. Jensen could hear him talk softly to another man and then they appeared in the living room. Blinking, he took in the appearance of the young man standing next to his father.

From the corner of his eyes he saw Jared nodding in greeting at the man whose eyes were fixed on Jensen. It was almost like looking into a mirror. Almost. Getting up, Jensen stretched to his full height and locked eyes with the slightly shorter man, who he instinctively knew was his brother.

"I...," the man started, nervously licking his lips. "I don't... gosh... Jensen?"

Jensen wanted to reply but his mouth was dry. So he just nodded minutely. Josh's eyes darted to his mother, Jared, and his father before settling back on Jensen. Jared had got to his feet next to Jensen by now. He could see Josh's eyes brimming with tears, lips trembling. He took a tentative step in his brother's direction but stopped short.

A tear made its way down Josh's cheek and Jensen knew it'd be up to him. He closed the distance to his older brother and engulfed the man in a big hug.

"Josh," he whispered. "It's me. It's okay."
Josh felt tense, Jensen could actually feel his brother trembling in his arms as tiny sobs shook his body. He wasn't sure what caused his brother to react this emotionally until he became aware of the words Josh whispered over and over.

"I'm sorry, Jen, so sorry. 'M sorry I didn't protect you. Couldn't protect you. I'm so sorry..."

"Josh, shhh," Jensen replied in the same manner, whispering in his brother's ear. "Not your fault, you hear me. It was never your fault. Just as it wasn't Jared's fault. You're not to blame. I don't blame you. So stop blaming yourself. I'm back now."

Jensen held his brother a bit longer despite his shoulder protesting. When Josh finally relaxed and returned the hug, his shoulder tried a bit harder and Jensen had to bite back a moan.

Finally they were sitting on the couch, coffee in hand, and Jensen took a careful sip from his Batman mug. He half expected some magic sparkle and a truckload of memories rushing over him, but nothing aside from the warm liquid running down his throat happened.

"That's a damn good coffee, mom," Jensen rasped and looked up with a shy smile. Three sets of eyes were locked on him, watching his every move. A quick glance at Jared told him, he was aware and doing his darndest not to stare at him as well. Before the group could fall back into an uncomfortable silence, however, Alan Ackles took the word.

"Your mother makes the best there is, son." He smiled fondly at his wife and then looked at Jensen again. "A few days ago, when we heard Jared was gone, we felt so bad for Sherri and Gerald. It also opened up an old wound in your mother and myself, because Jared has always been more than just the neighbors' kid. We were so happy to hear he's back, and now you're here, too."

There was an unspoken question in Alan's words but Jensen heard it loud and clear. His heart was pounding hard in his chest and his fingers trembled slightly. How do you tell your parents that your long lost son was involved in illegal activities that could land him in jail?

"I don't... I..." Jensen started but had no clue what to say. He was feeling more nervous by the second and was glad when Jared piped in.

"I was taken by the same man who took Jensen all those years back. I don't know what he did to him, but when I recognized Jensen's scar, it was obvious Jensen didn't remember his past. And yet he protected me."

Jared paused to take a sip of his coffee. He felt Jensen's gaze on him and knew his friend was thankful he was helping him out.

"Somehow I managed to jostle his memory and finally, he ended up getting me out of there. He saved my life... I mean, JD wasn't just gonna let me go. And Jensen here put his own life at risk to save me."

"That sounds like a story that can't be told in one evening," Alan remarked, leaning back. "I'm sure it will also help if we first take time and get to know each other again. Son, this must be much more for you to take in than for us and believe me, it's a lot for us. I don't want to jeopardize our reunion by pushing."

"Thanks." Jensen let his smile reach his eyes but his hands were still shaking slightly. "I'm still not remembering much, just some bits. But I guess there'll be more."

Donna nodded and put down her mug. "Do you already know where you'll be staying? Jared mentioned your home being out of question..."

"Well you know you're always welcome here, sweetheart," his mother smiled.

Just then the doorbell rang once more and Donna excused herself to answer it. Josh glanced at Jensen.

"Hey, do you remember Mackenzie? Our little sister?"

Jensen frowned slightly, a vague memory of a baby crying crossing his mind. He shrugged with a lopsided grin.

"Not sure if you can call it remembering..."

"You're kidding me, Mom!" An excited, boisterous girlish voice resounded from the front door, followed by a whirlwind of blond hair sweeping into the living room.

Jared wasn't sure whether to laugh at Jensen's predicament or drag Mac off him and tie her to a chair. He hadn't missed his friend stiffen at the unexpected display of joy and affection, but he didn't look panicked either.

"Mac, my girl, give him space to breathe," Josh shook his head at which Mac stuck out her tongue at him, but she did as he said and stepped back.

"Alright. Sorry, Jensen. I just got really excited when Mom said... I still can't believe it. Mom? Is there more coffee?"

"Excited is an understatement," Josh grumbled.

"It's okay, really," Jensen chimed in. "I just didn't expect it. Haven't really had to deal with any kind of siblings until..., um... nevermind."

Jensen had almost brought up Ben but he wasn't ready for lengthy explanations yet. Mackenzie however, was like a dog with a bone. Barely silent for sipping coffee, she bombarded everyone with questions, especially Jensen.

Where had he been?

Didn't he miss his family?

What had he been doing?

Was he any good at sports?
Did he have a girlfriend?

Jensen felt his head spinning and the walls closing in on him. He answered a few questions, some more vaguely than others. But Mac's curiosity had no bottom and finally, he set down the Batman mug he'd been clinging to and excused himself.

"Just need a moment, fresh air," he mumbled and went to sit on the porch swing.

Jared felt his worry go up a notch and made to go after his friend, but Alan put out a hand to hold him back.

"Give him a moment," he said. "He needs to process this. Mac can be a handful even when you're used to her, as you know."

Jared nodded. He made use of the time to tell Jensen's family the basics and also mentioned the bullet Jensen had taken for him. Donna and Josh paled slightly, Alan's face went grim as his jaws clenched and Mac hugged herself, looking contrite.

"I really blew it, didn't I?"

"No, you didn't," Jared shook his head. "But this is all new to him. He is still remembering. Barely a week ago, he was Jack, an only child having to put up with an adopted, arrogant and somewhat crazy little 'brother'. Finding out who he was, what happened to him as a kid, kinda set his whole world upside down. He will need a good while to grasp everything and come to terms with it."

"I understand. He must feel even more flushed than I do." Mac smiled tightly. Jared felt for the sparkly young woman and hugged her quickly. "Thanks, Jare-bear. I needed that. Do you think I can go out there and show him I can be normal, too?"

"Yeah, I think you can," Jared smiled back.

***

Jensen was staring up ahead, seeing front yards and the street, cars passing by and people walking their dogs without really seeing them. Part of him had wanted to walk past the porch swing. To run. To run until his lungs were burning and his legs would refuse to carry him any further.

But he didn't. He had promised Jared not to run and he would honor this promise. Mac wasn't that bad. He would just have to get to know her and get used to her. Out of nothing, the mental image of him holding a baby in his arms, looking down at it when it giggled, invaded his mind. Instinctively he knew it was himself with baby Mac, and it calmed him.

The tiny creak of the front door opening pulled him from his memory. Jensen looked up and saw a serious-looking Mac approach him. She walked past him and climbed up to sit on the porch banister.

"I'm sorry," she said. Jensen raised an eyebrow.

"What for?"

"For overwhelming you. I mean... I know how I can be. When Mom told me who was there when she let me in, everything just lit up inside me - with joy."
"With joy?"

"Well," Mac laughed softly. "To be honest, I thought my mysterious ghost brother would never be back. If there weren't any pictures at home proving you were real, I'd have thought at times Joshy made you up to lead me on. Tell me how lame I am."

"I don't think lame is what comes to mind when referring to you, Kenzie," Jensen said. "Ghost brother? Really?"

"Yeah well... It kinda felt like that to me. I mean, I was a baby. I gotta admit I don't remember you. I just know you because Josh would always tell me stories about what you two did, with Jared, with Jeff. How you were an awesome little brother. And even though he didn't say it out loud, I knew how much he missed you. I tried to be an awesome little sister so he wouldn't miss you too much. Not sure it worked."

They were quiet for a short while. Jensen was studying his shoes while letting things settle. Mac was watching him in silence.

"Do you think our parents will be disappointed if I opt to stay at Jared's?" Jensen finally asked.

"What? No. Why would they be?" Mac raised an eyebrow.

"I don't know. Cos I'm their son? I might be an adult but..." Jensen trailed off.

"You do what you need for yourself, Jensen. They understand. They deserve the credit."

"Yeah?" Jensen grinned. "You know, Kenzie. You're a pretty cool girl."


Jensen laughed. "Pretty cool. And pretty, yes."

"Well, so are you. Okay, maybe not pretty, but... ruggedly handsome. Can I convince you to pick me up from college some time?" Mac winked at Jensen, drawing out another laugh. She was happy. The tension she had unwittingly created was dissipating rapidly.

***

"Ty! I need your advice."

Charles Whitfield entered his friend's office with barely a knock.

"Yeah?" Ty Olsson raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah. I don't know whether to confront JD with Jamie Frances' picture tomorrow or leave that for court." Charlie dropped down into the chair opposite his friend's desk.

"'Right. Run it by me again. What's the deal?"

"Jamie Frances is... or rather was, as he is deceased... a recruit here at the PD. Only signed up for the most recent group, meaning, four months ago. Then, I think it's about three weeks now, he leaked the date for the weapons' trade gone wrong and the involvement of Chief Inspector Mitch Pileggi to
us. I got orders to deal with it. You know how it went pear-shaped. When we freed Jared, one suspect was killed. It was Jamie Frances. Only his boss, JD, called him Ben."

"Oh?" Ty pouted in thought.

"Yeah. My man, Jared, also knew him as Ben. Found out now, Jamie Frances was an alias for Benjamin McKenzie. I suspect Jamie was for Benjamin. Frances was his mother's maiden name. Morgan took him on after his parents were deceased."

"Right. So you think he was playing both sides? Why? I mean, what reason would he have had to set up the man who took him on? Did he hate what Morgan did? Think it was wrong?"

"I doubt it. What I heard from Jared, this Ben was troubled. Volatile. Crazy. I got no idea what motivated him. But I'm thinking that Morgan has no idea who set him up. I guess that's why they took Jared in the first place. Maybe the revelation will cause Morgan to spill some beans." Charlie looked at Ty expectantly.

"You might have a good point, Charles," Ty replied. "Morgan seems to be a calm, collected man, even under pressure. This kind of reveal might throw him off balance. I'd say, do it at court."

***

It was dark when Jared turned the keys to unlock his small apartment. He stepped aside to let Jensen pass and flicked on the light. It had been a long day for both of them and he was beat. He had no idea how Jensen must be feeling.

"Come on, Jay," he called, heading to the kitchen. "Want a beer to wind down and then I'll get you some sheets for the couch?"

"Sounds good," Jensen mumbled, checking out the apartment before flopping down on the couch in the tiny living room. He took the bottle Jared offered as he sat next to his friend. They clonked them together and drank.

"What a day, eh?" Jared sighed.

"I was scared I'd screw it up," Jensen admitted. "I couldn't have done it without you."

"You're welcome," Jared grinned. They sat in silence, sipping their beers. Eventually, Jared switched on the TV and found a music channel. They enjoyed the music and chatted their way through two more beers.

When Jared sat down next to Jensen the next time, he'd already been feeling the beers and ended up sitting even closer to Jensen than before. Their knees brushed and for a split second both of them froze. Jensen quickly relaxed and took the new bottle from Jared. The TV played classic rock and the boys' chatter died down as they listened.

Finally, Jared placed his empty bottle on the floor next to him and realized Jensen's thigh was still pressed up against his own. There was no real need to sit that close. It might be a tiny living room but the couch was big enough. He knew he should move away, but feeling Jensen's body heat through the denim just felt too good.
In a flash Jared recalled the moment Jensen had pressed the kiss on his lips in his prison cell. He'd been sure it had been Jensen feeling grateful for Jared's explanation. What had Jensen said when he'd asked Jack about him not being into Ben or into dick?

_That's for me to know and you to wonder._

Jared did wonder. He almost jumped when Jensen put his own empty bottle down noisily. In doing so, his leg pressed even tighter into Jared's. Jared bit his lip to stay quiet. He'd been going out with girls and boys, mainly girls, though, but Jensen... he just couldn't be so lucky, could he?

Their eyes locked and Jared felt the buzz of the beer telling him to go for it. His tongue snaked out, wetting his bottom lip, dragging his teeth over it as a follow-up. Jensen's green eyes were glued on Jared's lip and when his tongue snaked out a second time, Jensen growled.

Before Jensen's buzzed brain could register what was happening, Jensen's full lips were ghosting over his saliva covered ones. A quick, tentative brush and then Jensen was done testing. His mouth crushed on Jared's, lips moving expertly as Jensen's tongue invaded Jared's welcoming mouth.

A moan escaped Jared and his hands gripped the back of Jensen's head, making sure the kiss didn't end as suddenly as it started. But Jensen had no intention of stopping. When he realized Jared was responding, he pushed the taller man back on the couch, using his thigh to keep him in place as he pulled on every trick in the box to kiss him breathless.

Soon their crotches were lined up against each other and they rutted away, never taking their mouths off each other. Moans got louder and Jared had no trouble feeling Jensen's firm length rubbing against his equally hard bulge through the denim.

"If we don't stop I'm gonna blow in my jeans," Jared panted harshly as he pulled back for air. Jensen's eyes dilated even more at this confession.

"Would love to make you blow, Jare," he groaned thickly. For emphasis, he thrust his tented crotch against the older man once more.

"Oh snap, don't stop," Jared moaned and Jensen obliged. A few more thrusts and kinks were enough to make Jared see stars when he jizzed his cum in his jeans, softly moaning Jensen's name.

When he'd come down from his high enough to open his eyes he saw Jensen had shoved down his own jeans, sprawled on the couch and was jerking his thick cock while watching Jared.

"Gonna cum, Jare," he panted in short breaths, hand picking up pace. "Gonna cum hard."

Jared gathered whatever strength he had left to sit up and push away Jensen's hand. He took the long thick shaft in his own big hand and picked up where Jensen left off, adding a twist over the precum covered head with each stroke. Jensen's eyes were wide and his lips were open as he was panting and moaning harshly.

"Fuck, Jare... I... so good..."

"Wanna see you cum, Jay," Jared whispered in Jensen's ear and leaned over to run his fingertips over Jensen's taught balls. Jensen tensed and groaned and came with a shout, spilling thick ropes of spunk over Jared's hand and his own abs and legs.

Jensen had no idea how long they just lay there catching their breath. Then Jared moved and smacked his leg.
"How 'bout you get cleaned up and I get you those sheets?"

"Jared, I...." Jensen started but Jared cut him off.

"Not now, Jay. We talk in the morning, okay?"

"Kay," Jensen replied, dragging himself up and to the bathroom. Soon he was sprawled on the sleeper couch, clad in clean boxers and a cotton shirt while Jared retreated to the bathroom. When Jared climbed into his bed, Jensen was already out.
Chapter 12

When Jensen woke up it was still dark outside. His heart was beating rapidly as he recalled the dream that had ultimately woken him. He'd been a child again, riding bikes with Jared and Josh, carving sticks with Jared, laughing with his mother. Then, the scene had changed, JD had told him how his mother was dead and that his name was Jack. And then a manic looking Ben had swung his bat at him.

A glance at the clock on the stereo in Jared's living room told Jensen it was just after four a.m. There was no way Jensen could get back to sleep with that image of Ben in his mind. He sat up on the couch, running his right hand through his sleep-tousled hair. His muscles were telling him to move, so Jensen got up. He paced a few times through the apartment but worried he'd wake Jared. Throwing on his sweatpants and one of Jared's jackets, Jensen quietly left the apartment, leaving the door leaning on. He just needed some air, to tire himself out.

A quick jog around the block came to mind and Jensen quickly decided to head out before he changed his mind. His feet pounded rhythmically on the night dark pavement, decently illuminated by the street lamps and the light of the half moon. Taking a left turn at the first opportunity, Jensen hoped he'd find an easy route.

As he ran, lungs working over the oxygen, his brain replayed the last evening. Meeting his parents, his brother, his sister. Deciding to go home with Jared, and then...

Damn it, Jensen. I hope you didn't fuck up things with Jared now. Nice move, really. It just wasn't enough that you kissed him, probably freaked him into tomorrow, no, you had to dry hump the man. Seriously. And then...

Jensen shook his head. "Stupid," he chastised himself and picked up the pace. When he finally returned to Jared's apartment, his shirt was drenched in sweat and his heart was thumping like a steam engine. He leaned against the wall next to the front door and slowly let himself slide down until his elbows rested on his knees and his head was in his hands.

***

Jeffrey Dean Morgan was a man who knew no worries. Granted, he had been in hairy situations in his life, had had to deal with the loss of his wife, but worries? Not one day in the twenty-five plus years he'd been dealing with weapons behind the back of the law he'd been worried.

He knew how to keep off the radar, how to run things, treat people and reward them to make them loyal - sometimes to a fault. And this was somehow the one point that threw him right now.

Locked in his six by eight cell for most of the day, JD had a lot of time to run thoughts through his brain. He honestly knew no single person who could have set him up. Certainly none of his people. They proved their loyalty to him and he'd treated them like family, which in turn cemented their loyalty even more.

Moby he knew from high school. Had been loyal to him ever since JD had beaten up Rory, the bully, that always made Moby hand over his lunch and made him eat dust instead. To add insult to injury, Rory had been the one to christen Moby. Somewhere in his bird brain, Rory had memorized
that "Dick" was a German word for fat. And since Moby wasn't exactly skinny, Rory called him Moby as in "Moby Dick". It had kind of stuck.

Jenkins, well, Jenkins was Jenkins. His story was similar to Moby's, but JD met him later in life. He'd saved the man's hide when a bunch of upset druggies were after him, ready to pump him full of lead when they found out he'd stretched the merchandise he sold them. Well, maybe upset was putting it mildly.

Ben. Ben was... had been... a handful. JD had never noticed it before he took him on. When still in the care of his father, Steve, Ben had been a well-behaved boy. Steve had been JD's right hand up until him and his wife Phoebe had been in a freak accident on the highway. Ben had been at school when it happened and JD hadn't hesitated a moment to look after the boy. He'd been carrying on as before until one day, Jack had told him about Ben's advances. Ever since then something had changed in Ben. Not that he misbehaved, he was a good, useful boy. But the way he looked at others had changed.

And then there was Jack. His boy. He'd raised the kid well. Jack was clever, athletic, quick on the uptake, considerate, witty... JD could go on and on. It had taken him some long months to mold the boy he'd chosen for his son after JJ was gone into his son, but it had been worth it. Jack had always made him proud. And JD still doubted that Jack had anything to do with his current situation to begin with.

For JD it was clear that whoever snitched his deal with the Chief Inspector was fully responsible for him being behind bars. Because had it not been for the snitch, there wouldn't have been the shooting match with the SWAT. No SWAT - no hostage. No hostage - no Jack being corrupted. Yes, corrupted. There was no way Jack would have ever remembered who he was if it hadn't been for that hostage. Jared whatever.

Why of all the SWAT pigs there were would he end up taking the one hostage who knew Jack? Would even recognize the stupid scar? And how on earth had that man made Jack remember? But what hurt JD most was the fact that not only had Jack believed the man, no, he had also helped him escape. Even saved that moron's life risking his own.

Before Ben's bullet had hit Jack in the shoulder, JD had witnessed the first time Jack had confronted him. He'd been angry. Angry at JD. That had never happened before and it had triggered JD's rage so he missed his defense and was taken by surprise when he was overpowered by the SWAT.

As he was being lead past Jack to the police car, JD had mumbled an apology to his hurt boy. He hated seeing Jack hurt. And he was sorry for the way this whole situation had been created. JD hadn't seen or heard from Jack since then and none of the people he asked about his boy had been willing to fill him in on his predicament. They didn't even tell him whether his boy was alive.

With a growl JD got up from his cot and started pacing. Patience had never been his strongest point. And all the questions and thoughts bouncing in his skull drove him batshit crazy.

***

Jared woke three minutes before his alarm. He reached to shut it off before the penetrant noise would wake his guest. Daylight began seeping through the gap in the curtains. It was going on seven and Jared's stomach growled.
The last night's events returned to Jared's thoughts as he made his way to the bathroom to relieve his bladder. No way he was going to face Jensen sporting his morning wood. His head was still reeling from what happened last night. Jared couldn't believe they had got each other off like horny teenagers. Granted, they weren't that much older, but still.

Jared still wasn't sure what it was that made Jensen so irresistible to him. *Ah no, Jared. Definitely not the best line of thoughts unless you really want to face the man with a conspicuous erection.* Jared willed those thoughts away and concentrated on thinking of puppies. Finally, he stepped back outside and crossed the hallway. Maybe he'd be okay after all.

The living room was quiet. Jared decided to sneak over into the kitchen and wake Jensen with a steaming hot cup of freshly made coffee. When he passed the couch, Jared glanced down and froze. What he saw were rumpled sheets, but no Jensen.

Heartbeat picking up, Jared's mission for coffee was forgotten. Where could Jensen be? He hated himself for the fleeting thought that crossed his mind of Jensen using his bail to run. There had to be another explanation.

A quick survey told Jared that some pants, Jensen's sneakers and one of Jared's jackets were missing, and his heart sank. Jared quickly pulled his own jeans up and stuffed his naked feet into his running shoes. As he turned to reach for the key, his eyes fell on the front door. Faint daylight seeped through the tiny crack, telling Jared that Jensen had neglected to pull the door closed.

Carefully, Jared pushed the door open and stepped outside. Immediately he checked the street that was illuminated by the first rays of sun. A few people were walking their dogs or driving to work. There wasn't a lot of traffic yet, though. Walking up the curb, Jared sighed. Who was he kidding? If Jensen was gone, he was long gone. But, the open door made Jared hope he'd return in his own time.

Jared turned and walked back to his apartment, which was still covered in shade. When his hand stretched out to push the door open again, Jared almost leaped out of his skin.

"Missing me?"

Jared stifled a yelp and looked to the side where Jensen was sitting on the ground glancing up at him. The only things Jared could really make out were the greyish pants and the light parts of his t-shirt.

"Jeez, man. You gave me a fright. What are you doing out here?"

Jensen smirked. "Couldn't sleep. Needed to clear my head. So I tested the pavement around your place here. Ran a lap and then... well, now I'm sitting here waiting for the sleeping princess inside to join me."

"Did you just call me princess?" Jared raised an eyebrow.

"Were you just worried I had run?"

Staring at his feet, Jared bobbed his head slightly. "Yeah, how about we take this conversation inside?"

"Will there be coffee?"

"Sure," Jared grinned.
Charlie used his elbow to open the door to the conference room. His left arm was clutching several files to his body and his right carried a mug of steaming hot coffee. Using his foot, he kicked the door closed again and put his load onto the table.

Suddenly painfully aware that the muffled chatter that was filling the room when he entered had quieted down, Charlie looked up. Jason, Chad, Mike and Chris all had their eyes on him, trying to draw the information right out of his. A minute squeak alerted him to the door opening again, and he turned, grateful to escape the scrutiny for a second.

In the door way stood Ty Olsson and Kendrick Sampson, both not part of Charlie's SWAT team but involved in the case nonetheless. Charlie smiled and gestured to the open seats on the circular table.

"Since we're now complete," Charlie started, "I'd like to thank you all for coming in at this early hour. I trust you all know Ty?"

The boys all nodded and Chris cast a curious glance at Kendrick.

"Great," Charlie continued. "Then I just have to introduce Keni. Keni, these are my most trusted on my team, Jason Manns, Chris Kane, Chad Michael Murray and Mike Rosenbaum. Boys, this is Sergeant Kendrick Sampson. He's been in charge of guarding Jack Morgan, while he was in hospital."

Kendrick had shaken every man's hand before taking a seat next to Charlie and Jason.

"And this, boys, is the keyword. Since the charges against JD Morgan and his group have been quite severe and involved a member of the police, Judge Ferris has scheduled the hearing for JD for this afternoon already. Ty and myself have found some interesting things that we hope will unhinge the smug bastard so he can be convicted swiftly."

"What about the hearing for his son, this Jack?" Jason asked.

Charlie exchanged looks with Ty and Kendrick. "It will be at a later date since much of it relies on how things go with JD."

Chris frowned. "Can you explain that? Cos my brain is still absorbing coffee and not to quick on the uptake. Aren't the charges identical?"


"What?" Mike almost shouted.

"The hell's that supposed to mean?" Chad all but growled.


"JD's son - Jeffrey Junior or JJ for short - died in an accident when he was six. Somehow, in his pain, JD seeked to fill the hole since he'd already lost his wife. So, instead of doing what normal people would have done and file for adoption, JD kidnapped a boy. And called him Jack."

"You gotta be shitting me," Mike gasped. "How sick is that?"
"Pretty sick," Charlie agreed. "He sort of brainwashed the kid, made him believe he's his son. Made him forget who he really is. And now, when we had this mission at the warehouse, karma came to bite JD in the ass."

"He took Jared and Jared knew the kid," Jason nodded. "His name's Jensen?"

"Yes," Charlie confirmed. "Jensen Ackles. Been missing for seventeen years. His parents live next to Jared's. They grew up together. And, as you said, Jase... Jared recognized him. Made him realize he is not who he thought he was and in the end Jensen helped him escape."

"Jared said he took a bullet for him," Jason said thoughtfully.

"And a bat to the head," Chris added.

"So you see Jensen's case has to be handled in a totally different way and is also depending on what will all be disclosed in JD's hearing."

"Where's this Jensen now?" Chad asked. "You said he was in hospital."

"He was discharged. Jared paid his bail bond."

"What the f... you have to be joking!" Mike and Chad almost leaped from their chairs as Jason shook his head. He didn't seem surprised, though. He knew Jared, knew how the man ticked.

"You telling me he put down cash to vouch for a childhood friend that got raised into crime because he thinks he still knows him?" Chris' disbelief was audible.

"Jensen seems to be a decent man who values his friends and his word," Kendrick supplied.

"And how would you know that?" Chad snarled.

"Been watching him. Alone, and with Jared around. Or the docs. He only lost it in the throes of PTSD coming trough. He seems like a good man."

"Look, Keni," Chad replied. "I don't know you. But Charlie seems to trust you, so I do, too. Maybe you're right about this Jensen. But if his PTSD kicks Jared in the ass... I mean, I think Jared is too involved, emotionally. Not only has he been taken hostage, he also had to deal with thinking he found his childhood friend. I'm just not sure he's thinking clearly."

The group continued to discuss the pros and cons, expressed their worries about Jared, the case, the hearing and finally went on to discuss tactics for the latter while going through a whole lot of coffee.

***

Jared sipped on his steaming hot coffee and studied the way the little bubbles on top swirled around. Jensen was almost hugging his cup between sips. Finally he lifted his head abruptly, drawing Jared's gaze on him.

"So, are we gonna talk about it?"

"What? Me thinking you ran?" Jared raised an eyebrow.
Jensen shook his head. "We have already established that I did not run. Never even thought about it. I realize it sounds screwed up, but I wasn't raised to break my word."

Jared snorted humorlessly at that.

"No, I mean are we gonna talk about us getting each other off last night. Chalk it down to pent up sexual tension that just needed an outlet?"

Jared actually blushed somewhat at Jensen's words. His brain was working hard to find a reply - in vain. He did however manage to hold Jensen's gaze. His green eyes oozed warmth and compassion and Jared knew it hadn't been just an outlet. Not for him at least.

"Because you should know, me rebuffing Ben was not - as he thought - because I am not into dick."

Jared's eyes flashed at the confession and the implications tied to it.

"Maybe I'm just spitballing here, Jare, but I feel a connection to you that's much more than just friendship. And I can see you feel it, too. It's like... my soul recognized you way before I knew and understood I wasn't Jack."

"So the kiss in the cell was not a thank you from Jack for clearing up the scar story?" Jared asked hopefully. Jensen laughed.

"Oh, Jare, I'd seen you checking me out. And I'm sure you were aware I did the same. Not all of it was soul searching, princess."

"Quit calling me princess," Jared groused.

"Well, you're the one with long hair," Jensen countered. His mug was empty by now. "So, any suggestion how to handle this? Us?"

"Jensen, I think for the time being, anything us isn't a good idea. They could hold it against you in your hearing if they should find out. We have to play it smart, maybe use the time to reacquaint?"

Jensen's eyes displayed a hint of disappointment despite knowing Jared was right. Then a roguish smirk lit up his handsome face.

"But we can still relieve some tension if need be. At least when there are no witnesses. See it as our trial run."

That said, Jensen slowly closed the distance between himself and Jared

Carefully he plucked the coffee mug from Jared's unresisting hands and placed it on the table. Leaning in, Jensen let his lips ghost softly over Jared's before his tongue snaked out, licking at them. Jared tasted like sweet coffee and Jensen was delighted when he drew a tiny moan from the older man's lips.

After this short concession of pleasure, silence surrounded the men, neither of them breathing for a moment. Then, as Jared swallowed thickly, Jensen took it as a sign. Leaning forward, he pressed their lips together while moving his hand possessively to the back of Jared's head. His other hand traveled up to curl into his longer hair. A soft gasp left Jared's mouth and was swallowed up into the kiss.

Without breaking their liplock, Jensen rearranged himself to accomodate his growing erection. He boldly moved Jared's hand on his crotch, knowing he could easily feel the hardness of his dick
through the sweat pants. An indignant squawk left the brunette's mouth, but he did nothing to remove his hand from Jensen's lap.

Finally growing bold, Jared dragged his fingers over the outline of Jensen's erection, causing the man to groan into his mouth. He knew they should probably stop soon, but the subtle suctions of Jensen's plush lips had his own cock pulsate in expectation. Damn, how he'd love to feel those lips on his dick.

In the end both men had to come up for air, staring deeply into each other's eyes, breathing heavily. Jensen's tongue licked over his lips to taste Jared and he smiled.

"Hate to break the moment, Jare, but I believe your parents are expecting us for breakfast in an hour and I sure need a shower before that." Jensen grinned as Jared's eyes widened when he remembered his phone call with his mom before they'd left the Ackles residence. "Guess you need a cold shower, too."
Jensen let out a sigh of relief when he opened the door to Jared's place. He'd been spending the afternoon with his sister in town and as much as he'd enjoyed it, things were still all new to him and he was glad when he could get home.

Home. Jensen grinned when he realized he thought of Jared's place as home. He longed to just drop on the couch and kick up his legs, but he'd actually promised Jared he'd prepare food for them. Jared had met with his boss earlier in the day and then headed to their "medicine man" for a check-up and assessment when he was ready to return to his job.

Just as Jensen started getting all the ingredients for a mean Thai curry dish together, there was a knock on the front door. He frowned. Jared had a key so it wouldn't be him. Jensen decided to ignore it but the moment he did so, the knocking became more persistent. With a sigh, Jensen put down the packet of rice he had in his hand and went to check who it was.

In front of the door were two of Jared's friends or colleagues. Jensen was vaguely familiar with their faces but the names had escaped him so far.


"I'm sure he wouldn't mind us waiting for him," replied the shorter guy. The other one was actually a bit taller than Jensen but had nothing on Jared.

Usually Jensen wouldn't trust people he didn't know and they'd never set foot inside the house if it were his. But he knew they were friends and colleagues of Jared's and that he'd be back anytime, so Jensen stepped aside and gestured the men in.

"Thanks," the taller guy said, eyeing him suspiciously. "Name's Jason. Went to school with Jared. That there is Chad."

"Jensen," Jensen replied curtly. Chad had headed straight for the living room so Jensen gathered he knew his way around. "Can I offer you something to drink while you wait?"

Again the two exchanged a wary look. "No, actually, we're good," Chad replied. Jensen shrugged.

"Suit yourselves then. I trust you know your way around? 'Cos I promised Jared I'd cook." With that Jensen made to withdraw to the kitchen.

"Is it easy, Jensen?" Chad called, a challenge in his voice. Jensen halted and turned around slowly. He could sense the hostility in the two, Chad more so than Jason, but still. He couldn't really blame them as he was sure they knew who he was.

"Is what easy?"

"To pull wool over Jared's eyes," Chad continued.

"Why would I do that?" Jensen frowned. "He's my friend."
Chad chuckled humorlessly. "Yeah, that's what he says, too."

"Okay? So where's the problem then?"

"We just wanna make sure you're not playing him, Jensen," Jason spoke up. "Because we're his friends, too. And we all know you haven't been in the best company most of your life."

Jensen nodded to himself. That made sense. They knew. And like good friends would do, they were looking out for Jared.

"Look, I get it. And I understand you're concerned, but just because you are growing up with other ducklings doesn't mean you are one. Yes, I've had my part in what JD was doing. You do these things when family is involved. Doesn't mean I think they were correct."

"Huh," Chad grumped. "Nobody would get me to do something I think is wrong."

"Good for you," Jensen replied. "But I know for a fact that there are people, even cops, that know their father or mother should rather hand in their driving licenses cause they're a hazard but they don't have the heart to make them 'cause it would restrict them to staying home. It's like this, exactly like this, for me."

"Can't compare that, Jensen," Jason replied.

"Oh? Why not? 'Cos what I did is participating in a crime? So when said parent kills a person because they had no business driving, it's so much better than what I did?" Jensen was a bit angry now. "Besides, when you grow up into a situation, it's not so easy to figure out what only seems right and what actually is right. Not that it matters to you, but I never concluded a deal or shot anyone. Basically, my biggest crime is abetting by omission. Yes, I know how to handle a knife. Yes, I'm a good shot. But so are you. How about you trust Jared a little and give me the benefit of the doubt?"

"Oh, I trust Jared...," Chad started, only to have Jensen cut in.

"You don't trust his judgement."

Chad closed the distance between himself and Jensen, downright invading the taller man's personal space. Jason noticed that to his credit, Jensen didn't even flinch.

"Oh, I do trust his judgment," Chad snarled, nose only a few inches from Jensen's chin. "But he was in an unusual situation, with a lot of unknown factors - and I don't trust the unknown. I don't trust you!"

Jensen stared down in Chad's mistrust filled eyes for a moment. Then he smirked.

"Feeling is mutual, Taz," Jensen replied calmly.

Chad's eyes gave his next move away and Jensen easily blocked the punch Chad aimed for his chin. He caught Chad's right arm and in a fluid motion used the momentum to twist the man's limb onto his back. Equally fast, Jensen locked his own right arm at Chad's throat as he turned the man and pulled him back first against his chest, Chad's left arm twisted between them.

"Hey!" Jason called and moved to help his friend. At the same moment, the sound of a key being turned in the lock heralded Jared's return. All eyes fell on the tall man as he entered the scene. Jared looked up and took a moment to register what was happening. He frowned.
"What the heck is going on here?"

Jensen released Chad and stepped back. "Your friends here decided to make sure I'm not playing you," he explained.

"Just looking out for you, Jare," Jason tried to conciliate. "Chill out, Chad."

"Why should I chill, dude? He's the one with a criminal background," Chad spat, clearly unhappy about having been in the position he was in and having Jared witness it. His ego took a serious dent from having that youngster own him like that.

"Get it in your head, Taz, I'm not Al Capone," Jensen replied. Chad had enough. He turned and stormed towards Jensen again, only to be met by Jared's tall frame that stepped in his way.

"Stop acting like an ass, Chad," Jared hissed.

"He can't help it, Jare," Jensen couldn't resist getting a jibe in. "He's jealous."

"Jensen, not helping," Jared panted as he worked on holding back Chad.

"Okay, I'll back off and do what I was trying to all along," Jensen smiled and turned towards the kitchen.

"Whatcha cooking?" Jared asked as he stepped into Chad's path once more.

"Thai," Jensen shouted back and began rattling the pots.

Soon the rice was boiling and Jensen was cutting veggies and steaming chicken while mixing a Thai curry with a slight punch. The voices floating over from the living room were muffled and sounded like the sting was out of the conversation.

Jensen whistled *When The Levee Breaks*, which was his favorite Led Zeppelin song, only interrupting to taste his food. Sometime later Jared materialized behind him.

"Damn that smells divine," he mumbled, peeking over Jensen's shoulder. "That looks like a lot. Are you trying to feed an army?"

"Aren't your friends gonna eat with?" Jensen replied, raising an eyebrow at Jared.

"You'd be okay with that?"

"Why not?" Jensen shrugged. "They're your friends. They're just worried about you. Which doesn't mean they get to accuse me and push me around. But Chad seems like a great friend to have."

Jared's face lit up with a wide grin and he quickly pressed a kiss on Jensen's cheek, before darting out again to invite Chad and Jason.

As Jensen finally filled the rice and curry into big bowls to set on the table, Chad appeared in the kitchen. Jensen glanced at him and handed Chad the bowl with rice to bring to the table.

"Why didn't you help Jared when he was holding me back?" Chad asked without so much as a preamble, balancing the hot bowl on his hands.

"Jared can hold his own. He doesn't need my help. Plus, you're his friend. You weren't gonna hurt him."
"What happened to you not trusting me?" Chad asked.

"Jared trusts you. And I trust Jared," Jensen explained with a shrug and a smile. "You still wanna punch my lights out?"

"I trust Jared, too. He thinks you're a good guy. I suppose I can give you the benefit of the doubt you wanted," Chad grinned back.

"Great," Jensen smirked. "Then let's see if you can handle my curry."

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Jared kicked his legs up on the coffee table, pointing the remote to his flat screen TV and clicking through the channels. Jensen was sitting in a similar manner on the other side of the couch, looking at the screen without really seeing it.

"What do you wanna watch?" Jared asked his friend without taking his eyes off the screen. When he got no reply after a few moments, he turned his head to see Jensen staring into space, looking utterly exhausted.

"Jay? You good?"

"Hm?" Jensen blinked his eyes and met Jared's frowning gaze. "I'm beat, man. Kenzie dragged me around the mall and I swear to you if I ever try on another pair of jeans it'll be way too soon."

"She's very persuasive, I'll give you that," Jared chuckled. "But she has a great taste in clothes. I just know whatever she picked out for you, you're gonna draw all eyes on you."

Jensen smiled thinly. "Maybe. But she was draining my energy. And the encounter with Chad and Jason did nothing to replenish it."

For a moment it was quiet. Then Jared picked up the chat again.

"I'm glad you guys got along afterwards. Chad isn't a bad guy, but he does get hot headed at times. And Jason is just looking out for me."

"I know," Jensen sighed and closed his eyes.

"Want a drink?" Jared asked.

"I shouldn't really, but hell yes. Got a cold one?"

"Coming right up," Jared said and got up to fetch the beer. He'd found a basketball game on TV and together they made short work of the six pack.

"You nervous at all?" Jared asked quietly.

"Ya mean the trial?" Jensen looked at his friend to see him nodding.

"First time you'll see JD again after... I mean, they have all the proof they need that you were a victim as well. And you did put your life on the line for me."
"Seeing JD is gonna be weird," Jensen admitted. "And yeah, I think I'm nervous. Never been to court and there's just so much at stake. I... damn, Jare, I don't wanna go to jail. I don't pose a threat to law abiding citizens. All I wanna do now is finish my studies under my real name and then find a decent paying job."

"I don't want you to do jail-time either, Jensen. But JD can be locked away for life, for all I care."

"He's not a bad man, Jare. Well, not completely. I think maybe what happened to his wife and kid made him go off the rails," Jensen mumbled.

"Yeah? Maybe when it comes to kidnapping a five year old, but if I got Jason right, he'd been dealing weapons way before that already. Maybe he doesn't go around and murder people randomly, but selling weapons illegally might as well be a felony for murder because I'm sure at least one of them has been used in a crime after JD sold them."

Jared hadn't noticed he worked himself up like that, but JD to him had no business in the same sentence as 'good'.

Jensen stared at him, blinking. He was having a hard time sorting through his emotions. He resented JD for doing what he'd done. He couldn't get over the fact he'd been kidnapped and kind of brain washed. His memories of his life before JD were vague at best, but they were there. His memories of life with JD however, were vivid. JD had harsh rules but he'd never treated him badly as far as Jensen could remember.

He'd gone to ball games, took part in high school sports and JD'd been there to cheer him on. He'd given him advice and listened to his problems. He'd given praise when earned and told him off when he'd been wrong. Which is why Jensen never really questioned JD's weapon's business. His gut had told him it wasn't right, but JD was doing so much good for Jack that he couldn't be all bad.

"A nickel for your thoughts," Jared said quietly as he'd been watching the gears turn in Jensen's head for a good few minutes.

"I... Jare, he never hurt me. I know what he did isn't right but... he never seemed like a bad man," Jensen was looking for the right words to express his emotions.

"He may not have hit you, Jensen, but there are other ways of abuse. He kidnapped you, he brainwashed you. Who knows how he accomplished that. There are cruel ways of psychological terror that may not leave visible harm but they're wrong and abusive all the same. That's violence."

"Stop calling for your mom, Jack. She's gone and you'll never see her again. Get used to it. And for fuck's sake stop crying! Girls cry. Are you a girl? No? I didn't think so, Jack. No son of mine will cry like a girl, get that in your head."

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'What do you mean, "Who's that?", Jack? It's your mother. She died in the same crash that gave you this nasty scar. She's gone and I'm responsible for making a man out of you. Now do me a favor and stop asking about her. She's gone and you can't even manage to remember her. She'd be so sad. Now get your act together and behave like a proper man.'

Jared waited for Jensen to reply but all he did was stare ahead, wide-eyed. Jared frowned but didn't want to push his friend for an answer. Only when he saw Jensen's eyes brimming with tears, Jared realized something was wrong.
"Jensen? C'mon man, look at me. Please?"

Instead of a reply, Jensen started breathing faster, hands fisting in the couch cover like he was trying to hold on for dear life.

"Jensen?!"

'This is ridiculous, Jack! I really thought I'd made it clear years ago that I won't tolerate these questions about your mother. What twelve-year-old wouldn't understand she is GONE? If you can't remember her or recognize her in pictures it's YOUR fucking problem. Shows you how pathetic you are.'

'But...'

'There are no buts, Jack. Do I have to beat it into you?'

'No, sir. Please no. I...'

'Well, sorry to say but I think I have to. I do NOT want to hear about her again. And don't you dare start crying now, boy. Don't you DARE. I'll get the belt if you cry. Time you finally learned that a Morgan doesn't cry! Do you understand, Jack?'

'Y...yes, sir.'

'Good. And if you ever dream about being someone else again, I'm gonna lock you up for a month this time. I do not EVER want to hear the name Jensen again! Not EVER!'

"No!" Jensen cried out, startling Jared out of his concern.

Jared moved closer to his friend and laid his hand on Jensen's shoulder. This however triggered a response from Jensen, Jared had never anticipated. He lashed out, catching Jared's jaw with his fingers, legs thrashing all over the place. Jared cursed and dove in to restrain Jensen's panicking form. As Jared tried to pin Jensen's legs with his own, an elbow caught his ribs and drew a pained grunt from the cop.

"Damnit, Jay," Jared groaned and doubled his efforts to calm his friend. "Snap out of it."

"No, no, no, no, nooo, don't lock me up, please no," Jensen panted, anguish and fear evident in his voice.

"Jensen! It's me, Jared. You're safe, buddy, I got you. It's me, Jensen. It's Jared."

Jensen's struggles calmed a bit but didn't cease. Jared felt the heat of his friend's body against his where Jensen's back was pressed against his chest.

"That's it, Jensen, calm down. You're safe," Jared cooed. "Open your eyes and look at me, Jay."

Jensen was still breathing in rapid pants but his eyelids started to flutter as he attempted to follow Jared's instructions.

"Got you, Jay," Jared repeated.
"No," Jensen mumbled. "Don't..."

"Don't what, Jensen?"

Jensen's eyes opened wide. "Don't lock me up." Jared was elated when green eyes found his, but his elation turned to terror when the next moment Jensen's eyes rolled up and he went limp.

"Jensen? Don't do that to me, come on." Jared shoved Jensen's uninjured shoulder roughly, but Jensen stayed limp. "Damn," Jared cursed and fumbled his phone out of his jeans pocket. He pondered for a moment and then dialled up his sister Megan. She was a registered nurse, she'd know if he should call an ambulance or not.

"Meg?" Jared called as his call was connected.

"Jare-bear, what's up?" Megan's voice floated through the phone.

"I need your help, Meg. Jensen just had a panic attack or flashback or whatever. He was kind of hyperventilating and when I got him to look at me he just crashed. Should I get him to hospital?"

"With crashed you mean...?"

"Passed out, eyes rolling up and going all limp. Please, Meg, I'm worried here," Jared elaborated while running his free hand through Jensen's short hair.

"Is he still breathing too fast?" Megan inquired.

"No, he... kinda looks like he's sleeping."

"Did he hit his head or bite his tongue?"

"No," Jared replied.

"How's his pulse?"

"I don't know, I... hold on." Jared took a deep breath and let his fingers find the pulse point at Jensen's throat. "Not sure, maybe a bit quick but not racing."

"Good. Well, I'd say he's exhausted. He should be fine. Wasn't he out with Mac all day?"

"Most of it, yeah. Then he had a bit of a fight with Chad and Jason..."

"So... emotional stress. Didn't you say he was showing signs of PTSD in hospital?" Megan's voice was calm and her calmness carried over to Jared.

"Yeah. Guess I better try and get him to see someone about that, eh?"

"It needs to be his choice, bro. Just try and get him comfortable. He'll be fine in the morning. Wait, isn't it the start of the trial tomorrow? That'd explain his stress even more."

"Yeah, okay... I'll get him comfy and yes, trial is starting tomorrow. Meg... when he was... wherever he was in his head, he was scared. Even terrified." Jared blinked his eyes quickly to force back a tear that threatened to roll down his cheek.

"Do you know why?" Megan asked softly.

"Not sure, but he said 'Don't lock me up.' Megan, I think JD locked him up for punishment."
"I hope you're wrong, Jare. Cos if you're right, jail-time would spin him in even deeper," Megan sounded worried now.

"I know, Meg. But I'm quite confident that can be avoided. He's got a lot counting for him." Jared took a deep breath. "Right, thanks for your help, Sis. You're a life saver. I'll get Jensen to bed now and make sure he's up to the court appointment in the morning."

"Welcome, bro. Just make sure you don't fall too hard for him, yet," Megan replied cheekily and hung up.

Jared started at his phone in disbelief and huffed, before wriggling himself out from under Jensen to go and get the bed prepared. There was no way he'd let Jensen sleep by himself after his little episode and the couch was definitely too small for both of them.

A few minutes later, Jared had succeeded in getting Jensen to bed. That boy might be shorter than him, but he was still miles long of dead weight when Jared carried him. Once in bed he wrestled Jensen out of his jeans which earned him a sleepy groan and some hands trying to swat him away and Jared smiled. His sister was right, Jensen'd be okay.

After tucking the younger man in, Jared went to the bathroom and got ready for bed. He crawled in beside Jensen and switched off the light. Jared had no idea how long he laid there, listening to the other man's breathing. Just when he started dozing off, Jensen moved and moaned softly. Immediately Jared was wide awake again, muscles tense as he was trying to figure out what was going on.

"No," Jensen mumbled and Jared froze. Jensen's hand was moving around like he was searching for something and only stilled when he'd found Jared's arm.

Jared felt like his skin was on fire where Jensen touched him for comfort. The second Jared tried to pull his arm free, Jensen's hand would follow or tighten his grip. After three unsuccessful attempts, Jared gave in with a grin. If Jensen needed contact for comfort, who was he to deny him. But if there was contact, it would be the proper kind.

With a smile, Jared turned towards the sleeping man and snuggled up, arm coming to rest protectively across Jensen's middle. Jared buried his nose in the crook of Jensen's neck, breathing in the faint scent of Jensen's cologne mixed with... Jensen. His smile grew impossibly wider when after a few seconds, Jensen turned into him like the little spoon and his breathing evened out.

Damn, I can get used to this, Jared thought and allowed himself to drift off, too, body molded around Jensen's like they were made for each other.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Birthday, Jensen ;) ♡
Chapter 14

When Jensen woke up it took him a moment to realize where he was. Immediately he was aware of
the warm, lean body cuddled up to his, Jared's hand slung lazily over his midriff, sleep-limp hand
brushing slightly against his half hard, boxer-clad penis. Jared's own morning wood was pressing
decidedly into the small of Jensen's back and Jensen felt himself stand completely at attention at the
realization.

It was obvious Jared was still in dreamland, but Jensen was now wide awake. First daylight was
bathing the room in a soft, golden light. The events of last night slowly surfaced in Jensen's mind and
he stiffened. He hated the flashbacks and if he was in Jared's bed it meant last night's had been bad
enough that Jared had wanted to keep him close. Jensen cursed softly as his cock gave an interested
throb at the thought of Jared's closeness.

There was no way Jensen would start anything right now. Jared was still asleep and they both had to
be in court before long. With a sigh, Jensen untangled himself from the sheets and Jared's possessive
arm and made his way to the bathroom for a much-needed shower.

Jensen stripped his t-shirt and boxers off and his eyes caught his reflection in the mirror, falling on
the small, reddish scar on his right shoulder where Jared's bullet had grazed him in the warehouse.
Jensen was tempted to turn and look at the bigger one on the back of his left shoulder but he didn't
like the image even thinking of it evoked. Instead, he reached into the shower cubicle and switched
on the water.

When the spray was the desired temperature, Jensen stepped in and enjoyed the feeling of hot
droplets running down his skin. He just stood there a few moments before letting the water run over
his head as well, plastering his short hair to his skull. He could stand like this all day, but he had
places to be and needs to satisfy, as his still hard dick reminded him of. Quickly Jensen grabbed the
shampoo and lathered his body and hair in it before letting the spray wash him clean.

Jensen closed his eyes and the image of Jared on the couch the other day formed in his mind, making
his cock throb happily. Slowly Jensen ran his hand up his torso, flicking his fingers softly over his
nipple. The sensation caused him to moan softly and repeat the action. Keeping his fingers busy, he
let his other hand drift down to his engorged cock, softly tracing the hard hot outline of it despite his
need for a firmer touch.

Repeating the motion several times, his breathing became faster, more labored as the need for release
pooled deep inside him. A hard pinch of his nipple made his cock twitch and Jensen felt a pearl of
pre-come ooze from the slit. He threw his head back with a groan as his hand gripped his cock
tighter and twisted gently on the upwards stroke, soft skin beneath grazing his swollen head. A deep,
guttural moan escaped from his throat, his lust flaring with the sensation. Jensen was lost in the throes
of lust as he picked up speed, jacking his aching dick with purpose as his other hand left the nipple to
brace him against the wet tiles.

"Oh fuck," he moaned when his balls drew tight and his eyes opened in time to see his length pulse
violently, spitting out ropes and ropes of spunk as he came hard and heavy, plastering the tiles. "Ah,
fff..., Jare," he moaned as his body shuddered through his pleasure, leaving his knees weak so he had
to lean against the cold tiles. He hardly felt the cold, though, as the hot water and the adrenaline in
his veins made sure.
Jared woke up to the sensation of cold. Opening his eyes, he realized it wasn't for lack of a duvet, but he was missing the warmth of Jensen's body. Turning onto his back, Jared stared at the ceiling for a moment and then sat up. Jensen wasn't in the room at all, but Jared could hear the sound of the shower running.

As he threw back the duvet to get up, Jared noticed he was sporting a massive boner. The sensation of Jensen cuddling up to him resurfaced in his mind and Jared smiled. It had just felt so good. And right. Jared got up and looked down at the obvious tent in his boxers. He was sure it wasn't entirely cos it was morning. Thinking of Jensen had a big part in his dick acting like that.

Heading to the bathroom, Jared froze when he heard a muffled sound coming from it. At first, he wasn't sure if he'd imagined it over the patter of the water, but when it repeated, there was no mistaking it. Jared frowned, wondering what could cause Jensen to moan that way. Had he hurt himself? It was either that or... the moan repeated and immediately Jared knew exactly what it was. And that knowledge made him rock hard in a matter of nanoseconds.

Before Jared knew what he was doing, he'd slipped his hand in his boxers and squeezed his stiff prick to release some pressure off it. Only the effect was quite the opposite. Biting his bottom lip to prevent groaning out loud, Jared stood very close to the door and was as quiet as he could be so he wouldn't miss any of the amazing sounds Jensen was making in the shower. All the while Jared's hand was picking up the pace as his arousal raced towards its peak.

Jared knew he should stop but he was well aware that his body wasn't going to allow it. He pulled down his boxers and tucked the waistband underneath his balls and kept jacking, using the copiously flowing precome as lubrication. His breathing was coming as fast as his heart was beating, his mind sucking up the slightest lustful sounds from the bathroom.

After a few moments, Jared willed his hand away from his shaft as he threatened to blow his load right there. He tried to ignore his throbbing dick, which was hard enough as the sounds from the bathroom became more frequent and urgent. The moment he heard Jensen moan 'fuck', more precome dribbled from the tip of Jared's cock and he let his hand hover right above it, trying to resist its almost magnetic pull. "Ah, fff...., Jare," Jensen moaned from behind the door and Jared was done for. As his fingers closed around his shaft once more, he came all over his hand, unable to keep in his own moans any longer.

***

When Jensen left the bathroom, towel knotted around his hips, hair still slightly wet, he could hear Jared rummaging in the kitchen. Quickly he picked out fresh boxers and snatched his jeans. As he buttoned up, Jared appeared in the room, shirtless and in old, washed out jogging pants. Jensen frowned slightly. He was pretty sure when he'd left the bed, Jared had been dressed in boxers and a t-shirt. And if Jensen wasn't totally mistaken, Jared was freeballing in those joggers.

"Hey," Jared smiled cheerfully. "Want some coffee?"

"Oh yes," Jensen's eyes lit up. He hastened to dress in his best jeans and a short sleeved button down his sister had insisted brought out his gorgeous green eyes. When he slipped into his chair at the kitchen table, a steaming mug of coffee just the way he liked it was waiting for him. Gratefully he took a big sip, eyeing Jared's jogger-clad buns as the man loaded his own mug with sugar before joining Jensen at the table.

"Your coffee is to die for," Jensen all but moaned after another sip. Jared chuckled.

"I'm glad I got the right amount of sugar in there for you," he grinned.
"There's sugar in here?" Jensen made big eyes.

"Nope," Jared roared. "I know you're not a sugar person. You're sweet enough as is. I got enough sugar in mine for both of us."

Jensen snorted. "Right." Then he eyed Jared's bare torso. "What's with the lack of clothes?"

"Um... Wasn't ready to dress yet," Jared replied lamely, studying the swirl of cream in his coffee.

"Okay. And you didn't stay in your boxers why?"

Jared sighed and looked at his friend. Then he shrugged and blushed slightly. "You weren't exactly quiet in the shower."

Jensen froze and raised his eyebrows quizzically. Then, as his brain made the connection, he had the decency to blush a bit before grinning at his friend.

"That good, eh?" He winked.

"Shaddup," Jared grumbled and worked on his coffee.

"Well, I'd say we have to discuss that another time in peace. For now, I'd suggest you get your goosebumpy body into some decent clothes and we'll see if I get to return here after my testimony."


"It's called gallows humor, Jare."

"Whatever. I don't like it." Jared frowned.

"I don't fancy a stay in a cell - especially a lengthy one - either," Jensen replied sincerely. "But there is a realistic chance that I don't have a choice."

Jared scowled but he knew Jensen was right. So he got up to get dressed and ready.

***

JD was moving around in the uncomfortable chair he'd been put in at court. Granted, there were worse chairs in the world, but his extended stay in it made his ass sore - and not in a good way. He'd taken his lawyer's, a man called DJ Qualls, advice and made use of his right to remain silent and not incriminate himself while Judge Ferris had listed every detail they'd found out about his business.

The devil knew how they'd managed to get that many facts about it in that rather short time, but JD was a player and while DJ Qualls didn't look like much he certainly knew how to pull his weight in a courtroom. So far, JD thought, he could be doing much worse.

"I'd like to call a witness to the stand, your honor," the prosecution - a man called Richard Speight - announced. Next to him were the now familiar faces of Charles Whitfield and Ty Olsson. When Judge Ferris gave her consent, he continued. "I'm calling Jensen Ackles."

JD's eyes narrowed as he watched Jack walk up. He hadn't seen the boy in a while and had no idea how he was doing. The last thing he remembered was him getting shot and taken to a hospital. After
that, he got no news or updates or anything on his boy. Jack took the stand without so much as a glance towards JD.

After the usual words and the oath, Judge Ferris let Mr. Speight start the questioning.

"Sir, to begin with, I would like you to state your name for me," Richard Speight addressed his client.

"Of course, Sir. My name is Jensen Ross Ackles."

"And you were born March 1st?" Speight continued.

"That is correct, Sir," Jensen confirmed.

"Alright, Mr. Ackles. Can you tell me about Jack Morgan, please? Born, um... February, 18th the year prior?"

"That was the identity I was made to believe was mine by the defendant, Sir," Jensen replied.

"And why did he do that? Why give you another name - and date of birth?"

"Mr. Morgan as I now know, had suffered a loss and tried to fill the hole with me..."

"Jack, stop!" JD growled, all intentions blown out the window. "I raised you, fed you and treated you like my son. You have no reason to speak badly about me!"

Jensen took a deep breath, gaze intent on the prosecutor whose questions he was trying to answer. He kept quiet in an attempt to will down the tremor that threatened to overcome his body. Not in fear, but in anger. And Jensen knew getting angry at court could guarantee him jail time.

"Jack!" JD called again, blatantly disregarding whatever his lawyer was telling him in his ear.

"My name is not Jack!" Finally, Jensen turned to look at JD. "My name is Jensen. You kidnapped me, changed my name, brainwashed my five-year-old self and yeah, maybe you never raised your hand at me, but you used punishments that left no visible scars."

"What did they do to you, Jack, eh? What did they tell you? Don't you believe a word they say, Jack. It's lies!" JD was shouting now.

"They didn't tell me anything, JD," Jensen replied calmly. "I remember. I remember how you shouted at me, told me to forget my name, forget my family because if I didn't, you'd lock me up again. I was five, JD. I was scared. I'm not scared anymore. Not of you!"

JD was about to retort something, but Judge Ferris prevented it by using her hammer to restore order.

"That is enough now, gentlemen. Mr. Morgan, so far you were content not to answer any questions. You would do well to stick to that as long as we're talking to Mr. Ackles here." Samantha Ferris' words were calm but strict. "Mr. Speight, continue."

"Thank you, your Honor. So, Mr. Ackles, you say Mr. Morgan abducted you when you were five years old to fill the hole the death of his own son, Jeffrey Junior, had left?"

"Yes, Sir. I believe so," Jensen nodded.

"And in all those years, had it ever occurred to you to run away? To get back to your family?" Richard Speight looked directly at his witness.
"No, because he forced me to forget who I was. As I said, I was a kid. I was scared. He told me my family was dead, that he was my family now and that my name was Jack. Whenever I asked for my mother, he yelled at me to forget her and locked me up."

"Right, I'm sure that is scary to a kid. But you're an adult now."

"Yes, I am. But JD's... Mr. Morgan's methods were successful. I forgot who I really was and became the son he wanted. Life was easier if I was Jack. So I forgot Jensen. Kinda... I don't know, locked myself away." Jensen looked down for a moment and swallowed. His hands were getting sweaty and his voice threatened to tremble.

"That is understandable. I'm not a psychologist, but I'd say it's the brain's method to survive. However, how come you remembered who you were when Mr. Padalecki was a hostage of Mr. Morgan's and - as I heard - in your care?"

"I didn't remember," Jensen disagreed.

"You didn't?" Richard Speight frowned. "Then why did you help Mr. Padalecki to escape?"

"Mr. Padalecki recognized me, Sir. He made me remember," Jensen explained.

"Recognized you?"

"We were childhood friends and neighbors. He was there the day Mr. Morgan kidnapped me."

"So he recognized you seventeen years later? You said it yourself, you both were kids. You both grew up and changed."

"He recognized my scar," Jensen stated, pointing at his temple. "I had received it a year earlier when Jared lent me his bike. It's... kinda unique."

Speight nodded.

"So, he recognized you and then? Did he say hey, I know you, don't you remember me?"

"Not quite, Sir. He'd tell me I reminded him of someone. And he told me little bits about that someone. Every little bit jolted my memory and finally when I asked him to tell me about my scar, I could kinda see what he said in front of my eyes. See it happening. I knew he was right so that meant, all that JD had told me had been lies. I may have been raised by a criminal, but I do know what's right."

"Was this also the moment you remembered the methods Mr. Morgan used to make you believe you're Jack, his son?"

"No," Jensen replied hoarsely and cleared his throat. "Those things, I... well, I have these flashbacks. They get... triggered by things, words, situations. I don't know."

"Since when do you have these flashbacks?" Speight asked.

"Since, um... the hospital, Sir."

"Okay, what happened there? I mean, to trigger them?" Richard Speight raised an eyebrow.

"Um, when I woke up after my surgery, I was tied to the bed - I was a suspect, I guess. I wasn't clear in my head yet and suddenly, I was back in the car when I got taken. Mr. Morgan had tied me up then as well, so I panicked. Ever since then, these things keep happening." Jensen finished.
"Sounds to me like you should seek professional help to deal with that, Mr. Ackles," the prosecutor suggested.

"I've received that advice before, Sir. I intend to take it up," Jensen agreed.

"Good. So, I might come back to this matter, Mr. Ackles. But for now, I would need you to tell me if you know this person." Richard Speight held up a book-sized photograph for Jensen to see, before showing it around to the others.

"Yes, I know him," Jensen confirmed.

"Right. Please state his name for Judge Ferris."

"That's Ben McKenzie. He was taken under the care of... Mr. Morgan after his father passed. He was supposed to help me keep an eye on Jared, that is, Mr. Padalecki," Jensen readily explained.

"So, Mr. McKenzie was your friend?"

"I wouldn't call him a friend," Jensen denied. "He thought of himself as a little brother in part, but he also tried to get into kind of a relationship with me a few years ago. He didn't like my saying no, so we were peaceful with each other, because of JD. But he didn't like me at all."

"I see here, he was the one that shot you," Mr. Speight double checked his information.

"Yes. Although the bullet wasn't meant for me."

"Right." Richard Speight took a deep breath. "Before I continue down this path, I would like to - just for a moment - bring up another witness, your honor."

"Another witness?" Mrs. Ferris raised an eyebrow.

"Just for a quick question which coincides with the main thread of the questioning of Mr. Ackles."

"Mr. Speight. I usually don't condone this, so I will accept it only under reserve," Samantha Ferris replied.

"Thank you, your Honor. I call to the front Detective Mark Pellegrino. He's in charge of working with the police recruits," Speight announced.

In the audience, a blond, tall man got up and walked to the front. When Judge Ferris had taken up all necessary information, she nodded to Mr. Speight to let him know he could continue.

"Thank you, Judge Ferris and thank you, Detective. You have seen the picture I've shown to Mr. Ackles, correct?"

"That's correct, Sir," Detective Pellegrino confirmed.

"You also heard the name Mr. Ackles stated as the one belonging to the man in the picture?"

"That is also correct, Sir," the Detective agreed.

"Right. Now if you would please tell me, Detective, who you think this man is," Speight requested, holding up the picture again.

"Gladly. This man is called Jamie Frances. He was one of our recruits."
Chapter 15

"His name was Jamie Frances. He was one of our recruits."

Jensen froze at the words Detective Pellegrino calmly uttered. Ben had an alter ego? He was pretty sure Ben wasn't another kidnap victim because Ben's parents had always been around along with the kid. Jensen's mind was racing and it took him a moment to realize JD was shouting.

"... a lie! A big lie. Ben was not in the police. He didn't have another name. He wanted to take over my empire and hated that I wanted Jack for that part. He hated cops, he'd never join them!" JD all but spat.

"Sorry to disappoint you, Morgan," Detective Pellegrino replied. "But Jamie Frances did join the police half a year ago. We have his picture, his address, even his fingerprints and they all match the person that was shot at your arrest. The one you call Ben McKenzie. Sorry, but he wasn't as loyal to you as you thought."

Jensen heard the words but his mind was racing to other places. Why would Ben join the police under another name? What was his aim? Had he wanted to get away from JD? He never showed a sign he hated the life.

"Why would he have joined the blues? It makes no sense. He enjoyed my business, it's why he was upset I wanted Jack to take over," JD rambled on.

"Quiet!" Judge Ferris called and when her request was met she addressed Detective Pellegrino herself. "Did you know Mr. Frances used a different name to sign up?"

"No, your Honor. He had all necessary papers and all seemed in order. There was no inducement to assume it was a false identity," Pellegrino replied.

"Alright," Judge Ferris nodded and handed over the word to Richard Speight again.

"Detective, how long now have you known about the false identity now?"

"Honestly, it was only discovered after his death. We IDed him as one of our own but Morgan and our own Mr. Padalecki insisted his name was Ben McKenzie. Then Captain Whitfield dug into it and found out another important little bit," Pellegrino explained.

"What was that?" Speight raised an eyebrow.

"Mr. Frances was the one who tipped us off about the meeting between Mr. Morgan's group and Chief Inspector Pileggi." Pellegrino's words had the same effect as if he'd dropped a bomb in court.

JD was shouting erratically and several officers had to move in to restrain him. Jensen was standing on his spot, breathing hard. Ben had told the police. Ben had hated him ever since he denied him. Ben had known Jack would make the exchange with Pileggi. He'd arranged for the SWAT team to be there because he knew they'd shoot him.

And suddenly all the little things Ben had done after Jack told him he wasn't interested showed up in Jensen's mind's eye. How he'd accidently tripped him at the top of the stairs and only Jack's quick reflexes had allowed him to grip the railing before tumbling down. Or on the shooting range when Ben was fiddling with his gun and accidently pulled the trigger which sent a bullet in the beam right next to Jack.
And then Ben was there, face contorted, swinging his bat at Jack’s head like he wanted to hit a home run. Jensen felt his head throb in sympathy and the blood rushing through his veins. He forced himself to deep breaths. *It's not real, Jensen, it's over.*

For a moment he wasn't sure if the voice was in his head or if someone was talking to him. Slowly he became aware that he was screwing his eyes shut tight and he forced himself to open them. He immediately picked out Jared’s worried face in the audience.

"Mr. Ackles?"

He blinked and turned to the speaker, Judge Ferris.

"It's okay," he mumbled. "I'm okay."

"We can take a break," Samantha Ferris offered.

"No!" Jensen replied forcefully but immediately toned down his voice, looking contrite. "Sorry, no. I'd like to get it over with, your Honor."

"Right," she nodded and looked at her notes. "What I'm interested in is how and when you decided to help Mr. Padalecki to escape. And why."

Jensen briefly glanced at Jared before looking at the judge, carefully avoiding JD's glare he could practically feel on him.

"Why? There are several reasons. Jared reminded me of who I really am. We were friends. There was a bond between us then and with every detail that came back to me, I felt that bond forming again. Also, I knew JD planned on killing him sooner or later-"

"He's lying!" JD shouted.

"Mr. Morgan. One more outburst from you and I'll have you removed. You will get your chance to speak. Until then, I'd advise you to keep quiet." Judge Ferris pinned the tall man with a fearless glare to make her point. JD shrugged and sat back in his seat. "Thank you. Mr. Ackles, please continue."

"I knew he was planning on killing him because those were his orders. I was to find out if Mr. Padalecki knew who'd set JD up and then kill him. When I told him the hostage didn't know anything, Mr. Morgan repeated the order. I talked him out of it, suggesting he could still come in handy. I wasn't comfortable with having to kill someone, let alone in cold blood, and Ja... Mr. Padalecki had already kicked off my memories."

"So, is it common procedure for Mr. Morgan to kill hostages?" Ferris inquired.

"Not at all. We never used to take hostages. Also, I think it was his order because it wasn't a civilian hostage, but that's just my guess."

"Your guess?" Samantha Ferris raised an eyebrow. Jensen shrugged.

"Knowing what I do now, Mr. Morgan has been in this weapons business way before I was... taken. As far as I can tell growing up with him, he was never in trouble with the police, meaning he did it in a way that either left no ties to him or didn't get noticed in the first place. Also a reason for me - being a kid - to not suspect what he did was wrong. I did get that feeling when I was 16 or 17, though, but I didn't know better. He did what he did, it kept us fed and there was never a mention of police on his heels. How was a kid to know?"
Jensen swallowed and took a deep breath to calm his racing pulse.

"I don't think he had ever killed anyone or ordered someone killed unless he did it without me knowing. You'd have to ask him yourself or one of his old pals, like Moby."

"Moby?"

"Yeah, I don't think I've ever heard his real name. But he's always been part of JD's crew."

Judge Ferris scribbled a few words on her pad and then looked expectantly at Jensen.

"Um, so, that covers the why I guess. When did I decide it? I'm not sure. The thought had been there a while but I was torn. However, when I noticed Ben getting more and more intent on getting rid of Mr. Padalecki, I was trying to think up a way. And then, when I was sure, I had to act fast, but things went sideways."

"Sideways how?"

"Well, I had caught Ben mistreating Jared and...," Jensen started, only to be interrupted.

"Mistreating him, how?"

"Ben was using his baseball bat on him," Jensen elaborated. "I told him to get out, and it was obvious he'd go straight to JD or to fetch his gun. He had dropped his bat though and returned. I... I'm not quite sure what happened next. He must have knocked me out though. I remember him swinging the bat at me. And then it's bits and pieces. I was running with Jared. Then we were on the patio and JD was there with Ben. Ben had a gun and was shooting at Jared. So I pushed Jared out of the way. And then... I woke up in hospital, cuffed to the bed. Does that cover the question, your Honor?"

Judge Ferris completed some notes she took and then nodded at Jensen.

"For the moment I have no further questions. Gentlemen?" She looked at Mr. Qualls and Mr. Speight expectantly. Both men denied. "So for now, you are dismissed. Thank you."

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Jared was nervous when he took the stand and wiped his sweaty palms on his suit pants. It's not like he had anything to fear for himself, but he was worried that what he said could be used against Jensen.

"So, Mr. Padalecki, tell me about the moment you recognized Mr. Ackles," Richard Speight addressed him.

"I didn't really recognize him, Sir. I recognized the scar," Jared replied.

"Please elaborate."

Jared took a deep breath and thought back a moment.

"That day in the abandoned warehouse my team and I were taking positions. I had a clear view - meaning a clear shot - at all involved and my order was to wait for the signal before incapacitating the target that would be active in the exchange with a shot to the gun arm. Just, when the signal came, the target - Mr. Ackles - turned his head and I could see the scar on his face through my scope. It... shocked me. My target was off."
“You missed him?” DJ Qualls cut in.

Jared looked at the scrawny man. He wasn't sure what to think of him. The man looked like JD would have him for breakfast. And yet he must be quite capable, else JD wouldn't have hired him.

"No. I didn't, Sir. But I only grazed his shoulder. In an evaluating exercise, it would have been enough to fail. I was distracted and the mission went sideways. Mr. Morgan had more men hidden and at my shot, they rushed us. I got separated from the team and there was an explosion close to me. That's all I know."

"So," Mr. Speight spoke loudly, drawing everyone's attention back to him to continue his line of questioning that his opponent had so eloquently hijacked. "What is the next thing you know?"

"I woke up in a room, shackled to the cot, with Mr. Ackles as my guard," Jared explained.

"Was he your only guard?"

"No. He took turns with Mr. McKenzie... or Mr. Frances as he's known to the police."

"Right," the attorney nodded. "And what exactly were they doing, guarding you? I mean, you were shackled to the cot, where would you go? What was the need for a guard?"

Jared paused and refrained from trying to seek out Jensen's form. He had to focus.

"Sir, I had been thinking about that back on the cot already. My guess is, JD wanted them to get information. Probably the reason they took me in the first place. Jensen, or Jack, as he identified then, he was calm. In control. Asking specific questions. Ben, however, I... it seemed his only aim was to rough me up."

"Rough you up how?" Richard Speight asked.

"He gave me a bloody nose repeatedly, and the day Jensen helped me escape, he bruised my arm and ribs with that bat of his. Would have shot me if Jensen hadn't tackled me to the ground. I... think he hated Jensen. I'm not sure why, but he was full of hatred."

"So, they took turns guarding you, trying to get information in a good cop - bad cop way?"

"Um, no, Sir. I don't think so. I mean, to me it seemed neither of them was putting on an act. I, Jensen was calm. That's why I tried pushing slightly, to find out if I was right, that he was the friend of mine that went missing. At first, he denied it. Later, he asked for details. He brought me decent food and let me use the facilities, even removed the shackle once, and only locked the door."

"Okay, and you think all this was genuine?"

"Yes, Sir," Jared confirmed.

"Why?"

"I don't know, call it a hunch, a feeling, paired with the knowledge that the Jensen I knew was a good kid. It's true, he helped to hold me hostage. But he never mistreated me, he... protected me."

"Describe the scene that led to your escape, please," Speight prompted. Jared sighed.

"I, Ben was up to his tricks and was mouthing off about 'Jack' for not shackleing me up. Said he was demented for not doing it. I disagreed and said it's called sympathy or compassion. Ben didn't like that and we ended up in an argument and he produced his bat. Jensen walked in on it and kicked him
out. Then he asked me to tell him how he'd really got his scar. I think Mr. Morgan had let him believe it was a car crash. So, I did as he requested when Ben returned to get the bat he'd left there. Jensen was hunched at my feet and Ben... he knocked him out cold. For a moment I thought he'd killed him. There was so much blood."

Jared paused once more to gather his thoughts. His mouth was dry.

"I was like a sitting duck. I knew once Ben was done admiring his handiwork, he'd gun for me. Jensen had a butterfly knife in his pocket, I had seen it before and could see part of it sticking out from it. So I grabbed it and when Ben swung the bat at me I used it to defend myself. Ben dropped the bat and retreated, locking us in. I had to wake up Jensen to find out which key to use and we ran. But JD caught up with us on the patio."

"I believe we've heard the story from the point on already," Speight nodded. "You've heard it, too. Is there anything you'd want to add or correct?"

"No, Sir. What Mr. Ackles said was correct. But I'd like to add that when my team took over, Mr. Morgan shouted that he 'should have killed me before I talked crazy in Jack's ear'. To me, that clarifies whose intention it was to dispose of me," Jared stated.

"Maybe," Speight agreed while Qualls shook his head. "So, is there anyone else here who can give insight as to whether Mr. Ackles here is as volatile as Mr. Frances apparently was? Maybe someone not directly involved?"

"I don't know, Sir."

"We've heard brief accounts of him by Captain Whitfield and Sergeant Sampson, but I can't yet paint myself a picture. So, Mr. Padalecki, I'd ask you to think hard, who of the people you know that are not related to Mr. Ackles can help us determine what kind of man he is."

In the audience a figure raised up and Jared felt his heart pumping harder in his chest as he recognized the man.

"Me, your Honor."

Judge Ferris looked at the man, same as Mr. Speight and DJ Qualls.

"Your name, Sir?"

"Lieutenant Chad Michael Murray, your Honor."
Chapter 16

Jared was nervous when Chad walked up to the front and he knew Jensen must be feeling even more so. He knew Chad was his friend but he also knew Chad wasn't a fan of his behavior regarding Jensen. They'd had a fallout not too long ago and despite them later sharing dinner in an amicable manner, Jared knew it didn't mean Chad's wariness was gone. With thoughts, he tried to implore his friend not to bring any harm to Jensen.

"State your name again, Sir, and explain what your involvement is in regards to this case, please," Samantha Ferris addressed Chad.

"Yes, Your Honor. Chad Michael Murray, I'm part of the SWAT team with Jared Padalecki. I was present the day we busted the deal and Jared got taken hostage as well as the day his team got him back," Chad supplied.

"No relation to Mr. Jeffrey Dean Morgan or Jensen Ackles or any of the accused?"

"No, Your Honor."

"Alright. So, what can you tell us about Mr. Ackles?"

"To start off, yes, he is part of Morgan's team. He was present and active the day we had our mission. He was not leading, though. Can't say much about him in that regards. That was the first time I saw him. The next time was when we were raiding the place to rescue Mr. Padalecki."

"Right. So how about you lay out your version of it, Mr. Murray?" Samantha Ferris requested, ready to take notes.

"We'd been splitting the team to take the apartment building from two sides. I went through the front. We secured some consorts of Morgan's and got the information he was in the basement. When we reached it, there was commotion heard from the courtyard. At my arrival, the deceased, Mr. Frances, had his gun trained at our man Jared. We weren't there quick enough to prevent the shot. But Jared wasn't hit because Mr. Ackles risked his own life and shielded him," Chad recounted the events from his view.

"Did he do that when he realized the game was up and they were surrounded?" Mrs. Ferris dug deeper.

"No, Your Honor. Things were going so fast, he didn't know our team was there so he had no chance for an impromptu act. No, he was doing that because he wanted to."

Judge Ferris was scribbling something on her paper and then looked up and at Chad expectantly.

"Continue."

"Not much more to say about him on that day. He was out of it. Took the bullet that was meant for Jared." At this Chad's eyes briefly flickered over to rest on Jared for a moment.

"Did you see him again after that?" Richard Speight prompted.

"A few weeks later, yes. Until then I'd only heard how things progressed from Jared or the Captain. I have to say, I don't trust Jensen. Or didn't," Chad added. "Jared had been talking about him and his recovery and how Jack was really Jensen and his childhood friend, and I was sure Jensen was just
using Jared's untainted friendship to get his neck out of the sling."

"You were sure, as in you aren't anymore?" Speight asked, an eyebrow raised.

"What changed your mind?" Ferris added.

"A few days ago, a friend and myself decided to find out what he was really made of," Chad started, but judge Ferris interrupted.

"A friend?"

"Yeah, fellow team member Jason Manns, Your Honor. We knew Mr. Ackles was staying at Jared's place after he paid the bond. We also knew Jared wasn't home yet. We kinda confronted Mr. Ackles, and I tried to get a rise out of him. I mean, he was raised by a criminal, I expected him to go full gangster on me. He didn't. And I wasn't even subtle. I asked him squarely what his aim was, using Jared and their old friendship, being confrontational and all in his face."

"How did he react?" Ferris sounded very interested.

"He stayed calm, defended himself. Mostly with words," Chad elaborated.

"Mostly?" Ferris raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah. When Jared got home he'd just pinned me in a choke hold - a loose one. But that was after I had a swing at him. Defense on his side. He let me go immediately after Jared got back. So, you might say I still don't know much about that man and I sure don't count myself as his friend at this time, but I can say he's Jared's friend. He's not an out of control lunatic and he does know right from wrong. I told him that nothing could make me take part in something I didn't deem right, but I see now how things can be if you get raised into them and they conflict with your sense of justice and right."

Jensen had been staring at a spot somewhere in front of his feet the whole time Chad had been talking. At Chad's words, he lifted his head and looked at the man testifying, surprise obvious.

"So, do I think he should be tried? Yes. But I do also think he deserves a chance to show the world what he's really made of. Jared told me even when guarding him, Jensen was never cruel. He fed him and tried to protect him from Mr. Morgan and his lapdog. He helped him escape and put his life on the line for him. And for that I am grateful. He saved my friend."

"Thank you, Mr. Murray. No further questions for the moment," Judge Ferris declared. She moved some sheets to rearrange her notes and pondered things for a few minutes. It was very quiet in the courtroom.

"Counselors, please meet me in Chambers. Court is in recess and will reconvene in fifteen minutes." Judge Ferris clapped her gavel, adjourning the court.

A murmur filled the room as people started to softly exchange their opinions on the case amongst each other as the lawyers left the room.

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"Mr. Speight, Mr. Qualls, the reason I asked you to convene in private is the following. Taking into consideration all I heard today, I am offering Mr. Ackles a deal," Samantha Ferris addressed the men.

"A deal?" DJ Qualls frowned. He knew JD Morgan's business, had already successfully helped a few on his men in minor cases. A deal meant nothing good for JD when Jack was involved... or Jensen rather.

"Yes," Ferris confirmed.

"What kind?" Richard Speight dug deeper.

"I'd like him to set up a list of names, revealing all of the people Mr. Morgan made business with, in any form," she declared. Qualls blanched.

"I object," he started, but Ferris cut him off.

"You can't, Mr. Qualls. Normally I would only pass on this information to Mr. Speight, as he will represent Mr. Ackles in his own trial. You are only here because I would like to play with an open deck." She turned to Speight. "If he gets me that list, I am willing to offer a sentence be reduced to probation."

Qualls shook his head in silence, obviously not pleased with the news. Speight however pondered the judge's words and nodded.

"Mr. Speight, if you would be so kind and inform Mr. Ackles about my proposition?"

"Of course, your Honor." Speight nodded and turned to leave.

"Mr. Qualls, you may return to your stand. We will continue in," Ferris checked her watch, "five minutes." With that, she left the lawyer alone.

****

DJ Qualls returned to his stand, unable to hide the sour mood he was in. Of course, his client immediately picked up on it.

"What's it?" JD asked, eyebrow raised. The courtroom was only sparsely inhabited as most people used the recess to stretch their legs or take a leak. JD had noticed one of his men, who were not caught in the raid of the police, in the thinning audience as the crowd left at the start of the recess and had surreptitiously nodded the man closer. When he was in earshot, JD had pretended to talk to himself, which had earned him a weird stare from the guard. His man now knew to stay close and he did.

"Bad news, Mr. Morgan," Qualls replied quietly but JD wanted his man to hear as well.

"I don't like bad news," he frowned, purposefully without softening his voice. Qualls looked up and saw JD nodding at his man. He understood.

"Judge Ferris is offering Jack a deal," Qualls spoke, more loudly but not too loud to raise suspicion. "She wants names, you know? Names that are connected to you."

"Damn, Jack better not take that deal," JD growled.
"We'll find out in a few moments, Mr. Morgan. But the boy knows too much. It won't be good."

"If he agrees, he needs to be scared off," Morgan said decisively, shooting a fleeting glance at his man who nodded. "Collins will take care of it."

"I don't...," Qualls started but he was interrupted by Judge Ferris' gavel sounding the end of recess.

People took their seats again and Richard Speight walked up to the judge, speaking to her softly. She listened, nodded and then smiled.

"Ladies and gentlemen, in light of a proposition I made with the prosecution, I call in a recess and close this court for today. We will reconvene 48 hours from now."

JD shook his head, face angry. Jack had agreed to the deal. Now he hoped Collins would find the right words to stop Jack.

*****

"Chad, hey... Chad! Wait up!" Jared called to his friend who was walking toward his parked car and waited as Jared jogged up to him. Jensen was following albeit at a walking pace.

"'sup?" Chad asked, holding out his fist for Jared to bump.

"Thanks, man. For what you did in there, I mean, really man," Jared said, gratefully.

"You don't have to thank me, Jared," Chad started but Jensen, who had caught up, interrupted.

"But I do. Thank you for giving them your honest opinion on me. I know I still have to prove myself. And I will. I promise."

Chad eyed Jensen, scrutinizing the other man. Then his features softened.

"You know, Jensen, I can only begin to figure out what kind of man you really are. Jared here usually is a sound judge of character. You said I don't trust him. I do. You seem like you can be a really good friend. Just... don't mess it up, ya know?"

Jensen just smiled shyly at him and nodded.

"Where are you headed?" Jared asked with a grin.

"Um, just home. I promised Dani a movie evening," Chad all but squirmed.

"Movie evening?" Jared laughed. "As in she gets to pick what you watch?"

Chad frowned but nodded and Jared happily chortled. "Oh man, you're so screwed. I bet she'll pick something like 'Pearl Harbor' or 'The Birdcage'... or even worse, 'Cinderella'."

"Shuddup," Chad growled and half-heartedly tried to box Jared's shoulder. "So what are you two gonna do?"

"Hm, I got a list to make," Jensen pondered. "I might still have two days to do that, but I'd love to get it done sooner rather than later."
"A list? That the deal you got?" Chad asked with a squint.

"Hm, yeah. Gotta give up all the names I know that are connected with JD. Heads are gonna roll. He won't like that at all," Jensen let on with a serious expression.

"So you gotta watch your back?" Chad sounded apprehensive.

"Not yet," Jensen denied. "But knowing JD he'll find out about it and if he can contact one of the men... you catch my drift."

It was quiet for a moment before Chad cut the rather uncomfortable silence.

"And you, Jare? What are you gonna do?"

"You know I'm gonna watch the Cowboys kick ass," Jared provided and then nudged Jensen, trying to lighten the mood. "If you get your list done quick enough you're welcome to join me," he winked.

"Oh yeah? That's so generous of you, Jare. Would it be okay if I'd cook something up as well? I'm hungry like a wolf."

Chad snickered at the sarcasm in Jensen's voice. Jared's expression however sobered.

"He didn't eat much today," he frowned. "Nerves, I guess."

"Geez, thanks, Jare," Jensen muttered. At Jared's kicked puppy pout, however, he had to laugh. "Alright, get us back to your place, Sasquatch. I'm starving."

Jared and Jensen were driving in a comfortable silence for some time, while the radio softly showered them with classic rock, which they both loved.

They were both letting the music take them away from the thoughts reverberating in their heads about the events of the day. And then Jared's stomach rumbled loudly. Jensen chuckled.

"Do you feel like spaghetti bolognese or mac and cheese," he asked Jared who'd clapped a hand over his belly.

"Whichever goes faster, Jay," Jared replied.

He activated the turn indicator to leave the highway and pulled onto the mostly empty road towards his apartment. They were only about halfway home and a look in the rearview mirror told Jared, Chad was still a bit behind them. He'd turn off pretty soon, heading west instead of Jared's eastbound course.
"You know, it's good I recognize Chad's black beast from miles away or else I would think we're being followed," Jared announced, glancing in the mirror once more. Chad was about a good half mile behind him, but he still knew it was Chad. Between them was just one other car. Jensen turned and checked the side mirror in an attempt to see Chad's car and then he swore.

"Oh fuck, Jare, that's not good. So not good!" Jensen sounded almost frantic.

"Wha...? What's wrong?" Jared gripped the wheel tighter and checked both his mirrors to see what had spooked the younger man. The white car that had been behind him now was a good deal closer to them. Too close for comfort really. "Is that dude crazy?"

"It's one of JD's men, Jare. He means business. I'm so fucking sorry," Jensen muttered.

Before Jared could ask why Jensen was sorry, a loud roar made him look to the side and his eyes widened. The white car was now next to them and very close. Too close for comfort really. "Is that dude crazy?"

"It's one of JD's men, Jare. He means business. I'm so fucking sorry," Jensen muttered.

Before Jared could ask why Jensen was sorry, a loud roar made him look to the side and his eyes widened. The white car was now next to them and very close. Jared realized what was about to happen and wanted to hit the brakes, but he wasn't fast enough.

With an almighty crunch, the white Caddie smashed into them, side-on, causing Jared to swerve precariously close to the sloping shoulder of the road.

Training kicked in and Jared administered the countermeasures, but his Mustang wasn't built for wrestling matches and the white Caddie was relentless. Another well-measured hit followed and the Mustang's tires hit the dirt, bumping over a rock and threatening to drift into a spin.

Jared worked hard to regain control of his car but he lost for good when the dirt was replaced by a grass embankment and the car's left side went airborne. One roll took them to the bottom of the ditch, which catapulted the Mustang back up and into two more flips before coming to a shuddering halt about thirty feet from the embankment.

Absolute silence was the first thing Jared got aware of when the haze of the deployed airbags cleared. There was a buzzing in his ears and a throbbing in his head, telling him he'd banged his head in the tumble. Squeezing his eyes shut he tried to will the pain away and then froze.

"Jensen?"

Jared turned his head to take in the smashed and dented windshield. The passenger window was gone completely, but for a few lonely chards sticking out from the frame. Jensen was hanging slumped over in the seatbelt, blood dripping onto the deflated airbag in an agonizing rhythm.

"Fuck. Jensen! Wake up, man!"

Reaching one hand out to lift Jensen's chin, Jared had to bite back a pained moan when his shoulder protested. Jensen was out cold. His head must have hit the window as the car rolled. At least besides that head injury, there were no other obvious injuries to the younger man that Jared could see.

A shadow fell over Jensen and Jared looked up. Someone was standing just outside the smashed up Mustang. For a fleeting second, Jared thought it might be someone come to help, but then the reason he flipped the car in the first place resurfaced and he felt his blood run cold. The man outside the passenger door was not here to help. He had a gun. A gun with a silencer.

A gloved hand reached out and pushed Jensen's limp head back against the headrest none too gently. Jensen grunted slightly but his eyes stayed shut.

"You know I don't care if you're awake for this or not, Jack. But I can't let you make that list. JD is gonna be pissed but it has to be done."
"Don't you fucking dare touch him!" Jared fumed, right hand fumbling to release his seatbelt as all pain took a back seat and all he wanted was to keep Jensen safe.

"Whatcha gonna do, Bluebird? My bullet is faster than anything you can come up with. I wish I could make him suffer by watching me put a bullet between your eyes, but since he's decided to nap, you can have the honors. Hasta la vista, Jackie-boy!"

The man stepped back and lifted his firearm the second Jared's seat belt came loose. Shouting Jensen's name, Jared tried to pull the prone man out of harm's way. And then the muffled sound of a gun being fired slowed Jared's world and he screamed as Jensen twitched and slumped into his arms.
Chapter 17

Chad had been driving at a leisurely pace, enjoying the music that was taking his mind off the events of the day. Jared's Mustang was way ahead of him but he could still see him in the distance.

When Jared turned off the highway, Chad noticed the white Caddie following suit. He pursed his lips, but it could all just be a coincidence. Many people would be taking that route home from the city if they lived on the outskirts.

A few moments later, Chad took the exit as well. He'd be following his friend for another couple of miles before their ways parted. The radio switched to Metallica's "Fade To Black" and Chad drummed the rhythm with his thumbs on the steering wheel. It was a fairly straightforward stretch of road, not much steering to be done anyways.

Halfway through the song, Chad squinted his eyes and frowned. What on earth was going on in front of him? The white Caddie was picking up speed, closing the distance to Jared's Mustang and then pulled up alongside it. Instinctively, Chad upped the pressure on the accelerator to catch up.

"Holy smokes!"

With wide eyes Chad realized the driver of the Caddie was trying to run Jared off the road. That couldn't be good.

"Hold on, Jare, don't let that fucker.... shhhhhhit, shit, SHIT!"

Terrified, Chad watched as the Mustang first hit the curb and then flipped three times. He was still too far out to see much more than that but noticed the Caddie came to a stop and a man got out and climbed down the embankment, headed for the Mustang.

Fumbling for his cell phone, Chad hectically punched 911 and activated the speaker. A ring later dispatch picked up. Chad wasted no time waiting for them to ask about the emergency.

"This is Lt. Murray, I have an officer down on Muddy Branch Road, close to exit 12. Road rage. Request backup and EMTs. Now!"

Not waiting for a response, Chad hit the brakes hard when he saw the stranger go straight to the passenger side. He came to a stop about forty yards behind the Caddie and grabbed his Sig Sauer, stuffed the cuffs into his pocket and set off towards the car wreckage.

After just a few steps, however, he skidded to a stop. The man on the passenger side stepped back and lifted his arm, clearly pointing a gun at someone inside. Chad wasted no time and followed suit. He aimed quickly and pulled the trigger.

*****

Jared frantically pulled on his friend's arm, who was semi-conscious at best, to at least try and save him. He heard shots being fired and dread numbed his body when Jensen fell against him. Someone screamed and Jared realized it must have been himself. Burying his fists in Jensen's shirt, Jared looked up, fully expecting the next bullet to split his skull. To his surprise, nobody was there.

****
For a brief moment, Jared was stunned but then he burst into action and scrambled to get his Walther P99 from his glove compartment. Hearing a noise at the window, Jared brought up his gun, ready to defend himself.

"It's me, Jare! Don't shoot!"

Jared released the breath he'd unconsciously held.

"Chad! Dude has a gun. Where is he?"

"Put a couple of bullets in his body. He's down but still breathing. You good in there?" Chad knelt down to roughly pull the perp's arms to his back at which the man gave a pained cry. Plucking the cuffs from his pants pocket, Chad disabled the man further.

At his colleague's question, Jared finally dared to look at Jensen, who was still slumped over against him and unresponsive. Gently, Jared turned the younger man's head and sucked in some air. The right side of Jensen's head was covered in blood, but Jared couldn't make out a bullet hole.

"I'm okay, bit banged up. He shot at Jensen. Dunno where he's hit, though," Jared said hoarsely.

"Jare, he didn't shoot Jensen," Chad replied, getting up from the ground.

"What? I heard the shot, Chad."

"Well, I shot the asshat. A few times. And I just checked his gun, man." Chad slid out the clip once more and held it so Jared could see. "No bullet missing."

Jared stared at the clip for a few seconds and blinked. Chad secured the gun once more and pulled on the smashed-in door to see if he could help. In the distance, the first howl of sirens approaching could be heard. When Chad and Jared moved Jensen back into his seat, Jensen moaned painfully and briefly opened his eyes.

"He's coming to, Jare," Chad announced and gently grabbed Jensen's jaw. "C'mon, keep them open, Ackles, or Jared will bust a vein. Help is on the way."

"Jare 'kay?" Jensen mumbled as he worked on following Chad's command.

"I'm okay, Jay. We're good. Chad saved our sorry asses," Jared smiled relieved.

"My ass 'sn't sorry, yours is," Jensen muttered, eliciting an amused chuckle from Chad and an indignant snort from Jared.

"Jare, the cavalry is here. Just let the EMT's check you both over. If you're feeling as bad as your car looks...," Chad cringed.

"Didn't have time to check my inventory yet," Jared replied. "But my foot is stuck."

Chad looked over at Jared's foot and pulled a face. "So I see."

"Jare," Jensen said softly, causing his friend to look at him. "Don't feel so good."

"You don't look so good either," Jared agreed. "You dizzy?"

Jensen swallowed and closed his eyes. "Sick," he muttered and Chad reacted instantly. Jensen looked white as a sheet and Chad helped him turn to face the open door not one second too early.
A moment later they were surrounded by EMTs and police. Chad made way to let them see to Jared and Jensen, made sure they only treated the perp as long as they didn't cut him loose and sought out Captain Whitfield.

*****

"Chad!"

Chad turned as he was headed up the embankment and found Charlie standing only a few yards away. Quickly he closed the distance and greeted his superior.

"You called this in, right? What happened?"

"Hey captain, yep, I did. That was a hit if you ask me," Chad replied and walked his boss through the events. When he had finished, Charlie stood there with a frown on his forehead.

"You saying that car followed Jared from the court parking?"

Chad nodded, looking grim. "I don't know how, but somehow it must have leaked out that Jensen is to make a list. If they planned on killing him from the start, why wait until he could speak in court?"

Chad studied his feet, thinking. "I don't know, Charlie. But I get the feeling JD Morgan doesn't want Jensen dead. Someone else does, though."

Charles Whitfield blinked his eyes at this and gestured for Chad to walk with him to where they were performing first aid on the man who Chad had gunned down at the side of Jared's car.

"Does he look familiar to you?" Charles asked.

"Hm, difficult to say. He could have been in the warehouse. I can't say for sure, though. But I do think I saw him in the crowd at court."

Charlie nodded and then walked right up to the paramedic. He talked to him briefly and then produced his phone to snap a pic of the man. Then he walked back to Chad.

"Did Jensen say anything about this man?" Charlie asked Chad.

"Um, no. I don't think he was awake to see him. And if he recognized him before he ran them off the road, he didn't say."

"Maybe I should ask him," Charlie said, waving his phone.

"He might just cover you in bile," Chad said dryly.

"That bad?"

"No idea. But his head was covered in blood, he was slow to wake and he already used that assclown for target practice."

"Not good," Charlie grimaced. "How's Jared?"

"Not sure. He looked okay but his foot was stuck," Chad shrugged. His eye caught Jared sitting in the tail end of an ambulance and the two walked over.
"Hey," Charlie greeted, looking his man over. There was a bruise on Jared's head and two paramedics were busy wrapping up his foot. "You okay? Can you share what happened?"

"Bit banged up and sliced my leg and foot open somehow. Don't think it's broken though," Jared replied.

"X-rays will tell," the one paramedic chimed in and Jared nodded.

"Guess my car is a write-off, however," he sighed.

"Jared, did Jensen say anything when you noticed that guy in the Caddie? Did he recognize the attacker?" Charlie asked.

"Um, when the dude was pulling up next to us he said it's one of JD's men. No, wait, he was behind us, still. I don't know if he recognized the car or the driver, though," Jared replied.

"Okay, and when he was aiming at you?" Chad added to Charlie's question. Jared's face fell a bit.

"He didn't see that man, Chad. He smashed his head in. Only came to when you were there. Sorry." Jared watched the paramedic wrap up his foot.

Just then a commotion from the ambulance that was a few yards away from them drew the attention of the three men.

"Hey, no, no, no, buddy!" A male voice called from inside it, where Jared knew they were treating Jensen. "You don't get to sleep! Come on, buddy, look at me. Come o....h damnit. His blood pressure is all over the place... Brendan? Go up front and tell Aydan to switch on the music and floor it! Now!"

Jared's throat was dry and the paramedic tending to him became irritated at his attempts to stand up to see what was happening. Before Jared could ask any questions, the sirens started howling a split second before the ambulance sped off, leaving a faint trail of dust in the air.

******

Jared had a hard time waiting for the ER doc to splint and wrap up his sprained ankle. He'd had a small cut where a shard of glass had sliced along his shin which they had stitched closed and the x-rays for his ankle had taken them an eternity, or so it had felt to Jared. He knew they'd taken Jensen to the same clinic but nobody could or wanted to tell him anything about his condition.

At first Jared had felt his friend had picked up a nasty cut on his head and a concussion but the way they'd almost panicked on the scene left the niggling feeling there was more.

Finally the nurse handed him a pair of crutches with the instruction to stay mostly off his foot and he'd hobbled out of the ER cubicle where he found Chad and Jason waiting for him.

"You heard anything of Jensen?" Jared asked instead of a greeting.

"Nope, and hello to you, too," Chad replied.

"How are you feeling?" Jason inquired as he walked up to his friend and laid a hand on his shoulder.
"I'm okay," Jared replied. "Hurts a bit but those crutches are gone as soon as I'm out of here. It's not that bad."

"Charlie has gone to find out about Jensen," Chad informed Jared which did nothing to ease his frown.

"Damn, if he knows nothing yet, I'm scared."

"He'll be fine, Jare," Chad tried to calm his friend. "They probably just have to make sure he's got all his marbles where they should be." Jared just glared at Chad and started hobbling towards the chairs.

"I'm sure he's concussed. Rolling in a car will do that. Is your head okay?" Jason asked when taking the seat next to Jared.

"Bit banged up, but yeah," Jared replied. "But Jensen bashed his head open and he was out cold. I wasn't."

"Look, a bleeding head wound looks scary enough, but sometimes it's better it's bleeding outside than inside," Jason said calmly.

"But Jase, it's the second time in a few weeks he's been knocked unconscious. I know he has a hard head, but something was very wrong when they sped off the way they did," Jared countered imploringly.

Jason looked at Chad who shrugged and nodded. Before he could continue to talk to Jared, however, Charlie appeared at the end of the hallway, making his way over to the trio.

"Jared," he greeted when he arrived, face impassive. "How are you?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to get used to me being around a bit longer. Not ready for office work yet. But I will have to stay off my foot a few days," Jared informed his superior. "Any news about Jensen?"

Charlie looked at Chad, then Jason, before settling his eyes on the man seated in front of him.

"Charlie?"

Charles Whitfield heard the fear in Jared's voice loud and clear.

"He's stable now, Jared. He'll be alright, but it was a rocky trail."

"What? How do you mean? Did he suffer any damage to his brain?" Jared paled at his own words and was glad he was sitting because his legs felt like pudding.

"His brain is without pathological findings, Doc Day said. But he lost a lot of blood from..."

Charlie couldn't finish because Jared's eyes got wide a saucers.

"Was he shot after all? You said there were no bullets missing!" Jared looked at Chad.

"There weren't," Chad replied a bit harsher than he intended.

"Jared," Charlie cut in. "He wasn't shot. A piece of broken glass embedded itself in his thigh and when they moved him it dislodged and nicked the artery next to it. They didn't notice at first because the bleed wasn't detected. They focused on his head injury. But when his blood pressure started to go they searched because the cut on his head wasn't enough to account for the low pressure. They fixed it, but he lost quite a bit of blood. So they're busy topping him off, but he'll have to stay in a day or
two to make sure there's no infection and that his head's fine. He...

"Can I see him?" Jared rasped.

"I don't think so for now. But we'll have a guard outside his door just in case there are more of JD's men out there to get him. Jared, we need that list, like, yesterday," Charlie's tone was serious.

*****

Jensen felt like he was falling through the clouds. An endless, infinite rush. He tried to grab onto the fluffy edges but it was like trying to grab the air. There was no purchase. Fear started crawling up his leg like a burn that was spreading relentlessly and his head was throbbing to a rhythmic beat.

Slowly the beat evolved into a disembodied voice calling him. The longer it called, the clearer his name sounded and the thinner the clouds became. A slight whiff of disinfectant made him scrunch his nose and he became aware of a soft hand caressing his arm.

"Jensen, honey, open your eyes?"

He frowned slightly. The voice was familiar but he couldn't put a face to it. Maybe if he did what the voice asked he'd see the face. Getting his eyelids to cooperate was another thing, however. After what seemed like ages of trying, he finally succeeded and was rewarded with a smiling face right in his line of vision.

"Mom?"

"Oh, Jensen. Yes, it's me. How are you feeling, hon? You had us all worried."

Jensen was confused. Why were they all worried? He desperately tried to clear the remaining fog in his head and looked around. His mother was sitting next to his bed, her hand holding his. By the door to his hospital room, there was a strange yet familiar face. Wait, hospital?

"What happened?"

"Oh no, don't you remember?" Donna sounded worried. Remember? The last thing Jensen remembered was leaving the court with Jared and getting into his car. His car! Suddenly the pictures of the events that unfolded rushed his head and he tried to sit up.

"Jensen, relax," his mother said soothingly, but only when the other person in the room stepped closer in case Donna needed assistance, Jensen managed to get a grip on himself. Kendrick - that was the other, familiar person.

"Where's Jared? Is he okay?" Jensen's question was directed at the officer.

"Jared's fine, Jensen. He just has a twisted ankle," Kendrick replied. "He's been asking about you. As has Charlie, I mean, Captain Whitfield. They are desperate for that list."

"List?" Jensen frowned and looked at his mother.

"The list the judge asked about, hon. The names?"

"Oh. Yes. I... don't know if I'm up for that right now," Jensen mumbled.
"Jensen, it would be important. The police think this road incident was no coincidence," Donna said softly.

Jensen swallowed and licked his parched lips. "Right. Well, get them in."

"Great," Kendrick smiled. "But first I'll have to bring in the doctors."

Fifteen minutes later Dr. Felicia Day and her colleague, Dr. Beaver, were happy with their patient and allowed the police to visit and question their charge. On Jensen's request, his mother gave them space, too. As soon as she'd left the room, Jared had taken over the abandoned seat next to Jensen's bed.

He had yet to say a word but his eyes had sought out Jensen's and were asking all the questions. Jensen smiled to put Jared at ease. Then he accepted a pen and writing block from Charlie and started jotting down names. It took him almost ten minutes until he was sure he hadn't missed one. Charlie accepted the list and let his eyes roam over it.

"Jensen, one more thing," he then said, pulling his phone from his pocket. "Do you know this person?" He handed the phone to Jensen who took a moment to check out the picture.

"Um, yeah. Name's Misha Collins. He's on the list. One of JD's quiet undercover men. You don't see much of him unless there's a problem. What happened to him?"

Charlie and Jared exchanged a look, which caused Jensen to frown. Charlie opened his mouth to speak but Jared shook his head. Then he spoke himself.

"Chad happened to him after he ran us off the road. Jensen, he was trying to kill us. Or at least you," Jared explained. "Luckily Chad was close enough to gun him down before he could pull the trigger on either of us."

Jensen felt stunned. For whatever reason, he'd never considered that JD would put a hit on him. The realization that he must have done just that, blew his mind. His head started to throb again and he was back in the rolling car. Everything was spinning faster and faster until it stopped.

"Jensen!"

He blinked and the inky black in front of his eyes disappeared. Another blink and his eyes focused on Jared's frantic face.

"'m okay, Jare," Jensen mumbled.

"No, Jay, you're not. Almost thought you were gonna check out completely on me. Kendrick was ready to get the nurse," Jared disagreed.

"Jensen, you're safe here. Collins is in custody and we're going to make sure everyone on the list will be, too. Kendrick will stand guard and I'm sure Jared won't leave anytime soon. Chad and Jason are waiting outside, so you see, you're really quite safe here," Charlie announced.

Jensen nodded. "Where's my mom?"

"I convinced her to go home," Jared explained. "Told her I'd take care of you."

Jensen's eyes widened slightly and Kendrick chuckled which in turn caused Jensen to blush ever so slightly. He looked at Jared who was smiling.
"When can I get out of here?"

Jared's smile faded somewhat. "Well, you have a concussion. The second in just a short amount of time. They wanna watch you the next 48 hours. And they need to watch that leg of yours, make sure there's no infection and that you don't pull the stitches."

"What? What's wrong with my leg?" Jensen pushed up on his elbows to look down, only to find he couldn't see anything for the duvet. Jared anticipated him trying to pull it off and stilled his hand with his.

"Leave it. I'll tell you. You almost checked out on us. I thought you'd just scrambled your eggs real good, but in the ambulance you nearly coded. There was a piece of glass stuck in your thigh, close to the main artery. It went undetected at first because the glass kinda sealed the wound and what little it had bled wasn't visible on your dark pants. It must have come loose on the way to the ambulance 'cuz you were bleeding like a stuck pig - or so they said. They only found it because of your blood pressure going haywire and they whirled you off leaving a cloud of dust."

"Do you have to make it sound so dramatic?" Jensen asked.

"It was dramatic," Jared replied. "Don't ever scare me like that again."
Jensen was tired of laying in the hospital bed. His head was still a bit sore but no nausea or dizziness was bothering him and the stitches in his leg were starting to itch. He knew they'd have to stay in a few more days, but he was kinda developing cabin fever.

Kendrick was doing his best to keep him company whenever Jared or his family weren't around, but his replacement, a fellow called Travis, was a bore and preferred to stay outside the door.

Right now Jensen was watching Kendrick practicing a magic trick for his nephew's birthday party. Time was trickling by way too slowly as he was waiting for his doctor to clear him for home. And he was missing Jared, but he knew it was the day the jury was due to decide JD's fate. He sighed.

"Sorry this isn't any more entertaining, but I only just started. Luckily I have two more weeks to perfect the trick," Kendrick apologized with a shrug and a grin.

"You'll get the hang, yet," Jensen replied with a slight grin. "Maybe you should try it in parts, you know? First, practice how to make the coin disappear without dropping it and then when that's working, you add the rest?"

Kendrick raised an eyebrow and pursed his lips. "Huh. Good idea. I'll give it a try."

Jensen watched his changed routine a few times before there was a knock on the door and in came Jared. Jensen's eyes lit up and Kendrick nodded at Jared in greeting.

"Hi Jare," Jensen said cheerfully. His day had just become a lot less of a drag.

"Hey, man," Jared replied, smiling toothily. He seemed to be in a great mood. "How are you today?"

"Ready to split," Jensen fake growled impatiently. "You got my release papers?"

"Hi Jared," Kendrick chimed in. "You planning on staying a bit? Cos I need to take care of..."

"Geez, Keni, TMI!" Jared snorted and then gestured to the door. "You're dismissed, I'll be here. Jay'll be in safe hands."

When Kendrick had closed the door behind him, Jared went to sit next to Jensen on the edge of the bed. Jensen had his good leg hanging over the edge and was sitting up. His back didn't really enjoy prolonged laying anymore.

"Again. How are you?" Jared repeated his earlier question.

"Honestly, I feel fine save for my back and ass feeling numb," Jensen replied, drawing a chuckle from his friend.

"Well, I got some good news for you," Jared sounded happy and Jensen's eyes widened in anticipation. "Jury got a verdict for JD. They found him guilty on all charges. Including of kidnapping you, and the attempted hit. He'll have to live to be 168 years old before he'd be eligible for parole."

"Wow," Jensen exhaled. Then it was quiet for a few moments before he continued. "That's... incredible, I mean..."

"Yeah, I know what you mean, Jay. I gotta say I'm relieved, though. And even more so because
Charlie told me they managed to arrest everyone on your list they didn't yet have behind bars."

Jensen just stared at Jared, jaw slack. It was a lot to process and as liberated as he felt, there was this niggling uncertainty in his mind about his own trial. Which, was scheduled for the following day.

"Jare," he finally started but didn't know how to finish. He just locked eyes with his friend and no words were needed. After what felt like an eternity, Jared leaned in and softly brushed his lips against Jensen's.

For a moment, Jensen was frozen, but then he came alive and kissed Jared back. Letting the older man back him up into the cushion, Jensen brought his hand up to Jared's head to take control over the moment. He couldn't say how long they'd been kissing when the sound of someone clearing his throat pulled both of them back to reality.

"Do I get a turn?"

Jensen looked over Jared's shoulder to see Kendrick standing behind them, an unreadable expression on his face. Jared had turned as well and Jensen had to give him credit for not letting go of him like he'd been burned.

"Ummm, it's not...," Jared started, but Kendrick couldn't hold his poker face and broke into a grin.

"Relax, Jared. One, I'm happily married to my ex-girlfriend, and two, I couldn't give a damn about who you're exchanging germs with. But yeah, I totally get it. It's cool."

Jared stared at the other man in utter confusion. A moment later soft laughter from Jensen startled him out of his staring.

"So... you broke up with her to marry her?" Jensen chortled excitedly.

"Something like that," Kendrick grinned and winked.

A resolute knock redirected everyone's attention to the door which opened to reveal Dr. Beaver marching in with a nurse in tow.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," he greeted. "Mr. Ackles? I would like to check your stitches before handing over the release papers. Dr. Day stopped by earlier to check on you?"

"She did," Jensen nodded.

"Right. She already signed the papers, so if everyone else here would be so kind as to wait outside...?"

Jared and Kendrick took the hint and made to leave the doc alone with his patient.

"I'll wait outside, Jay," Jared smiled back at Jensen before closing the door behind him.

*****

Finally back at Jared's apartment, Jensen was glad to be able to hog the couch and give his leg a rest. He'd had no idea walking with a stitched up thigh could be such an effort. Jared had stowed his crutches in a corner as soon as they'd entered the premises and hobbled around the kitchen only to
emerge with two glasses of soda a moment later. Sitting down next to Jensen he handed over one
glass.

"I think we've earned a little sugary treat," he smiled and took a sip. Jensen just watched him enjoy
the cold liquid. When Jared noticed he was being watched his eyes widened. "What?"

Jensen chuckled. "Nothing. You're a dork."

Jared grinned. "I know you mean that in a good way."

"The best," Jensen smirked and winked. Then he tasted his drink as well and sighed in contentment.

"Do you think Kendrick will tell what he saw?" Jared asked after a moment of silently enjoying each
other's company.

"Um, why should he? I mean, I don't think so. But even if, I don't think it matters really," Jensen
replied.

"Hm, maybe you're right. Then I can continue this," Jared grinned wickedly as he put down his own
glass on the coffee table and relieved Jensen of his.

Jensen watched him like a hawk and bit his lip to stop himself from chuckling. Jared caught that
motion and hungrily stared at the younger man.

"You know, when you do that it makes me wanna do things," he growled softly.

"Oh?" Jensen cocked his eyebrow. "Like what?"

Instead of a reply, Jared leaned in and captured Jensen's soft lips between his. He nibbled briefly and
immediately pounced when Jensen moaned softly and parted his lips. As he devoured Jensen's
mouth, his hand slowly pushed under the other man's t-shirt to feel the heated skin.

Not pretending to be shy, Jensen reacted and worked his own hand around to cup Jared's ass and
pull him closer. Before he knew it, Jared popped the button of Jensen's jeans and slid his hand in
under the boxer briefs to palm Jensen's semi-hard dick with the intent to stroke it to full hardness.

Jensen bucked his hips against Jared's hand, giving his consent.

"Holy smokes," a familiar voice came from the hallway and both Jensen and Jared froze. "Now I
gotta bleach my eyes."

Jared groaned in frustration and withdrew from Jensen to turn and face the intruder.

"Dammit, Chad, what are you doing here?"

"We wanted to make sure you had food in the fridge, so we went shopping," Chad explained and
stepped aside to reveal Jason, Chris, and Mike, all loaded with grocery bags and apparently shell-
shocked. "Borrowed the spare key from your mother. But I had no idea we'd be 'treated' to you
exploring the other side of the fence."

Despite his words, Chad didn't seem angry. Jared was way too perplexed to feel embarrassed but
Jensen was red in his face as he tried to inconspicuously redo his jeans button. Chad felt in a
generous mood and decided not to comment on it.

"So.... you two hungry for food or just for each other?"

"Depends on who will cook," Jared tried to sound nonchalant.
"Actually," Chris chimed up as he squeezed past Chad to drop his grocery bag in the kitchen, "I am cooking. Unless neither of you is interested in spicy chicken wings and homemade fries."

Jensen swallowed as his mouth started to salivate at the prospect of something other than hospital food but he didn't yet trust himself to speak. Chad might have helped along his case in the long run, but he wasn't sure yet whether he'd passed the test with Jared's colleagues at all. He felt more nervous now than when he was testifying and just couldn't stop his leg from bouncing.

"Sounds delicious," Jared declared and rested his hand on Jensen's knee to still the restless movements. One look at his friend told him Jensen was working on controlling his panic.

"You know it'll be delicious when Chris cooks," Mike confirmed as he and Jason carried the rest of the bags inside. He continued to stock up Jared's fridge and help Chris as Jason and Chad found themselves some space in Jared's living room.

"Jensen," Jared spoke softly to his friend, trying to be a calming influence. "Relax. You're fine. We're fine. Okay?"

Jensen took a deep breath and nodded. "Yeah, okay." He managed a tiny smile.

"You do know we don't bite," Chad looked at Jensen.

"Could have fooled me," Jensen replied with an impish grin. "What happened to not liking me?"

"Don't listen to Chad," Jason cut in. "He's a grumpy old man and very protective over his team. You passed his test, though."

"Oh?"

"Yep. You did hear what he said in court?" Jason raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah, sure. Thanks, I guess," Jensen smile was genuine now but he was still feeling somewhat self-conscious about the fact that Jared hadn't removed his hand from his knee, yet, despite the fact that the bouncing had subsided.

"So, Jared missed the Cowboy's game the other day. I don't know how he survived that." Chad grinned at Jared sticking his tongue out at him and then turned to Jensen. "Hm, and what about you? Cowboys or Indians?"

"Um... Cowboys of course," Jensen shot back. "I'm a Texas boy just like y'all."

"Good boy," Chad laughed along with Jason and Jared and they settled into some light conversation while waiting for some mean chicken wings.

*****

"Keni?"

Charles Whitfield called out when he saw the other man walking down the hallway a few steps ahead of him. Kendrick cringed at the unwanted nickname but stopped and turned.

"Captain?"
"Thanks for waiting up. Do you have a moment?"

"Yeah, certainly," Kendrick replied.

"Great. My office is right over there." Charlie walked ahead and proceeded to unlock the door to invite Kendrick in. "Thanks. I just wanted to ask your opinion on how Mr. Ackles is taking the whole thing. You've witnessed moments after the attempted hit that we didn't."

Kendrick took a seat in the chair opposite Charlie and thought back. "Right. I think it came as a shock to him. You know, to hear there was an attempt on his life and then the memories coming back to him. I can imagine it must all be a big mess inside for Jensen. Within a few weeks everything in his life has turned topsy-turvy and I mean, finding out you've been kidnapped as a kid can't be a walk in the park for anyone."

"True," Charlie nodded. "I'm just trying to figure out if he was aware JD might put a target on his back or did he think that man would never harm his little precious boy?"

"Hm," Kendrick muttered. "I'm just going on my observations, but I don't think he was surprised that someone might run them off. What shook him was the name of the perp and the realization that Collins was ready to put a bullet in him."

Charlie pulled a face as he mulled over the sergeant's thoughts. Then he scratched his head.

"You know, I just can't really get into Jensen's head. He was a good kid. Then he gets kidnapped and ends up getting indoctrinated by JD. He struggles with that, but he learned to be a good son and do what your parent asks you. Right?"

Charlie looked at Kendrick, who nodded, a curious expression on his face.

"Okay, but he's not stupid. He has common sense and knows right from wrong. Why does he still do what JD does? He has to know it's against the law."

"Maybe he was scared of JD or what that man would do to him if he didn't comply?" Kendrick mused.

"I don't know, Keni. He never struck me as being scared. I know Jason and Chad said in the original operation when Jack was taking over the transaction, he seemed very confident."

Both men sat in silence, each following a train of thought to come up with an explanation.

"Um, if it's alright, Captain, I'd like to ask my friend Steve for advice. He studies psychology with an emphasis on criminal psychology and victim behavior. I remember he once told me something about a coping mechanism that I think could fit Jensen's profile but I'm not sure."

"You mean like Stockholm Syndrome?" Charlie's eyes were wide.

"Not really. With Stockholm's, the victims know they're a victim but they sympathize with the perp. Jensen - or maybe, in this case, Jack - he had forgotten he was the victim until Jared came along. So him going against his own better judgment about what's right and what's wrong might have been an unconscious way to make sure he wouldn't be JD's victim again. You know what I mean?"

"I guess I do," Charlie replied.

"Those flashbacks that Jensen is experiencing now could be part of that all. Because I agree with you. Jensen is an intelligent, polite and well educated young man and him strolling on the wrong side
"Right," Charlie nodded. "Okay, try to find out by your friend about that phenomenon and get back to me. If you can, tonight still. I might need it tomorrow."

"Oh? You think despite the deal Judge Ferris made he might need more leverage to stay out of jail?"

"No, I don't doubt he'll go free. Only real question is how long he'll be on probation. No, I want to know because I'm sure Jensen will be part of Jared's life one way or another. And since Jared is on my team, he'll be part of our lives, too. I just want to figure out how he ticks so I know what to expect," Charlie explained.

"Gotcha," Kendrick smiled and then got up to leave.

*****

With a sigh of relief, Jared closed the door behind Jason and his friends after they'd still chatted a while following dinner. He knew they were just looking out for him, but he had hoped to have some alone time with Jensen. Tomorrow would turn out to be a fateful day when the judge would present the jury in Jensen's case about the facts and all.

As things were, Jared thought there were enough things going in Jensen's favor but one never knew how the jury would perceive things and decide. If push came to shove, Jensen might end up having to serve time and Jared really hated that thought. He knew Judge Ferris had practically guaranteed Jensen probation, but it was still the jury who made the decision.

He returned to the living room where Jensen had made himself comfortable on the couch and was flicking through the channels. Jared grinned at that innocent action and sat next to him.

Jensen just lowered the volume on the TV and put the remote down. Then he looked at Jared, who was just staring at him.

"Um, Jare? Take a pic, will ya?" Jensen jested.

"Oh, sorry," Jared muttered. "I... I was just thinking about tomorrow and what might happen."

"You're afraid it won't go as we hope?" Jensen frowned.

"No. Maybe... one never knows. But yeah, I'm scared I won't see you for a while. And I hate that thought. I really do. It's been such an up and down of emotions with the operation going haywire... when I saw you. I really thought you might not remember me. You were so adamant about being Jack."

"I was just doing what I felt at the time and what was expected of me," Jensen replied but Jared didn't seem to hear him.

"And Ben? He was a nasty piece of work. How you put up with his attitude without losing your temper I will never understand. Damn, when he knocked you out with the bat, I thought you were..."

Whatever else Jared was about to say was cut off by Jensen sealing his lips over Jared's. Jared froze for a second and then moved his lips against Jensen's as the sensation bypassed his running-ten-
miles-an-hour brain. When they had to come up for air, Jensen's hand sought out Jared's crotch, fondling the rapidly growing erection.

"Jay," Jared panted. "What are the odds we'll be walked in on for the third time today?"

"Zero," Jensen mumbled between soft kisses to the corner of Jared's mouth. "Spare keys are on the table. Nobody's gonna stop us. And I don't wanna stop at all." He captured Jared's lips between his once more and kissed him urgently. Jared moaned as his body agreed with Jensen and he bucked his hips against the other man's hand as he kissed him back.

"What happened to waiting?" Jared breathed against Jensen's neck when he started kissing his way along Jared's throat.

"Don't wanna wait," Jensen muttered and pressed his rock hard erection against Jared's hip. "Wanna feel all of you, Jare."

"Oh damn," Jared groaned. "Me too."

He could feel Jensen smile against his neck and almost yelped when the button of his jeans was opened and Jensen's fingers worked their way into his boxers to cup his balls.

Jensen was half straddling Jared on the couch, mouth licking and sucking and kissing all over the exposed skin on Jared's neck as his fingers tugged on the white-hot cock, thumb spreading a droplet of precum over the head. He worked his hands further down to fondle the balls again and 'accidentally' let his precum slick index finger breech the barrier of Jared's hole.

"Fuck," Jared groaned and bucked his hips, causing Jensen's finger to slide in a bit deeper.

"Would love to," Jensen chuckled, nibbling Jared's earlobe. He shifted slightly and then grunted in pain.

"Jay? What's wrong?"

Jared tried to sit up straight to look at Jensen.

"Leg hurts. The stitches are pulling when I use the muscles too much. Any chance we can relocate this to your bed?"

"You sure we should be doing this at all? You're still hurt." It wasn't hard to hear the concern in Jared's voice but Jensen had other ideas.

"Told you I don't wanna wait, babe," he growled, pulling Jared to his feet and leading the way to the bedroom without letting go of Jared's hand. With a quick motion, Jensen traded their positions so Jared was in front of him and gently pushed him down to sit on the mattress.

Jared's arms came around Jensen's waist and he pulled the younger man in so his crotch was pressing against his chest, hard cock easily perceptible. He made short work of buttons and zippers and carefully pushed the denim along with the cotton boxer briefs down over the perfect globes of Jensen's butt.

Erection freed, Jensen's shaft was poking against Jared's throat and Jared opened his mouth to lock over the smooth head. Jensen groaned loudly. Encouraged by that reaction, Jared took the whole head into his mouth, sucking and nibbling. His hands pushed up as much of Jensen's t-shirt as he could, trying to free more skin. Getting the hint, Jensen quickly got rid of his shirt and then pulled Jared's up over his head. With an audible plop, he let go of Jensen's cock so the fabric could be
thrown aside.

"You got some lube?" Jensen gasped, mind still reeling from the sensation of Jared's hot, velvet mouth on his dick.

"Drawer," Jared nodded and turned to crawl up and reach to his bedside cabinet to retrieve the desired item. As he did so, he shimmied down his jeans as well, knowing Jensen's eyes would be fixed on his ass.

When Jared returned to his spot at the edge of the bed, Jensen had carefully discarded his jeans as well, now naked but for the bandage on his thigh. Jared looked down at it for a moment.

"You sure you'll be okay? I don't want to have to explain in the hospital how we managed to pull your stitches."

"I think if I keep standing up it should be fine. Not that much strain on the muscles then. Now shut up and come closer, Jare," Jensen ordered, biting his lips. He took the lube bottle from Jared's fingers and coated his own with a generous amount.

"Pull up your legs, handsome."

Jared complied and Jensen carefully worked two fingers first around his rim, then slowly breaching inside with every other stroke, until he was satisfied the other man's hole was slick enough. With the remainder of the cool gel on his fingers, Jensen quickly slicked up his throbbing shaft.

Jared was looking at Jensen towering over him, arousal so obvious on him, visible from head to toe. His green eyes were almost black with desire, the lips swollen and spit shiny. The pulse point in his neck was fluttering rapidly and Jensen's dick was sporting a droplet of precum. Jared licked his own lips and moaned as the sight made his own cock dribble.

"Condom?" Jensen asked, voice trembling as he worked two fingers around and into Jared to open him up.

"No," Jared replied. "Wanna feel you, Jay."

A third finger joined in and Jensen slowly pushed deeper, trying to feel out Jared's hot spot. When he lightly flicked over it, Jared moaned and closed his eyes.

"Shit, Jare, turn over. If I look at your face I'll cum as soon as I stick it in," Jensen's voice trembled as he spoke. He was so close already just from the prospect of being inside Jared, soon, he really didn't want to risk embarrassing himself completely.

Jared chuckled briefly and then complied, pushing up on his arms as he turned. Immediately Jensen's hands roamed over his ass, feeling, caressing, mapping out his skin. For a moment, Jared reached down to squeeze his own cock, causing some precum to drip down onto the sheets.

"Doubt I'll last long once your in, Jay. I don't care, though. Bet we'll have many more opportunities to test our stamina. Just wanna feel now, Jay. Feel you inside."

Jensen growled at the rasped confession and gripped his cock to line it up with Jared's puckered hole. Slowly he increased the pressure to work the head in.

"Feel okay?" he panted, desperately trying to hold back.

Jensen gripped Jared's pelvis tight and complied, pushing in until he was flush with Jared's ass. He gave them both a moment to adjust to the tightness, eyes closed and lips parted as he willed himself to wait. But when Jared slightly rocked back against him, all self-restraint evaporated. With a keening grunt, Jensen started pounding into the hot, lube slick tunnel, vaguely trying to angle his thrusts to make sure he hit Jared's prostate.

Jared welcomed the rather rough onslaught, relishing in the power of Jensen's thrusts. His dick was aching more with each poke on his hot spot and soon Jared was a moaning mess. He tried concentrating on feeling Jensen's balls slapping against his butt quickly realized it did nothing to stave off his climax.

"Jen...sen, I'm... gonna... ah, fuck... 'm cumming!"

Jared felt his balls draw up tight and throb and with a shout he ejaculated thick ropes of cum onto the sheets beneath him. Jensen's thrusts became sloppy, he was panting loudly and then his hips stuttered and he gave one final thrust before his cock exploded inside of Jared's tight tunnel. Jensen groaned all the way through his orgasm and finally collapsed on Jared's back.

After a second Jensen slid off to the side and pulled Jared down with him as his softening cock slipped out. He pulled the taller man close, slinging his arm possessively over Jared's defined abs.

"Love you," Jensen mumbled, pulse still racing, totally blissed out. Jared smiled at the soft words and settled his hand over Jensen's on his belly.

"You, too."
Chapter 19

JD Morgan was lying stretched out on his cot in his cell, staring at the fluorescent tube that illuminated his cell with an unnatural light. His lawyer, DJ Qualls, had let him know that the hit attempt on Jack by Mr. Collins had failed.

"Hit?" JD had called. "I didn't order a hit! It was supposed to be a scare!"

Qualls had shrugged and told him that his former hostage and another police officer had made it clear that Collins had pulled a gun on Jack after running them off in a ditch.

"Did Jack also say that?"

"From what I heard, Jack was out cold," Qualls had replied.

"Out cold? From being run into a ditch?" JD couldn't believe that. Qualls had shrugged once more.

"Car flipped."

JD blinked as he remembered the faint flutter of fear those words evoked. A car flipping was what had cost him his wife. His only consolation was the fact that Jack had made the list, after all, meaning he couldn't be damaged too badly.

At the moment when JD had realized his bubble regarding Jack had burst, he'd been ready to get rid of him. But when Ben had gunned Jack down - even if he hadn't been aiming for Jack in the first place - he'd known that no matter what happened, he would never want to see him dead.

Qualls had pointed out that Misha had been shot but not killed so JD was hoping he'd get a chance to find out just what Misha got wrong when he'd said he'd wanted Jack scared off. What bothered JD to some extent was the fact that Jack must be thinking he wanted him dead. JD felt the urge to clear that up and would ask the guard for pen and paper in the morning.

*****

Samantha Ferris was on her way to court for the trial of Jensen Ackles. She'd met the young man a few days prior in another trial and of course, had informed herself about his background story. All in all, she had come to the conclusion that they could 'save' the boy, but prison wasn't the way to go about it. He had met her deal about making a list and she hoped the jury would see things her way.

Hastened footsteps behind her made her turn to look over her shoulder and she noticed the scrawny lawyer JD Morgan had in his employ approaching her. When he saw her look at him he waved and jogged the next steps to catch up to her.

"Mr. Qualls? What's heating your shoes?" she asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Morning, Judge Ferris," DJ Qualls panted and fumbled with his coat's pocket to produce an envelope. "My client, Mr. Morgan, asked me to hand this over to his son, um... I mean, Mr. Ackles. It's unsealed, so maybe you would wanna check to see if it can be delivered. Um, Mr. Morgan, well, it seemed to be quite important to him."
Samantha took the envelope and studied it while listening to Quall's words. When he had finished, she stayed quiet for a few moments before replying.

"Mr. Qualls, you are aware this is highly unusual. But given the circumstances, you can tell Mr. Morgan that I will consider passing on his letter depending on content if and when I see fit. That's all I can say for now. I might not pass it on at all if I consider the content unsuitable. Have a good day."

With that she resumed her to the chambers to prepare for her day of work. She closed the door behind her and put down her bag as well as the letter. Then she went to change into her robe and sat at her desk, grabbing the files that were the unusual case of Jensen Ackles. She jotted down something on an orange post-it and smiled.

Her eyes fell on the envelope she'd just received and she stretched out her hand to pick it up. After inspecting it briefly she pulled open the flap and extracted the folded paper. Reading slowly, the judge's eyes widened slightly and - after re-reading at least twice more - Samantha Ferris decided to hold back the note until she saw fit.

*****

Jensen was sitting next to Richard Speight, rubbing his sweaty palms over his dress pants clad thighs as he watched the jury retreat to the jury room. He knew his fate was mostly in their hands now and the thought of what it would mean to his parents to find their son after seventeen years only to see him go to jail was killing him.

Both of his parents were sitting in the audience, as well as his siblings and Jared with his parents. Jensen hadn't turned around but he was sure he'd heard Chad's and Jason's voices as well and he'd actually seen the guard he'd had at the hospital, Kendrick.

Jensen was well aware that despite the quite unusual circumstances regarding himself, he had been part of Jared's kidnapping in the wake of an illegal deal. The jury didn't really have a choice but to find him guilty. The only charge he knew he wasn't guilty of was using a weapon on anyone.

Somehow the police had gotten hold of his red Balisong knife. Jensen had always carried it in his pocket and he knew he'd taken it out once when guarding Jared, back when he was Jack and Jensen was buried in the darkest depths of his consciousness. But he hadn't used it, not even for a threat. He had just put it on display as a way to let Jared know he was armed.

Jared had piped up and declared that he knew about the knife but the reason they found it bloodied under the cot of his prison was that he'd pulled it from Jensen's pocket after Ben had knocked him out and used it in self-defense by cutting Ben. Naturally, Jensen had no recollection of this but he hoped the jury would believe Jared's words.

"While the jury is in deliberation, court is dismissed. Parties will be summoned once the jury has made their verdict," Judge Ferris announced and the murmuring in the courtroom rose up as people began discussing the possibilities and heading towards the exits to stretch their legs.

"Mr. Speight? I would like you and your client to come up to my desk, please," Ferris declared a bit more softly when Speight was about to release Jensen into the care of Jared. The lawyer exchanged a glance with his client and then both walked up to meet the judge's request.

The room was empty now but for the bailiff and Jensen's family near a door as well as Jared and a
few friends.

"Mr. Ackles," she started, making eye contact with the young man. "Mr. Morgan's lawyer, Mr. Qualls, delivered a note from his client, addressed to you. I have decided since everything in your case now has been said and your verdict is being deliberated, that you should be allowed to have it if that's what you'd want. You don't have to accept the note. But it's your choice now."

Jensen eyed the envelope Judge Ferris had picked up and then looked at his lawyer.

"Up to you, Mr. Ackles," Richard Speight smiled.

Jensen looked at Jared, whose gaze was a question and reassurance at the same time.

"There's nothing bad in there, right?" Jensen asked, uncertain if he should accept the message.

"No. Mr. Morgan is somehow trying to explain himself," Ferris replied.

"Alright," Jensen nodded, determined now. "Then I'll accept it."

Taking the proffered envelope, Jensen walked towards Jared but paused about halfway to pluck the note from it. He unfolded it and started to read.

Jared heard Chad, Jason, and Chris chatting close by and looked at them. He was glad they were all here today, giving moral support of sorts. Mike was headed towards the door, no doubt looking to hit the restrooms. Jared grinned. That boy had a bladder the size of an ant.

Footsteps from behind him made Jared turn, expecting Jensen to appear next to him. But instead, he saw Charlie and Kendrick walking up. He nodded in greeting and was about to talk when his gaze fell past Kendrick on Jensen and he froze.

Jensen was still standing at the same spot he'd paused to read, but he was trembling. He was trembling bad enough for Jared to see him shake from a good few yards away. His eyes were locked on the rustling piece of paper but even from the distance Jared knew he wasn't seeing it.

"Jensen?" Jared was moving and Kendrick had just reacted quickly enough to avoid being shoulder barged by the worried man.

When Jared reached his friend he called his name again, but he wasn't sure if Jensen had heard him. All the remaining people in the courtroom, Jensen's family and Jared's friends, definitely had because instantly it was quiet as everyone turned to look at what was happening.

Jared reached out to put his hand on Jensen's shoulder. The moment he made contact, Jensen jumped back and lifted his head, green eyes looking at Jared without seeing him.

"You said you could never hurt me," Jensen whispered and Jared frowned.

"Jensen?"

"Forget that name, Jack! There is no more Jensen! Get it in that thick skull of yours!"

JD's face was furious as he shouted at the little boy. He'd hoped Jack had finally learned who he was and then again that name popped up in the boy's dreams.

"But...," the boy started with quivering lips and JD grabbed him by the hem of his shirt.

"No but, Jack. You know I would never hurt you but you 'really' have to learn that lesson. There. Is.
No. Jensen!

He pulled the stumbling six-year-old behind him until they reached the storage room. There were no windows and to make sure the boy finally took him seriously about this, JD decided to leave the lights off. It was an old house with old-fashioned 'trimmings' and the light switch was a string hanging from the light fitting in the ceiling. A string that was quite short and that Jack could never reach.

"P...please, don't lock me up, Sir," Jack sobbed. "I'll remember, I promise."

"You said that the last ten times already, Jack. You have to learn it. No shut up already and accept your punishment before I get really angry." JD uncurled the small hands that were holding on to his big one in a desperate plea to forego his punishment. JD didn't believe in being lenient anymore. Being lenient had cost him too much already.

"Stay there. One hour. Make a sound and the time will double. You have to learn. Understand, Jack?"

Jack sniffled and nodded minutely. Then the lights were switched off and the door closed. Almost all the way. A faint thin line remained for a brief moment.

"Not the dark, please," Jack pleaded. "It's scary, pleeease."

JD just looked at him, only a silhouette against the light from outside for Jack. He shook his head.

"I could never hurt you, Jack."

Then it was pitch black and the key being turned was the loudest noise Jack ever heard.

"Dammit, Jensen, snap out of it!"

Jared's frantic voice penetrated the fog in Jensen's brain and his eyes opened wide as he tried to make the transit between memory and reality. Then a hand touched his chest and Jensen reacted. He was not going to let JD drag him into that dark chamber again. Jensen shoved the hand away with all he had and swung his arms until he connected with something solid.

A pained grunt cleared the rest of the fog in Jensen's brain and reality crashed back on him. He saw Jared clutching his shoulder and immediately realized it was his doing. And then he felt his feet moving, headed for the exit. Green eyes were brimming with tears so he could hardly see but his feet moved anyway. His name reverberated like an echo in his skull, or was someone calling him?

Suddenly he was engulfed by two strong arms, pulling him close, holding him tight, keeping him grounded and a familiar voice was talking to him. Jensen had no idea what was being said but he knew it wasn't Jared. He'd hurt Jared. Oh shit, he'd really done it, now.

"It's okay, Jensen. You're okay. You're safe. No-one will hurt you. No-one will lock you up. And no-one will make it dark. You're okay. That's it. Now, take a deep breath and get those tears out of your eyes, alright?"

Jensen followed the voice and when his eyes were able to focus again he recognized Chad. Jared's friend Chad, who thought he was trying to manipulate Jared. Jared's friend Chad, who had shot a man to save his life.

"I fucked it up, didn't I?"
"No, you didn't," Chad replied, arms still firmly wrapped around Jensen's shoulder.

"I didn't?"

"No, you didn't," Jared's voice confirmed from behind Jensen. Jensen turned his head as much as he could in Chad's grip and Chad, catching the hint, let him go.

"I'm sorry, Jare," Jensen mumbled.

"What for? You did nothing wrong?" Jared raised an eyebrow.

"I hurt you," Jensen disagreed and nodded at where Jared was still rubbing his shoulder. Jared stilled and looked at his shoulder briefly before looking at Jensen.

"Not your fault. You panicked. I shouldn't have tried to touch you while you were still caught up in it," Jared corrected. "You okay now?"

Jensen swallowed and nodded, looking around and noticing the concerned glances of his family.

"Can we get out of here? I need a drink of water."

"Sure thing," Jared replied with a smile and lead the way.

*****

Samantha Ferris had been busy collecting her items and straightening out the files on her desk after handing the letter over to the addressee. She didn't expect the jury to take too long to come to a verdict. The problem was, that while Jensen's involvement in the events in question was undeniable, the circumstances and aftermath were not really textbook and his behavior after being released on bail had been impeccable. That young man didn't give the judge the impression of someone who's on the look-out for trouble.

There was a low murmur filling the emptying courtroom, some chatter from lingering people and Judge Ferris had a slight smile around her lips when she picked up some words that told her, her impression of Jensen Ackles was mirrored by the audience.

As she was about to step through the door into her chamber, Jensen's name being called with slight trepidation made her stop and turn around to find out what was happening.

The young man in question was standing, seemingly frozen to the spot but trembling, in the middle of the room. One of his friends, Jared Padalecki, as she recognized quickly, walked up to him, again calling his name. But he got no reaction.

Only when Jared touched his hand to Jensen's shoulder, the younger man reacted and jumped back. He muttered something that Samantha almost didn't pick up but when she realized what he'd said, she held her breath.

'You said you could never hurt me.'

She was pretty sure she'd read these words or similar in JD Morgan's letter. Closing her eyes briefly to help recall the letter, she nodded to herself. JD had used the same words to close his letter to Jack... or rather, Jensen.
Opening her eyes again, the judge saw that Jensen was in dire distress. Jared's worried calls and pleas to snap out of it didn't seem to get through to him. Ferris had seen this kind of reaction with PTSD patients.

Jensen was talking but not in response to Jared but the scene that must be unfolding in his mind's eye. Samantha heard word bits, don't lock me up, and, not dark, please, coming from Jensen who sounded like a terrified child.

Jared got more forceful and ordered Jensen to snap out of it once more. It seemed to work but Jensen was still scared. Samantha saw him flail about and connect with his friend, which seemed to gather his senses. And then he ran.

Just as Samantha was about to call out to the bailiff at the door to stop him, another officer and friend of Jared's got hold of Jensen and somehow managed to calm him down. At that moment, Judge Ferris was absolutely certain that jail time would be a certain way to kill the boy's sanity.

*****

Two hours later, Samantha Ferris dismissed the jury after thanking them for their verdict. She announced the punishment for Jensen Ackles would be read the next day and let him go home in the charge of Jared Padalecki.

As she had expected, the jury had found the young man guilty in the charges of accessory to solicitation of deadly weapons as well as of the kidnapping of a police officer. The third charge, possession and use of a deadly weapon, had been ruled as not guilty. Yes, they'd found his short blade knife, so possession of it, he had. But there had been no evidence that he had used it or had attempted to use it.

At any rate, Samantha Ferris already knew how she'd formulate the punishment, but she wanted a little time to think it all through, especially since she had observed first hand what several witnesses had already stated - that Jensen Ackles had been a victim himself.

He might not have been aware of it anymore when the events that lead to his charges had taken place, but in the wake of it all and upon discovering who he was and what had happened, his subconscious worked hard to remind him what he'd been through. And it proved that he had been manipulated and more or less brainwashed as a young child by the man who had tried to use him to replace his son, his heir.

Samantha had been pleased to see a tiny smile on the young man's face as he left the courtroom along with his family and friends. And she knew it wasn't just about saving the youngster from jail time but also about helping him heal and become a valuable member of society. Provided with the right help, Ferris was certain that Jensen Ackles would be more than able to redeem himself.
Jensen and Jared sat on the porch of the Ackles' house, letting the food settle while enjoying the warm, clear evening turning into night. Donna had invited them over for dinner just for the sake of it. Everyone knew it was just in case her son had to serve an undetermined length of time even without her saying it.

Jensen had enjoyed the roast and the light conversation that had been going on. But he couldn't help noticing that nobody breached the topic of the trial. They'd all been present, even his little sister, but everybody had avoided the proverbial elephant in the room.

After dessert, Jared had ushered Jensen outside and here they were, dangling their legs from the edge like little kids, enjoying the quiet. There was just something nice about being able to share a comfortable silence with someone that said so much more than words ever could. They didn't get to enjoy their peace for long, however, as approaching footsteps soon disclosed.

Jared looked up and saw Josh walking over to them. He had a pensive look on his face like something was bothering him.

"Hey," Jared greeted, which made Jensen look up. Josh smiled at Jared and then looked at his brother.

"Hey," he returned the greeting.

"Wanna sit here with us, Josh?" Jensen offered with a smile.

"Love to," Josh replied and then looked at Jared. "Any way I can have a few words with my brother alone? I mean, it's not that I want to get rid of you..."

"I know, I get it. I'll see if I can get myself some leftover dessert," Jared replied and patted Jensen's leg as a quick goodbye as he got up. "Just holler when y'all feel like company."

Jensen watched Jared disappear through the front and then patted the empty space next to him.

"C'mon, bro, plant your rear end next to mine."

Josh chuckled and then did as asked. They sat like that for a moment, simply enjoying the closeness. Then Josh took a deep breath and started to speak.

"Do you remember us sitting like this when we were kids, Butch?"

"Butch?" Jensen frowned deeply.

"Aw, Jensen, don't tell me you forgot Butch Cassidy?" Josh sounded exasperated.

"I know who he is, Josh. I'm not demented. Everybody knows him. But why are you calling me Butch?" Jensen was feeling a bit weirded out but not really offended.

"Well, we played a lot of wild, wild west with Jeff and Jared. Sometimes we'd even allow Megan in. Anyways, whatever we played, nobody could really catch you. And then we watched the movie with Paul Newman and Robert Redford and Jeff said you were just like Butch. So... it kinda stuck."
No amount of Batman worship on your side could change that,” Josh explained.

Jensen nodded. He’d watched the movie a few times. "Hey, if I was Butch, who was Sundance?"

Josh chuckled. "Jared of course."

"Figures,” Jensen muttered and grinned. He wondered if Jared remembered. "Oh, and no, I don’t really remember us sitting here like that. At least not yet. Sorry."

Josh nodded like he’d expected that. "That's okay. If you ever want to hear what all we were up to, you have but to ask."

"Oh, I’m sure I will. Now... what did you want to talk about that made you send Jared off? I’m guessing it's not my Butch days." Jensen asked, looking up.

"Yeah," Josh sobered. "Um, I wanted to ask you about what happened earlier, you know, in court, when you read that letter. I mean, I just noticed when Jared was getting to you, but it seemed like you were in a totally different universe. And I got the feeling it wasn't like Disney Land."

Jensen kept quiet for a few heartbeats. Then he took a deep breath and swallowed noisily.

"Different universe sums it up nicely somehow," he started. "Some words in that letter triggered a flashback. A pretty strong one at that. It... I was a kid again... and... scared. Like being in a virtual reality memory. Only it was more like a nightmare."

"Looked like it alright. Do you know what brings that on? Is there always a trigger of sorts?" Josh sounded as much worried as intrigued.

"So far, yeah. Doc called it PTSD but for me, it feels more like my brain is trying to give me back my memories. Ya know, stuff that I forced myself to forget because it would always end badly. Only... it brings these horrible memories up first. And they almost feel more real than the first time around."

"No good memories in there?" Josh asked.

"Not so far, no," Jensen denied. "I wish they'd stop, though. I don't know what I'm doing when they hit. I'm just scared I'll hurt people when I'm trapped in those memories."

Once more it was quiet but for the rustling of the leaves in the wind and the chirping of a lost cricket.

"I really wish I would remember the good stuff," Jensen finally said. Josh sought eye contact with his brother and laid his hand on Jensen's shoulder.

"I sure hope the good stuff will come back and when it does it will oust the bad," Josh declared, doing his best to sound confident. Jensen smiled, grateful for Josh's words.

"You and me both, bro. You and me, both."

*****

Jensen Ackles was walking nervously towards the court building. After the pleasant evening he and Jared had spent at his parents' he'd had a hard time finding any sleep and no amount of cuddling on
Jared's side had been able to change that. His mind was on the upcoming sentencing and although he didn't think that the judge would let him sleep in freedom when she was about to throw him in jail, he just couldn't be sure.

Obviously Samantha Ferris didn't see him at risk of breaking away and yet all this felt like a giant exam to him. Towards the early hours of the morning, Jensen had managed to doze a while. He'd told himself whatever would happen, he'd make the best of it, make it work. If he had to serve time then he would. And he wouldn't let it break him.

The courtroom was already filled with a fair amount of auditors, which didn't really help to settle Jensen's nerves. Jared was trying to have a calming influence but since he was a giant energetic puppy most of the time and at least equally nervous, it didn't help at all.

Jensen spotted his lawyer and made his way over to him. Richard Speight greeted him with a tight smile and a handshake. As they walked towards the stand, Jensen noticed quite a few familiar faces in the crowd. His family, of course, was there and Jared's also, along with Jared's friends and even the doc who had stitched up his leg. After a moment of confusion, Jensen remembered his mother mentioning at her hospital visit that this doc was a friend of a family and had already stitched up his head back all these years after his biking accident.

Once everyone was seated they didn't have to wait long for Judge Ferris to arrive at her desk and greet everyone. She looked in a good mood and was smiling to herself as she spread the papers out in front of her. The room became eerily quiet in expectation once more, a fact that the judge also picked up on. She decided not to keep everyone on tenterhooks too long.

"I see, Mr. Ackles, you managed to stir up quite a bit of interest," Ferris announced. Her eyes had caught sight of one particular person in the crowd. "It's not every day we have a former governor in the crowd. Welcome, Mr. Davis."

Former governor William B. Davis had been in office at the time when Jensen's kidnapping had occurred. It was a case that he'd never really managed to forget because no matter what they did, it was as if the boy was erased from the face of the earth. He'd been in personal contact with the boy's family a few times and when he had read the name in the papers a few days back, he'd decided to wrap up the ties for himself as well. He nodded at Judge Ferris' greeting and steeled his expression when all eyes fell on him.

"I'm not going to draw this out any longer than necessary," Ferris continued. "We heard the conclusion by the jury yesterday. So will Jensen Ackles please rise for sentencing."

Jensen worried his lips with his teeth as he complied and stood, taking a deep breath.

"Jensen Ackles, you have been found guilty for accessory to solicitation of deadly weapons as well as of the kidnapping of a police officer, Lieutenant Jared Padalecki, and you are hereby sentenced to two years in jail."

There was a gasp in the crowd and Jensen's heart dropped. He had expected it, but still hoped for a lenient sentence.

"However," Samantha Ferris continued, "in light of the extenuating circumstances that are your own kidnapping at the age of five by the convict Jeffrey Dean Morgan and the subsequent brainwashing - for lack of a better word - as well as the fact that you risked your own life to keep Lieutenant Padalecki safe and your flawless behavior while on bail, I will commute the sentence to parole."

Jensen lifted his head abruptly, not sure he heard right. He must have, however, since Richard
Speight patted his back and smiled widely and the murmuring in the audience picked up in volume.

"I do have a condition, though, Mr. Ackles," Ferris added after a moment.

"Yes, your Honor?" Jensen replied, gazing at Samantha Ferris expectantly.

"For the duration of the parole you will not only have to fulfill the usual parole regulations but I want you to see someone regularly to help you deal with the PTSD," Ferris elaborated.

Jensen nodded his agreement. He'd already thought about that even before Jared had mentioned it a few days ago.

"And, young man, you should continue your studies. Law with an emphasis in criminology is always something where you'll be needed, especially with your rather unique insights. I have no idea what you had in mind when starting your pre-law studies but if you continue down that path now, I'm sure we'll hear a few good things about you in the years to come."

Jensen wasn't sure what to say to that. He felt a bit overwhelmed at the confidence the judge seemed to have in his determination to stay on the right side of the law and his abilities to shine, but he knew he'd do his darndest to prove her right.

Then Judge Ferris dismissed everyone and Jensen found himself shaking hands with his lawyer and his assistant. A moment later a whirlwind of long blond hair launched herself at him and Jensen had just enough time to brace himself and grab onto his sister to make sure her enthusiasm didn't end with both of them crashing to the ground.

"Geez, Kenzie," Jensen gasped. "Don't kill me."

"I know, I know.... or else Jared will kick my ass," she beamed. "I'm just so happy."

"I'm happy, too," Jensen replied.

"And me," Jared's deep voice drawled over the overall buzz. Mackenzie grinned and let go of her brother, allowing Jared to hug his friend as well.

*****

Jensen was nursing his second beer carefully, drumming his foot to the bass of the Metallica that filled the bar. Jared was leaning over to understand what Chad trying to tell him over the music. It was pretty full in the "Black Impala" and Jensen wasn't sure he liked it. He'd never really been out like that but Jared's crew had insisted to sponsor a tiny party, as Chad had called it.

Suddenly Jensen was tugged on his denim shirt and looked up from his beer. Jason was trying to get him up and over to the pool table that Mike and Chris had conquered.

"Jared said you play pool, Jensen. He usually wins our contests. C'mon 'n show us he can be beaten."

Jensen raised an eyebrow and smacked a grinning Jared playfully on the shoulder. Jared giggled and pulled himself upright.

"Oh no, guys. He's already buzzed. If I beat him he has to be sober," Jensen groaned playfully.
"He's had the same you did," Chad replied. "Two beers and a shot. Not our fault he's a lightweight. But he kicks our butts even when he's buzzed."

"I didn't have a shot," Jensen contradicted.

"You do now," Jason smirked and slammed one down in front of him. Jensen stared at him and then shook his head, smiling. He looked at Jared and downed his shot in one go.

"Cripes, what the heck was that?" He almost coughed at the burn in his throat.

"We call it rocket fuel," Chad laughed.

"I can see why," Jensen wheezed and then followed a chuckling Jared over to the pool table. Mike was busy trying to beat Chris, who in turn was trying to unconspicuously spike Mike's beer with his shot.

"Don't think I don't know what you're doing, Kane," Mike warned after smashing a red ball in the side pocket. Chris grinned sheepishly and downed what was left of his shot.

When the game ended, Jared prepared the balls for his bout with Jensen, who already watched him like a hawk. He might not have been out in bars much, but playing pool was one of his favorite past-times and JD'd had a table in his loft apartment. Also, Jensen was no stranger to alcohol. While he didn't believe in getting himself silly-ass drunk, he knew how to pace it when he had to. He'd hustled almost everyone of JD's crew a few times until they found him out and threatened to whip it out of him with the cue if they caught him again. Of course Jensen had known they'd never have beaten Jack but it had made him even more perfect at it.

"Your break," Jared said, nudging him. "Let's see if what you said about your skills comes close to the truth or if you were just bragging."

There was a slight - not even slur - in Jared's words and the corner of Jensen's mouth twitched in amusement. So, Jared wanted him to break. Well, he could have a break.

Jensen took the cue Mike offered him and inspected it briefly. It looked like a decent one and after another swallow from the beer Jason had got he lined up the break.

It wasn't his best game, but it was solid and Jensen did end up beating Jared, but just barely. They all took turns with the beer and the cue and Mike managed to sneak in the odd shot of rocket fuel and Jensen couldn't remember a time where he had felt more relaxed. He was actually enjoying himself immensely, especially since he got the chance to stare at Jared playing pool without having to fear snarky remarks.

Closing up on midnight, Jared and most of his colleagues had gone for a trip to the john and Jensen was left with Chad at the bar. Chad was still someone Jensen couldn't really figure out and he wouldn't be mad if Jared or Jason or anyone would join them again, soon.

"I don't bite, you know," Chad said and Jensen wondered briefly if he could read minds.

"You sure know how to bark, though," Jensen returned and smirked.

"Guilty as charged," Chad grinned, holding up his hands in an innocent gesture. "Have to look out for my crew."

Jensen nodded in agreement. "Yeah. I do know Jared values your friendship a lot."
"He said that, eh?"

"Yup," Jensen quipped.

"Right," Chad nodded. "Can I tell you something?"

"Um, sure," Jensen replied with a slight frown.

"You know about my crew, right?"

"Yeah. You're not just colleagues. You're friends," Jensen stated.

"Correct. But my crew isn't just colleagues. It includes people that are important to my colleagues, my family, theirs... and that means it includes you, too."

"What?" Jensen was a bit perplexed. Despite Chad's testimony in court and his help in getting him out of the last flashback, Jensen still had the impression that Chad didn't really trust him.

"Don't sound so surprised, dude. You are Jared's friend, right?"

"Yeah, but..."

"No but. I know how it looked when we first met. But all I saw then was Jack Morgan. By now I got to know Jensen Ackles. And he seems to be a pretty cool guy. I know Jared thinks you're an awesome friend. And that means you're crew."

Jensen looked at Chad trying to find anything in his expression that would indicate a joke or something, but Chad looked quite serious. Like he really meant it.

"I... thanks, man. That really means a lot," Jensen said with a slight tremor in his voice. Chad held out his hand which Jensen grasped with a smile. A cheering erupted behind them and Jensen felt a few hands clapping his back.

"That calls for another round of beer," Chris called loud enough for the bartender to hear. Soon they lifted their glasses and sealed the new friendship in style.

*****

When Jared opened his eyes the next morning the sun was already shining into the room and the clock on his bedside table informed him it was nearing 11am. His head was still feeling a bit foggy but the memory of the last day and the evening brought a smile to his face.

He and Jensen had returned to his apartment around 2 a.m. after celebrating Jensen's parole with the crew and lots of beer and booze. They'd just managed to undress to their boxers before crashing hard.

All the uncertainties of the last weeks had taken their toll on both men and Jared knew Jensen hadn't been sleeping well at all. He turned to look for the younger man and chuckled when he saw him on the other side of the bed, still deep in slumber, laying face down.

Whatever part of the duvet Jensen had, had slid down during the night leaving Jared to admire the perfect curve of his ass, which caused Jared's dick to twitch with interest. He stretched out his hand
to let it run lightly over the firm, boxer clad globes. At the contact, Jensen stirred and bucked his ass up into Jared's hands with a soft moan.

"Jay, handsome... you awake?" Jared crooned, hand never stopping its ministrations.

Jensen lifted his head, hair sticking up all over the place and smacked his lips as he struggled to open his eyes.

"'s the time?" He mumbled and Jared laughed.

"Time to wake up and enjoy this," Jared replied and continued to feel up Jensen's warm body. He moved a bit closer and started nibbling on Jensen's shoulder, which Jensen only tolerated a few moments. Then he turned over with a growl and pulled Jared close to engage him in a bruising kiss and rubbing his growing hard-on against Jared's hips.

"Nobody ever told you to let sleeping dogs lie?" Jensen mumbled between kisses as he let his hand roam over Jared's torso and shoulder before threading his fingers into Jared's hair.

"Oh, I've heard it, believe me. But I wanted this particular dog awake," Jared replied.

"Careful what you wish for," Jensen rasped and pulled on Jared's boxers while Jared was trying to rid Jensen of his.

Jared groaned when he felt Jensen's hand close around his shaft, stroking it leisurely.

"Feels like you need to release the pressure, Jare," Jensen grinned. "I can help."

Instead of a reply Jared leaned his head back and groaned in pleasure. Jensen, ever the opportunist, immediately pounced on his chance and planted a few kisses on Jared's exposed neck, nibbling his way up to the stubbled chin until his lips sealed over Jared's.

As Jensen deepened the kiss, his hand stayed busy on the other man's cock, keeping up a delightful rhythm and occasionally dropping down to cradle Jared's balls. His own manhood was achingly hard, dickhead coated in a film of clear fluid, ready for action. With a swipe of his index finger Jensen collected some of his precum and rubbed the slicked up digit firmly around Jared's rosette.

"Damn you, Ackles," Jared rasped, trying to spread his legs wider. Jensen just grinned, obviously pleased with himself.

"Got any lube close by, Sundance?"

"Top drawer, Butch," Jared supplied, not missing a beat. Soon Jensen had worked an ample amount of lube into Jared's pink hole, using three fingers for prep.

"You ready, Jare? I kinda can't wait," Jensen moaned as he nibbled on Jared's clavicle.

"Can't wait either. Just need to feel you, Jay."

Jensen didn't wait any longer and straddled Jared's left thigh, lining his trembling cock up with Jared's tight tunnel. Then he hooked the taller man's right leg over his shoulder and thrust himself all the way in in one motion.

"Damn you feel so good around me," Jensen panted as he held still to allow both of them to adjust.

"Yeah? Show me how good I feel, Jay."
Jensen didn't need a second invitation. He withdrew his dick slightly and then thrust forward, burying himself balls deep. Keeping the pace steady, he began to angle his thrusts to make sure he hit Jared's prostate. Jared gasped the first time he felt the sparks spread through his body and kept moaning with each stroke that took his breath away.

When Jensen felt the tip of his dick head starting to tingle he moved his hand down to tug on Jared's erection, matching his thrusts with a flick of his wrist.

"Damnit, Jay, gonna make me blow," Jared grunted, breathing heavily, hands fisting in the sheet beneath him. Jensen seemed to take this as a challenge since he angled his thrust in a new direction while running his thumb over the tip of Jared's dick and Jared lost it. He literally saw fireworks as he squeezed his eyes shut and shouted out his pleasure while his cock ejected spurt after spurt of hot, thick spunk, coating Jensen's torso and his own. His trembling hole clasped around Jensen's length, making the younger man's thrusts stutter.

"Fuck, Jare... too good. Need to cum so bad," he keened, keeping up his rhythm as he chased his own orgasm.

"Let go, Jay," Jared gasped, still breathing heavily. "Wanna feel your pleasure. Fill me up." He consciously tightened around Jensen's cock and Jensen lost it. Hips snapping forward one last time, he shouted as he emptied his balls deep inside his lover.

*****

Jensen sat at the kitchen table, hair damp from the shower he'd had, nursing an extra large mug of Jared's coffee while nibbling on a slice of toast. Jared was rummaging through the drawers, trying to locate his favorite spoon which only left Jensen sitting there with a grin and a shake of his head.

"It's just a spoon, Jare," he chuckled and took another sip of the delicious hot liquid.

"It's a special one. This is a special day. See he logic?"

"A special day?" Jensen raised an eyebrow.

"Your first day of your new life... officially," Jared explained. "And before I forget it, I got a gift for you."

"What? Why? It's not my birthday, is it?"

"It sort of is, but that's not the reason," Jared explained and then quickly dashed to the living room before taking a seat opposite Jensen. He put a simple cardboard box, about the size of a small brick in front of Jensen.

"What's that?" Jensen asked, feeling somewhat comprehensive. Jared took a deep breath.

"When I was cuffed to that cot after the raid, you showed me that knife of yours. Remember?"

"Yeah," Jensen whispered. He remembered. He liked that knife.

"Well, I remembered that you always liked knives and when we were kids I'd lend mine to you because your parents didn't want you to have your own yet. You promised you wouldn't tell." Jared
watched Jensen intently as he told the story.

"Now that Balisong of yours, I know you love it. And they kept it in evidence, meaning it's kinda off limits."

"Yeah, I know," Jensen sighed.

"Well, the case is closed and I kinda sweet talked Charlie into helping me, and guess what, they let me have it."

Jensen almost dropped the mug he'd lifted to his mouth.

"What?"

"I got your knife, Jay," Jared grinned and pushed the box closer to Jensen. A delighted smile flickered over Jensen's face as his fingers touched the box. Then his face fell a bit.

"Jare, it is engraved. With my name. I mean, Jack's name," Jensen mumbled.

"I know. It's still yours. Why don't you give it a chance? That knife did nothing to you and it kinda saved me," Jared replied and gave the box another push.

Jensen gave Jared a pointed look that seemed to say he only did it to make Jared happy and took the box. Slowly he lifted the lid off and looked at the rubber foam cushioned weapon. Jared had placed it engraved side up and Jensen's eyes widened when his eyes fell on the letters.

This was his knife alright, he recognized the little scratch at the end of the handle where he'd once dropped it on some gravelly ground. It was sporting his name, just like expected, but it wasn't Jack.

"Chad has a friend who's a goldsmith. He volunteered to make this adjustment," Jared explained.

Jensen carefully took the knife into his hand and softly ran his finger over the letters. There was nothing carved out. Chad's friend had merely added a few things. Instead of reading JACK the handle now sported J.ACKLES. A grin spread over Jensen's face.

"This is awesome, Jare. I don't know what to say, really."

With that he got up and walked around the table to Jared, engulfing him in a tight hug.

"Thank you," he whispered and Jared just squeezed him back in acknowledgement.

"You're most welcome. You ready for some food then?" To underline his own body's need, Jared's stomach gave a loud rumble at those words and the boys laughed.

"Ready, Jare. Can't have you starve, can I?"
That's all folks.... at least for now. Thank you for going on this ride with me, for all the kudos and comments and I thank cyncitymojo for her patience and beta work :) 

I have in mind to write a sequel - idea's already bouncing around in my skull, but there are a few things I have to do before that. So, bear with me ;) 

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!