Island Comforts
by ariadnes_string

Summary

Steve is caring. It's a little scary.

Island Comforts

Danny sneezed himself awake, bumping his head painfully against the passenger side window of Steve's car.

"Ow," he muttered, blinking sticky eyes, a little disoriented. Then he remembered. Steve had unexpectedly shown up to get him that morning, and Danny had felt too crappy to put up much of a fight about it, deciding to conserve all available energy for dragging his aching body through a day of chasing bad guys. So Steve was also giving him a ride home.

"We're here, princess," Steve said, "and please try not to add to the snot in my car. I'm gonna have to disinfect it as it is."

A tissue materialized in Danny's field of vision, and he took it gratefully, blew.

"Thanks," Danny grunted, too exhausted for more conversation, and pushed open the door. After the air-conditioning of the car, the heat and light hit him like a pickaxe between the eyes, and he stumbled forward a few steps, head bowed.

Which is why it took him that long to realize they weren't in front of his place. They were in Steve's driveway.

"Wha--?" He gawped, unable to stop himself from doing a cartoonish double take.
"Yeah. I couldn't bring myself to leave you in that flea-ridden dump you call home." Steve sounded annoyed by his own mercifulness. "Seemed like some kind crime against humanity or something. Go on in—you can crash in the spare room. At least I know those sheets have been washed in the past month."

"You could've asked. You've never heard of asking?"

And okay, he was being ungrateful, sure, because Steve obviously trying, in his stealth commando way, to be nice. But Danny was too ticked off by his own decrepitude—the humiliation of being in a state so miserable it had caused Steve McGarrett to take pity on him, for chrissakes-- to really care.

"What? And interrupt the love affair you were having with the upholstery?" Steve scoffed. "Please. You were asleep before the key turned in the ignition. You're no shape to be making your own decisions."

"So you kidnapped me? 'Cause that was the caring thing to do? That what they teach you in the SEALs?" Danny's outrage was somewhat undermined by another vicious sneeze.

"Blow your nose, Patty Hearst," Steve said, slapping a pack of Kleenex into Danny chest as he went past, "and come in out of the heat."

Fucking kids, Danny thought, trailing after him defeatedly. Not Grace—Grace was an angel. Okay, maybe an angel with a runny nose at the moment. But no, no, it was her germ-laden little friends he blamed—the ones who had given her this cold in the first place. Because what had been a kid-sized cold in a kid-sized body had morphed into an extra-large, kick-your-ass kind of cold in his grown-up one. And he hadn't thought anything could be worse than sniffling your way through a New Jersey winter, but, no, no: it turned out that being sick and baking like a bug in the tropical sun might actually have that beat.

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Steve was already hitting the buttons on the microwave when Danny made it to the well-equipped, perennially immaculate kitchen at the back of the house. He propped himself up against island, suddenly a little dizzy from the shift in light and temperature. The short walk from the car must have raised a sweat, because he could feel it drying on his skin in the cooler air. He shivered, hunched up his shoulders against the chill.

Steve caught the movement, gave him a sharp look out of the corner of his eye, then turned back quickly when the microwave pinged.

"What is that?" Danny eyed the steaming mug Steve was holding out to him suspiciously—he couldn't identify the smell. "Some kind of magical Hawaiian potion guaranteed to cure the common cold?"

Steve shook his head mournfully. "Is everything you know about Hawaii taken from Scooby Doo and the Wiki Tiki?"

"What? No!" Danny protested, even though, yeah, maybe it was, a little.

He took a sip before he realized that Steven hadn't actually answered his question. But the tea, or whatever it was, tasted fine—gingery, maybe—and the heat felt good on his raw throat.

Steve nodded his approval, and went back to opening cupboards and poking through various cans.

"What're you doing?" Danny asked, curious.
"Making soup." Steve held up two cans, comparing them, "You sound like you could use some."

Okay. Clean sheets. Tea. Soup. Things were definitely heading out of Danny's comfort zone of acceptable caretaking from your fellow officers. Going over the edge of the known world, in fact.

He felt the need to protest. "Soup? Who has soup?" he rasped, voice getting ready to crap out altogether. And then where would he be? Completely at Steve McGarrett's mercy, that's where. He shivered again.

"What? Everyone has soup. You don't have soup?" Steve went on, unconcerned, looking for a pot now, "And you with a kid and everything? That's a little scary."

"You're scary," Danny retaliated lamely, then warmed to the subject. "Even when you're trying not to be scary. Especially when you're trying not to be scary. Soup." He shook his head, tried to snuffled back some of the shit in his nose.

Steve just said, "Uh huh," looked at him like he thought Danny was being a little hysterical, and reached out to press a palm against his forehead. Danny didn't even have time to flinch. It was like all Steve's moves: expert, unexpected, and clearly designed to be a lethal combat skill under the right circumstances.

"You're running a little hot there, Brah," Steve said, not unkindly, "Go get some meds and lie down—I'll get you up in a bit."

Danny widened his eyes. "Who are you?" he said, "and what have you done with the formerly badass Steve McGarrett?"

Steve narrowed his eyes just enough to let Danny know that his mother-henning was pretty fucking badass, thank you very much, and made a shooing motion.

Danny raised his arms in semi-mocking surrender. "Okay, okay, I'm going."

"Second door on your left," Steve called after him. "Try the Korean stuff in the prescription bottle—way better than OTC."

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The top shelf of the bathroom cabinet did indeed have an impressive array of cold medicines—though Danny found it almost impossible to imagine a virus having the audacity to go after Steve McGarrett. A little cluster of prescription bottles with labels in Korean characters nestled at the end, but Danny shied away from them. He didn't have the language skills to figure out which one cleared your sinuses, and which one made you do things like dangle a suspect off a skyscraper by his ankles.

Danny settled for the Tylenol Cold and Flu.

He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror as he washed down the pills with a cupped handful of water, and could see why Steve had felt compelled to take pity on him. He might even have done the same himself if their situations had been reversed.

Watery eyes looked back at him out a face drained of color except for the unhealthy red flush over his nose and cheekbones. He stared back at himself with the dopey expression of someone who'd been breathing through his mouth all day.

And yeah, dopey was probably a nice way of putting it.
He blew his nose on some toilet paper, splashed water on his face, and decided lying down wasn’t such a bad idea after all.

"End of the hall," Steve called, as soon as Danny opened the door of the bathroom.

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Thick blinds held the fierce sunlight at bay, making the spare room almost cave-like. Danny had to flick on the overhead light as he came in. The room was—masculine—Danny thought as he looked around. Not masculine in the deprived-of-female-attention way Danny's studio was masculine, but rather as if the all the decorating choices had been made by men for men. The walls were painted Hunter green, the bed covered with a quilted duvet in some kind of subdued blue and gray pattern. A built-in set of shelves along one wall held a few books and trophies; a couple of subdued botanical prints adorned the walls.

But someone—Steve's dad, Danny supposed—had clearly set up a shrine to a younger Steve on the middle shelf. Danny moved along the array of stuff, poking out a cautious finger to touch the dust-free objects: trophies for football and swimming; a plaque for being Valedictorian of his high school class; photos of quarterback Steve in front of a winning team; in uniform at his Annapolis graduation.

Danny peered at the pictures. Steve looked younger, less hardened, but still steely-eyed, still scary. Danny shook his head, amazed. Guess he’d been born with it.

At the end of the row, though, tucked away behind another set of team pictures, was a smaller photo of an even younger Steve—ten or eleven maybe—sitting in a lush garden with his arms around an enormous dog—a shaggy beast as big as he was. Both dog and boy were muddy, twig-covered, as if they were taking a brief break from wrestling their way through the undergrowth. Steve's childish face was split with an enormous grin. He looked—Danny picked up the photo examine it more closely—he looked out-of-breath, carefree, happy, as if he hadn't been born scary after all. Danny found himself smiling back at the boy Steve had been, the infectious joy cutting through both the lost years and his current congestion.

"Williams," his partner's adult bark traveled down the hall, "quit dicking around in there and lie down already."

Startled, as if he'd been caught prying, Danny put the picture down quickly.

"What? You have bat ears now?" He yelled back, wincing at how much it hurt his throat.

But he decided the better part of valor was compliance at this point, and stretched himself out carefully on the smooth bed. He wouldn't sleep, he didn't think, not in a room so filled with McGarrett strangeness. But the sheets were cool against his face, and it was quiet in here, the quietest place he'd been for days, and so, even though he heard Steve's footsteps in the hall, and sensed someone turning off the light, he didn't resist the tug of unconsciousness, pulling him under.

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